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Phanostrate and the Legitimization of Professional Female Healers in Fourth Century Athens

Hannah Cremo
Bard College

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by

Hannah Cremo

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For
my beloved brother
Metro

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Introduction

In the fourth century BCE, professionalized medicine was growing in popularity, and the interest in studying women's bodies was increasing as well. However, women's modesty often prevented them from invasive exams carried out by male physicians, and so they sometimes sought out female healers. Phanostrate is the first documented of these healers who is also classified as a professional. We know of her existence through two objects—a funerary monument and a statue base—on which we can read her name and inscriptions related to healing. The first of the two, the funerary monument, found in Menidi, Attica, titles her as a *maia kai iatros*, midwife and physician, and praises her for her reputation in healing. The second object was found in the Athenian Asklepieion and commemorates her healing of Lysimache, a citizen woman from Cholargos. She is the only female *iatros* with inscriptional evidence in the fourth century BCE and for nearly two centuries after that, when several other woman doctors entered the scene. In this paper, I explore the evidence of Phanostrate's existence and what it reveals about female healers in the ancient world.

The evidence of female *iatros* is rare and usually does not provide biographical information about these women. They are never mentioned in the Hippocratic Corpus, which is significant considering the Corpus was the primary medical text of the era; however, midwives and unnamed, untitled female assistants were mentioned a handful of times. The only clients that they worked with were women and children. Ultimately, female healers were massively underrepresented in a society that relied on women for caring in the home and for other women in a professional setting.

Although there is very limited evidence from the fourth century BCE for these healers, I have chosen this century as my primary focus. Due to the found locations of Phanostrate's objects, Athens is the central location of this study. Phanostrate, even with the little that we know

about her, provides a unique window into the life a working Athenian woman, who was participating in the public sphere. While being a working woman alone was extraordinary, her role as a *maia* and *iatros* was especially rare, as we can see by the lack of evidence. The inscription and relief from her funerary monument are the closest that we get to a voice for female healers of the fourth century BCE. These objects are examples of how she wanted to be perceived by society.

My first chapter provides an in-depth view of the two objects that mention Phanostrate, and briefly discuss some of the theories about her life based on what we know from the inscriptions. With this basic information about her, we can move on to discuss the specifics of Phanostrate's work as a *maia* and *iatros* in Chapter 2, to create a fuller picture of her medical practice. Using texts like the Hippocratic Corpus, Plato's *Thaeatetus*, and Soranus' *Gynecology*, I am able to establish some possibilities for the expectations of a *maia*. Using the Hippocratic *Corpus*, inscriptional evidence, and the story of Agnodike, I do the same for *iatros* and *iatrina*.[1] Chapter 3 ties together the information from the first two chapters to inquire into the different forms of literary and visual self-representations used by Phanostrate to legitimize her practice in the ancient Athenian *polis*.

The goal of this paper is to discuss the origins of female medical professionals and to explore the ways in which ancient female healers represented themselves. I argue that in fourth century Athens, legitimacy as a female medical professional in the eyes of doctors and the whole *polis* comes from a combination of using masculinized language to engage in medical discourse and feminine self-representation to expand the ideal of a "respectable woman." Phanostrate's funerary monument is the first look into how female healers legitimized themselves in the

[1] *Iatros* is the masculine form, translated as "physician" and *iatrina* is the feminine form of the same word.

professional medical world, and so using her as a model, we can better understand the evolving world of professionalized medicine.

Chapter 1: Evidence of the First Professional Female Healer

In this first chapter, I examine two pieces of evidence of Phanostrate's existence and what they tell us about her and her life. First, I look at her funerary monument (Figure 2) and establish a description of the relief panel and inscription, as well as offer some basic information about Phanostrate that can be gleaned from the stele. Then, I review a second inscription on a statue base that was found in the Asklepion of Athens; it was recently established as another dedication to Phanostrate. Using these objects, we can ask and attempt to answer some of the questions that arise. Although information about Phanostrate is limited, using her funerary stele and the statue base, we can create a narrative of who she was and how she may have wanted the world to view her.

Figure 1: Map of Attica.[2]

[2] Bernard Suzanne, "Map of Attica in Socrates and Plato's Time," map, Plato and His Dialogues, https://www.plato-dialogues.org/tools/attica.htm.

PHANOSTRATE'S FUNERARY STELE

The object itself is a funerary monument (also referred to as a grave stele), which is partially damaged. It is 0.61 meters tall and 0.39 meters wide and is dated to mid-fourth century BCE. It was found in Menidi, Attica, now known as Acharnes, and formally known as the ancient deme of Acharnae (Figure 1). It was the largest deme in Attica in the fourth century BCE and was about seven miles north of Athens and Melite. The stele is currently located in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (no. 903).

Label

At the top of the stele, the first five characters of a name are clearly identifiable: Φανοσ. The rest of the name is reconstructed as Φανοστράτη (Phanostrate) from the full version of the name that appears in the label and verse epigram. In the following line, only the word Μεḷιτέως is known. The rest of the stele is damaged. Μεḷιτέως is an adjective in the genitive, meaning "of Melite." Most likely, it refers to the man who was responsible for Phanostrate—her father, husband, or slaveholder. Μεḷιτέως is Daux's reconstruction from the first two characters Με-; this reading is commonly used in scholarship discussing Phanostrate and her citizenship status. However, in the book, *Immigrant Women in Athens*, Rebecca Futo Kennedy suggests alternate forms (Μελιταίς, Μελιταιέως, or Μιλησια), which would change the word's significance.[3] Kennedy's reading lends credence to the interpretation of Phanostrate being a metic, and it would also express a form of independence that is not commonly seen on the gravestones of Attic women in the fourth century.

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[3] Kennedy, Rebecca Futo, "Working Women, Not 'Working Girls,'" in *Immigrant Women in Athens: Gender, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Classical City* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 141-143, digital file.

Figure 2: Phanostrate's Funerary Monument.[4]

Directly above the relief panel, there are two names, Ἀντιφίλη (Antiphile) and Φανοστράτη (Phanostrate), which were established by Daux in 1972. The previous reading by Clairmont in 1970 not only labelled both women in the relief as Phanostrate, but also identified the standing woman as the midwife and the seated woman as the patron. Daux updated the text to reflect the name Antiphile, which labels the standing woman, and the name Phanostrate, which labels the seated woman. The subject of the funerary monument is, in fact, the seated woman and not the standing woman. Daux's reading is the most commonly used in recent scholarship, but Clairmont's reading had a great impact on how people interpreted Phanostrate's monument for the next few decades.

Relief Panel

The relief is set in a square frame with rounded edges, which separates it from the inscription. There are six figures in total: two women and four children of varying ages.

On the left side of the relief, there is a standing woman who has a veil placed over her head and is resting her left elbow on top of her right forearm. Above the relief, she is labelled as Ἀντιφίλη (Antiphile). Her right leg is bent slightly at the knee, so that the foot (or its impression against her clothes) is visible; that same leg is outlined through her "skirt." She is wearing a long dress (depicted with the thin stripes) underneath a cloak, which is tucked partially under her right arm but leaves both forearms visible. Her hair, under a veil, is not visible and her facial features may have been more detailed at the time of the stone's creation but are currently eroded. Her right hand is gripping the hand of the seated woman.

On the right side of the relief, the seated woman holds the hand of the standing woman with her right hand. Above the relief, she is labeled as Φανοστράτη (Phanostrate). Her left arm is

[4] Thank you to the National Archaeological Museum of Athens for allowing me to use this image of the stele in this project.

resting on her lap. Her left ankle is crossed over the right one, and her feet are slightly elevated on a platform (which is attached/next to the chair). The impression of her left leg is seen through her skirt. She is wearing similar clothing to the other woman (including the detail that her cloak is pulled over her right shoulder and tucked underneath that elbow), but she does not have a veil. Her hair is braided and pulled into a style off her neck. Her facial features are slightly more detailed than those of the standing woman, but still primarily outlines. She is leaning against the back of the chair but is sitting up straight.

Behind the chair, on the far right of the relief, a young girl is reaching her right hand up. It is difficult to say whether she is reaching towards the sitting woman or pointing at the standing woman. Most of her face is visible, but because the stele is damaged at the upper right half of her body, that side is difficult to make out (including what her hairstyle is and what her left arm looks like). She is wearing a long dress, similar to those of the older women. She is about as tall as the standing woman's leg.

Underneath the chair, directly between two of the legs, there is a small child (the smallest of the four). Its gender is not immediately clear. Its left arm is hanging down and its right arm is reaching up, again either towards the seated or standing woman (it is unclear which one). It seems to be wearing a long garment.

In between both women, another small girl is facing the standing woman. She is the third largest child, a little bit taller than the standing woman's knee. Her hair seems to be pulled up off her neck, like the sitting woman's hair. It is not clear what position her arms are in.

All the way to the left of the stele, the tallest child is placed behind the standing woman. She is as tall as the hip of the standing woman. Her right arm hangs down (bent slightly at the

elbow), and her right hand is pulled up toward her ribcage. She also has a similar hairstyle as the seated woman and is wearing similar clothing to the other children.

Although the roles of both Antiphile and the children are uncertain, there are a few common theories that attempt to explain their presence on the monument. Antiphile is often thought to be a client or patron of Phanostrate, and sometimes the one who erected the funerary monument.[5] The children, in general, are often interpreted as symbols of Phanostrate's profession as a midwife or occasionally, as representatives of Phanostrate's work as a pediatrician.[6] Further interpretations of the relief will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Epigram

μαῖα καὶ ἰατρὸς Φανοστράτη ἐνθάδε κεῖται,	Midwife and doctor Phanostrate rests here,
[ο]ὐθενὶ λυπη⟨ρ⟩ά, πᾶσιν δὲ θανοῦσα ποθεινή.	has caused pain to no one, and having died, is missed by all.

Underneath the relief panel, two lines of Greek hexameter verse detail who the stele is for (Φανοστράτη : Phanostrate) and for what purpose (funerary). The text was first established by Christof Clairmont in 1970; I am using the updated text, which was established by Georges Daux in 1972. The lines of the epigram are generally readable and have no significant difficulties for reconstruction or interpretation (unlike the label at the top of the stele). Phanostrate is described as a μαῖα καὶ ἰατρὸς ("midwife and doctor/physician"). The words ἐνθάδε κεῖται ("rests here") indicate that her resting place is in the same location as the monument. She is said to have οὐθενὶ λυπηρά ("caused pain to no-one"). The participle θανοῦσα confirms that Phanostrate died, and after her death, she is πᾶσιν ποθεινή ("missed by all").

