

The Disease Woman: A Neutral Representation of Health?

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Abstract

This essay discusses the Disease Woman schema on folio 52v in Wellcome MS 290, a medical illustration often neglected in modern scholarship, and considers how it related to late medieval ideas about the gendered human body. The figure is positioned within its original manuscript context and compared to the other (male) bodies depicted, as well as discussed in relationship to other medical illustrations and contemporary scientific and theological theories. Through close study of formal features and intervisual analysis, this essay shows that the Disease Woman functioned not just to describe illness or ailments, but also to emphasise women's inferior bodies and status.

Keywords: Medical Manuscripts; Medieval Medicine; Medical Humanities; Gender; Wound Man; Disease Woman; medical illustrations; medical diagrams; masculinity; femininity.

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Introduction and Manuscript Context¹

As medieval medical motifs go, the Wound Man is relatively well known to modern audiences, even making a brief appearance in the TV show *Hannibal*.² Less well known, however, is the Disease Woman, a motif often included alongside the Wound Man in medieval manuscripts and early printed books. Current scholarship has largely focused on the depiction of the bruised and battered male body on its own, removing him from his original visual and textual frameworks.³ While the motif often travelled between texts, and was copied in both manuscripts and incunabula, he was commonly, through *mise-en-page* and proximity, linked with his female counterpart, the Disease Woman. Illustrating what injuries can befall the human body, the Wound Man figure is penetrated by instruments embedded in the wounds that they have caused. Karl Sudhoff famously referred to it as a surgical-grotesque, a warped Saint Sebastian, as both figures show their wounds and the tools which inflicted them.⁴ I believe that the intellectual and

¹ I would like to extend my thanks to the anonymous reviewers of this essay.

² Episode 6, Season 1 of *Hannibal*. Produced by NBC and originally aired May 2, 2013. I am grateful to Jack Hartnell for telling me about this.

³ Elizabeth Matthew Lewis, *The Wound Man Through History: An Exhibition of Selected Landmark Books and Articles* (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1976), 20-22.

⁴ Karl Sudhoff, 'Der Wundenmann' in Frühdruck und Handschrift und sein erklärender Text. Ein Beitrag zur Quellengeschichte des "Ketham" *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 1 (1907), 351.

stylistic choices made by medieval artists rendering the Wound Man and the Disease Woman reflect contemporary ideas and theories regarding the subordinate position and defective nature of the female disposition. In this essay, I will focus my discussion on the pair of images included in a late medieval English manuscript, Wellcome MS 290 (Fig. 1 and 2).⁵ By considering the Wound Man and the Disease Woman of this codex in relation to contemporary scientific ideas about sex and sex-difference, we can gain a deeper understanding of this gendered image pair. I will show that within the visual programme of this codex, gender is constituted and described through artistic choices and references to contemporary medical and physiognomical discourses. I will further discuss how the visual cues modern readers might understand as neutral were in fact coded with social, scientific, and theological meaning.

First, however, we must consider the immediate physical and visual surroundings of the Wound Man and Disease Woman. In this codex, the Wound Man is a standard figure of its kind, illustrating wounds inflicted on the human male body by arrows and clubs, swords, and daggers. The male figure is standing upright, displaying his bleeding, wounded, and pierced body. The torso is opened and his internal organs labelled. The surrounding text describes and names different ailments which have befallen him. For example, the text above the left shoulder reads “tumour in the neck” and on the other side of the figure the legend reads “cut in the large vein in the neck.”⁶ Similarly, the representation of the Disease Woman remains faithful to this visual norm.⁷ The crouching figure is pregnant, the child visible in her womb, and the body is overwritten with the names of ailments and diseases.⁸

⁵ London, Wellcome Medical History Library, Wellcome MS 290. The online catalogue entry:

[\(http://archives.wellcome.ac.uk/Dserve/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=\(RefNo==%27MS290%27\)\)](http://archives.wellcome.ac.uk/Dserve/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=(RefNo==%27MS290%27))
(Accessed February 20, 2017).

⁶ Wellcome 290 f. 53v: *stuma in collo* and *incisio vene magne in collo* respectively.

⁷ Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 26-33.

⁸ Madeline Caviness, “Art, Representations of Women,” in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe, an Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus (New York, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2006), 39. In Wellcome MS 290, f. 52 v, the text on the left shin of the Disease Woman reads ‘Cramps’ (*spasmus*); in the text on the left hand side of the head, it reads ‘lethargy’ (*letargia*).

Jack Hartnell shows that these two illustrations exhibit "direct influence from the printed" book *Fasciculus Medicinae*, and were thus produced after 1491.⁹ The images of the two figures are not the only decorative features within this rich and luxurious manuscript and in order to fully understand them, it is necessary to consider the larger codicological context.

