

In Search of an «Authentic» Women's Medicine: The Strange Fates of Trota of Salerno and Hildegard of Bingen (*)

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SUMMARY

1.—*Cherchez les femmes*. 2.—The Renaissance and Beyond. 2.1.—«Trota» and the *Trota*. 2.2.—Hildegard. 3.—Shifting Paradigms.

ABSTRACT

Despite centuries of debate about the medieval medical writers Trota and Hildegard, there still remain widely disparate views of them in both popular and scholarly discourses. Their alternate dismissal or romanticization is not due to a simple contest between antifeminist and feminist tendencies. Rather, issues of gender have intersected in varying ways with other agendas (intellectual, nationalist, etc.). Recent philological researches have helped not only to clarify why these earlier interpretations were created in the first place, but also to raise our understanding of these women and their work to a new, higher level.

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1. «*CHERCHEZ LES FEMMES*»

Imagine her bewilderment. An undergraduate in an American college or university goes to the reference section of her library. Pre-med and just beginning to form an image of herself as a future professional, she is taking a course on medieval women and wants to find out how women's medical conditions were cared for in the Middle Ages and how women practiced medicine. She goes to the standard English-language reference work for medieval studies, the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, and looks in the Index volume for an entry for «Medical practitioner» (1). There is none. Then she looks under «Doctors (of medicine)». She finds the heading, but there is no reference to women. She looks under «Physicians». Again, nothing on women, but there is a *see also* for «Barber-surgeons». She follows up that reference and again finds nothing about women, but here there is a *see also* for «Beauty Aids». «Aha!» she says, «I'm getting close. At least this seems to have something to do with women». She looks up the article on «Beauty Aids» in volume 2 but again finds no female practitioners. She does, however, find mention of a *text* entitled *Ornement des dames* («The Adornment of Women»); this has its own separate article, so she looks that up. Here she finds it asserted that this work

«makes fictitious references to Galen and other medical authorities, and most frequently cites 'Dame Trot'—that is, the *Trotula minor*, which the *Ornement* resembles» (2).

«Hmm», she says, «here's what *sounds* like a reference to a real woman, but then it implies that it's really a text. What's going on here?» There is a cross-reference to the article on «Trotta» so she pulls the «T» volume down off the shelf. Before putting the Index volume back, however, she checks under the «Women» entry. Here, at last, she finds subentries for «medical care of» and «physicians». Rather than offering her the lists of other texts and practitioners that she expects to find,

(1) STRAYER, Joseph R. (ed.). *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols., New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982-89.

(2) NELLIS, M. K. Beauty Aids. In: STRAYER, n. 1, vol. 2, pp. 145-50.

however, both these subentries refer her back to one single article: the one on Trota and this so-called *Trotula* text. It is only when she looks up this last article that she finds a cross-reference to any other woman connected with medicine: Hildegard of Bingen. «Okay, I'll look that up in a minute. But first let me read what they've got to say about Trota».

She reads ... and her heart sinks. Here she is told that there was a historic woman named Trota and that she was indeed a medical author. But instead of writing any of the three popular *Trotula* treatises on women's healthcare, Trota authored only a general and largely uninfluential compendium of medicine. As for the *Trotula* treatises, our student finds that «it seems likely that all three of these texts were written by men». The author of this entry goes on to say that the *Trotula*'s popularity «was enhanced because they were thought to be by a woman» (3). «But why», our student wonders, «were they *thought* to be by a woman if they weren't by a woman? And how would *men* have known so much about women's diseases?» She then sees it asserted that Chaucer «heralded the name of Trotula» and she remembers that she had earlier seen a *Chaucer Name Dictionary* on one of the shelves. She opens this up and finds the following biography:

«Trotula di Ruggiero, fl. twelfth century A.D., was a physician at the Salerno medical school. She was also the wife of one of the physicians at the school and mother of two sons. She collaborated with her husband in writing the *Encyclopaedia regimen sanitatis* and is credited with the authorship of a treatise on gynecology and obstetrics, *Trotulae curandarum aegritudinum mulierorum [sic] ante et post partum*, also known as *De passionibus mulierum*, in sixty chapters. This treatise is referred to simply as *Trotula*» (4).

«This is crazy», our student says. «Why are these two 'authoritative' books, published only two years apart, saying such completely different things?» Technological wizard that she is, she decides to surf the Net for «up-to-date» information. There she finds an account agreeing in

(3) BENTON, John F. Trota and Trotula. In: STRAYER, n. 1, vol. 12, pp. 213-14.

(4) DE WEEVER, Jacqueline. *Chaucer Name Dictionary: A Guide to Astrological, Biblical, Historical, Literary, and Mythological Names in the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, New York, Garland, 1987, p. 328.

some respects with that in the Chaucer dictionary, although here it is claimed not simply that «Trotula» was a physician at the Salerno medical school but that she actually occupied the *chair* of medicine; moreover, «many women» were also «professors of medicine» there. Even here, however, after giving such a detailed account of «Trotula's» biography, this author concludes with the cryptic statement «Some scholars dispute that Trotula was a woman, or that she even existed» (5).

Exasperated by this astounding array of conflicting opinions about «Trotula» (6), our student decides to turn her attention to Hildegard. She pulls down the «H» volume of the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* and finds that Hildegard (1098-1179) «became famous in her lifetime as a physician and healer» (7). «This sounds promising», she says excitedly, relieved that at least there no longer seem to be any debates about authenticity here. She reads on. Hildegard wrote two medical works, she finds out, both of which

«give a clear picture of the state of pathology, physiology, therapeutics, and pharmaceutics as practiced in twelfth-century Germany, specifically in convents. Both books were in great demand among physicians as late as the fifteenth century; they are of interest today because in them many drugs and herbs were for the first time listed by their German names, apparently because Hildegard was not familiar with their Latin names» (8).

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- (5) BOIS, Danuta. Distinguished Women of Past and Present. In: <http://historymedren.miningco.com/msubmed.htm>, consulted November 1998. Bois is summarizing the biography of «Trotula» given by BROOKE, Elisabeth. *Women Healers: Portraits of Herbalists, Physicians, and Midwives*, Rochester, VT, Healing Arts Press, 1995. My thanks to Montserrat Cabré for bringing this website to my attention.
- (6) Strictly speaking, the historic Salernitan woman Trota (or Trocta) should be distinguished from the textually-generated authoress «Trotula», to whom the *Trotula* texts have traditionally been attributed. Since this confusion has only been sorted out in the past couple of years (see n. 21 below), however, in discussing earlier scholarship I will retain the two designations as if they were synonymous.
- (7) SOUDEK, Ernst H. Hildegard of Bingen. In: STRAYER, n. 1, vol. 6, pp. 228-229.
- (8) SOUDEK, n. 7.

