

1 MIDDLE ENGLISH TROTULA TEXTS

There are several Middle English translations of texts associated with the name of Trotula, three of which are represented here. Although her existence has sometimes been questioned, Trota, or Trotula, did indeed exist. She was a woman physician who practised in Salerno, Italy, which was a great centre of medieval medicine, in the late eleventh or twelfth century. ('Trota' is a genuine name found in records of the period and is probably a diminutive of Gertrude, rather like 'Trudy'.) But the only genuine work that can be attributed to her is the very rare *Practica secundum Trotam* (*The Practice according to Trotula*), which was never translated out of Latin (see Green 2001: xvi; Benton 1985: 30–53).

From the thirteenth century onwards, however, her name was associated with several Latin treatises that circulated throughout Europe and were translated into many vernacular languages, including English. Whatever the sex of the authors, compilers or translators, these texts were seen in the Middle Ages as written by a woman, and their very existence must have influenced common perceptions of the range, status and role of women's writing. Furthermore, they do clearly seem to be based on, and sympathetic towards, women's experience of sexuality and childbirth.

'Trotula' was often cited in other texts as an authority on obstetrics and gynaecology. Ironically, some anti-feminist writings also claimed her as an authority because she appeared to endorse the idea that women are physically inferior to men (see above, Introduction, p. 18 and below, p. 27 note to ll. 9–12).

The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childing (the title given it in one manuscript) is a Middle English translation of a compilation, some of which comes from the Latin twelfth- or thirteenth-century text the *Cum auctor*, sometimes known as the *Trotula major*. The extracts here derive from that text. From the number of surviving manuscripts it seems to have circulated quite widely in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The other two texts were less popular. The *Liber Trotuli* ('Book of Trotulus') is strangely named as one would expect the feminine form *Trotulae* rather than the masculine *Trotuli*. In spite of its Latin title it is an English translation of the *Trotula minor*, the most notorious of Trotula's supposed works as it includes recipes for cosmetics – universally deplored by medieval moralists – and for lotions to create an illusion of virginity. *The Book of Rota* has no title but begins, 'This boke mad a woman named Rota'; much of its material, including the passages printed here, derives from the *Trotula major* and 'Rota' is presumably a corruption of Trota'. Its immediate original has yet to be identified but was possibly written in French (see p. 38 note to l. 111).

Comment: The first passage strikingly juxtaposes sexual and gender difference; that is, it considers the biological, sexual differences between men and women but within this frame exposes the social construction of gender through women's

exclusion from knowledge, even in an area of intimate concern to them. The translator claims to write specifically for a female audience with their welfare in mind, and has in fact chosen a text generally friendly to women, originally composed from a female perspective. It also displays a positive attitude towards menstruation, which it does not regard as unclean or as a punishment for original sin, as it so often was throughout the Middle Ages, but as necessary for childbearing, even though the causal relationship is misunderstood. Indeed, the implication is that female saints, including presumably the Virgin Mary whom many believed to have been conceived immaculately, i.e. exempt from original sin, were biologically like all other women in menstruating. The second passage discusses failure to menstruate and excessive menstruation. The third passage describes various treatments, attributed to three female practitioners, who are cited alongside Galen as authorities. It blends material from the Trotula with material from a short text derived from the Hellenistic obstetrician Soranus.

The passage from the *Liber Trotuli* shows how women's insecurities about sex made them vulnerable to pseudo-medical, possibly dangerous manipulation. The recipe for restoring virginity consists largely of various gums to constrict the vagina and therefore make intercourse more difficult. It cannot have been good for the female body, even if it worked. But the text is also notable for its non-judgemental, even encouraging attitude towards sexual activity. Generally, all the Trotula texts pay only the most cursory lip-service to Christianity, and none to the ideal of celibacy. Rather, they belong to a tradition springing from Greek scientific thought and regard sexual relations, whether in or out of marriage, as desirable, and indeed necessary for health. Unsympathetic towards virginity, they reserve their only condemnation for abortion and infanticide (however, as they regard regular menstruation as essential to women's health, their numerous recipes to provoke menstruation could possibly have been used to induce abortion).

The same nonchalant attitude toward sexual activity is evident in the first passage from *The Book of Rota*, an account of uterine suffocation and its treatment. It clearly regards sexual frustration as a frequent cause of 'suffocation of the womb' or hysteria. The second passage includes an explicit recognition that infertility, that disaster for a medieval woman, is not always her fault. It offers a would-be scientific, though no doubt ineffectual, method of diagnosis, which is in fact extremely ancient and goes back to the Greek physician Galen. The suggested cures have strong overtones of sympathetic magic, though one could act as a dietary supplement which might well have aided conception.

