

Gender and Healing in the Hippocratic Corpus

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For my parents,

Allan and Carol,

whose love and support
made this possible.

Abstract

Hippocratic physicians sought to establish themselves as medical authorities in ancient Greece. An examination of the deontological texts of the Hippocratic corpus reveals that the Hippocratics created a medical authority based on elite male characteristics. The key quality of the Hippocratic physician was *sōphrosunē*, a quality closely associated with men and used in the differentiation of genders in the Greek world. Women were not believed to innately possess this quality and so their healing activities were restricted within the Hippocratic framework. Women's healing activities are only mentioned in the corpus when women are involved in the treatment of other women or self-treatment. The Hippocratic construction of medicine as a male domain fit within a Classical cultural framework, as the cultural anxiety concerning women healers and women's use of *pharmaka* are evident in both Greek myth and literature.

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Introduction

Like the modern patient, the ancient Greek patient had many choices for treatment. He or she could turn to the gods, particularly Asclepius, for divine intervention. Or she could consult the local physician, herbalist, root-cutter, surgeon, itinerant healer, or midwife. Anyone who considered him- or herself a healer could offer advice for a fee. Medical healing and religious healing were seen as complementary, and patients could—and did—seek both types of help simultaneously. All that was needed to be considered a healer was a reputation for healing. Medical practice was not a private affair and healing knowledge was not limited to a select few in antiquity. The patient and physician were not alone during treatment; an entourage of family, friends and curious onlookers gathered around the patient to watch and discuss the physician's treatment. These onlookers came with their own theories, ideas and experiences and did not hesitate to question the physician if they believed his diagnosis or treatment was wrong.¹ Rival physicians might also be present, in which case each physician had to rely on rhetoric to convince the patient—and the audience—that their treatment was the better one.

¹ Nutton 1985a: 37-38.

It was within this polyphonous, competitive ‘medical marketplace’ that the Hippocratic physicians strove to be heard and to establish themselves as the voice of authority. The Hippocratic physician constantly had to prove his medical authority and certain treatises from the Hippocratic corpus discuss the qualities that a Hippocratic physician required. The qualities they promoted, chief of which was *sōphrosunē*, were those associated with elite men. Although the Hippocratic authors provide some evidence for women’s involvement in healing activities, they construct medicine as a male practice at the expense of female healers. By studying the presence of women in the Hippocratic corpus along with the depictions in Greek literature and rhetoric, it becomes evident that the Hippocratic authors are drawing on the same societal attitudes. Ultimately, because women were believed to lack innate *sōphrosunē*, in the absence of instruction, a woman’s knowledge of and her involvement in healing men was a source of anxiety for Greek men.

The Hippocratics and *Sōphrosunē*

Since the Greek quality of *sōphrosunē* is both a defining characteristic of the Hippocratic physician and the quality that differentiates genders in the ancient Greek world, it is worth taking a moment here to discuss what this quality entails. This study relies on the understanding of *sōphrosunē* presented in the works of Helen North and Michel Foucault.

As North explains, *sōphrosunē* developed as a civic virtue in Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.² The practice of *sōphrosunē* was particularly

² North 1966: 135.

important in the first half of the fifth century B.C.E. and was considered one of the four cardinal virtues.³ Just as courage was the chief quality of the Greek male citizen in times of war, *sōphrosunē* was the chief excellence of citizens in times of peace.⁴ For the fifth century Athenians, *sōphrosunē* implied “good sense, moderation, self-knowledge, and that accurate observance of divine and human boundaries which protects man from dangerous extremes of every kind.”⁵ The *sōphrōn* man was modest, conscious of his limitations, prudent, sensible, wise, obedient to authority, free from hubris, and worthy of honour.⁶

Xenophon presents *sōphrosunē* as having three components: *enkrateia* (the ability to control one’s appetites and passion), *karteria* (the ability to endure external forces such as cold, heat, and toil), and *autarkeia* (the ability to be content with little).⁷ According to Xenophon, *enkrateia* is the foundation of all virtues (*Mem.* 1.5.5).⁸ It is narrower in scope than *sōphrosunē* and is often treated as either a subheading of *sōphrosunē* or as a separate virtue in its own right.⁹ *Sōphrosunē* and *enkrateia* are closely related and at times Xenophon and Plato seem to use the terms interchangeably.¹⁰ *Enkrateia* is “characterized more by an active form of self-mastery, which enables one to resist or struggle, and to achieve domination in the area of desires and pleasures.”¹¹ It is the quality which rules over pleasure and desires and, as

³ North 1947: 1, 2.

⁴ North 1947: 3.

⁵ North 1947: 2.

⁶ North 1947: 2.

⁷ North 1966: 125; Xen. *Mem.* 1.4-5.

⁸ See further North 1966: 126.

⁹ North 1966: 123, 130.

¹⁰ Foucault 1990: 64.

¹¹ Foucault 1990: 64.

such, it is a prerequisite of *sōphrosunē*.¹² *Enkrateia* is active self-mastery whereas *sōphrosunē* is the general state of moderation.¹³

Sōphrosunē is also closely related to *aidōs*, commonly translated as shame, modesty, respect, fear or dishonour.¹⁴ While closely related to *phobos* (fear), *aischunē* (shame) and *oneidos* (dishonour or disgrace), *aidōs* is not identical with any of them.¹⁵ Rather, *aidōs* is the visible manifestation of *sōphrosunē*. It is shown particularly in one's downcast eyes and the act of covering oneself to signal one's submission.¹⁶ *Aidōs* "keeps those who are incapable of behaving in a wise and responsible manner under control," while preventing those who have power from using their power in an arbitrary and destructive manner.¹⁷ *Aidōs* is best understood as discretion or delicacy of feeling;¹⁸ it is the quality which inhibits one from committing actions perceived as disgraceful in public, while *sōphrosunē* has the same effect even in private (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.1.30).¹⁹

While both men and women could be *sōphron*, this quality of self-control took different forms in men and women. For men, *sōphrosunē* was believed to be an innate quality; possession of this quality allowed a man to act in a self-controlled manner. *Sōphrosunē* was a state reached through exercise of self-mastery (*enkrateia*) and restraint in pleasures (*autarkeia*).²⁰ It was the characteristic that caused one to avoid

¹² Foucault 1990: 65.

¹³ Foucault 1990: 37.

¹⁴ Ferrari 1990: 191.

¹⁵ Ferrari 1990: 192-193.

¹⁶ Ferrari 1990: 190, 200.

¹⁷ Ferrari 1990: 193-194.

¹⁸ Ferrari 1990: 189.

¹⁹ North 1966: 131.

²⁰ Foucault 1990: 78.

disgraceful conduct not only in public, but in private as well.²¹ The inability to control one's desires was a negative trait since it threatened enslavement to those desires.²² A respectable Greek man was in control of his body and desires and did not allow himself to be subjugated to another person, and particularly to a person less able to behave in a self-controlled manner.

A woman, however, was believed to lack the ability to exhibit self-control,²³ and so the quality of *sōphrosunē* took a different form. Since she was not believed to be capable of demonstrating *sōphrosunē* on her own, she needed to be subordinate to a male guardian, or *kyrios*.²⁴ For her, Foucault explains, *sōphrosunē* meant leading a moderate life as imposed on her by her condition of dependence on a man.²⁵ She was not expected to apply the principles of moderation and self-control to herself, but only to obey the orders and instructions laid down for her.²⁶ Although women were commonly considered to lack rationality, foresight and understanding, the absence of these characteristics did not mean that a woman could not be virtuous, but only that her virtue came through training and submission.²⁷ Her virtue was dependent on her strength of character and her dependence on her male guardian.²⁸ As we shall see, the possession of *sōphrosunē* becomes important in determining who can act as a healer within the Hippocratic system.

²¹ North 1966: 131.

²² Just 1989: 175.

²³ Just 1989: 187.

²⁴ Just 1989: 166.

²⁵ Foucault 1990: 83.

²⁶ Foucault 1990: 80, 146.

²⁷ Just 1989: 164, 165, 183.

²⁸ Foucault 1990: 84.

Scholarship & Evidence

Although we know from ancient sources such as Demosthenes 59 and Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* that women were involved in the healing process, the role of women as healers is relatively understudied. Studies in the history of medicine make only passing references to the gender of healers, if any mention at all. Vivian Nutton, speaking of Greek and Roman antiquity in general, defines a doctor as "a person, male or female" who conducts medical treatment or devotes his time to healing.²⁹ In a later work, Nutton states that the Hippocratic physician was "almost always he."³⁰ Although Nutton does go on to discuss briefly the possible role of women in medicine, his focus is on their activities as midwives and healers within the home and his discussion is brief.³¹ Holt Parker (1997) does address the question of gender; however, his study does not examine female healers within the Hippocratic corpus. Research on Hippocratic medicine by scholars such as Helen King and Leslie Dean-Jones approaches the subject of gender and healing with the woman as the patient rather than the agent. Neither do papers from the 11th and 12th International Hippocrates Colloquium attempt to place women healers as agents within the Hippocratic framework. Women appear here only as Roman midwives and in the context of Hippocratic gynecological recipes.

Clearly, the role of Greek women as healers has been largely overlooked in modern scholarship. This is partly due to the sources—the Hippocratic corpus is, after

²⁹ Nutton 1985: 27.

³⁰ Nutton 2004: 87.

³¹ Nutton 2004: 100-102.

all, male-authored and the degree to which the texts reflect female voices is debatable.³² It may also be, as feminists have argued, that the sex of past historians has coloured the history they wrote or that the style in which history is usually written is recognizably masculine.³³ However, the ancient evidence indicates that women did indeed carry out healing activities. In Euripides' *Hippolytus* we see a woman turning to another woman rather than to a male physician for help in certain situations (293-6). Female helpers appear in numerous places in the Hippocratic treatises *De natura muliebri* (*On the Nature of Women* 6, 40) and *De mulierum affectibus* (*On the Disease of Women* 21, 68). Midwives, or female healers who attended births, appear in *De carnibus* (*Fleshes* 19) and *De mulierum affectibus* (68). Numerous instructions to the Hippocratic physicians to use a woman's help in an examination appear in *De mulierum affectibus*, *De natura muliebri*, and *Sterility*. There is also the tale of Hagnodike, a Greek woman who disguised herself as a man in order to study medicine with Herophilus; when her deception eventually came to light before the Areopagus, her female patients supported her work and the Athenians amended their law (*Hyg. Fab.* 254). Plato also speaks of women skilled in medicine (*Rep.* 454d2). And, of course, there is the c. 350 B.C.E. inscription to a woman named Phanostrate in which she is described as both a midwife and a healer (IG II².6873).³⁴ There is, thus, plenty of evidence that women in ancient Greece were agents of healing, perhaps to the extent that women physicians were an everyday part of the ancient

³² This debate is summarized by Demand 2004: 53, 64-65 and King 1998: 22.

³³ Morley 2004: 93-94.

³⁴ Parker 1997: 140n1.

world.³⁵ This evidence, and the lack of scholarly work to place it within the Hippocratic framework, suggests that it is time to re-examine the subject of Greek physicians. In this study, I will examine Hippocratic attitudes towards female healers by comparing representations of male and female healers in the Hippocratic corpus and place these attitudes within their broader social context as presented in archaic, classical and hellenistic oratory and literature.

Terminology

Medical treatment involves a range of inter-related activities, including diagnosing illnesses and understanding medical theory. This investigation focusses on the active role women healers may have played in treating themselves or others and examines this role within both Hippocratic and cultural contexts. Boundaries between healing activities are somewhat flexible and modern terms such as ‘nurse,’ ‘doctor,’ and ‘physician’ carry a variety of connotations for us that were not necessarily applicable for the ancient Greek. Because of this, I have chosen to use the more neutral term ‘female healer’ to denote women engaged in medical activity.

As will be discussed further in chapter two, the Greeks appear to have differentiated between women who act as informal healers during childbirth and those with further training. The Greek term $\mu\alpha\tilde{\iota}\alpha$ can be used broadly to denote a foster-mother or grandmother and is the common word used to denote a midwife, i.e., a woman whose practice is confined to the activities immediately surrounding

³⁵ Parker 1997: 131.

childbirth.³⁶ Plato *Theaetetus* 149a-d gives a description of the midwife's activity: She provides abortifacients if she thinks it best to cause a miscarriage; she uses *pharmaka* and incantations to induce labour; and she is sometimes involved in matchmaking. It is possible that she was also responsible for the care of the mother and newborn for several days following birth and arranged for the exposure of the child if necessary.³⁷ The Hippocratics use the substantive ὀμφαλητόμος to denote a midwife; according to L.S. J., this is the Ionic word for the Attic μαῖα. Most scholars appear to understand midwives as informal female-helpers. Midwifery in the ancient world is too broad a subject to be included in this study, so references to women as μαῖα is limited.

By the late fifth and early fourth centuries, the Greeks differentiated between midwives and physicians.³⁸ While the ancient world had no official body who regulated and certified physicians, there were still opportunities for medical training, as we shall see in chapter one. The Greek term ἰατρός is used to denote a physician or surgeon and carries with it the idea of medical training. *Iatros* occurs throughout the Hippocratic corpus in reference to the male physician (e.g., *Flat.* 1; *Acut.* 6, 8, 14; *Medic.* 1; *VM* 8, 20). The related adjective ἰατρικός denotes someone skilled in medical arts,³⁹ and is used in the masculine and feminine forms to denote physicians in Platos' *Republic* 454d. These terms, as they relate to female healers, are discussed further in chapter two.

³⁶ L.S.J. A2; Parker 1997: 132.

³⁷ Blundell 1995: 111.

³⁸ Parker 1997: 133. Parker also mentions the ἰατρόμαια, who was likely a midwife who had undergone some type of extra training.

³⁹ LSJ A.II.

Overview

My analysis begins with an examination of the deontological texts of the Hippocratic corpus to determine how the Hippocratics emphasized elite male qualities to construct a medical authority that excluded female healers. Close reading of relevant passages in the Hippocratic corpus allows us to identify the ideal characteristics of the Hippocratic physician.⁴⁰ The chief qualities required of a physician as presented in the deontological texts of the Hippocratic corpus are *sōphrosunē* and rhetorical ability; both of these are closely associated with the elite man. The Foucauldian theory of Greek sexuality aids in understanding the gender hierarchy that underpins Greek ideas of gender and *sōphrosunē*. The Hippocratic authors drew on this gender hierarchy to establish male healers as dominant over female healers. By using feminist theories and reading history ‘from below,’ it is possible to investigate the role played by women healers in the Hippocratic corpus. Medical discourse in Classical and Hellenistic Greece was polyphonous; the Hippocratics were but one voice and they attempted to establish themselves as the dominant authority. In creating a collective identity for themselves, the Hippocratics established conventions for self-presentation within Greek medical culture. The voice of authority and collective identity they sought to create was predominantly masculine.

⁴⁰ This analysis relies largely on the use of the Hippocratic corpus as compiled by Emile Littré (published between 1839-1861), which is still the most widely-used edition of the corpus. Not all treatises have been translated into English at the time this thesis was written. Table 1.1 in the appendix provides the English, Greek, French and Latin (where available) titles of the various treatises along with the relevant volumes in the Loeb and Littré editions. Standard abbreviations for the Hippocratic treatises, as presented in the *L.S.J.*, are also listed, and will be used throughout this thesis.

This study then moves on to explore how women are represented in the Hippocratic corpus when acting as healers. Female healers are presented only rarely, and their healing activity appears to be limited to other women or to children. A feminist approach to the material places women at the center of this research. At the same time, a gender-based analysis is also necessary, since ideas of femininity and masculinity are intertwined and mutually dependent.⁴¹ The feminine and masculine are defined in terms of opposition: the feminine is the absence of masculine characteristics.⁴² To understand Greek attitudes towards female healers it is necessary first to identify the qualities that women were believed to have and then to compare these qualities to those expected of a man. Understanding gender characteristics as the Greeks constructed them is key to understanding Greek attitudes towards female healers and the place of female healers within the Hippocratic corpus.

Having established that the Hippocratic healers do not view female healers as equal, the Hippocratic view of female healing activity is then placed within its cultural context using intertextual analysis. An examination of literature reveals male anxiety towards female healers and demonstrates that this anxiety was prevalent in Greek society more generally. Chapter three examines the literary depictions of Medea, Helen, Circe, and Deianeira. Here we see that women's use of *pharmaka* causes anxiety, since *pharmaka* can be used in both beneficial and destructive manners. The recurrent theme of women with *pharmaka* causing harm to men suggests that this was a source of ongoing tension within Greek culture. By studying the literary representations of women using *pharmaka* it is possible to better

⁴¹ Scott 1996: 153.

⁴² Burke 2008: 84.

understand the cultural framework within which Hippocratic physicians and female healers operated. An intertextual analysis of the realizations of Medea by Euripides and Apollonios Rhodios in particular reveals the underlying anxiety in Greek society regarding women's knowledge and deployment of *pharmaka* and, by extension, healing activity in general.

The Greek man's anxiety concerning female healers is further explored in chapter four through an examination of rhetorical and forensic literature. While the literary evidence—both the Hippocratic corpus and works of rhetoric and literature—is to some degree informed by societal attitudes, it is also an active agent in the construction of these attitudes. The legal speeches, including Antiphon 1 (*Prosecution of the Stepmother for Poisoning*), [Demosthenes] 59 (*Against Neaera*), Demosthenes 54 (*Against Conon*), Isaeus 6 (*On the Estate of Philoctemon*), and Isocrates 19 (*Aegineticus*) depict women acting in healing roles. The speeches present women as a threat to sick men; since the women do not possess innate *sōphrosunē*, they cannot be relied upon to act in men's interest. Rather, the women in these texts take advantage of the sick man's situation for their own gain. Xenophon treats the issue of women and *sōphrosunē* in more depth; while he believes women are inferior to men, he presents them as capable of learning *sōphrosunē* and therefore trustworthy in the treatment of the household slaves.

There is some scholarly debate regarding the degree to which the Hippocratic corpus conveys female medical lore, but regardless of how much women's knowledge the Hippocratics have appropriated, they are reemploying this knowledge to construct a new medical authority. This new discourse centers on male ideas of

sōphrosunē that, in light of Greek gender hierarchies, automatically limits the role of women within the Hippocratic system. The quality most important to the Hippocratic healer, *sōphrosunē*, is one which women were believed naturally to lack. Although the Hippocratics established male medical authority for themselves, there was still room in Greek society for female healers. A woman's ability to heal other women, children or slaves may have given her a certain degree of authority. This hierarchy of healing corresponds to the Greek hierarchy of gender.

Male anxiety about female healers is reflected in Greek literature, and this anxiety continues into Hellenistic and Roman writing. Women involved in healing and using *pharmaka* come to be represented in literature as witches. From Homer to Euripides to Apollonios Rhodios, the mythological women Helen, Circe and Medea are depicted as sinister on account of their use of *pharmaka*. The figure of Medea is particularly exploited as a witch in Hellenistic and Roman writings. Poets such as Theocritus and Propertius associate a woman's use of *pharmaka* with witchcraft and emphasize the dangers of an uncontrolled woman using *pharmaka*. Women using *pharmaka* remained a threat to men long after the Hippocratics established the medical arts as a male domain.

Chapter 1

The Hippocratic Physician

The deontological works in the Hippocratic corpus demonstrate the Hippocratic concern for establishing an authoritative identity based on Greek masculine qualities. The creation of this identity was important since there were many healing options available to the sick. The Hippocratics attempted to distinguish themselves from their competition not only by defining their theoretical and methodological approach to healing but, more importantly, by defining the actual moral characteristics required of a physician. The key traits of the physician, according to the Hippocratics, were rhetorical ability and *sōphrosunē*, both characteristics closely identified with the elite Greek male. Rhetoric was a key skill for the physician, since to practice his art, he first had to convince the patient that the treatment he offered was best. The physician could present himself as an authoritative medical practitioner by engaging in debate, lecture, or simply by his ability to explain clearly the disease and treatment to the patient. In Greek society, rhetorical training was only accessible to men and reflects male participation in the assembly. While any Athenian man could speak in this context, in practice it was typically well-educated members of the elite who did so. Training in rhetoric was a key component of the physician's education, just as it was

for the future statesman. The physician also had to demonstrate exemplary moral qualities. He gained authority through his own personal moral reputation and for this reason was required to be *sōphrōn*, or self-controlled. *Sōphrosunē* was considered an innate quality of Greek men and was the key trait for differentiation between the male and female genders in ancient Greece. The Greeks associated innate self-control, *sōphrosunē*, with men; while women could be *sōphrōn*, their *sōphrosunē* was defined by their submission to male authority. *Sōphrosunē* and rhetorical skill are both masculine characteristics and they served to establish Hippocratic medicine as a male domain. By establishing medicine as an elite male domain, Hippocratic medicine privileged the male healer over non-Hippocratic and female healers.

The primary source for understanding the Hippocratic physicians and treatments is, of course, the Hippocratic corpus. The Hippocratic corpus comprises some 60 treatises written by a number of different authors between 420 B.C.E. and the first or second century C.E.¹ Because the texts were written by various authors over several centuries, there are some variations, and even a few contradictions, in how healing practices are understood. However, the treatises that make up the corpus share an essential core of medical thinking.² Hippocratic physicians attributed illness to natural causes, rather than supernatural, and understood disease in terms of humoral imbalance and the theory of critical days.³ Despite the variety of authors and disagreements, the corpus can be thought of as a unified whole since the treatises

¹ Treatises are dated on stylistic grounds; most appear to have been written between 420 and 350 B.C.E., although some possibly date to the first, second, or even third century C.E. See Nutton 2004: 61.

² Demand 1998: 73.

³ Demand 1998: 73; Laskaris 2002: 3. The theory of critical days allowed the physician to predict on which days crises will appear during the progress of the disease (King 1995b: 212). This understanding of illness was closely linked to contemporary philosophy. See Demand 1998.

engage with the same medical theories. While most texts appear to be written for other physicians, some, such as *De prisca medicina (Ancient Medicine)*; *De aera, aquis, locis (Airs, Waters, Places)*; and *De flatibus (Breaths)* are directed at the layperson.⁴ There is no suggestion that any of the texts, including *Jusjurandum (Oath)*, were ever held up in antiquity as an unimpeachable standard which physicians were required to uphold.⁵ Although there was no way of enforcing certain behaviour, advice on proper conduct for physicians appears in a number of treatises. Deontological texts such as *De arte (On the Art)*, *Jusjurandum*, *De decente habitu (Decorum)*, *De medico* and *Praeceptiones (Precepts)* can be combined to create a holistic picture of the ideal Hippocratic physician. The Hippocratic corpus contains both practical and theoretical texts,⁶ and each contributes to the creation of an authoritative voice defining Hippocratic medical theory and practice.

Hippocratics in the Medical Marketplace

The Hippocratic Collection, written by Hippocrates of Cos and his followers, had already attained the status as a ‘classic’ by the Hellenistic period and remained a standard authority for Western medicine from antiquity until the nineteenth century.⁷

The Roman doctor Celsus, in his work *De medicina*, described Hippocrates as “a man first and foremost worthy to be remembered, notable both for professional skill and for eloquence, who separated this branch of learning from the study of philosophy”.⁸

⁴ Nutton 1992: 17.

⁵ Nutton 1992: 26.

⁶ Demand 1998: 73.

⁷ Jouanna 1999: 349.

⁸ Translated in Jouanna 1999: 349.

According to Pliny the Elder (*NH* 29.3), medicine was discovered by Asklepios and the art of surgery developed during the Homeric era. Following a century of darkness, medicine then experienced a renaissance with Hippocrates (*NH* 29.4).⁹ His stature varied among the various Hellenistic and Roman schools of medicine, and although the methodists made a point of criticizing the Hippocratic theories, Hippocrates continued to represent the ideal physician, even in Christian literature.¹⁰ It is important to note that the ancient world had no system for approving or registering physicians. The determination of a person's status as a healer was left to the layperson or to the individual doctor.¹¹ For the Greeks, the doctor was defined as a person who devoted much of his time to healing or carried out medical treatment for a fee.¹²

Hippocratic physicians needed to establish themselves as healing authorities to compete with other healers. An individual in ancient Greece had many treatment options at his or her disposal; physicians, herb-cutters, druggists, midwives, gymnastic trainers, diviners, exorcists and priests all offered assistance.¹³ There was no dichotomy between what today we would term "conventional" and "alternative" healing; all healings were equally acceptable to the Greek. For example, a pregnant woman could seek the help of the goddess Artemis, the god Asklepios, a midwife and a physician (Hippocratic or otherwise) if she so wished. The selection of one treatment method did not preclude the simultaneous use of others; where the herb-

⁹ Jouanna 1999:350. Pliny the Elder credits a student of Hippocrates, Prodicus, with founding the art of healing with ointments (*NH* 29.4).

¹⁰ Jouanna 1999: 350-1, 358.

¹¹ Nutton 1985: 26.

