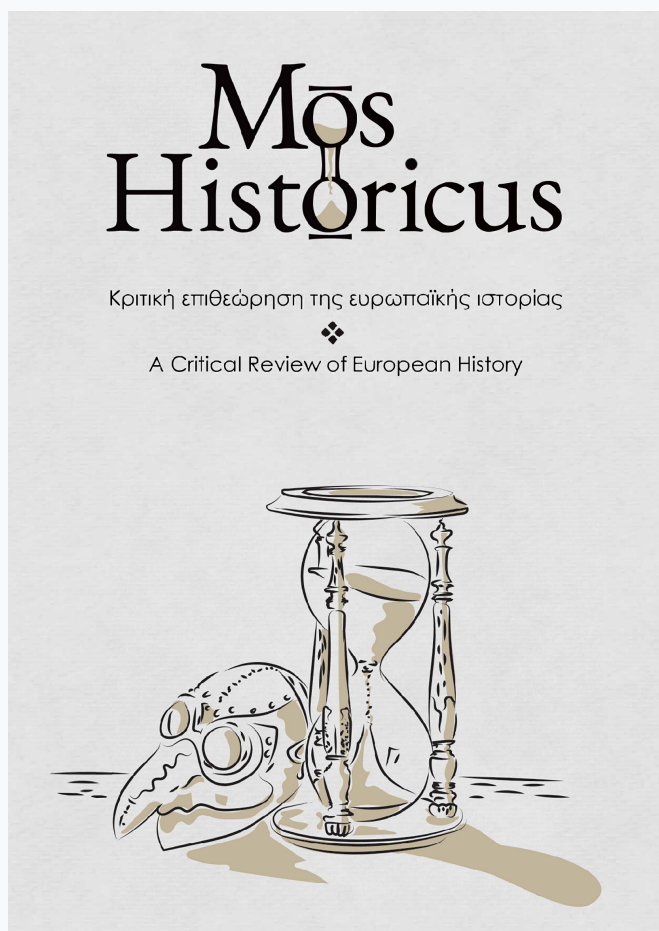


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### Plagues and diseases through newspapers' reports during the seventeenth century

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# Plagues and diseases through newspapers' reports during the seventeenth century

Λοιμοί και ασθένειες μέσα από τις σελίδες των εφημερίδων του 17ου αι.

Dr. Panagiotis Georgakakis\*

Δρ. Παναγιώτης Γεωργακάκης

**ABSTRACT:** Plagues and the transmission of diseases constituted one of the major concerns of people during the early modern period. Although there was a consistent effort from the sixteenth century onwards to find proper solutions to relieve the European citizens, the lack of medical knowledge forced these states to focus mostly on the containment of these diseases and not on finding a cure. Thus, the European states used any available resource in this battle against plagues. One of the most prominent allies in this effort to control the outbreak of diseases was the press. Brochures and pamphlets issued by the authorities, reporting the established policies on plagues, circulated in large numbers during the sixteenth century. The emergence of the newspaper in the early seventeenth century increased this circulation. The purpose of this article is to present the role of Francophone newspapers in propagating public health measures through the relevant reports and advertisements on their issues, during a period when the need for medicines increased, the services provided by apothecaries became necessary for the function of the health system and doctors' involvement was of utmost importance.

**Keywords:** Plague, spreading diseases, gazettes, medical advertisements, reports

**ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ:** Οι λοιμοί και οι μεταδοτικές ασθένειες αποτελούσαν βασικούς παράγοντες ανησυχίας κατά την πρόιμη νεότερη περίοδο στην Ευρώπη. Παρόλο που από τα τέλη του 16ου αι. και κυρίως κατά τον 17ο αι. παρατηρείται μια εντατική προσπάθεια εύρεσης λύσεων που θα ανακούφιζαν τους κατοίκους των ευρωπαϊκών κρατών, η έλλειψη επαρκών ιατρικών γνώσεων είχε ως αποτέλεσμα τα κράτη να περιορίζονται κυρίως στην προσπάθεια

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Ο Παναγιώτης Γεωργακάκης είναι διδάκτορας του πανεπιστημίου του St. Andrews, με θέμα διατριβής την ανάπτυξη και κυκλοφορία συγγενικών εφημερίδων στις Ηνωμένες Επαρχίες της Ολλανδίας, 1670-1701. Είναι πτυχιούχος του τμήματος Ιστορίας-Αρχαιολογίας του ΕΚΠΑ, όπου επίσης ολοκλήρωσε με άριστα τις μεταπτυχιακές του σπουδές στην Ευρωπαϊκή ιστορία. Έχει εκδώσει άλλα τρία άρθρα με θέμα τα νέα σε εφημερίδες της πρόιμης νεότερης Ευρώπης.

ελέγχου και περιορισμού των ασθενειών και όχι στην καταπολέμησή τους. Στη μάχη αυτή εναντίον των ασθενειών, οι ευρωπαϊκές αρχές χρησιμοποιούσαν ό,τι μέσο διέθεταν για ενημέρωση και προστασία. Αναπόφευκτα λοιπόν, η τυπογραφία αποτέλεσε σημαντικό σύμμαχο σε αυτή την αποστολή. Μπροσούρες και φυλλάδια με τις αποφάσεις των αρχών για την αντιμετώπιση των λοιμών κυκλοφορούσαν ήδη από τον 16ο αι. Σε αυτά ήρθε να προστεθεί και η κυκλοφορία της εφημερίδας από τις αρχές του 17ου αι. Σκοπός του άρθρου αυτού είναι να παρουσιάσει τον ρόλο των εφημερίδων, κυρίως των γαλλόφωνων, στην ενημέρωση του κοινού πάνω σε θέματα δημόσιας υγείας, καθώς και τη σπουδαιότητα των φαρμάκων, των φαρμακοποιών και των ιατρών, όπως αυτά εμφανίζονταν μέσα από τις σελίδες του Τύπου της εποχής.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Πανώλη, μετάδοση ασθενειών, εφημερίδες, ιατρικές έντυπες διαφημίσεις, αναφορές