Manuscripts: The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childing is extant in five fifteenth-century manuscripts. The extracts here are edited from Oxford Bodley MS Douce 37. The *Liber Trotuli* is found only in BL MS Add. 34111, and the *Book of Rota* in CUL MS li. vi. 33, and Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 403. None of these texts has been previously edited.

Further Reading (for full details see Bibliography): For the history of the Latin Trotula texts and their vernacular translations and derivatives, see Green 1989; for

a modern English translation, Green 2001; on medieval theories of embryology see Hewson 1975 and Needham 1959. For a critical edition of *The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childring*, see Barratt 2001.

From *The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childring*

a) Prologue

(Oxford MS Douce 37, ff. 1–2)

Oure lorde God, whan he had storid the worlde of all creaturs, he made manne and woman a resonabull creature, and badde hem wexe and multiply, and ordende that of them two schulde cume the thurde and that of the man, that is made of hote and drye mature, schulde come the sede
5 and that the woman, that ys made of cold matyre and moyste, schulde receyve the sede, so that by the tempure of hote and colde, moyste and dry, the chyldre schulde be engendyrde, ryht as we seen treys, cornys and herbys mou not growe withoute resonabyll tempure of the foure.

And forasmoche as whomen ben more febull and colde be nature than
10 men been and have grete travell in chylidyng, ther fall oftyn to hem mo diverse sykenes than to men, and namly to the membrys that ben longynge to gendrynge. Wherefore, in the worschyp of Oure Lady and of

1 *storid*] stocked. *of*] with.

2 *resonabull*] rational. *wexe*] wax, grow.

3 *ordende*] provided, decreed.

4 *mature*] matter, substance. *sede*] seed, semen.

6 *tempure*] balance, appropriate mixture.

7 *engendyrde*] conceived. *ryht*] just. *treys*] trees. *cornys*] corn, cereals.

8 *mou*] may.

the foure] i.e. the elements of the hot, cold, moist and dry; in ancient scientific tradition going back to the Greeks, the four elements that constituted all matter were reflected in the human body by the four 'humours', or bodily fluids, of blood, choler, melancholy (black choler) and phlegm, the correct balance of which maintained good health.

9–12 *And . . . gendrynge*] this assertion of women's physical inferiority may be one reason why Chaucer included 'Trotula' among the texts that made up Jankyn's *Book of Wicked Wives* in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* (CT III(D): 677). In context, however, women's physical weakness is mentioned to evoke compassion, not contempt.

9 *febull . . . colde*] weak and cold; women's 'cold and damp' constitution was believed to be inhospitable to intellectual activity.

10 *travell*] toil, labour. *chylidyng*] giving birth. *ther . . . hem*] they often suffer from.

11 *mo*] more. *namly*] particularly. *membrys*] parts of the body.

11–12 *that . . . gendrynge*] which appertain to conception.

all sayntys, I thynke to do myn ententyffe bysynes forto drau oute of
 Latyn into Englysch dyverse causis of here maladyes, the synes that they
 15 schall knou hem by, and the curys helpynge to hem, afture the tretys
 of dyverse mastrys that have translatyde hem oute of Grek into Latyn.
 And because whomen of oure tonge cunne bettyre rede and undyrstande
 thys langage than eny other, and every whoman lettyrde may rede hit
 to other unlettyrd and help hem and conceyle hem in here maledyes,
 20 withowtyn scheuyng here dysese to man, I have thys drauyn and wryttyn
 in Englysch.

And yf hit fall any man to rede hit, I pray hym and scharge hym in Oure
 Lady behalve that he rede hit not in no dyspyte ne sclaudure of no
 woman, ne for no cause but for the hele and helpe of hem, dredynge that
 25 vengauens myht fall to hym as hit hath do to other that have scheuyd here
 prevytees in sclaudyr of hem; undyrstondynge in certeyne that they have
 no other evyls that nou be alyve than thoo women hade that nou be
 seyntynt in hevyn.

13 *do . . . bysynes*] try diligently.

13–14 *drau . . . Englysch*] translate from Latin into English (this is the translator's comment, not the original text).

14 *here*] their. *synes*] signs, symptoms.

15 *afture*] according to.

16 *dyverse mastrys*] various masters; the treatise draws partly on the Greek medical writers Muscio and Soranus (early second century).

17–19 *And . . . unlettyrd*] it was a medieval commonplace (which like most commonplaces had a strong element of truth) that women were ignorant of Latin and that if they could read at all they could read only their mother tongue; consequently translations of all sorts are often explicitly said to have been made for women, or at women's request (see Introduction, p. 12).

17 *whomen . . . tonge*] i.e. English-speaking women. *cunne*] know how to.