¹² Nutton 1985: 27.

¹³ Nutton 1985: 40.

cutter or physician might fail, the gods might succeed. Indeed, at least one Hippocratic author acknowledges that healing comes from the gods (*Decent.* 6). Laskaris argues that the overlap in secular and magico-religious *pharmaka* is evident in the Hippocratic corpus, particularly in the gynaecological texts.¹⁴ Magico-religious medical practices were sufficiently authoritative and effective that they both provided secular physicians with useful therapies and offered serious competition.¹⁵ And although the Hippocratics credit successful self-treatment to chance (*De Arte* 5), medical knowledge was not secret and it was possible for anyone to be his or her own physician.¹⁶ In fact, certain Hippocratic treatises were written for the lay audience, although the authors are careful to distinguish between what a layperson and a physician are each able to do. *De affectionibus* (*Affections*) is one treatise that scholarship suggests was written for the layperson; as such, it presents information on what medical knowledge and skills the educated Greek was expected to possess.¹⁷ The author of *De prisca medicina* also has confidence that the layperson can understand some medical explanations. The non-physician is not able to find out anything for himself, as the physician can, but he or she can understand disease if the physician explains it (*VM* 2).¹⁸ Although the Hippocratic authors have differing levels of confidence in the layperson's capacity to understand and treat medical conditions, the authors of *De affectionibus* and *De prisca medecina* expect the layperson to have

¹⁴ Laskaris 2002: 6.

¹⁵ Laskaris 2002: 3.

¹⁶ Nutton 1985b: 40.

¹⁷ Cañizares 2010: 88.

¹⁸ See also Cañizares 2010: 91.

some understanding.¹⁹ Even as the Hippocratic authors recognize that the non-physician can understand certain medical ideas, they are still careful to distinguish between the trained physician and the untrained layperson. After all, a knowledgeable layperson was competition for the Hippocratic physician. To differentiate themselves from knowledgeable laypeople and other healers, the Hippocratic physicians defined medicine in terms of elite male characteristics.

Constructing a Masculine Authority

The physician had to convince the patient of his authority to heal in terms the patient could understand. He could do this by appealing to widely-held authorities, such as a famous local physician, to underpin his theoretical ideas and justify his treatments and claims,²⁰ or he could attempt to enhance his authority by criticizing rivals or long-dead predecessors.²¹ The physician's ability to be persuasive and confident was necessary to his success,²² as it was ultimately the patient who decided who was to be considered a medical authority.²³ If the physician was not sufficiently skilled to convince the patient to submit to his treatment, the physician lost his patient to someone else. The treatises of the Hippocratic corpus show an increasingly self-conscious medical profession that sets high standards and principles for its adherents.²⁴ This was necessary for the creation of authority. Because the patient had

¹⁹ Cañizares 2010: 93. See Cañizares for further discussion on the permeable boundaries between specialized and lay medical knowledge. The easy interchange between doctors and laypeople was facilitated by the lack of medical jargon (Nutton 1985b: 31).

²⁰ Massar 2010: 181.

²¹ Massar 2010: 182.

²² Massar 2010: 169.

²³ Nutton 1985: 27.

²⁴ van der Eijk 2005: 105-6.

so many options for treatment and there was no official sanction of the Hippocratic physician, the Hippocratics had to construct an authoritative voice for themselves.

The physician's moral reputation, medical skill, and rhetorical ability were important aspects of the authoritative voice.

A Hippocratic physician required training in both medical skill and rhetoric, which he gained through an apprenticeship to an established physician. The Greeks recognized that teachers had a defining influence on whomever they taught, so the master's own technical skill was very important.²⁵ *De decente habitu* 18 instructs the physician to pass on medical knowledge to others. As part of the pupil's education, the master physician may leave the pupil in charge of a patient to carry out the physician's instructions and administer treatment (*Decent.* 18). In addition to providing medical education, the apprenticeship system created a network of people who could support the physician and vouch for his ability.²⁶ This association was an easy way of ensuring laypeople recognized the physician as qualified and, in some cases, identified the particular medical trend of which the physician was a part.²⁷ The apprenticeship system provided the new physician with public and professional recognition of his ability to heal in addition to practical training in rhetoric and healing.

Rhetoric was an essential skill for the Hippocratic physician. Greek society encouraged open discussion and debate, and this extended to the field of medicine.²⁸

With many treatment options available to the patient, the Hippocratic physician had

²⁵ Massar 2010: 170.

²⁶ Massar 2010: 175.

²⁷ Massar 2010: 183.

²⁸ Nutton 1985a: 37.

to convince the ill or injured person that his treatment was superior to others. Open confrontations at the patient's bedside or noisy debates on the street corners were likely the norm.²⁹ A physician's ability to persuade had direct bearing on the development of his career and he had to use arguments recognizable to the lay public.³⁰ Towards that end, the physician was advised to avoid flowery language, poetic quotations, violent arguments or inappropriate language (*Praecepta* 12-13).³¹ Not all Hippocratic embraced debate. *Praecepta* 12, for example, cautions the physician against holding lectures, but the author concedes that if the physician wishes to engage in lecture or debate, he should avoid using poetic language. Patients connected a physician's rhetorical ability with his medical competence.³² It was not the physician's medical skill alone, but also his rhetorical skill, which were critical to his acceptance by the patient as a medical authority.

Rhetoric was a distinctly male domain; taught at the highest level of education, it enabled the male citizen to participate in political activities such as the assembly and the law courts. Citizens were expected to participate in political debate and to speak on their own behalf in the law courts.³³ The importance of the study of rhetoric to facilitate participation in civic life was generally recognized.³⁴ Both the Athenian political and legal systems depended on the direct participation of a large number of citizens and provided the fora in which men achieved political prominence.³⁵ This

²⁹ Nutton 1985a: 37; See also Nutton 1992: 19.

³⁰ Masser 2010: 170.

³¹ See further Nutton 1985b: 36-7.

³² See further Nutton 1985b: 36.

³³ Kennedy 1994: 3. See also Andersen 2001.

³⁴ Kennedy 1994: 8.

³⁵ Gagarin 2000: xii.

prominence, which was achieved by swaying the majority of citizens in one's favour, was never permanent and could be easily reversed.³⁶

Although the Athenians could be suspicious of the persuasive powers of rhetoric, they also had an appetite for it.³⁷ Great value had been placed on effective speaking since the Homeric era,³⁸ and by the Classical period oral competition had become important to the acquisition of status. Rhetorical contests were contests of character and in Classical Athens, oratory was the forum of competition for those wanting honour and status within the community.³⁹ Gender identity was achieved through one's performance of specific qualities,⁴⁰ and speaking in the assembly or law courts allowed the Greek citizen to perform his gender role. For the Greeks, manly excellence came from control over self and others, which could be achieved through symbolic and rhetorical means.⁴¹ As Fredal explains, rhetorical contests were one type of public contest for honour which allowed men to enhance their masculinity through performance while negotiating their political and social status.⁴² Rhetoric, then, was critical to masculine public self-formation and self-assertion and was one manifestation of the struggle to be male.⁴³ Rhetoric is clearly a masculine domain and the Hippocratics' emphasis of a physician's rhetorical ability indicates that they saw medical practice as a male activity.

³⁶ Gagarin 2000: xix-xx.

³⁷ Andersen 2001: 3.

³⁸ Gagarin 2000: xi; Kennedy 1994:8.

³⁹ Fredal 2006: 23; Gagarin 2000: xxvi.

⁴⁰ Fredal 2006: 23.

⁴¹ Fredal 2006: 23.

⁴² Fredal 2006: 23.

⁴³ Fredal 2006: 23-24.

A reputable physician certainly had to be educated in his medical art, which included an education in rhetoric. Whether this education in rhetoric came from his physician master or from training with an orator is unclear. If the physician were to learn from a professional orator, he would have required money to pay for his education; education was restricted to those who could afford to pay for it, and rhetoric and persuasion in particular were restricted to the well-off.⁴⁴ Of course, a student of rhetoric did not necessarily need to train with a high profile teacher, whose fees made his education available only to the wealthy, and he could choose training lasting anywhere from a single lecture to a four-year course.⁴⁵ Since there was no governing body for medicine in the ancient world, the level and quality of education received by physicians varied on an individual basis. The author of *De arte*, for example, hints that he has more education than many of his colleagues.⁴⁶

The actual socio-economic status of the Hippocratic physician is unclear. Some scholars assume that the practice of medicine in antiquity carried with it the same social prestige that it does in modern times and there are suggestions in the sources that physicians did come from an above-average socio-economic status. Rademaker, for example, argues that *De arte* was written to attract “well-educated laymen” to the medical profession.⁴⁷ The Hippocratic authors themselves were obviously well-educated in rhetoric and of sufficient status to have the time to write and distribute their works. Since training in rhetoric is associated with elite status,⁴⁸ a

⁴⁴ Morgan 2007: 306.

⁴⁵ Morgan 2007: 306-7.

⁴⁶ Rademaker 2010: 114.

⁴⁷ Rademaker 2010: 102.

⁴⁸ See further Harding 1987.

well-educated physician would have had to come from the upper classes. Although Nutton suggests in his earlier writings that physicians were on par with craftsmen,⁴⁹ he argues in more recent scholarship that physicians could, and sometimes did, treat the poor or needy for free if they wished.⁵⁰ The abnegation of fees is recorded in some honorary decrees and indicates that physicians had some level of prosperity, likely from land, which allowed them to exist without a professional income.⁵¹ Plato included a doctor, Eryximachus, at his symposium, which may also suggest that physicians had a high status, but this cannot be taken as absolute proof since he does depict people of non-elite status, such as the stoneworker Socrates, at the symposium as well.⁵² The question of physicians' status is "a vexed problem" with a tendency for scholars to over generalize.⁵³

While physicians' status likely varied by physician and location,⁵⁴ the Hippocratics did espouse the moral characteristics valued by the elite Greek male. The physician's reputation was extremely important, as he relied on it, together with his rhetorical skill, to persuade the patient of his treatments and to gain the patient's confidence.⁵⁵ The treatise *De medico* opens with a long discussion of the physician's required qualities. The physician must be healthy, clean, well-dressed and perfumed (*Medic.* 1). He is to be *sōphrōn* in life—that is, discreet, of sound mind and self-

⁴⁹ Nutton 1985b: 28, 30, 37; Cohn-Haft 1956: 15.

⁵⁰ Nutton 1992: 28.

⁵¹ Nutton 1992: 28. Land wealth was economically safe in the ancient world, since it could not be easily stolen and did not readily depreciate (Todd 1990: 171). The authors' reluctance to discuss fees in the Hippocratic corpus may also stem from the desire of elite men not to be seen engaged in business.

⁵² Demand 1998: 73. Plato's concern, of course, is with philosophical issues rather than presenting an accurate historical account (74).

⁵³ Parker 1997: 148n21.

⁵⁴ Demand 1998: 73.

⁵⁵ Massar 2010: 169

controlled—since this is important to one’s reputation (*Medic.* 1). He should be grave and kind to all, serious but not harsh, and not given to excessive mirth, since that is considered vulgar. The physician must demonstrate self-control of his spirit since patients will put themselves into his hands; this is especially necessary when he is called upon to treat women, who are likened to “possessions of great worth” (ἄξια πλεῖστα κτήματα) belonging to another man (*Medic.* 1).

Sōphrosunē was a quality closely associated with elite men and was equal to the qualities of justice, courage and prudence.⁵⁶ It was achieved through the practice of self-mastery (*enkrateia*) and restraint in the practice of pleasure.⁵⁷ The *sōphrōn* citizen was a fervent democrat, hated oligarchy, was loyal and generous to fellow citizens, was quick to perform liturgies, was self-effacing and inoffensive, and was averse to litigation.⁵⁸ The quality of *sōphrosunē* was also associated with the male domain of rhetoric.⁵⁹ The ideal orator possessed all four Stoic virtues: wisdom, justice, *sōphrosunē* and knowledge. The moral excellence of a speaker was important because it enhanced his use of ethical persuasion.⁶⁰ Speech was thought to have the power to produce *sōphrosunē* in an audience, so *sōphrosunē* was essential to the good orator.⁶¹ An orator was responsible for the promotion of *sōphrosunē* and justice in his city, and to do this he must possess the quality himself.⁶² The orator’s, or author’s, *sōphrosunē* also enabled him to restrain the impulse to use inappropriate metaphors, unacceptable

⁵⁶ Foucault 1990: 81.

⁵⁷ Foucault 1990: 78.

⁵⁸ North 1966: 122.

⁵⁹ North 1948: 3-4.

⁶⁰ North 1948: 3.

⁶¹ North 1948: 2, 4.

⁶² North 1948: 5.

rhythms or undue archaisms.⁶³ The possession of *sōphrosunē* also lent the orator—and the physician—authority because wisdom and moderation were seen to go together; an individual who was immoderate in his behaviour was always ignorant as well.⁶⁴

Sōphrosunē was a necessary quality for a man who was to rule over others, be it in the city, in the home or in the sickroom. *Sōphrosunē* was the virtue that qualified a man to exercise his mastery over others; a person who was under others on account of his status was not expected to find moderation within himself but simply to obey the orders and instructions he was given by those who did possess *sōphrosunē*.⁶⁵ Self-mastery (*enkrateia*), an important aspect of *sōphrosunē*, allowed a man to be a man.⁶⁶ *Sōphrosunē*, then, was a man's virtue and allowed a free man to establish his dominance over those who were ethically, sexually or socially below him.⁶⁷ Thus, for a physician to exercise control over his patient and the patient's disease, the physician had to have innate *sōphrosunē*. As we shall see in chapter two, this quality restricted the practice of medicine to free, adult men, as women, children, and slaves were not believed to possess inherent *sōphrosunē*.

This idea of *sōphrosunē* is not unique to *De medico*, but is found in other treatises as well. In *Jusjurandum (Oath)*, the physician vows to keep careful watch over his life and art (15) and to abstain from all wrongdoing (*πᾶσα ἀδικία*) and sexual behaviour (*ἀφοροδίσια*) towards women and men, whether they are freemen or slave

⁶³ North 1948: 17.

⁶⁴ Foucault 1990: 86.

⁶⁵ Foucault 1990: 80-81.

⁶⁶ Foucault 1990: 82.

⁶⁷ Foucault 1990: 83.

(20). *De decente habitu* advises the physician to keep careful watch over himself and to ensure that he does not engage in gossip (*Decent.* 7). Gossip was an activity closely associated with women,⁶⁸ and association with female characteristics had a negative impact on a man's authority since women were believed to be ruled by their physical appetites and to lack rationality.⁶⁹ For a physician, association with feminine qualities calls into question his own *sōphrosunē*. A physician needed to be of high moral reputation because he allied himself with the patient in order to combat the disease (*Epid.* 1.5.1).⁷⁰ The Hippocratic treatises attempt to regulate the physician's behaviour towards the patient and his or her family so that the physician has moral authority over the patient and his disease.

Mythological Tradition for the Male Healer

In constructing medicine as an activity requiring elite male qualities, the Hippocratic physicians were tapping into a Greek mythological tradition that associated healing with the god Asklepios and with elite Homeric warriors (*Ep.* 1). The earliest mention of Asklepios occurs in the *Iliad*, where he is twice identified as the father of Machaon (*Il.* 4.194, 11.518), while the story of his birth and life is recounted in a number of places in Graeco-Roman mythology.⁷¹ Asklepios was raised by the centaur Cheiron, who instructed him in the art of healing by means of incantations, *pharmaka* and

⁶⁸ See, for example, Aristoph. *Thes.* 390-395.

⁶⁹ Just 1989: 163-164.

⁷⁰ Jouanna 1999:359.

⁷¹ See further Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.14; *HHAsklepios*; *Pyth.* 3.

surgery (*Pyth.* 3. 47-53, *Il.* 4.217-219).⁷² Cheiron has the characteristics required for a physician; he is described as the “most righteous of centaurs” (δικαιότατος Κενταύρων; *Il.* 11.833).⁷³ Cheiron has the *sōphrosunē* that other centaurs lack and so his knowledge of *pharmaka* is trustworthy.

Asklepios is described in the *Iliad* as a blameless healer (ἀμύμων ἰητήρ) (4.194).⁷⁴ He was commonly considered the hero-father of Greek physicians and from early on physicians were known as “Asclepiads”, the sons of Asklepios, a term still being used by Euripides in the fifth century (*Alcestis* 970).⁷⁵ This is significant, since by considering themselves one group, physicians formed an informal corporation, which gave themselves greater presence and influence.⁷⁶ As observed above, a physician drew on the name of his teacher to persuade others of his abilities and knowledge; being able to trace one’s knowledge and skill back to Asklepios, then, imparted a sense of authority to a physician. The name of Asklepios could be used by the Hippocratics to instill respect for their practice in the minds of their patients and competitors.

The Homeric tradition also presents medicine as a chiefly male activity and the practice of medicine is worthy of a Homeric warrior. The two sons of Asklepios, Machaon and Podalirius, both skilled healers, led a contingent of 30 ships from

⁷² Although centaurs are usually representative of a dangerous natural force that threatens civilized life (Walcot 1984: 41), as we shall see in the case of Nessos and Deianeira in chapter three, Cheiron is an exception. As the son of Kronos and a nymph, he is not of the same race of the rest of the centaurs and resembles them only in form (*Argon.* 2.1231).

⁷³ The literary tradition represents Cheiron as educating heroes in the arts of medicine and war. See further Robbins 1975, 1978, 1993.

⁷⁴ L. S. J. specify that the term is never used to describe the gods, which indicates that Asklepios was not yet considered a god, but a hero like the other Greeks.

⁷⁵ Edelstein & Edelstein (Vol. 2) 1945: 54.

⁷⁶ Edelstein & Edelstein (Vol. 2) 1945: 60.

Tricca (*Il.* 2.729-733). Homer singles out Machaon as a doctor on numerous occasions,⁷⁷ which suggests that his ability as a physician is as important and valuable to the Greeks as his ability as a warrior. When Menelaus was struck by a Trojan arrow in *Iliad* 4, Agamemnon assures him that they will send for the healer (*iatros*) to examine the wound and spread *pharmaka* on it (4.190-1). Agamemnon sends the herald Talthybius to find Machaon, who is fighting in the ranks of the men from Tricca. Machaon expresses no surprise that he is being called away from the fighting to tend Menelaus' wounds, but with his heart roused, he heads off to find the wounded soldier (4.208).⁷⁸ He treats Menelaus' wound by sucking out the blood and spreading soothing *pharmaka* on it (4.218-9). Machaon himself is later wounded by Paris' arrow and carried from the field in Nestor's chariot (11.505-515). Nestor is motivated to rescue Machaon because a healer (*ἰητρος ἀνὴρ*) is worth many men for the cutting out of arrows and the use of soothing *pharmaka* (11.514-515).⁷⁹ Machaon is listed among the great warrior leaders at Troy and therefore is esteemed as a warrior. He is important to the Greeks not just because of his skills as a warrior, but primarily because of his skill as a healer.

Like Machaon, Achilles possesses skill in medicine and is thus able to heal the physical body with *pharmaka* (*Il.* 9.186-189).⁸⁰ Patroclus also has some medical knowledge, which he acquired from Achilles. The wounded Eurypylus begs Patroclus to take him back to his ship, cut the arrow from his thigh and sprinkle the wound with *pharmaka* (11.831-2). Patroclus removes the arrow, cleanses the wounds and

⁷⁷ Arieti 1984: 127.

⁷⁸ Edelstein & Edelstein (Vol. 2) 1945: 6.

⁷⁹ Edelstein & Edelstein (Vol. 2) 1945: 6.

⁸⁰ Mackie 1997: 8.

administers a pain-killing root (11.842-845). The early Greek mythological tradition associates heroic warriors with the practice of medicine. Thus, from earliest times, medicine in Greece was associated with elite men. The Homeric term ἰητρός remained the common term for indicating a male healer in the Attic form ἰατρός, forging a link between the Homeric heroes and later healers such as the Hippocratics. By using the term ἰατρός to refer to themselves, the Hippocratic physicians could exploit the cultural ideals of the Homeric elites. They could then associate their practice of medicine with the elite Greek man at the expense of other healers.

Conclusion

In the ancient world, medical knowledge was not confined to those who called themselves doctors and the accessibility of this knowledge allowed members of the community to pass judgment on those who claimed to be healers.⁸¹ The Greek patient had many healing options from which to choose: physicians, herb-cutters, druggists, midwives, gymnastic trainers, diviners, exorcists and priests all offered healing. In this noisy medical marketplace, the Hippocratic physician had to make his art stand out. The Hippocratics had to create for themselves an authoritative voice. The treatises of the Hippocratic corpus reflect this; to convince the public of the benefits of Hippocratic medicine, the physician presented himself as a medical authority by exhibiting the qualities of an elite Greek man. A physician's training in rhetoric helped him convince potential patients to submit to his treatment. The Hippocratic physician used rhetoric to publicly discredit his competition and to elevate the status

⁸¹ Nutton 1985b: 33-34.

of Hippocratic healing. But rhetoric alone was not enough; the Hippocratic physician also had to be of the highest moral standing. His personal moral reputation was critical to his ability to practice medicine. By leading a life in which he exhibited *sōphrosunē* he could elevate himself in the eyes of his patients and more easily persuade them to submit to his treatments. *Sōphrosunē* was a quality closely associated with the Greek male citizen, and by demonstrating this quality the Hippocratic physician made himself an acceptable medical authority. To further enhance his medical authority, the physician associated himself with the famous healer Hippocrates of Cos and traced his knowledge of medicine back to the Homeric heroes, the divine Asklepios and the centaur Cheiron. Tapping into this medical tradition further allows the physician to associate healing activities with male qualities. By placing physicians within this male tradition and by emphasizing the necessity of male characteristics, such as rhetorical ability and *sōphrosunē*, the Hippocratic authors were constructing an authoritative voice that privileged the elite male healer.

Chapter 2

Female Healers and the Hippocratic Corpus

Although women faced social disdain, stigma and disgrace for working outside the home, wives of metics and citizens did take up occupations when it was an economic necessity.¹ One such occupation is that of physician or healer, although the evidence for female healers in ancient Greece is fragmentary and scanty at best. The few existing references to female physicians could suggest that female healers made up a small percentage of physicians or that they were common enough not to warrant particular mention.² Evidence for female physicians extends back to the 5th century B.C.E. in Greece with Plato's mention of a female physician in his *Republic*. By the 4th century B.C.E., at least, the Greeks distinguished between midwives and female physicians, as evidenced by the inscription honouring the midwife-physician Phanostrate. The story of the female physician Hagnodike, who disguised herself as a man to learn medicine and whose story comes to us only through a Roman source, also indicates that at least some Greek women were practicing medicine in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. The hazardous nature of childbirth in pre-modern societies and

¹ Pomeroy 1977: 51; Kosmopoulou 2001: 284.

² Parker 1997: 131.

the Greek reluctance to permit communication between unrelated men and women, both of which are alluded to in the tale of Hagnodike, encourages the belief that female physicians were needed in ancient Greece.³ Childbirth appears to be the one medical situation when a woman could count on being attended by another woman.⁴ Although their practice seems to be confined primarily to women's diseases and childbirth,⁵ female healers do appear in the Hippocratic corpus. Their presence is indicated through vocabulary such as ἡ ἀκέστωρ (healer), ἡ ἰητρεύουσα (a woman who is doctoring), and ἡ ὀμφαλητόμος (midwife or umbilical cord cutter). The Hippocratics sought to create a male voice of medical authority in part by reserving the term *iatros* for themselves. Although the Hippocratics acknowledge the presence of female healers when necessary, the terminology they use for female healers indicates that they are not considered as equally capable as the male Hippocratic physician.

Evidence for Female Healers in Ancient Greece

The earliest written evidence for female physicians in ancient Greece comes from Plato's *Republic* of 421 B.C.E.⁶ Plato mentions a female healer (ιατρικά) twice:

οἷον ἰατρικὸν μὲν καὶ ἰατρικὴν τὴν ψυχὴν ὄντα τὴν αὐτὴν φύσιν ἔχειν ἐλέγομεν (*Rep.* 454d2)

³ Pomeroy 1977: 59-60.

⁴ Blundell 1995: 98.

⁵ Parker 1997: 136.

⁶ Parker 1997: 131

We meant, for example, that a male physician and a female physician have the same nature with respect to the soul.⁷

ἀλλ' ἔστι γὰρ οἶμαι, ὡς φήσομεν, καὶ γυνή ἰατρική, ἢ δ' οὐ,
καὶ μουσική, ἢ δ' ἄμουσος φύσει (*Rep.* 455e6-7).

We shall rather, I take it, say that one woman has the nature of a physician and another not, and one is by nature musical, and another unmusical?⁸

In both passages, Plato uses the feminine form of the adjective ἰατρικὸς (skilled in medical arts) substantitively to indicate that he is referring to a female physician.