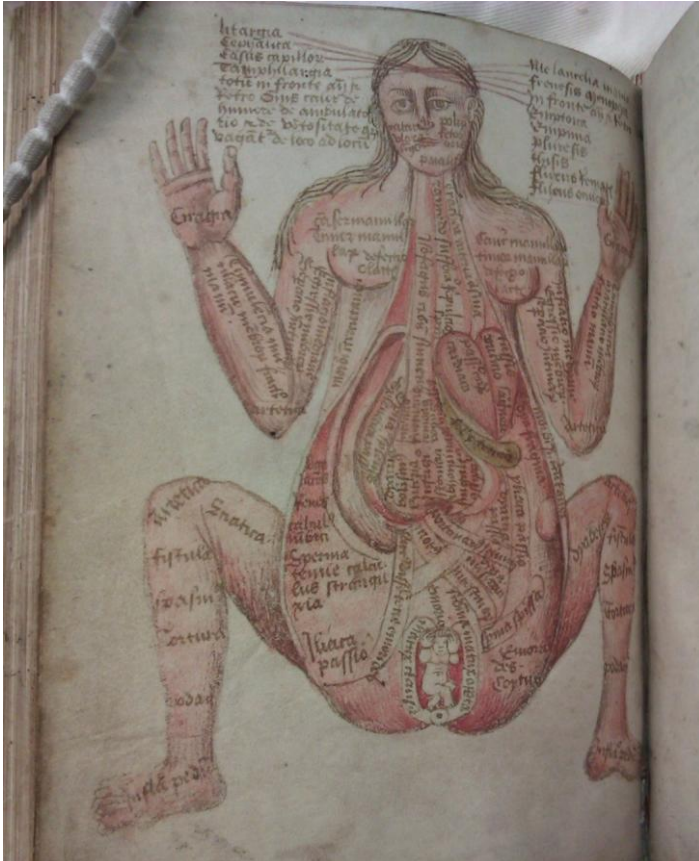


Fig. 1. Diagram of the Disease Woman. London, Wellcome Collection Library, Wellcome MS 290, f. 52v. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

⁹ Jack Hartnell, "Wording the Wound Man," *British Art Studies* 6 (2017): 23-26.



Fig. 2. Diagram of the Wound Man. London Wellcome Collection Library, Wellcome MS 290, f. 53v. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0

The text in Wellcome 290 was produced in the middle of the fifteenth century in England. It is written in English with Latin labels and marginal commentary added later. The manuscript is composed of 56 parchment folios in a modern binding and the pages measure 180 by 135 millimetres. Several are decorated with colourful and gilded spray borders. Several depictions of the human male body are included at the very end of the codex, together with the illustrations of the Wound Man and Disease Woman. Folios 49v and 50r contain the frontal and dorsal view of the male body, with legends naming the body parts in Latin (Fig. 3). The following openings, folios 50v and 51r and folios 51v and 52r respectively, depict the human skeleton and musculature from both the front and back (Figs. 4 and 5). Although these two frontal and dorsal figures do not contain depictions of primary or secondary sex characteristics, they are nevertheless to be read as male as they follow on from and mimic the pose and position of the initial male body. The Disease Woman and Wound Man are placed after these figures: facing a blank page, the Disease Woman is on folio 52v, while the Wound Man, also facing a blank page, represents the last schema in the codex on folio 53v. Although the Wound Man and Disease Woman are physically set apart from the main text, isolated at the end of the codex, and distinguished by the *mise-en-page*, their relationship to each other is emphasised through the structure of the page, the legends, and the depictions of the bodies themselves. These illustrations of the human body are all contained within the same quire at the end of the codex. The interaction between the text and the decorative scheme shows that the manuscript was produced in two distinct phases; the text was written initially and at an undetermined later date, the anatomical drawings at the end of the codex were then bound into the same manuscript. The same hand that produced the Latin legends on or near the anatomical illustrations also annotated the treatise. The text in Wellcome 290 begins with a description of the body in English and is followed by a much-abridged English translation of the Pseudo-Galenic treatise *Anatomia Porci* which does not always agree with other versions of the text.¹⁰ Medical historian Ynez O'Neill calls the *Anatomia Porci* the “earliest Western work on anatomy,” and argues that it was probably

¹⁰ Thomas N. Haviland, “‘Anatomia Porci.’ A twelfth Century Anatomy of the pig used in teaching Human Anatomy,” *Wiener Tierärztliche Monatsschrift* 72 (1960): 248.

used as a teaching aid.¹¹ Very little is known about the ownership of the manuscript. However, the pattern of marginal translation and notes, none of which are practical, indicate that the primary reader of this text was perhaps not someone practicing medicine, but rather a reader-viewer with non-expert interests in the subject.