The *Nouvelles solides et choisies*, a Huguenot gazette published in the Dutch Republic throughout the 1680s, placed an advertisement at the end of its issue on 1 July 1688. The advertisement stated that:

We informed the public that Messieurs Ras, father and son, royal surgeons and doctors of the King of France, were in Brussels throughout the years 1686 & 1687 providing the citizens with a lot of cures, and now they are travelling in Lille, Valenciennes and in other cities in Flanders for curing people from diseases; after that, they will visit the Holland, and they will stay in Rotterdam and later in Amsterdam [...]. They will stay in each region for almost twenty days.<sup>1</sup>

The advertisement continued by informing the readers of the gazette about the addresses where these two French doctors could be found during their stay in Flanders and in Holland. Although this advertisement is interesting by itself as it was one of the few announcements where doctors visited foreign states providing treatments for diseases, some intriguing questions arise. Why did two royal French doctors decide to visit these regions? Was this an autonomous decision or it was more a plan of the French authorities who were seeking to expand the French influence in these places months before the start of the War of the Great Alliance? Were the plagues and spreading diseases a reason which drove the early modern European states to adopt a common policy, putting aside their differences?

<sup>1</sup> BL: PENN.NT367: *Nouvelles solides et choisies*, du Jeudi 1 Juillet 1688.

This article sheds light on these questions as well as on the role of gazettes in the dissemination of important announcements about public health, at a time when wars and pandemics either coexisted or alternated to each other. Moreover, the study of these newspaper reports not only reveals the policies followed by the European states' authorities in order to control these diseases, but also whether these policies had been successful or not. This article presents the reports coming from the Huguenot gazettes published in the Dutch Republic during the second half of the seventeenth century. These gazettes contain important information as during this period they hosted news from every major European city, while most of the newspapers published during the seventeenth century were interested mostly in the internal news of their state. These Huguenot gazettes give us an extremely useful map of international news concerning the outbreak of plagues in Europe and the policies of each state against these threats.

### **Pandemics in early modern Europe**

The fourteenth-century outbreak of the "Black Death" was the key event and the turning point that led to the reconsideration and revision of existing methods of health care in Europe. After all, the European states did not have any other option but to reform their health care system and to develop sophisticated mechanisms to control the spread of epidemic diseases. Indeed, Europe faced a serious number of emerging cases of plagues and diseases immediately after the end of the "Black Death" in 1351 up until the eighteenth century, with critical bouts of epidemics in Marseille and Moscow in 1720 and in 1770 respectively. Yet, Europe faced more than just plague outbreaks. There were also outbreaks of smallpox, cholera and typhus. Throughout those centuries, European authorities tried to restrain the spread of these diseases using a variety of methods, which have not always been proven successful.<sup>2</sup>

The plague and other diseases did not strike with the same severity all the European states. The differences lie on the death rates per region or state, on the duration and frequency of each outbreak. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, for instance, the plague spread vastly over an area that covered most of Germany, half of Italy, an important part of

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Slack, "Responses to Plague in Early Modern Europe: The Implications of Public Health", *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 87:2 (2020), p. 409; Nico Voigtgländer & Hans-Joachim Voth, "The Three Horsemen of Riches: Plague, War, and Urbanization in Early Modern Europe", *Review of Economic Studies*, 80:2 (2013), p. 779.

France and the Iberian Peninsula, and the main urban clusters in the Low Countries and England. In Northern Europe the plague struck repeatedly, while in Southern Europe there was only one wave of the disease. There are also differences in the places affected by these outbreaks. In the north of Europe, plague outbreaks affected mostly urbanized areas; in Southern Europe it was the countryside that was affected the most.<sup>3</sup> [Table 1]

**Table 1:** Plague intensity in western Europe during the seventeenth century<sup>1</sup>

Country/Region	Plague victims (millions)	% of population lost to plague
South Italy	0.87-1.25	30-40
North Italy	2	30-35
South Germany <sup>2</sup>	-	20-25
Dutch Republic	-	15-25
Spain	1.25	18-19
France	2.20-2.40	11-14
England	0.45	8-10

1. These data were an excerpt of the following: Guido Alfani, 'Plague in Seventeenth-century Europe', pp. 408-430.; I. Fusco, *Peste, demografia e fiscalità nel regno di Napoli del XVII secolo* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).; E.A. Eckert, 'Boundary formation and diffusion of plague: Swiss epidemics from 1562-1669', *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1978), pp. 49-80.; K.F. Helleiner, *The population of Europe from the Black Death to the Eve of the Vital Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1967), pp. 1-97.; M.A. Arnould, *Mortalité et épidémies sous l'Ancien Régime dans le Hainaut et quelques régions limitrophes* (Liège/Paris: Université de Liège, 1965), pp. 465-481.

2. South Germany includes Rhineland, Alsace and part of Switzerland.

During the seventeenth century, European states once again faced the calamities of plague and other diseases. In Southern France and Northern Italy, the plague outbreaks of the 1630s and 1660s were extremely lethal, especially when compared to the "Black Death". A great number of casualties could also be observed in the Holy Roman Empire, as the Thirty Years' War inflamed pre-existing problems. Troops on both sides acted as disease carriers, spreading the plague.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Guido Alfani, "Plague in seventeenth-century Europe and the decline of Italy: an epidemiological hypothesis", *European Review of Economic History*, 17:4 (2013), pp. 412-413.