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[5] References to Antiphile: Clairmont 1970 ('mistress'), Kosmopoulou 2001 ('the erection of the gravestone by Antiphile, a wealthy patroness'), Laes 2011 ('a metic and wealthy patroness, who erected Phanostrate's gravestone'), Castelli and Rothstein 2019 ('client'), Bielman Sanchez 2008 ('patiente'), Daux 1972 (concludes we don't know who she was).

[6] References to the children: Kosmopoulou 2001 and Laes 2011 ('the children are the offspring of Antiphile, whom she helped to give birth'), Sánchez Bielman 2008 (the children were signs of Phanostrate working as a pediatrician).

At first glance, the stele appears to be an elaborate, large gravestone complete with a relief that depicts a scene typical of Athenian grave monuments. However, with the addition of the epigram, we know that she worked as both a μαῖα and an ἰατρὸς and that changes how we view the relief and the relationships between the people on it. Trying to understand Phanostrate's relationships and the subtext of her funerary monument presents opportunities to learn how she either viewed herself or wanted to be remembered. Also, this is the most concrete evidence of Phanostrate's existence and secures her position as the first known professional female physician. Although the next object offers significantly less content to examine, merely by existing it expands that perspective to Phanostrate's community and how they viewed her.

Figure 3: Current restoration of the Asklepieion in Athens.[7]

STATUE DEDICATION TO PHANOSTRATE

In this section, we are analyzing the second object that mentions a female healer named Phanostrate. It is important to remember that the object is in a different location, although still in

[7] Davide Mauro, *Asclepieion at 2018*, April 18, 2018, photograph, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Asclepieion_(Athens)_01.jpg.

Athens, and has a different type of inscription than the first. As of 2017, the object has been attributed to the same Phanostrate that we have been discussing.

On the base of a statue, which is now lost, there is a dedicatory inscription. It was found in the Asklepieion, on the south slope of the Acropolis in Athens (Figure 3). An Asklepieion was a temple created for the god of healing, Asklepios, and was a place of worship for those who either devoted their lives to him or believed they were healed by his hand. The statue base is dated to mid-fourth century BCE. It is currently located at the Epigraphical Museum in Athens (no. 9007).

Φανοστράτη – – –?– – –
vacat 0,021
Δηλοφάνης ἀνέθηκε Χο[λαργεὺς εἰκόνα τήνδε], /
τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς Δ[¯ ˘ ˘ εὐξαμένης]· /
Λυσιμάχηι γὰρ μητρὶ ˘ ¯ ˘ ˘ ¯ ˘ ˘ ¯ ˘ /
χεῖρα μέγας σωτὴρ ¯ ˘ ˘ ¯ ˘ ˘ ¯ ,
vacat 0,03
ἐπὶ Πατ[αίκου ἱερέως].[8]

Phanostrate [. . . ?]

Delophanes of Cholargos dedicated [this likeness]
his own daughter D- [having vowed it]
for on [her?] mother Lysimache . . .
[you laid your?] hand, great saviour . . .

In the priesthood of Pat[aikos].[9]

At the top of the dedication, the name Φανοστράτη (Phanostrate) is read. When reviewing this inscription, I use Jaime Curbera's revised edition for *IG* II^3 from 2017, which changed the longstanding reading of this name from Φανόστρατος (Phanostratos) to the feminine form, Φανοστράτη. The eighth character seems to be the most contested in determining the

[8] *IG* II^3 4 700; Text established by Jaime Curbera in 2017.
[9] Translation by Stephen Lambert.

name. While Curbera is confident that the character is η (*eta*), a previous interpretation writes the character as ο (*omicron*), hence the restoration: Φανόστρατος. This dedication was not attributed to a woman named Phanostrate until the recent update, and Curbera also notes that the name likely refers to the same Phanostrate from the funerary monument, IG II^2 6873.

The following line confirms that the person who commissioned the statue was Δηλοφάνης Χο-, which was restored as Delophanes of Cholargos. Cholargos is a deme about four miles northwest of Athens. Curbera also added εἰκόνα τήνδε to the text for this inscription, rounding out the line to say that "Delophanes dedicated this likeness," implying that the statue was in the image of Phanostrate.[10]

In the next line, the inscription confirms that Delophanes had a daughter (τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς) whose name starts with Δ (*delta*); unfortunately, the inscription is too damaged to understand the rest of the name. Curbera adds εὐξαμένης to the inscription, and so the dedication began with a vow from Δ- that her mother, Λυσιμάχη (Lysimache), was healed by "the hand of the great savior" (χεῖρα μέγας σωτὴρ). Based on both the location of the statue and his role in healing, Asklepios is quite clearly the "great savior." The last line of the inscription was restored by Curbera as ἐπὶ Παταίκου ἱερέως ("in the priesthood of Pataikos"), which helps date this inscription to before 343 BCE.[11]

Although the statue itself is lost and the inscription is damaged, its existence is important for understanding the extent of Phanostrate's medical practice. Both the statue inscription and the funerary monument were in public locations where people could visit and witness Phanostrate's significance in her community. Plus, having a statue dedication in the Asklepieion was a rare and

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[10] Both Totelin in "Do No Harm…" ("The name of the person represented…") and Lambert on the AIO website ("… this dedication of a statue of her…") say that the missing statue is Phanostrate's image.

[11] Sara B. Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion: The People, Their Dedications, and the Inventories* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1989), 126.

high honor for medical practitioners. The second object is proof that female healers were respected and even though only a few names are known, their contributions to the professional sector of medicine were appreciated.

CONCLUSION

Although it is easy to treat the stele and statue base as separate entities, for the sake of understanding Phanostrate, we must view them as two chapters of one narrative. Together, the objects present a much more complete picture of Phanostrate's role in her community. Since the funerary monument provides the most information about Phanostrate, it is the most discussed object of this project, but it was likely created after the statue base. While the funerary monument introduces us to Phanostrate as a healer and a beloved member of her community after her death, the statue base reinforces that people held this sentiment during her lifetime. These objects provide the only inscriptional evidence we have for professional female healers in fourth century Athens, and so they are the closest we get to a voice for these women. Throughout the second chapter, I will piece together information from these two objects and the general information that is known about ancient female healers to create a fleshed-out narrative of Phanostrate's medical practice.

Chapter Two: Phanostrate's Work as a μαῖα and ἰατρός

Throughout this chapter, I examine the ancient medical world and the roles of female healers within it, in an attempt to understand the work of Phanostrate as a μαῖα and ἰατρός. I first establish a framework which we will use to separate professional healing from other types, such as religious healing. Then, I briefly discuss the state of female healers in ancient Athens, and how their work was often underrepresented. The following two sections detail the work of μαῖαι and ἰατροί; using inscriptional and textual references, I outline the history of these women, their tasks, and their clientele. In doing so, I determine some of the differences and similarities between the two professions and begin to ponder why Phanostrate might have used both words.

THREE SECTORS OF HEALING

In this section, I discuss a key framework that distinguishes three different sectors of healing: popular, professional, and folk. In *Women Healing/Healing Women*, Elaine Mary Wainwright adapts Arthur Kleinman's 'Inner Structure of Health Care Systems' from his book *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*, to the ancient medical world.[12] Popular healing is both the most common type and the one with least surviving evidence due to its setting in the home and with family members; it was where women practiced healing the most and first identified and treated injuries and diseases.[13] By contrast, professional healing, although the smallest percentage of all healing, was well-documented and dominated by trained male physicians.[14] The folk sector of healing is associated with a blend of religion, magic, and medicine, and it consisted

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[12] Arthur K. Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 12th ed. (Berkeley (Calif.): University of California Press, 2008), 49-60.
[13] Elaine Mary Wainwright, *Women Healing/healing Women: The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity* (London: Equinox Pub., 2006), 35, digital file.
[14] *Ibid.*

mostly of women healers.[15] The focus of this project is on women in the professional sector who are vastly underrepresented and of whom Phanostrate is a striking and unusual example. But since there is so little known about Phanostrate's practice, it is important to review the folk and popular sectors of medicine for more possibilities and a greater understanding of the social climate for female healers; her work likely overlapped with these other sectors as well.

How do we define professional healing and how does our definition differ from Kleinman's? His introduction to professional healing says that it is "comprising the organized healing professions. In most societies, this is simply modern scientific medicine."[16] 'Modern scientific medicine' in fourth century Athens would likely have been the information found in the Hippocratic Corpus practiced by *iatros*. Often, these physicians practiced for a fee and were focused on healing through an understanding of the body's anatomy and a patient's indiviuality.[17] Kleinman claims that "the professional sector requires that its form of clinical reality be accepted as the only legitimate clinical reality," which may be accurate for his argument.[18] However, in ancient Athens, professional practitioners worked closely with religious healing cults, which would typically fall into the folk sector of medicine. In some ways, ancient professional healing separates itself from the traditional and religious healing methods, but they also benefit from their existence.[19]

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[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 53.

[17] Vivian Nutton, "Medicine," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome*, by Edward Bispham, Thomas J. Harrison, and Brian A. Sparkes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 424, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g0b03m.60.

[18] Kleinman, *Patients and Healers*, 58.

[19] Chapter 3 will discuss the intersection between religious and professional healing further.

THE STATE OF FEMALE HEALERS IN FOURTH-CENTURY ATHENS

The earliest inscriptional and textual references to female healers are best described as sparse and lacking detail, and the lack of information on this type of healing makes it difficult to track healing women before the fourth century BCE. While popular healing took place regularly in the home, household women rarely recorded these moments, unlike physicians in the professional sector. Even the history of midwifery is reliant on information from later centuries (that is, later than Phanostrate). There are a few mentions of the word *maia*, but it was often in passing with no definitive information about their work and role.[20]

The first mention of female healing is in Homer's *Iliad*. The epic shows a woman acting in the popular sector—for example, Hecamede healing soldiers.[21] A common thread in the first few centuries of female healing is how rarely these women are given specific titles; more often, they were described with participles describing actions like "touching" or "feeling" rather than being given professional titles like *maia* or *iatros*.[22] Hecamede may have been performing acts of healing, but not professionally or at the same level of an *iatros*.