«Okay, I get it», says our astute young researcher. «Hildegard was (a) representative of a certain kind of female medicine, (b) physicians (do they mean *male* physicians?) were eager to have her work (I guess because she offered them some kind of knowledge they couldn't get from other sources), and (c) Hildegard seems not to have been familiar with Latin medical literature. I guess this must mean that she practiced a kind of indigenous 'folk' medicine. I guess this also means that all women (at least those in nunneries) practiced this same kind of folk medicine. So, I guess it was this 'feminine, folk wisdom' that (male?) practitioners were trying to find in consulting Hildegard's works». This image of Hildegard as the ultimate embodiment of folk medicine is further confirmed when this student opens up the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, the leading reference source in the History of Science. Here, Hildegard is evaluated as «a 'simple' woman, typical of the unlearned mystic *idiota* who wrote down what she 'saw and heard', following a command given to her by 'voices'. She is therefore basically original in both her spiritual and her naturalist and medical work» (9). When our student pulls a book called *Hildegard of Bingen's Medicine* off the shelves, she finds the claim that «Hildegard produced all of her works, as she has said, through her heavenly or spiritual vision. She did not rely on medical experience or upon traditional learning» (10). «Wait a minute», our student says. «So not only was Hildegard not learned, but she didn't even get her knowledge from medical *practice?*» More surprisingly, as far as our student can discern from this strange book, there seems to be nothing about women in this female «spiritual healer's» writings. «Oh, I give up», she finally says in disgust. «If this is what 'women's medicine' looked like in the Middle Ages, then I want nothing to do with it».

Trota and Hildegard, Hildegard and Trota. Although our intrepid student could have assembled a much longer list of medieval women involved in medical care had she searched through specialized historical

(9) PAGEL, Walter. Hildegard of Bingen. In: Charles C. Gillispie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972, vol. 6, pp. 396-398.

(10) STREHLOW, Wighard; HERTZKA, Gottfried. *Hildegard of Bingen's Medicine*, trans. Karin Anderson Strehlow, Santa Fe, NM, Bear & Co., 1988, p. x. This volume appears in a series entitled «Folk Wisdom».

literature (11), these two figures would still stand out in her mind because they are the only two who traditionally have been identified as medical writers and, so, as representatives of what women *thought* about medical theory and practice (12). Ironically, however, Trota and Hildegard have rarely been associated with each other in modern academic literature, despite the fact that they both lived in the twelfth century, both achieved considerable renown in their own time and in the years after their deaths, both became objects of scholarly scrutiny in the Renaissance and the modern period, and both (because of that scrutiny) have had the authenticity of their works questioned. Both have been adopted in modern peri-academic discourses—feminist, on the one hand, and homeopathic, on the other—as heroines in the history of medicine. Both were invited to Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party* in 1978, two of just six medieval women to sit at that illustrious gathering of thirty-nine great women in history (13). (See Figures 1 and 2).

What I would like to do here is to juxtapose the post-medieval fates of these two medical figures. As I will explain in more detail later, recent researches on Trota/«Trotula» and Hildegard have radically transformed our understanding of their work and its influence. Nevertheless, we are inheritors of centuries-long traditions that continue to profoundly

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- (11) In English, surveys can be found in GREEN, Monica H. *Women’s Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe*. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1989-90, 14, 434-473. GREEN, Monica H. Documenting Medieval Women’s Medical Practice. In: Luis García-Ballester *et al.* (eds.), *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 322-352. GREEN, Monica H. *The Possibilities of Literacy and The Limits of Reading: Women as Owners of Medical Books in Later Medieval Europe*, forthcoming. Bibliography on «Women and Medicine» has been published periodically in the *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* since 1990.
- (12) Several hundred recipes attributed to five different women are found in the twelve-volume medical compendium that Count Palatine Ludwig V compiled in the early sixteenth century. One (and perhaps two) of these women seems to have authored a medical text, though these have not yet been found. See STOUT, Debra L. *Medieval German Women and the Power of Healing*. In: Lilian R. Furst (ed.), *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1997, pp. 13-42 (p. 15).
- (13) CHICAGO, Judy. *The Dinner Party: A Symbol of Our Heritage*, Garden City, NY, Anchor Books, 1979.



Figure 1.—Place setting for Trotula at Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* (1979). According to Chicago, the carved symbol on Trotula's plate derives from the Aztec goddess of healing, and is combined with a birth image and a caduceus. The runner incorporates a tree-of-life motif, and employs a medieval Italian quilting technique called Trapunto. © Judy Chicago 1979; photo credit © Donald Woodman. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 2.—Place setting for Hildegard at Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party* (1979). Hildegard’s plate is painted to resemble a stained-glass window. Her runner is designed to resemble a Gothic cathedral, and is decorated with an embroidery technique used in the Middle Ages to embellish the vestments of clerics. © Judy Chicago 1979; photo credit © Donald Woodman. Reproduced with permission.

affect present-day narratives about the character of these women and the medical writings they produced. As my opening vignette shows, even in 1999 a student first dipping her toe into the ocean of scholarship on these two figures will encounter remnants of earlier traditions. Rather than just dismiss these divergent views as sloppy or unprofessional scholarship, I will suggest that an archeological excavation helps explain why these older views have fundamentally shaped the topography of scholarly and semi-scholarly narratives for so long. Several different factors have influenced these narratives, one of which, not surprisingly, is gender. However, notions of gender have intersected in varying ways with other currents of thought, producing the rather odd story I am about to tell.

2. THE RENAISSANCE AND BEYOND

Hildegard and «Trotula» were first linked together more than 450 years ago when, in 1544 in Strasbourg, Johannes Schottus published their attributed works together in his volume *Experimentarius medicinae* («Collection of Tried-and-True Remedies of Medicine»). For Schottus, I believe, far from being incidental, the fact that both Hildegard and «Trotula» were female authors was quite relevant to his empirical enterprise. Hildegard had already appeared in an earlier edition from Schottus in 1533. There, her *Physica* was the star attraction in a collection of four works on «the natures, operations, and effects of things, and what commonly are called *Experimenta*». Schottus, in explaining the marvelous uses of *experimenta* in therapy, stressed that «no healthy person will become afflicted, if we gather the more worthy things from the writers of old of both sexes» (14). In describing Hildegard, Schottus lauded her not simply as a woman of noble German lineage, but as one «worthy to be inscribed in the Catalog of those of good merit, who by exacting study and sex and family, left to her heirs this monument more lasting than bronze» (15).

(14) *Physica S. Hildegardis ... Oribasii ... Theodori ... Esculapii*, Strasbourg, Johannes Schottus, 1533, f. ir: «nemo sanus inficias ibit, siquando ex ueterum utriusque sexus eius farinae Scriptoribus, probatiores e situ uindicemus».

(15) *Physica S. Hildegardis ...*, n. 14: «s. Hildegardis illa, ex nobili Germani sanguinis

Eleven years later, Schottus brought out his collection of *experimenta* again, this time adding two more texts to the four he had originally published in 1533. Here, Hildegard was demoted to third billing. Immediately in front of her was the *Euporiston* of Theodorus Priscianus, a distillation of late antique theoretical and practical medicine. This, however, was not a newly discovered text but merely a reprint from one of Schottus' earlier editions; here in the 1544 edition, Schottus did not even bother to mention it in his letter to the reader (16). The only really new text was the one that now took top billing: the *Trotulae curandarum aegritudinum muliebrium ante, in, & post partum Liber*, «The Book of Trotula on the Treatment of the Diseases of Women before, during, and after Birth» (17).