18 *whoman lettyrde*] literate woman.

19 *unlettyrd*] illiterate. *conceyle*] advise.

20 *scheuyng*] showing, disclosing.

22 *yf . . . man*] if any man chances. *scharge*] charge, enjoin.

22–3 *in . . . behalve*] on Our Lady's behalf.

23–4 *no . . . woman*] any contempt or slander of any woman; the fictional Jankyn's use of a Trotula text, among other anti-feminist writings, to control the Wife of Bath (see above) suggests that the translator's anxiety was not unfounded. It is significant, though, that the translator here condemns such contempt as uncharitable, suggesting that the debate was not always one-sided.

24 *ne . . . hem*] nor for any reason except their healing and help.

25 *vengauens*] vengeance, punishment.

25–6 *other . . . prevytees*] others who have revealed their (i.e. women's) secrets.

26 *in certeyne*] certainly.

27 *evyls*] diseases, troubles. *nou*] now. *thoo*] those.

Ryht as the makere of all thyngys ordende treys forto burjone and floure
 30 and than aftyrwarde forto beere froyte, in the same manere he hath
 ordeynde to all whomen an esporgymente, the whyche ys calde the
 flourys, witoutyn whyche may no chylde be engendryde ne conceyvyde.
 For befoore that hit ys comyn ne afture hit ys gonne may no woman con-
 ceuwe. For ryht as polucyon be superhabundance of humors fallyth to a
 35 man, so dothe the flourys to a woman, as I shall tell yow hereafyre.

b) *Causes of Menstrual Problems*
 (ff. 8–9^v)

Now schall I tell yow the cause of retencyon and fayllynge of floures. Hit
 fallith other-whyle of defaute of blode, and that commyth to a woman
 that ys hote and dry of complexion, in wyche the blode ys mochyll
 vastyde, and that ys the cause that they be lene and make mochyll urine,
 40 and so the flourys be holdunne. And other-whyll hit commyth of that the
 blode ys stopyde, that hit may have no ysseu, and that commyth of colde
 and of drynesse. For bothe qualites mak the vaynes narou, small and
 strayte. And other-whyle hit commyth of gret congeylynge of blode, that
 for the grosnesse hit may not passe the vaynes, and that befallyth whan
 45 melancholy ys cause of that defaut, and ye schall knou the dysesse whan
 a woman makyth but lytyll watyre and thyn. And other-whyle hit fallyth

29 *burjone*] flourish.

30 *froyte*] fruit

31 *esporgymente*] purgation.

32 *flourys*] menstrual flow.

34 *polucyon*] pollution, i.e. nocturnal emissions. *be*] by. *superhabundance*] excess.
humors] bodily fluids. *fallyth to*] occurs in.

36 *retencyon*] retention. *fayllynge*] failure. *floures*] menstruation, menstrual flow.

37 *fallith*] happens. *of defaute*] from lack.

38 *complexion*] physical constitution; 'hot and dry' is of course masculine (see previous passage).

38–9 *mochyll vastyde*] much wasted, diminished.

39 *they*] i.e. such women. *lene*] lean.

40 *holdunne*] withheld, retained. *of that*] from (the fact) that.

41 *ysseu*] issue, exit.

41–2 *colde . . . drynesse*] women's constitution is properly cold but also moist (see previous passage).

43 *strayte*] tight, constricted. *congeylynge*] coagulating, clotting.

44 *grosnesse*] thickness. *passe*] i.e. pass through.

45 *melancholy*] excess of black choler. *knou*] know, recognise.

46 *but . . . watyre*] only a little urine.

bycause that the blode that scholde go there-away passyth by other wayys,
 as be vomyt or bledynge at the nose or the emeroydys benethe, and that
 ys of the flouyre that sekyth to have ysseu and may have none, and so
 50 voydyth there. And yf hit stope because hit may have no resonabull ysseu,
 ye schall mak hem hole be medycyns that sewyn here-aftyre, where hit
 spekyth yf women have to lytyll of here flourys.

Now schall I tell yow the causys that makyn the flowrys to fall to super-
 habundantly and oute of cours. One cause ys that the vaynes of the
 55 matryce been oftun tyme over-opyn and that schall be know whan the
 flouyre passyth hastyly rede and clere. Anothir cause ys whan a woman
 hath gaderyde over-moche blode by over-moche mete and over-moche
 drynck and over-moche reste, and other-whyll hit commyth because the
 60 blode ys ovyre-moche chaufyde be colere or other humors that cume oute
 of the hede and other partyes of the body and medyll with the blode and
 chaufe hit and mak hit to boyle, that the vaynes may not hold hit. And
 yf the flourys that passun comme of colere, than they be yelou. And yf
 they comme of blode, than be they rede and yf they comme of fleume,
 than be they watyre-lycke and pale.