<sup>4</sup> Guido Alfani, *Calamities and the Economy in the Renaissance Italy: The Grand Tour of the Horsemen of Apocalypse*, Palgrave, Basingstoke 2013, pp. 43-44; Ann G. Carmichael, "Diseases of the Renaissance and Early

In seventeenth-century England, outbreaks of disease occurred mostly in large urban centres, especially in London. This was the case in the Low Countries as well, in Flanders and Holland. For instance, Amsterdam was gravely affected by the plague. The city dealt with the disease several times during the seventeenth century -in 1602, 1617, 1623-1625, 1635-1637, 1654-1655 and in 1663-1664- as it was a major trade hub with its harbour being an international centre for exchanging goods and information.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the plague, Europe dealt with several other diseases during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Influenza was often an issue during the sixteenth century, as at least three major waves hit Europe in 1510, 1557-1558 and 1580. The number of influenza outbreaks decreased during the seventeenth century, as only two outbreaks have been recorded in 1627 and 1663. Yet, both have been considered extremely lethal in the contemporary scholarly discourse.<sup>6</sup> "New diseases" also made their appearance, inciting fears that urged for a better medical explanation by the authorities. Typhus, scarlet fever, syphilis and tuberculosis were just a few of the diseases which spread across Europe during the early modern period.

Smallpox also was a disease which troubled the European population, especially from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. The mortality rates of this disease were accelerating during the seventeenth century. Around 30% of the annual mortality in Italian cities was due to the smallpox outbreaks of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The percentage in England was smaller, just 10%. London, however, dealt with continuous waves of smallpox for years. Likewise in major cities of the Dutch Republic, like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht that were very densely populated had a wide propagation of smallpox among its inhabitants. In the eighteenth century, smallpox outbreaks were extremely common in major Dutch cities, with a smallpox outbreak occurring almost every three years.<sup>7</sup>

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Modern Europe", in Kenneth F. Kiple (ed.), *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 281.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Anthony Wrigley & Roger Snowden Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, Arnold, London 1981, p. 668; Christopher J. Duncan & Susan Scott, *Return of the Black Death: The World's Greatest Serial Killer*, Wiley, Chichester 2004, p. 331.

<sup>6</sup> Carmichael, "Diseases of the Renaissance", *ibid*, p. 282.

<sup>7</sup> Ann G. Carmichael & Arthur Silverstein, "Smallpox in Europe before the seventeenth century: Virulent killer or benign disease?", *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 42:2 (1987), pp. 147-168; Lorenzo del Panta, *Le epidemie nella storia demografia italiana*, Loescher, Turin 1980, p. 248; Willibrord J.M.J. Rutten, "The demographic history of smallpox in the Netherlands, 18th-19th centuries", in Theo Engelen, Don R. Shepherd & Yang Wen-shan (eds.), *Death at the opposite ends of the Eurasian continent. Mortality trends in Taiwan and the Netherlands 1850-1945*, Aksant, Amsterdam 2011, p. 184.

## The emergence of gazettes

The emergence of the newspaper during the first decade of the seventeenth century played a significant role in the development and the establishment of a community of news which was important in shaping public opinion a century later. In 1605 Johan Carolus, a bookseller from the city of Strasbourg, published the first printed news broadsheet. Others soon followed his idea by establishing their own ventures, first in the German states and later in the Dutch Republic, France, England, and the rest of Europe.<sup>8</sup>

The first gazettes had an obvious main purpose, to inform their readers about trade goods, new trade routes and harbours, along with anything that dealt with commerce. If there was any information about a war that could affect commerce or news about a harbour that was under siege, then newsmen would include this information in their gazettes. Soon, these gazettes started to present a variety of information in their issues; diplomatic news, news about warfare and news from the courts appeared in their reports.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the gazettes that emerged during the seventeenth century were primarily focused on the news of their state, while the news coming from foreign cities was usually outdated. Evidently, their content was constructed as such because the newsmen targeted an internal and more limited readership rather than an international one.

The first newsman, who inserted more news from foreign cities into his gazette, was Théophraste Renaudot, the founder of the Paris *Gazette*. Renaudot established his newspaper in 1631 and thanks to Cardinal Richelieu's help, he managed to eliminate his rivals. Renaudot's primary purpose was to cover the Thirty Years War; his gazette, however, became the mouthpiece of French government propaganda from the start of its circulation.<sup>10</sup>

The first who realized the power of the French language as the dominant language of the time, and the chances for more profit were the Dutch. From 1620, Dutch newsmen published and circulated Francophone gazettes. The first Francophone gazette that was published was the *Courant d'Italie et d'Almaigne* in 1620 by the German Caspar van Hilten in Amsterdam. It was a translated copy of his Dutch newspaper entitled *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt &c.*

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World came to know about itself*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2014, p. 183; Thomas Schröder, "The Origins of German Press", in Brendan Dooley & Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, Routledge, New York & London 2001, p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Pierre Vittu, "Instruments of Political Information in Franc", in Dooley & Baron (eds.), *ibid.*, p. 166; Pettegree, *ibid.*, pp. 84, 182-183.

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Feyel, "Théophraste Renaudot", in Jean Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire de la presse. Dictionnaire des journalistes: 1600-1789*, vol. 2, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 1999, pp. 838-848; Gilles Feyel, *L'Annonce et la Nouvelle. La Presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Regime (1630-1788)*, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 2000, p. 170; Howard M. Solomon, *Public Welfare, Science, and Propaganda in Seventeenth Century France. The innovations of Théophraste Renaudot*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1972, pp. 55, 107.