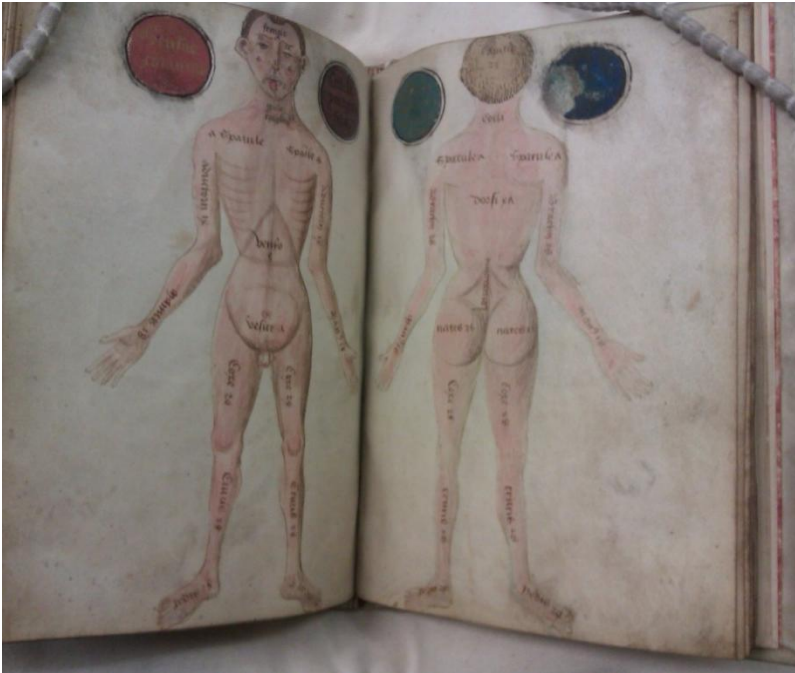


Fig. 3. Nude male figure. London, Wellcome Collection Library, Wellcome MS 290, ff. 49v – 50r. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0

¹¹ Ynez O'Neill, "Another Look at the "Anatomia Porci," *Viator* 1 (1970): 115; Haviland (1960), 263.

The text originated in the south of Italy and is based on an earlier textual tradition, rather than on direct observation of porcine dissections. Its sources include Celsus's *De Medicina*, but the word choices are reminiscent of Galenic texts which O'Neill believes could be the remains of an earlier oral tradition.



Fig. 4. Human skeleton. London, Wellcome Collection Library, Wellcome MS 290, f. 50v-51r. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0



Fig. 5. Human musculature. London, Wellcome Collection Library, Wellcome MS 290, f. 51v-52r. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0

The Gendered Nature of the Disease Woman

Monica Green argues that the Wound Man and Disease Woman served a didactic purpose for a non-medically trained audience, consisting of clerics and “marginally learned practitioners with some medical basics.”¹² The Disease Woman is one of the few examples of the female form depicted as a generic human body. The first-known Disease Woman was a simple image of the human muscle system which included female breasts, and while gynaecological ailments were labelled, the primary concern was with non-gender specific diseases.¹³

¹² Monica Green, “Bodily Essences: Bodies as Categories of Difference,” in *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Medieval Age*, ed. by Linda Kalof (New York: Berg, 2010), 151.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Discussing a Disease Woman very similar to the one in Wellcome 290, Madeline Caviness explains that diagrams of the female body presented in medical texts were not meant to be naturalistic, but rather representative of contemporary ideas regarding gender and conceptions of health. She further argues that “the invasive writing within the woman's body attests to the author's anxiety about the subject.”¹⁴ Caviness interprets the entire *mise-en-page* as illustrative of other contemporary discourses surrounding gender and of a profound unease with the female body. It should be noted that the inclusion of writing within diagrams concerning the female body is not exclusive to this manuscript. The medical manuscript Ashmole MS 399, produced in England in the late thirteenth century, included schemas of the internal organs and physiological systems. The illustrations of the veins, nerves, muscles, and other systems mapped on the entire upstanding body, the internal organs, as well as the male genitalia are surrounded by text and writing, while the female genital organs contain writing inside of the schemata itself. Likewise, Wellcome MS 49, a later religious and medical codex produced in Germany around 1420 contains a Disease Woman on f. 38r, a Wound Man on f. 35v, and several anatomical diagrams illustrating the physiological systems of the body on the folios in between. Although some of the male figures have legends within or on top of their upright bodies, once again the Disease Woman is set apart from the male figures by the number of legends within her viscera and her crouched posture and outstretched arms.