Schottus was clearly quite excited by his discovery of «Trotula's» work, dedicating half of his letter to the reader to explaining how he found the work and how he had persuaded Georg Kraut, «a man in every way humane and most learned in medicine», to edit the text. As for the author herself, Schottus praised her as «a woman by no means of the common sort, but rather one of great experience and erudition» (18). Schottus thus granted «Trotula» almost the same attributes that had distinguished Hildegard: class (in «Trotula's» case, *non vulgaris* rather than *nobilis*), experience, and erudition. The knowledge that came through experience was what Schottus most wanted to emphasize in his

prosapia mulier, digna subscribi Catalogo bene meritorum, que tam exacto studio, & sexui, & familiae, posteris item suis, monumentum hoc aere perennius reliquit». My thanks to Francis Newton for pointing out to me that this last phrase echoes Horace's Ode 330.

- (16) See MOULINIER, Laurence. *Le manuscrit perdu à Strasbourg: Enquête sur l'oeuvre scientifique de Hildegarde*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne; Saint-Denis, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1995, pp. 18 and 84. In both the 1532 and the 1544 editions, Theodorus Priscianus' work was falsely attributed Octavius Horatianus.
- (17) *Experimentarius medicinae*, Strasbourg, Joannes Schottus, 1544, containing KRAUT, Georg (ed.). *Trotulae curandarum Aegritudinum Muliebrium, ante, in & post partum liber unicus, nusquam antea editus. Quo foeminei sexus accidentes morbi & passiones. Infantum & puerorum à partu cura, Nutricis delectu, ac reliqua ijsce adnata. Dispositiones utriusque Sexui contingentes. Experimenta denique uariarum Aegritudinum: cum quibusdam medicamentis decorationi Corporis inseruientia, edocentur*, pp. 3-35.
- (18) *Experimentarius medicinae*, p. 2: «hec fuerit TROTVLA, certè non uulgaris, quinimò multae peritiae & eruditionis foemina».

collection, but in emphasizing the gender, first of Hildegard, then of «Trotula», he implies that their femaleness was itself a contribution to their experiential knowledge and their authority.

Both Hildegard and Trota/«Trotula» were thus inducted very early on into the catalog of female physicians (19). The later fates of «Trotula» and Hildegard suggests, however, that no one beyond Schottus thought that their gender alone was sufficient to create a market for their works. Hildegard's *Physica* would never appear in print again until Migne brought out a collection of her works in the *Patrologia Latina* in the mid-nineteenth century (20). The *Trotula*, in contrast, would be printed eleven more times in the course of the sixteenth century. Why such a drastic divergence?

2.1. «Trotula» and the Trotula

In some respects, the Renaissance fate of the *Trotula* paralleled their medieval circulation. Far from being limited to any single geographic area, the *Trotula* had circulated throughout all of western Europe from

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- (19) In 1543, when the noted French legal scholar André Tiraqueau addressed the question, «Whether the art of medicine detracts from nobility», he argued that practice of this art was no more forbidden to women than to men. To support this contention, he listed over forty different women noted for their medical skills, among whom were Trota and Hildegard. TIRAQUELLUS, Andreas. *Commentarii ... de nobilitate, et jure primigeniorum*, 3rd ed., Lyons, Gulielmus Rovillius, 1566, cap. 31, pp. 310-314; my thanks to Rachel Howarth of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas for confirming that the reading is the same in the 1543 edition. Tiraqueau's celebration of female practitioners in the *De nobilitate* is in stark contrast to his representation of women in *De legibus connubialibus* (first published in 1513) in which he produced one of the largest Renaissance collections of commonplaces proving the inferiority of women. See MACLEAN, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 5 and 69.
- (20) DAREMBERG, Charles; REUSS, J. F. (eds.). *S. Hildegardis abbatissae Subtilitatum diversarum naturarum creaturarum libri novem*. In: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*, 221 vols., Paris, Migne, 1841-1864, vol. 197, pp. 1117-1352.

the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries. Indeed, throughout much of that time they were the leading specialized texts on women's medicine (21). Although the *Trotula* would encounter stiff competition from other gynecological texts in the sixteenth century, their repeated publication in various cities (Strasbourg, Paris, Lyons, Venice and Basel) shows a continued, broad-based audience for the work. Throughout the medieval period, not much thought seems to have been given to «Trotula's» biography; when any identifying features were mentioned, it was usually to associate her with the famed medieval medical center of Salerno. Georg Kraut's classicizing emendations to the text in 1544 were to change that.

Kraut's text was first pirated three years later in 1547 by Paulus Manutius for an Aldine edition in Venice. This collection was entitled *Medici antiqui omnes qui latinis litteris diversorum morborum genera & remedia persecuti sunt, undique conquisiti* («[The Writings of] All Ancient Latin Physicians Who Described and Collected the Types and Remedies of Various Diseases»). Manutius' inclusion of «Trotula» in this eminent collection of ancient physicians was no careless misunderstanding. On the contrary, he had, perhaps unwittingly, read the text exactly as Kraut had intended it to be read. For Kraut, besides rearranging the three component parts of the *Trotula* to create one seamless (and seemingly single-authored) text, had also silently suppressed all obviously post-third century names. The result was that there was hardly anything left in the text to indicate that it must have been a medieval composition.

Just as Manutius's decision to include the *Trotula* in his collection of ancient medical writings was deliberate, so too was his decision to omit Hildegard. Since Manutius was clearly using a copy of the 1544 *Experimentarius* as his source for the *Trotula* (indeed, Kraut's peculiar rendition of the text would be the only one Renaissance scholars knew),

(21) On the medieval circulation of the *Trotula*, see GREEN, Monica H. The Development of the *Trotula*. *Revue d'Histoire des Textes*, 1996a, 26, 119-203. GREEN, Monica H. A Handlist of the Latin and Vernacular Manuscripts of the So-Called *Trotula* Texts. Part I: The Latin Manuscripts. *Scriptorium* 1996b, 50, 137-175. GREEN, Monica H. A Handlist of the Latin and Vernacular Manuscripts of the So-Called *Trotula* Texts. Part II: The Vernacular Translations and Latin Re-Writings. *Scriptorium* 1997, 51, 80-104.

he could not have been ignorant of the existence of Hildegard's *Physica*. Her work, however, in contrast to the «classical» work of «Trotula», was precisely the kind of medical text Manutius did *not* want to include. As Manutius said in his preface, «We have not added the writings of more recent authors, because it would be both unending and superfluous, for in fact nothing seems to be missing from the ancient works we have printed» (22). The «barbarisms» of Hildegard's Latin style and, worse, her incorporation of Germanic terminology, marked her as hopelessly medieval, an example of the kind of intellectual decay that a more cultured aesthetic now found embarrassing. Even German speakers treated this female medical writer with scorn. Conrad Gesner, writing in Zurich in 1545 (only one year after the second edition of the *Physica*) distinguished between *two* Hildegards: the sainted abbess of Bingen, and another, the author of the *Physica*, one Hildegard of Pinguia. For Gesner, this latter author's sex was fundamentally linked to the quality of the product, a work full of «many obscurities, worthy of the teachings of old women, as well as superstitious things devoid of any reason» (23).