Others would follow his example. In 1655, Otto Barenz Smient started the publication of the *Nouvelles Ordinaires*, the first weekly Francophone gazette that was not a translated copy of a Dutch one. In 1662, Cornelis van Swoll, another Dutch publisher, would establish his own French gazette, *La Gazette d'Amsterdam*. Smient and especially Van Swoll relied on Huguenot copywriters and editors for the survival of their gazettes. These Huguenots had established news networks not only in Paris but also in other European capitals, especially during the 1670s, when King Louis XIV's aggressive policy towards the Huguenots of his realm became more and more apparent.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, during the 1670s the first Huguenot gazettes would emerge. The number of Huguenot gazettes that were published in the Dutch Republic would increase rapidly after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 which drove a significant number of Huguenots to exile. Huguenot gazetteers followed a completely different policy than the ordinary newsmen. They did not concentrate on news from the Dutch Republic, as the Dutch newsmen did, but, on the contrary, they were interested in international news. This decision proved to be wise, since their pre-existing news network had been expanded after the establishment of Huguenot communities in several European states during the 1680s. These communities had a close relationship to each other exchanging news and information. Thus, the Huguenot gazetteers found not only new correspondents in several European states but an external readership as well. The example of the Huguenot theologian Jacques Lenfant is indicative of the popularity of the Huguenot gazettes. On 29 November 1684, Lenfant wrote from Heidelberg to his friend and fellow exile Pierre Bayle in Rotterdam. At the end of his letter, he stated that:

For the rest, to change the subject, we are so happy here with the *Gazettes raisonnées* that come to us from Holland, the style seems so pure, the phrasing so free, and the reflections so solid, that I was asked to be informed who was the author, and if we will be able to have them all since they first appeared. I beg you, Sir, to tell me what you know about it, and I promise to keep your communication discreet.<sup>12</sup>

As Lenfant's letter indicates, the Huguenot gazettes published in the Dutch Republic were well-known to members of the Huguenot diaspora beyond the borders of the state. Indeed, the Huguenot gazettes were the first international newspapers. The Huguenot newsmen leaned

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<sup>11</sup> Panagiotis Georgakakis, "Delivering the News from Abroad: French-Language gazettes published in the Dutch Republic during the second half of the Seventeenth Century", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 89:4 (2020), pp. 660-662.

<sup>12</sup> "Lettre 359: Jacques Lenfant a Pierre Bayle", at <http://bayle-correspondance.univ-st-etienne.fr> (access: 30.06.2022).



on to a very dynamic diaspora that was not only a constant pool of customers, but also supplied them with news. Therefore, their information was reliable and up-to-date, and Huguenot gazetteers were regarded as purveyors of accurate and informative news.

### **The Diseases in the Huguenot reports and the importance of the public health**

Huguenot gazettes presented news from all major European cities and from places where something noteworthy happened, like a battle or the signing of a treaty. The appearance of a disease outbreak was a very important event not to be mentioned in the reports. The concern for public health was apparent through the numerous advertisements that were published in the Huguenot gazettes. Thus, notices or decrees that dealt with health care or with the containment of a disease always appeared in the gazettes.

An outbreak of plague swept through Poland, Hungary, Austria and later many German cities between 1675 and 1684, worrying the state authorities. The *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits* and the *Nouvelles solides et choisies*, the two Huguenot gazettes of that time, presented reports from the cities which had been affected by the plague. The *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits* shared news from Poland in the issue published on 12 June 1681, with the inclusion of a report originating in Hamburg on 6 June. Among the information stated, one could read that "a great disease fell into the country ravaging it greatly".<sup>13</sup>

In the issue published on 14 August 1681, the report from Hamburg dated on 8 August included a declaration from the German authorities in Frankfurt who denied entrance to their city for people and goods coming from the places which had been affected by the plague. The officials informed the readers that this decision has been approved by the emperor Leopold I, and that "the people and goods from the cities of the empire which [had] not been affected [had] the liberty to move and to trade in [their] land".<sup>14</sup>

Although there was a continuous flow of reports about the plague outbreak and the cities which had been affected, the information appearing in these reports lacked details. None of these reports, for instance, included the number of deaths due to the plague. On the contrary, the reports often commented that the plague had devastated the city or the land, without any other information whatsoever. Apart from the names of cities and places that had been affected, the gazettes presented the names of famous or important figures struck by this disease. This

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<sup>13</sup> BnF: G-4390: *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits, du Jeudi 12 Juin 1681.*

<sup>14</sup> BnF: G-4390: *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits, du Jeudi 14 August 1681.*

information was purposeful and targeted. Firstly, the readership of the gazettes constituted mainly of people who belonged in the middle and, especially the upper classes of society, to whom such an information was valuable. Moreover, the news of important figures contracting plague reinforced the arguments of state authorities for a restrictive policy, at least until the danger was over. The examples below clearly demonstrate this Huguenot approach.

The *Nouvelles solides et choisies* published news of the plague in its issue circulating on 8 March 1685. A report coming from Vienna informed the readers that the Bishop of the city had been affected by the plague and thus he could not attend a meeting with his colleague, the Bishop of Venice. This news alarmed Dutch officials. The gazette placed an announcement by the magistrates of the city of Amsterdam at the end of its issue. According to the announcement: "anyone who has any kind of fever should visit the doctors immediately". The editor of the gazette added at the end that "many other Dutch cities stated that they would provide to their citizens a free appointment to doctors for the same reason".<sup>15</sup>

In 1694, a huge outbreak of smallpox hit England. The infectious disease devastated the land until 1695 and one of its victims was Queen Mary II. The gazettes did not share much information about the epidemic, not until the news of the Queen's health became known. This was not something unusual, as news from the front was editors' priority. The War of the Great Alliance was at its peak at that time and the gazettes' reports were full of information about armies, fleets and royal decisions for the reinforcement of the states' treasurers. Thus, news about the smallpox outbreak in London appeared usually at the end of each London report. The first report in which the outbreak was mentioned appeared in the issue of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* on 1 April 1694. At the end of the London report dated on 23 March, the reader was informed that: "the Lord Mayor of the city of London was very sick from the smallpox, but he is feeling better now".<sup>16</sup>