The appearance and structure of genitals and the secondary sex characteristics are the primary ways in which gender is understood and categorised in modern popular discourse. Although it was not the most important indicator of sex and gender, this metric also affected how sex difference was understood in the Middle Ages. The text in Wellcome 290 describes the female sexual organs as following: “in the woman, instead of the penis is the neck of the womb. And the womb is hollow. So that it can grow and be made large at the time of bearing [a child].”¹⁵ The text describes how female reproductive organs have two small testicles which “in comparison to the testicles of the man, of the male

¹⁴ Caviness, “Art, Representations of Women,” 39.

¹⁵ Wellcome MS 290, f. 31r: *In the woman for sothe in þe stete of the zarde. ys the neke of the moder. And þat matrix ys made hynolly. þat yt may be mayd strayt oute. Alud mayd large yn tyme of beryng.*

reproductive organs, are turned inward.”¹⁶ However, in the Disease Woman schema, the reproductive organs are not rendered as an inverted version of the penis and testes (fig. 1).¹⁷ The female generative organs in the diagram are defined by their practical purpose, that of gestating a foetus. Similarly, the Disease Woman’s gender is not determined by the shape and form of her genitals, but by other formal features in the presentation of her body on the page.

The schemas in Wellcome 290 engage with contemporary theological, social, and medical discourses in specific and recognizable ways. Both diagrams list or describe illness and trauma which can affect both men and women, using distinct and often contrasting visual cues. The Wound Man is standing upright and the text is written adjacent to the body. Conversely, the text of the Disease Woman has almost exclusively been written upon the female body, making the figure appear chaotic and disordered. However, the choice of the biological and medical information included also denotes difference in the two figures. Within the exposed insides of the male body, the labels provide the names of internal organs; for example, the heart is labelled “beating heart.”¹⁸ When the same organ in the Disease Woman is labelled, it is done with names of ailments associated with it, such as pain or

¹⁶ Wellcome MS 290, f 31v: *And yt bath smalle balokkys neyles brode. And the neke of yt in comperyconn to þe ballokkyss þis yn mann of a 3ard or a pyntyl. y turned inward.* This description is similar to one particular theory, the one-sex model as outlined by Jaques Lacqueur, which describes the female body as a faulty replica of the male body with all reproductive organs turned inside out. He traces the origins of this idea from Aristotle and Galen up through the Early Modern Period. However, Laqueur does not discuss the Middle Ages explicitly and his theory has been criticised, as it ignores the social aspects of gendered relations and removes gender from the site of the body. Katharine Parks argues that the one-sex-model was presented by Galen in *The Uses of the Parts* (*De usu partium*). As this text was not generally known in the medieval period, the awareness of this model could not have been prevalent or widespread. See: Laqueur, *Making Sex* (1992); Collum and Goldberg, “Gender Ideologies” in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (2006); Parks, “Cadden, Laqueur and the ‘One-Sex Body,’” *Medieval Feminist Forum* (2010).

¹⁷ Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985), 21. It is also worth noting that the sexual and reproductive organs on the female figure in the Disease Woman diagrams do not readily adhere to other contemporary ideas often reproduced in anatomical treatises, such as the seven chambered womb.

¹⁸ Wellcome 290, f. 53v: *Puḷsino cor*

“suffering.”¹⁹ These representations are congruent with other contemporary views on the “natural” gendered order, as understood by contemporary science and natural philosophy. When writing about the medieval pseudo-science physiognomy, Joseph Ziegler argues that masculinity and femininity was not decided by the “external shape,” but by the complexion and temperament of the individual.²⁰ This understanding of sex difference will prove important when decoding the ways in which the two bodies were understood.

In the diagram of the Disease Woman, the female body is primarily described as a receptacle for the foetus. The body is opened and her internal body displayed from chest to pelvis; the contours of her internal flesh follow closely the outline of her body. Conversely, the form of the male figure in the Wound Man diagram is also shown with some of his visceral organs on display, although the surface of the opened body is smaller than the corresponding opening on the female figure. Furthermore, the legends and labels occupy less space within the body itself. This comparison is important when considered within the history of anatomy and anatomical illustrations. Writing about the history of dissection, Katharine Parks argues that through its association with the uterus, the female body was linked to a “visualizable inside,” whereas the male body was understood as primarily surface. She justifies this argument with specific references to printed diagrams of the Wound Man:

I do not mean to suggest that men were not thought to have internal organs; although this type is not typical of earlier manuscript versions of this image, the “wound man” in 1491 and 1494 editions has clearly defined viscera, themselves vulnerable to sword, dagger and lance. But the male body was not reduced to and identified with its interior like the female body.²¹

The reduction and association of the female body to its inside is one of the ways in which late medieval anxieties regarding femininity were

¹⁹ Wellcome 290, f. 54v: *Passio cor cardiacae*

²⁰ Joseph Ziegler, “Sexuality and the Sexual Organs in Latin Physiognomy 1200-1500,” in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History: Sexuality and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. by Philip M. Soergel (New York: AMS Press, 2005), 90.