«Trotula», therefore, in contrast to Hildegard, survived the scrutiny of Renaissance humanists because she was able to escape her medieval associations. But it was this very success that would eventually «unwoman» her. When the *Trotula* was reprinted in eight further editions between 1550 and 1572, it was not because it was the work of a woman but because it was the work of an *antiquissimus auctor* («a very ancient author») (24). In 1566, when the *Trotula* was for the first time incorporated into a collection of gynecological texts, this *antiquissimus auctor* became the object of further philological scrutiny. Following the suggestions of a Dutch physician named Hadrianus Junius (who himself claimed to be following a thesis of Guido Morillonus), «Trotula's» new editor, Caspar

(22) MANUTIUS, Paulus (ed.). *Medici antiqui omnes qui latinis litteris diversorum morborum genera & remedia persecuti sunt, undique conquesti, & uno uolumine comprehensi, ut eorum qui se medicinae studio dediderunt commodo consulatur*, Venice, Aldus, 1547, f. ir: «recentiorum scripta non attigimus, quia fuisset & infinitum & supervacaneum, quippe cum a veteribus, quos impressimus, nihil videatur praetermissum».

(23) GESNER, Conrad. *Bibliotheca universalis*, Zurich, 1545, as cited in MOULINIER, n. 16, p. 174, n. 23. Pinguia is another Latin name for Bingen.

(24) See GREEN (1996a), n. 21, pp. 121-122, n. 7, for a list of all editions.

Wolf, emended the author's name from «Trotula» to Eros (25). According to Junius, *Trotula* was a corruption of *Eroiulia*, which was itself a corruption of the «correct» form *Eros Juliae*. Eros, (the freedman) of the empress Julia (26). Wolf was so convinced of Junius' brilliant emendation that he also altered the one internal verbal form that had signaled the author's gender: for Kraut's *compulsa* («I [female speaker] was moved»), itself a editorial invention, Wolf substituted the masculine *compulsus*. Through these two subtle «corrections» of the text, Wolf thus created for male gynecologists an ancient forefather. The *Trotula* appeared under Eros' name in its final two editions of the sixteenth century (27). By the seventeenth century, however, it fell from the ranks of canonical texts. Male gynecologists were apparently no longer in need of an ancient precedent (or at least not *this* ancient precedent) to justify their work (28).

Outside of gynecological circles, the authoress «Trotula» was not so easily eradicated. Ignoring the debates among medical philologists, the Italian historian Antonio Mazza resurrected «Trotula» in 1681 in his *Historiarum Epitome de rebus salernitanis* («Epitome of the Histories of Salerno»).

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- (25) WOLF, Caspar (ed.). *Gynaeciorum, hoc est de Mulierum tum aliis, tum gravidarum, parientium et puerperarum affectibus et morbis libri veterum ac recentiorum aliquot, partim nunc primum editi, partim multo quam ante castigatioribus...*, Basel, Thomas Guarinus, 1566.
- (26) JUNIUS, Hadrianus. *Animadversionum libri sex, omnigenae lectionis thesaurus, in quibus infiniti penè autorum loci corriguntur & declarantur, nunc primum & nati, & in lucem aediti*, Basel, Isengrinus, 1556, p. 250.
- (27) The *Libri gynaeciorum* were reprinted with «Eros» in 1586-88 in Basel, and in 1597 in Strasbourg.
- (28) The continued appeals well into the nineteenth century to the gynecological writings ascribed to Hippocrates is an important exception. See KING, Helen. *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998. The late first/early second-century writer Soranus was also being reclaimed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an ancient gynecologist, even though it would not be until the nineteenth century that his gynecological text was actually discovered. See HANSON, Ann. *The Correspondence between Soranus, Antonius and Cleopatra*, forthcoming.

«There flourished in the fatherland, teaching at the university [*studium*] and lecturing from their professorial chairs, Abella, Mercuriadis, Rebecca, Trotta (whom some people call «Trotula»), all of whom ought to be celebrated with marvelous encomia (as Tiraqueau has noted), as well as Sentia Guarna (as Fortunatus Fidelis has said)» (29).

As I will argue at greater length elsewhere (30), when one follows up Mazza's citations, one finds that there is no evidence whatsoever that Salernitan women were ever «teaching at the university and lecturing from their professorial chairs». Just as the Renaissance humanists' creation of the classical authorities «Trotula» and then Eros can be traced to the intellectual politics of their day, so Mazza's invention of this story can be attributed to the intellectual politics of his. Just three years before Mazza's *Epitome* appeared, Elena Cornaro received a doctorate in philosophy at Padua, the first formal Ph.D. ever awarded to a woman. Mazza, concerned to document the glorious history of his *patria*, Salerno, may have been attempting to show that Padua could not claim priority in having produced female professors. Whatever his motives, Mazza's nationalistic mythology offered a compelling alternative to the classicizing inventions of the sixteenth-century philologists. It was adopted (with some garbling) by Salvatore De Renzi in the nineteenth century in his equally jingoistic *Collectio salernitana*, a massive five-volume study of Salernitan medicine (31). From De Renzi (who also originated several elements of «Trotula's» hypothetical familial history), the myth infiltrated other synthetic histories of medicine, giving rise to the rather bizarre modern accounts of «Trotula's» biography I cited earlier.

The nationalists' resurrection of «Trotula», as beguilingly romanticized as it was, did not cause the philologists' critique to be entirely abandoned.

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- (29) MAZZA, Antonio. *Historiarum Epitome de rebus salernitanis*, Naples, Pacus, 1681; repr. Bologna, Forni, 1965, p. 128: «Floruerunt igitur in Patrio Studio docendo, ac in Cathedris disceptando Abella, Mercuriadis, Rebecca, Trotta, quam alij Trotulam vocant, miris sanè encomijs celebrandae, vt notauit Tiraquellus, ac Sentia Guarna, vt ait Fortunatus Fidelis».
- (30) GREEN, Monica H. *Mulieres Salernitane: The Medical Practices and Reputation of the Women of Twelfth-century Salerno*, in preparation.
- (31) DE RENZI, Salvatore. *Collectio Salernitana ossia documenti inediti, e trattati di medicina appartenenti alla scuola medica salernitana*, 5 vols., Naples, Filiale-Sebezio, 1852-59; repr. Bologna, Forni, 1967.

In 1773 in Jena, C. G. Gruner challenged the earlier philologists' position by refuting the notion that the *Trotula* was an ancient text (32). Far from reclaiming a medieval «Trotula» as author, however, he dismissed her alleged authorship on the grounds that she was cited internally within the text. From that point on, Gruner referred to the now nameless author solely in the masculine, never pondering even for a moment whether «Anonymous» might have been a woman (33).