There is little consensus, however, on the correct reading of *Republic* 454d2. Jowett translated the passage as “a physician and one who is in mind a physician may be said to have the same nature” in his 1892 text and D. A. Rees, following the example of James Adams, translated the passage as “one male physician and another male physician have the same nature” in his 1963 edition.⁹ Pomeroy argues that these two erroneous translations arise from the emendations of textual critics in the Roman and Renaissance periods, who thought the idea of a female physician in Athens “preposterous.”¹⁰ But as Pomeroy explains, Plato is demonstrating that external physical characteristics, such as biological sex, are irrelevant in determining what pursuits are appropriate to an individual’s nature.¹¹ Plato then moves on in his argument to show that just as both men and women may be equally suited to the study of medicine, both men and women may be suitable for the administration of the state (*Rep.* 455d). The train of logic demands the interpretation that Plato is referring to

⁷ Trans S. Pomeroy 1978: 496

⁸ Trans P. Shorey 1963: 447-449.

⁹ Jowett 1892; Rees 1963; Pomeroy 1978: 497.

¹⁰ Pomeroy 1978: 498.

¹¹ Pomeroy 1978: 498.

both female and male physicians in 454d.¹² Plato is not attempting to prove a woman's aptitude for medicine; rather, he is supporting his argument by pointing to something that already exists and with which his listeners would be familiar.¹³ He no more needs to prove that some women have an aptitude for medicine than he needs to prove that some women have a gift for music.

Epigraphical proof of female physicians is provided by the 4th century B.C.E. funerary inscription of Phanostrate. The memorial tablet depicts two women, one seated and the other standing, surrounded by both male and female infants.¹⁴ Across the top of the tablet is the inscription ΦΑΝΟ[ΣΤΡΑΤΗ] [--] ΜΕ[ΛΙΤΕΩΣ ΓΥΝΗ],¹⁵ below it reads μαῖα καὶ ἰατρός Φανοστράτη ἐνθάδε κείται / [ο]ὔθενί λυπη<ρ>ά, πᾶσιν δέ θανοῦσα ποθεινὴ (Phanostrate, a midwife and physician, lies here. She caused pain to none, and all lamented her death.)¹⁶ Phanostrate is depicted in the characteristic manner of a woman exhibiting *aidōs*, which Kosmopoulou describes as “characteristically ladylike” in pose and attire.¹⁷ Kosmopoulou classifies this gravestone as belonging to a group of stones which honours professional women by depicting them in their professional status.¹⁸ Women are usually shown on gravestones as subordinate to men and as elevating the status of a deceased husband or father;¹⁹ however, here Phanostrate is the focus of the scene and the children

¹² Pomeroy 1978: 499.

¹³ Parker 1997: 132; Pomeroy 1978: 500.

¹⁴ Lefkowitz & Fant 2005: 266.

¹⁵ As described in Pomeroy 1977: 60.

¹⁶ Kosmopoulou 2001: 316; Trans. Lefkowitz and Fant p. 266 no. 376.

¹⁷ Kosmopoulou 2001: 299, 300.

¹⁸ Kosmopoulou 2001: 282.

¹⁹ Kosmopoulou 2001:282.

connote her experience as a midwife and physician.²⁰ A funerary monument is a form of self-representation to the public;²¹ Phanostrate, or perhaps her husband or family, chose to represent her as the wife of a citizen of Melite and as an esteemed professional woman.²²

The commemorator's distinction between midwife (μαῖα) and physician or healer (ιατρός) is significant, since it indicates that the Greeks differentiated between the two practices. The *maia*, commonly translated midwife, was a woman whose practice was normally confined to childbirth.²³ Midwives depicted in tragedy and novels tend to be older widows without a *kyrios*, which allowed them the freedom to travel.²⁴ In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates describes midwives as those who are too old to conceive children (149b); barren women, however, are not able to be midwives because they lack experience (149c). Midwives are described as using *pharmakeia* (mild remedies, purgatives) and incantations to induce labour; causing miscarriages when deemed appropriate; matchmaking between men and women to produce the best children; and cutting a newborn's umbilical cord (149d-149e).

In contrast to the Hippocratic corpus, inscriptions, papyri and literature often use the feminine article placed in front of the most common term denoting a healer, ἡ ιατρός.²⁵ As Dean-Jones points out, given Greek ideas of shame and modesty, while it is difficult to imagine a female doctor attending male patients, the female physician

²⁰ Kosmopoulou 2001:300

²¹ Kosmopoulou 2001: 282

²² Pomeroy 1977: 60

²³ Parker 1997: 132; Kosmopoulou 2001: 299.

²⁴ King 1998: 181

²⁵ Parker 1997: 133

attended to women and, perhaps, to children as well.²⁶ Since the same term is used for male physicians in the Hippocratic corpus, its application to a woman here suggests that Phanostrate acted as a healer for matters other than childbirth. Her designation on the stele as both *maia* and *iatros* provides evidence that by 4th century B.C.E. Greeks distinguished between women who assisted in childbirth and those involved in a wider range of healing activities.²⁷

A discussion of female healers in ancient Greece is not complete without a discussion of the story of Hagnodike, recorded by Hyginus in *Fabulae* 274 (first century C.E.). Although it comes to us only from a Roman source the premise of the story—that women practiced some form of obstetrics in the 4th century B.C.E.—is consistent with the epigraphical and literary evidence.²⁸ According to Hyginus, the Athenians had decided that no slave or woman should learn the science of medicine. Because there were no midwives (Latin *obstetrices*) to help women in labour, and because modesty forbade their attendance by male physicians, significant numbers of women were dying in childbirth. Hagnodike, desiring to learn medicine and help these women, disguised herself as a man and trained under the physician Herophilus. She then attended women in labour, revealing herself to them as a woman, and thereby helping them (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 274.11). Hagnodike was, according to Hyginus, the first female physician in Greece.

²⁶ Dean-Jones 1994: 31.

²⁷ Pomeroy 1977: 60.

²⁸ Pomeroy 1977: 59.

The tale of Hagnodike is problematic as evidence for female healers in fourth century B.C.E. Greece. It appears only in this one source and its details are open to scholarly debate.²⁹ For example, Hagnodike's disguise follows the story of Plato's pupil Axiothea, who disguised herself in male clothing for the sake of an education as well.³⁰ The preservation of the story in Latin is also problematic; Hyginus uses the term *obstetrices* but we do not know which of the several words denoting female healers and midwives in Greece the Athenians would have used for her. The obvious Greek equivalent is *maia*, a woman whose practice is confined to childbirth,³¹ but as we saw with Phanostrate, a woman could be both a *maia* and an *iatros*. Regardless of what she may have called herself (or been called by others), Hyginus' story suggests that Hagnodike was trained as a physician under the direction of the well-known physician Herophilus, in the same manner that Hippocratic physicians were trained. The story of Hagnodike argues for the medical treatment of women by other women because of Greek cultural ideas of modesty.³² The women's sense of modesty means they would rather die in childbirth than be seen by a male physician (*Mul.* 1.62). There was, thus, a practical need for women with medical training. While elements of Hagnodike's story may leave us sceptical, we cannot ignore the possibility that there was a real woman who was traditionally the first female physician and who attended the classes of another doctor.³³ As we have seen with the inscription of Phanostrate

²⁹ King 1998: 181; Pomeroy 1977: 59.

³⁰ Pomeroy 1977: 59.

³¹ King 1998: 182; Parker 1997: 132.

³² Dean-Jones 1994: 33.

³³ Pomeroy 1977: 59.

and the female physician in Plato's *Republic*, women were practicing obstetrics and possibly other medicine as well in the fourth century B.C.E.

Female Healers in the Hippocratic Corpus

Although the Hippocratic corpus does not directly discuss female physicians, and makes few references to women taking a healing role, there is still evidence that women were involved in healing activity. Examination of the Greek terms for healers is also useful in determining the presence of female healers in the Hippocratic corpus. Ancient Greek has a number of terms for women acting as healers, among which are ἡ ἰατρική, ἡ ἰατρός or ἡ ἰατήρ (female healer, physician); ἡ ἀκεστήρ or ἡ ἀκέστωρ (healer); ἡ ὀμφαλητόμος (umbilical cord cutter); and μαῖα (midwife). However, the Hippocratics do not use these terms to refer to women involved in healing. A search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for the roots of Greek words for healers suggests that women involved in healing activities are not identified as healing authorities in the Hippocratic corpus. The results of this search, compiled in Table 2.1, indicate that when women are mentioned as healers in the corpus, they are usually referred to by the use of the feminine participles ἰητρεύουσα (a woman who is doctoring) and ἐσαφάσσουσα or παραφάσσουσα (a woman who is touching or feeling). Each of these participles occurs once. The feminine forms of the nouns ἡ ἀκέστωρ (healer) and ἡ ὀμφαλητόμος (midwife or umbilical cord cutter) also occur only once each. By contrast, the terms ἡ ἰατήρ, ἡ ἰατρός, and ἡ μαῖα do not occur at all. Often individual

women are simply referred to as γυνή, which leaves their status as healing authorities ambiguous.

The term ἀκέστωρ is applied to women attending a birth in *De carnibus* (*Fleashes*) 19:

εἰ δέ τις βούλεται καὶ τοῦτο ἐλέγξει, ῥηϊδίον· πρὸς τὰς ἀκεστρίδας αἱ πάρεισι τῆσι τικτούσησιν ἐλθὼν πυθέσθω (*Carn.* 19).

If anyone wishes proof, the matter is easy: let him go to the midwives that attend women who are giving birth and ask them.³⁴

Although Potter translates ἀκέστωρ as ‘midwife,’ this could also be translated ‘healer.’³⁵ The Hippocratic author acknowledges that he gets his information from female healers who are involved in childbirth. The author uses the term ἀκέστωρ for these female healers whose activities are limited to childbirth. The Hippocratics do not appear to use the Greek *maia*, the usual Greek term for midwife, but the feminine form *omphalētōmos* is used once in *De mulierum affectibus* (*On the Diseases of Women*) 1.46. This term is used to describe the woman who cuts the newborn child’s umbilical cord. Her involvement in childbirth is mentioned in passing as the Hippocratic author describes problems that can arise if the cord is not cut correctly. Both terms ἀκέστωρ and ὀμφαλητόμος are used to describe the female healer’s activity in relation to childbirth. The Hippocratic author appears to take it for granted that such women are regularly a part of childbirth, even suggesting in *De carnibus* 19

³⁴ Trans. Potter 1995: 165.

³⁵ L.S.J. A

that those who do not believe what he is saying can consult one of these female healers for themselves.

In addition to the terms ἡ ἀκέστωρ and ἡ ὀμφαλιτόμος, feminine forms of participles of healing-related verbs are also used to denote women as healers. These are ἰατρεύουσα, from the verb ἰατρέω meaning “to treat medically”, and παραφάσσουσα and ἐσαφάσσουσα, from ἀφάσσω “to feel.” In *De mulierum affectibus* 1.68, ἡ ἰατρεύουσα (literally “the female who is doctoring”) uses her fingers to open the mouth of the patient’s uterus and draw out the umbilical cord and the foetus. In *De natura muliebri (On the Nature of Women)* 6, the παραφάσσουσα (literally “woman feeling gently”), examines the opening of a woman’s uterus with her finger. Littré (7.321) attributes the action to a “sage-femme” (midwife), but the Greek does not specify that the woman is a midwife. Indeed, the Greek does not specify the role of this woman beyond her action; she could be the patient herself, a friend, a physician’s assistant or a physician. Littré also attributes the participle ἐσαφάσσουσα to a midwife (7.385), but again, the Greek does not specify the woman’s identity (*Nat. Mul.*40). Littré’s decision to translate these participles as “sage-femme” says more about ideas of female healers in the mid-19th century Europe than in 5th century B.C.E. Greece.

The participle σμήχουσα (from σμήχω, “to wash off”) is used in *Epidemiae* 4.11 in the treatment of a young boy with a head wound. The author states that the woman washed the wound prior to the physician’s arrival and, as a result, the boy developed a fever and died. The verb σμήχω can mean simply to wash off or to purge,

but it often carries the sense of washing off with the help of soap or unguents.³⁶ It is possible that the woman who washed the boy's head used some type of *pharmaka*, but the author does not specify this. Whether or not an unguent was used could be immaterial to the treating Hippocratic physician, since *De capitis vulneribus (Head Wounds)* 13 strictly admonishes the physician not to moisten head wounds. Lesions or wounds of the head are not to be moistened with anything, not even wine. The author of *Epidemiae* does not emphasize the woman's use of *pharmaka* or soap in the washing and uses only the feminine participle *σμήχουσα*. This suggests that the physician is not drawing attention to the woman's contribution to the patient's condition so much as emphasizing the mistreatment itself. It is not possible to say with certainty whether the author is censuring the woman for her involvement or merely stating fact, but it is clear that a woman is involved in the unsuccessful treatment of a child.

Notably, female healers are never referred to in the Hippocratic corpus with forms of *iatros*. This term appears to be limited to male Hippocratic physicians (e.g., *Acut.* 5, 8, 44; *VM* 9, 20; *Medic.* 1; *Jusj.*; *Praec.* 5). Furthermore, women healers are primarily referred to through the use of feminine participles. The distinction between the noun *iatros* and the feminine participles is important because the use of a noun or verbal term makes a statement about the healer's status. The noun identifies a permanent status, whereas the verbal form indicates a temporary, and perhaps

³⁶ L.S.J. A.II.

unnatural, status.³⁷ Thus, when female healers are referred to by a participle without an article, as they are in *De natura muliebri* 6 and 40, the author is indicating that the woman is acting in the capacity of a healer but does not have the status of one. When the male physician is referred to by the nominal form *iatros*, the Hippocratic author is making a clear statement that this person is recognized as a medical authority.

Finally, women involved in medical treatments are often referred to simply as γυνή (woman), which may suggest they are *ad hoc* assistants drawn from among the friends and family of the patient.³⁸ Both *Epidemiae* and *De mulierum affectibus* show a γυνή involved in the internal examination of another woman. At *Epidemiae* 5.25, the Hippocratic author reports that a woman felt something rough in the mouth of her own womb. Another woman then examines it for her and removes a stone. When discussing women who are unable to carry a foetus to term, the physician in *De mulierum affectibus* 21 states that it is necessary not only to question the patient carefully, but to have another woman (ἑτέρη γυνή) feel the inside of the patient's uterus when it is empty. Women also aid in the removal of foetuses. At *Excision of the Foetus* 4 we read that four women are to hold the pregnant woman by her arms and legs and shake the patient to make the foetus drop out.

The corpus does not specify if any of these women were formally trained as physicians, but Dean-Jones argues that the *Jusjurandum* does leave open the possibility that women could be formally trained in Hippocratic medicine. The section of the oath she points to as evidence reads as follow:

³⁷ McClure 2003: 17.

³⁸ Bourbon 2008: lxxvi n.164.

καὶ γένος τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφοῖς ἴσον ἐπικρινεῖν ἄρρεσι, καὶ
 διδάξειν τὴν τέχνην ταύτην, ἣν χρίζωσι μανθάνειν, ἄνευ
 μισθοῦ καὶ συγγραφῆς (*Jusj.*)

And to consider his [the teacher's] family as my own brothers,
 and to teach them this art, if they want to learn it, without fee
 or indenture³⁹

The physician swears to treat the offspring of his master as though they were his own brothers (ἀδελφοῖς... ἄρρεσι). Scholars, as in Jones' translation above, assume that γένος refers to male family members. Dean-Jones, however, points out that γένος does not specify gender and could refer to both male and female offspring. She argues that if the author of the oath were referring only to male offspring, he would have used the word υἱεῖς ("male child") instead of γένος.⁴⁰ In addition, she also suggests that if the author were referring to teaching only the master's sons, he would not have needed to specify that the teacher's offspring be treated equally as male (ἄρρεσι) siblings, as this would have been the expected relationship between males.⁴¹ Dean-Jones suggests that although ἀδελφοῖς describes brothers, it could include female offspring.⁴² While her argument could present the possibility that female offspring, as well as male, were trained in Hippocratic medicine, it is made weak by the broad meaning of γένος. The term γένος may refer to one's descendants or off-spring, or, even more broadly, one's clan or family,⁴³ so it could be referring to relationships between generations of healers rather than specifying healers' genders, and thus is of

³⁹ Trans. Jones 1962: 299.

⁴⁰ Dean-Jones 1994: 32.

⁴¹ Dean-Jones 1994: 32.

⁴² Dean-Jones 1994: 32.

⁴³ LSJ AII, AIIIb.

limited value for determining the Hippocratic preferences for male healers. If the training of women as Hippocratic physicians were a common practice, we would expect to find female healers mentioned throughout the Hippocratic corpus, which, as we see below, is not the case.

Not surprisingly, most references to female healing activity concern childbirth and gynaecological care. Of course, to the Hippocratics all women's medicine was gynaecological in nature, since women's diseases had their origins in a malfunctioning womb (*Loc. Hom.* 47). The decision to use a male doctor for childbirth or to rely on help from female kin or neighbours lay in the hands of a woman's *kyrios* or, if she were a slave, her owner.⁴⁴ Even if a male doctor supervised the birth, another woman often delivered the child and cut the umbilical cord.⁴⁵ Blundell suggests that in normal circumstances childbirth was handled exclusively by women and the physician was only called in for complications.⁴⁶ She argues that, because there are no treatises on obstetrics, the Hippocratic physician was brought in only for difficult cases.⁴⁷ But to argue from the absence of evidence is dangerous; just because a Hippocratic treatise on obstetrics has not come down to us does not mean there never was one.

Furthermore, it was not always necessary to bring in a Hippocratic physician for difficult childbirths. Plato's *Theaetetus* 149d suggests that a midwife can bring a

⁴⁴ Demand 2004: 44.

⁴⁵ Dean-Jones 1994: 35.

⁴⁶ Blundell 1995: 110.

⁴⁷ Blundell 1995: 110.

difficult birth to a successful conclusion.⁴⁸ As Demand points out, women were present on the peripheries of the male profession of medicine.⁴⁹ The Hippocratic treatises show women working alongside the Hippocratic physician, and by virtue of working together, the midwives would have the opportunity to become familiar with Hippocratic theories and practices.⁵⁰ Passages alluding to the presence and involvement of a midwife leave no doubt that women assisted, or were advised by, Hippocratic doctors in both normal and abnormal deliveries.⁵¹ Women who moved beyond midwifery, such as Phanostrate, likely acquired some formal training.⁵² There is evidence that even ordinary women had some understanding of Hippocratic medical theories. That women are shown in the Hippocratic corpus as counting the days of their pregnancy carefully (even though the physicians are not inclined to believe them) suggests that women had some familiarity with medical theories concerning the development of the foetus.⁵³ So whether through formal training or the informal acquisition of knowledge, it appears likely that women had the opportunity to learn Hippocratic treatments, if not theories, and were able to heal other women.

Female Self-Treatment

The physician's assistant did not have to be a third person in the sickroom; in many instances, it is the female patient herself who assists in her own treatment. The

⁴⁸ King 1998: 177.

⁴⁹ Demand 2004: 67.

⁵⁰ Demand 2004: 67.

⁵¹ Demand 2004: 66.

⁵² French 1987: 72.

⁵³ Demand 2004: 53.

examples of a woman's involvement in self-treatment under the guidance of a Hippocratic physician are plentiful throughout the gynaecological treatises. Although there are many examples of the Hippocratic physician performing internal examinations and manipulations on their female patients, the physician might leave some of these for the patient to perform herself.⁵⁴ In numerous places throughout the gynaecological treatises the author instructs the physician to have the female patient examine the mouth of her uterus. For example, in *De mulierum affectibus* 133 the woman is to touch the uterine opening with her finger during fumigation to check if the fumigation is working. The woman may be required to examine the uterus opening in case it is thin and moist (e.g., *Mul.* 59; *Nat. Mul.* 2) or inflamed and sagging (*Nat. Mul.* 11). In some places the female patient uses her fingers to re-align the mouth of her uterus (*Mul.* 134, 141; *Nat. Mul.* 40). The female patient may also apply *pharmaka* internally, as she does in *De mulierum affectibus* 37, when she rubs oil into the opening of her uterus or in *De mulierum affectibus* 89, when she applies fig juice to the uterine opening and oil to her genitals.

A woman may be responsible for inserting or removing her own pessaries or suppositories, as at *De mulierum affectibus* 19, 59, 81, 84, 88, 89, 133, 162, 177, 179. It is usually unclear, however, whether it is the woman herself who uses *pharmaka* to make the pessary or whether she relies on the male physician to concoct the prescription. In *De natura muliebri* 20, for example, the physician prescribes pessaries for the woman to insert into her womb, but the text does not specify whether

⁵⁴ Bourbon 2008: lxxvi. I have listed the examples of female self-treatment that I found in *De mulierum affectibus*, *De natura muliebri* and *De superfetation* in Table 2.2 in the appendix.

the physician provides the actual pessaries or simply a recipe for the woman to make them herself. *De superfetation* 33 describes both a physician making a suppository for a female patient to apply and a woman making and applying her own suppository.

The author of *De natura muliebri* 71, however, clearly specifies that the woman is to concoct a pessary from goose fat and oregano to bring on her menses.

The gynaecological treatises also depict women self-administering *pharmaka*. The Greeks used a wide variety of animal, plant and mineral substances as *pharmaka* and the Hippocratics use these substances in ointments, fumigations, pessaries and suppositories in conjunction with other treatments. For example, *De mulierum affectibus* 141 explains how a woman should use her finger to re-align the mouth of her uterus and also prescribes which medicines and ointments the patient should administer to herself. *Pharmaka* could also be consumed as food or drink. *De natura muliebri* 93 instructs the female patient on mixing and drinking a concoction of sage, juniper and wine. The patient is also instructed in applying *pharmaka* such as fat from a stag, oil, and fig juice to her uterus or genitals (*Mul.* 84, 89). The use of fumigations of myrrh and rose-water (*Nat. Mul.* 6) and the various recipes for pessaries, as discussed above, are also examples of women self-administering *pharmaka*. The female patient could obtain these *pharmaka* from a physician, a rootcutter, a knowledgeable friend or relative, or concoct it herself. Recipes provided in *De natura muliebri* include a myriad of vegetable, animal and mineral products.⁵⁵ It is possible that the Hippocratic physician provided the recipes for the patient to obtain, prepare

⁵⁵ Bourbon 2008b: 235-240. French (1987: 70) notes that although these treatments may appear distasteful to us, it is difficult to determine how efficacious or harmful treatments might be.

and administer the *pharmaka* herself, but these recipes may also have been available through women's traditional oral knowledge.

Although most examples of women administering *pharmaka* are restricted to self-treatment in the gynaecological treatises, *Epidemiae* 4.11 and *De morbo* 4.54 depict women administering *pharmaka* to children.⁵⁶ In *De morbo* 4.54, women administer *pharmaka* to their newborn babies to purge and enlarge the intestines. The example from *Epidemiae* 4.11 may or may not include the use of *pharmaka*, as discussed above, but even if the woman is using some form of *pharmakon* to clean the boy's wound, she is administering it to a child. These two examples suggest that it may be acceptable or even expected for a woman to treat her children with *pharmaka*. It is noteworthy, however, that women are nowhere depicted as administering *pharmaka* to adult men. The administration of *pharmaka* by women is found primarily in the gynaecological texts and only as part of their own treatments or those of their offspring.

Female self-treatment, whether manipulation, self-examination or administration of *pharmaka*, occurs under the direction of a Hippocratic physician. Although these treatments likely came from women's knowledge in the first place, as discussed below, the Hippocratic physician had little faith in a woman's ability to understand her own body. As we read in the Hippocratic corpus, women, particularly those who are stout and phlegmy, cannot necessarily recognize the signs of pregnancy (*Carn.* 19). The physician must question his female patient carefully, since she may

⁵⁶ See Table 2.3 in the appendix.

remain silent about her condition out of fear, shame or modesty (*Mul.* 1.62). More generally, non-physicians are viewed by the Hippocratics as being unable to determine the best course of treatment (*Acut.* 6). Even when women are involved in their own treatment, treatment must be under the direction of a Hippocratic physician.

Female Healers, *Sōphrosunē*, and Male Hippocratic Authority

The Hippocratics likely show women in a healing capacity so rarely and only in the context of self-treatment or treatment of women or children because of the type of medical authority the author-physicians are attempting to construct. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hippocratic medical authority is constructed in a way which privileges elite men through its emphasis on inherently male characteristics. Chief among these necessary qualities for a physician is *sōphrosunē*. As discussed earlier, *sōphrosunē* was a state reached through exercise of self-mastery and restraint in pleasures.⁵⁷ It was the characteristic that caused one to avoid disgraceful conduct not only in public, but in private as well. The inability to control one's desires was a negative trait since it threatened enslavement to those desires. A respectable Greek male was in control of his body and desires and did not allow himself to be subjugated to another person, and particularly to a woman; his *sōphrosunē* was on equal footing with the ideals of justice, courage and prudence and it qualified him to exercise mastery over others.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Foucault 1990: 78.