65 Another cause ther ys because that all that blode within the body of
 woman ys corrupte thyng and Nature of hys pouere woll woyde corrupte
 thyngys and noyant to mannys body and womannys, and so makyth the

47 *there-away*] away in that direction.

48 *emeroydys*] haemorrhoids.

50 *voydyth*] evacuates. *resonabull*] appropriate.

51 *hem*] i.e. such women. *sewyn*] follow.

53–4 *to superhabundantly*] too abundantly.

54 *oute of cours*] irregularly.

55 *matryce*] womb, uterus.

56 *hastily . . . clere*] rapidly and bright red.

57 *gaderyde*] gathered, accumulated. *over-moche mete*] excessive food.

59 *chaufyde*] heated. *colere*] cholera.

60 *medyll*] mingle.

62 *than*] then. *yelou*] yellow.

63 *fleume*] phlegm.

64 *watyre-lycke*] watery.

65–6 *all . . . thyng*] reflecting the theory that menstruation purges the woman of undigested matter.

66 *hys pouere*] power; 'Nature' is more usually personified as female.
woyde] void, evacuate.

67 *noyant*] harmful.

flourys to voyde to superhabundantly and ovyre-owtragisly, so that hit
 70 so febull that here lyvere coldyth for the blode that sche lesyth, and may
 not abyde in hys kendly hete ne to defy the mete and drynck into kyndly
 blode, but turnyth so into vatyre and fallyth to a dropsy incurabyll but yf
 they be the sonnere iholpyn and stopyde by medycynys that ye schall
 fynde here-aftere, where hit spekith for superfluite of over-moche flourys.

c) *Some Cures for Failure to Menstruate*
 (ff. 24^v–27)

75 Anothyre medycyn that a lady of Salerne usyde. Tak perytory, malouys,
 calamynt and the daysy and let stampe hem and wrynge out the juse of
 the forseyde herbys. Afture tak fayere flowere of whete and tempyre hit
 with the juce of the forseyde herbys and mak ther-of oblayes or crispys
 80 and yif hare the fyrst day seven, the second day five, the thurde day thre,
 and sche schall purge hare anonne.

[. . .] Galyen sayth that a woman that hath lost hare flowrys schulde
 blede undyre harre ancle one day on that one fote, another on that other
 fote, mesurably as sche may bere, for the blode will evyre draw thedyre
 as hit hath ysseu, and so schall sche mak hit to draw donward.

68 *ovyre-owtragisly*] excessively.

69 *lese . . . to*] lose the desire for.

70 *lyvere coldyth*] liver grows cold.

71 *hys*] its. *kendly, kyndly*] natural. *defy*] digest.

72 *vatyre*] water. *dropsy incurabyll*] incurable oedema. *but yf*] unless.

73 *iholpyn*] helped. *stopyde*] staunched.

75 *Salerne*] Salerno, Italy: see headnote.

75–6 *perytory, malouys, calamynt*] pellitory-of-the-wall, mallows, catnip.

76 *let . . . hem*] have them pounded. *wrynge*] squeeze.

77 *fayere . . . whete*] fair wheat flour. *tempyre*] mix.

78 *oblayes or crispys*] small cakes or wafers.

79 *yif hare*] give her.

80 *purge hare*] purify herself, i.e. begin to menstruate. *anonne*] immediately.

81 *Galyen*] Galen, Greek physician and medical authority (c. 130–c. 200) who worked in Rome.

82 *blede*] be bled: bleeding was a standard medieval therapeutic practice. *harre*] her.

83 *mesurably . . . bere*] moderately as far as she can tolerate it.

83–4 *draw . . . ysseu*] gravitate towards the place where it can exit.

85 A medycyn for the same: tak horhownd and stamp hit and draw hit
 thorow a cloth and yiff hare to drynk with white wynne. And that herbe
 ys good to bath harre ynne. And hit ys good whyle hit ys grene to stamp
 hit and ley hit undyr hare navyll. Or ellys lett sethe hit in a pot and,
 90 also hote as sche may suffyre hit, let hare sitte ther-ovyre and receyve the
 fume into hare matryce, and look sche be well covyrde with clothys all
 aboute, that the fume may well be holdyn ynne so that nonne passe but
 upward. [. . .]

For to mak the flourys to come, allthow the matrys be out of hare ryght
 place, and forto mak a woman conceive: tak of botyr five unce, of juce
 95 of isope one unce, of myrre one unce, of the seuet of a deere too unce,
 of grece of a henne too unce, of terebentyne too unce and of hony
 that suffysyth; mak all thes thyngis to sethe in a potte of erthe and use
 hem as a pessary undyrnethe. For this pessary usydde Dame Fabina Prytyll
 whan hare nature was nygh wastydde, and sche was all hooll.