Historians of medicine in the twentieth century have been heirs equally to the philologists' tradition and the nationalists' one, a fractured and incompatible inheritance that has led to the scholarly quagmire that (understandably) so perplexes anyone first attempting to find out anything about «Trotula» or her attributed writings. Contributors to the «Trotula Question» have been inclined to adopt one tradition or the other without, however, exploring why the gulf between the two interpretive stances is so huge. When feminist historians of medicine first approached this scholarly inheritance earlier in the century, there was no question but that the Italian tradition celebrating a female professor should be adopted over the philologist's tradition negating not simply «Trotula's» academic rank but her very gender. In 1900, Mélima Lipinska, a physician practicing in Paris, adopted Mazza's and De Renzi's interpretations without the slightest demur, dismissing as hardly worthy of note the philologists' critiques and the «many strange things» they had said about «Trotula» (34). Later in the 1930s, Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead, a gynecologist and president of the American Women's Medical Association,

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- (32) GRUNER, Christianus Godofredus. *Neque Eros, neque Trotula, sed salernitanus quidam medicus, isque christianus, auctor libelli est qui 'De morbis mulierum' inscribitur*, Jena, Strauss, 1773.
- (33) Gruner used various historical and semantic arguments to assert that the author of the *Trotula* must have been Christian, Salernitan, and of the fourteenth (!) century. Like all other contributors to the «Trotula Question» prior to the nineteenth century, Gruner seems not to have consulted a single manuscript in constructing his critique.
- (34) LIPINSKA, Mélima. *Histoire des femmes médecins depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, G. Jacques, 1900, p. 93. In her abbreviated revision thirty years later, Lipinska does not acknowledge that there is any controversy about «Trotula» at all. LIPINSKA, Mélima. *Les femmes et le progrès des sciences médicales*, Paris, Masson & Cie, 1930.

decided to wrestle with the philologists on their own ground. She spent two years in London researching her book, *A History of Women in Medicine*, where she surveyed catalogs of medieval manuscripts (35). From this rather limited body of evidence (much of which seems to have been garbled by inaccurate note-taking), Hurd-Mead claimed that since all the medieval copies of the *Trotula* accepted «Trotula» as author, we should, too. When Hurd-Mead's successor as president of the American Women's Medical Association, Elizabeth Mason-Hohl, endeavored to provide modern readers with an English translation of the *Trotula* in 1940, she performed a deft philological move of her own: still using Kraut's «emended» text as her base, she inserted an «I, Trotula», into the preface and, in the case history where «Trotula» had been referred to in the third person, she deleted «Trotula's» name and rendered the whole passage in the first person (36).

Between the 1930s and the 1980s, the controversy over «Trotula's» existence and authorship continued, ranging from the thoughtful to the ridiculous (37). In 1985, John Benton threw a wrench into all earlier stances about «Trotula» and her work. He argued, first, that none of the elements of «Trotula's» so-called biography (her connection

(35) HURD-MEAD, Kate Campbell. *A History of Women in Medicine, from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Haddam, CT, Haddam Press, 1938; repr. New York, AMS Press, 1977. Hurd-Mead's paleographical skills were not, apparently, up to the task of looking at the manuscripts themselves; when referring to the text of the *Trotula*, she relies on the Renaissance edition. She also relied heavily on Lipinska's work, to the point of duplicating several of her errors. On Hurd-Mead's biography and her contributions to the history of women in medicine, see CABRÉ I PAIRET, Montserrat. Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead (1867-1941) and the Medical Women's Struggle for History. *Collections. The Newsletter of the Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine*, 1993, 26, 1-4, 8.

(36) MASON-HOHL, Elizabeth (trans.). *The Diseases of Women by Trotula of Salerno*, Los Angeles, Ward Ritchie Press, 1940.

(37) The fact that no critical edition of the *Trotula* has even been attempted prior to the end of the twentieth century is itself a sign of scholars' entrapment in the terms of debate established in the sixteenth century. Major discrepancies between Kraut's 1544 «classicized» edition and the medieval manuscripts have long been noted by manuscript cataloguers [see GREEN (1996a), n. 21, pp. 121-122], yet it has been assumed that the «Trotula Question» could be solved merely by altering one or two words in Kraut's otherwise unscrutinized edition.

with the de Ruggiero family, etc.) had any documentary foundation. Secondly, on the basis of a preliminary survey of the extant manuscripts of the *Trotula*, he argued that this seemingly single text was not one or even two but *three* different texts, each by a different author, none of whom, in his view, was female (38). That Benton offered a «consolation prize» in his discovery of Trota's authentic *Practica secundum Trotam* («Practical Medicine according to Trota»)—and thereby his confirmation of Trota's historicity—seems to have gone largely unnoticed. Several scholars have pronounced themselves unpersuaded by his claims that «Trotula» did not write the *Trotula*, but they have done so only by ignoring the manuscript evidence that Benton brought forward (39). An opposite tendency has been for feminist scholars to delete «Trotula» from the pantheon of «women worthies». Joan Ferrante, for example, in a 1980 essay on learned women of the Middle Ages, asserted that «Trotula» was «apparently a fiction». In her most recent survey (written more than ten years after Benton's discoveries were published) of the variety of ways medieval women were connected to writing, neither «Trotula» nor Trota makes an appearance (40). The increasingly demanding

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- (38) BENTON, John F. Benton. Trotula, Women's Problems, and the Professionalization of Medicine in the Middle Ages. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 1985, 59, 30-53.
- (39) HERLIHY, David. 'Opera muliebria': Women and Work in Medieval Europe, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1990, pp. 104-107; and RIVERA GARRETAS, María-Milagros. Trotula: El cuerpo de mujer. In: *Textos y espacios de mujeres (Europa siglos IV-XV)*, Barcelona, Icaria, 1990, pp. 105-129. Other authors cite Benton without ever realizing that his arguments have invalidated the traditional picture of the authoress «Trotula» that they are presenting based on the now-discredited Renaissance text. See, for example, ANDERSON, Bonnie S.; ZINSSER, Judith P. *A History of their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*, 2 vols., New York, Harper & Row, 1988, vol. 1, p. 421; and the new Italian translation of the Renaissance text by BOGGI CAVALLO, Pina; CANTALUPO, Piero. *Trotula de Ruggiero: Sulle malattie delle donne*, Palermo, La Luna, 1994.
- (40) FERRANTE, Joan. The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy. In: Patricia H. Labalme (ed.), *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, repr. New York and London, New York University Press, 1984, pp. 9-42. FERRANTE, Joan. *To the Glory of Her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1997. «Trotula» is likewise omitted from WILSON, Katharina (ed.). *An Encyclopedia of Continental Women Writers*, 2 vols., New York, Garland, 1991. As of 6 November 1998, «Trotula» did not even have a subject heading in the on-line bibliography on women and

expectations of a rigorous women's history have put not simply the textually-generated «Trotula» but also the historic Trota in danger of complete extinction.

2.2. Hildegard

Hildegard, as the burgeoning number of recent publications, performances and compact disk recordings amply testifies, is not in the least bit in danger of extinction. Yet she came very close to it. Her theoretical work, the *Causae et curae*, was not known to scholars until 1859 and was not printed in full until 1903. Indeed, it barely survived the Middle Ages. Only one complete copy and one collection of excerpts of it are known today, although traces of two further manuscripts can be found in medieval «sightings». Her *Physica* was decidedly more successful; currently, five complete copies and eight fragments are known (41).

This circulation hardly constitutes «great demand», however. With only one exception, Hildegard's medical writings have never been documented outside the narrow axis of the Rhine valley. Indeed, not even Benedictine nunneries seem to have shown any interest in her medical works (42). Nevertheless, Hildegard was no obscure figure. Unlike «Trotula», whose relatively slight biography could allow her to be so readily eradicated in the sixteenth century with the swipe of a

gender in the Middle Ages, the *Medieval Feminist Index*, <http://www.haverford.edu/library/reference/mschaus/mfi/mfi.html>, and this despite the fact that the present author is herself on the editorial board!