⁵⁸ Foucault 1990: 81.

A woman, however, naturally lacked self-control. Since she did not innately have *sōphrosunē*, she needed to be subordinate to someone who did—i.e., a male guardian or *kyrios*. The Greeks believed women were slaves to their sexual desires and ruled by their physical appetites.⁵⁹ This stereotype of women as lacking understanding, foresight and rationality was commonplace in Greece.⁶⁰ The pervasive nature of this stereotype is suggested by its exploitation in Athenian comedy. Although in reality women's access to wine and opportunities for revelry were severely restricted, the female characters in comedy are often portrayed as being overly fond of drinking, dancing and noisemaking.⁶¹ Aristophanes exploits these stereotypes in his depiction of the female supporting characters of *Lysistrata*.⁶² When Lysistrata proposes a 'sex strike' to bring about an end to the fighting between the Athenians and Spartans, the women initially resist because they do not want to sleep alone (*Lysistrata* 143-144). Although the women struggle to keep their oath to resist sexual temptation, the humour for the Greek audience comes from the women's ability to resist while the men succumb, as this represents a comic reversal of a reality in which women are enslaved to their sexual desires.⁶³ The depiction of women as unable to control themselves also occurs in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. The women have gathered on the Acropolis as part of the festival of the Thesmophoria and are using this opportunity to discuss what to do about Euripides, whom they accuse of

⁵⁹ Just 1989: 162, 163.

⁶⁰ Just 1989: 164.

⁶¹ Henderson 1997: 91n1.

⁶² Henderson (1997: 91-2n1) notes that Aristophanes is careful to exempt his heroine, Lysistrata, from this stereotype. See also Henderson 1997: 88.

⁶³ Henderson 1997: 93n24.

portraying women in a negative light and thus arousing their husbands' suspicions. Euripides, they claim, depicts women as adulterous, lecherous, prone to drink and excessive talk (*Thes.* 393-394). As a result, when men return from the theater with their heads full of false ideas, they watch their wives with excessive suspicion (*Thes.* 400). Aristophanes uses this for comedic effect as he depicts the female characters as susceptible to vice. When Mnesilochus discovers that First Woman's 'baby' is actually a wine-skin, he declares that only one passion rules a woman and encourages her to neglect her family and domestic duties, and that is her passion for wine (*Thes.* 730-739). Although these depictions of women are used for comedic effect, Aristophanes generally espouses the social, political and moral feelings of conservative, upper-class Greeks.⁶⁴ These comedic depictions demonstrate both the belief that women lacked rationality and the tendency to regard women as irresponsible.⁶⁵ Because of this, women were considered inherently different from and inferior to men.⁶⁶

Although women were considered to lack rationality, foresight and understanding, the absence of these characteristics did not mean that a woman could not be virtuous, but only that her virtue came through training and submission.⁶⁷ Women were still capable of *sōphrosunē* and the closely-related traits of *enkrateia* and *aidōs*.⁶⁸ Her virtue was dependent on her strength of character and her

⁶⁴ Henderson 1997: 1-2.

⁶⁵ Just 1989: 164; Dover 1984: 146.

⁶⁶ Just 1989: 154.

⁶⁷ Foucault 1990: 83.

⁶⁸ Foucault 1990: 160. Ferrari (1990) explains *aidōs* as the outward, visual representation of a woman's *sōphrosunē*. *Aidōs* was an appropriate trait for women of all ages and was demonstrated by a woman's

dependence on her male guardian. For a respectable Greek woman, virtue and *sōphrosunē* came through submission to her *kyrios*. As Foucault explains, when a person was under the authority of others on account of his (or her) status, he (or she) was “not expected to find the principle of his moderation himself;⁶⁹ it would be enough for him to obey the orders and instructions he was given.” A *sōphrōn* woman exercised her will and reason by respecting the rules that were laid down for her.⁷⁰

When women act on their own impulses and desires, they exhibit a lack of self-control, which results in harm. The danger that female healers pose to men hinges on a woman’s perceived lack of *sōphrosunē*, or self-control, when using *pharmaka*. To further complicate matters, special knowledge of wild plants in particular is viewed with a mixture of distrust and awe. Pharmaceutical knowledge arouses fear since the line between poison and medicine is easily blurred. *Pharmaka* introduce a powerful, unstable element to what might be an already unstable and critical situation. When the knowledge of *pharmaka* is possessed by a woman of inadequate *sōphrosunē*, both fear and danger increase for a man. Because women lack their own inherent *sōphrosunē* they are not considered capable of understanding and using *pharmaka* in a manner beneficial to men and so cannot be trusted as healers.

The gynaecological treatises are particularly interesting in how they contribute to this creation of a male authority. These treatises are unique within the corpus in that they are male authored but contain “privileged information” which the authors

downcast glance and covering of herself (190). The quality of *aidōs* “keeps those who are incapable of behaving in a wise and responsible manner under control, and it prevents those who have power from using [it] in an arbitrary and destructive manner” (Ferrari 1990: 193-194).

⁶⁹ Foucault 1985: 80.

⁷⁰ Foucault 1990: 146.

could only have learned from women.⁷¹ The texts were also possibly directed at a female clientele and thus show glimpses into the intimate lives of Greek women.⁷² It has been suggested, for example, that *De mulierum affectibus I* was written for female patients.⁷³ The inclusion of recipes for abortifacients and long lists of remedies in the gynaecological works suggest that the Hippocratic authors of these treatises were compiling traditional women's lore, rather than developing new theories and treatments.⁷⁴ A continuous tradition of medical lore and home remedies had developed independently of the Hippocratic physicians but was available to them for use.⁷⁵ This incorporation of traditional female knowledge into the systematic presentations of male medical theorists effectively transforms the knowledge.⁷⁶ The Hippocratics encapsulated earlier folk medical theories and practices in their own therapies.⁷⁷ By creating a new discipline of gynaecology and by putting that knowledge into a written form that favours elite, learned men, the male Hippocratic physician transformed women's reproductive knowledge into Hippocratic knowledge and thereby assumed control over the treatment of women.⁷⁸ In texts such as *De mulierum affectibus*, the medical writer gives voice to Hippocratic professionalism

⁷¹ Dean-Jones 1994: 27. As King (1995: 206) points out, the medical writers do not depict women as being entirely without knowledge.

⁷² Dean-Jones 1994: 27.

⁷³ Demand 2004: 53.

⁷⁴ Demand 2004: 60, 63. King (1995: 207), however, raises three important counter-arguments to this position. Firstly, many of the gynaecological recipes include animal excrement, which is not used in the treatment of men and could be an expression by male physicians of women's impurity. Secondly, the flamboyant nature of some recipes could be due to the Hippocratic physician's need to impress his clients in a competitive atmosphere. Finally, the use of rare, costly ingredients such as myrrh and Egyptian perfume are unlikely to feature in women's home remedies.

⁷⁵ Hanson 1991: 78.

⁷⁶ Demand 2004: 53.

⁷⁷ Hanson 1991: 78.

⁷⁸ Demand 2004: 68.

while separating himself from the female practitioners he considers outside the Hippocratic tradition.⁷⁹ Although much of the knowledge within these treatises likely originated from women, the Hippocratics use it to insert themselves into the area of gynaecological treatment, which was previously reserved for other healers.⁸⁰ By incorporating women's knowledge into Hippocratic explanations of how the body functioned and the causes of disease, the physician asserts his right to intervene in the treatment of women.⁸¹ Through the creation of the gynaecological treatises in particular, the Hippocratics assume authority over the treatment of female patients.

Conclusion

The Hippocratics were constructing a voice of medical authority that was male, and for this to be successful they had to incorporate traditional female knowledge into the Hippocratic system. They did this by codifying female knowledge and fitting it into the Hippocratic framework. At the same time, the Hippocratics also needed to find a way to deal with female healers. They could either denounce them, as they do other physicians (e.g., *Lex*), ignore them or attempt to bring them under their authority. The corpus neither denounces female healers nor completely ignores them. Rather, the Hippocratics acknowledge the existence of female healers and bring their service in under the authority of the Hippocratic physician. The use of the participles *σμήχουσα*, *ἐσαφάσσουσα*, *ἰητρεύουσα*, and *παραφάσσουσα* emphasize the agency of female

⁷⁹ Hanson 1991: 81.

⁸⁰ Hanson 1991: 87.

⁸¹ Hanson 1991: 79.

healers, while at the same time suggesting that their status and identity as healers is only temporary. While the Hippocratics recognize that women could, and did, participate in healing activities, the use of participles rather than the usual nouns for healers, particularly *iatros*, suggests that the Hippocratics did not see these women as healers equal in status and authority to themselves.

Both the paucity of and the nature of the evidence for female healers in the Hippocratic corpus leads us to two important conclusions. Firstly, Hippocratic physicians did not see female healers as capable of Hippocratic healing. Secondly, that when women were involved in healing activities, their involvement extended only to themselves, other women, and children. As discussed previously, the Hippocratics are concerned with constructing a medical authority based on characteristics considered by the Greeks to be inherently masculine. This emphasis on male qualities, and in particular on *sōphrosunē*, does not allow the female healer to be an equal to the male Hippocratic physician. The Hippocratic authors emphasize male authority throughout the corpus, and particularly in the gynaecological treatises. They wish to restrict the role of female healers to the context of assisting the male Hippocratic physician in the treatment of other women. Because of their emphasis on cultural ideas about *sōphrosunē*, the Hippocratic physician does not appear comfortable with women taking a healing role. This male anxiety concerning women healers is not restricted to the Hippocratic authors but is evident in wider ancient Greek culture. As we shall see in the following chapters, women involved in healing and the use of *pharmaka* are problematized throughout Greek myth and literature.

Chapter 3

**Depictions of Women and *Pharmaka* in
Epic and Tragic Literature**

A strong tradition exists in Greek myth associating women with drugs and poisons and these representations reflect the cultural perception of female healers as potentially malevolent. As noted earlier, the Greek term *pharmaka* encompasses both beneficial medicines and dangerous poisons and literary depictions of women using *pharmaka* suggest that they were not to be relied upon to understand and use *pharmaka* in a manner beneficial to men. Women who possessed knowledge of *pharmaka* posed a threat to male authority and health in part because of the ambiguous nature of *pharmaka* itself.

Cultural anxiety towards female healers is evident in the myths of Medea, Helen, Circe and Deianeira. This depiction of female figures in mythology forms part of a tradition that is apparent across archaic, classical and hellenistic iterations of the Greek mythological corpus.¹ Unlike the Hippocratic corpus or the forensic evidence discussed elsewhere in this work, epic and tragic literature do not seek to give a causal explanation of events or ideas, but rather reflect the values of the culture that

¹ Just 1989: 230.

produce them.² Myth provides a vehicle through which a culture can express and explore important societal issues.³ Greek myth presents women as society imagines they might be;⁴ thus, the recurrent theme of women with *pharmaka* causing harm to men suggests that female healers were a source of anxiety for Greek men.

The ambiguous nature of *pharmaka* made them a dangerous force, particularly when administered by women. Epic and tragic literature in particular reflects the anxiety and mistrust that men had towards female practitioners of *pharmaka*. An intertextual analysis of the representations of Medea by Euripides and Apollonios Rhodios reveals the underlying anxiety regarding women's knowledge and practice of *pharmaka* and, by extension, their healing activity in general. In the *Odyssey*, Helen and Circe are both familiar with the power and use of *pharmaka* in a way that emphasizes their ambiguous nature. The tragic poet Sophocles (5th century B.C.E.) shows Deianeira murdering her husband Herakles because she lacks the knowledge to use drugs carefully. When examined together, these representations of female healers demonstrate that not only was women's knowledge of *pharmaka* dangerous because of the ambiguous nature of medicinal substances, but also because *pharmaka* came from beyond the civilized world and were not subject to male control.

Medea

The tradition of associating women with malevolent drugs is evident in the myths of Medea, particularly the versions by Euripides in *Medea* (431 B.C.E.) and by

² See, for example, Walcot 1984:39.

³ Robbins 1978: 102.

⁴ Just 1989: 216.

Apollonius Rhodios in the *Argonautika* (3rd century B.C.E.). In both works Medea is a helper figure with knowledge of powerful and potentially dangerous *pharmaka*, which she uses for primarily malevolent purposes. Euripides' *Medea* represents both the benefits and dangers of *pharmaka* combined in one woman: she promises to use her special knowledge of practical *pharmaka* to heal the Athenian king while at the same time using them to destroy the king of Corinth and his daughter (*Med.* 717-718, 780-789). In the *Argonautika*, Apollonius portrays Medea primarily as a woman whose knowledge of *pharmaka* has a clear supernatural element on account of her descent from Helios, the sun god, and her role as priestess of Hecate. She is not the practical human healer of Euripides' play, but rather the semi-divine witch or sorceress. Her use of *pharmaka* is accompanied by ritual action and thus, like Circe, encompasses both the mortal and divine spheres. Medea in the *Argonautika* possesses dangerous knowledge of *pharmaka*, which, when combined with spoken incantations, result in the destruction of her family. A comparison of these two works reveals that rather than using *pharmaka* to bring balance and order, as a physician should, Medea uses them to bring disorder and chaos. These two accounts of Medea emphasize the dangerous power that women with knowledge of *pharmaka* were thought to possess in ancient Greece.

In the *Medea*, Euripides emphasizes Medea's human rather than divine nature and gives her aspects of a normative Athenian mother and wife,⁵ and she represents herself as sharing a common lot with the Corinthian women (*Med.* 231). The play's original audience would most certainly have been familiar with Medea's story, and

⁵ Blondell 1999: 155; Bongie 1977: 36. Euripides does not mention Medea's divine heritage until line 950. See Mueller 2001: 493 and Blondell 1999: 167.

while Euripides does not mention Medea's use of *pharmaka* in her earlier adventures in Colchis, he does not repress her use of them in Corinth.⁶ As Euripides depicts her, Medea is associated with both good and evil *pharmaka*, but her association with the latter is stronger.

When Medea first emerges from the house, she threatens to harm Jason's new bride and since she is a "clever woman and skilled in many evil arts" (σοφὴ πέφυκας καὶ κακῶν πολλῶν ἴδρις), as Creon describes her, she poses a very real threat to the safety of others (*Med.* 283-5). She is a danger not just because of her skill with *pharmaka*, but also because of her ability to persuade others through the use rhetoric. Her plan, we learn, is to murder Jason's new bride with *pharmaka* (*Med.* 385). She later explains how she will smear a costly robe, her wedding gift to Jason's bride, with poison and describes how Jason's bride will die a horrible death by the power of her *pharmaka* (*Med.* 789, 806). It is on account of Medea's dangerous knowledge that Creon wishes to exile her (*Med.* 285), but she is able to persuade him with words and supplication to give her one more day in Corinth (*Med.* 291-356). This gives her a reprieve to plan and execute her revenge on Jason. She contemplates seeking her revenge through physical violence, but decides to pursue the course she is most skilled in: the use of *pharmaka* (*Med.* 376-385). When the Athenian king Aegeus passes through Corinth on his return from Delphi, Medea uses her skill in rhetoric to supplicate him for protection (*Med.* 709-716). She offers to help him realize his desire for descendants by means of *pharmaka* that will cure him of his sterility (*Med.* 717-718). Once she has secured her future safety, she goes on to describe how she will use

⁶ Graf 1997: 29.

pharmaka and guile to bring about the gruesome death to the Corinthian princess (*Med.* 780-789). When the messenger reports that her *pharmaka* have killed the princess and her father Creon, Medea rejoices (*Med.* 1125-1128). Medea's use of *pharmaka* demonstrates their ambiguous nature. She offers beneficial *pharmaka* to Aegeus and destructive *pharmaka* to Creon and his daughter.⁷

Interestingly, Medea's use of *pharmaka* is closely linked to her use of rhetoric, and, as we have seen in chapter one, rhetoric is closely linked to medicine. Euripides' tragedy focuses on *logos* both as a medium of communication and as a way of understanding and remembering reality.⁸ Medea is skilled in the art of persuasion, something in which the Greeks took cultural pride,⁹ and her use of rhetoric when interacting with Creon and Aegeus is tied to her use of *pharmaka*. She uses her skill in persuasion to supplicate Creon and is quick to find his vulnerable spot as a parent.¹⁰ By appealing to his sensibilities as a parent, she convinces him to grant her the day's reprieve she requests (*Med.* 340-356). Through her speech, she manoeuvres Creon into a position where he cannot refuse her request without appearing unreasonable.¹¹ But her supplication of Creon is undermined by her use of *pharmaka*, since she then murders him along with the princess (*Med.* 1125-1126). Medea herself admits that she would never have fawned over (θωπεύω) Creon unless she were contriving (τεχνάζω) something or stood to profit from (κερδαίνω) her flattery (*Med.* 368-369). Rather than using rhetoric to facilitate the right use of *pharmaka*, as a

⁷ The use of *pharmaka* is really aimed at Jason, since Medea is seeking revenge on him, and although he suffers the consequences of her *pharmaka*, he does not ever handle the gifts. See Mueller 2001: 496.

⁸ Boedeker 1991: 97.

⁹ Blondell 1999: 162.

¹⁰ Bongie 1977: 37.

¹¹ Bongie 1977: 38.

physician should, Medea uses rhetoric so that she can use *pharmaka* in a destructive manner. She abuses the sacred relationship between supplicant and supplicand by killing Creon.

Medea does take the role of physician when she offers to put an end to Aegeus' sterility (*Med.* 717-718) and here again her use of *pharmaka* is closely tied to the use of rhetoric in her supplication. Although she has used her rhetorical skill to influence Creon (368),¹² she does not necessarily need to persuade Aegeus in the same way since they will both benefit from their exchange. When Medea supplicates him, Aegeus does what is right by not refusing her request.¹³ He is ethically obliged to support Medea because of his reverence for the gods (*Med.* 720).¹⁴ Supplication is a divinely sanctioned act and Aegeus' reverence for the gods should be sufficient reason to accept her request. Medea's supplication of Aegeus, however, is also accompanied by her promise to cure his sterility and his swearing of an oath. Medea questions Aegeus to find out what he was seeking in Delphi and what the Oracle told him. She learns that, although he has a wife, Aegeus is childless by the act of some god (*Med.* 671). Although Medea appears to dismiss the matter (*Med.* 688), she returns to the subject later when she offers to use her skill with *pharmaka* to allow Aegeus to beget children (*Med.* 718). Medea uses her rhetorical skill to learn Aegeus' vulnerable spot and appeal to it, just as she did with Creon. Her offer of *pharmaka* helps her secure Aegeus' oath that he will offer her refuge.

¹² Rickert 1987: 109.

¹³ Mueller 2001: 488.

¹⁴ Bongie 1977: 47, 48.

Aegeus' promise of help is not sufficient for Medea, who is concerned with oaths,¹⁵ and she successfully convinces him to swear an oath that he will provide her with sanctuary in Athens. As Fletcher notes, Medea's ability to convince (perhaps even dupe) Aegeus into swearing an oath is consistent with the rhetorical ability she demonstrates during her interaction with Creon.¹⁶ The liturgical question and reply format of her exchange with Aegeus demonstrates her complete control over the situation.¹⁷ Medea presents this oath as a benefit to both of them; when Aegeus' guest-friends, the Corinthians, ask for her extradition, he can safely refuse them because he has sworn by the gods (734-740).¹⁸ She will be protected from extradition and he will be protected from the potential anger of his Corinthian guest-friends should he need to refuse their request for her extradition. Aegeus agrees that if he should break his oath to Medea, he will accept the customary punishment: the destruction of his house and children (755).¹⁹ He is dependent on Medea's promise of *pharmaka* to obtain heirs; thus, her promise of help is dependent on his honouring of his oath. If he should banish her or give her up, he will be deprived of children. Medea's use of *pharmaka* is intimately linked with her rhetorical ability, and she uses both to secure her own future.

Medea lives according to the heroic code of helping friends and harming enemies and so needs to destroy Jason by destroying the things dearest to him—

¹⁵ Mueller 2001: 489.

¹⁶ Fletcher 2003: 33.

¹⁷ Fletcher 2003: 34.

¹⁸ Boedeker 1991: 98.

¹⁹ Rickert 1987: 110.

namely, his new bride and his children.²⁰ But since she lacks the ability to use physical strength against him, Creon and the princess, she resorts to the power of her *pharmaka* (376-385).²¹ Her only weapon in dealing with Creon and Aegeus is “self-serving persuasion—fortified where necessary with supplication or an oath.”²² As a hero, Medea is a speaker of words and a doer of deeds; these deeds include the use of *pharmaka* that pervert her speech acts. She takes advantage of the ambiguous nature of *pharmaka*, using them for both beneficial and destructive purposes; in both cases, her use of *pharmaka* is closely tied to her use of rhetoric.

Let us contrast this depiction with that found in Apollonius’ *Argonautika*. Apollonius depicts Medea as an enchantress who uses *pharmaka* as a conduit for magic. Medea’s connection with the dark arts is more distinct in Apollonius than in Euripides. While Medea is semi-divine,²³ her connection to magic comes primarily through her relationship to Hekate, whom she serves as priestess (*Argon.* 3.251; 4.246-250). This goddess is credited with giving Medea her pharmaceutical skill; when Argos suggests that the heroes seek Medea’s help, he describes her as:

Κούρη τις μεγάροισιν ἐνιτρέφει' Αἰήταο,
τὴν Ἐκάτη περίαλλα θεὰ δάε τεχνήσασθαι
φάρμαχ', ὅσ' ἤπειρός τε φύει καὶ νήχυτον ὕδωρ.

A maiden, nurtured in the halls of Aeetes,
Whom the goddess Hecate taught to handle magic herbs with
exceeding skill—
All that the land and flowing waters produce.²⁴
(*Argon.* 3.529)

²⁰ See further Bongie 1977, particularly pages 30-32, 38.

²¹ Bongie 1977: 40.

²² Boedeker 1991: 99.

²³ Medea is the daughter of Aietes, who is the son of Helios and the brother of Circe (*Argon.* 3.247-8, 4.684).

²⁴ Trans. Seaton 1912: 231.

Hekate was a chthonic deity possibly originating from Caria, although this has been disputed.²⁵ The earliest representation of Hekate in Hesiod's *Theogony* (413-455) lacks chthonic associations; it is not until the fifth century B.C.E. and the appearance of Euripides' *Medea* that her underworld characteristics and connection with magic begin to dominate.²⁶ By the Hellenistic period, Hekate was considered to be the goddess of magical arts. The magic she teaches Medea primarily concerns the use of marvelous plants (*Argon.* 3.355-368).²⁷

The *pharmaka* that Medea offers must also be accompanied by ritual action for greatest effect. When she gives Jason the potion that will protect him during the sowing of the dragon's teeth, she also gives him strict instructions on its use (*Argon.* 3.1026-1050). He must wash himself in a river at midnight and then, wrapping himself in a dark cloak, sacrifice a ewe and pour a libation of honey to Hekate. At dawn he must steep the drug in water and rub it over his body, as well as sprinkle it on his shield and sword. The efficacy of Medea's potions is connected to the ritual actions Jason must perform. This use of *pharmaka* accompanied by ritual action is also seen when Medea calms the serpent guarding the Golden Fleece. While chanting and calling on the god Sleep, she administers a somniferous drug to the serpent. She uses a branch of juniper, which the ancients thought could repel snakes, to smear her

²⁵ Boedecker 1983: 81.

²⁶ Marquardt 1981: 252. Marquardt suggests the transformation of Hekate into a goddess of witchcraft could be connected with the appearance of the Thessalian road-goddess Einodia, who was associated with witchcraft, in Athens in the fifth century. Hekate is also connected to Artemis, who has negative potential among men (Marquardt 1981: 256).

²⁷ Tupet 1976: 156.

salves on the monster's head (*Argon.* 3.148-154).²⁸ The efficacy of Medea's *pharmaka* is enhanced by ritual action and incantation.

Apollonius' Medea also inverts the idea of *pharmaka* and the role of the physician. Unlike the physician who strives to bring balance and order through medicine, Medea uses *pharmaka* to bring disorder and destruction to her family. Medea's decision to help Jason is fraught with conflict. She initially wavers over whether to help Jason (*Argon.* 3.767-769); once she has delivered the *pharmaka* into his hands she is filled with terror at the thought of what she has done (*Argon.* 4.11). She is terrified that her handmaidens will betray her and chooses to flee with Jason rather than face her father's rage. Medea agrees to help Jason calm the serpent but he in turn must rescue her from her father (*Argon.* 4.195). Medea has gone against her father by helping a man to whom he is hostile and she prefers to flee Colchis with Jason than to face the wrath of king Aietes.