In the next issue of the gazette published on 5 April 1694 it is similarly reported that the mayor of London survived from the smallpox and he returned to his duties. The admiral Killigrew, however, was not as lucky. In the same report from London covering the period 26-28 March, it is stated that: "the Admiral Killigrew... is now dead from the disease".<sup>17</sup> The gazettes did not update their readers about the course of the pandemic until 10 January 1695. The issue of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* published on that date included a report from London

<sup>15</sup> BnF: G-4390: *Nouvelles solides et choisies*, du Jeudi 8 Mars 1685.

<sup>16</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: XXVI. Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Jeudi 1 Avril 1694.

<sup>17</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: XXVII. Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Lundi 5 Avril 1694.

referring to the period from 28 to 31 December 1694. The report stated that: "Her Majesty, the Queen, was very ill and she vomited, and on Sunday red, small poxes appeared in her skin, alarming all the royal doctors. The King remains on her side since then, and the doctors provided her with lot of medicines".<sup>18</sup> The gazette published on 17 January 1695 delivered most unfortunate news. The London report dated on 7 January opens with the news about Queen's health:

The joy and relief that we share during the morning of Tuesday, as the health of our Queen had been better, did not last long. The night more poxes appeared in her skin, and the Queen bravely endured the intense pain. The doctors provided her with some new medicines, but her condition became more and more irreversible... The Queen died after eight days of disease, and the King, who was next to her all the time, is inconsolable.

The report continues by presenting both the assembly of the royal council and the Parliament, gathered not only to express their condolences for the loss of the Queen to the King, but also to deploy controlled measures against the pandemic. The report, however, mentions that any restriction would be difficult to be maintained, as "the city of London [was] full of soldiers and militia who [were] gathering [there] in order to fight in Ireland and in Europe".<sup>19</sup> These examples reveal the importance of health measures for the officials. All European states showed consistent effort in dealing with the outbreaks of diseases that impacted their regions. The control of the epidemic spread was of central importance as the mortality of the population could easily be augmented, causing severe problems to the state itself. Indeed, other than outbreaks of disease, the states dealt with war, food shortages, and the imminent issue of poverty. However, their approaches and related efforts were not always successful, and conflicts often arose.

New legislation and the passing of decrees were usually the first steps authorities took in order to control a disease outbreak. These notices were made public using various methods. In Italy, *comandatori* read decrees publicly and placed them in prominent places in the city, for instance on church doors or in front of a public building. In Amsterdam, heralds would also read these decrees in every important public space, like in the Dam or in the harbour, while the

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<sup>18</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: III. *Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Lundi 10 Janvier 1695.*

<sup>19</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: IV. *Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Lundi 17 Janvier 1695.*

same notices were affixed in the Bourse.<sup>20</sup> Most of these decrees focused on the restriction of the population who had already been affected. The *Gazette d' Amsterdam* published on 20 January 1695 presented not only the funeral of Queen Mary II, but also the decision of the Lord Mayor of the city of London on the restriction due to the pandemic. The mayor informed the King that it would be for the best of the realm if the Londoners remained indoors for some days, until the number of deaths decreased.<sup>21</sup> A similar process was repeated in London in the summer of 1625, when the plague struck the English capital. John Gore, Lord Mayor of London, issued instructions for the restriction of the disease; yet these measures proved ineffective.<sup>22</sup>

Gore described that "the houses infected [had] not been, nor yet [were] kept shut up", despite a "proclamation and many precepts and orders in that behalf made and taken, as well by the King's most excellent Majestie, as by [him] and [his] Brethen the Aldermen". Gore instructed Londoners to avoid leaving their homes, and not "to come into, or frequent any public assemblies".<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately for Gore and the Londoners, these attempts at disease control failed. Historian Paul Slack estimates that more than 26,000 people died in London, approximately 20% of the population.<sup>24</sup>

Other strategies formulated were quarantine and cordons sanitaires.<sup>25</sup> Cordons sanitaires were lines of military posts, or other barriers enclosing a community stricken by an infectious disease. The people living in that area could not move beyond those barriers, as the containment of the disease would be at risk. This measure was more commonly practiced in Southern Europe, but this does not mean that certain states in Northern Europe had not also adopted it.

The other method of disease control was quarantine. Quarantine encompassed several distinct policies and procedures, from the containment and observation of the people who were suspected of infection, along with their goods, to the isolation and treatment of the sick and to

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<sup>20</sup> Clé Lesger, *The Rise of the Amsterdam Market and Information Exchange. Merchants, Commercial Expansion and Change in the Spatial Economy of the Low Countries c. 1550-1630*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006, pp. 157-158, 214, 222, 225; Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice, Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: V. *Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Jeudi 20 Janvier 1695*.

