Sins of the Flesh

Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe

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Joseph Grünpeck’s Astrological Explanation of the French Disease

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Responses to the French Disease varied widely, depending on social status, education, profession, and political commitments.¹ Physicians tried to incorporate the new sickness into existing categories in an effort to naturalize and control it. Empirics saw in it the opportunity to extend their own authority by encroaching on territory normally held by learned doctors. Religious and political reformers seized the opportunity to call for social and religious reform. Each group made sense of the French Disease in light of its own intellectual commitments and goals, and each offered a different interpretation of what was really occurring. For Joseph Grünpeck, who produced the first German tract on the pox, the advent of the French Disease was both terrifying and promising. He was more of a political propagandist than a physician, so his works on the French Disease were more than mere medical tracts. Combining his training in medicine and astrology with his search for a powerful patron, Grünpeck interpreted the advent and spread of the pox in political and social terms and incorporated it into his own career ambitions.

Joseph Grünpeck’s early career was unremarkable. In 1487 he was admitted as a pauper to the University of Ingolstadt, where he studied rhetoric with Conrad Celtis and medicine with Wolfgang Peyser.² After obtaining his M.A. in 1491, he joined his many countrymen who went to Pavia to study medicine.³ When his friend and traveling companion Bernard von Waldkirch was appointed canon of the cathedral in Augsburg, in

¹The best recent study of these responses is Arrizabalaga, Henderson and French, The Great Pox. See also French and Arrizabalaga, ‘Coping with the French Disease,’ pp. 248–287.


³On the German preference for the University of Pavia, see Grendler, The Universities of the Italian Renaissance, pp. 82–93.
the summer of 1494, Grünepeck left Pavia and relocated to the University of Krakow to combine his study of medicine with astrology. Because it was the only university in Central Europe at that time to have chairs in both astrology and medicine, Krakow attracted many students who hoped to become court physicians and advisors at one of the many local and regional courts. Grünepeck remained in Krakow only a short time before returning to Ingolstadt in early 1495, where he began tutoring to students at the University of Ingolstadt in Latin rhetoric.

When the plague broke out in Ingolstadt that summer, Grünepeck was already convinced that he deserved a position at the imperial court. Accordingly, he fled Ingolstadt and returned to Italy, where he hoped to meet Emperor Maximilian I, who was leading the imperial troops back onto the peninsula in an effort to expel the French. However, when he encountered the imperial troops in Tuscany, he did not find the emperor but the French Disease raging through the army. Like his contemporaries, Grünepeck was terrified of this new epidemic that he could neither understand nor explain. Rather than remain in Italy, Grünepeck returned to Augsburg, resumed his job as Latin tutor to the now exiled Ingolstadt students, and redoubled his efforts to find a rich patron. In early 1496, Grünepeck capitalized on the emperor's visits to Augsburg in April, May, and June to cultivate his relationships with influential members of Maximilian's court, including his friend Waldkirch and the humanists Conrad Celtis and Conrad Peutinger. Grünepeck was, no doubt, hoping for the opportunity to secure a career in the imperial bureaucracy. In the autumn of 1496, Grünepeck produced two works on the advent and spread of the French Disease and used them to create the opportunity that he needed finally to attract the attention of Emperor Maximilian I.

**MAXIMILIAN'S 'BLASPHEMY EDICT'**

The appearance of the French Disease among the imperial troops and its continued spread into Austria and southern Germany was the source of great concern for Maximilian I. On the one hand, he took an immediate and pragmatic interest in the pest that was decimating his army in Italy and threatening to unravel his plans to expel the French from the peninsula. On the other hand, and more importantly, Maximilian saw the French Disease as a symbolic threat to his larger political ambitions, a threat that required immediate and official attention.

Maximilian became the *de facto* Holy Roman Emperor upon the death of his father, Frederick III, in 1493. His claim to the title, however, did not go unchallenged, and he had to struggle constantly to reassert his authority. Indeed, his massive propaganda campaigns were intended to legitimate his position as emperor. A key component in these efforts was Maximilian's attempt to portray himself as the prophetic, universal emperor who would reform the church, unite Europe, expel the Ottoman threat, and lead a crusade to retake the Holy Land. Maximilian's conviction that he was the prophetic emperor was shared by many imperial propagandists. As early as 1488, Johannes Lichtenberger had predicted that Maximilian would lead a unified Christian army against the infidels, vanquish the Ottoman threat, and usher in a Golden Age before handing the imperial insignia back to God in Jerusalem. As suggested by Lichtenberger's prediction, Maximilian was thought to enjoy a particularly close relationship with God that required him to surpass all his predecessors as well as his contemporaries in honour and piety and to defend the Christian faith. Indeed, the guiding model for Maximilian's life was that of the pious knight, a model that he drew from the courtly romances and Arthurian legends he avidly collected and read.

At the end of the fifteenth century, with the Turkish armies on Europe's eastern borders and deep divisions between the emperor and his allies as well as his enemies, this image of the ideal knight and prophetic emperor became a powerful vehicle of imperial propaganda. Consequently, Maximilian could not allow the advent of the French Disease – which he, like most people, believed to have been sent from God as a punishment for human sin – to escape notice.

At the imperial Diet in Worms in 1495, Maximilian focused on imperial reform, addressing social and political issues in most of his edicts. On 7 August, in the closing session of the Reichstag, he addressed the problem of the French Disease in his edict against blasphemy, published almost immediately in both Latin and German and circulated widely throughout the

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5 Dieppeche, Kaiser Maximilian I. als politischer Publizist.

6 The best introduction to the tradition of the last emperor is Reeves, The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. See also the discussion in Tanner, The Last Descendant of Aeneas.

7 Lichtenberger, Prognosticatio Ioannis Lichtenbergii. The other popular prophecy in the late fifteenth century, the pseudo–Methodian prophecies, also looked to Maximilian as the prophetic emperor. See Opusculum divinarum revelationum sancti Methodii.


When he produced his tracts on the French Disease, Grünecker captured the spirit of Maximilian’s ‘Blasphemy Edict.’ His Latin *Tractatus de pestilentia sorra sive mala franzos* appeared in mid-November, followed a couple of weeks later by the German version, *Ein hübscher Tractat von dem Ursprung des bösen Franzos.* These two booklets explain the advent, spread, and symptoms of the French Disease within an astrological framework, and both served Grünecker’s political goals as much as they offered a medical account of the disease. Both their similarities and differences reflect the contours of Grünecker’s larger political and social project.

