



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

Richard Sugg

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Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires charts in vivid detail the largely forgotten history of European corpse medicine, when kings, ladies, gentlemen, priests and scientists prescribed, swallowed or wore human blood, flesh, bone, fat, brains and skin against epilepsy, bruising, wounds, sores, plague, cancer, gout and depression.

One thing we are rarely taught at school is this: James I refused corpse medicine; Charles II made his own corpse medicine; and Charles I was made into corpse medicine. 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. Medicinal cannibalism utilised the formidable weight of European science, publishing, trade networks and educated theory. For many, it was also an emphatically Christian phenomenon. And, whilst corpse medicine has sometimes been presented as a medieval therapy, it was at its height during the social and scientific revolutions of early-modern Britain. It survived well into the eighteenth century, and amongst the poor it lingered stubbornly on into the time of Queen Victoria. This innovative book brings to life a little known and often disturbing part of human history.

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