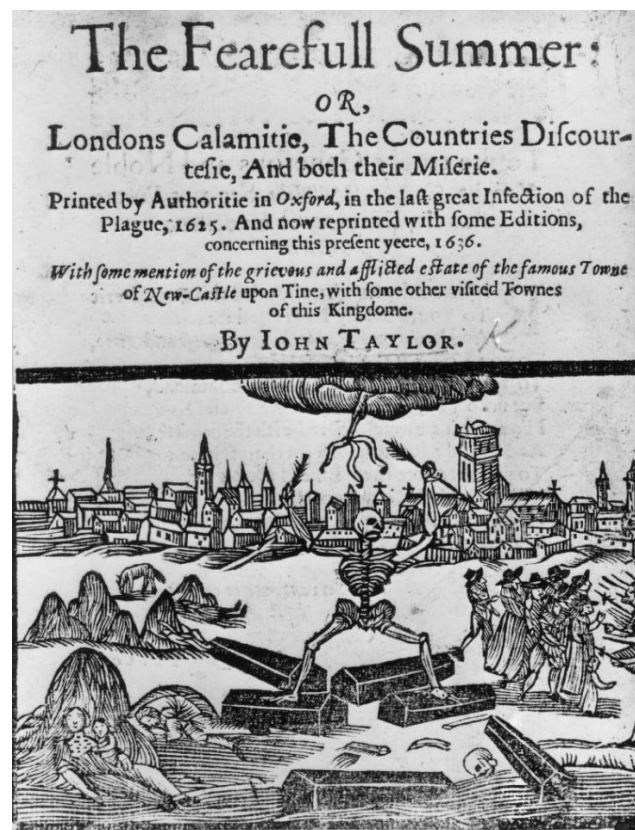
<sup>22</sup> Kirsty Rolfe, "It is No Time Now to Enquire of Forraine Occurrents': Plague, War, and Rumour in the Letters of Joseph Mead, 1625", in Joad Raymond & Noah Moxham (eds.), *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2016, pp. 570-571.

<sup>23</sup> John Goare, Mayor of London, *By the Mayor. Whereas the Infection of the Plague is Daily Dispersed more and more in Divers Parts of this city*, London 1625.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Slack, *The Impact of plague in Tudor and Stuart England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1985, pp. 7-17, 145-151.

<sup>25</sup> Alexandra Bamji, "Health passes, print and public health in early modern Europe", *Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 32 (2017), pp. 442-445; Valentin Groebner, *Who are you? Identification, Deception and Surveillance in early modern Europe*, Zone Books, New York 2007, pp. 171-184.

the gradually reintegration into the society of those who had recovered from the disease.<sup>26</sup> The Huguenot gazette *Mémoires* presents such an example of quarantine in its issue published on Thursday 15 August 1675. The London report dated on 9 August informed the readers that three merchant ships arrived from the East Indies in the Fort of Saint George on 5 August. The report gives detailed information about the cargo of the ships and, among other things, it stated that: "the crew will remain in the lodge named *Bengale* for several days, following the procedure. After that, the cargo will be transferred to Portsmouth".<sup>27</sup> [Illustration 1]



**Illustration 1:** Pamphlet against the restriction policies in London, Oxford, 1625. University of Michigan Library

Authorities did not only use restrictions; they realized the importance of health care and hospitals. Dutch innovations were extremely influential on this matter. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, two Dutch institutions would

<sup>26</sup> Brian Pullan, "The Counter-Reformation, medical care and poor relief", in Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham & Jon Arrizabalaga (eds.), *Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe*, Routledge, New York & London 1999, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> BnF: g-4275-4390 4278: *Mémoires Qui dévoient servir à la composition de la Gazette d'Amsterdam, du Jeudi 15 Aout 1675.*

emerge, the "tuchthuis" and the civil hospitals for the disabled and sick and poor. Those two institutions would soon expand in Northern Europe.<sup>28</sup>

The Dutch also invested in a more sophisticated civic health care system by reinforcing new medical doctrines and clinical methods that were taught in Dutch universities. The use of chemistry and physics in the production of medicines as well as the importance of hygiene were the first steps to a more reliable protection from diseases. This defense was reinforced by the new administrative and organizational mechanisms which had as a main objective the improvement of care and public hygiene. The system of regulating apothecaries, for instance, became famous not only in Dutch cities, but in foreign states as well.<sup>29</sup>

Another method which helped in the early stage of affection was the advertisement of doctors, apothecaries and any medicine available for the relief of the patients' symptoms or the treatment of the disease ailing them. This kind of advertisements were common in the Huguenot papers, and they were purposeful, aiming first and foremost to the promotion of medical care during a period when the battle against diseases was of utmost importance to most European societies. Nevertheless, gazetteers also accepted advertisements in their newspapers in order to gain more profit as they proved to be an important additional income. Advertisements stand witness to the development of a consumer society, projecting its needs and fears.<sup>30</sup> [Table 2]

**Table 2:** The percentage of the genre of the advertisements appearing in the Huguenot gazettes, 1677-1701<sup>1</sup>

<b>GENRE OF ADVERTISEMENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE IN TOTAL</b>
<b>BOOKS/ BOOKSELLERS/ BOOK AUCTIONS</b>	46%
<b>DOCTORS/ APOTHECARIES/ MEDICINES</b>	16%
<b>MERCHANTS</b>	15%
<b>LOTTERIES</b>	7%
<b>ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	6%
<b>MISSING PERSONS/ ANIMALS</b>	4%
<b>WANTED PERSONS</b>	4%
<b>TEACHERS/ SCHOOLS</b>	2%

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Israel, "Dutch influence on urban planning, health care and poor relief: The North Sea and Baltic regions of Europe, 1567-1720", in Ole Peter Grell & Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700*, Routledge, New York & London 1997, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> Israel, "Dutch influence on urban planning, health care and poor relief ", *ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur der Weduwen, "Booksellers, Newspaper Advertisements and a National Market for Print", in Shanti Graheli (ed.), *Buying and Selling: the business of books in early modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2019, p. 41.

1. Source: Panagiotis Georgakakis, *Delivering the News: The Huguenot gazettes published in the Dutch Republic, 1671-1701*, PhD Thesis, June 2022.