**GRÜNECKER’S ASTROLOGICAL EXPLANATION**

Like all his contemporaries, Grünecker was baffled and frightened by the French Disease and admitted that standard medicine had trouble explaining its appearance. Although Grünecker claimed that physicians’ inability to account for the pox was one of the primary reasons for publishing his texts, he could nevertheless draw on a number of tools and models when composing his tracts. In response to the frequent plague outbreaks the plague tractate, or plague concilia, had developed by the late fifteenth century into a popular genre of medical writing: Plague concilia shared common characteristics and explanatory categories. Physically, they were short, rarely more than a handful of pages, and printed in a small format, often in Latin and the vernacular. This helped keep costs low for both printer and consumer and ensured a wide reading public. Their content included explanations of the source and causes of the plague, usually a mixture of natural, astrological, and supernatural causality. Plague concilia concluded with advice on how to avoid the disease and dietary regimens for maintaining and recovering health. The most famous of these concilia was written by the renowned Italian physician Gentile da Foligno, but this was just one of many such works circulating throughout Europe in the late fifteenth century. When Grünecker wrote his works, he adopted both the format and the content of the plague concilia to fit the French Disease.

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10 The text of the edict is found in a number places. I have used the copy in *Deutsche Reichsstatuten unter Maximilian I*, pp. 575–577. A Latin version is available in Fuchsin, *Die ältesten Schrifftsteller*, pp. 305–306. There is some question to the actual date of composition. Hans Haustein suggested that it was written in 1497 and predated to 1495. Paul A. Russell originally accepted this dating, but then seemed to reject it a few years later. Cunningham and Grell echo Russell’s claim. The Reichsstatuten and Herrmann Wiesflecker have adopted 1495 as the date of composition. Along with French and Arrizabalaga, I accept the earlier date as more likely. See Haustein, *Die Ehrengeschichte der Syphilis*, pp. 300–301; Russell, *Syphilis, God’s Scourge or Nature’s Vengeance?*, p. 290; Russell, ‘Astrology as Popular Propaganda,’ p. 173; Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, pp. 253, 342 note 12; French and Arrizabalaga, ‘Coping with the French Disease,’ p. 249.

11 Escatological fears were widespread in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Europe. See, for example, Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, chaps. 4 and 5.


13 neinlich wo solich aus bewegter hitz des zorns, aus trunkenheit oder dergleichen zufall unbedacht beschehe, umb 1 mark lötigs goldes, ... in der gebiete solich mißhandlung getan wurdet.’ Maximilian, *Deutsche Reichsstatuten*, p. 577.

14 At the same time, Maximilian was struggling to bring about a variety of tax reforms that would have relied on a similar structure of collection and payment. Wiesflecker, *Kaiser Maximilian I*, pp. 189–190, 223.

15 Russell claims that the German tract preceded the Latin. The internal dates suggest the opposite order, which I have accepted here. See Russell, *Syphilis, God’s Scourge or Nature’s Vengeance?*, pp. 290–291.


17 Russell likens Grünecker’s work to Gentile’s. While this is true, it undervalues the importance of the entire genre of writing represented by the plague tracts. Russell, ‘God’s Scourge or Nature’s Vengeance,’ pp. 290–291. On Gentile, see the recent work: French, *Canonical Medicine.*
Grünecke distinguished two causes for the French Disease, a first cause or source and a secondary or physical cause. He had no doubt that the first cause or source of this new plague was the will of God. As everybody knew, during times of increased blasphemy and sinning, God sent down a series of punishments. In particular, he punished the sins of pride, greed, and lust with pestilences, bloodshed, and famine. As Grünecke reminded his reader, this was well attested in the Holy Scriptures. It should come as no surprise then, Grünecke claimed, that God had sent the French Disease now, when these and worse sins are common amongst people:

Hence all those torments, which lay hidden in former ages, are now frightfully on the increase. Therefore it is clear that these ills are sent down by the will of God to terrify men. For such reasons this filth, which they call the French Disease, clearly emanates from divine vengeance.

The echoes of Maximilian’s ‘Blasphemy Edict’ were not accidental. In Grünecke’s explanation, just as in Maximilian’s, God’s will was the source of this horrible illness.

At the same time, he needed to explain the secondary or physical cause of the French Disease. Sensing no tension in his account, Grünecke explained to his reader how the motions of the planets, especially planetary conjunctions, caused all manner of physical change on earth. Although he points to Aristotle as his authority for this position, he also borrows from the Arab astrologers Alboinmsar and Messaha when he claims that ‘the death of races, which have passed away, and the desolation of kingdoms are due to the conjunctions of two stars, Saturn and Jupiter.’

all plagues shared a divine first cause and an astrological secondary or physical cause; the French Disease was no exception. Although a proper account had to incorporate both, Grünecke concentrated on the astrological causation.

Central to Grünecke’s idea of astrological causation was the theory of great conjunctions, which had been developed most fully by the Arab astrologers Alboinmsar and Messaha. According to this theory, conjunctions of the outer planets, especially Jupiter and Saturn, correlated with significant and wide-scale changes on earth. Alboinmsar had distinguished three types of conjunctions based on their frequency – conjunctio magna, conjunctio major, and conjunctio maxima. Following the first conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign of Aries, minor conjunctions occurred every twenty years as the two planets came together in the different the signs of the first triplicity – a trio of zodiacal signs related by the primary quality they were thought to share, either fire, air, water, or earth. In sixty years, the planets again met in Aries, producing a conjunctio magna. The fourth such conjunction, 240 years after the initial one, shifts out of the first triplicity, and Jupiter and Saturn meet in the first sign of a new triplicity. This conjunction was called a conjunctio major. Saturn and Jupiter repeat this through the four triplicities until finally, after 960 years, the two planets come together once again in the original sign of Aries. This was a conjunctio maxima. With its convenient periods of 60, 240, and 960 years, the theory of great conjunctions became a common tool for understanding history in the medieval and Renaissance periods. By the time Grünecke was writing, it had become a set piece in the popular plague tracts, and Grünecke simply adapted it to fit his contemporary situation.