²¹ Parks, *Secrets of Women*, 27-33.

considered and mitigated. The primary way in which gender difference was understood in scientific texts was in terms of the different physiological construction of male and female bodies. Males and females of all species were believed to differ through complexion, disposition, and shape. Furthermore, medieval scholars believed that complexions and varied humoral balances were the most relevant factors in affecting gender difference.²² According to Aristotelian and Galenic sources, heat was understood as one of the defining factors when articulating gender.²³ Joan Cadden notes that, “males are warmer than females and life is associated with heat, death with failure of heat.”²⁴ The medieval understanding of the physiological construction of the male and female body, allowed women to be described as morally, physically, and intellectually inferior to men. Thus, from a medieval perspective women were:

closer to children – incomplete humans. Indeed the internal disposition of female genitals is also a result of the less than fully developmental characteristics of the female. In a world in which women's economic rights and legal standing were limited, the implicit comparison of women to children reinforced the notions of their incapacity and dependency.²⁵

These ideas – which also constructed and reinforced a hierarchical binary gender system – are evident when the diagrams of the Wound Man and Disease Woman are interrogated in a larger visual context. The Wound Man and Disease Woman unambiguously show a female body riddled with diseases and other ailments, while the male body is not.

The interpretations which rose from this particular visualisation of the female body in Wellcome 290 allowed the male body to be considered in more positive terms. The male body is shown as intact and whole rather than porous, open, and permeable. Jacqueline Murray summarises the relationship between the medieval ideals of femininity

²² Joan Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1993), 171.

²³ Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and medical science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, reprint 1995), 31.

²⁴ Joan Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, 173-176.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

and masculinity, noting that the two concepts were reflexive, defined against each other and closely linked to the hierarchical relationship and power imbalance between men and women.²⁶ She argues that we must acknowledge that the medieval and modern understandings of gender were not merely scientific, but rather shaped by social norms. The ways in which gender was embodied in the Wound Man and Disease Woman diagrams of Wellcome 290 become clearer when the images are considered in relationship to the larger social constructions of gender and theological discourses on the inherent sinful nature of women. In order to better understand how this pair of images functioned, it is important to consider them in light of contemporary medical and theological ideas on the meanings imbued in the shape and posture of the human body.

The Male Body as Unmarked and Whole

Within this codex and within the larger tradition of illustrated medical manuscripts, the Disease Woman is the only commonly recurring depiction of the whole, intact female body.²⁷ It is therefore important to position the Wound Man and the Disease Woman pair within a larger medical visual context. The female form is set apart from its comparative male bodies in several significant ways. While the diagram of the Disease Woman described illnesses and the human viscera, it also operated in more subtle ways in order to emphasise the healthy nature of the normative male body. Much like the Wound Man, the Zodiac Man and Phlebotomy Man, two other popular medical motifs, have been largely excluded from discussions focusing on gender. The Zodiac Man is the most common medieval medical motif and depicts the influences of the signs of the Zodiac on the human body (Fig. 6).²⁸

²⁶ Jacqueline Murray, "Femininity and Masculinity," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe, an Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (New York; London: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2006), 284-287.

²⁷ There are depictions of female body parts, such as depictions of the foetus in the womb. See for example, London, British Library, Sloane MS 249, Sloane MS 2463 and for an edition of this text see: Beryl Rowland, *Medieval Woman's Guide to Health* (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

²⁸ For more on the Zodiac Man, See: Charles Clark, "The Zodiac Man in Medieval Astrology," *Journal of Rocky Mountain Association* 3 (1982): 13-38 and Clark, *The Zodiac Man in Medieval Medical Astrology*, PhD dissertation (Department of History, University of Colorado, 1979), Harry Bober, "The Zodiacal Miniature of the Très Riches Heures



Fig. 7. Zodiac Man in the fifteenth-century Folding Almanack. London, Wellcome Collection and Library, MS.8932. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0

This depiction was often paired with the Phlebotomy Man, a diagram using the human male body as a guide for medical practitioners to find the bleeding points for effective treatment (Fig. 7). The association between the two is so pervasive that the schemas are on occasion

of the Duke of Berry: Its Sources and Meaning,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 11 (1948), 1-34.

combined.²⁹ The figures are usually shown standing upright with their hands along their sides.³⁰ The male bodies are unmarked by difference, allowing them to function as neutral representations of human bodies.³¹