100 And are ye yeve hare eny medycyns, let hare six or seven dayes before
 use metys laxatyvys and drynkys and tak castorium and tempyre hit with
 the juce of pulioll and of calamynt and yiff hare to drynk. Or tak pulioll
 and calamynt and sethe them in mede and than dry ham and mak
 poudyre of hem and of that poudyre yif hem to drynk with mede.

85 *horhownd*] horehound.

86 *yiff*] give

88 *ley*] lay, apply. *undyr*] below. *lett . . . hit*] have it boiled.

89 *also . . . hit*] as hot as she can bear it.

89–90 *sitte . . . matryce*] the ancient therapeutic practice known as subfumigation.

90 *look*] see to it.

91 *holdyn yme*] kept in.

91–2 *that . . . upward*] i.e. that it all goes upwards.

93–4 *allthow . . . place*] even if the uterus is displaced.

94 *botyr*] butter. *unce*] ounces.

95 *isope*] hyssop. *myrre*] myrrh. *seuet . . . deere*] deer suet, fat. *too*] two.

96 *grece*] grease. *terebentyne*] terebinth, turpentine.

97 *that suffysyth*] that is sufficient. *mak . . . sethe*] have all these things boiled.

98–9 *Fabina Prytyll*] a corruption of ‘Fabiana Priscilla’, the name of an otherwise unknown ancient doctor or midwife.

99 *nature . . . wastydde*] physical constitution was nearly destroyed.
all hooll] completely cured.

100 *are*] before. *yeve*] give.

101 *metys . . . drynkys*] food and drink with laxative properties.
castorium] castor, the dried perineal glands of the beaver.

102 *pulioll*] pennyroyal, wild thyme.

103 *mede*] mead. *ham*] them.

- 105 Dame Cliopatre taut thys medycyn to hare douter, yif hare matryce were so induerde and hardyde that hare flowrys myghth not passe. Sche bad tak the gall of a boll or of another best and the poudyre of myrre and the juce of isop and methill hem togythere and than tak tosydde woll and mak a pessary therof and rolle hit and put hit in so.
- 110 Another: tak rwe, mynt, pulioll ryall, of eche lyche muche; thre croppis of sauge, thre plantys of rede cole, thre hedys of lekys, and sethe all thes in a pot of erthe with wynne and yif hare to drynk aftyr hare bathynge. Another: tak the rote of gladyoll and the rote of lovache and the herbe of nepte and seth them togythyre in wynne and yif hare to drynk at evyn
- 115 and at morunne and let kyvere hare warme that sche may swete. Or tak tansay, fethyrfoy, mugwort and fry hem in bottyre and bynde hem hot to hare navill, and so do ofte. Another that a Jue dede to the quene of France: he tok gyngere, levys of lorere and savayn and he stampid hem both togythere and put hem in a pott upon quyk colys and made the quene to
- 120 syt over the pot mowth and receyve the fume therof up into hare matryce and let covyre hare well with clothys, that the fume myghht not passe. But whan women use many suche fumigacyons hit ys nedfull for here to anynt hare wyket within with oyle roset for over-moche chafynge.
- 125 Nepte, calamynt, myntis, savayne, eschalones, senvay, pepyre and comyn be good for hare, usydde togedyre or els eche be hemselfe. Foulys of the felde, kyddys or gottys flesch, fysch of rynnynge water with scalys,

105 *Cliopatre*] Cleopatra, considered to be the author of the gynaecological treatise *Gynaecia Cleopatrae*.

taut] taught.

106 *induerde*] toughened. *hardyde*] hardened.

107 *gall . . . boll*] bull's gall-bladder.

108 *methill*] mix. *tosyddde woll*] teased wool.

110 *rwe*] rue. *of . . . muche*] a similar amount of each.

110–1 *croppis . . . sauge*] pieces of sage.

111 *plantys . . . cole*] heads of red cabbage.

113 *gladyoll*] yellow flag iris. *lovache*] lovage.

115 *morunne*] morning. *let . . . warme*] have her covered warmly.

116 *tansay, fethyrfoy, mugwort*] tansy, feverfew, mugwort (wormwood).

117 *Jue*] Jew.

118 *lorere and savayn*] laurel (bay) and savin (soapwort).

119 *quyk colys*] live, glowing coals.

122 *fumigacyons*] subfumigations.

123 *wyket*] external genitals. *oyle roset*] rose oil.

for . . . chafynge] because of excessive overheating, chaffing.