- (41) These small numbers of extant manuscripts are similar for Hildegard's other major writings. For an excellent overview of the state of the scholarship on Hildegard's medical writings, see GLAZE, Florence Eliza. Medical Writer: 'Behold the Human Creature'. In: Barbara Newman (ed.), *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and her World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998, pp. 125-148.
- (42) Aside from the copies of her works that remained at her nunnery at the Rupertsberg, the only known connection between Hildegard's medical writings and a female house is the incorporation of some excerpts of her *Physica* in a cookbook and an *Arzneibuch* compiled by a male physician at the female Cistercian abbey of Seligenthal. See GREEN, Possibilities, n. 11.

philologist's pen (43), Hildegard had a solid reputation that demanded engagement. This reputation was not due to her medical writings (or her music or her poetry), however, but to her prophetic gifts. It was created largely by the (somewhat embellished) collection of her prophecies made by one Gebeno in 1220. Thus it is not surprising to find that the sole extant complete copy of the *Causae et curae* closes the text with the rubric «The Prophecies of Saint Hildegard» (44). Nor is it surprising to find that the only copy of her *Physica* documented outside of the Rhine valley was in a volume owned by the York Augustinian friar and bibliophile John Erghome, who had a pronounced appetite for anything to do with prophecy (45).

When Hildegard's medicine was reclaimed in the mid-nineteenth century, it was as part of a project to assemble *all* her writings, not because the medicine in particular had aroused interest (46). Publication of her works spawned not only new interest, but new criticism. Although Hildegard's medical writings had had their first encounter with *Echtheitskritik* in the sixteenth century when Conrad Gesner divorced the saint from the medical writer, the most substantive arguments against Hildegard's authorship came in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (47). In

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- (43) For the few elaborations of «Trotula's» biography in the Middle Ages, see GREEN, Monica H. 'Traittié, tout de mençonges': *The Secrés des dames*, 'Trotula', and Attitudes Towards Women's Medicine in Fourteenth- and Early Fifteenth-Century France. In: Marilyn Desmond (ed.), *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. 146-78; and GREEN (1996a), n. 21, pp. 150-152.
- (44) Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Ny kgl. Samling 90b. The incipit reads «Beate hildegardis cause et cure», while the text ends «Expliciunt prophetic sancte hildegardis».
- (45) HUMPHREYS, K. W. (ed.). *The Friars' Libraries*, London, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, British Library in association with the British Academy, 1990, p. 110. On Hildegard's reputation as a prophet in England, see KERBY-FULTON, Kathryn. Hildegard and the Male Reader: A Study in Insular Reception. In: Rosalynn Voaden (ed.), *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, D. S. Brewer, 1996, pp. 1-18.
- (46) The text of the *Physica* in the *Patrologia latina* was edited by the noted historian of medicine, Charles Daremberg, who also edited a verse version of the *Trotula* at just about the same time. See GREEN, Handlist, Part II, n. 21, pp. 101-102.
- (47) MOULINIER, n. 16, pp. 175-78.

1917, Charles Singer (who a few years later would dismiss «Trotula» as an author and replace her with the male Trottus) (48) rejected the notion that Hildegard could have written the medical texts attributed to her on the grounds that they were unworthy of her «virile intellect» (49). These general questions of authenticity have now been answered satisfactorily in Hildegard's favor, yet as Eliza Glaze has noted there lingers the question of whether the medical writings somehow stand apart from the rest of her corpus.

Hildegard, like «Trotula», was readily adopted by feminist medical historians in the early twentieth century. These historians downplay Hildegard's divine inspiration, apparently in order to make her a better model for modern female practitioners, who were struggling for credibility at the very moment medicine was aggressively adopting scientific principles. When Mélina Lipinska first wrote about Hildegard in 1900, she treated her with great admiration, depicting her as fully knowledgeable in all areas of medicine. Aware of the work of other contemporary physicians, Hildegard was also ahead of her time; referring to the *Physica*, Lipinska claimed that certain passages «contain in germ some modern discoveries» (50). By 1930, however, when she had the full edition of the *Causae et curae* available, Lipinska suggests that the «confusion that reigns in this work» could be attributed to the fact that Hildegard was first and foremost a visionary (51). Despite these reservations, Lipinska goes on the credit Hildegard for her understanding of the circulation of the blood and universal gravitation! Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead, in contrast, painted Hildegard strictly as a rational empiricist: «nobody but a true observer of nature and an experimentalist could have written [these works], notwithstanding that she expressly says that all her studies

(48) SINGER, Charles; SINGER Dorothea. The Origin of the Medical School of Salerno, the First University: An Attempted Reconstruction. In: Charles Singer; Henry E. Sigerist (eds.), *Essays on the History of Medicine Presented to Karl Sudhoff on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday November 26th 1923, 1924*; repr. Freeport, NY, Books for Libraries Press, 1968, pp. 121-138.

(49) GLAZE, n. 41, pp. 145-46.

(50) LIPINSKA (1900), n. 34, p. 137.

(51) LIPINSKA (1930), n. 34, p. 39.

derived from the Bible» (52). Indeed, while she acknowledges Hildegard's occasionally «reverential» language, she depicts her in completely secular terms, suggesting that she knew the medical texts of Salerno as well as those of Dioscorides and Isidore of Seville.

The most recent wave of enthusiasm for Hildegard's medicine is not feminist *per se* but New Age (53). As Barbara Newman has noted, these new interpretations of Hildegard «give the impression that she dropped into her world like a meteorite from a late-twentieth century sky, proclaiming enlightened postmodern views on gender, ecology, ecumenism, and holistic health to an uncomprehending age» (54). This depiction of Hildegard as a visionary outside of time is in many respects due to the persona Hildegard herself helped create: that of an *indocta* («uneducated woman») and a *paupercula* («poor little woman») who was the passive recipient of visions from on high. Hildegard's only explicit reference to her medical writings dates from the late 1150s or early 1160s, when she claimed that «This same vision [i.e., the one in which the *Scivias* was revealed to her] showed the subtleties of the diverse natures of creatures in order that I might explain them» (55). Later, in her *Liber divinorum operum* («Book of Divine Works»), she wrote that «In every created thing, that is, in animals, reptiles, birds and fish, in plants and trees, there are hidden certain secret mysteries which no person or any other creature can know or sense except to the degree that [such knowledge] is given by God» (56). After her death, the monk Theoderic, who was writing the third layer of the palimpsest of Hildegard's biography

(52) HURD-MEAD, n. 35, p. 187.

(53) See MOULINIER, n. 16, pp. 5-8, for a summary of the Hildegard revival in Europe, where she is even more popular than in North America.

(54) NEWMAN, Barbara. 'Sibyl of the Rhine': Hildegard's Life and Times. In: NEWMAN, n. 41, pp. 1-29 (p. 1).

(55) HILDEGARD of Bingen. *Liber vitae meritorum*, CARLEVARIS, Angela (ed.), Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 90 Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols, 1995, prologue to Part I (p. 8): «eadem visio subtilitates diuersarum naturarum creaturarum ... mihi ad explanandum ostenderit».