By the time Phanostrate was active, professional healing was developing into a regular practice; however, women were still often not visible. The Hippocratic Corpus occasionally mentions midwives (*omphalatomos*) and female aides who would do physical exams on women with instructions from the *iatros*.[23] Plato discusses the work of a *maia* as a metaphor for his work as a philosopher.[24] The two dedicatory objects associated with Phanostrate are the most concrete evidence we have for working women in the medical field in fourth-century Athens, and they are

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[20] For a selection of these mentions, refer to the appendix: The Language of Healing Women.
[21] Homer, *Iliad*. She appears first in Book XI, lines 638-641 and several times throughout Book XI, and then again in Book XIV.
[22] I will discuss these references later on.
[23] Hp.*Mul.*1.21.
[24] Pl.*Tht.*149a.

the only pieces of inscriptional evidence about female medics for the following two centuries. This is one reason why Phanostrate is so significant: she stands as a representative of the hard work of female healers and marks a grand transition of healing women from the shadows into the recognized, professional field. Female healers, midwives, and physicians were indispensable; without their efforts, other women would have rarely been seen and often misunderstood due to their discomfort with men and male physicians.[25] Women in the professional sector allowed for more trust in the medical system, as demonstrated by the statue base inscription for Phanostrate, where her client's gratitude is clearly expressed.

THEORIES OF PHANOSTRATE'S PROFESSION

In the epigram on Phanostrate's funerary monument, her profession is mentioned in the first three words: μαῖα καὶ ἰατρὸς. This assertion of her work is unique. The words μαῖα and ἰατρός are used together to describe only Phanostrate in the historical record, and the phrase opens up an inquiry into what ἰατρός could mean when describing female physicians. Although there is not much information available about μαῖα specifically from fourth century BCE, using medical texts from the second century CE[26] and brief mentions in the Hippocratic Corpus as well as Plato's *Theaetetus*, it is possible to piece together the typical work of midwives, and so a part of Phanostrate's work. Complications arise when determining the work of an ἰατρός. Texts, such as the Hippocratic Corpus cover the work of male ἰατρός extensively, but because of gender inequalities, understanding how this word applied to women is a difficult task.

To better understand these gender dynamics, and more specifically the role and persona of Phanostrate, it is important to parse out differences between μαῖα and ἰατρός. While her work

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[25] King, Helen. *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge, 1998: 171.
[26] Soranus' *Gynaecology* and select texts from Galen's corpus.

as a μαῖα is well agreed upon by scholars, there is room for debate about what ἰατρός actually means. The most common theory is that she was trained in gynecology and so was able to aid in her clients' gynecological problems as well as work with them throughout pregnancy and childbirth. Scholars also believe that she could have been a fully trained ἰατρός, capable of healing any medical issue that was typical for an ἰατρός to heal. Due to the children surrounding her on the stele's relief, some scholars thought that she was a pediatrician; however, this theory is significantly less common in modern scholarship. The next two sections aim to determine Phanostrate's work and the difference between the two terms, μαῖα and ἰατρός, using the two objects that were examined in Chapter One, as well as other contextual information.

ΜΑΪΑ: THE PROFESSION DESIGNED FOR WOMEN

To start, I will outline a brief word-history of μαῖα and then discuss the tasks that are required of these women. The word-history below focuses on three ancient texts in which the word is especially important and illuminating: Plato's *Theaetetus*, various passages found in the Hippocratic Corpus, and Soranus' *Gynecology*. It is important to acknowledge that all of the observed texts are limited by their authorship because the writer was projecting the experience of a man onto a woman.[27] For the purpose of this inquiry, our attempts at better understanding women and specifically female healers in the ancient world will be mostly through the perspective of men. The closest we get to the voices of women is on their gravestones, so I also review the other known μαῖα in this era and another from the first century BCE. To help build a complete picture, I reference research done by other classicists who offer broad overviews of female healers of the ancient world.

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[27] Hanson, Ann Ellis. "THE MEDICAL WRITERS' WOMAN." In *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by Halperin David M., Winkler John J., and Zeitlin Froma I. PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY: Princeton University Press, 1990: 314.

By far, μαῖα is the most common word associated with female healers in Ancient Greece, which, in a medical context, means "midwife," "deliverer," or "lady doctor." It also has a broad array of alternative meanings, including "mother," "grandmother," "foster mother," and "wetnurse," among others.[28] The context for each use of μαῖα especially matters because of how many meanings this word can have. All of them ultimately seem to hint towards a women's role in caring for children, whether that means being the mother, the deliverer, the caretaker, or the wet nurse. The earliest uses of μαῖα began around the 8th century BCE to broadly mean "nurturer" or as a term of respect for older women. Its use extended well into Late Antiquity in medical and fictional texts. Most notably, authors used it to mean "midwife" starting around the 4th century BCE in passing references in non-medical texts and inscriptions. It was not until the 2nd century CE that Soranus discussed midwives and their role in the medical community extensively in his *Gynecology*. Before that point, many other poets, playwrights, and authors employed μαῖα with its full range of meanings.

In the 4th century BCE, Plato uses various forms of μαῖα in a dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, in which Socrates compares his work as a philosopher to the work of his mother as a midwife: "You've not heard that I'm the son of a midwife? A very fine and muscular one, too: Phaenarete?"[29] Later in that section, Socrates briefly describes the characteristics needed to become a midwife, as well as some of their tasks in assisting births.[30] He also draws parallels between a midwife's ability to assist women in childbirth and a philosopher's ability to help men in mental anguish.[31] Using Plato's dialogue, we can cross reference the traits and tasks with the

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[28] *LSJ*, s.v. "μαῖα"
[29] Pl.*Tht.*149a; "εἶτα, ὦ καταγέλαστε, οὐκ ἀκήκοας ὡς ἐγώ εἰμι ὑὸς μαίας μάλα γενναίας τε καὶ βλοσυρᾶς, Φαιναρέτης;"
[30] Pl.*Tht.*149b-d.
[31] Ibid.,150b.

other primary texts to create a picture of what midwifery looked like in the fourth-century BCE specifically.

Given the word's use as a term for a female medical practitioner in Plato and inscriptional texts such as Phanostrate's *stele*, the lack of this word in the Hippocratic Corpus is significant. As we will see with other Greek terms in this chapter, the Corpus rarely acknowledges female healers formally, instead using participles and calling them ἐσαφάσσουσα— "a woman who is touching/feeling." In Chapter 8 of *Hippocrates' Woman*, Helen King states that women were rarely allowed to work with male patients because of how unnatural it seemed to the Greeks.[32] As a result, they are not acknowledged in the Hippocratic Corpus with any detail beyond their occasional help with treating female bodies. Another possibility for the word's absence in the Corpus is that the broad range of meanings for μαῖα made it less of an official title in medicine and instead a casual one assigned to mothers and other regular caregivers. A final reason could be that discussions of female healers and midwives tended to be more often spoken rather than written; in that case, the evidence of inscriptions that use μαῖα to mean "midwife," is helpful, since they allow us more of an insight into non-literary language.

However, later medical writers do use the word μαῖα. In contrast to the Hippocratic Corpus, the medical writer Soranus uses μαῖα almost exclusively in his discussion of midwives several centuries later. In the 2nd century CE, he wrote *Gynecology*, in which he discusses women's bodies, how they function, how pregnancy and childbirth work, the nature of different diseases, and also the role of midwives and the requirements to gain that title.[33] The primary

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[32] King, Helen. *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge, 1998: 171.
[33] See *Soranus' gynecology* for a full translation by Owsei Temkin.

purpose of the text was to aid midwives in their caring for other women, which was indeed successful, as midwives used *Gynecology* as a textbook for centuries after its creation.[34] He references μαῖα thirty times throughout his work, mainly within the first book. For instance, he writes μαῖα in the first two section titles, "What persons are fit to become midwives"[35] and "Who are the best midwives."[36] Those two sections, in particular, are of great relevance for our examination of women in the ancient medical world, and so Soranus' *Gynecology* will be discussed next while determining who could become a μαῖα.

When we consider who could become a μαῖα, Soranus provides detailed evidence, but it differs from what we find in Plato's *Theaetetus.* While Plato claims that midwives were usually women past childbearing age who have given birth before, the evidence from the later medical writer speaks contrary to that, primarily in the first two sections of Soranus' *Gynecology*.

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates makes it clear that only women who were no longer able to conceive children would become midwives: "I imagine you know that none of them acts as midwife to others while she is still conceiving and bearing children herself, only when she's no longer capable of doing so."[37] This is because of the goddess Artemis who was childless; rather than assigning the task to infertile women, she gave it to women with experience. However, he offers no other reasoning for this statement or even any examples of midwives like Phaenarete, his mother. This is also the only qualification that Plato writes about, whereas Soranus extensively discusses the qualifications and temperament needed to become a *maia*.

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[34] Retief, FP, and L. Cilliers, "The Healing Hand": 171.
[35] Sor.Gyn.II.4; Τίς ἐστιν ἐπιτήδειος πρὸς τὸ γενέσθαι μαῖα
[36] Ibid., 5; Τίς ἀρίστη μαῖα
[37] Pl.*Tht.*149b.

In the first section of his gynecological treatise, "What Persons Are Fit to Become Midwives?", Soranus establishes the basic qualities that a woman needs to receive training "to prevent fruitless work." His standards are that:

> "A suitable person will be literate, with her wits about her, possessed of a good memory, loving work, respectable and generally not unduly handicapped as regards her senses, sound of limb, robust, and according to some people, endowed with long slim fingers and short nails at her fingertips."[38]

Following the list, he provides reasoning for each quality and physical attribute. However, this first section only offers a small assessment of qualities; the second section goes into detail about the ideal *maia*.

In "Who Are the Best Midwives?", Soranus addresses that the point of this chapter is to outline the best midwife, so that "the best may recognize themselves, and… beginners may look upon them as models, and the public in time of need may know whom to summon."[39] Although she may be "faultless," a midwife who merely completes her work is not the best, instead, it is a woman who goes above and beyond in both her knowledge and effort. Soranus says that she is the best "if she is trained in all branches of therapy" and able to use all of that knowledge to prescribe accurate, helpful, individualized treatments. The ideal *maia* must be unshakeable, communicative, patient, and sympathetic. In direct contrast to Plato's statement, Soranus writes that: "it is not absolutely essential for her to have borne children, as some people contend, in order that she may sympathize with the mother, because of her experience with pain; for <to have sympathy> is <not> more characteristic of a person who has given birth to a child." In the

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[38] Soranos d'Éphèse., *Soranus' Gynecology*, 5.

[39] All of the references in this paragraph come from: Soranos d'Éphèse., *Soranus' Gynecology*, 6.

second century CE, people believed that a midwife must be young because they are strong, but Soranus instead offers that youth does not lend itself to strength and agedness does not imply weakness, and so age does not matter, but a *maia* must still be "robust." Finally, he says that the best *maia* need to have a "quiet disposition," cannot be greedy, and need soft hands (for the comfort of her clients).

