

The Fascinating History Of Corpse Medicine: From the Renaissance to the Victorians

Throughout history, humans have exhibited a strange fascination with the dead. From ancient cultures to modern civilizations, the belief in the mystical and healing properties of corpses has persisted. Corpse medicine, the practice of using human remains for medicinal purposes, was particularly prevalent during the Renaissance and Victorian eras. This article delves into the captivating history of corpse medicine, exploring its origins, development, and eventual decline.

Understanding the Origins of Corpse Medicine

The origins of corpse medicine can be traced back to ancient civilizations such as Egypt and China. These societies believed in the transference of energies and believed that consuming parts of the deceased could bring about various benefits. For example, the ancient Egyptians believed that consuming mummified flesh could help retain youth and vitality.

However, corpse medicine truly flourished during the European Renaissance, a time when medical practices and beliefs were undergoing rapid transformation. The rise of anatomy and an increased understanding of the human body led to the exploration of various remedies involving human remains.

Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the

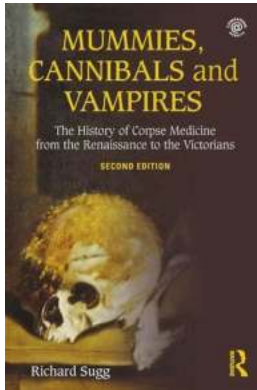
Victorians by Richard Sugg (2nd Edition, Kindle Edition)

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled
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The Renaissance: A Golden Age for Corpse Medicine

The Renaissance witnessed a surge of interest in the medical properties of human corpses. For instance, physicians would create concoctions using crushed skull fragments, believing it could cure ailments such as epilepsy and migraines. Additionally, powdered mummy flesh was deemed an effective treatment for numerous diseases.

During this period, body snatching became a lucrative trade, with resurrectionists stealing corpses from graveyards to meet the demand for anatomical research and medical treatments. It was not uncommon for wealthy individuals to purchase mummified remains or body parts from these sinister suppliers in pursuit of health and beauty.

Corpse Medicine in the Victorian Era

The Victorian era, known for its rigid societal norms and strict etiquettes, also witnessed an intriguing relationship with corpse medicine. With advancements in medical science, including the discovery of bacteria and the development of surgical techniques, corpse medicine began to decline. However, it did not disappear entirely.

During this period, mummy powder and other human-derived concoctions were still available in apothecaries, promising relief from various ailments. Interestingly, it was often the middle and upper classes who continued to seek out these remedies due to their historical association with healing powers.

The Decline and Ethical Concerns

With the advancements in modern medicine, the belief in the efficacy of corpse medicine gradually waned. The of the Germ Theory and the adoption of evidence-based medicine led to a shift in medical practices away from superstitions and towards more scientific methods.

The ethical concerns surrounding corpse medicine also played a significant role in its decline. Increasing awareness of human rights and the recognition of the dignity of the deceased made the use of human remains for medicinal purposes increasingly unacceptable in society.

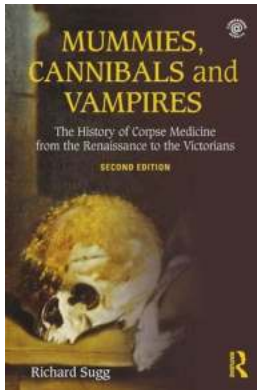
Legacy and Reflection

While the practice of corpse medicine has predominantly been left in the pages of history, its influence can still be observed in contemporary culture. References to corpse medicine can be found in literature, art, and even in the naming of certain medical procedures.

Exploring the history of corpse medicine allows us to reflect on the human fascination with macabre and the evolution of medical practices. It serves as a reminder of how human beliefs and societal values shape our understanding of health and healing.

The history of corpse medicine provides intriguing insights into the evolution of medical beliefs and practices throughout the ages. From its ancient roots to its

flourishing during the Renaissance and eventual decline during the Victorian era, the fascination with using human remains for medicinal purposes is a testament to human curiosity and the quest for better health. Although corpse medicine is no longer a widely accepted practice, it remains an intriguing part of our collective history that continues to captivate our imagination.