However, in order to employ the theory of great conjunctions, Grünecke had to establish two important conditions. First, he had to

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19 Unde hic etiam, quod superioribus etibus laterunt, plage horribilissime ingruit, quare haud clam est, nec flagitia e defixa volant in terram ad terrorum hominem demittit, quam ob rem etiam eccelli, quom malum de Franzos vocant: ex superna vindicta demergi par videri potest. Grünecke, Tractatus, sign. A7.
20 On the necessary religious aspect of the French Disease, see French and Arrizalaga, ‘Coping with the French Disease,’ pp. 249–250.
21 For a lucid discussion of how the plague could be seen both as a punishment from God and a product of natural causes, see Eser, ‘Die Pest—Strafe Gottes oder Naturphänomen?’, pp. 32–57. Eser, however, mischaracterizes Grünecke’s tracts as about the plague: ‘Der Traktat handelt nicht, wie der Titel vermuten ließe, nur von der Franzosenkrankheit (Syphilis), sondern auch von der Pest.’ Eser, ‘Die Pest’, p. 39.
22 Alboinmsar’s text is available in a modern edition and translation, see Alboinmsar, Liber introductionis nasiors ad scientiam judiciae a mensa, Alboinmsar, Abu Ma’Sa’ar, The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology. For a detailed analysis of how this could be used as a tool for understanding history, see Smoller, History, Prophesy and the Stars, and Veenstra, Magic and Divination at the Courts of Burgundy and France, chap. 4.
determine the horoscope for the earth, or the configuration of the heavens at the moment of its creation. From this he could then calculate when the first Saturn-Jupiter conjunction had occurred in Aries. Second, he needed to establish the age of the earth, which would enable him to calculate the number of years that had elapsed from that first conjunction until the present. Only then could he use this theory to account for the most important feature of the French Disease—its appearance.

There was a long tradition of trying to establish the horoscope for creation, the *thesma mundi*, stretching back at least to the fourth century. Julius Firmicus Maternus used the astrological assumption that a planet’s exaltation—the portion of the zodiac in which the planet was considered particularly efficacious—corresponded to its location in the zodiac at the moment of creation. Maternus and those who followed his example placed Aries at the important medium solstitial and the sun in Leo. Opposed to this was the Christian tradition that placed the sun near the beginning of Aries, the vernal equinox, so that the Creation, Annunciation, and Crucifixion could occur on the same day. An important variation from these two traditions arose out of the writings of Pierre d’Ailly. Basing his work on Alburnus, he combined the Christian and Arab traditions and ultimately arrived at a unique *thesma mundi*, which he published in his *Concordantia astronomicum cum theologia*. Grünepeck was probably familiar with much of this tradition. Because he was not a first-rate astrologer or mathematician, he preferred to borrow from it rather than calculate his own *thesma mundi*. Without bothering to acknowledge it, he used d’Ailly’s *Concordantia* as the source of his own horoscope for Creation. Grünepeck apparently did not read the text very carefully, relying instead on the illustrations in d’Ailly’s book. Grünepeck’s horoscope for Creation and his explanatory text both reproduced the two errors from d’Ailly’s illustration. Nevertheless, he used this erroneous horoscope as the point from which to calculate the first great conjunction and all subsequent conjunctions.

Grünepeck now needed to establish the age of the earth. Here again he relied heavily on d’Ailly’s work. Throughout the medieval period, St. Augustine was clearly the most authoritative Christian source on the age of the earth. Building on an analogy to the six days of creation, he had divided history into six ages, delimited by significant historical events. In the fifteenth century, this framework for understanding history acquired increased significance, particularly after d’Ailly used these divisions to warn that the Day of Judgment threatened if the Church did not mend the Great Schism. At the end of the century, as millennial fears increased, Augustine’s model of history had lost none of its impact. Grünepeck recognized this fact when he adapted d’Ailly’s presentation for his own contemporary situation. Indeed, Grünepeck’s account of the history of the earth apes d’Ailly’s in every detail.

The key problem in calculating the age of the earth, Grünepeck claimed, was to determine the length of the first era, from the creation to the Flood. Despite disagreement amongst the most important chroniclers, Grünepeck assures his reader that they all affirm that 2,242 years elapsed between the moment of creation and the Flood. Grünepeck offered no explanation for this value and perhaps did not understand how d’Ailly had calculated it. For his own purposes, d’Ailly’s calculations were best ignored, and he quickly moved on, filling in the remainder of his chronology: Flood to Abraham, 942 years; Abraham to Kind David, 940 years; King David to expulsion from Babylon, 485 years; Expulsion from Babylon to Christ, 590 years. He apparently did not notice or, more likely, did not care that these values did not equal the accepted duration for the period from the Flood to Christ—3,101 years and 10 months, a value both he and d’Ailly had quoted from the Alphonsine Tables. It is characteristic that neither this discrepancy nor the other details of his explanation troubled Grünepeck, as he was more concerned with establishing the proper astrological model for his explanation and feigning authority and knowledge than with the minutia of his account. Indeed, he could confidently expect to impress his readers with this show of erudition and technical expertise because most of them would not have recognized his borrowings from d’Ailly, whose *Concordantia astrologicum cum theologia* was a daunting and expensive text that had only recently been printed.

Grünepeck’s façade of expertise ran into its first problem when he hinted at the correlation between *conjunctiones magicae* and significant historical events. He listed the seven *conjunctiones maxima* that had occurred in history, from 320 years after the creation of the earth to the most recent, 735 years after the birth of Christ. His assertion that these conjunctions had signaled

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disasters, plagues, and the downfall of kingdoms rang hollow, as he was unable to point to any such correlations. Once again undaunted by this hurdle, he simply shifted the burden of proof from the *conjunctiones maxima* to the more frequent *conjunctiones magna* and *conjunctiones majores*:

Although the general changes and the great miracles always come during the *conjunctiones maxima*, and have always done so, as one finds in all histories filling the chronicles that have been written from beginning of the world up to this time, still stranger things have always happened during the times of *conjunctiones magna* of the two planets Saturn and Jupiter.  

This argument was essential for he wanted to trace the advent of the French Disease to the most recent Saturn-Jupiter conjunction, a *conjunctio major* that had occurred in the evening of 25 November 1484.

This was a clear attempt to overcome the difficulty posed by the more than seven centuries between the last *conjunction maxima* and the advent of the pox. However, even the most recent *conjunctio major* had occurred ten years prior to the initial outbreak of the pox, and as Grünpeck had reminded his reader, *conjunctiones majores* portended changes in kingdoms and increased power and riches for the nobles. This left him wanting a convenient explanation for natural disasters and the advent of plagues, preferably one that would help him bridge the ten-year gap. For this he relied on two further forms of astrological causation. First, Saturn-Mars conjunctions, which occurred every 30 years, signaled both famine and war. Finally, again borrowing from Albumasar, Grünpeck pointed to the theory of ten revolutions of Saturn. Together, these different types of celestial causation all played a role in Grünpeck's account of the advent and spread of the pox, an account that was much more sophisticated and nuanced than that which simply referred to the theory of great conjunctions.