Medea in the *Argonautika* is driven by passion. She is consumed by desire for Jason and while in this state she makes choices that lead to her family's destruction. Medea dreams that Jason has come to take her away as his wife, for the gods have already ordained that the *polypharmakos* (πολυφάρμακος, "abounding in drugs"²⁹) Medea will fall in love with Jason and use her pharmaceutical knowledge to help him win the Golden Fleece (*Argon.* 3.616; 3.27). Consumed by her desire for Jason,

²⁸ On juniper see Pliny *NH* 24.36. Tupet (1976: 160) suggests that the ancients knew ways to induce sleep and to an outsider these might seem magical.

²⁹ Apollonios uses the adjective *polypharmakos* (πολυφάρμακος "knowing many drugs or charms") as an epithet for Medea only twice (3.27; 4.1677) and it is the only epithet he gives her (Green 2007: 253). The use of *polypharmakos* connects Medea more closely with Hekate and Circe (253). Circe is also described as *polypharmakos* in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 10.276). Elsewhere, the adjective is also used in the *Iliad* to describe the healers (ἰητροί) who are treating the wounded warriors during the Trojan War (*Il.* 16.28).

Medea persuades her sister Kalkiope to help her meet Jason. By convincing Kalkiope that her sons, who have been rescued by Jason following a shipwreck, will meet with destruction, Medea plants the idea in her sister's mind that Jason and the Argonauts will need the help of her *pharmaka* (*Argon.* 3.688-712). Medea is torn by feelings of shame and terror, but her passion for Jason wins. Ultimately, she decides to deceive her father to gain Jason's favour through her knowledge and use of drugs (*Argon.* 3.779). Aietes sees Jason and his companions as a threat to his kingdom, telling them that if they had not eaten at his table, he would cut off their hands and tongues and send them home (*Argon.* 3.376-381).³⁰ Medea chooses to help a man towards whom her father is hostile. Her gift of *pharmaka* allows Jason to complete the seemingly impossible tasks that Aietes has set for him and thus constitutes a betrayal of her family.

Medea brings further destruction to her family during her flight: to prevent their capture, Medea lures her brother Apsyrtos into an ambush by using both rhetoric and *pharmaka* she disperses on the winds (*Argon.* 4.442-475). She lures Apsyrtos into a temple by promising that he can have the Golden Fleece (*Argon.* 4.456). Medea then betrays her brother to Jason, who murders him and mutilates the corpse (*Argon.* 4.463-474).³¹ Although Apollonios has Jason murder Apsyrtos, Medea is still very much involved; her brother's blood paints her dress and veil red (*Argon.* 4.474).³²

³⁰ Apollonius does not make it clear exactly why Medea's father does not wish for Jason to obtain the Golden Fleece, although other versions of the myth indicate that its theft will result in the death of Aietes or the downfall of his kingdom (Diodoros 4.47.2, *Hyginus* 22). See Gantz 1993: 341 for a discussion of the possible prophecies against Aietes.

³¹ Such mutilation was thought to prevent the victim's ghost from returning to seek vengeance (Bremmer 1997: 84).

³² Bremmer 1997: 84n2. Many other versions of the myth, including the oldest, depict Medea actively killing her brother (Bremmer 1997: 85-86).

Scholia on *Medea* 1334 suggest that Apsyrtos was killed at the altar or hearth of the temple, which was a sacred place where suppliants can expect protection.³³ Medea and Jason also use guest-gifts as a snare for Apsyrtos (*Argon.* 4.422). By using such gifts as to lure Apsyrtos to his murder, Medea and Jason disrespect Zeus, the protector of guests (*Argon* 3.193, 986).³⁴ Thus, Medea uses her *pharmaka* to pervert the sacred rituals of supplication and *xenia*.

Medea's actions are made more troubling because they are directed against her brother. The Greeks placed great value on the relationships between siblings.³⁵ Sisters were expected to be close to each other; we see, for example, the close relationship Medea has with her sister Chalkiope.³⁶ Brothers and sisters erected gravestones for one another, and sisters mourning the deaths of brothers are common in myth.³⁷ Brothers were expected to guard the sexual honour of their sisters, as well as to defend and discipline them when necessary. A sister could expect her brother to serve as her *kyrios* in the absence of her father, to find her a husband, or to take her in if her marriage ends.³⁸ This close relationship between brothers and sisters makes Medea's involvement in Apsyrtos' murder particularly heinous. By murdering her brother, Medea permanently severs all her ties with her natal home; she declares her

³³ Bremmer 1997: 85.

³⁴ Green 2007: 312.

³⁵ See Bremmer 1997: 89. Examples from Greek literature include: Menander, who speaks of a passion between brothers (fr. 809 Edmonds); Plato, who cites a proverb concerning brothers helping each other (*Rep.* 362d); and Lysias where a brother is expected to know the financial affairs of his deceased sibling (32.26).

³⁶ Bremmer 1997: 92.

³⁷ Bremmer 1997: 93, 94, 100. The primacy of the brother-sister bond is illustrated throughout Greek literature. The examples of Orestes and Electra (Aesch. *Lib.*); Orestes and Iphigenia (Eur. *IT*); Polynices and Antigone (Soph. *Ant.*); Althaea and her brothers (Ov. *Met.* 6.11-781); the Dioscuri and Helen (*Il.* 3.235-245) stand in marked contrast to Apsyrtos and Medea.

³⁸ Bremmer 1997: 100.

independence from her family and gives up any right to protection from them.³⁹ Thus, her murder of Apsyrtos brings permanent destruction to her family. Medea's use of *pharmaka* to help her father's enemy and kill her brother results in disorder and chaos rather than healing and balance.

The figure of Medea contributes to a strong tradition in Greek myth associating women with drugs and poisons and depicting women with pharmaceutical knowledge as a source of fear. Medea demonstrates that a woman who possesses knowledge of *pharmaka* is dangerous and unstable. The Medea of Euripides' play wields *pharmaka* as a weapon against her husband Jason, using her knowledge of *pharmaka* to take vengeance on him, his new bride and his father-in-law and to persuade Aegeus to help her escape Corinth. Her use of *pharmaka* demonstrates the ambiguous nature and potential for harm associated with medicinal substances. In Apollonius' epic, Medea's *pharmaka* are primarily a destructive force. By choosing to use her *pharmaka* to help Jason, Medea tears her own family apart and causes the death of her brother. Just as Medea uses *pharmaka* in the *Argonautika* to destroy her natal family, she uses *pharmaka* to destroy her conjugal family in the *Medea*. Rather than using *pharmaka* to bring balance and order, as a physician should, Medea uses them in both works to create chaos and bring death. These depictions of Medea using *pharmaka* to murder men speak of the Greek man's fear of women using *pharmaka*.

³⁹ Bremmer 1997: 100.

Helen

Homer's *Odyssey* offers our earliest depictions of women using *pharmaka*. In book four, Telemachus journeys to the home of Helen and Menelaus to seek information on Odysseus' whereabouts, and Menelaus' account of the fallen heroes reduces everyone to tears (*Od.* 4.183-6). Menelaus exhorts the group to cease their weeping and turn to the meal at hand (*Od.* 4.212-213). Helen, however, has another remedy. This daughter of Zeus has learned cunning drugs (μητιόεντα φάρμακα) from an Egyptian woman named Polydamna and she slips these drugs into the men's drinks (*Od.* 4.227-228).⁴⁰ Egypt produces many drugs that are good (ἔσθλά) and many that are baneful (λυγρά; *Od.* 4.230). The *pharmakon* Helen administers to the men appears to fall into the first category, since it is able to 'quiet all pain and strife, and bring forgetfulness of every ill' (νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων); whoever consumes this drug is unable to weep, even if his entire family were to be killed before him (*Od.* 4.220-224). The effect of Helen's drug is ephemeral, since its effects last only a day (*Od.* 4.223),⁴¹ and this aspect may also suggest its helpful nature. By administering this seemingly good drug, Helen enables her guests and her husband to listen to potentially painful stories about Odysseus' adventures at Troy without feeling any pain.⁴² Its use here appears to be a benevolent attempt to ease the men's psychological trauma.⁴³

⁴⁰ The term μητιόεντα means 'full of metis' or 'skilful in attaining one's ends' (Nickel 2009: 7; Cunliffe 1963: 270). The cunning intelligence of the *pharmaka*'s administrator, Helen, is transferred to the drugs themselves (Nickel 2009: 7). The term is also translated as 'helpful' or 'wellchosen' when applied to *pharmaka* (L.S.J.).

⁴¹ Reece 1993: 85.

⁴² Bergren 2009: 323.

⁴³ Reece 1993: 84.

Although Helen's *pharmakon* eases the men's grief and emotional pain, it is problematic because it is also said to induce forgetfulness. The consumption of substances that cause forgetfulness occurs in the *Odyssey* on two other occasions. In the land of the Lotus Eaters, Odysseus' men consume the sweet lotus fruit, which causes them to forget the way home and to lose all desire to leave the land (*Od.* 9.91-97).⁴⁴ Likewise, the *pharmaka* administered by Circe make the men forgetful of their own country (*Od.* 10.236).⁴⁵ Forgetfulness in the *Odyssey* is problematic because it keeps one from honouring warriors by remembering their heroic deeds and thereby ensuring their *kleos* (fame), which is critical to one's social identity.⁴⁶ Forgetfulness threatens Odysseus' homecoming (*nostos*), without which he will have no *kleos*. Although Helen's *pharmakon* may be positive in that it alleviates her guests' pain, it has sinister associations because it causes forgetfulness. The theme of forgetfulness is presented negatively in the *Odyssey* because of its association with the loss of *nostos* and *kleos*.

Even though Helen's *pharmakon* may be good, Telemachus appears to be impervious to it. Prior to the administration of the *pharmakon*, Helen, Telemachus, Menelaos and Peisistratos are weeping as they remember their fallen friends (*Od.* 4.183-187). However, after they drink the *pharmakon* and listen to Helen's and Menelaos' stories, Telemachus says "it is more painful" (*ἄλγιον Od.* 4.292). Telemachus is still able to feel pain. This suggests that while the others were

⁴⁴ The lotus fruit is not specifically identified as a *pharmakon*, but the use of food substances as *pharmaka* is not unusual. The relationship between food and drugs is discussed further in the conclusion.

⁴⁵ Reece 1993: 84.

⁴⁶ Redford in Jones 1988: 499.

susceptible to Helen's *pharmakon*, Telemachus alone is able to withstand its power and in this he is like his father. As we shall see below in the discussion of Circe and Odysseus, the image of a woman giving *pharmaka* to men weakened by grief ties into wider Greek cultural anxieties.

Circe

The matter of *pharmaka* arises again in book ten of the *Odyssey* when Odysseus relates his encounter with Circe. Half of Odysseus' men have gone with Eurylochus to investigate the strange island on which they have been shipwrecked. They find the home of Circe in a forest glade, surrounded by roaming mountain lions and wolves (*Od.* 10.212). These animals are men whom Circe has transformed using *kaka pharmaka*, evil drugs, which cause them to forget their homes (*Od.* 10.236).

Eurylochus and his men hear Circe moving about inside the house, singing as she weaves (*Od.* 10.220-228). Circe's domestic activity is the sort of activity expected of a proper Greek woman.⁴⁷ Innocently, the men follow her into the house where she feeds them a *pharmakon*-laced porridge, taps them with her wand, transforms them into swine and then turns them out into the pigsties (*Od.* 10.235-7). While it appears to be the use of the wand that turns the men into swine, Circe's use of *pharmaka* is still an integral part of her ritual action. Later, using another *pharmakon*, she anoints each man and they return to younger, taller and more handsome versions of their earlier selves (*Od.* 391-396). Circe uses her *pharmaka* to bring harm to men and it requires the intervention of Odysseus, to make her reverse the harm done.

⁴⁷ Fantham 1994: 103.

Circe's knowledge and use of *pharmaka* in this episode contrast with Odysseus' pharmaceutical experience. When Eurylochus reports to Odysseus what has happened to the men, Odysseus sets off to rescue them. Hermes meets him as he approaches the house of Circe (*Od.* 10.277). The god warns Odysseus of Circe's 'deadly wiles': she will give Odysseus a potion and put *pharmaka* into his food (*Od.* 10.290-293). However, her *pharmaka* will have no power over him since Hermes gives him the herb moly, which will make him impervious to her potions (*Od.* 10.292-3, 305). Odysseus' knowledge of *pharmaka* here is not well developed, since he must be taught by Hermes how to identify and use the herb moly.⁴⁸ As Clay points out, although this herb comes from the earth and therefore is not remote to human experience, it belongs to a "kind of knowledge available to the gods alone."⁴⁹ The white flower and black root of the moly represent both the beneficial and harmful nature of *pharmaka* and its power comes from both parts.⁵⁰ Circe, however, is already well-versed in the use of *pharmaka*. Although Odysseus consumes the same potion Circe gave the other men, it has no effect on him because he has already availed himself of the moly. And even though Odysseus is able to transform Circe from an enemy to a lover, she still remains a threatening force to Odysseus since she is able to delay his departure and possibly prevent his return home.⁵¹ In this episode, we see women's *pharmaka* bringing harm and men's *pharmaka* bringing good.⁵² Circe uses

⁴⁸ Luck 1985: 5. This knowledge of herbs suggests that Circe is connected to a Mother Earth cult.

⁴⁹ Clay 1972: 128, 130.

⁵⁰ Clay 1972: 130.

⁵¹ Just 1989: 223, 224.

⁵² While depictions of men using *pharmaka* in the *Iliad* are positive (see chapter one), it is not necessarily the case in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus, we are told in 1.260-264, had searched for a man-killing poison (φάρμακον ἀνδροφόνον) to smear on his arrows. Athena, disguised as Mentès (*Od.* 1.105), states that although Ilos would not give the *pharmaka* to Odysseus out of fear for the gods, Mentès'

pharmaka to disrupt the order of nature and bring harm to men but Hermes, through Odysseus, uses *pharmaka* for the preservation and restoration of order. Hermes' role in teaching *pharmaka* to Odysseus echoes the myth of Asklepios and his followers while suggesting that, in this situation, male use of *pharmaka* is divinely sanctioned by the Olympian gods.

This representation of *pharmaka* is somewhat complicated by the fact that Odysseus is mortal and Circe a goddess.⁵³ Two hierarchies come into play here: the divine/mortal hierarchy and the male/female one. While it may seem that the divine/mortal hierarchy should be privileged over the male/female, this is not always the case. Greek literature can construct the uncomfortable idea of the sexual union of a goddess and a mortal man in a way that protects the adult male's claim to dominance, and the relationship between Circe and Odysseus is one example in which the male/female hierarchy takes priority.⁵⁴ Stehle argues that the male/female hierarchy predominates in this episode and that it is Circe, the goddess, who must accommodate herself to Odysseus, the male mortal.⁵⁵ Hermes' instructions to Odysseus allow him to retain "control of the phallus" in his relationship with Circe.⁵⁶ By having Circe swear an oath to the gods that she will not unman him (*Od.* 10.299-

father did so (*Od.* 1.263-264). Athena expresses the wish that Odysseus would come home and kill the suitors (*Od.* 1.265-266). The context suggests that Odysseus would be using his arrows to restore order, rather than to bring disorder.

⁵³ The Greeks trace Circe's divinity through her descent from Helios (Hesiod *Theogony* 956). Luck (1985: 5) suggests that Circe, like Medea, may have been the goddess of an earlier, pre-Greek religion and her knowledge of herbs may be connected to a Mother Earth cult.

⁵⁴ Stehle 1996: 203, 209. The male/female hierarchy is also emphasized in the Calypso episode.

⁵⁵ Stehle 1996: 204.

⁵⁶ Stehle 1996: 204.

301), Odysseus ensures that her power is neutralized and that the male/female hierarchy is dominant.⁵⁷

The image of Circe as a virtuous housekeeper engaged in the womanly work of weaving is inverted by her use of *pharmaka*. When the men call out to her, she opens the door, welcomes them into her home and offers them food (*Od.* 10.230-231, 233-234). Circe appears to extend to the men the hospitality they would expect, and it appears at first that this is a reception scene similar to those occurring elsewhere in the *Odyssey*. She offers her guests a modest concoction of barley, cheese, honey and wine (*Od.* 10.234-236). By sharing a meal with her visitors, Circe offers them an intimate welcome into her home.⁵⁸ The shared meal should be a part of the practice of *xenia*, but Circe betrays her guests' trust by adding to the food drugs that will cause them to forget their homes. She then turns the men into swine, which gives her control over them; they are now a part of nature, which she controls.⁵⁹ This inverts the Greek male-female gender hierarchy by allowing a woman to exercise control over men. Circe uses her *pharmaka* against others to gain control of them; by contrast, Odysseus, on Hermes' instruction, consumes his *pharmakon* for his own protection. By using the moly, Odysseus protects his human, civilized nature and prevents his transformation into a wild animal. Thus, Circe is using *pharmaka* to achieve control over others while Odysseus uses *pharmaka* to maintain control over himself and to gain control over Circe. Odysseus' men lost their *sōphrosunē* when they consumed

⁵⁷ Stehle 1996: 204. Hermes' involvement further emphasizes the predominance of the male/female hierarchy, since this hierarchy also exists among the gods. This is evident, for example, in Aphrodite's subordination to Zeus in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (Stehle 1996: 208).

⁵⁸ See Reece 1993: 22.

⁵⁹ Just 1989: 228. By making the men swine, Circe makes them less than human. See Newmyer 2003 for a discussion of the Greek idea of human domination of animals.

Circe's drugs and came under the woman's influence; this results in their transformation into wild and uncivilized animals. Odysseus' use of *pharmaka* is required to bring about the reversal of Circe's malevolent *pharmaka* and restore the male/female gender hierarchy. This episode contrasts the evil female-*pharmaka* pairing with the good male-*pharmaka* pairing, and also emphasizes how men can unwittingly come under the influence of women who practice *pharmaka*.

Odysseus remains impervious to Circe's *pharmaka* just as Telemachus was impervious to Helen's. In both cases, these two heroes are the only ones in their respective groups who are able to resist *pharmaka*. Despite having consumed Helen's *pharmakon*, which is described as banishing pain and sorrow (νηπενθής), Telemachus is still distressed (ἄλγιστον) after hearing his hosts' accounts of his father (*Od.* 4.292); we are not told that Menelaus or Peisistratos feel grief, which suggests that Helen's *pharmakon* worked on them.⁶⁰ Odysseus is the only one of his men who consumes Circe's potion but remains unaffected (*Od.* 10. 326-329). Their immunity to *pharmaka* offered to them by women is one of the many similarities between the father and son in this poem, and is also a part of the larger Odyssean theme of the dangers powerful, independent women pose to men.⁶¹ In both cases, the men receiving *pharmaka* are in a vulnerable state. Peisistratos, Menelaus and Telemachus, have all been weakened by grief by the remembrance of his losses during the Trojan War (*Od.* 4.184-186). Odysseus' men are broken-hearted and discouraged by their shipwreck and remembrance of the trials they have suffered (*Od.* 10. 198-202). Both of these episodes evoke the cultural anxiety of male vulnerability to a woman's

⁶⁰ See further Nickel 2009.

⁶¹ See further Austin 1975: 182-191.

pharmaka that is also evident in the forensic works examined in chapter four. As we shall see in Apollodoros *Against Neaera* (55-56) and Isaeus *On the Estate of Philoctemon* (6.21), men who have been weakened by an external element such as illness are believed to be particularly susceptible to control by female healers. The depictions of Helen's and Circe's use of *pharmaka* in the *Odyssey* reflect a cultural anxiety about the intentions of women as healers and the danger this presents to men when they are in a vulnerable state, whether through physical illness or mental weakness.

Deianeira

Like Medea, Sophocles' Deianeira uses *pharmaka* spread on a robe; however her harmful use of *pharmaka* results from her own ignorance rather than intentional malevolence. Deianeira believes the *pharmakon* she is using to be a love potion rather than a deadly poison. Although Sophocles does not use the term *pharmaka*—he uses the terms poison, philtre, and love charm (ἰός, φίλτρον, στέργημα; *Trach.* 574, 584, 1138)—the story highlights the danger of a naïve woman using powerful potions she may not fully understand.

Herakles has sent a new and much younger mistress back to the house and now Deianeira, his wife, finds her position under threat (*Trach.* 543). Rather than being angry with her husband, which is 'not honourable for a woman of sense,' she devises a way to win back Herakles' love (*Trach.* 545). She has in her possession blood from the centaur Nessos, whom Herakles had killed. Deianeira reports that as Nessos lay dying, he instructed her as follows:

ἐὰν γὰρ ἀμφίθρεπτον αἶμα τῶν ἐμῶν
 σφαγῶν ἐνέγκῃ χερσίν, ἧ μελαγχόλους
 ἔβαψεν ἰούς θρέμμα Λερναίας ὕδρας,
 ἔσται φρενός σοι τοῦτο κηλητήριον
 τῆς Ἡρακλείας, ὅσπερ μήτιν' εἰσιδὼν
 στέρξει γυναῖκα κείνος ἀντὶ σοῦ πλέον.

take away in your hands the clotted blood from my wound,
 where the poison's black gall, the creation of the hydra of
 Lerna, dyed it, it shall be a charm for the mind of Heracles,
 so that he shall never more see and love another woman
 instead of you.⁶²
 (*Trach.* 572-577)

Even though the centaur, Herakles' enemy, has referred to poison (ἰούς), Deianeira finds the idea of a love potion too tempting and believes Nessos' false promise. She says she abhors rash crimes and those who commit them; nevertheless she has decided to use *pharmaka* received from the centaur, relying solely on the centaur's word and never having put the substance to a test (*Trach.* 590-1). She sends a robe treated with the potion to Herakles, giving the messenger Lichas strict instructions on how it should be handled (*Trach.* 600 ff). Only too late does she realize that the centaur, Herakles' enemy, has tricked her. The bit of fleece she used to apply the potion to the robe is nowhere to be found since it has consumed itself (*Trach.* 674-678). Deianeira realizes now that she has acted in haste in a matter she does not understand. In her attempt to sway Herakles' affections, she herself has been unwittingly manipulated by the centaur into causing Herakles' destruction.

Later accounts of the myth describe her as having 'female wile and villainy' (Dio Chrysostom 60.7). There is general agreement that prior to the fifth century, Deianara was not an innocent victim of Nessos' deception, but devised the fatal cloak

⁶² Trans. Lloyd-Jones 2002: 185.

by her own design.⁶³ But even if Sophocles has introduced the centaur's deception and attempted to transform Deianara "from valkyrie to victim,"⁶⁴ I suggest that his attempt has not been altogether successful. While she may be acting in good faith to retain Herakles' love, she has allowed her emotions to overtake her reason. Rather than exercising restraint and caution in her use of *pharmaka*, she naively takes Nessos at his word and attempts to influence Herakles by means of *pharmaka*. Sophocles' Deianeira, like Euripides' Medea, uses *pharmaka* to control a man with fatal results; unlike Medea, however, she is ignorant of its power. Deianeira represents the naïve, untrained woman who does not have the proper discernment to use *pharmaka* wisely and thus brings harm to men around her. As we shall see in the following chapter, this image of women using *pharmaka* as poison is not restricted to myth, but occurs in oratory as well.

***Pharmaka* and the Uncivilized World**

The four women examined here—Medea, Circe, Helen, and Deianeira—are all connected to the uncivilized, wild and irrational world in both a geographical and a symbolic sense. The ancient Greeks projected their culturally undesirable qualities onto outsiders, and these qualities include expertise with magic drugs.⁶⁵ People with special knowledge of wild plants are often viewed with a mixture of distrust and awe;⁶⁶ this is amplified when it is connected to places beyond Greek control.

Geographically, Medea and Circe both come from lands beyond Greek borders which

⁶³ Carawan 2000: 195.

⁶⁴ Carawan 2000: 196.

⁶⁵ Blondell 1999: 153.

⁶⁶ Lloyd 1983: 120.

were perceived as barbaric simply because they were from outside the known world and were inhabited by the monstrous and the divine.⁶⁷ Although Euripides presents Medea as attempting to live the life of a Greek woman, Medea brings her pharmaceutical knowledge to Greece from her home in Colchis on the Black Sea, a mysterious and distant place.⁶⁸ Circe inhabits the island Aiaia somewhere beyond the known world; even the poet of the *Odyssey* is unclear whether her island is in the west or east.⁶⁹ Her island is a dream-like world where Odysseus and his men spend a year eating and drinking until thoughts of home awaken them.⁷⁰

Just as Medea's knowledge of *pharmaka* comes from beyond the borders of Greece, so does Helen's. Helen learned the use of *pharmaka* from an Egyptian, but the *Odyssey* is not clear where this learning took place; it is possible that Helen learned about the uses of *pharmaka* during her supposed sojourn in Egypt.⁷¹ Egypt is described in the *Odyssey* as a land that bears the greatest number of medicines and a place where every man is a doctor with more understanding than men anywhere else (*Od.* 4.231-232). That Egypt is a place which "bears greatest store of drugs, many that are healing when mixed, and many that are baneful" highlights the dual nature of *pharmaka* (*Od.* 4.229-230) and emphasizes their ambiguous nature.⁷²

Even when these women are depicted using *pharmaka* within Greek borders, they remain symbolically connected to the fringes of the mortal world. Medea, Circe, and Helen are not typical mortal women, since they are all descended from divinities.