Ultimately, anybody could practice as a *maia*; there was no certification process, and so the best midwives were the ones with positive reputations in their communities. Midwifery started within the family; mothers and sisters usually aided their pregnant kin in the birthing process. Sometimes a knowledgeable woman from their town or village would help, and that was the closest thing to professional midwifery in the ancient world. The fourth century BCE brought about the introduction of formal medical texts and along with it, medical professionals. This newfound practice of analytical and experimental medical work was in the pursuit of understanding not just male bodies, but female bodies as well. However, the new interest in gynecology combined with the modesty of ancient women meant that a male *iatros* was rarely allowed to touch them to conduct their analyses, and so a door opened for a *maia* to practice professionally as well.

Phanostrate and Phaenarete, then, are just two examples of what is likely a longer list of women who were *maia* at the time. The Hippocratic Corpus references midwives in general (τὰς ἀκεστρίδας) as authorities on birth in *Fleshes*, which means that there were more than two practicing midwives in fourth century Athens.[40] That also means that we cannot use Phaenarete and Phanostrate as the only examples of the typical midwife. Although Socrates may have some experience with the expertise of midwives because of his mother, she was one among many.

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[40] Hp.*Carn*.19.

Plato was not a medical authority and was using this information in the context of Socrates' argument, not to convey factual information to teach the reader about the role of a *maia* or to teach other midwives. Soranus may have been writing centuries after Phanostrate's time, but his information is more detailed and likely closer to the truth than Socrates because his goal was to educate women and help them to be the best *maia* that they could be. With a better understanding of who could become a practicing *maia* in fourth century BCE, we can now discuss their knowledge and skills.

Once again, we are starting with Plato; in *Theaetetus*, Socrates briefly addresses what a *maia*'s capabilities and typical tasks are. He mentions that a midwife is able to tell when other women are pregnant and also that they are skilled matchmakers (but they choose not to practice that skill).[41] They aid other women throughout pregnancy and during birth, including being able to make birth pains gentler or bring them on through drugs and incantations. They are also able to induce the birth when women are experiencing complications and can even cause miscarriages in the early stages of pregnancy. The last thing that Socrates mentions is that they cut umbilical cords, which is expected for a midwife.[42] Plato shares only these things about midwives, most of which can be confirmed by other texts from the time such as the Hippocratic Corpus or from later periods like Soranus' *Gynecology*.

Although the Hippocratic Corpus does not use the term *maia* and female healers are rarely discussed, there are still a few mentions that corroborate and add to the information that Socrates shares about the expected tasks of a midwife. One of these references comes from *Fleshes* 19. The author of this section discusses how fetuses and children operate on a sevenfold

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[41] Pl.*Tht*.149c-d.
[42] *Ibid*., 149d.

pattern, including the possibility of a child being born within seven months. The reference to midwives stems from the author telling his readers that: "If anyone wishes proof, the matter is easy: let him go to the midwives (τὰς ἀκεστρίδας) that attend women who are giving birth and ask them."[43] Unfortunately, it does not offer any specific information about their roles in assisting births. However, the author does imply that midwives are both knowledgeable and trustworthy enough for people to learn certain information from them, and that they did attend births. The next mention uses the term ὀμφαλητόμος once in *Diseases of Women*, and in contrast to its use of ἀκεστρίς, the author mentions a potential ignorance by midwives: "… or the midwife [ὀμφαλητόμος] through ignorance trims the child's umbilical cord before the placenta has been expelled from the uterus."[44] This comment provides some valuable information about a midwife's role and potential knowledge, specifically in knowing when to cut an umbilical cord, as implied by the very term for her job, ὀμφαλητόμος, which literally means "cutter of the navel-string."[45] If a midwife does not have this knowledge, then she could trim the cord too early and create health problems for the mother or child. However, the Hippocratic Corpus only offers a small sample of what midwives were expected to know, in contrast to what we see in Soranus' *Gynecology*.

By the time Soranus was writing in the second century CE, midwifery was a formal professional practice, and so his text was aimed at helping women to understand a myriad of situations that occur before, during, and after childbirth.[46] His *Gynecology* covers a range of topics including basic female anatomy, conception, abortion, expectations during labor, caring

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[43] Hp.Carn.19; εἰ δέ τις βούλεται καὶ τοῦτο ἐλέγξαι, ῥηΐδιον· πρὸς τὰς ἀκεστρίδας αἳ πάρεισι τῇσι τικτούσῃσιν ἐλθὼν πυθέσθω.

[44] Hp.Mul.46; ἢν ῥαγῇ βίῃ ὁ ὀμφαλὸς ἢ ἀμαθίῃ ὑποτάμῃ ἡ ὀμφαλητόμος τὸν ὀμφαλὸν τοῦ παιδίου πρόσθεν ἢ τὸ χορίον ἐξιέναι ἐκ τῶν μητρέων

[45] Refer to the appendix, "The Language of Healing Women," for a word-history of ὀμφαλητόμος.

[46] All references in this paragraph are from Soranus' *Gynecology*, 5-6.

for a newborn baby, infertility, and various uterine issues. As stated in "Who are the best midwives?", Soranus recommends that a midwife "is trained in all branches of therapy," so although the information about midwives in the fourth century BCE is limited, it is possible that any of the knowledge within his *Gynecology* was available to a *maia* during this later period. With Soranus' statement that *maia* were trained not just in aiding childbirth, but also in gynecology and childrearing, we have a fuller picture of a professional *maia*'s skillset, and also her clientele. Every reference of or inscription about a *maia* healing someone involved another woman or a baby. Plus, Soranus' primary mentions of men relate to their semen and conception, and not in regards to healing them. He also provides a timeframe for when a midwife would be expected to help a pregnant woman—starting at or before conception until the baby is able to walk at the latest. Soranus offers up a variety of predicaments and solutions, such as selecting a wet nurse, how to care for the infant, and what to do if the baby falls ill. While a *maia* is typically considered to have fewer skills or knowledge than an *iatros*, it is clear that they can still boast of a complex practice.

With more information about a *maia*—her traits, abilities, and clientele—, then we can better understand one-half of Phanostrate's work. However, given that the richest sources date to much later, it is still difficult to create a concrete picture. Based on what we know, Phanostrate was a *maia* who was trained through an apprenticeship to determine whether or not a woman is pregnant, to create recipes and routines for healing and making the pregnancy less painful, to deliver a baby, and to induce an abortion if needed. She was also highly praised by her community, as evidenced by the dedication set up in the temple of Asclepius. We do not know how old she was when she began her training, nor if she had children of her own, but we do know that she received training not just as a *maia*, but also as an *iatros*. In the next section, I

describe the other half of Phanostrate's title, *iatros*, and the women called *iatrina* who were often excluded from discussions of medicine in the fourth century BCE.

AGNODIKE, THE OTHER FIRST FEMALE IATROS

As established by over a hundred years of scholarship on ancient medicine and epigraphy, Phanostrate was the first known professional female *iatros* in the Greek world. Her story, although missing many details, has been significant in the discussion of ancient women in medicine not only because of her existence, but also the high praise she received from her community. Phanostrate seemed to be an outlier in her time; while it was not uncommon for women to work as *maia* (as we saw in the discussion above), having the title of *iatros* as a woman is unheard of. The only other instance of a woman acting as a *iatros* in fourth-century Athens appears in one of Hyginus' *Fabulae*, in the story of Agnodike.[47] Agnodike was a young woman who dressed as a man in order to study and practice medicine—an art that was illegal for women to practice at the time. Hyginus wrote about her journey to gaining the trust of her female patients and eventually inspiring a change in Athenian law. This section of my chapter is structured around Agnodike's story to best illustrate the possibilities of the roles *iatros* and *iatrina* (the feminine form of this noun) for Athenian women in the fourth century. Since most of our information about female physicians comes from nearly six centuries after Phanostrate's time, during the reign of the Roman Empire, Agnodike is the closest thing we have to evidence of other practicing women in the professional sector. First, I discuss Hyginus and other pertinent context that should be considered when reading about Agnodike, and then, I include the Latin text and the English translation of this *Fabula*.

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[47] She practiced in the late fourth and early third centuries. (Helen King, "Agnodike and the Profession of Medicine," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, n.s., 32 (1986): 54, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44696917.)

In her article "Agnodike and the Profession of Medicine," Helen King outlines several complications that need to be taken into account when attempting to differentiate between the fiction and reality of fourth century Athens in Hyginus' tale. Although there is dispute about Hyginus' identity,[48] I leave that aside for the purpose of this paper. However, the preservation and historical accuracy of his text brings some issues to our attention. For one, the surviving text is in Latin, but Hyginus is believed to have written in Greek originally, so many of the awkward grammatical structures are attributed to that translation. The two remaining Latin manuscripts by ps.-Dositheus and Jacobus Micyllus have many discrepancies, but ultimately the one by ps.-Dositheus seems most accurate to the original Greek text.[49] King also mentions that there is ~~heated~~ debate among scholars about the state of medicine in Athens, which I discuss later in this section. Lefkowitz and Fant, before their translation of the passage in their sourcebook on ancient women, add that "the name Hagnodice ('chaste by judgement') was coined to fit the story."[50] Thus, they suggest that she may not have been a historical figure. Both King and Lefkowitz and Fant mention that the doctor who trained Agnodike, Herophilos, was a real historical figure, Herophilos of Chalcedon. But Hyginus' representation of him is likely fictional: he practiced in Alexandria, not Athens. While his study of gynecology would have made him a perfect fit to train Agnodike, "*his* reality does not prove hers."[51]

With all of this information in mind, here is the story of Agnodike, as told by Hyginus:

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[48] Christian James Fordyce and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "Hyginus (3)," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., by Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-3188.

[49] "Ps.-Dositheus, some papyrus fragments, and passages preserved in the twelfth century Arnulf of Orleans all show that the manuscript used by Micyllus was a very bad one, with abridgements, gaps, and also some repetition, suggesting interpolations in the fourth or fifth century. The lists at the end of the work - of which 274 is one example - are in a particularly poor condition, and are under suspicion as being later than the rest of the text" (King 54-5).

[50] Lefkowitz and Fant, "IX. Medicine," 342-343.