The advertisements that appeared in the Huguenot gazettes varied. The book industry dominated the advertising market of the period. Following these were medical advertisements. Doctors and apothecaries were extremely active in advertising their services. Doctor Leviez, a surgeon, placed twenty-eight advertisements in the *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*, the *Nouveau journal universel* and the *Nouvelles solides et choisies* from 1684 to 1690, while doctor Massard, a physician and iatrochemist, had placed twenty-one advertisements in the *Nouvelles solides et choisies* and the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* from 1693 to 1701.<sup>31</sup>

Most doctors and apothecaries had their businesses in Paris. This was pivotal to their advertising content, as Huguenot papers focused on the huge French market, where only one authorized gazette was in circulation, and not in the internal Dutch market where the profits were limited. From 1677 to 1701, the Huguenot gazetteers placed 289 advertisements for doctors, apothecaries, syrups and medicines, constituting the 36% of the total corpus of the advertisements appearing in the gazettes during the period 1671-1701.

The apothecary Le Baume advertised his medicines against headaches but also against the pain of the smallpox in his advertisement in the *Gazette d'Amsterdam*. The advertisement opens with the following sentences: "Le Baume, the apothecary who is famous in Rome about his medicines, left Rome and now lives in Paris. His medicines against headache and the pains of the smallpox will bring relieve to everybody...". The advertisement continues by giving to the public the apothecary's address.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the apothecaries and doctors advertised their stock of medicines which could be used for various diseases. Thus, doctor Massard advertised in the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* his new book about "the innocent and very effective cures against any kind of diseases". The doctor

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<sup>31</sup> The available information about those doctors is limited. Even though the advertisements were extremely detailed about the doctors' work and the medical treatments they provided, personal details were hardly mentioned. The only exception was Jacques Massard, who wrote and published a serial work of apocalyptic interpretation entitled *L'Harmonie des Prophéties anciennes avec les modernes*. Massard was a Huguenot, who found sanctuary, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in Amsterdam where he was active as a doctor and a writer. Kristine Wirts & Leslie Tuttle, "Jacques Massard: Prophecy and the Harmony of Knowledge", in Lionel Laborie & Ariel Hessayon (eds.), *Early Modern Prophecies in Transnational, National and Regional Contexts*, vol. 324/23, Brill, Leiden 2020, pp. 84-132.

<sup>32</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: LXXII. Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Jeudi 14 Octobre 1694.

did not ask for any payment until the patient had recovered.<sup>33</sup> Doctor Leviez advertised his medicines in several issues of the *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*. The advertisement stated that "the doctor Leviez [had] created medicines for all the diseases which [were] considered as incurable". Among these diseases were cancers, epilepsy, stroke, secret diseases and smallpox.<sup>34</sup> The apothecary Vallesond in Paris insisted that he possessed a medicine for all the pains, for which the cost ranged from two to four écus.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, a most interesting advertisement was placed in the *Histoire journalière de ce qui se passe de plus considérable en Europe*, and specifically on its issue published on 7 November 1697, that delivers important medical news. The Diocese in Frejus in Paris discovered a new medicine which was effective against fever, pleurisy, smallpox and towards other secret diseases as well. The advertisement continued by informing the potential clients that the medicine can be provided only with a doctor's prescription. Moreover, for patients over fifty years of age, the medicine could be provided as a powder in their soup. It was the only advertisement that did not come from a doctor or an apothecary and, still, it provided a very detailed report about the duration of the recovery, from fifteen days to three weeks, and it was the only medicine that one could obtain only on prescription.<sup>36</sup>

Another interesting advertisement was placed at the end of the Paris report in the issue of the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* on Monday 10 August 1699. Readers were informed about Du Pont, a merchant in Dunkirk who had cancer in his ear for several years. The cancer had been growing all over his ear and "finally, Du Pont resolved to have an operation performed by the major surgeon of the Prince from the Regiment of Picardy, in the presence of monsieur Barberoux and monsieur Berdal, the principal doctors of the city, and the surgeons Casot and Hervin". The advertisement presented the method that the doctors followed, resulting in "the tumour [being] removed from the ear successfully". Although this advertisement has hardly anything to do with contagious diseases, it is another example which highlights the existence of a health network that transcended the states' borders. It is apparent that, through the advertisements, the suppliers and sellers of these cures were looking for customers from all over the country. They sometimes advertised a tour, during which they would present

<sup>33</sup> GEN: CD 39 RES: II. Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Jeudi 7 Janvier 1694.

<sup>34</sup> GEN: A11096: *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*, du Jeudi 12 June 1687; *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*, du Mardi 17 June 1687; BL: PENN.NT359/BnF: G-4275-4390 4279: *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*, du Jeudi 6 Juillet 1684; *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits*, du Mardi 2 Mai 1684.

<sup>35</sup> MAZ: 16300: *Le Mercure Universel*, du Jeudi 14 June 1691.

<sup>36</sup> BnF: G-4465: ANNO 1697. No. 89. *Histoire journalière de ce qui se passe de plus considérable en Europe*. Avec privilège de Nos-Seigneurs les États de Hollande & West-Frise, du Jeudi 7 Novembre 1697.



themselves to patients in different cities. The fact that all the cities mentioned in the itinerary of such tours were renowned for their Calvinist ties reinforces the argument that the Huguenot newspapers circulated principally in French cities with a strong Huguenot tradition.<sup>37</sup>

Most of these advertisements came from foreign states, especially France; an observation that correlates with the fact that the Huguenot newspapers were targeting an international, and specifically a French, readership. Corresponding conclusions can be drawn from comparing the corpus of advertisements appearing in Huguenot gazettes with the corpus of the advertisements appearing in Dutch newspapers during the same period. The Dutch newsmen welcomed advertisements mostly from local merchants and booksellers, with the advertisements of luxury goods becoming gradually more commonplace. There were also advertisements for doctors, apothecaries and medicines, but their appearance was limited.<sup>38</sup>

Dutch newspapers targeted an internal readership, since they already had an established presence in their homeland, and thus, merchants were striving to advertise their products and services through them as the assemblage of more customers was guaranteed. On the other hand, the Huguenot editors and publishers did not have such an established network. Therefore, it was an easier choice for the Huguenots gazetteers and newsmen to create and expand their advertising network in the huge French market, where the internal competition hardly existed as the one and only French newspaper, the *Paris Gazette*, did not attempt to include advertisements in its issues. In fact, since the Huguenots had apparently upheld social and professional connections to their motherland, their expansion to the French advertising market was rendered less challenging. Therefore, the Huguenots and the Dutch gazetteers simply followed the needs of the market they targeted.