⁶⁷ Just 1989: 243.

⁶⁸ Just 1989: 265, 269.

⁶⁹ West 2005: 44.

⁷⁰ Segal 1968: 425.

⁷¹ Skutsch 1987: 189.

⁷² Trans. Lattimore 1967: 71.

Medea is the daughter of Aietes and the granddaughter of Helios (*Argon.* 3.247; *Med.* 1321). As we have seen above, she is also closely connected to Hekate, a chthonic goddess. Circe is a daughter of Helios and thus also related to Medea (*Argon.* 4.727). Helen is described in the *Odyssey* as the daughter of Zeus (*Od.* 4.127). She is also connected with the sun and was possibly worshipped at Sparta as a goddess (Apollodoros 3.10).⁷³ The semi-divine nature of these women allows them to move through barbaric and Greek geographical space of their own free will, whereas mortal females are relatively stationary within the civilized world.⁷⁴ Deianara is also connected to the uncivilized world since her *pharmaka* come from a centaur. The centaurs are associated with the Amazons as living beyond the civilized world in a bizarre and barbaric realm.⁷⁵ Depicted in Greek art as half-man, half-horse, centaurs were “powerful figures of savagery,” located somewhere between men and beasts, and known for their lewd behaviour and drunkenness.⁷⁶ Because centaurs are set outside of the civilized world, Deianara’s *pharmaka*, like that of Medea, Circe, and Helen, come from beyond the civilized, rational Greek world.

This link with the barbaric, natural world suggests that their pharmaceutical knowledge is particularly dangerous. The *pharmaka* these women use come from places that do not function according to Greek ideals of civilization; thus, when the women engage with the *pharmaka*, they engage with a world that is not under male control. They are stepping outside the male-dominated Greek world and acting in a

⁷³ Skutsch 1987: 189. Skutsch suggests that the worship of Helen is connected to the worship of a vegetation goddesses in Indo-European myth.

⁷⁴ Worman 1997: 155-156.

⁷⁵ Just 1989: 243, 246.

⁷⁶ Just 1989: 246; Robbins 1978: 94. Note that Cheiron, as discussed in chapter one, is the polar opposite of all other centaurs (Robbins 1978: 96).

sphere perceived as barbaric, uncivilized, and other. Medea, Circe and Deianeira each use *pharmaka* to act in her own interests within a male-dominated environment.

When women use *pharmaka* they are engaging with a sphere that is theirs and is not subject to male control. In doing so, they are able to use *pharmaka* and to become active agents in the male-dominated world of ancient Greece. Naturally, the uncivilized nature of *pharmaka* and women is threatening to men because they are not in control of it.

Conclusion

Myth serves both to reflect and to inform cultural attitudes; it is an exploration and expression of the complexity of a culture.⁷⁷ Characters such as Helen, Circe, Medea and Deianeira are part of a tradition that associates women with drugs and poisons. The actions of these women emphasize that women with pharmaceutical knowledge are to be feared. A woman with pharmaceutical knowledge is a menace because she can equally prepare medicinal drugs or deadly poison but may lack the ability or intention to use them in a manner beneficial to men. Pharmaceutical knowledge arouses fear since the line between poison and medicine is easily blurred and *pharmaka* introduce a powerful, unstable element to what might be an already unstable and critical situation. The evidence from epic and tragic literature demonstrates that Greek men were afraid of women administering *pharmaka*. People with special knowledge of plants can easily arouse feelings of fear and distrust,⁷⁸ these fears appear to be amplified when the person administering the *pharmaka* is a

⁷⁷ Dowden 1995: 46.

⁷⁸ Lloyd 1983: 120.

female. The legal evidence examined in the following chapter suggests that for Greek men, the ambiguous nature of *pharmaka* was particularly dangerous when combined with a woman's perceived lack of *sōphrosunē*.

Chapter 4

Female Healers in Athenian Life

The ancient Greek woman is presented in Greek literature as someone who requires subordination to her husband or *kyrios* (male guardian) because she naturally lacks the ability to exhibit *sōphrosunē* (self-control).¹ The Greek use of *sōphrosunē* in distinguishing gender contributes to the depictions of healers in Greek literature, since the patient must be able to trust the healer to act in a *sōphrōn* manner on his behalf. A woman who engages in healing activity towards men is a source of great anxiety because illness inhibits a man's own *sōphrosunē* and, as a result, he may come under the control of an unscrupulous woman.² This anxiety is evident in all genres of Greek literature, which depicts illness as a dangerous time for a man. Although Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* depicts women as having the capability to be trained in rational thought and to care for sick slaves, women are not always depicted as capable and useful healers. Law speeches by Apollodoros [Dem.] 59 (*Against Neaera*), Antiphon (*Against the Stepmother*) and Isaeus (*On the Estate of Philoctemon*) demonstrate the belief that a citizen male being cared for by a woman is susceptible to her

¹ Katz 2003: 39.

² King 1998: 163.

manipulation and deceit because his illness makes him defenceless.³ These legal orators (with the exception of Isocrates) are critical of women who, by nursing ill men, influence them to act in an improper manner. The cultural fear of female healers could be exploited to justify or explain away a man's poor decisions and to preserve his reputation. This chapter examines how women using *pharmaka* were represented by Xenophon and the Attic orators Antiphon, Demosthenes, Apollodoros, Isaeus and Isocrates. These texts reflect Athenian cultural attitudes and have the potential to reveal how the Greek male constructed *sōphrosunē*, medicine and women.

Nature of the Legal Sources

Using legal speeches as a source of evidence concerning ancient Greek society is not without problems. While legal speeches are stories about human behaviour, and thus can offer insights into the lives of the ancient Greeks, they are stories that have been shaped by the law.⁴ The way in which these stories are presented is influenced by the structure of Greek law and the rhetorical practices of Greek orators. Athenian law regulated how disputes between men—and they were almost always men—were conducted and simplified the disputes to a dyadic structure.⁵ Even when there were more than two sides to the story, conflicts were reduced to the interests of the prosecutor and defendant. The law also regulated who could litigate and what kinds of actions could be brought before the court, which affects what types of events the

³ Katz 2003: 39. I follow Trevett 1992 in attributing [Dem.] 59 to Apollodoros.

⁴ Johnstone 2002: 248

⁵ Johnstone 1998: 225.

modern scholar has available to study.⁶ The court served as a public stage on which citizens played out their private enmities and demonstrated their quality of being a citizen and thus was a forum for competition between male citizens.⁷ The ambiguous nature of Greek law and the use of the court as a forum for competition promoted a range of legal stories and arguments, which were at times contradictory.⁸ The orator could narrate the events of a conflict in whatever way he thought would best sway the jury to his side and these legal representations of events were not necessarily reality, but rather only one way of constructing experience.⁹ Compounding this problem for the modern reader is the fact that in most cases only one speech in a trial has survived and there is no extant independent information.¹⁰ It is necessary, then to approach these sources with an eye to the rhetorical devices used by the orators, the legal and public context into which these speeches fit and with the awareness that even in cases concerning women, women were incidental to the legal proceedings.

The law court was a noisy place, with jurors shouting and demonstrating their approval of the speaker;¹¹ it was within this somewhat chaotic milieu that *rhetores* were expected to deliver their speeches from memory.¹² With such a large and noisy audience, the orators had to present events in a way that would keep the jury's attention and win their favour. The audience was most influenced by the orator's skill

⁶ Johnstone 2002: 248.

⁷ Osborne 1985: 52; Andersen 2001: 11; Fredal 2006: 27.

⁸ Osborne 1985: 43; Johnstone 2002: 251-2.

⁹ Johnstone 1998: 224.

¹⁰ Johnstone 1998: 221.

¹¹ Carey 1997: 7.

¹² Edwards 2000: 231.

in arguing than in the accuracy of the facts of the case.¹³ The ambiguous nature of Greek law provided the orator with many rhetorical resources, particularly in the case of the defendant, who could argue that the prosecutor's story did not fit the legal parameters.¹⁴ Orators could even distort or even invent references and historical precedents as long as they sounded reasonable; they might use humour to hold the jury's attention, win sympathy or put his opponent on the defensive.¹⁵ The creation of "an appearance of artless simplicity" and the avoidance of anything that might seem too fictitious or elaborate were also important for winning over the jury.¹⁶

It was not unusual for Greek orators to rely on the use of popular prejudices and stereotypes to turn the jurors against their opponents. But even these stereotypes and prejudices are valuable; since rhetoric is a psychagogic art, these legal speeches offer a mirror to Athenian culture.¹⁷ The stereotypes that are of the most interest here are obviously those concerning women. While women appear in legal speeches, they are presented only in terms of their relationship to free men.¹⁸ Because their interests are represented only in terms of how the legal dispute affects men's *oikoi*,¹⁹ women appear predominately in inheritance and guardianship cases and in cases relating to death and confiscation of property. Because a woman was always represented in court by her *kyrios*, women in legal speeches do not tell their own stories but have their stories told for them by men—and their stories are told only in so far as it affects the

¹³ Harding 1987: 29. This interest is evident in Thucydides 3.38, where Cleon chastises the people for their love of oratorical ability and form over facts. See also Andersen 2001: 13-14.

¹⁴ Johnstone 2002: 251.

¹⁵ Harding 1987: 31.

¹⁶ Edwards 2000: 231; Andersen 2001: 8.

¹⁷ Harding 1987: 38.

¹⁸ Johnstone 1998: 222.

¹⁹ Johnstone 1998: 228.

men. The representations of women in judicial speeches are based on stereotypes and are dependent on highly negative depictions of women.²⁰ Because oratory appealed to popular opinion and prejudice, legal speeches reveal more about general attitudes towards women and sexuality and less about the individual women involved.²¹ Thus, the view of women afforded to us by Athenian legal speeches is a reflection of men's popular stereotypes and opinions of women. For this reason, what they suggest about women and healing reveals more of the cultural context in which the Hippocratic authors were operating.

Women's Ignorance of *Pharmaka*

The theme of women using *pharmaka* to ill effect is not restricted to myth, but appears in oratory as well. Antiphon (c. 480 B.C.E.), presents women using *pharmaka* in an unflattering manner. His earliest speech, *Prosecution of the Stepmother for Poisoning*, demonstrates the Athenian man's anxiety over women using *pharmaka*.²² The speaker is prosecuting his stepmother for the deliberate poisoning of his father and argues that this was not the first time his stepmother used *pharmaka* against his father. The stepmother, for her part, has claimed she only used *pharmaka* to make a love potion, but, like Deianeira in the previous chapter, the result was the poisoning of her husband.

The murder charge in *Antiphon I* is brought forward by the stepson of the accused murderess, who is defended by her own son, the speaker's half-brother (1.6);

²⁰ Glazebrook 2005: 182.

²¹ Harding 1987: 28-29, 33-34; Glazebrook 2005: 182.

²² Usher 1999: 27; Edwards 2000: 233.

the victim of the poisoning was the speaker's father (1.3). According to the speaker, Philoneos, a friend of his father's, was staying as a guest in their home (1.14). Philoneos had a concubine, whom he was considering placing in a brothel. The stepmother, who believed herself wronged by her husband, befriended the mistress and proposed a way in which each woman could regain the love of her man (1.14). The stepmother provided the potion; the slave mistress provided the means. Philoneos, the father and the concubine travelled to Peiraeus and while they were offering libations there, the concubine slipped a generous helping of the poison into their cups (1.19). Philoneos expired immediately, but the father lingered in illness for twenty days (1.20). The dying father charged his son with seeking vengeance (1.30) and the speaker repeatedly calls on the jury to pity his dead father and punish the stepmother with death (1.3, 4, 25).

Although the evidence in this case is peculiarly tenuous, since there are no witnesses—the slave girl has already been put to death and the half-brother refuses to allow his slaves to be tortured for testimony (1.9-13, 20)—Antiphon uses rhetorical means to appeal to the jury's prejudices and stereotypes of women and *pharmaka*.²³ The speaker must persuade the jury through the way in which he relates the events of the case.²⁴ The defence will argue that the poisoning was accidental (1.27), so Antiphon emphasizes the women's forethought, planning and persistence that preceded the murder.²⁵ The women are placed at the centre of a conspiracy to murder the father and Philoneos. Allegations of conspiracy are used in oratory so that the

²³ Usher 1999: 28.

²⁴ Usher 1999: 29.

²⁵ Usher 1999: 28.

prosecutor may exclude the possibility of a tragic accident and use logical deduction and arguments from silence, rather than hard proofs, to substantiate the charge that the stepmother had indeed committed murder by proxy.²⁶ The stepmother's supposed repeated attempts at murder (1.3,9) and the stepbrother's reluctance to hand over the slaves for torturing (1.11) are presented as clear indication of a conspiracy.²⁷ The half-brother's silence about the plot becomes proof of the plot's existence rather than a cause to doubt it.²⁸

By creating this conspiracy in the minds of the jury, the son avoids the difficulties of the case. The possible motives of the concubine – she was to be sold to a brothel (1.4)—casts doubt on the stepmother's intentions.²⁹ The only witness, the concubine, is no longer present to present her version of events (1.20). The concubine, who had an interest in murdering her owner, is no longer there to support the accusation against the stepmother.³⁰ If anything, the concubine had more motive for murder than the stepmother; the speaker never makes it clear why the stepmother would have wanted her husband dead. By creating a picture of a cunning female conspiracy for the jury, the speaker draws attention away from the stepmother's lack of motive and her absence from the murder scene and focuses on the character of the women.³¹

²⁶ Roisman 2006: 12.

²⁷ Roisman 2006: 12.

²⁸ Roisman (2006: 13) calls this “a fine example of the perverse logic of conspiracism.”

²⁹ Usher 1999: 30.

³⁰ Roisman 2006: 12.

³¹ Roisman 2006: 12.

The accused women are presented as stereotypically scheming and deceiving, whereas the male victim is presented sympathetically.³² Philoneos is said to have been “a good and noble man, a friend of our father’s” (άνήρ καλός τε κάγαθός και φίλος τῶι ήμετέρῳ πατρί)(1.14) who is the involuntary (άεκούσιος) victim of the stepmother’s plot (1.5). His death is described as ignominious (άκλεής), ungodly (άθεος) and violently carried out (1.21, 26). The stepmother is described as an ungodly (άθεος), shameful (αισχυρός), unfeeling (άβουλος), plotting (βουλεύσασα) woman without respect (μή αιδούς) for gods or men and who willingly (έκουσίως) brought about her husband’s death (1.23, 26, 27). To further evoke loathing and fear from the jury, the speaker calls the stepmother ‘Clytemnestra’ (1.17).³³

The speaker also takes great care to connect the stepmother with *pharmaka*. In 1.9, the speaker relates an earlier incident where the father caught the stepmother attempting to administer *pharmaka* to him; she defended herself by saying that it was merely a love potion to restore his love for her. Since there is no clear demarcation between beneficial and harmful *pharmaka*, it is plausible that she had intended her use of *pharmaka* to restore her husband’s love rather than to poison him. Antiphon then uses the term *pharmaka* three times while describing how he believes the poisoning took place (1.17, 19). The speaker paints a thoroughly negative picture of the stepmother and, through his use of rhetoric, connects her to the poisoning of his father. His accusation is plausible to the Athenian jury because of “men’s ignorance and lack of control over women’s handling of foodstuffs.”³⁴ As the logographer of

³² Usher 1999:29.

³³ Roisman 2006: 13.

³⁴ Roisman 2006: 13.

this speech, Antiphon draws on established stereotypes of women and *pharmaka*. If the murder is an accident, as the defence will have claimed, and the *pharmaka* were really meant to have been a love potion, then the stepmother becomes a real-life Deianara who, as we saw in the previous chapter, lacks the wisdom to differentiate between good and evil *pharmaka*. If, on the other hand, the poisoning was intentional, as Antiphon would have us believe, the orator is exploiting the cultural ideas of women's nefarious use of *pharmaka* as presented in myth. The speaker's own insistence of his stepmother's guilt emphasizes the danger posed by women using *pharmaka*. Most importantly, the stepmother's use of *pharmaka* has not resulted in health and well-being, as the use of *pharmaka* in the hands of a physician should; rather it has resulted in the death of a husband and the public splintering of his family in the Athenian law court. Once again, a woman's use of *pharmaka* does more harm than good.

Women Manipulating Weak Men

Oratory also depicts women using their healing ability and knowledge of *pharmaka* to exert influence over sick men to gain an advantage for themselves or their children. The belief that women can manipulate men when they are weakened by illness is evident in Apollodoros' *Against Neaera* and Isaeus 6. In both cases, the women are acting to secure an improved situation for their children, but their actions are viewed negatively by men because they go against Greek cultural norms. The emphasis the orators place on the women's involvement in caring for the sick also helps to

exonerate the men involved for their poor decisions, since any acts done by a man under a woman's influence were considered null and void ([Dem.] 48.56).

In Apollodoros' *Against Neaera* ([Dem.] 59), Neaera and her daughter Phano take advantage of the ill Stephanos' weakened state to convince him to recognize his child with Phano as a citizen child whose parents are both Athenian. According to Apollodoros, the child is not a citizen child because, he claims, Phano is not an Athenian citizen woman. The charge is being brought against Stephanos, Neaera's *kyrios*, by Apollodoros and his son-in-law Theomnestos ([Dem.] 59.2).³⁵ The co-prosecutors are attempting to establish Neaera's identity as a prostitute; he describes her life starting from her purchase by Nicaretē as a child and her activities as a courtesan ([Dem.] 59.18-25). Apollodoros recounts Neaera's activities as a courtesan while living in Corinth ([Dem.] 59.26-30), her transference to Athens ([Dem.] 59.31-36) and her flight to Megara to practice prostitution there ([Dem.] 59.36). She then returned to Athens with Stephanos and her two sons, Proxenus and Ariston, and her daughter Phano ([Dem.] 59.38). She continued in prostitution, while Stephanos engaged in blackmail against her clients ([Dem.] 59.41). Stephanos married Phano to Phrastor, passing the girl off as legitimate citizen, but when, according to Apollodoros, Phrastor discovered the truth, he divorced her ([Dem.] 59.50-51). However, sometime after the divorce, Phrastor fell ill with a condition that rendered him helpless ([Dem.] 59.55). Neaera and Phano gave him medical care (θεραπεία), bringing him what was needed and looking after him since he had no one else to care for him ([Dem.] 59.56). In his weakened state, Neaera, his former mother-in-law, and

³⁵ MacDowell 2009: 121.

his estranged wife, Phano, persuade him to recognize his child by Phano as eligible for citizenship ([Dem.] 59.56). Specifically, we are told, in his weakness (*ἀσθένεια*), the women beguile or inveigle (*ψυχαγωγέω*) him ([Dem.] 59.55). Apollodoros asserts that Phrastor agreed to this proposal on account of his perilous condition and that he would not have agreed if he had been healthy ([Dem.] 59.57). The reasons for Phrastor's decisions are his ill health, his lack of legitimate children, his alienation from his own family and, Apollodoros emphasizes, the care he received from Neaera and Phano ([Dem.] 59.58).

Apollodoros presents Phano and Neaera as having dubious moral qualities. According to him, Phano did not know how to live modestly and frugally, but emulated her mother's habits and lifestyle ([Dem.] 59.50). Phano has grown up to be as licentious as her mother; therefore, Apollodoros' descriptions of Neaera shade Phano's character as well. Apollodoros demonstrates his disrespect for Neaera by using insulting terminology;³⁶ he describes her as haughty (*ὕφριζουσα*), impious (*ἀσεβοῦσα*), and contemptuous (*καταφρονοῦσα*)—all qualities which are the opposite of *sōphrosunē* ([Dem.] 59.12).³⁷ Apollodoros' use of *αὕτη* and *τοιαύτη* to refer to Phano are derogatory ([Dem.] 59.73, 81, 85).³⁸ Phano is also designated as *ἡ ἄνθρωπος*, a degrading term when used of women but which is preferable to her actual name ([Dem.] 59.20, 21, 29, 38, 39).³⁹ That Apollodoros openly and frequently names Neaera and Phano suggests their notoriety, since the name of a good Athenian

³⁶ Glazebrook 2005:168.

³⁷ Glazebrook 2005: 171.

³⁸ Glazebrook 2005: 177.

³⁹ Glazebrook 2005: 177.

wife was never mentioned in public.⁴⁰ This is emphasized in Phano's case, since she had two names (Phano and Strybele) and Apollodoros gives both ([Dem.] 59.50).

Neaera and Phano are depicted as the antithesis of the ideal woman. Their extravagant lifestyle and practice of prostitution demonstrates their lack of self-control (*autarkeia*) and their inability to live modestly (*enkrateia*), virtues which are necessary to the practice of *sōphrosunē*. The women lack *sōphrosunē* and when Phrastor accepts their nursing care, the women take advantage of him to further their own ends.

Apollodoros draws on the stereotype of female healers as manipulative and scheming to explain why Phrastor recognized his son born from Phano. Apollodoros' comment to the jury that "you know of yourselves what value a woman has in the sick-room, when she waits upon a man who is ill" is telling ([Dem.] 59.56).⁴¹ While on the surface this phrase may appear to praise women, given the context I agree with King that this is unlikely.⁴² The male speaker is speaking to a male jury and, as shown above, takes care to point out to them Neaera's use of feminine guile on the ill Phrastor. Rather than praising women, the statement is meant to remind the jurors that even a woman can prevail over a man who has been weakened by illness.⁴³ This shifts the focus of blame from Phrastor to the women and reminds the listener that decisions made by a man under the influence of a woman are not legally binding ([Dem.] 48.56). The speaker painstakingly shows that Phrastor was under the influence of Neaera and Phano by emphasizing Phrastor's helplessness and Neaera's manipulation of the situation through the use of the passive voice; Phrastor is cajoled

⁴⁰ Cox 1998: 176; Sosin 1997: 77. See further Schaps 1997, Sommerstein 1980.

⁴¹ Trans. Murray 2001: 395.

⁴² King 1998: 163.

⁴³ King 1998: 163.

(ψυχαγωγούμενος) and persuaded (ἐπείσθη) by Neaera to take back the child ([Dem.] 59.55, 58). Throughout the passage, Neaera and her daughter are the active predators pursuing their own agenda, while Phrastor is a passive victim unable to help himself on account of his illness. In addition, the word used for persuasion, *psychagogeō*, has strong negative connotations. Its literal meaning is to lead souls to the underworld; used metaphorically it means to attract the soul, to win over, to persuade or to delude.⁴⁴ This word choice emphasizes the negative influence the women can have over the sick man in their capacity as healers. Apollodoros' depiction of Neaera and Phano as unscrupulous women taking advantage of an ill man as they care for him allows him to present Phrastor's decision to recognize the child as the manipulation of scheming women. It also serves as a reminder to the jury of how dangerous women can be in the sickroom.

This portrayal of women healers as manipulative also appears in Isaeus 6, *On the Estate of Philoctemon*. The case contesting the estate of Euctemon of Cephisia, who died at a great age with great wealth, was brought before the court by representatives of two of Euctemon's sons.⁴⁵ As with *Against Neaera*, it involves decisions made by a man while under the influence of a purported prostitute. Euctemon began living with Alce, an ex-prostitute from his tenement-house, despite the protests of his wife and family (Isaeus 6.21). He eventually becomes so ill as a result of drugs or disease "that he was persuaded by the woman to introduce the elder of her two boys to the members of his ward under his name" (6.21).⁴⁶ The prosecutors

⁴⁴ L.S.J. A.II.2

⁴⁵ Usher 1999: 149.

⁴⁶ Trans. Forster 1983: 217.

claim that Alce persuaded Euctemon to introduce one of her sons by a different man to the *phratry* as his legitimate citizen offspring (6.21). Even while Euctemon is still alive, Alce and her son begin to carve up and sell off Euctemon's estate at the expense of his legitimate children (6.34-35). In 6.21, the speaker makes it clear that he believes Euctemon was weakened by drugs, disease or some other cause (ὕπὸ φαρμάκων εἴθ' ὑπὸ νόσου εἴθ' ὑπὸ ἄλλου τινός) so that he was persuaded (ἐπείσθη) by Alce to introduce one of her sons to the *phratry* under his name (6.22). While he does not directly accuse Alce of poisoning Euctemon, he plants this seed in the jury's mind by associating her with *pharmaka*. The speaker suggests that Alce has manipulated Euctemon either through the deliberate administration of *pharmaka* or through her nursing care. As in *Against Neaera*, the speaker uses the passive form of πείθω (persuade) to further emphasize the man's defencelessness as a result of his condition. Alce's character as a scheming woman is further developed in the speech as the speaker goes on to describe how she urged Euctemon to cancel his will (30), and then attempted to hide Euctemon's death from his relatives so she could make off with his possessions (39). Alce, like the stepmother in Antiphon 1, is associated with the use of *pharmaka* for poisoning. As in *Against Neaera*, we see a conniving, scheming woman taking advantage of an enfeebled man; in doing so, the manipulative woman is corrupting the citizen body by having children of doubtful status accepted as citizens.