The bulk of Grünpeck's work was consumed in laying out his theory; proving its validity required only that Grünpeck fill in the historical events, which he did in meticulous detail on a single page. The primary cause of the French Disease was a series of planetary conjunctions. The first of these was the *conjunctio major* at 6:04 PM on 25 November 1484, when Saturn and Jupiter had met at 23°43' of Scorpio, a sign ruled by Mars. The solar eclipse that followed on 25 March 1485 was the second conjunction, whose effects were made worse by its proximity to the *conjunctio major*. Finally, Saturn and Mars came together at 9° of Scorpio on 30 November 1485. Like the eclipse, this conjunction was under the malevolent influence of the preceding *conjunctio major*. These phenomena had a cumulative effect and indicated a period of increasingly dire catastrophes, including plagues, famines, war, and natural disasters. Grünpeck reminds his reader that this is exactly what had come to pass: Germany had been suffering from droughts and famines since the middle of the previous decade; war between the Empire and Charles VIII of France was raging in Italy; the plague had become endemic in many southern German cities, breaking out each summer; and a number of earthquakes had occurred in the early 1490s. Worst of all, 'in addition to all this there came the cruel and unheard of, and unseen sickness, the French Disease, which also the aforementioned conjunction has brought here from France into Italy, and after that into Germany.' On this account, the pox was the culmination of dire consequences springing from the series of conjunctions in the mid-1480s.

Grünpeck still had to confront the decade-long gap between this series of conjunctions and the advent of the pox. He recognized that this was the weakest part of his argument and attempted to reinforce it at every turn. At this point, he introduced the ten revolutions of Saturn precisely to address the gap between the conjunctions and the advent of the pox. Like the theory of great conjunctions, the ten revolutions of Saturn was an Arab contribution to Western astrology. According to this theory, every tenth revolution of Saturn was correlated to significant changes on earth, including the advent of pestilences and death. This gave a period of roughly 300 years and for the spread and symptoms of the disease. See, for example, the works in Fuchs, *Die ältesten Schriftsteller*, and Sphhoff, *Zehn Syphilis-Drucke*.

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33 Again he borrowed this list from d’Ailly. Owing to the errors he imported from d’Ailly in his *Thesma mundi*, Grünpeck could not have calculated these values.


39 Es sind auch über dises mer zeiht unbließe Saturni Von wolchen do sagt Albumasar. die all haben gar ein grosse bedümm in der verwandlung der reyhe und der gesez. auch anderer grossenwürkung nach der leere der grossen Sterntheer wölchen dingen.
another way of dividing history. In his most detailed list yet, which he again 
lifted from d’Ailly, Grünpeck correlated every tenth revolution of Saturn 
with some important historical event from the time of Alexander the Great 
to the most recent in 1489. This last one was followed by 
numerous great evils, at first the great famine, which lasted for a full seven 
years and has not finished yet. After that the cruel pestilence, which also 
still rages, and the great war with the King of France. Beyond these ills, 
there now comes the fearfully cruel sickness, and the aforementioned 
French Disease.41

Introducing the influence of the ten revolutions of Saturn helped Grünpeck 
attribute the advent of the pox to a more recent celestial phenomenon and 
account for at least part of the ten-year gap. Moreover, it allowed him to 
draw direct connections between celestial phenomena and plagues.

The spread of the disease was easier to explain. Here, Grünpeck relied 
on the primary qualities of the planets and zodiacal signs, and the belief that 
these planets and signs affected the people who shared those characteristics. 
Jupiter, normally a beneficial planet, was a hot and moist planet and ruled 
over France. However, in the 1484 conjunction, Jupiter’s influence had been 
negated by two facts. First, the malevolent Saturn had suppressed Jupiter in 
the conjunction, and second, Mars, the other malevolent planet, had been 
Lord of the conjunction. Here Grünpeck’s politics begin to appear. Just as 
Jupiter, France’s ruling planet, had been overcome by the other planets during 
this conjunction, so too were the French the first to be oppressed by the pox, 
for their normally fit complexion had a natural abundance of blood, moisture, 
and saturation, all of which were prone to rotting.42 In a thinly veiled political 
statement, Grünpeck implied that the Italians were no better than the French 
and thus were particularly susceptible to the French Disease, a conclusion he 
arrived at by pointing to the similar odour that accompanied both the pox 
and the Italians. Finally, he treats rather summarily the pox’s spread into the 
Germanies and England. Mars’s role in the conjunction, along with its 
influence over the similarly warlike and fierce Germans, explained the spread 
of the pox into the empire.43

The last piece of Grünpeck’s explanation, which cemented its validity, 
was its account of the pox’s symptoms. Like all writers of the period, 
Grünpeck had to address the question: why did the pox strike the genitals?44 
Once again he turned to astrology. The latest conjunctio major had occurred 
in Scorpio, which in accepted medical theory ruled the sexual organs. 
Consequently, this conjunction portended some horrible disease affecting 
the genitals. Scorpio was also the house of the malevolent Mars, indicating 
that this affliction would be particularly severe. Grünpeck could, however, 
make his explanation more specific than this. Nobody doubted that the 
French Disease resulted from an excess of the two humours melancholy and 
cholera, as confirmed by the disease’s symptoms: black, oozing sores that 
produced a rancid stench; fevers and burning in the limbs and joints.45 
According to Galenic medicine, Saturn influenced the production and 
expulsion of melancholy, while Mars exercised similar control over cholera. 
This relationship was essential to Grünpeck’s explanation. Drawing on both 
the conjunctio major and, more importantly, the subsequent conjunction of 
Saturn and Mars, Grünpeck pointed out how the main symptoms of the 
pox were derived from these two planets. To explain the final characteristic 
symptom of the French Disease, the concentration of the black pusules on 
and around the genitals, Grünpeck needed only to point to the fact that all 
the conjunctions had occurred in the sign of Scorpio. Nature, he claimed, 
tries to relieve the excess of melancholy and cholera by expelling them 
where there is a concentration of veins, heat, and moisture, that is, the 
genital area, which Scorpio ruled.46

Although Grünpeck saw the French Disease as a new, unique, and 
historically significant disease, he offered little in the way of novel advice 
for its treatment or prevention. When Grünpeck offered his reader advice 
on how to avoid contracting the French Disease, he actually relied on quite 
standard precautions proffered for every plague. Despite his laments that 
standard medicine had trouble explaining the pox – making necessary his 
erudite astrological theorizing – he readily fell back on highly traditional

43 The last planet to play a significant role in the conjunction had been Saturn, which 
ruled over England. This accounted for the disease’s subsequent spread into that country. 
Grünpeck, Ein hübscher Tractat, sign. C4v; Grünpeck, Tractatus, sign. C4v.