(56) HILDEGARD of Bingen. *Liber divinorum operum*, DEROLEZ, Albert; DRONKE, Peter (eds.), Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis 92, Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols, 1996, Visio quarta, c. 105 (p. 255): «Sed tamen in omnibus creaturis, scilicet in animalibus, in reptilibus, in uolatilibus et in piscibus, in herbis et in

in 1186 (when plans were being made for an attempt at canonization), claimed that «she made manifest by a prophetic spirit certain things on the nature of humans and the elements, and diverse creatures, and how humans can be aided by them, as well as many other secret things» (57). Johannes Trithemius, abbot of Sponheim, visited the Rupertsberg late in the fifteenth century and remarked on the copies of Hildegard's writings that he found there:

«In the medical books, she records with a subtle exposition, the many wonders and secrets of nature in such a mystical sense, that only from the Holy Spirit could a woman know such things» (58).

For most modern popular interpreters of Hildegard's medical writings, these claims to divine origin lift Hildegard and her medicine above the muddle of human affairs. Walter Pagel's assessment of Hildegard in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, cited earlier, stems not simply from Hildegard's self-depiction (which, as his scare quotes indicate, he treats with some skepticism), but more fundamentally from Pagel's own bias in favor of «natural» medicine, which he pursued for many years in his laudatory studies of the sixteenth-century medical iconoclast, Paracelsus. The authors of the popularizing *Hildegard's Medicine*, Wighard Strehlow and Gottfried Hertzka, are, respectively, a pharmacologist and a physician who have rejected artificial pharmaceuticals in favor of a phytopharmacy based entirely on Hildegard's teachings. They take Hildegard completely at her word and interpret God as «the true author» of her work (59). Even as recently as 1998, Priscilla Throop, in the first complete English translation of the *Physica*, could claim that «the so-called medical works

pomiferis quedam occulta misteria Dei latent, que nec homo nec alia ulla creatura scit aut sentit, nisi quantum eis a Deo datum est».

- (57) GOTTFRIED of St. Disibod; THEODERIC of Echternach. *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis*, KLAES, Monika (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis* 126, Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols, 1993, book 2, chap. 1 (p. 20). On the layers of composition of the *Vita*, see NEWMAN, Barbara. *Hildegard and Her Hagiographers, or The Remaking of Female Sainthood*. In: Catherine M. Mooney (ed.), *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 1999.
- (58) As quoted in GLAZE, n. 41, p. 125.
- (59) STREHLOW; HERTZKA, n. 10, p. xviii.

were revealed by direct transmission from the Divine, *in the same way* her more theologically based visions were» (60).

This view of Hildegard as little more than a channel for divine revelation unmediated by any personal intellectual gifts or social context is no longer tenable. Modern analyses of a variety of medieval women's writing have shown that claims of unlearnedness and humility are more often than not a trope, which in Hildegard's case was honed to perfection. As Barbara Newman has observed, «The main purpose of her apparent self-deprecation ... was not to belittle herself or comment on the faults of her early training but to emphasize that the source of her revelations was divine, not human. Without this indispensable claim to prophecy, her career as a writer and preacher would have been unthinkable» (61). What is therefore most striking about the medical writings is that here Hildegard seems to have felt confident enough of her intellectual powers to have foregone «divine backing», for in contrast to all her other major works, there is nothing in the medical writings themselves that in any way lays claim to supernatural origin (62). Whatever Hildegard herself thought about her originality as a medical writer, no medieval users of the *Physica* allude to a divine origin of the work. Most did nothing more than to identify Hildegard as a saint (*beata* or *sancta*); some did not mention her name at all. In 1543, when including Hildegard in a list of female healers, the French legal scholar André Tiraqueau noted her reputation for sanctity, but thought her erudition equally worthy of praise (63). Even J. F. Reuss, in his introduction to the *Patrologia latina*

(60) THROOP, Priscilla (trans.). *Hildegard von Bingen's Physica: The Complete English Translation of Her Classic Work on Health and Healing*, Rochester, VT, Healing Arts Press, 1998, p. 2, emphasis added.

(61) NEWMAN, n. 54, p. 7.

(62) GLAZE, n. 41, pp. 144-145, perceptively notes, however, that Hildegard may well have felt some unease about publicizing her medical writings, which may explain why they, alone of all her works, do not appear in the *Riesenkodex* in which were assembled all her other writings shortly after her death.

(63) TIRAQUELLUS, n. 19, p. 313. Tiraqueau's description of Hildegard's medical writing is intriguing since it clearly does not come from the printed edition of the *Physica*. He refers to her writing on medicine as describing «which simples and which composite medicines are good for taking away disease» (*inter multa doctrinae suae monumenta scripsit in medicina, quae Simplicia, quae composita tollendis*

edition of the *Physica* in 1857, placed Hildegard squarely (if somewhat naively) in a line of other medieval monastic interpreters of medicine. Modern popularizers of holistic medicine, in contrast, do not make even so much as a nod toward scholarly studies of Hildegard's medicine or the historical context in which it was created. Divine truth is not subject to historical contingency and therefore has no need of historical interpretation.

The post-medieval fates of «Trotula» and Hildegard thus differed in several fundamental respects. Their gender contributed to their success when Johannes Schottus implicitly valorized the empirical knowledge they gained by the fact of being women. And, of course, their gender was their sole reason for being incorporated into Tiraqueau's list of medical «women worthies» in 1543 as well as the early twentieth-century feminist accounts. Their gender also seems to have spawned the authenticity questions that seem to be *de rigueur* for female writers. However, the reasons why their writings fell into desuetude differed, as did the reasons why they were revived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Renaissance humanism, national pride, religious devotion and anti-scientific naturalism have intersected in varying and not entirely predictable ways with sentiments both feminist and anti-feminist to move these two women into and out of the limelight of the stage of history.

3. *SHIFTING PARADIGMS*

The most recent episode of the strange fates of Trota and Hildegard shows their scholarly trajectories once again in parallel course even as each woman seems to become more distinct than ever before. Out of the fragments of Trota's corpus discovered by John Benton, I have reconstructed a picture of a practitioner who is a consummate empiric, combining knowledge of traditional therapies with new ones she has observed or created herself. The conditions she addresses range from

aegritudinibus prosunt). This division between simple and compound medicines first appeared in the canonization proceedings in 1233, and was repeated in Matthew of Westminster's account of her writings in 1292.

gastrointestinal to ophthalmological to pediatric. While her command of empirical medicine is impressive, Trota largely eschews (and may to some extent be ignorant of) theoretical musings on the causes of disease and the underlying physical structures and processes of the human body. Trota is, I believe, on the very margins of literate medicine (64).

As for the *Trotula* texts themselves, Benton's discovery that Kraut had fused three texts into one in his Renaissance edition has forced a return to the medieval manuscripts. And what riches they are bringing forth! Although many questions about the early history of the texts may remain unanswered due to the loss of all twelfth-century manuscripts, the remaining corpus of manuscripts has allowed the reconstruction of a textual tradition of surprising complexity. According to my analyses, one of the three *Trotula* texts (pace Benton) *does* derive from the work of the historic Trota. This text, *De curis mulierum* («On Treatments for Women»), acknowledges a broader spectrum of women's medical concerns than I have found in any medical text from the whole Middle Ages. From recognition of difficulties of bladder control to cracked lips caused by too much kissing to instructions for how to cut the umbilical cord, we sense the mundane but nonetheless pressing concerns of women. Although *De curis mulierum* is intended as a handbook for female medical practitioners rather than the laywomen who would normally have been attending uncomplicated births, care of problems consequent to birth is a particularly frequent concern. Most importantly—and most strikingly—*De curis mulierum* evinces a hands-on practice of medicine for women. By reconstructing twelfth-century attitudes toward male contact with the female body (especially the genitalia), it is possible to determine that while Trota's femininity put her on the margins of the male world of education and literate discourse, it simultaneously allowed her and other female practitioners an access to the female body that, as far as I have been able to determine, no male practitioner could ever have.