[51] Helen King, "Agnodike and the Profession of Medicine," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, n.s., 32 (1986): 54, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44696917.

antiqui obstetrices non habuerunt, unde mulieres uerecundia ductae interferant. nam Athenienses cauerunt ne quis seruus aut femina artem medicinam disceret. Agnodice quaedam puella uirgo concupiuit medicinam discere, quae cum concupisset, demptis capillis habitu uirili se Herophilo cuidam tradidit in disciplinam, quae cum artem didicisset, et feminam laborantem audisset ab inferiore parte, ueniebat ad earn, quae cum credere se noluisset, aestimans uirum esse, ilia tunica sublata ostendit se feminam esse, et ita eas curabat. quod cum uidissent medici se ad feminas non admitti, Agnodicen accusare coeperunt, quod dicerent eum glabrum esse et corruptorem earum, et illas simulare imbecillitatem. quod cum Areopagitae consedissent, Agnodicen damnare coeperunt; quibus Agnodice tunicam alleuauit et se ostendit feminam esse, et ualidius medici accusare coeperunt, quare turn feminae principes ad iudicium uenerunt et dixerunt, Vos coniuges non es tis sed hostes, quia quae salutem nobis inuenit eam damnatis. tunc Athenienses legem emendarunt, ut ingenuae artem medicinam discerent.[52] (ed. Rose)

The ancients did not have midwives, so women perished as a result of their modesty, because the Athenians forbade slaves and women to learn the art of medicine. Hagnodice, a certain young woman wanted to learn the art of medicine. Because she was eager to do it, she cut her hair and put on men's clothes and apprenticed herself to study with a certain Hierophilus. After she had learned the art and heard that a woman was in suffering pain in the lower section of her body, she went to her. But when the woman did not want to trust herself to her because she thought she was a man, Hagnodice lifted her tunic and revealed that she was a woman, and so she treated women. When the doctors saw that they were not allowed to treat women, they began to accuse Hagnodice, on the grounds that 'he' was a seducer and corrupter of women and that the women were pretending to be sick. So when the court of the Areopagus was in session they began to accuse Hagnodice. Hagnodice lifted her tunic for them and showed herself to be a woman. And then the doctors began to accuse her more energetically. As a result the leading women came to the court and said: 'You are enemies rather than husbands, because you have condemned the woman who discovered how to save us.' Then the Athenians revised the law so freeborn women could learn the art of medicine.[53]

Agnodike's story provides important insight into the status of *iatros/iatrina*, and in my analysis I follow the narrative as Hyginus presents it. The first piece of context that Hyginus

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[52] Hyg.*Fab*.274.10-13.

[53] Translated in Lefkowitz and Fant, "IX. Medicine," 342-343.

reveals is that it was illegal for women and slaves to study medicine, even as midwives. As previously mentioned, this is heavily disputed. Two common interpretations therefore present themselves: (1) a law was passed that prevented women and slaves from studying medicine and so women protested, or (2) Agnodike was the very first practicing *maia kai iatros*.[54] Based on the word-history for *maia*,[55] it is clear that, while healing women were rarely mentioned, they did exist.[56] If we are treating Hyginus' story as fact, then the most likely interpretation is the first one. However, since it is usually considered a myth and there are no other canonical indications of it being illegal for women to study medicine, we can instead treat that piece of information as Hyginus taking liberties with storytelling.

A key detail from the first sentence is that *antiqui obstetrices non habuerunt*, "the ancients did not have midwives." Although the word initially used to describe female healers in this story is *obstetrices*[57], the descriptions of her healing acts later on prove that the typical English translation, "midwife," is not sufficient in describing the extent of Agnodike's studies. King also notes this word choice as confusing when considering the rest of the story and the phrase *artem medicinam*, "the art of medicine." Then, which type of medicine does Agnodike study and practice? Hyginus's representation of Herophilos may not be historically accurate, but because his historical counterpart founded his own school of medicine, it is likely that Agnodike received training rooted in anatomy, including gynecology.[58] Later in the story, Agnodike hears

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[54] King, "Agnodike and the Profession," 55.

[55] In particular, the existence of Phaenarete and Phanostrate prove that women did practice before Agnodike.

[56] There are several other words for "midwife" as well, including, but not limited to, ἀκεστρίς, ὀμφαλητόμος, and ἰατρόμαια. In fact, ἀκεστρίς, often translated as "healer," was used in the Hippocratic Corpus (discussed above).

[57] *obstetrix* in the singular form. It could also be a translation error; the original Greek may have used *iatros*.

[58] His followers are called Herophilians. He also wrote several medical texts, but they were lost and so the only remaining fragments we have are quotes from Galen's texts. He is known for his study of anatomy, and as mentioned previously, gynecology. For more information about Herophilos, refer to *Herophilus: The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria* by Heinrich von Staden.

of a woman suffering from gynecological problems[59], and so she goes to her, reveals her sex, and heals the woman. Since Agnodike's clients from that point onwards were women, she would be dubbed a "gynecologist" by modern standards. However, she studied "the art of medicine" dressed as a man and so while her clients may have been women, she was likely capable of healing men as well.[60]

Switching our focus back to Phanostrate: if that was the route that Agnodike took to practice medicine, what might Phanostrate's process have been? The Herophiliean and Empiric schools would have been created too late for Phanostrate's introduction to medicine,[61] but the Hippocratic practice would have coincided perfectly with the time frame and might make sense of her connections to the god of healing, Asklepios. Hippocrates was a follower of Asklepios and modeled his school after Asklepios's teachings with the primary focus being on scientific practice rather than magical or religious methods.[62] The founding of Hippocratic medicine also adds context to Phanostrate's statue in the Asklepieion; either Phanostrate or the family she helped were followers of Asklepios. Not only the statue, but also her funerary monument may also link her with Hippocratic practices and dialogues, according to Laurence Totelins in her article, "Do No Harm: Phanostrate's Midwifery Practice." In particular, she says that, "While it

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[59] *ab inferiore parte*, "in her lower body"

[60] Unfortunately, we don't know where Agnodike would have stood in the ancient debate about how to best heal men and women and whether or not genitalia plays a major role in the healing process. However, considering her teacher, Herophilos, it is likely that she held the belief outlined by von Staden, "'There is no disease peculiar to women… because the uterus becomes diseased through the agency of the same things' as any other part of the male or female body, for example by quantitative excesses (of humours?), by 'thickness' or growth, and by disharmony. Despite these reassurances Herophilus had to concede, however, that certain 'affections' are peculiar to women: menstruation, conception, childbirth, breast-feeding, concocting or 'ripening' of the mother's milk, and 'the opposites of these' (i.e. presumably infertility, miscarriage, lack of lactation)."

[61] Herophilos lived from roughly 330-250 BCE and Phanostrate practiced around 343 BCE.

[62] Richard H. Savel and Cindy L. Munro, "From Asclepius to Hippocrates: The Art and Science of Healing," *American Journal of Critical Care* 23, no. 6 (November 1, 2014): 438, https://doi.org/10.4037/ajcc2014993. Christos F. Kleisiaris, Chrisanthos Sfakianakis, and Ioanna V. Papathanasiou, "Health care practices in ancient Greece: The Hippocratic ideal," *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine* 7, no. 6 (March 15, 2014): 2, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4263393/.

seems to [Totelin] that the *Oath* implies a male swearer, it is possible that women, as Phanostrate did, 'masculinized' themselves to access medical training and swore a medical *Oath*."[63] This literary masculinization allowed her to practice medicine, which is reminiscent of Agnodike, who took great lengths to appear male in order to study medicine. Chapter 3 further discusses the figurative and physical masculinization of female healers who wished to practice in the professional sphere.

Regardless of her chosen school of medicine, since there were no formal medical schools like the ones we have today, Phanostrate would have studied by apprenticeship under a practicing *iatros*. For example, one of the other *iatrina* that we know the most about, Antiochis, was the daughter of Diodotus, a famous physician and "cited as an authority" by Dioscorides.[64] She and several other women were trained by their enslavers or family members, and so, just as Agnodike sought a medical practitioner to train under, Phanostrate likely did the same. After completing her apprenticeship, Phanostrate would have acted as an *iatros* primarily for women and children. Helen King, in Chapter 8 of her book, *Hippocrates' Woman*, establishes that:

> For a woman to serve as *iatros* to an adult male is, at least theoretically, impossible. Where a woman is described as a *iatros*, she should rather be seen as a 'woman who treats women'; should one have treated a male patient, she would have become invisible in terms of the prevailing ideology in which only a man could demonstrate sufficient self-control in order to take over control on behalf of a sick adult male.[65]

The clients of a *iatrina* is a well agreed-upon topic among scholars; although it is certainly possible that they practiced on men, it is probable that they had female clientele more often.

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[63] Totelin, "Do No Harm," 132.

[64] Holt N. Parker, "Women Doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire," in *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill*, by Lilian R. Furst (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 134, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130j9g5.11.

[65] Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 170, digital file.

Phanostrate herself is known for healing Lysimache, who likely suffered from gynecological problems, and there are several other texts that discuss women providing medical aid only to other women.[66]

Another reason for her primarily female clientele is found throughout the Hippocratic Corpus, where women are consulted for the knowledge of their own bodies and asked to conduct exams on themselves or other women. For example, in *Diseases of Women I*, the author wrote that "another woman" should be asked to "palpate the uterus."[67] Women were essential in the healing of other women, whether as professionally trained *iatros* or as assistants. In *Diseases of Women 1.62*, the author wrote that "women may be ashamed to speak out" about their health issues because of "their inexperience and ignorance." However, the fault is also in the hands of the *iatros* attending to them because they treat women as if their diseases are the same as men's, when in fact, "there is a great difference in the treatment of women's diseases and those of men."[68] The acting physician must ask questions and help their female patients to feel comfortable talking about their bodies, or else the women may suffer further. In *Eight month's child*, the author refers to women of experience (not *maia* or *iatros*) as authorities on the female body and birth: "You should not distrust women about their giving birth, for they always say the same thing and they say what they know; they are not to be persuaded by either fact or argument to believe anything contrary to what they know is going on inside their own bodies."[69] This is

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[66] *IG* II^3 4 700: Stephen Lambert notes that it was probably gynecological, but there is no mention of what the issue was in the surviving fragments of the inscription.

[67] Hp.*Mul.*1.21: "... εἰ ἑτέρη γυνὴ ψαύσειε τῶν μητρέων κενεῶν ἐουσέων…"

[68] Hp.*Mul.*1.62: "καὶ γὰρ αἰδέονται φράζειν, κῆν εἰδῶσι, καί σφιν δοκέουσιν αἰσχρὸν εἶναι ὑπὸ ἀπειρίης καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνης. ἅμα δὲ καὶ οἱ ἰητροὶ ἁμαρτάνουσιν, οὐκ ἀτρεκέως πυνθανόμενοι τὴν πρόφασιν τῆς νούσου, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς τὰ ἀνδρικὰ νοσήματα ἰώμενοι· καὶ πολλὰς εἶδον διεφθαρμένας ἤδη ὑπὸ τοιούτων παθημάτων. ἀλλὰ χρὴ ἀνερωτᾶν αὐτίκα ἀτρεκέως τὸ αἴτιον· διαφέρει γὰρ ἡ ἴησις πολλὸν τῶν γυναικείων νοσημάτων καὶ τῶν ἀνδρείων."