44 See John Arrizabalaga’s contribution to this volume for fuller discussion of this 
question.

45 On humours in treating diseases, see Siraisi, Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine, 
pp. 115–152.

46 Grünpeck, Ein hübscher Tractat, sign. B8v–C1v; Grünpeck, Tractatus, sign. C2v–C3v.
advice, which he copied from the popular plague tractates that served as models for his entire text. The best way to avoid the pox was flight combined with proper dietary practices and a cheerful disposition, for depression fosters sickness. Astrology was curiously absent. There was, however, one piece of advice specific to the French Disease. Grünpeck suggested that 'one should keep away from women, because this sickness is aroused by that.' Although Grünpeck seemed to link sexual activity with contracting the pox, it is not clear that he understood sexual contact as the mechanism for catching the disease. Rather, he thought sexual arousal would increase a person's chances of falling ill. Moreover, he assumed a male patient and placed women in the role of infecting agent. This assumption informed the title-page illustration, which depicts a group of infected women and the male corpse of their most recent victim. This dynamic, which colours much medical writing on the disease for centuries to come, can be detected in the earliest recorded responses. Grünpeck's advice, with its moralizing overtones, fit nearly with Maximilian's intent in his 'Blasphemy Edict.'

THE FRENCH DISEASE AS POLITICAL TOOL

Grünpeck's Tractatus de pestilentiali scoria and his Ein hübscher Tractat were more than just his attempt to account for the French Disease. They shared a basic astrological framework and capitalized on the fact that the French Disease was a serious social problem. Further, they both borrowed extensively from the popular plague tractates and thus reflect common late fifteenth-century practices. Yet in their presentation, scope, and reliance on textual authorities these two works show important differences beyond the linguistic one, differences which reveal the contours of Grünpeck's various goals and expectations.

His Latin Tractatus de pestilentiali scoria was obviously beyond the reach of the vast majority of people. Indeed, Grünpeck used this tract as an opportunity to display his erudition to a very select audience, one centred on the imperial court. The first hint of this comes in the dedicatory letter written to Grünpeck's long-time friend Bernard von Waldkirch. By late 1496, Waldkirch had become a familiar figure amongst Maximilian's courtiers and had recently been appointed canon of the Augsburg cathedral. Waldkirch had facilitated Grünpeck's entrance into Conrad Celtis's Danubian Literary Society and was certainly an important friend. He now hoped that Waldkirch could help him move into imperial service. This was, however, just Grünpeck's opening salvo. Taking advantage of a fortuitous conjunction of events—Maximilian's recent 'Blasphemy Edict,' Grünpeck's own experience with the pox in Italy, and his recent contact with the court as it passed through Augsburg—Grünpeck hoped to secure a lucrative position, preferably one at the imperial court. He recognized that to accomplish this he would have to demonstrate his erudition and eloquence, and display talents that the emperor valued. Laden with classical allusions and learned digressions, his Tractatus de pestilentiali was intended to accomplish these goals. At the same time, Grünpeck argued openly that his talents would be a service to any court.

In the late 1480s and early 1490s, the University of Ingolstadt became a centre for humanist education and learning. This thrust was centred around Conrad Celtis and his efforts to improve the educational standards at the university by introducing humanist scholarly techniques and to establish the first of his many sodalities. These efforts were instrumental in Celtis's efforts to gain imperial favour, which led to his crowning as poeta laureatus in 1487. It is no surprise then, to see Grünpeck larding his text with classical allusions and indications of his own humanist talents. Xenophilius, the long-lived musician, and the Praenestine oracles along with Egyptian sages, Greek gods, and the Roman author Valerius Maximus all play important supporting roles in Grünpeck's work, alongside more typical sources such as the Bible, Aristotle, Galen, and Ptolemy. Grünpeck mixes

48Shortly before Grünpeck dedicated his Tractatus to Waldkirch, the two of them wrote a letter to Celtis, expressing pleasure at his recovering health and claiming that it was thanks to Jupiter that the recent bad weather had abated. See Celtis, Der Briefwechsel des Konrad Celtis, pp. 224–225.
49For the introduction of humanist studies to Ingolstadt, see the now dated but still useful Bauch, Die Anfänge des Humanismus in Ingolstadt: See also Schöner, Mathematik und Astronomie an der Universität Ingolstadt im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. On Celtis in general, see Spieß, Conrad Celtis.
50Xenophilius enjoyed considerable fame in the Renaissance, probably due to Pliny the Elder's claim that he lived 105 years without ever being sick. Indeed, Grünpeck quotes Pliny in his reference to Xenophilius: 'Xenophilius Musicum centum et quinque annis sub sillo corporis incomodo vivisset.' Cf. C. Pliny, Naturalis historia, VII. 50. The most famous use of Xenophilius is probably Montaigne's essay, 'Que philosophe, c'est apprendre à mourir,' where he makes the same claim. In Grünpeck's Latin texts the Praenestine oracles are referred to as the 'praenestine soroeres,' surely an error either on his part or that of the printer for sortes Praenestinae, which Roman emperors and foreign potentates consulted. Grünpeck surely knew of these through Virgil's Aeneid, VII, 678, and perhaps Valerius Flaccus, who reportedly came from there. Once again, Grünpeck is quoting from a classical source when he mentions Valerius: '...testis est Valerius, qui nullam ait esse tantam felicitatem quae malignitatis dentes vitare possit.' Compare with Valerius Maximus' Factorum et dictiorum memorabilium, IV, 7, ext. 2.
classical allegory with astrology, humoral medicine, and physiology without distinction. Indeed, his primary insight into the causes of the French Disease came in an allegorical dream:

On the thirteenth of last November, I was trying to hurry across an Egyptian stream that springs, so they say, from the centre of the philosopher’s fountain. I was persistently running back and forth consulting with and intently asking not only philosophers and physicians but also other learned persons, all the while contemplating what this disease might be, this disease that now so miserably assails, torments, irritates, and scourches human bodies and afflicts them with itching. Due to my extreme efforts, which caused me to sweat profusely, I was overwhelmed by a deep sleep. However, when everyone confessed to be ignorant of the origin of this disease, I immediately decided to go to the schools of the Egyptians. When I had feasted my eyes on the pellucid waters of that most lovely river and was gazing at the older men refreshing themselves there, who likewise looked back at me in the most encouraging way, I decided to sit down and conversed with them. I was eager to know what sorts of people they might be. Then one of them whispered in my right ear that Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy—and he listed innumerable other astronomers—were discussing their opinions about terrestrial and celestial matters. A few were discussing among other things the cause of this French Disease. Some claimed it was the plant of the night, others the mentagra, others still a species of leprosy, and they cured it with the remedies by which these other diseases are healed. ... When at last, as happens with impetuous youth, always eager for distinction, I found myself compelled to say and prove by various arguments that this conjunction of planets that occurred a few years ago was definitely the cause of this disease. Everybody agreed with this. But now they had to leave. They said that they had been sent by immortal Jove from the underworld to this little stream only to do good for mankind. In a sealed letter they gave me the results of their supreme assembly so that I would publish them throughout the world. They then vanished with a sigh, and I, as if in a dream, returned to town and composed what follows on this disease of the French.51

Modeling himself after Celtis, Grünpeck hoped that his combination of disciplines and eloquence would appeal to Maximilian.

Fearing that he had been too subtle, Grünpeck made his desire for a position at court more explicit at other places in his Tractatus de pestilentia. Although he was quick to point out that he had not wasted his ‘youth in sluggisness and stupid luxury without useful study,’ he was nevertheless hesitant to put pen to paper, fearing that he would be harshly judged.52 He marshaled the courage to publish only after suggesting that he would be the harshest critic of his own work. He compared himself to the most eminent authors, who had been ridiculed by the ignorant masses, and implied that whatever criticisms his work may evoke, he still deserved a place among ‘the most distinguished men, endowed with the highest learning, virtue, and wisdom.’53 At the end of his work, Grünpeck again praised his own work by placing it in the company of some of the greatest works of antiquity.

In my meagre judgment, admittedly that of a novice, you have before you, Bernard of Waldkirch, a useful little work written on 5 November, which seems to explain the cause of this sickness that assails us now. ... If however, it is not expounded with the skill of a master, in the manner of the Minerva of Phidias or the Venus of Apelles, nevertheless it will be a useful gift from a friend to you. For I do not ask that you place it in a golden chest, nor prize and value it as much as Ptolemy Philadelpus did his library, replete with every sort of book, nor hold it in such honour as qui rursum amicabilissimos vultus in me conjicerent, consedii, confabulaviisque. Avidus vero scientiis quot se gererent, tum unus qui adest dexteram in aurem mihi susurraret, Eosdem esse Hippocratem Galienum Avicennam Platonem Aristotelem Ptolomeum. Aliosque ferme innumeris astrologis recensebat, qui dererum naturalium celestiique contemplationem dissenserent. Inter cetera quidam huius mali de Francos causam discutere elaborabant aserentes id esse plantam noctis. Alia mentagoram. Alia leprome speciem, eisdem quibus huius cinctundes saenatur, remedii mederi. Unde quum postremo, ut mos est ferventis novitaturique avide adolescentes, verba premere propria nequirem, in eum prorupi planetarum centrum, qui paucis exactis annis fulsit, eundem esse huius morbi propriis stationibus causam varij argumentationibus ostendens, a singulari mihi assensum iuvi, interim abire coacti sunt. Nanque ses ab inferis ab immortali Jove, in fluuiolum hum kissos suisse, ad hominum fulitem festeantur ea qui summo consilio concluissent. Obsignata charta mihi dari dicer, quo per orbem terrarum disseminari. Sic et conspectu meo evanuerunt magno edrio genuit. Ego veluti stupefactus in urbem redi, hancque subius huius mali de Francos causam que sequitur, ‘Grünpeck, Tractatus, sign. B4–C1.’

52adolescentiam ignavia luxuque inerti sine bonis letiis traduxisse.’ Grünpeck, Tractatus, sign. C3f.

53cum dignissimi viri, omni virtute, sapientia atque doctrina praediti.’ Grünpeck, Tractatus, sign. C3f.
Darius did the books of Homer, which he kept in a chest with the spoils of war; this was adorned with gold, gems, and pearls, and he ordered that it protect Homer's poems. Nor will I prevent you from throwing it into the flames after you have read it, since it is not one of Virgil's works, which despite the poet's protests, the deified Augustus forbade burning.\textsuperscript{54}

Grünpeck clearly esteemed his \textit{Tractatus de pestilentia} rather highly, and the implication was obvious: Grünpeck and his texts were worthy of the highest accolades.

Grünpeck's title-page woodcut further supported his attempts to flatter the emperor and secure a position at his court. The woodcut shows the baby Jesus sitting on the Virgin's lap and healing a pair of infected but suppliant women. The corpse of an infected man, one who presumably did not observe the appropriate degree of piety, lies in the foreground. Maximilian kneels to the Virgin's right, where he is receiving the imperial crown from her. This woodcut served Grünpeck's goals in two ways. First, in the manner of Maximilian's 'Blasphemy Edict,' it suggested that even those afflicted with the French Disease could be cured through proper religious devotion. Second, Maximilian is depicted as the divinely chosen emperor, pure in his devotion and thus in his right to lead the Holy Roman Empire. Grünpeck was not alone in his belief that Maximilian occupied a special place, nor was this the only place that he expressed this conviction.\textsuperscript{55} In his 'Prognosticon für 1496–1499,' which he dedicated to Hans Langenmantel, the Burgermeister of Augsburg, Grünpeck claimed that it was through the emperor that Jesus would bring peace to the empire.\textsuperscript{56} Furthermore, although the imperial armies were presently embroiled in wars with the French and plagues were raging in many southern German cities, Grünpeck was convinced that the situation would improve dramatically after Maximilian's fortieth birthday in 1499.\textsuperscript{57}

Emperor Maximilian I certainly appreciated Grünpeck's efforts. The emperor was constantly beset with domestic unrest and foreign struggles that threatened his authority and claim to the title of emperor. His successes at the imperial Diet in Worms in 1495 had, by early 1496, largely evaporated as the princes and electors co-opted his political and financial reforms. Moreover, Maximilian was still bogged down fighting the French in Italy, a struggle precipitated by the duplicity of Pope Alexander VI. Although the pope had recently renewed his alliance with the emperor, Maximilian was constantly wary of the pope, who had notoriously switched allegiance between the French and the empire. In Grünpeck's opinion, which he shared with many of his German contemporaries, Alexander VI was in part responsible for the advent of the French Disease and its subsequent spread up the peninsula and over the Alps.\textsuperscript{58} In this context, Grünpeck's derogatory comments about the French and the stinking Italians must have resonated with the emperor and the population more broadly. Further, Maximilian would have been happy to appropriate Grünpeck's implication that the French and Italians are, in the end, going to be overwhelmed by the Germans, just as Jupiter had been subsumed under the power of Mars.