This homo-social discourse is rendered primarily through the pose and posture of the different figures. Most Zodiac Man and Phlebotomy Man diagrams depict the male body standing upright in the same pose. Nevertheless, the Disease Woman is not displayed in the same upright position. Instead, her body is cramped, cluttered with writing, and her posture visually sets her apart from the bodies represented in the Zodiac Man, Phlebotomy Man, and Wound Man diagrams. This expression, evoking the anxieties of the time, can also be seen in literary sources. When writing about the Pseudo-Ovidian text *De vetula* (The Old Woman), Sarah Miller argues that the unease surrounding the female body is the result of its changing and permeable nature. The female body is irreversibly changed through intercourse, the loss of virginity, and childbirth, whereas the male body is unchangeable. Textual descriptions of the microcosmic male body, a literary topos similar to the Zodiac Man, can be understood as:

[solving the] problems of corporeal instability. ‘Ovid’ maps stability onto the (male) human body by identifying it with the supremely ordered natural universe, thus reinforcing the boundaries of both.³²

²⁹ See the combined diagrams of the Zodiac Man and the Phlebotomy Man in the British Library, Harley MS 3719, f. 154r and ff. 158v-159r

³⁰ For a discussion on the visual relationship between the Zodiac Man and the Phlebotomy Man in Wellcome MS 8004, a fifteenth-century medical handbook, see: Sara Öberg Strådal, “A Closer Look at the Zodiac and Phlebotomy Men in Wellcome MS 8004,” *Hypothesis, Opuscula* published October 11, 2016, <http://mittelalter.hypotheses.org/8919> [accessed February 11, 2017] or Sara Öberg Strådal, *Depictions of Physical Order: Diagrams in Late Medieval English Medical Manuscripts*, PhD dissertation (University of Glasgow, 2015), 130-139.

³¹ Green, “Bodily Essences: Bodies as Categories of Difference,” 141.

³² Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (New York, London; Routledge, 2010), 43.

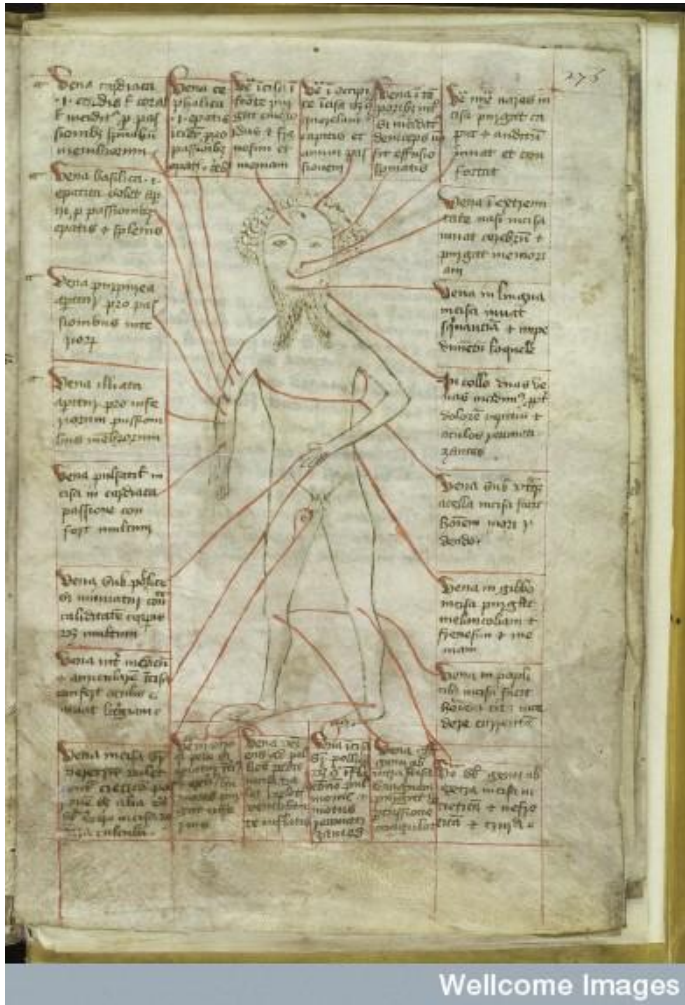


Fig. 8. Phlebotomy Man from the fourteenth-century *Miscellanea Medica*. London, Wellcome Collection and Library, MS 544. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0

These medical diagrammatic representations show male figures standing upright, their bodies largely closed and unchanging, even under the onslaught of violence or astrological influences. The anxieties on the changing and permeable nature of the human female body were

addressed through aligning the male body with the subtle rules of the universe.