[69] Hp.*Oct.*4: "Χρὴ δὲ οὐκ ἀπιστεῖν τῇσι γυναιξὶν ἀμφὶ τῶν τόκων· λέγουσι γὰρ ταὐτὰ αἰεὶ καὶ λέγουοι ἅπερ ἂν εἰδέωσι· οὐ γὰρ ἂν πεισθείησαν οὔτ᾽ ἔργῳ οὔτε λόγῳ 442ἄλλο ἢ ὅ τι γνῶσιν ἐν τοῖσι σώμασιν αὐτῶν γινόμενον."

one of the reasons that women sought out Agnodike in Hyginus' *Fabulae*, because she was not only trained in the *medicam artem*, but also has her own personal experience of being a woman to draw upon. However, it is important to note again that their skills as an *iatros* would not necessarily be limited to gynecology and their client base may not have been exclusive to women.[70]

Regarding the knowledge and skills of these women doctors, the options seem endless. Ancient texts that cite women as medical authorities, the Hippocratic Corpus, and a brief phrase in Agnodike's story allow us to outline some of them. Holt N. Parker lists several illnesses and diseases in regard to which medical authors cite a *iatrina* for their experience in curing, easing pain, or aiding in healing.[71] The ancient authors do not provide any other biographical information about these women, but their expertise was usually treated with similar praise and scrutiny as that of male *iatros*. Parker mentions Olympias, Kleopatra, and Aspasia as three such *iatrinae* with expertise. Olympias is noted for her skills in gynecology and anatomical illustrations and Kleopatra for her work in cosmetics. Aspasia is quoted by Aetius in his gynecological treatise for her "authority on care during pregnancy, sickness during pregnancy, abortion, causes of difficult delivery, care after embryotomy, suppression of the menses, displacements of the uterus, and uterine ulcers."[72] As for Agnodike, she is said to have visited a woman who was suffering *ab inferiore parte* ("in her lower body"), and so once again, gynecology seems to be well within the skill set of the *iatrina*. Galen, in particular, uses the recommendations and recipes from several named *iatrinae* for healing a variety of illnesses and bodily maladies. For example, he cites Aquilia Secundilla for a plaster (the neopolitos), which

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[70] Parker, "Women Doctors," 136.
[71] Parker, "Women Doctors," 138.
[72] Parker, "Women Doctors," 138.

helps with multiple diseases;[73] Eugerasia made a pastille for healing the spleen and dropsy;[74] Origeneia created a recipe to cure ulcers and suppuration, as well as a pill for stomach aches;[75] Samithra had expertise with anal diseases;[76] and Xanite was cited for healing impetigo and mange[77]. This is only a list of *iatrinae* cited as medical authorities, so it likely does not cover the full range of knowledge that these women actually had; they could have known any of the information in the Hippocratic Corpus or even in Galen's or Soranus's writings.

Since Phanostrate was practicing at the emergence of professional medicine, when there was significantly less information about female healers, we cannot know for sure what the extent of her practice was. However, considering her use of both *maia* and *iatros*, it is likely that she provided a less specialized medical service, as well as midwifery skills. She probably helped to heal women of various gynecological issues, as well as illnesses not related to female sex organs. Much like the process for becoming a *maia*, she would have apprenticed under an *iatros* before practicing professionally. Once again, we know that she was praised for her work, but we are unsure at which age she began training. In scholarship, the common sentiment is that *iatros* were superior to *maia* both in title and in practice. While it is reasonable to believe that the ancient Greeks held a similar opinion, the evidence shows that the practice still involved many of the same skills required of an *iatros*, but the clientele were primarily pregnant women. With a better understanding of both of Phanostrate's professions, the next chapter focuses on how female healers legitimized their work in a male-dominated field.

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[73] Gal.13.976.
[74] Gal.13.244.
[75] Gal.13.58, 143.
[76] Gal.13.310.
[77] Gal.13.331.

Chapter 3: How Professional Female Healers Legitimized Themselves

This chapter builds on the information of the previous two chapters to discuss the legitimization of female healers in ancient Athens. To start, I discuss how Phanostrate uses masculine language to engage with Hippocratic discourse in which women typically were not involved. I also focus the following section on her funerary relief and how it uses typical characteristics of an Attic relief to expand the expectations for women. The last section explores the world of religious healing in the cult of Asklepios and how Hippocratic *iatros* and priests benefitted from each group's success.

THE MASCULINIZATION OF PHANOSTRATE

As mentioned previously, the fourth century was a time that saw the introduction of professional medicine, especially for the healing of women and gynecology, since men became more interested in their bodies. This increased interest in healing and understanding female bodies opened the door for women to enter the professional medical field, and so they also began to receive training in medicine. In particular, given that training as a Hippocratic physician was most common for men at the time, was it possible for a woman to operate under that same school? Laurence Totelin argues briefly in "Do No Harm: Phanostrate's Midwifery Practice" that it was indeed possible that Phanostrate and other practitioners were able "to access medical training and [swear] a medical *Oath*."[78] However, they would have had to masculinize themselves in order to do so mostly through the use of masculine terms and language to describe themselves and possibly by taking on physical masculine traits. This section presents the various instances of Phanostrate masculinizing herself on her funerary monument and discusses why that is significant for female healers' need to legitimize themselves in the public realm.

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[78] Totelin, "Do No Harm," 132. She is referring to the Hippocratic *Oath* in this statement.

Phanostrate's funerary monument has several words and phrases that are usually associated with men, starting with the third word, ἰατρός. Although this word has a feminine equivalent (ἰατρίνη), Phanostrate used the masculine form and is the only known ancient woman to do so. Although there are several possible reasons for that, the simplest is that the feminine form did not exist yet and so her best option was to use ἰατρός. However, even that reasoning is vulnerable to questioning: for example, why not use the word ἀκεστρίς, which was used in the Hippocratic Corpus and so already associated with female healing? Using this form of the word seems, then, to have been deliberate.

Moreover, as Totelin points out, her use of this term is the first part of Phanostrate's engagement in discourse with other Hippocratic physicians. The Corpus avoids titling female healers, including *maia*, who are instead called *omphalatomos*; however, midwives are at least referenced as a source of knowledge for childbirth and "the experienced woman" is cited as an authority on her own body.[79] The only other type of healing woman is the shadowy figure who helps male ἰατρός when they need to touch female bodies—τὴν ἰητρεύουσαν.[80] Basically, there were no female ἰατρός according to the Hippocratic authors, only midwives, assistants, and patients. Phanostrate's funerary monument identifying her as an ἰατρός breaks gender roles that did not entertain the idea of women being knowledgeable about anything in professional medicine except the female body.

A couple of the other possibilities, that she was actively masculinizing herself or challenging the idea that female healers are "less than" their male counterparts, all lead to the same conclusion. The title of ἰατρός also indicates professionalism in a way that other options do

[79] Hp.*Mul*.1.46: *omphalatomos*. Hp.*Carn*.19: *akestridas*. Hp.*Oct*.4: women as authorities on their own bodies.
[80] Hp.*Mul*.1.68.

not; *maia* or *omphalatomos* alone would not accurately represent the full scope of Phanostrate's abilities, and *akestris* was not commonly used. All of those titles also already have a feminine form or like *maia*, have exclusively women working in their field, and so even if those women are still considered less skilled or knowledgeable than an *iatros*, they were given a sort of legitimacy with their titles. However, this validity is still authorized completely by men and their language. Later mentions of professional *iatrina* often relied on the voice or reputation of the man in that physician's life in order to legitimize her, and even on the funerary monuments that express the highest praise, she may not have been given a title.

For example, Pantheia of Pergamum's monument from the second century CE reads: "You raised high our common fame in the art of medicine, and even though a woman, you did not fall short of my skill."[81] Pantheia is given no professional title and her high skill in medicine is prefaced with the fact that she is a woman. She is then compared to the skills of her husband, Glycon, who set up the monument. Another woman, Antiochis of Tlos, who set up her own funerary monument, says she was the "daughter of Diodotus, commended by the council and the people of Tlos for her experience in the doctor's art."[82] By mentioning Diodotus, a well-known physician of the first century BCE, Antiochis stays in line with the typical grave monuments of women that identify the man who is responsible for them, and it attaches his reputation to her own, attributing her skills to his teachings. Phanostrate's funerary monument likely follows the same pattern with the fragmented Μεḽιτέως "man of Melite," in the second line of the

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[81] Peek 1955: no. 2040; αὐτή μοι καὶ παῖδας ἐγεί|ναο πάντας ὁμοίους, // αὐτὴ καὶ | γαμέτου κήδεο καὶ τεκέων | // καὶ βιοτῆς οἴακα καθευθύνεσκες |ἐν οἴκῳ // καὶ κλέος ὕψωσας ξυ|νὸν ἰητορίης, // οὐδὲ γυνή{ι} περ | ἐοῦσα ἐμῆς ἀπολείπεο τέχνης. | // τοὔνεκά σοι τύμβον τεῦξε Γλύ|15κων γαμέτης, // ὅς γε καὶ ἀθ[ανά]|τοιο δέμας κεύθει Φιλαδέλ[φου], | // [ἔ]νθ[α] κ̣αὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ κείσομ[αι], |αἴ κε θά[νω]. . .

[82] TAM 2.595: Ἀντιοχὶς Διοδότοῦ Τλωὶς μαρτυρηθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῆς Τλωέων βουλῆς καὶ τοῦ δήμου ἐπὶ τῇ περὶ τὴν ἰατρικὴν τέχνην ἐνπειρίᾳ ἔστησεν τὸν ἀνδριάντα ἑαυτῆς'

inscription. But unusually, she also receives a professional title that is not restricted to women, *iatros*.

Phanostrate continues to masculinize herself in the rest of the inscription. In the last part of the epitaph, Phanostrate is said to be πᾶσιν ποθεινή, "missed by all." Many scholars note that this phrase only appears on monuments for men. Moreover, "it suggests an influence that goes beyond the familial circle," as Totelin puts it.[83] Generally, a Hippocratic *iatros* had a client base that included all community members who needed healing and could afford their fee. That Phanostrate's clientele extended beyond her immediate family is likely confirmed by the statue base in the Asklepeion about her work with Lysimache and the probability that Antiphile was a client as well. This makes her similar to the few other female doctors we know of who also had a wide client base. Agnodike is a mythical example of a *iatrina* having a wide range of clientele, including the wives of the heads of the Areopagus, and Antiochis, as mentioned above, was praised by a council and the people of Tlos for her medical work in the community. By suggesting the wide extent of her practice, and using language normally reserved for men, Phanostrate's funerary monument continued to masculinize her.