Women as Hindrances to Healing

The attitude towards women in the sick room is not always clear. Women are not always presented as scheming, manipulative or ignorant, but even then they are not presented in a flattering light. Women can be criticized for being in the way, as in Demosthenes 54, but they may also be criticized for not being there at all, as in Isocrates 19. In the first instance, Demosthenes draws on the stereotype of women as hysterical creatures who are ruled by their emotions and incapable of calm reasoning in the face of trouble. Demosthenes 54 *Against Conon* describes a street attack in which Ariston, the speaker, claims to have suffered severe injuries at the hands of Conon and his son. Ariston presents himself as a simple, modest, innocent young man.⁴⁷ His aim in this speech is to convince the jury that Conon, whom he accuses of attacking him, is guilty not only of failing to discipline his son, but also of taking part in the fight.⁴⁸ Forster suggests that street brawls and assaults were not uncommon in Athens,⁴⁹ but Ariston expresses outrage that a citizen should lead his son and other young men in an attack against another citizen. Ariston includes his wife's reaction to the brawl in his attempt to convince the jury of the seriousness of his injuries; in the process, he indicates that women are a hindrance to treatment rather than a help.

The brawl which has led to this lawsuit is described in 54.7-8. Ariston alleges that he was spotted by Ctesias as he was taking an evening stroll through the agora with his friend Phanostratus (54.7). Feelings of anger and hatred already existed between Ctesias and Ariston because of earlier conflicts between the two while

⁴⁷ Morford 1966: 241.

⁴⁸ Morford 1966: 241.

⁴⁹ Forster 1943: 25.

servicing in the army (54.4, 6). As Ariston and Phanostratus were returning through the agora, Ctesias and a group of friends fell upon them, thrusting Ariston into the mud and beating him with such force that his lip was split open, his eyes were closed up and he could neither move nor utter a sound (54.8). Some people passing by, who were likely friends of Ariston involved in the brawl and the witnesses mentioned in 54.10,⁵⁰ carried the wounded Ariston home, where he was met by his mother and the female servants (54.9). With some difficulty and despite the cries of the hysterical women, Ariston was carried to a bath, cleaned up and shown to the surgeons (54.9). Although Ariston was brought near to death on account of the attacks of fever and violent pains which were the result of the attack (54.11, 13), he did eventually recover and chose to avenge himself through a lawsuit.⁵¹

As is to be expected, Ariston conveniently passes over any part he played in the instigation of the attack (7),⁵² focussing instead on the severity of his injuries to win the jury's sympathy. To emphasize his grave injuries and endangered life, he appeals to the authority of the physicians (11-12). He is vague about how many physicians actually attended him, using the plural in some places and the singular in others.⁵³ Either only one doctor attended him or several physicians attended him but only one was convinced he was close to death (12).⁵⁴ Even if the jurors were not able to understand all of what Ariston was saying regarding his injuries, they would likely

⁵⁰ Morford 1966: 245.

⁵¹ Morford 1966: 245.

⁵² Carey and Reid 1985: 82.

⁵³ Carey and Reid 1985: 84.

⁵⁴ Carey and Reid 1985: 84.

have been impressed by his use of medical terminology.⁵⁵ The persona of the physician evidently carries enough authority in ancient Athens that Ariston can refer to it to support his case.

Ariston uses the women's emotional response to his injuries to further emphasize the danger of his situation. The hysterical response of Ariston's mother and female servants is important to our study because it demonstrates woman acting without *sōphrosunē* when confronted with a medical situation. The women are unable to control their emotions when they see the wounded man. Ariston describes his mother and the female servants as shouting and crying aloud (κραυγή και βοή τῆς μητρὸς και τῶν θεραπειδῶν ἦν) (9) and wailing and screaming as though someone had died (και κραυγή και βοή τῶν γυναικῶν τοσαύτη παρ' ἡμῖν ἦν ὡσπερανεὶ τεθνεῶτός τινος) (20). The women are useless to help the wounded Ariston because they are simply too emotional to be of assistance. Not only are they unable to help Ariston, but their emotionally-driven response delays those attempting to help him; the women begin their shrieking and crying when Ariston arrives at the door and it is only with difficulty (μόγις) that he is eventually carried to a bath (54.9). While the difficulty in taking him to the public baths could in part be due to the severity of his injuries, the passage suggests that the women contribute to this difficulty.⁵⁶ When Ariston returns to this image in 20, he adds further detail to emphasize the women's reaction; they were wailing and crying so loudly that the neighbours came to inquire what was happening (20). The women's display of grief over Ariston's injuries is so

⁵⁵ Carey and Reid 1985: 85.

⁵⁶ Carey and Reid (1985: 84) specify that the baths referred to here are public baths, not a bath in the home.

intense that it extends beyond the *oikos*. Because they are not able to control their emotions, the women become a hindrance to Ariston's treatment. The text does not directly critique the women for their lack of emotional control; rather, it is presented as natural that women should not be able to control themselves when faced with a medical emergency and thus reveals the social stereotype of women's inability to remain calm in a crisis. Although the women's response to Ariston's injuries may be exaggerated to further his case, the women are represented as lacking the ability to care for an injured man.

Despite these criticisms of women as incapable of dealing with traumatic injuries and as using a man's sickness to their advantage, women could also be criticized for *not* caring for an ill male relation. Isocrates' depiction of healing activity in *Aegineticus* depicts a man engaged in healing activity while at the same time criticizing women for their absence from the sick room. The speech is an early case of a disputed inheritance concerning the estate of Thrasyllus (Isocrates 19.5).

Thrasylochus, who had adopted the speaker, has died about twenty years before his father Thrasyllus. Now that the father has also died, the inheritance, which would have belonged to Thrasylochus, is being claimed by the speaker.⁵⁷ The speaker recounts the events surrounding Thrasylochus' death to show that Thrasylochus had not only made him his legally adopted son and given him his sister as a wife, but had also made him his heir (9). The speaker tells the jurors how Thrasylochus was dying from an illness, but his wife, who was receiving daily updates about his condition, refused to come and nurse him (13). This task was instead left to the speaker, who

⁵⁷ Usher 1999: 124.

nursed the dying man with the help of a single slave boy since not even the domestic slaves could stand the sight of Thrasylochus' illness (25). His suffering was so great that the speaker could not leave him at any time (27). The nursing duties were difficult to endure, and disagreeably toilsome and exacting (28), and the speaker's prolonged nursing of the invalid reduced him to such a condition that his friends feared he would die as well (29). Such was the speaker's devotion, however, that he preferred to die himself than to see Thrasylochus "perish before his fated day for lack of a friend to nurse him" (29).⁵⁸

Isocrates demonstrates the idea that the style of a speech was more important than its actual argument.⁵⁹ The speaker must rely on rhetorical devices to prove that Thrasylochus' half-sister was negligent towards him and therefore has no right to challenge the inheritance; thus he takes a high moral tone to make himself look as virtuous as possible.⁶⁰ But even with this taken into consideration, the speech reveals that caring for the sick was an appropriate undertaking for both men and women.⁶¹ The speaker cares for Thrasylochus on account of his kinship; had Thrasylochus' other female relatives been healthy, their obligation to care for him came not from their gender, but from their kinship.⁶² While the speaker complains about the lack of help from the women, nowhere does he complain that he has been made to do a woman's work.⁶³ The male speaker of Isocrates 19 does not identify care for the sick

⁵⁸ Trans. Norlin 1961.

⁵⁹ Kennedy 1994: 49.

⁶⁰ Sternberg 2000: 172; see also Usher 1999:125.

⁶¹ Sternberg 2000:176.

⁶² Sternberg (2000: 177) bases her argument on the phrase οὐδεὶς τῶν συγγενῶν in 19.24. The masculine pronoun οὐδεὶς implies that any relative, male or female, had a moral obligation to nurse Thrasylochus.

⁶³ Sternberg 2000: 177.

as a gendered task but rather shows that it was equally expected that both men and women would be involved in caring for the sick.

The speaker complains that none of Thrasylochus' relations bothered to assist in nursing him save for his mother and sister; these two, however, are a hindrance rather than a help since they are also ill and in need of care (25). The speaker says nothing more about them other than that they were too sick to be of help, and instead focuses on Thrasylochus' own disease and his own devotion in nursing the man for the better part of a year. While the women are not overtly criticized, neither are they praised for their attempts to help. The speaker praises himself for his continued care of Thrasylochus despite falling ill himself (29) but is completely dismissive of the women's help in the same situation. So far this is a depiction of women being useless in the sickroom, akin to Demosthenes 54; what complicates matters, however, is the speaker's attitude towards Thrasylochus' absent wife. According to the speaker, the wife received daily updates on Thrasylochus' condition and was within travelling distance (30). The speaker is highly critical of the woman for never visiting Thrasylochus during his long illness and for not giving him the customary funerary rites upon his death (30, 33). Sternberg's idea that kin were obligated to care for kin suggests that the wife was expected to care for her husband in his illness. The wife fails in her obligation to care for her sick husband, so the task falls to Thrasylochus.

If a woman in the worse case scenario is a danger to an ill man and in the best useless, why is the speaker so critical of the wife for not coming to nurse Thrasylochus? There are two possible explanations: rhetoric and stereotype. This is a forensic speech over the estate of Thrasylochus and the speaker is a litigant trying to

prove his right to the inheritance of Thrasylachus' disputed estate. He wishes to show the jury that he deserves the inheritance more than the estranged wife does. Naturally, he is critical of her and will use whatever means possible to prove to the jury that she did not care for her husband and so deserves no part of his estate. Criticizing her for not coming adds more weight to his argument against her. Secondly, this speech suggests that the portrayal of women in other speeches as incapable and possibly dangerous could be more stereotypical than realistic. While some men may have believed strongly that a woman is a dangerous nuisance to a sick man, it does not necessarily hold that every man shared that opinion. The rhetoric of the law court does not necessarily translate directly into practice in the *oikos*. Nevertheless, it appears that women healers, and particularly those skilled in *pharmaka*, were widely believed to be a threat to men because at best they were too emotional to be of help and at worst they were ignorant, manipulative or scheming.

Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*

A discussion of representations of female healers in classical Athenian literature is not complete without consideration of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*. Although Xenophon was not writing for the law courts, his work can be considered here because he, too, is relying on popular stereotypes and opinions of women while expressing a common utopian impulse.⁶⁴ Xenophon's view of women is somewhat unusual because he presents them as capable of being trained in rational thought and

⁶⁴ Murnaghan 1988: 17.

behaviour.⁶⁵ Although the words of Ischomachus come to the reader third-hand and are idealized,⁶⁶ they still reveal much about women and healing.

In the *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon has Socrates recount a conversation he had with Ischomachus for Chrystobolus' enlightenment as a part of Socrates' investigation into what makes a man noble. A part of this conversation depicts Ischomachus explaining how he manages his household and, in particular, how he trained his wife to manage his affairs. *Oeconomicus* 7 reveals the types of tasks a woman was expected to carry out, including the care of the slaves. Xenophon asserts that the different aptitudes of men and women make distinct gender-roles natural (7.34-34).⁶⁷ The wife's duty, like those of a queen bee, is to remain indoors, sending out the servants who work outdoors and supervising those who work indoors (7.35-36). Her more pleasant and rewarding tasks include teaching the ignorant slaves how to spin wool and keep house and having the power to reward the discreet and useful slaves (7.41). A less pleasant task, however, is to care for the ill slaves (7.37). The verb Xenophon uses, *θεραπεύω*, has a number of different meanings. In general terms it can mean to take care of a person or to foster, but it is also used with the specific sense of treating someone medically as in the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine* 9.⁶⁸ The wife clearly has some authority over household slaves and this authority extends to caring for them in their illnesses.

⁶⁵ Pomeroy 1994: 34.

⁶⁶ Murnaghan 1988: 10.

⁶⁷ See also Pomeroy 1994: 36.

⁶⁸ L.S.J. A.II.3, 4,7. Interestingly, in several rare examples the verb is also used with food or drugs with the meaning "to prepare" (L.S.J.A.II.10). For the sense 'to treat medically,' see L.S.J. A.II.7.

Xenophon connects the idea of *sōphrosunē* with one's ability to heal. He presents women as able to become *sōphrōn* through training; by educating his wife, Ischomachus regulates her behaviour and transforms her into a productive member of society in general and his estate specifically.⁶⁹ *Sōphrosunē* is a virtue of practical wisdom potentially available to both men and women;⁷⁰ Both men and women, Xenophon says, are given the power to practice *enkrateia* and the one who is able to practice it best will gain the most benefit from it (7.27). In terms of household management, *sōphrosunē* is defined as taking care of one's possessions and adding to them through careful management (*Oec.* 7.15). Xenophon, through the dialogue between Socrates and Ischomachus, presents women as capable of being *sōphrōn* and contributing to the management of the household.⁷¹ Unlike other depictions of Athenian women, Xenophon believes that a woman can be taught to think rationally;⁷² that women have intellectual powers equal to, or even superior to, those of men; and that a woman's education prepares her for her proper function in the *oikos*.⁷³ As a *sōphrōn* woman, the wife is able, and indeed expected, to care for ill slaves. No mention is made whether the wife is expected to care for her husband should he fall ill. This is important to note, since slaves were seen as having even less innate *sōphrosunē* than women, while citizen men, as we have seen, were believed to possess the quality naturally. Xenophon's presentation of a woman's capacity to heal is positive, provided that she is practicing that skill on someone who is less *sōphrōn*

⁶⁹ Pomeroy 1994: 39; Glazebrook 2009: 240.

⁷⁰ North 1966: 129.

⁷¹ Interestingly, though, he still presents the woman as being susceptible to moral slackness, since each of the three conversations Ischomachus has with his wife are introduced by a lapse on her part (Murnaghan 1988: 12).

⁷² Pomeroy 1994: 34.

⁷³ Pomeroy 1994: 38. Xenophon follows Plato in this belief.

than she is. A woman can be trusted to care for the household slaves, male and female, in their illnesses.

Conclusion

Greek culture was pervaded by the view that women were vulnerable to passion, irrationality, physicality and possession by external forces.⁷⁴ Women were a source of disorder and calamity, and their influence over weakened men was dangerous. The danger of a woman's influence was even enshrined in a law attributed to Solon and cited in Dem. 48.56 and Dem. 66.14; according to this law, acts done by a man under the influence of a woman were null and void. A woman's influence could be used to question a man's decision-making ability. Female influence was the equivalent of insanity.⁷⁵ The legal orators used these stereotypes of women as dangerous and irrational to support their cases and thereby demonstrated that women were commonly thought to lack the *sōphrosunē* required to care for an ill or injured man. While these depictions reflect stereotypes and may not align with reality, they are used in law courts and thus suggest a generalized anxiety men had about women in the sick room. Even if in practice women nursed men, as Isocrates 19 suggests, their practice may have been restricted to slaves, children or other women—that is, those with less social status than citizen men. Perhaps it was acceptable for women to be involved in the care of sick slaves, as in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, since slaves were below the status of women; it was not desirable, however, for a woman to heal a man.

While Xenophon suggests that women and children were educable and capable of

⁷⁴ Murnaghan 1988: 12.

⁷⁵ Johnstone 1998: 229; Dem. 48.56.

overcoming “their propensity to unruliness,”⁷⁶ the repeated depictions of dangerous women in the law courts suggests that this was not a common opinion. When combined with the mythological depictions discussed in the previous chapter, the underlying cultural anxiety towards women engaged in healing activity becomes even more evident. The mythical and literary depictions of female healers hint at a widespread cultural anxiety while at the same time reflecting that anxiety back to the audience.

It is within this cultural context that the Hippocratics practiced their medicine and formulated their ideas about the ideal healer. The Hippocratic belief that an ill patient was deficient in *sōphrosunē* and needed a healer who could exercise it on his behalf is born out in the examples of female healers in oratory. Women, as we have seen in chapter two, were believed to lack innate *sōphrosunē* and thus were not able to exercise mastery over a man. A man’s diminished self-control when ill made him susceptible to the scheming of unscrupulous women. Because women were believed to lack innate *sōphrosunē* they needed a man to exercise control over them. As we shall see in the concluding chapter, the cultural depictions of women healers as ignorant, scheming, manipulative and hysterical made it acceptable for the Hippocratic physicians to bring female healers under their control.

⁷⁶ Murnaghan 1988: 12.

Conclusion

As the Hippocratic physicians sought to establish themselves as a male medical authority, they were faced with the question of what to do about female healers. The cultural context in which the Hippocratics operated was pervaded by male anxiety towards female healers. Women were depicted as ignorant, scheming, manipulative and dangerous when they engaged in healing practices, and particularly in the use of *pharmaka*, on men. For the Hippocratics, however, female healers were also a source of competition within the medical marketplace. Further, female healers represented a source of medical knowledge, which the Hippocratics could appropriate and present as part of their corpus. Rather than deny the existence of female healers or attempt to silence them, the Hippocratics chose to bring female healers under their authority.

The Hippocratics placed great value on the quality of *sōphrosunē*. This was a quality associated with elite men, since the ideal Greek was a man who was in control of his appetites and who practiced moderation and self-control.¹ The Hippocratics believed this quality was important to a physician because an ill man had diminished *sōphrosunē* and required someone to exercise mastery over him and his disease. Since

¹ Plato *Timaeus* 42.

sōphrosunē was a male quality, this meant the physician must be a man. Women did not have this inherent self-control; rather, their *sōphrosunē* came through submission and subordination to a *sōphrōn* man.² Because of women's perceived lack of innate *sōphrosunē*, their healing activities within the Hippocratic medical framework are restricted to those whose status is equal to or less than their own, that is, to other women, children, and slaves.

The Hippocratics brought women healers under their control by restricting their healing activity. Depictions of women involved in healing activities in the Hippocratic corpus, as we have seen, are restricted to women treating other women, themselves or their children. Although the corpus contains only several references to women treating children, the women are not censured for their actions (*Epid.* 4.11; *Morb.* 4.54). As we have seen in chapter two, women are occasionally shown treating other women, but even then they are not accorded the same status as the Hippocratic physician. Women are shown involved in their own treatment throughout the gynaecological texts *De natura muliebri* and *De mulierum affectibus*, but even then a physician often oversees their treatment. These Hippocratic depictions of women treating those with equal or lesser status fits within the cultural contexts examined in chapter four. Isocrates 19 demonstrates that, for some Greeks at least, there was an expectation that women would be involved in the healing of sick kin, regardless of gender. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* also shows women being responsible for the treatment of sick slaves (7.37); slaves, of course, were of lower status than women and thus the female healer did not present a danger as she would for the citizen male.

² Foucault 1990: 84.

Women who treat men, on the other hand, are presented as dangerous. Isaeus 6.21 and Apollodoros *Against Neaera* 55-56 show women using their knowledge of *pharmaka* to take advantage of sick men. The stepmother of Antiphon 1 is accused of using *pharmaka* to poison her husband, while the mother and sister in Demosthenes 54 are a hindrance to the injured man because they are unable to control their emotions.

By taming the female healer much as a *kyrios* tames a Greek woman, the Hippocratic physician controls the dangerous aspect of female healers. Under the authority of the male Hippocratic physician, the female healer moves from being dangerous to being beneficial. The cultural framework in which the Hippocratics were constructing their authority emphasized the necessity of bringing women under male authority. Female healers who operate independently of a male physician are presented as a threat to men. The mythological examples of Medea, Circe, Helen and Deianeira demonstrate the anxiety Greek men had of women using *pharmaka*. These women use *pharmaka* to wield power over men. Classical Athenian oratory also represents these stereotypes of women. The prostitute Alce exercises influence over the ill Euctemon and possibly uses *pharmaka* to make him ill (Isaeus 6.21). The stepmother of *Antiphon* 1 is accused of using *pharmaka* to murder her husband, although she suggests it was a love potion gone awry (1.9). Finally, Neaera and Phano manipulate the ill Phrastor to introduce his child by Phano as a citizen child (*Against Neaera* 55-56). In all these cases, the female healers present a threat against either an individual man or against the male citizen body as a whole. The underlying

message seems to be that a female healer who is not brought under male control has the potential to bring great harm to men.

These sources indicate, however, that the cultural anxiety about women treating men is focussed on women using *pharmaka* and treating men. *Pharmaka* were volatile substances; they could be foodstuff, therapeutic drugs or deadly poisons. *Pharmaka* were made even more dangerous when associated with women, who innately lacked the *sōphrosunē* to use *pharmaka* wisely. The ambiguity of *pharmaka*, coupled with women acting on their own, presented a double threat to the Greek man.

Pharmaka carried the potential to harm or to help; the term itself encompasses both beneficial drugs and dangerous poisons. Recipes from the Hippocratic corpus show substances ranging from plant material to animal byproducts, to minerals and even human fluids being used as therapeutic agents.³ It is logical that both beneficial and destructive drugs are described with the same Greek term, since potentially toxic plants can be therapeutic in small quantities.⁴ Conversely, virtually any substance, even water, can be toxic in sufficient quantities.⁵ A useful medical agent is also a poison, and almost every poison, under the right circumstances, exerts a useful medicinal action and may be considered a therapeutic agent.⁶ Our own cultural

³ See Table 4.1 in the appendix for a partial list of substances used medicinally by the Hippocratics.

⁴ Fackelmann 1993: 312.

⁵ Fackelmann 1993: 312; Macht 1938: 34. See also Flint-Hamilton 1999 for a discussion of how legumes can be poisonous.

⁶ Macht 1938: 34. In many cultures poison is believed to counter poison (van Courtland Moon 2008: 710).

experiences, sentiments and psychology create our conception of whether something is medicine or poison.⁷

To complicate matters further for the ancient Greek, many foodstuffs can act as medicine or poison. Many of the plant and animal products the Hippocratics prescribe for ailments were also consumed as foodstuff.⁸ The blurring of the line between *pharmaka* and foodstuff further associates poisonous *pharmaka* with women since food preparation was a woman's activity (e.g., Xen. *Oec.* 7.21, 36; Aristoph. *Thes.* 415-425). The opportunities for accidental poisoning during food preparation must have been plentiful and since women were closely associated with the storage and preparation of food, they were likely associated with poisoning as well. Pre-modern authors assumed that the readers of their work were already knowledgeable in the observation of plants, drug preparation, dosages, and in making good diagnoses;⁹ a healer with incomplete knowledge could be dangerous. The line between beneficial *pharmaka* and poisons was unclear and an inexperienced or ignorant healer could turn a therapeutic agent into a poison. As we have seen in our examination of Greek literature, the ambiguous nature of *pharmaka* was a source of anxiety for men when they were used by women.¹⁰ This ambiguity, when combined with the cultural

⁷ Macht 1938: 40; Fackelmann 1993: 314. Fackelmann examines a number of plants, including the castor bean and nightshade, that are commonly considered poisons in western culture but are used medicinally or as food stuff by various indigenous cultures.

⁸ Prominent examples in the corpus include wine and cabbage. See Table 4.1 in the appendix for further examples.

⁹ Riddle 1985: 322.

¹⁰ This male anxiety of female healers becomes exaggerated in Hellenistic and Roman literature, as the use of *pharmaka* becomes closely linked to the practice of magic. See, for example, Sen. *Med.*; Ov. *Am.* 3.7.27-38; Tibullus 1.2.41, 2.4.55-56; Propertius 1.5.4-6, 2.1.47-56; Theocritus *Idyll* 2. Eur. *Hipp.* 509 mentions the use of love philtres and Propertius 2.4.7-8 mentions the use of magic herbs. Further depictions of witchcraft occur in Tibullus 1.2.41, 1.8.21; Ov. *Am.* 2.1.23; Virg. *Buc.* 8.69; Plut. *Defect. orac.* 13; Plut. *Coniug. praecept.* 48; Aristoph. *Cl.* 49-50; Pliny *NH* 30.6; Apuleius *Met.* 2.1.6. For secondary scholarship, see Tupet 1976.

perception of women lacking *sōphrosunē*, made it necessary for the Hippocratics to bring the female healer under the male Hippocratic authority to legitimize her healing practices. By doing so, a woman's healing ability and pharmaceutical knowledge shifted from being dangerous to being beneficial.