The medieval study of physiognomy emphasised the close connection between the physical appearance (including blemishes on the body) and a person's character.³³ Physiognomy could be understood to remove the free will and agency from the individual and therefore the practice was surrounded by ecclesiastical ambiguity.³⁴ However, it also fulfilled a theological function, as it could allow students to approach and consider the physical appearance of Christ.³⁵ Roger Bacon's commentary on the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum* (Secret of Secrets) described the perfect human body.³⁶ The text uses masculine grammatical forms and proclaims that the physical form follows the internal character of the soul.³⁷ When discussing this text, Karma Lochrie argues that the "science of physiognomy allows the interpreter to force the other's body to give intimacy, to reveal the being beneath the appearance."³⁸ The *Secreta secretorum* describes "the true man" as "the best naturally ordered construction."³⁹ Moreover, the description of the physical characteristics of the ideal man included "hair that is moderately flat and he should neither be too tall nor too short."⁴⁰ Some of these features are present in the representations of the male figures discussed here – the ideal body of the universal man.

Medieval artists also used the shape and contortion of the bodies to convey deeper meanings – or to suggest the relative status or hierarchies among those depicted. This can be observed in depictions of Christ and

³³ Ziegler, "Text and Context," 181-182.

³⁴ Ibid., 161.

³⁵ Ibid., 171.

³⁶ The *Secreta Secretorum* was translated to Latin from Arabic. Roger Bacon produced his commentary on the text in 1260. The text is divided into sections discussing the proper behaviour of a good ruler, how to maintain good health, a discussion on the properties of stones and herbs, and physiognomy. For more on this see: Lochrie, 105. On the importance and influence of the *Secreta Secretorum*, see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 46-53.

³⁷ Roger Bacon, *Secretum Secretorum*, 164. "And therefore the soul will conquer and master the body" *Cum itaque fuerit anima superans corpus et dominans*.

³⁸ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 113.

³⁹ Bacon, 171. *Ille vero homo est optime memorie bene compositus in natura*.

⁴⁰ Bacon, 171. *capilli plani mediocriter ... et qui est non nimis longus nec nimis brevis*.

those crucified with him.⁴¹ The Gospel account describe the different suffering experienced by Christ and the thieves in one important aspect: because Christ was already dead when the soldiers returned, his legs were not broken to trigger his demise.⁴² Mitchell Merback argues that the shape of Christ's divine body was treated differently as compared to the bodies of the thieves as a way to emphasise his sanctity:

Broken, dislocated, twisted, bent and levered around the beams of the cross, held down with tight ligatures – the limbs of the Thieves are forced to obey the dictates of the painter, who in turn seeks to convince us, with all the skill available to him, of the anatomical plausibility of these gruesome punitive contortions. 43

Similarly, the Disease Woman is crouching while contained within the borders of the page. The idea that the religious character could be discerned through a person's stature and stance can also be found in the writing of Vincent de Beauvais (c. 1190 – c. 1264). He observed in his *Speculum Naturale* (Mirror of Nature) that while the human mind, not the body, was created to mirror God, the man's upright stature signified

⁴¹ Depictions of Christ carried many simultaneous meanings and messages, and representations were not all uniform renderings where his body appeared masculine. Another example of gendered depictions of Jesus include medieval images and discussions of the feminized Christ, occasionally lactating and often shown as a maternal figure to all Christendom. The relationship between late medieval medical ideas and the representations of Christ's feminine or ambiguous body is a rich potential area for further research. However, I will only focus here on depictions of Christ's unblemished, whole body in relationship to depictions of the thieves crucified alongside him, as this juxtaposition is analogous to that posed by the bodies within the Wound Man and the Disease Woman diagrams. For more on the idea of the feminized Christ, see for example, Eleanor McCullough, "Loke in: How weet a wounde is heere!": The Wounds of Christ as a Sacred Space in English Devotional Literature," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Suffering, the Sacred, and the Sublime in Literature and Theory*, ed. by Holly Faith Nelson, Lynn R. Szabo and Jens Zimmerman (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 25-38; see also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁴² Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999), 121. John 19:31-33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 122.

his superior intellectual status.⁴⁴ Likewise, the analysis of corporeal cues was used to situate both men and women within hierarchical power relationships. Considering the ways expressions of masculinities were created within different social circles, Ruth Mazo Karras notes that femininity was understood as opposite to masculinity, that “being not-a-woman is always a greater or lesser part of what it means to be a man.”⁴⁵ Although the crouching pose of the Disease Woman recalls a woman positioned on a parturition chair, in the process of giving birth, the comparison of her cramped and contorted body to the upright stature of the male bodies in the same codex emphasises their physical differences. The Wound Man and Disease Woman pair must be read in relationship to each other as well as to other contemporary visual culture.