124–5 *eschalones, senvay, pepyre and comyn*] scallions, mustard, pepper and cumin.

126 *fysch . . . scalys*] i.e. fresh-water fish.

all theys be good for hare to ete. And yf sche have no agu ne fevyre, good hit ys for hare to drynk stronge whyte wynne. Othyre thyngis were good for hare to use, but that woll not I wryht, lest summe wolde leve all thes
 130 medycynys and use that to moche.

From the *Liber Trotuli*

d) *Some Recipes* (BL MS Add. 34111, ff. 211–12^v)

Now it is to touche of some wyman that han thair prive membre so large and so eville-smellyng, where-thorow their hosebondes forsaken hem because of largenes and be the wykked smel, ne han no wille to come nere hem.

135 For this vice of the woman, do mak a water strictive that wille mak come togyder in this maner. Tak the bark of the poumegarnet and the galles and the bark of hem and the braunches of lentisci and the leves of vivelef and the rotes of the two consoudes, the more and the lesse, and the leves of the lorer and of the rosemarin, and sethe alle thes in reyny water or in
 140 aqua rosacea, in whiche water do boile mastik and frauncensens, galbanum, sagapium, that bien gummes, and gumma arabica and parchemyn of a calfe, and whan thes bien wel ysothe, do streyn thes and do to the leves of the lorere and of rosen, that it smel sote.

128–30 *Othyre . . . moche*] the original lists as further treatments cupping, scarification and sexual intercourse.

129 *leve*] leave off, abandon.

131 *prive membre*] genitals.

132 *where-thorow*] because of which.

133 *be*] because of. *wille*] desire.

135 *vice*] physical defect, blemish. *do mak*] have made.
water strictive] astringent liquid.

136 *poumegarnet*] pomegranate.

137 *lentisci*] mastic tree. *vivelef*] five-leaf, quintfoil.

138 *the(1) . . . lesse*] the consound is a kind of herb, the 'lesser' being the daisy, the 'greater' being comfrey.

139 *lorer*] laurel. *rosemarin*] rosemary. *sethe*] simmer. *reyny*] rain.

140 *aqua rosacea*] rose water. *do boile*] have boiled. *frauncensens*] frankincense.
galbanum] gum resin.

141 *sagapium*] gum resin, concrete juice of *Ferula persica*.
gumma arabica] gum from certain species of acacia. *parchemyn*] skin.

142 *ysothe*] seethed, simmered. *do streyn*] have sieved. *do to*] add.

143 *rosen*] roses.

Yif that thow wille so wassh hem with this water, have it redy and
 145 make hem, whan that thei gothe to bed with man, do hem wassh thair
 instrument with this same water with thaire fynggers within with wolle
 iwet in this water; and also wassh welle withoute, for it clensith and
 maketh swote the humours, bothe within and withoute, and than do hem
 dry with a lynnen clothe iput within and also do dry withoute and than
 150 she may stride and lete passe the moisture within benethe. And than
 another tyme do hir putte in and dry it with a dry lynnen cloute.

And whan that she wille go slepe with any man, do hir take thes poudres
 ymade of dry roses, of clowes and of notemugges, of galyngale and of the
 leves of the lorer, and of this poudre do tak a lytel porcion bitwix thin
 155 hondes and do frote the brest and the teten and the prive membre and
 other that longgeth therto and than do wassh the face with aqua rosacea
 and than do touche the man; and at she do frote hir under the armeoles
 and in other places where she see that it be do.

A powder yproved for staunchyng of the blode ate the nose and of the
 160 prive floures. Take saunk de dragoune and bolum armenicum and canel and
 the rynd of the poumegarnet, of alum and mastik of galles ana unces too,
 and mak poudre of alle thes other ana, and do hem in a litel water ichaufyd
 and do this togyder and sithen put in the hole that gothe to the marice.

145 *make . . . wassh*] make them have washed.

146 *instrument*] genitals. *within*] internally. *wolle*] wool.

147 *withoute*] externally.

148 *swote*] sweet. *humours*] secretions.

150 *stride*] walk around. *lete . . . benethe*] allow the moisture within to flow out.

151 *another*] i.e. a second.

152 *do hir take*] let her take. *poudres*] powders.

153 *clowes*] cloves. *notemugges*] nutmegs. *galyngale*] galingale.

154 *thin*] thy.

155 *frote*] rub. *teten*] nipples.

156 *other . . . therto*] the other parts of the body in that area.

157 *at . . . hir*] that she may, i.e. let her, rub herself. *armeoles*] armpits.

159 *yproved*] tested.

