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Was Waltho Van Claturbank’s Speech Ever Spoken?  
The Fashion of London Quacks’ Speeches Between the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth Centuries

Resumo
Na segunda metade do século XVII, a vida social em Londres caracterizava-se pela forte presença de charlatães que se tornaram, gradualmente, um verdadeiro fenómeno social. Este fenómeno foi frequentemente objecto dos ataques dos médicos do Royal College of Physicians e também da crítica de inúmeros escritores satíricos. O presente artigo estuda um discurso particular atribuído a um charlatão que se autodefine como “High German Doctor”, conforme as várias aparições que fez e que estão documentadas em folhas estampadas e em muitas colectâneas de arengas de charlatães, à luz de uma fonte até agora ainda não identificada. Este discurso, paródia das palavras de um charlatão incluídas num panfleto satírico anónimo imprimido em 1676, é originariamente descrito como um exemplo do falar enganador dos charlatães. O facto de esta paródia ter sido reescrita e expandida no final do século XVII, e o facto de a nova versão ter sido muitas vezes reimpressa posteriormente e acompanhada de diferentes ilustrações, atesta que, não só a sociedade inglesa acolhia favoravelmente tais produtos satíricos, como também confirma a constante presença de charlatães no século XVIII.

Palavras-chave: charlatães, médicos, sátira.

Abstract
In the second half of the seventeenth century, irregular practitioners of medicine were a common feature of London life, and became a social phenomenon attacked not only by Royal College physicians, but also by satirists in their pamphlets. This article studies a particular speech attributed to a self-proclaimed “High German Doctor” which appeared in various and sundry broadsides and collections of quacks’ harangues, in the light of an until now unacknowledged source. The latter, a parody of a quack’s speech embedded in an anonymous satirical pamphlet printed in 1676, is originally presented as a
specimen of quacks’ deceitful discourse. The fact that this parody was rewritten and expanded towards the end of the century, and that the new version was later reprinted several times and with different illustrations, testifies not only to English society’s favourable reception of this sort of satirical products, but also to the continuity of quacks’ activities throughout the eighteenth century.

**Keywords**: practitioners of medicine, physicians, satire.

### A Labyrinth of Dates and Data

If one looks up «Waltho van Claturbank» in the British Library Catalogue, one soon finds that it is the name of somebody who wrote (?) an eighteenth-century broadside entitled «Pharmacopola Circumforaneus, or the Horse Doctor’s Harangue to the Credulous Mob», only that Claturbank is a pseudonym, and no real person seems to correspond to it. The first question arises, then, about the identity of this individual. Actually the name is mentioned for the first time as the speaker of a harangue with the above mentioned title in the collection *Harangues or Speeches of Famous Mountebanks in Town and Country*, a booklet of 64 pages plus a dedicatory letter assembled by an otherwise anonymous D.G., and printed in London at the beginning of the eighteenth century (its shelfmark in the British Library is 1038.g.46). In D.G.’s work, a possible date of which might be around 1700 but also 1725, the «Pharmacopola …», occupies pages 13-19. The uncertainty about the publication date is analogous to everything concerning Waltho’s speech and is the keynote of its subsequent editions. Indeed, almost certainly for its strong satirical content, this speech was often reproduced in broadsides (these, too, of uncertain date) and in the various reprints of D.G’s collection.

The British Library also possesses another edition of the booklet (again with no date; shelfmark: 12330.k.121), which constitutes a totally peculiar object, it consisting of the original text interspersed with images and ephemera deriving from sundry sources. Most of the latter are quacks’ handbills and newspaper cuttings advertising proprietary medicines, some are engravings of social scenes focusing on quacks’ activity, some are broadsides. One of these is a two-column print entitled

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1 Christopher Merret, in *The Accomplisht Physician, the Honest Apothecary, and the Skilful Chyrurgeon* (London, s.n., 1670), translates «pharmacopola» into «seller of prepared Medicines» (p. 40). The whole phrase «pharmacopola circumforaneus» is used by Cicero for a charlatan selling medicines in a square.