The Wound Man shares striking similarities to images of martyrdoms. One explicit example is the narrative scenes of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, as noted by Sudhoff.⁴⁶ Depictions of Saint Sebastian, with his torso pierced by multiple arrows, allowed pious viewers to contemplate the martyr’s suffering and faith. Looking at Saint Sebastian’s seemingly feminised torture – the figure is usually standing almost completely naked in a passive pose penetrated by arrows – Robert Mills argues that binary gender was constituted through male hagiographical narratives. He argues that although martyrdom imagery “suggests sadism,” because they “align the viewer

⁴⁴ Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex; sive, Speculum maius. Speculum Naturale*, vol 1 (Graz, 1624)1: col 2215. Because not created according to the likeness of God, nevertheless not this second body [which is] after the reasoning mind. Yet in himself, hereafter he has a body [with a] formerly quality, because this person declares because [in himself, with the body], the upright stature will be clearly seen. Just as higher will have been revealed. (Translation mine.)

Nisi quod ad imaginem Dei ut creatus, non tamen hoc secundum corpus sed secundum intellectum mentis. In ipso tamen etiam corpore quondam proprietatem habet, quae hoc ipsum indicet, videlicet quod erecta statura factus est. Sicut superius utensum est.

⁴⁵ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 153.

⁴⁶ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings of the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 100. Sebastian was an early Christian saint who was executed by the emperor when he proclaimed his Christian faith. According to the *Golden Legend*, he was shot with arrows until he “looked like a porcupine” and was left for dead. He was later found alive by a Christian woman; he challenged the emperor once again and was this time clubbed to death.

with the victim-as-hero ... In effect, martyrdom is more generally a genre in which un-manning literally *makes* the man.”⁴⁷ The body in the Wound Man diagrams is intervisually linked to these types of depictions. While victimised by numerous weapons – swords, knives, and arrows – his masculinity is nevertheless emphasised through his ability to withstand the torture. Through a complex set of references, his male body is closely related to the physiognomical norm and aligned with the perfect suffering body of saints. Meanwhile, the Disease Woman is separated from the Wound Man by an empty page while the visual markers alluding to holy men (upright posture and tortured by outside influences) are absent, as she is depicted crouching, her distorted body only hurt by internal disorders and imbalances.

Scholars have discussed and analysed the anxieties surrounding the female body in the medieval period. Murray notes that these were not solely feminine concerns,

The story of the medieval body, then, is not only the story of women’s life giving, lactating, menstruating, polluting bodies. It is also the story of men’s bodies and their “vile members” which so often seemed to have a will of their own. It is the story of superfluous humors, spontaneous erections, seminal emissions, nocturnal pollution and castration anxiety. It is the story of a fundamental disease with the male body and with the masculine experience of human embodiment.⁴⁸

However, this aspect of contemporary gender discourse, the unease and discomfort with the masculine body, is largely absent from the representation of the male form in the Wound Man. While the figure is shown bleeding and beaten, the body is not defeated. The male body in the Wound Man schema is standing upright, displaying his wounds much like a martyred saint. Indeed, as Bettina Bildhauer has shown, the shedding of blood depicted in the Wound Man diagram does not show an open or porous body, but rather a contained and closed body, as the medical context promised healing.⁴⁹ The Wound Man presents a

⁴⁷ Robert Mills, “‘Whatever you do is a Delight to Me’, Masculinity, Masochism and Queer Play in Representations of Male Martyrdom,” *Exemplaria* 13 (2001): 35-37.

⁴⁸ Jacqueline Murray, “‘The law of sin that is in my members’: the problem with male embodiment,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2000), 18.

⁴⁹ Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003, 2006), 27.

restricted masculinity, as the opposite of femininity, which is emphasised through the *mise-en-page*, the codicological structure and intellectual content. While the male bodies at the centre of the Zodiac Man, Phlebotomy Man, and Wound Man schemas all stand upright thus communicating medical theories, physical ideals, and theological interpretations of masculinity, the squatting posture of the female form in the Disease Woman diagram signalled that her disposition was inherently sinful, inferior, and marked as different from the norm.

While the Disease Woman renders numerous non-gendered visual ailments, providing the layperson interested in medicine with a schematic view of possible illnesses affecting the human body, both male and female, the artistic choices made regarding the posture, shape, and appearance of the female body in Wellcome 290 recalled and emphasised her biologically, socially, and theologically inferior status as compared to her male counterpart. Drawing on the visual language used in hagiographical narratives and depictions, as well as within other types of medical diagrammatic illustrations, it is clear that the schemas of the Wound Man and Disease Woman together posit the female form as other from the male, signalling the position that normative masculinity was defined against.

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