Greek literature shows women engaged in healing activities and using *pharmaka* in an ambiguous light. Was there a positive side to women practicing *pharmaka*? Knowledge of *pharmaka* allowed women to be active agents in a male-dominated society. Medea uses her knowledge of *pharmaka* to facilitate her escape from Colchis with Jason and to negotiate with Aegeus for her flight to Athens. Deianeira attempts to ensure her security as Herakles' wife by using *pharmaka* to influence his love. The stepmother of Antiphon 1 uses *pharmaka* either to regain her husband's love or to dispose of a husband who has wronged her. Alce and Neaera both convince men to present their children as citizens (Isaeus 6.21; *Against Neaera* 55-56). And while the Hippocratics bring a woman's use of *pharmaka* under male control, women are still actively involved in their own treatment.¹¹ Even though *pharmaka* are prescribed by the male physician, the female patient can still concoct it and administer it herself (*Nat. Mul.* 20, 71, 93). *Pharmaka* were dangerous substances, and a woman's use of them caused men to fear her, but they also offered her a type of agency not otherwise available. By her careful use of *pharmaka* a woman could assert herself in a male-dominated environment.

¹¹ See Table 2.4 in the appendix.

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Appendix

Table 1.1 Hippocratic Corpus

The following table provides the English, Latin, Greek and French titles for the treatises comprising the Hippocratic corpus. The English titles are given with the key word first, so related treatises appear together. The table has been alphabetized by the English title. Latin titles are provided where I could determine them with complete certainty. Greek titles are taken from the L.S.J. and French titles from the Littré edition of the corpus.

The Littré 1839 edition, which provides a detailed *apparatus criticus*, is the authoritative source for the Hippocratic treatises. Littré provides the Greek text with a facing French translation. While a number of Hippocratic treatises have been translated into English as part of the Loeb Classical Library collection, at the time of my research the gynaecological texts were not yet available. I have relied on the Loeb and Littré editions in my research and have included the respective volume numbers for each treatise. If there is no volume number, the treatise was not available in that collection.

English	Latin	Greek (L.S.J.)	French (Littré)	Loeb Vol.	Littré Vol.	Abbreviation (L.S.J.)
Affections	<i>De affectionibus</i>	περί παθῶν	Des affections	5	6	<i>Aff.</i>
Airs, Waters, Places/ On Places	<i>De aera, aquis, locis</i>	περί ἀέρων ὑδάτων τόπων	Des airs, des eaux et des lieux	1	2	<i>Aër.</i>
Anatomy	--	περί ἀνατομῆς	De l'anatomie	9	8	<i>Anat.</i>
Ancient Medicine	<i>De vetere medicina/ De prisca medicina</i>	περί ἀρχαίας ἱητρικῆς	De l'ancienne médecine	1	1	<i>VM</i>
Aphorisms	<i>Aphorismi</i>	ἀφορισμοί	Aphorismes	4	4	<i>Aph.</i>
Art	<i>de Arte</i>	περί τέχνης	De l'art	2	6	<i>de Arte</i>
Bones, Nature of	--	περί ὀστέων	De la nature des os	9	9	<i>Oss.</i>
Breaths	<i>De flatibus</i>	περί φουσῶν	Des vents	2	6	<i>Flat.</i>
Child, Eight-Months'	<i>De hebdomadibus</i>	περί ὀκταμήνου	Du foetus de huit mois	9	7	<i>Oct.</i>
Child, Nature of	--	περί φύσιος παιδίου			7	<i>Nat. Puer.</i>
Child, Seven-Month	<i>De septimanis</i>	περί ἑπταμήνου	Du foetus de sept mois		7	<i>Septim.</i>
Child, Seven-Month (2 nd treatise)	--	περί ἑπταμήνου				<i>Septim. (Sp.)</i>
Coan Prenotions	<i>Coa praesagia</i>	Κωακαὶ προγνώσεις	Prénotions Coaques	9		<i>Coac.</i>
Crises	<i>De judicationibus</i>	περί κρίσιων	Des crises	9	9	<i>Judic.</i>
Critical Days	--	περί κρίσιμων ἡμερέων	Des jours critiques	9	9	<i>Dieb. Judic.</i>
Decorum	<i>De decente habitu</i>	περί εὐσχημοσύνης	De la beinséance	2	9	<i>Decent.</i>

Dentition	--	περι ὀδοντοφυΐης	De la dentition	2	8	<i>Dent.</i>
Diseases	<i>De morbo</i>	περι νόσων	Des maladies	5-6	6, 7	<i>Morb.</i>
Dreams	--	περι ἑνυπνίων		4		<i>Insomn.</i>
Epidemics	<i>Epidemiae/ De morbis popularibus</i>	ἐπιδημῖαι	Des épidémies	1, 7	2, 3, 5	<i>Epid.</i>
Excision of the Foetus/ On the Foetus	--	περι ἐγκατατομῆς ἐμβρύου	De l'excision du foetus	9	8	<i>Foet. Exsect.</i>
Fistula	<i>De fistulis</i>	περι συρίγγων	Des fistules	8	6	<i>Fist.</i>
Fleashes	<i>De carnibus</i>	περι σαρκῶν	Des chairs	8	8	<i>Carn.</i>
Fractures	<i>De fracturis</i>	περι ἄγμων	Des fractures	3	3	<i>Fract.</i>
Girls	<i>De virginibus morbis</i>	περι παρθενίων	Des maladies des jeunes filles	9	8	<i>Virg.</i>
Glands	--	περι ἀδένων	Des glandes	8	8	<i>Gland.</i>
Haemorrhoids	<i>De haemorrhoidibus</i>	περι αἱμορροΐδων	Des hémorrhoides	8	6	<i>Haem.</i>
Head Wounds	<i>De capitis vulneribus</i>	περι τῶν ἐν κεφαλῇ τρωμάτων	Des plaies de tête	3	3	<i>VC</i>
Heart	--	περι καρδίας	Du coeur	9		<i>Cord.</i>
Humours	<i>De humoribus</i>	περι χυμῶν	Des humeurs	4	5	<i>Hum.</i>
Instruments of Reduction	<i>Vectarius</i>	μοχλικόν	Mochlique	3	4	<i>Mochl.</i>
Internal Affections	<i>De affectionibus interioribus</i>	περι τῶν ἐντὸς παθῶν	Des affections internes	6	7	<i>Int.</i>
Joints	<i>De articulis</i>	περι ἄρθρων ἐμφολῆς	Des articulations	3	4	<i>Art.</i>
Law	<i>Lex</i>	νόμος	La loi	2	4	<i>Lex</i>
Letters	<i>Epistulae</i>	ἐπιστολαί	Lettres, décret et harangues		9	<i>Ep.</i>
Liquids, Use of	<i>De humidorum usu</i>	περι ὑγῶν χρήσιος	De l'usage des liquides	8	6	<i>Liqu.</i>
Man, Nature of	<i>De natura hominis</i>	περι φύσιος ἀνθρώπου	De la nature de l'homme	4	6	<i>Nat. Hom.</i>
Man, Places in	<i>De locis in homine</i>	περι τόπων τῶν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον	Des lieux dans l'homme	8	6	<i>Loc. Hom.</i>
Nutriments	<i>De alimento</i>	περι τροφῆς	De l'aliment	1	9	<i>Alim.</i>
Oath	<i>Jusjurandum</i>	ὄρκος	Serment	1	4	<i>Jusj.</i>
On Generation	<i>De semine</i>	περι γονῆς	De la génération	-	7	<i>Genit.</i>
On Purgative Medicines/ Remedies	<i>De remediis/ Aphorismi de medicinis purgantibus</i>					
Physician	<i>De medico</i>	περι ἱητροῦ	Du médecin	2, 8		<i>Medic.</i>
Precepts	<i>Praeceptiones</i>	παραγγελῖαι	Préceptes	1	9	<i>Praec.</i>
Prognostics	<i>Prognosticon</i>	προγνωστικόν	Pronostic	2	2	<i>Prog.</i>

Prorrhethics (I & II)	<i>Prorrhethicon</i>	προρρητικόν	Prorrhétique	8	5, 9	<i>Prorrh.</i>
Regimen	--	περι διαίτης	Du régime	4	6	<i>Vict.</i>
Regimen in Acute Diseases	<i>De diaeta in morbis acutis</i>	περι διαίτης ὀξέων	Du régime dans les maladies aiguës	2	2	<i>Acut.</i>
Regimen in Acute Diseases (Appendix)	--	περι διαίτης ὀξέων (νόθα)	Du régime dans les maladies aiguës (appendice)	6		<i>Acut. (Sp.)</i>
Regimen in Health/ On Diet	--	περι διαίτης ὑγιεινῆς	De régime salubre	4	6	<i>Salubr.</i>
Sacred Disease	<i>De morbo sacro</i>	περι ιερῆς νόσου	De la maladies sacrée	2	6	<i>Morb. Sacr.</i>
Sight	<i>De visu</i>	περι ὄψιος	De la vision	9	9	<i>Vid. Ac.</i>
Superfetation	<i>De superfetation</i>	περι ἐπικυήσιος	De la superfétation	9	8	<i>Superf.</i>
Surgery, In the	<i>De officina medici</i>	κατ' ἰητροῦ	De l'officine du médecin	3	3	<i>Off.</i>
Ulcers/ On Sores	<i>De ulceribus</i>	περι ἐλκῶν	Des plaies	8	6	<i>Ulc.</i>
Weeks and Days	--	περι ἐβδομάδων	Des semaines	-	8	<i>Hebd.</i>
Women, (Diseases of)	<i>De mulierum affectibus</i>	γυναικεῖα	Des maladies des femmes	-	8	<i>Mul.</i>
Women, Nature of	<i>De natura muliebri</i>	περι γυναικείης	De la nature de la femme	-	7	<i>Nat. Mul.</i>
Women, On Sterile/ On Barenness/ On Sterility	--	περι ἀφόρων	Des femmes stériles		8	<i>Steril.</i>

Table 2.1 Women Treating Women in the Hippocratic Corpus

The Hippocratic corpus does not use the expected Greek terms for healers (ιατρίνη or ἡ ἱατρός “female healer, physician” and μαῖα “midwife”) when female healers are mentioned. Instead, women involved in healing treatments are most often referred to as γυνή “woman.” In a few instances, the nouns ἀκέστωρ “healer” and ὀμφαλητόμος “midwife” and the feminine participles of healing verbs are used to denote women conducting healing activity.

Terminology	Reference	Description
ἀκέστωρ “healer”	<i>Carn.</i> 19	attends birth
γυνή “woman”	<i>Epid.</i> 5.25	woman feels something rough at the mouth of her womb; another woman removes a stone from her
γυνή “woman”	<i>Mul.</i> 1.21	woman to examine the uterus when it is empty in the case of a woman who spontaneously aborts (L. 8.61) ¹
γυνή “woman”	<i>Foet. Exsect.</i> 4	four women hold the female patient by her limbs and shake her
γυνή “woman”	<i>Mul.</i> 21	examination of the uterus when it is empty by another woman (L. 8.61)
ὀμφαλητόμος, ἡ “midwife, umbilical cord cutter”	<i>Mul.</i> 1.46	if the umbilical cord is broken by force or if the umbilical-cord-cutter cuts it before the placenta (chorion) leaves the uterus, the placenta may remain in the uterus (L. 8.107)
ἰητρεύουσα “(female) one who is doctoring”	<i>Mul.</i> 1.68	opens mouth of uterus, draws out umbilical cord and foetus (Littré translates as ‘sage-femme’) (L. 8.145)
ἐσαφάσσουσα “(female) one who is feeling”	<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 40	woman uses her finger to adjust the mouth of the uterus (Littré translates as ‘sage-femme,’ but this could also be done by the patient herself) (L. 7.385)
παραφάσσουσα “(female) one feeling gently with the finger”	<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 6	woman feels the opening of the uterus with her finger (Littré translates this as ‘sage-femme’)(L. 7.321)

¹ The volume and page number from the Littré edition have been provided for references in treatises that have not yet been translated into English.

Table 2.2 Women's Self-Treatment in the Hippocratic Corpus

This table provides an extensive sampling of women's self-treatment activity in the Hippocratic corpus. The Hippocratics viewed all women's health as gynaecological in nature; thus, this table was compiled by careful examination of the gynaecological texts; *De natura muliebri* and *De mulierum affectibus* proved the most fruitful. Women's self-treatment includes the applications of oils, unguents, pessaries and fumigations, as well as internal manipulations. Volume and page numbers of the Littré edition follow a description of the passage.

Reference	Description
<i>Mul.</i> 13	woman uses her finger to perform an internal manipulation (L. 8.53)
<i>Mul.</i> 19	woman removes pessary
<i>Mul.</i> 20	woman washes herself with warm wine
<i>Mul.</i> 37	woman rubs oil into the mouth of her uterus; the following day, she injects wine and oil into the uterus (L. 8.91) woman applies a pessary (L. 8.93)
<i>Mul.</i> 44	woman washes herself in hot water (L. 8.103)
<i>Mul.</i> 45	woman washes herself with hot water three times a day (L. 8.105)
<i>Mul.</i> 49	woman injects astringents into the uterus if it is ulcerated following childbirth (L. 8.109)
<i>Mul.</i> 59	woman touching the opening of the uterus finds it thin and moist woman uses pessaries and drinks wine (L. 8.119)
<i>Mul.</i> 75	woman uses a pessary twice a day, washes herself, applies laurel oil following a bath (L. 8.163-165)
<i>Mul.</i> 81	woman applies pessary (L. 8.203)
<i>Mul.</i> 84	woman applies softening pessary, bathes, removes pessary, washes with perfume (L. 8. 205) woman applies fat from stag (L. 8.209)
<i>Mul.</i> 88	woman takes a bath, removes pessary, washes with perfumed water (L. 8.213)
<i>Mul.</i> 89	woman applies softening pessary woman applies fig juice to open mouth of uterus woman washes with water woman applies oil to her genitals (L. 8.215)
<i>Mul.</i> 112	woman does fumigations until she is dry (L. 8.243)
<i>Mul.</i> 121	woman washes with warm water, myrtle and sage (L. 8.265)
<i>Mul.</i> 126	woman inhales fumes (L. 8.273)
<i>Mul.</i> 133	woman touches the mouth of her uterus during fumigation (L. 8.289) woman removes and re-inserts pessary as necessary (L. 8.291) woman washes with hot water (L. 8.293, 209)
<i>Mul.</i> 134	woman takes bath, manipulates mouth of uterus into place, uses ointments (L. 8.305)
<i>Mul.</i> 135	woman takes a hot bath seated (L. 8.307)
<i>Mul.</i> 141	woman uses her finger to re-align the mouth of the uterus, also uses medical drink and lotions

<i>Mul.</i> 141	woman uses her finger to manipulate the mouth of the uterus into place (L. 8.315) woman uses aromatic fumigation (L. 8.315)
<i>Mul.</i> 144	woman applies sponges (L. 8.319)
<i>Mul.</i> 146	woman examines mouth of uterus to determine if it is opening following treatment
<i>Mul.</i> 146	woman examines the opening of the uterus with her finger, does a fumigation three times a day and inserts pessaries (L. 8.323)
<i>Mul.</i> 157	woman examines the opening of her uterus (L. 8.333)
<i>Mul.</i> 162	woman applies a pessary (L. 8.341)
<i>Mul.</i> 177	woman applies pessaries (L. 8.361)
<i>Mul.</i> 179	woman applies pessaries (L. 8.363)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 2	the woman, touching the uterine opening, feels it to be thin (L. 7.313) woman uses several pessaries (L. 7.315)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 4	woman washes herself (L. 7.319)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 5	patient washes herself
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 6	fumigation of myrrh and rose-water
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 7	woman washes herself with a concoction of lentils (L. 7.323) patient examines the opening of her womb with a finger woman takes a bath, has a fumigation
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 11	the opening of the inflamed womb is thin and sagging when the patient touches it with her finger the woman uses a lead probe following fumigation (L. 8.47)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 18	woman washes twice a day with hot water (L. 7.339)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 20	doctor prescribes pessaries for the woman to insert in her womb (L. 7.341)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 35	woman purges herself (L. 7.379)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 40	woman uses her finger to adjust the mouth of the uterus (Littré translates the participle ἐσαφάσσοῦσα as referring to a 'sage-femme,' but this could also be done by the patient herself) (L. 7.385)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 66	woman removes pessary (L. 7.403)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 67	woman washes herself with a concoction of wine and myrtle (L. 7.403)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 71	woman makes a pessary of goose fat and oregano for bringing on menses (L. 7.405)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 93	woman washes herself with hot water woman mixes a drink of sage, juniper and wine, which she drinks (L. 7.411)
<i>Superf.</i> 25	describes the treatment a woman follows to promote pregnancy, which includes bathing herself and putting a clean piece of linen and hairnet on her hair
<i>Superf.</i> 27	woman applies a daily suppository
<i>Superf.</i> 33	physician makes suppository and gives it to the woman to apply; woman makes suppository and applies it;

	woman applies suppository given by physician
<i>Superf.</i> 34	woman bathes following fumigation

Table 2.3 Women Treating Others (non-women)

A search through the *TLG* and relevant scholarly articles revealed only two references in the Hippocratic corpus to female involvement in the healing of non-female patients. Both of these examples have children as patients.

Passage	Person Treated	Summary
<i>Epid.</i> 4.11	boy	woman washed head wound, rubbing the area around the wound, causing fever and death (compare with <i>VC</i> 13, which advises that head wounds should not be moistened)
<i>Morb.</i> 4.54	newborn infant	author describes how women administer <i>pharmaka</i> to their newborn babies to purge and enlarge the intestines (L. 7.597)

Table 2.4 Women Administering *Pharmaka* in the Hippocratic Corpus

This table lists occurrences in the Hippocratic corpus where women are associated with the administration of *pharmaka*. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the definition of *pharmaka* is somewhat ambiguous, as food and drink are often used in specific medicinal ways. A search of the *TLG* for occurrences of the root *pharmak** in the Hippocratic corpus returns hundreds of entries. By carefully examining each of these entries and the texts *De natura muliebri* and *De mulierum affectibus*, I was able to compile the following table of references to women using *pharmaka*. Note that in all but one instance, the woman is administering *pharmaka* to herself.

Passage	Person Treated	Summary
<i>Morb.</i> 4.54	newborn infant	author describes how women administer <i>pharmaka</i> to their newborn babies to purge and enlarge the intestines (L. 7.597)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.37	self	woman rubs oil into the mouth of her uterus; the following day, she injects wine and oil into the uterus (L. 8.91) woman applies a pessary (L. 8.93)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.49	self	woman injects astringents into the uterus if it is ulcerated following childbirth (L. 8.109)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.52	self	woman drinks a preparation of flour, lentils, vinegar and oil (L. 8.111)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.59	self	woman touching the opening of the uterus finds it thin and moist woman uses pessaries and drinks wine (L. 8.119)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.75	self	woman uses a pessary twice a day, washes herself, applies laurel oil following a bath (L. 8.163-165)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.81	self	woman applies pessary (L. 8.203)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.84	self	woman applies softening pessary, bathes, removes pessary, washes with perfume (L. 8. 205) woman applies fat from stag (L. 8.209)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.88	self	woman takes a bath, removes pessary, washes with perfumed water (L. 8.213)
<i>Mul.</i> 1.89	self	woman applies softening pessary woman applies fig juice to open mouth of uterus woman washes with water woman applies oil to her genitals (L. 8.215)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.112	self	woman does fumigations until she is dry (L. 8.243)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.121	self	woman washes with warm water, myrtle and sage (L. 8.265)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.126	self	woman inhales fumes (L. 8.273)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.133	self	woman touches the mouth of her uterus during fumigation (L. 8.289) woman removes and re-inserts pessary as necessary

		(L. 8.291)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.134	self	woman washes with hot water (L. 8.293, 209) woman takes bath, manipulates mouth of uterus into place, uses ointments (L. 8.305)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.141	self	woman uses her finger to re-align the mouth of the uterus, also uses medical drink and lotions
<i>Mul.</i> 2.141	self	woman uses her finger to manipulate the mouth of the uterus into place (L. 8.315) woman uses aromatic fumigation (L. 8.315)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.146	self	woman examines the opening of the uterus with her finger, does a fumigation three times a day and inserts pessaries (L. 8.323)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.162	self	woman applies a pessary (L. 8.341)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.177	self	woman applies pessaries (L. 8.361)
<i>Mul.</i> 2.179	self	woman applies pessaries (L. 8.363)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 2	self	the woman, touching the uterine opening, feels it to be thin (L. 7.313) woman uses several pessaries (L. 7.315)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 6	self	fumigation of myrrh and rose-water
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 7	self	woman washes herself with a concoction of lentils (L. 7.323)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 7	self	woman takes a bath, has a fumigation (L. 7.323)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 20	self	doctor prescribes pessaries for the woman to insert in her womb (L. 7.341)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 67	self	woman washes herself with a concoction of wine and myrtle (L. 7.403)
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 71	self	woman makes a pessary of goose and oregano for bringing on menses
<i>Nat. Mul.</i> 93	self	woman washes herself with hot water woman mixes a drink of sage, juniper and wine, which she drinks (L. 7.411)
<i>Superf.</i> 27	self	woman applies a daily suppository
<i>Superf.</i> 33	self	physician makes suppository and gives it to the woman to apply; woman makes suppository and applies it; woman applies suppository given by physician

Table 3.1 Examples of Healing in Athenian Literature

This table lists examples of healing that occur in Greek literature. Not all of these examples are discussed in chapter four as some are either too brief for analysis or not immediately relevant to this discussion, but they are provided here for the reader's interest.

Citation	Gender of Healer and Patient	Description
Antiphon 1 <i>Against the Stepmother for Poisoning</i>	woman administering <i>pharmaka</i> to man	speaker's stepmother accused of poisoning her husband on repeated occasion; <i>pharmaka</i> possibly meant as a love philtre
Apollodoros <i>Against Neaera</i> 55-56	women nursing man	Phrastor is nursed back to health by Neaera and her mother, who convince him to present his illegitimate child as his own; criticism of women in the sickroom
Aristoph. <i>Lysistrata</i>	woman nursing woman	woman attending to another woman in childbirth
Aristoph. <i>Thes.</i> 485	man nursing woman	husband prepares herbal medicine for wife
Dem. 54. 9-12 <i>Against Conon</i>	woman caring for man	victim of street assault nursed back to health—bathed by mother and female servants and then carried off to the surgeon's; women shrieking and wailing
Dem. <i>Ltr.</i> 3.30	women nursing man	Pytheas nursed in last illness by two mistresses
Isaeus 6.21 <i>On the Estate of Philoctomen</i>	woman (prostitute) possibly using drugs on man	Euctemon leaves wife and sons to live with Alce, prostitute, perhaps under influence of drugs
Isoc. 19.24-33 <i>Aegineticus</i>	man nursing man; criticism of women's absence	Thrasylochus nursed by male relative in final illness; criticism of women's absence
Thuc. 2.51	not specified	plague victims nursed by family and friends
Xen. <i>Anab.</i> 7.2.6.	man nursing men	Persian soldiers nursed by Spartan governor Cleander
Xen. <i>Cyrop.</i> 1.4.2	man nursing man	Astyges nursed by grandson Cyrus
Xen. <i>Cyrop.</i> 5.1.18	female nursing male?	Araspus receives care from Panthea via her servants
Xen. <i>Oec.</i> 7.37	female nursing slaves	wife is instructed to care for sick servants

Table 4.1 Pharmaceutical Substances in the Hippocratic Corpus

The Greek term *pharmaka* is used to denote both beneficial drugs and harmful poisons. Substances used as *pharmaka* in the Hippocratic corpus fall into four categories: plant material (roots, leaves, branches, fruits), animal material (meat, milk, fat, excrement), minerals and human fluids. The selection below has been translated from Bourbon (2008: 235-240). This list is not meant to be exhaustive but to give the reader a sense of the variety of pharmacological substances used by Hippocratic physicians.

Plant

absinth (wormwood)
acacia
almond oil
anemone
anise
ash tree
baccara
balsam sap
barley
black heliobore
blackberry
brithwort
buckthorn
buttercup
cabbage
cardamome
castor
celery
chard
chickpea
cinnamon
coriander
cress
crimson
cucumber
cumin
cyclamen
cypress
dill
Egyptian perfume
Egyptian white oil
elderberry
fennel
fig
garlic

gourd
grape pip
green vine brand
heather
horseradish
iris
ivy
juniper
laburnum
laurel
lichen
liquorice
mallow
myrrh
millet
mint
myrtle
narcissus
nettle
olive
onion
oregano
parsley hemlock
pear
peony
pepper
pine
pomegranate
poplar
poppy (red & white)
raisin
rapeseed
reed
rose
rue
rye grass

saffron
salvia/sage
straw
sumac
thistle seed
vinegar
violet
wheat
white oil
wild colocynth
wild thyme
wine

Animal

asses' milk
beef fat
bull bile
bull urine
butter
cow milk
cow urine
deer fat
dog milk
egg
fish
goat cheese
goat fat
honey
meat
pig bile
pig grease
sea scorpion bile
seal oil
sheep fat
sheep grease

sheep liver
sheep milk
stag horn & hoof
starfish
wax
wool

Mineral
alum
bitumen
earth
gypsum/talc
nitrate

salt
sulphur
Human
breast milk
urine