Grünpeck's vernacular treatise differed in some important aspects; nonetheless, it functioned in similar ways. He pruned \textit{Ein hübscher Tractat} of all extraneous material, particularly the more learned allusions and discussions found in his Latin text. Consonant with his goals and the purpose of the text, this version is a much simpler handbook on the source and cause of the French Disease and conformed to the patterns and expectations of the late fifteenth-century vernacular plague tracts, which were responses to the recurring plague outbreaks and quickly adopted a common format and content.\textsuperscript{59} When Grünpeck wrote his \textit{Ein hübscher Tractat}, he simply adapted this literature to fit his immediate context.

An important aspect of most vernacular plague tracts was their connection to the local city councils or princes.\textsuperscript{60} As the plague became

\textsuperscript{54} Habes, Bernart de Waldkirch meo judicito licet minus gravi sed simpliciis sincerisque et hominis, at ia dicum, tyrannis opusculum nile lucubratum proximis Nonis Novembris, quod causam habuimus illum iniquum quem iniquum explicat videlicet. Sin neque non est elaboratum subli unico, quem admodum minval phide, seu Venus aputta, tamen gratia tibi eri amici minus. Nam non postulo ut in archam auream reponas, et tantis est tesi quali Polioneus philolbus philolboi sunt omnis generis librarium referrestitum estimavit. Neque ut tante in horneore reservandum putes, quante Libros libros Homerius retinetinos duxit cum scrinio capto inter spolia quos erat auro gemmisque ac margaritis praeciosum custodiam voluniam homeri dare praecipit. Neque inhibeo posteaquipum sedulo perlergetus ut igni non credes, quam non sunt Virgilii Codices quos divus Augustus contra voluntatem eius cremari vetuit.' Grünpeck, \textit{Tractatus}, sign. C4'.

\textsuperscript{55} Following Frederick III's death, Maximilian became the object of much prophetic literature produced in the Germanies. Johannes Lichtenberger's work enjoyed the widest popularity but was just part of a larger tradition that existed in both manuscript and print.

\textsuperscript{56} Wann unser herr theusus xapus do er eingieng in die welt do hat er geeret das römisch reych zü den zeiten seiner zükunft, Wann durch den keyser Augustus er fridam machet, die welt do mit in seiner heiligen gegenwärtigkeit frid wart.' Joseph Grünpeck, 'Prognosticon für 1496–1499,' Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3042, f. 9v.

\textsuperscript{57} Grünpeck, \textit{Prognosticon sine (ut alii volunt) Judicium Ex Conjunctione Saturni & Jovis Durandii et resolution Saturni Orius} (Vienna, 1496), n.p. Unfortunately, Grünpeck does not explain why he thought matters would improve.

\textsuperscript{58} Grünpeck did not name the pope in his tracts on the French Disease. However, in his 1496 prognostication that he produced for the Burgermeister of Augsburg he identified the pope and his duplicity as largely responsible for the various plagues currently afflicting the Germanies. See Grünpeck, 'Prognostikon für 1496–1499,' fol. 4v.

\textsuperscript{59} On the plague tracts in general, see Campbell, \textit{The Black Death}.
increasingly common, and as physicians continued to flee from infected areas along with everybody else who could, local authorities realized that they needed to do something to assuage the fears and concerns of many people who were forced to remain in the city and infected areas. Their attempts to compel physicians to stay, either through higher payments or threats of punishment, generally failed. They did succeed in persuading town physicians to write short, vernacular treatises on the origins, spread, and prevention of the disease. These sold for little money so that they could be widely available and would enable people to treat themselves during plague outbreaks. In this way, plague tracts were linked to the local political authorities and associated with a position as a town physician. Further, town councils and local princes used them to show the citizenry that they were concerned for the general welfare, turning plague tracts into political tools aimed at consoling the fears of the populace and thus quelling any unrest that might accompany plague outbreaks.

Grunpeck intended his *Ein hübscher Tractat* to function in the same way as the plague tracts. He offered his readers a description in simple German of the origins and causes of the French Disease. Moreover, he suggested a variety of precautions for avoiding the disease—these precautions were exactly those presented in the plague tracts. Grunpeck might have viewed this text as a secondary plan, should his attempt to find a position in the imperial bureaucracy fail. It served as a kind of application to the city fathers in Augsburg, advertising Grunpeck’s ability to be town physician. Indeed, he seems to have anticipated a practice that became more common in the sixteenth century, when city councils retained physicians specifically to treat the French Disease.60 It was certainly no accident that Grunpeck dedicated his German text to Hans Langenmantel, the Burgermeister of Augsburg. However, this text also supported Grunpeck’s efforts to secure his ideal position. Emperor Maximilian I was constantly struggling to build cohesion and support among his German subjects. While Grunpeck’s *Ein hübscher Tractat* lacked the eloquent digressions of his Latin *Tractatus*, it retained all the political, pro-imperial implications of that more elite text, including the disparaging references to the French and Italians, and the title-page woodcut showing Maximilian as saviour. In other words, Grunpeck’s *Ein hübscher tractat* could function as yet another tool in Maximilian’s political agenda. It helped

to portray Maximilian as concerned for his subjects health and welfare. And unlike the plague tracts, which were at least initially grounded in particular locales, Grunpeck’s *Ein hübscher Tractat* was simultaneously printed in Augsburg, Cologne, Leipzig, and Nürnberg, thereby spreading Grunpeck’s pro-Habsburg message across much of southern Germany. It was, in this way, yet another piece of pro-imperial propaganda.

**Conclusion**

Grunpeck’s attempts to secure a position at the imperial court were successful, due in no small part to his two works on the French Disease. Because the French Disease was a sensitive and important issue for Maximilian, Grunpeck seized on it to bring himself to the emperor’s attention. Moreover, although Grunpeck explained the French Disease within an astrological framework, he interpreted the pox within the political and social terms that resonated with Maximilian’s larger efforts to build cohesion and support for a pan-German ideal. The disease and Grunpeck’s account of it, thus, became part of Maximilian’s political propaganda. Shortly after Grunpeck’s *Tractatus de pestilentiali* and *Ein hübscher Tractat* appeared he was invited to perform in front of the emperor and his family. A few months later, at the imperial Diet in 1497, he was crowned poet laureate. By the end of the Diet he had been appointed Maximilian’s personal secretary and was working on the emperor’s biography.