Our understanding of the form (and so the character) of Hildegard's medical writings is likewise in the midst of a paradigm shift. Whereas in

(64) Preliminary results of these analyses can be found in GREEN, Monica H. Estraendo Trota dal *Trotula*: Ricerche su testi medievali di medicina salernitana (trans. Valeria Gibertoni & Pina Boggi Cavallo). *Rassegna Storica Salernitana* 1995, 24, 31-53.

the case of the *Trotula* recent work has forced us to split apart a supposedly single text, in the case of Hildegard scholars have begun to ask whether what we now treat as two texts were in origin just one (65). Whether one text or two, Hildegard's medicine, like Trota's, seems to have a distinctively gendered cast to it, but in a very different way. Hildegard is in many respects quite traditional in her views. The painstaking philological researches of Laurence Moulinier and Florence Eliza Glaze are now showing that Hildegard was quite knowledgeable about and heavily influenced by the traditions of literate medicine of her day. This is true even of her discussion of women. Her concept of gynecological and obstetrical disease in the *Causae et curae*, for example, includes only menstrual retention, menstrual excess, and difficult birth—that is, exactly the same minimalist nosology found in the *Practicae* of male writers. What distinguishes Hildegard, as Joan Cadden has convincingly shown, is her development of a complex and novel understanding of the human body that locates gender differences at the heart of her explanations (66). Recent researches have thus completely inverted traditional assumptions about Trota and Hildegard as medical authors: Trota, far from being a professor of medicine (at least in any academic sense), turns out to have been very much on the margins of literate medical culture. Hildegard, far from being a «simple» interpreter of folk medicine, turns out to have been one of the most successful articulators of a bookish monastic medicine.

What has caused these shifts in our understanding of Trota and Hildegard? The initial answer is simple: philology, philology, and more philology. Despite the bad name that philology earned for itself in the sixteenth-century denials of «Trotula's» femininity, it is these traditional techniques of reconstructing textual history that offer us the opportunity to overturn conceptions of Hildegard's and Trota/«Trotula's» work set

(65) The description of her medical work that Hildegard herself gives in the *Liber vitae meritorum*, as noted above, refers to one vision, but this need not imply that she wrote only one book. Already by 1233, the canonization proceedings refer to two books, one on simple medicines and one on compound medicines.

(66) CADDEN, Joan. It Takes All Kinds: Sexuality and Gender Differences in Hildegard of Bingen's 'Book of Compound Medicine'. *Traditio*, 1984, 40, 149-174. See also MOULINIER, n. 16, pp. 179-204.

in printed stone by Renaissance editors. The mass of new manuscript sources discovered in the last decade and a half has alone radically transformed our understandings of the medieval texts: for both the *Trotula* and Hildegard, the number of known manuscripts has more than doubled in this short period of time (67). To be fair to our predecessors, I must stress that this work could not have been done even a century ago. Collation of data of such magnitude would not be possible without the availability of microfilm, jet travel, and computer processing. But lest I seem to veer too far toward technological determinism, let me also point out the return to philology is not simply a happy result of modernity nor is the discovery of so many new manuscripts sheer coincidence. Several of the new manuscripts of Hildegard's *Physica* were discovered because a monetary prize was offered to hasten the search (68). Benton's discovery of Trota's *Practica* was only partially serendipitous: it was because he was engaged in an aggressive search for all *Trotula* manuscripts that he used the opportunity of a brief stay in Madrid to examine what we can now recognize as a critically important manuscript in deciphering the connection between Trota and the *Trotula*.

What also differentiates much of this new scholarship from that of previous generations is a greater self-consciousness of the politics that inform *all* historiographical endeavors. Whatever the unique motivations of individual researchers may be, there can be no question that the larger intellectual context in which this new philological work is being carried out both supports and drives it. And it is precisely because that network of support and stimulation is so large that researchers can bring higher levels of self-criticism to their work. When the feminist physician/historians Lipinska and Hurd-Mead were writing earlier in this century, women's position in medical practice was still too precarious for them to admit (perhaps even to themselves) that «Trotula» and

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- (67) The number of known manuscripts of Hildegard's medical writings has gone from eight to sixteen; for the *Trotula*, from sixty to 124 copies of the Latin texts, plus sixty manuscripts of medieval translations.
- (68) See WEISS ADAMSON, Melitta. A Reevaluation of Saint Hildegard's *Physica* in Light of the Latest Manuscript Finds. In: Margaret R. Schleissner (ed.), *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine: A Book of Essays*, Garland Medieval Casebooks, 8, New York, Garland, 1994, pp. 55-80.

Hildegard were not quite the models of scientific medicine they might hope for. Current researchers, in contrast, are less concerned with finding «women worthies» than with answering important questions raised by developments in the history of medicine, cultural history, and, most importantly, women's and gender history.

Will the answers to these questions lead us, at long last, to an «authentic» women's medicine? If we understand «authentic» to mean medical beliefs and practices that can be traced back to real female historical actors, then the answer will be yes. If, however, we understand «authentic» to mean some form of women's medicine insulated from male involvement or completely distinct from a masculine mainstream medicine, then the answer will probably be no. The traditional philological goal of reconstructing the «original» text by means of collation of extant witnesses and artful emendations seems more and more of a Platonic ideal, ever receding from our grasp. Hildegard is now recognized as a perpetual revisor of her texts; even in her own lifetime, there was probably never any *single* version of her work (69). Recent understandings of medieval practices of composition raise further questions about the unity of authorship. The fact that Hildegard dictated to a series of four different male scribes has long been known; what is still not known is how much each scribe put his own imprint on her words as he pressed them into writing. Trota's *De curis mulierum* likewise appears to be the result of oral dictation, and it is likely that her work, too, was influenced by the male medical culture around her and was soon absorbed into it.

Even as they have made the search for any pure *ipsissima verba* of our female authors seem more futile, perhaps downright wrongheaded, our new postmodernist sensibilities have laid out a path for a newly invigorated and even more ambitious philology. There can be no text without a context, and it is in reconstructing that larger scenario of author + scribe/compiler + audience—all of them fixed firmly in their political and social circumstances—that we begin to piece together not simply the *oeuvres* of these female medical writers but their historical

(69) GLAZE, n. 41, pp. 146-47.

meanings and uses (70). It is only now that we have developed ways of analyzing the historical functions of gender that we can treat the works of these medical writers with the exacting criticism they demand, acknowledging both their achievements and the limitations to achievement posed by the social context in which they worked. Hopefully, by the time our earnest young student graduates from medical school a few years from now, scholars of Trota and Hildegard will at last be able to provide her with, if not an «authentic» women's medicine, then at least some better-crafted fictions of how women practiced and theorized medicine in medieval Europe.

(70) For an exceptionally lucid account of this new way of looking at texts, see SPIEGEL, Gabrielle M. History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages. *Speculum*, 1990, 65, 59-86.