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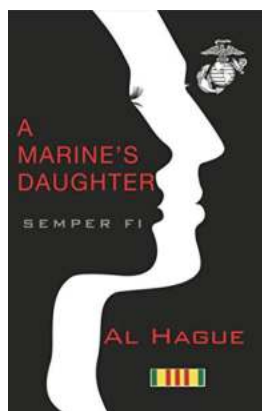
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Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires charts in vivid detail the largely forgotten history of European corpse medicine, which saw kings, ladies, gentlemen, priests and scientists prescribe, swallow or wear human blood, flesh, bone, fat, brains and skin in an attempt to heal themselves of epilepsy, bruising, wounds, sores, plague, cancer, gout and depression. In this comprehensive and accessible text, Richard Sugg shows that, far from being a medieval therapy, corpse medicine was at its height during the social and scientific revolutions of early-modern Britain, surviving well into the eighteenth century and, amongst the poor, lingering stubbornly on into the time of Queen Victoria.

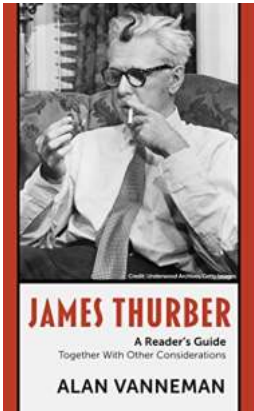
Ranging from the execution scaffolds of Germany and Scandinavia, through the courts and laboratories of Italy, France and Britain, to the battlefields of Holland and Ireland, and on to the tribal man-eating of the Americas, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* argues that the real cannibals were in fact the Europeans. Picking our way through the bloodstained shadows of this remarkable secret history, we encounter medicine cut from bodies living and dead, sacks of human fat harvested after a gun battle, gloves made of human skin, and the first mummy to appear on the London stage. Lit by the uncanny glow of a lamp filled with human blood, this second edition includes new material on exo-cannibalism, skull medicine, the blood-drinking of Scandinavian executions, Victorian corpse-stroking, and the magical powers of candles made from human fat. In our quest to understand the strange paradox of routine Christian cannibalism we move from the Catholic vampirism of the Eucharist, through the routine filth and discomfort of early modern bodies, and in to the potent, numinous source of corpse medicine's ultimate power: the human soul itself.

Now accompanied by a companion website with supplementary articles, interviews with the author, related images, summaries of key topics, and a glossary, the second edition of *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* is an essential read for anyone interested in the history of medicine, early modern history, and the darker, hidden past of European Christendom.



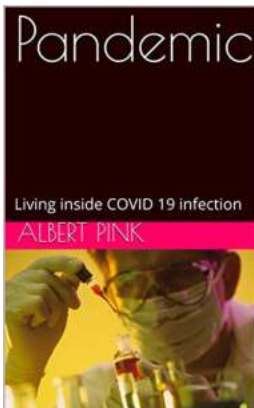
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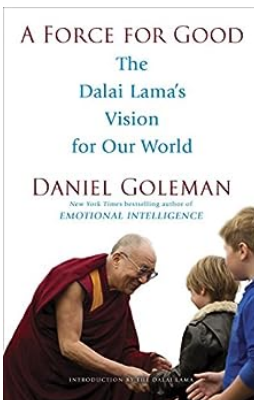
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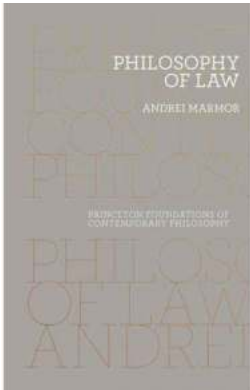
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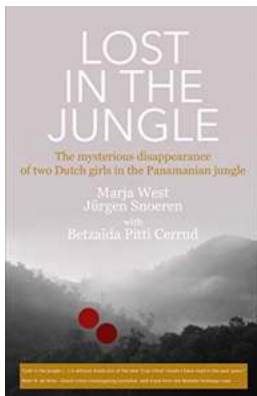
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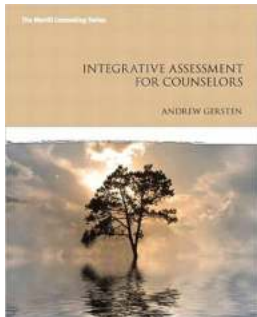
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