Unfortunately, Grunpeck’s meteoric rise was cut short when he contracted the pox in 1501 after attending a dinner party hosted by his friend Celtis. Moments after leaving the city of Augsburg he was assailed by the pox’s deadly arrows, which pierced his genitalia and caused them to ulcerate and swell so large that his two hands could scarcely conceal them. Terrified and despondent, Grunpeck skulked back home and remained isolated for some time. Although shame prompted him to suffer the disease in silence, when he returned to his duties and was again amongst his friends, his sickly pallor betrayed his condition and forced him to confess that he too had caught the French Disease. He was immediately ostracized from the court and even from his circle of closest friends while he struggled with the disease for the next two years.62 He recounts in often gruesome detail his symptoms— for nearly four months a thousand abscesses appeared around his genitalia before spreading to other parts of his body—and the agonizing treatments he endured in the hopes of finding a cure. As he had in his earlier works, Grunpeck again dismissed learned medicine, which had been entirely

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60 The most important of these plague tracts was Gentile da Foligno’s *Consilia*. Indeed, Gentile’s text gives its name to this entire genre of medical texts. See French, *Canonical Medicine*, pp. 274–296. See also Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p. 148, and Giralt, ‘The *Consilia* Attributed to Arnau de Vilanova.’

61 French and Arrizabalaga, ‘Coping with the French Disease,’ p. 251.

62 Grunpeck, *Libellus*, sig. 7r.
ineffectual at reducing even the severity of the symptoms. Instead, he turned
to empirics, quacks, and charlatans, before he stumbled upon a treatment
that seemed to work. In 1503, a healthy and slightly more humble
Grünpeck published a short work, *Libellus de mentalagra alias morbo gallico*,
in which he detailed his sufferings and eventual cure.

Although now himself a survivor of the pox, Grünpeck’s under-
standing of the French Disease had changed little in the seven years since
he first published his thoughts on the pox. In general, he still associated it
with sexual activity — he tells us that not only Ceres and Bacchus but also
Venus had attended Celsus’s dinner party — and genitalia, where according
to him the disease always appeared first and most virulently. He did not,
however, understand sexual contact as a mechanism for catching the French
Disease. Except for his one brief comment about Venus, Grünpeck makes
no further reference to women, sexual intercourse, or even loose sexual
mores. Remarkably absent is any mention of sin, lust, or blasphemy, which
had at least provided the context for his earlier *Tractatus de pestilentiali.*
Perhaps sensing his own culpability and hoping to avoid the charge of
hypocrisy, he eschewed all moralizing and concentrated instead on describ-
ing the disease and various remedies. He returned to his earlier conviction
that the advent of the French Disease was caused by the planetary conjunc-
tions in 1484. Indeed, he offers the same explanation in the opening pages
of his *Libellus de mentalagra,* once again relying on the celestial influences,
the association between Scorpio and the genitalia, and the affiliations
between planetary qualities and human complexions to explain the appear-
ance and spread of the pox as well as its symptoms.

Throughout his *Libellus de mentalagra,* Grünpeck carefully separated his
explanations of the French Disease’s cause from his account of its treatment.
Nowhere does he suggest that he used astrology in treating his disease. In fact,
the cesspool emptiers, tailors, cobblers, rubbish collectors, and other quacks
and empirics who lanced Grünpeck’s tubercles, smeared him with stinking
ointments and encouraged him to ingest bizarre pills and medicaments,

probably knew little astrology and less learned medicine. Grünpeck turned to
them out of desperation, hoping to find the cure that would allow him to
return to his position at the court, a return that was made possible by
Maximilian’s increasingly ambivalent attitude toward the pox. Sometime
between his ‘Blasphemy Edict’ in 1495 and the early sixteenth century, the
emperor softened his stance on the French Disease. He ceased to condemn
those suffering from it and instead demanded simply that they excuse them-

selves from the court until they were cured. This was, no doubt, a pragmatic
decision — Grünpeck and Celsus are just two of the more famous courtiers
within Maximilian’s inner circles who suffered from the pox, and Maximilian
himself reportedly contracted the disease a few years later. Although Grün-
peck certainly had not wished for the disease, he turned his experiences and
frenetic search for a cure to his advantage. Having tried various available
treatments without success, Grünpeck concluded on a positive note by
offering the one remedy that seemed to work. Making this remedy available
for other people, he claimed, had motivated him to publish his *Libellus de
mentalagra.* More importantly, he also used the opportunity to show publicly
that he was now cured and was prepared to resume his duties as Maximilian’s
personal secretary.

For Grünpeck, the pro-imperial propagandist and avid courtier, astro-
ology was not a tool of medicine, but rather a political and social tool. In his
hands, it provided a means of explaining the advent, spread, and symptoms of
the French Disease. Astrology also allowed him to capitalize on the emperor’s
larger political agenda. Grünpeck recast Maximilian’s concerns about lust,
loose sexual practices, and blasphemy in an astrological framework at precisely
the right moment to ingratiate himself to emperor. Seven years later, after
having endured and overcome the French Disease, Grünpeck still relied on
astrology to describe it. This time, however, he shifted the astrology into the
background in order to emphasize his experiences, treatment, and eventual
cure that enabled him to return to the imperial court.

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64Verumque dixit cum pauci post Augustenisse in oppido roguatus querandum sodalium
et commilitonum nosterum quaquadie convivium instituissent: cui non solum baccus et
cales sed etiam venus interaret: medici voluptati sese ingestit infensa humanarum pestum
nutrix contagio innumera isus infectionis spirula gercens: cuius horrore territ us relictis
epulis omnes augebamus: sed in pedes extra portas Augustenison in agrum envoi: dum
terrem per frigida membra fusa illarum rerum objectis repellere elaborarem: infelix
numen me a tergo ex improviso adorum gravissime sauciavit: quo vulnere totus infectus
duobus fere annis a cesaris consuerundine:* Grünpeck, *Libellus,* sign. 2v.
65Grünpeck, *Libellus,* sign. 2r–3s, 9r–10r.
66French and Arrizabalaga, ‘Coping with the French Disease,’ p. 257.
67Grünpeck, *Libellus,* sign. 3r.
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