Phanostrate's other phrase describing her legacy, [ο]ὐθενὶ λυπη⟨ρ⟩ά ("caused pain to no-one") is also heavily loaded with masculine associations, this time specifically in Hippocratic discourse. Totelin argues convincingly that Phanostrate's language shows her being closely aware of and participating in a contemporary discussion about the nature and purpose of medical arts with regard to pain and suffering:

> I would suggest that the author of *On Winds*, Euripides, and Phanostrate were all participating in a debate on the nature of the medical art, and the place of *lupē* within it. I am not suggesting that Phanostrate had read those texts (although that

[83] Totelin, "Do No Harm," 133.

> is not entirely impossible), but rather that she was aware of debates that might have taken both oral and written forms.[84]

The first passage that Totelin references is from *On Winds*, where, in her words, "Medicine … brings grief to physicians, but alleviates it in patients" because of the horrific things that the *iatroi* saw while they were healing.[85] In the next text that Totelin sees as an important part of the discourse, Euripides' *Hippolytus,* the nurse of Phaedra makes similar statements about suffering that healers endure in their practice:

> κρεῖσσον δὲ νοσεῖν ἢ θεραπεύειν:
> τὸ μέν ἐστιν ἁπλοῦν, τῷ δὲ συνάπτει
> λύπη τε φρενῶν χερσίν τε πόνος[86]
>
> But it is better to be sick than to treat the sick.
> The former is a single thing, while the later joins together
> Pain (*lupē*) of heart to toil of hands.

Totelin points out that connections between Hippolytus and *On Winds* had already been made by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in 1891, but Phanostrate's funerary monument has not been brought into the scholarly conversation.[87] By far the most striking connection is that both Phanostrate and Phaedra's nurse, as women treating other women, use forms of *lupē* to discuss pain in the medical arts.

However, Totelin states that Phanostrate's contribution to this discussion was different from the other two authors:

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[84] Totetlin, "Do No Harm," 135-136.

[85] Totelin, "Do No Harm," 135. Hp.*Flat*.1: τῶν δὲ δὴ τοιούτων ἐστὶν τεχνέων καὶ ἣν οἱ Ἕλληνες καλέουσιν ἰητρικήν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἰητρὸς ὁρεῖ τε δεινὰ, θιγγάνει τε ἀηδέων, ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίῃσί τε συμφορῇσιν ἰδίας καρποῦται λύπας· οἱ δὲ νοσέοντες ἀποτρέπονται διὰ τὴν τέχνην τῶν μεγίστων κακῶν, νούσων, λύπης, πόνων, θανάτου·
"Among such arts [that bring pain to their pursuers] is that which the Greeks call medicine. Indeed, the physician sees terrible things, touches unpleasant things, and through the misfortunes (*sumphorēsin*) of others, he harvests pains (*lupas*) that are his own. Sick people, on the other hand, escape the worst of ills thanks to the art: diseases, pain (*lupēs*), physical pains, and death."

[86] Eur.*Hipp*.186-188.

[87] Totetlin, "Do No Harm," 135.

> Phanostrate did not state that she had brought on grief to herself while dealing with patients' pains. Rather, she suggested that she had caused pain to no-one, perhaps even including herself, as a healer, in that assertion.[88]

This assertion by Phanostrate is reminiscent of one of the most well-known passages in the Hippocratic Corpus—the *Oath*. It establishes the basic rule for all Hippocratic physicians that they will only use their abilities to heal and to never injure, and then goes on to establish acts that an *iatros* should never do, even when asked:

> 2. διαιτήμασί τε πᾶσι χρήσομαι ἐπ᾽ ὠφελείῃ καμνόντων κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ κρίσιν ἐμήν· ἐπὶ δηλήσει δὲ καὶ ἀδικίῃ εἴρξειν κατὰ γνώμην ἐμήν.
> 3. οὐ δώσω δὲ οὐδὲ φάρμακον οὐδενὶ αἰτηθεὶς θανάσιμον, οὐδὲ ὑφηγήσομαι ξυμβουλίην τοιήνδε· ὁμοίως δὲ οὐδὲ γυναικὶ πεσσὸν φθόριον δώσω.
> 4. ἁγνῶς δὲ καὶ ὁσίως διατηρήσω βίον ἐμὸν καὶ τέχνην ἐμήν.
> 5. οὐ τεμέω δὲ οὐδὲ μὴν λιθιῶντας, ἐκχωρήσω δὲ ἐργάτῃσιν ἀνδράσι πρήξιος τῆσδε...
> 8. ὅρκον μὲν οὖν μοι τόνδε ἐπιτελέα ποιέοντι, καὶ μὴ ξυγχέοντι, εἴη ἐπαύρασθαι καὶ βίου καὶ τέχνης δοξαζομένῳ παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον, παραβαίνοντι δὲ καὶ ἐπιορκέοντι, τἀναντία τούτων.
>
> I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgement; but never with a view to their injury and detriment. I will not administer a drug to cause death, even if asked to do so; and I will not secretly advocate use of such drugs. Similarly, I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion. I will keep pure and holy both my life and my art. I will not use the knife, even on sufferers from stone; in this I shall yield place to experts....
> Now if I carry out this oath and do not break it, may I enjoy a good reputation for my life and my art for all time; but if I break it and transgress, may the opposite happen to me.[89]

Totelin goes on to examine the domains of "experts," including *maiai* as authorities on abortive pessaries, but instead, I would like to focus on the last line, which claims a physician shall have a good reputation as long as they keep their *Oath*.[90] Language of causing no pain or suffering to

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[88] Totetlin, "Do No Harm," 136.
[89] Hp.*Iusj*.2-8.
[90] Totelin, "Do No Harm," 137-139.

patients is an important part of the *Oath*, "I will not administer a drug to cause death… I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion… I will not use the knife." It is possible that Phanostrate could have taken up similar guidelines for herself to bring pain to no-one. As indicated on her funerary monument, she was successful. Taking up the Hippocratic *Oath* and engaging with it on her funerary monument would have been another way for her to legitimize herself in the professional sphere and among Hippocratic *iatroi*.

Totelin argues, then, that Phanostrate was engaging in Hippocratic discourse with the phrase *outheni lupera*. Why is this argument important for my paper? By using phrases like *outheni lupera*, Phanostrate pioneered language that legitimizes her and other women who engaged in these sorts of discussions, which were often dominated by male physicians. Moreover, Phanostrate represented herself with masculinized language, such as *iatros* and *posin potheinē*, because legitimacy comes mainly from masculine traits and language. Once again, we can compare Agnodike's disguise as a man so that she could practice medicine. However, unlike Agnodike, Phanostrate did not completely hide or disguise her femininity, as we see on the relief of her funerary monument. The next section discusses the complicated and nuanced dynamics of visual self-representation and language that could express her femininity in dialogue with this masculinized language of professional medicine.

FEMININE SELF-REPRESENTATION ON PHANOSTRATE'S FUNERARY MONUMENT

In this section, I establish the ways in which Phanostrate could have been balancing the legitimacy she craved as an *iatros*, while still upholding the values of women in the *polis*. Although Phanostrate was going against the grain in many ways, maintaining her femininity in

the relief and in some phrases in the inscription also allowed her to stay in line with some of the ideals regarding respectable femininity in fourth century Athens.

The first part of Phanostrate's funerary monument we must examine is the relief that we reviewed in Chapter 1. It depicts her and a woman, Antiphile, with their hands clasped in *dexiosis* and surrounded by four children of varying ages. The iconography of the relief is very typical of female grave monuments in this period, which use such visual language to idealize the deceased regardless of their actual profession or social status. This is noted by Angeliki Kosmopoulou in her work on professional working women in fourth century Athens:

> "Overall, gravestones for female professionals do not comprise a true self-representation of the 'working class'—this does not exist before the Hellenistic period—but rather an idealistic portrait of working women. Regardless of their occupation, the dead women are never shown in action on their gravestones. Instead, they are dressed in attire no different from that worn by ordinary people and some even lack the typical attributes of their profession, necessitating the help of inscriptions for their correct identification."[91]

Phanostrate's epigram labeling her as *maia kai iatros* is the only reason that we can say she was the first professional female healer. Her relief shows that she and Antiphile were "respectable women" because of their clothing, and even having a female-centered relief with *dexiosis* was typical for the time period. Every detail of the funerary monument adds more context and complexity to the story of Phanostrate; without the epigram, Phanostrate would be presented as an average Athenian woman.

The first detail of the monument that I focus on is Phanostrate and Antiphile's clothing, which was a key feature to indicate social status and phases of life, like death. Their clothes indicate that they were "respectable women" who were citizens that either did not work or

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[91] Kosmopoulou, "'Working Women,'" 305-306.

worked jobs that were considered distinguished or impressive.[92] According to Mireille M. Lee, in her book, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*, beginning in the sixth century BCE, women of high status often wore both a *himation* and a *chiton*, as the two garments together represented leisure.[93] Lee also mentions that using the *himation* as a veil is common in Classical grave reliefs to represent a woman's agency, and in particular, "The convention of veiling the head and face with one's garments as a means of concealing grief, well attested in the literary sources, nevertheless displays the mourning status of the individual."[94] Clearly, the veil was a way to convey Antiphile's grief and sadness over the passing of Phanostrate.

In discussing their status, it is important to note that slaves wore secondhand garments, often in poor condition, so the elaborate style and the length of Antiphile and Phanostrate's clothing seem to indicate that they are being represented as high status and wealthy, or at the very least as free.[95] Another detail that supports both her status and femininity is her hairstyle, which is the most visible between the two, because hers is braided and pulled up and off of her shoulders, instead of cut short, as a slave's hair would have been. Her posture, according to Angeliki Kosmopoulou, is also "lady-like," another sign of how she is being represented here as having high status as a free woman.[96] The visual self-representation of Phanostrate in relief diverges from the masculinizing language of her epigram. By presenting herself in the typical

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[92] Burton, "Public Memorials," 23.

[93] The broader bands of fabric represent the *himatia* and are placed over much thinner stripes, representing the *chitones*. The *chitones* are much more noticeable around the ankles of the two women. This artistic style is indicative of that style of dress. A woman also tended to wrap her *himation* around either shoulder and occasionally over the top of her head as well. The way a woman wrapped her *himation* was also considered a form of non-verbal communication, as it could be used to express her modesty, sexuality, among other things. For more information about clothing and garments in Ancient Greece, see Lee, Mireille M. *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

[94] *Ibid.*, 116 and 228.

[95] *Ibid*., 8.

