



# The Sick Rose: Disease and the Art of Medical Illustration

*Richard Barnett*

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*The Sick Rose* is a visual tour through the golden age of medical illustration. The nineteenth century experienced an explosion of epidemics such as cholera and diphtheria, driven by industrialization, urbanization and poor hygiene. In this pre-color-photography era, accurate images were relied upon to teach students and aid diagnosis. The best examples, featured here, are remarkable pieces of art that attempted to elucidate the mysteries of the body, and the successive onset of each affliction. Bizarre and captivating images, including close-up details and revealing cross-sections, make all too clear the fascinations of both doctors and artists of the time. Barnett illuminates the fears and obsessions of a society gripped by disease, yet slowly coming to understand and combat it. The age also saw the acceptance of vaccination and the germ theory, and notable diagrams that transformed public health, such as John Snow's cholera map and Florence Nightingale's pioneering histograms, are included and explained. Organized by disease, *The Sick Rose* ranges from little-known ailments now all but forgotten to the epidemics that shaped the modern age. It is a fascinating *Wunderkammer* of a book that will enthrall artists, students, designers, scientists and the incurably curious everywhere.

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