Studying closely the medical advertisements appearing in the Huguenot and Dutch newspapers, we can observe other differences as well. Almost all the medical advertisements appearing in the Dutch newspapers came from surgeons, oculists and apothecaries who were selling products other than medicinal relief and treatment of a disease. On the contrary, similar advertisements were less common in the Huguenot gazettes, while the advertising of doctors' services and of medicinal treatments was hosted more frequently. These examples highlight the diverse needs and medical tendencies of the Dutch and French society.

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<sup>37</sup> BnF: LXIV. *Avec Privilège de Nos-Seigneurs Les États de Hollande & de West-Frise, du Lundi 10 Aout 1699.*

<sup>38</sup> Arthur der Weduwen, "From Piety to Profit: The Development of Newspaper Advertising in the Dutch Golden Age", in Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, Paul Goring & Christine Watson (eds.), *Travelling Chronicles: News and Newspapers from the Early Modern Period to the Eighteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden 2018, pp. 233-253.

As Jonathan Israel argues in his article, the Dutch innovations in urban planning and in medical care systems during the second half of the seventeenth century resulted in the decrease in communicable disease infections. A fact that prompted their promotion and their increased popularity in other states as well.<sup>39</sup>

That was not the case with France. Paris was a highly urbanized area with a plethora of poor, haggard and often diseased people and the situation in most other French cities seemed to be similar to the Parisian example as the infrastructure had not been ameliorated since the Middle Ages. Thus, communicable diseases were common phenomena in the French state, filling the hearts of people with disquiet and despair.

In a way, some medical advertisements acted as a counterweight to such sentiments. For example, the medical advertisement placed in the *Recueil des Nouvelles* on 21 May 1693 stated that "the royal doctor Tyer de Monroche was instructed by the King to find the cure in several new diseases".<sup>40</sup> This advertisement can be deemed a message that the French King was aware of the fears of his subjects, and he took appropriate action by instructing one of his best doctors to find effective cures to different diseases for the people of his realm. It was a political statement. The King would do anything necessary for his people. It is important to mention that the above advertisement was placed in a Huguenot gazette while the War of the Great Alliance (1688-1697) was at its peak, and the King was seeking internal stability for the continuation of this war. The advertisement in the introduction to my article was also a political statement. The King showed his superiority by providing the services of his best doctors for people's relief, even if the land they inhabited was not part of his territories and they were not his subjects, yet.

There were also many advertisements about doctors, French among them, who visited foreign cities providing treatments to people. These advertisements, however, were different from the one the *Nouvelles solides et choisies* placed in its issue. The Ras, father and son, whose advertisement was mentioned in the beginning of my article, were both royal doctors, meaning that in order to visit a foreign state they had to obtain the approval of the French King. It seems unlikely that two royal doctors visited the capital of a state which was at war with France two years prior without the consent of the King. Indeed, the expansion plans of King Louis XIV had already been in motion and the lack of a solid central government in the Spanish Netherlands gave him the opportunity to present himself, especially to the Francophone

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<sup>39</sup> Israel, "Dutch influence on urban planning, health care and poor relief", *ibid.*, pp. 64-81.

<sup>40</sup> BnF: G-4275-4390: *Recueil des Nouvelles, du Jeudi 21 Mai 1693*.

population, as the King who could provide safety and health care. Simultaneously, the War of the Reunions (1683-1684), which was the prelude of the War of the Great Alliance, created a significant pressure on the magistrates of Brussels who had to deal with an increasing number of refugees in their city and the problems that followed them. As it appears, health care was considered a priority for people during the last decades of the seventeenth century.

## **Conclusions**

The fear of plague and other diseases was overwhelming in Europe during the seventeenth century. Although there was a decrease in the number of the disease outbreaks during the second half of the century thanks to the medical innovations and the measures taken by the authorities, people continued to become distressed, even despaired, when news about the emergence of another outbreak circulated.

Gazettes played their own role in this battle against diseases. The Huguenot gazettes published in the Dutch Republic had the advantage of establishing their news networks in every place where a Huguenot diaspora existed. Thus, they presented up-to-date news from almost all the major European cities. This was also the case with the outbreaks of diseases, as information regarding their management was circulated in order to notify people in other states. Declarations from the authorities on the health conditions in the places that were struck by the plague became known far and wide to people, from England to Warsaw and from Stockholm to Madrid. Thus, the European states took precautions towards the people and goods coming from the infectious areas, thanks to the reports appearing in the gazettes.

Moreover, the increasing need for doctors, apothecaries and medicines also found its way into the gazettes. The Huguenot diaspora and the people in France were the main readers of the Huguenot gazettes; and that readership eagerly searched for medical help. The medical advertisements also revealed a political game between the states; whoever, state or ruler, managed to provide health care and relief from these diseases, would hold himself with prestige above his opponents. Health care had the same impact as the victories on the battlefields.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ

BL: British Library

BnF: Bibliothèque nationale de France

GEN: Bibliothèque Saint Geneviève

MAZ: Bibliothèque Mazarine

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