160 *prive floures*] menstruation.

saunk de dragoune] san-dragoun, red juice or the resin of the dragon-tree (*Dracaena Draco*).

bolum armenicum] Armenian bole (red earth). *canel*] cinnamon.

161 *ana unces too*] two ounces of each.

162 *other ana*] each of these.

do . . . ichaufyd] have them warmed in a little water.

163 *sithen*] then.

165 Forto mak streyt the prive membre. Tak a stone that is yclepyd omathistos
 and gallas and bollum armenicum and saunk de dragoune and stamp hem
 wonder smalle that thei may be sarcid thorow a lynnyn cloute, and tempre
 thes poudres with the juse of plantayne, and than do dry it ate sone and
 than tak a lytel of this pouder with the juse forsayd and do it in be a tent
 170 and do mak the woman somdel lige wyddopyn, strechyng oute the legges,
 and this pouder is gode for woman that hathe han part of man and wolde
 be holde for a mayden.

For woman that hathe the prive membre large, to beo made streyt. Tak
 gallas and sethe hem in water, and with this water do wassh the prive
 membre, and than take the pouder of boli armenici and of thes gallas and
 175 strew thes poudres ther-upon, and it shalle mak streyt.

From *The Book of Rota*

e) *Hysteria: Suffocation of the Womb* (CUL MS li. vi. 33, ff. 3–5)

180 The matryce ryses some tymes up to the stomake, and that is called the
 rysynge of the matrice or of the mother. And thys call the fisisions
 suffocacion of the matrice, and commeth oft tymes of gret grevaunce, or
 after gret sorowe, and sumtyme of great abundauns of wynde, the which
 would be delyverd by mans company. This dissesse have wedowes that were
 wont to have mans company. Also this sicknesses come sumtyme and oft
 of wantynge of flouris. This sicknes ys full grevos in sum wemen oftymes,

164 *streyt*] narrow. *yclepyd*] called.

166 *wonder*] extraordinarily. *sarcid*] sieved. *cloute*] piece of cloth. *tempre*] mix.

167 *juse*] juice. *ate sone*] quickly.

168 *do . . . tent*] put it in by means of a linen plug.

169 *somdel*] to a certain extent. *lige*] lie. *wyddopyn*] i.e. with her legs apart.

170 *han part*] had experience.

170–1 *wolde . . . mayden*] wants to be thought a virgin; presumably the various gums served to create adhesions and make intercourse difficult.

175 *strew*] sprinkle; this recipe probably worked by acting as a constrictive.

176–7 *matryce, matrice, mother*] uterus.

177 *fisisions*] physicians.

178 *commeth*] (it) comes. *grevauunce*] injury, distress

180 *delyverd*] released. *mans company*] i.e. sexual relations. *wedowes*] widows.

181 *wont*] accustomed. *this*] these.

182 *of(1) . . . flouris*] from failure to menstruate.

that they be sore sycke and fall in sownynge and loose ther brethe and lye as they were dede.

185 How wemen died in rysyng of the mother. And oft tymes they dyed of that sicknes, and therefore it is perelous but it is sone helped whyle a woman hath the axis. And she be called by her proper name, it easeth hir, for she undirstandeth it but she may nott answer. And after that she thynkes uppon all that she hath harde in her desese well inowghe.

190 Thys is helpe for the dissesse, yf a woman be fallen in a sowne of this forseyd infirmite. Take fyrst and frete fast and strongly her extremetyes, that is, her handes and the solis of her feete, with salt and vyne-eger, or else with oyle of lorell leues or with oyle of roses. Take tyeme and bynde hit nere to her body with a towell fast and harde, and yt wyll helpe to
 195 draw downe the blood and the matrice. And also holde sum thyng that is stynkeng to her nose, as is brent cloth or brent lether or brent horne or assafetida, and all stynkyng thyng that wyll dryve downe the matrice. And in the mene tyme, holde beneth at her privety sum thyng that is of swete saver, as is muske or cloves or canell or lorell leues or camemell and
 200 other, such as yow plese. And lett a woman anynt her handes with an oyle that is called oleum muscelinum, that is yn Englyshe oyle of muske, or else with balme, or oyle of lyllyes, and put her fyngers into her privete and stere abowte faste to ma the mater to dyspley and cum downe faste. And loke yf you may make her nese, for that wyll helpe her greatly. All
 205 thys ys good to helpe a woman when she is in this disses.

183 *sownynge*] swooning. *loose ther brethe*] cease to breathe.

186 *but . . . helped*] unless it is helped promptly.

187 *axis*] access, acute attack. *And*] if. *proper*] own.

189 *harde*] heard.

190 *sowne*] swoon.

191 *frete fast*] rub firmly.

193 *tyeme*] thyme.

194 *nere*] closely. *fast and harde*] tightly.

195–6 *holde . . . nose*] i.e. to repel the uterus that has risen up out of its proper place (the origin of smelling salts).

196 *brent*] burnt.

197 *assafetida*] asafoetida, a plant with a strong smell like onion or garlic.

198 *privety*] pudendum.

199 *saver*] savour, smell. *canell*] cinnamon. *camemell*] chamomile.

202–3 *put . . . faste*] as uterine suffocation was caused by a build-up of female ‘seed’, it could be cured by inducing sexual release.

203 *stere abowte faste*] stir around strongly. *ma*] make.
mater] (corrupt) matter. *dyspley*] disperse, dissipate.

204 *loke . . . nese*] see if you can make her sneeze.

f) *Infertility: Diagnosis and Cure*
(ff. 11^v-13)

Another infirmite ther ys of the matrice of a woman, that is they may nott
conceave children as they wold. And this may be sumtyme thorowe the
defaute of the man, and sumtyme it may be the defaute of the woman,
and sumtyme thorow bothe. But to knowe in whether the faute is, take
210 this medicyne:

Take a lytyll erthen pott newe and put therin the mans uryne and cast
therto an handfull of bran and stere it fast with a sticke about and take
annother newe erthen pott and put therin the womans uryne and put
bran therto and ster it as the other, and let it stande so nine dayes or ten
215 and loke than in whether pott that yow fynde wormes in. Ther ys the
defaute that is baren, be yt the man or the woman, for the baren wyl be
full of wormes. The vessell that the baren uryne is in wyll stynke. And yf
nether vessell be with wormes, than is neyther of them baren. And than
they may be holpen with medicynes, of the which sum I wyll speke of, to
220 make a woman to conceve with childe.

Take woll well tosed and roste it well in asse mylke and bynd it uppon
the womans navell and let hit lye soo tyll she have done with her husband
for that journey, and she shall conceave.

Take the lyver and the stones of a gryse that a sowe hath noo moo of
225 that lytter but one, and drye that and make it in powder, and gyffe it to

206 *infirmite*] disease, disorder. *matrice*] uterus.

207 *conceave*] conceive.

208 *defaute*] deficiency, fault.

211 *lytyll . . . newe*] small, new, earthen pot; the position of 'newe' after the noun suggests that the translator's original might be French.

uryne] urine.

210-11 *cast therto*] throw into it.

212 *stere . . . about*] stir it round thoroughly with a stick.

215 *than*] then. *whether*] which.

216 *baren*] barren, infertile. *be yt*] whether it is.

219 *holpen*] helped.

221 *woll*] wool. *tosed*] combed, carded. *roste*] cook, boil.

asse mylke] ass's milk. *bynd*] tie.

222 *have done*] has had intercourse.

223 *journey*] day (compare F. *ournée*).

224 *lyver*] liver. *stones*] testicles. *gryse*] piglet.

224-5 *that . . . one*] i.e. that is the only product of a sow's litter. *gyffe*] give.

the woman to drynke and she shall conceve. And geve a man the pouder
to drynke and sone after he shall engender. Sum men seye yt ys no forse
whether ther be no moo of that varow or no. And sum men saye yt were
good inogh yf the stones of the grysse were bakyn in a pye by hemselve,
230 without any other fleshe. And make a woman to eate of that pye, and the
same nyght let it be knowen to her husbände, and than company with
hym, and she shall conceve, as it hath byn proved in dede.

Textual notes

2 *a*] and.

6 *by*] be.

7 *be engendyrde*] engendyrde.

18 *may rede*] rede.

37 *fallith*] fallit.

46 *a*] om.

58 *the*] of.

61 *that*] with.

67 *and noyant*] noryschant.

68 *voyde to*] om.

69 *woman*] women.

84 *to*] do.

97 *thyngis*] tyngis.

98 *Dame*] damd.

105 *Dame*] damd.

118 *of*] or.

120 *up*] vt.

176 *ryses*] rysezes.

178 *off*] + to *crossed through*.

185 *died*] *altered from did*.

194 *hit*] + fast *crossed through*.

201 *muscelinum*] muscelimum.

203 *annother*] annothe.

209 *hemselve*] hymselfe.

226 *geve*] give. *pouder*] powder.

227 *engender*] father a child. *ys no forse*] makes no difference.

228 *whether . . . no*] whether or not there are any more (piglets) in that litter; a litter of a single piglet would be extremely rare.

229 *inogh*] enough. *bakyn*] baked. *by hemselve*] i.e. on their own.

230 *fleshe*] meat, i.e. the pig's liver.

231 *company*] (let her) have intercourse.

232 *byn*] been.