[96] Kosmopoulou, Angeliki. "'Working Women': Female Professionals on Classical Attic Gravestones." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 96 (2001): 299.

feminine dress of citizen women, she not only maintained the cultural norms for these women, but also aimed to expand them to include working women and women who operated more in the public sphere.

The next interesting detail on the funerary monument is Phanostrate and Antiphile's hands clasped in *dexiosis*. In fourth century Athens, this motif was used often and in ways that are not always clear to us. Some scholars believe that it represented unity between the figures, a farewell to the deceased, or possibly a line of communication between the living and the dead. Especially among women, *dexiosis* seems to indicate care and familiarity.[97] If Antiphile was Phanostrate's client, there would naturally be some affection between the two women, especially if Phanostrate helped to deliver her children. Regardless of the context of the *dexiosis* on this monument, it is still another example of Phanostrate following the visual norms used to depict deceased Athenian women on her funerary monument.

A similarly meaningful choice was the inclusion of all women and children on the relief. Although all-female groups were common on funerary reliefs at the time, such an arrangement seems to point more directly towards Phanostrate's client base and her professional success in her field. The identity of Antiphile is unknown, but many scholars theorize that she was a client or patron of Phanostrate's, even saying that she was the one who erected the funerary monument. Without the epigram, we might assume that Antiphile and Phanostrate were related, since it was typical for family groups to be depicted together on grave reliefs. Knowing her work as *maia kai iatros*, however, adds a new dimension to their relationship. The same can be said about the children in the relief, whom we might first assume are Phanostrate's. But since the relationship between Antiphile and her might not be familial, but rather client and healer, they are probably

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[97] See Elizabeth Pemberton, "The 'Dexiosis' on Attic Gravestones" and Davies, Glenys. "The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art" for more on the significance of *dexiosis*.

Antiphile's children. It is also likely that Phanostrate helped deliver them and, considering both the number of children and their varying ages, they stand on the monument as representatives of her success in midwifery.[98] Even though these aspects of the relief seem to touch upon her professional accomplishments, they come closer to hinting more at her work as a *maia* rather than as a *iatros*. If the children were not emphasized so strongly on the relief, we might instead read Antiphile instead as a client of her broader practice as a *iatros* rather than the more specific work of a *maia* (just like her client Lysimache in the temple dedication that we will discuss below). Since *maiai* were primarily women who aided and healed women, her visual self-representation leans into the values and expectations for women assigned by the *polis*. The work of *maiai* was well-established in ancient Athens, and although her visual self-representation leaned into those values assigned by the *polis*, the epigram may have been aiming to expand the expectations for an Athenian woman.

PHANOSTRATE IN THE ASKLEPIEION

This section focuses on the dedicatory inscription on the statue base of Phanostrate and how its presence in the Athenian Asklepieion changes Phanostrate's legitimacy as an *iatros*.[99] While I have refrained from extensively discussing religion and folk medicine up to this point, the second inscription allows us to question Phanostrate's involvement with healing cults and the intersection of professional and religious medicine. The statue was erected in honor of Phanostrate and dedicated to Asklepios for their efforts in healing Lysimache, the wife of Delophanes of Cholargos and mother of D-. We can date the statue and its inscription to sometime before 343 BCE, likely during Phanostrate's lifetime. Although the fragmentary

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[98] Not only helping to successfully deliver the children but deciding that they are children worth rearing.

[99] *IG* II^3 4 700; Important to note again that this object was recently associated with both the name Phanostrate and the healer from *IG* II^2 6873 in 2017. There is very little scholarship on the inscription and its significance.

inscription does not contain any language that titles her as *maia* or *iatros*, it does commemorate her healing of Lysimache. Associating with the healing cult of Asklepios helped patients to feel more comfortable with professional healers and vice versa; it normalized professional medicine, especially for women who were thus encouraged to receive care from *iatrina* like Phanostrate.

Throughout Ancient Greece, temples dedicated to the god of healing, Asklepios, were built as places for the ill and injured to beg for recovery. People would journey to one of the Asklepieion and sleep in a room (*abaton*) where Asklepios might visit and heal them.[100] Although we might assume that professional medicine would operate separately from these temples, many of the healing methods used by Asklepios were reminiscent of popular treatments by Hippocratic *iatroi*. In order to best understand how these two realms of medicine intersect, first, we must understand how they differ, which Helen King outlines:

> "But Hippocratic healers believed that dreams are not always as significant as the patient fears, and healing in Hippocratic medicine took place in the physical world of bodily fluids and material substances, in contrast to Asklepian medicine, where the patient's dreams also included the god's healing act, achieved by surgery, drugs or touch."[101]

Often, the dreams included physical acts of healing that could be accomplished by contemporary *iatroi*, and so with the blessing of Asklepios and his guidance, temple physicians could then heal the patients based on how they interpret the dreams. Patients would usually seek assistance from one group at a time, but King points out that the popularity of both branches of healing likely grew because of their associations with one another.[102] When professional healing failed, begging a god of healing would be the next step, and although there is less physical evidence, it is likely that the opposite happened as well.

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[100] Wainwright, *Women Healing/healing*, 83-84.
[101] King, *Hippocrates' Woman*, 102.
[102] *Ibid*., 103.

King also discusses the reasons that someone, specifically women, may choose either religious or professional healing. She concludes that the Hippocratic narratives around illness, infertility, and other complications tend to place focus on the individual, which some women wanted to avoid because "not everyone wants to research their past."[103] Hippocratic practitioners would use certain terminology to remove blame from mothers of stillborn or weak babies—eight-month and seven-month babies respectively.[104] However, by selecting temple medicine, women were healed in a space that could feel free of judgement, as everything was relying on the gods. Ultimately, it was up to the patient to decide which narrative they prefer, divine or practical. The two sects may heal their patients separately for the most part, but each benefit from the others success.

With more research and education occurring in Hippocratic medicine, the healing cults could then adjust dream interpretations accordingly so that they could provide the best healing options possible. The primary difference between the dream and the physical healing was that Asklepios often was capable of creating cures that would be much more effective than what was

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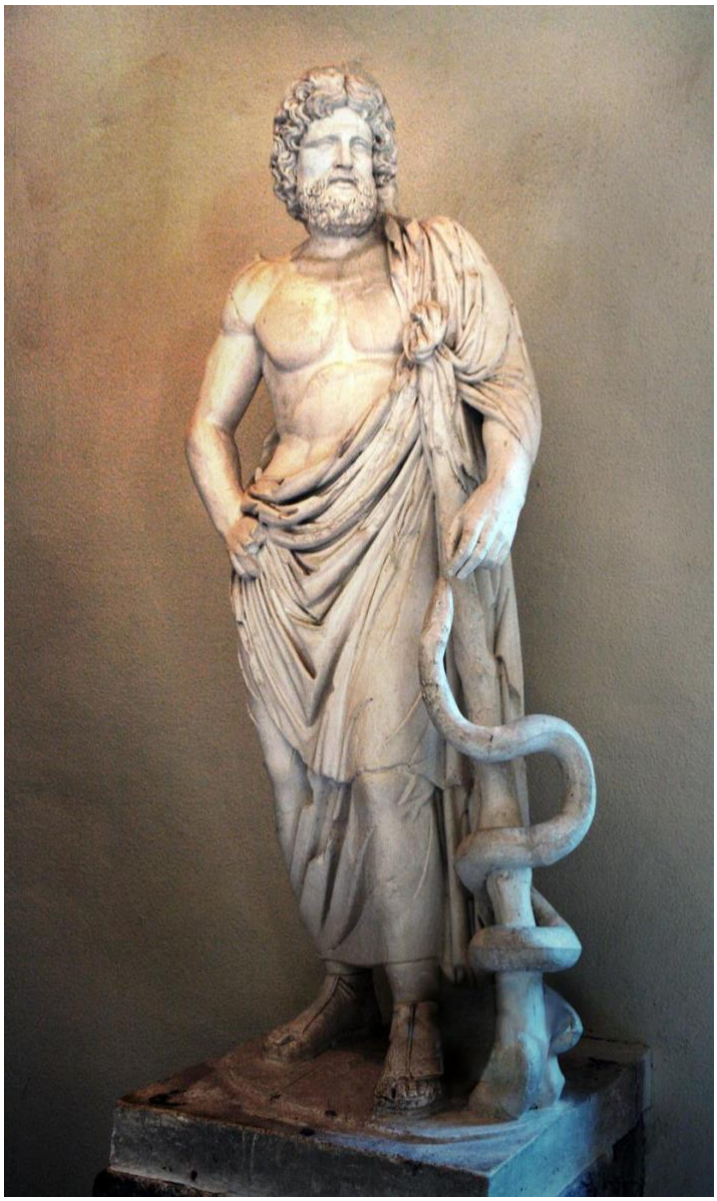
[103] *Ibid*., 113.
[104] *Ibid*., 112; Hp.*Carn*.19.

possible for *iatroi* and priests. The groups also used similar iconography, like the Rod of Asklepios (Figure 4), and Hippocrates invokes Asklepios in the Hippocratic *Oath*:

Figure 4: Statue of Asklepios in the Museum of Epidauros Theatre.[105]



[105] Michael F. Mehnert, *Statue of Asclepius, exhibited in the Museum of Epidaurus Theatre*, photograph, Wikipedia, September 11, 2008, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asklepios_-_Statue_Epidauros_Museum_2008-09-11.jpg.

> Ὄμνυμι Ἀπόλλωνα ἰητρὸν καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ Ὑγείαν καὶ Πανάκειαν καὶ θεοὺς πάντας τε καὶ πάσας, ἵστορας ποιεύμενος, ἐπιτελέα ποιήσειν κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ κρίσιν ἐμὴν ὅρκον τόνδε καὶ συγγραφὴν τήνδε·
>
> I swear by Apollo Physician, by Asclepius, by Health, by Panacea and by all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will carry out, according to my ability and judgment, this oath and this indenture.[106]

As stated by Helen King, Asklepios was well-versed in contemporary healing methods, and with an increase in popularity of Hippocratic medicine, the expectations for the healing god grew as well.[107] By coexisting and encouraging patients to seek help from both professional and religious practices, every success adds to the credibility of both institutions.

While we can now parse out why women may have chosen either one branch of medicine or both, where do female healers fit into these accounts? Priestesses had the clearest role, as they would be involved with healing similar to their male counterparts—help interpret the dreams of those who slept in the *abaton* and then prescribe methods of healing. In fact, priestesses typically were allowed more freedoms than every other profession for women because they operated in the public sphere. Usually, women would devote themselves to female goddesses, such as Athena or Artemis, but inscriptional evidence points to some in the cult of Asklepios. On the other hand, as detailed in Chapter 2, the practices of *iatrina* wholly depend on the time period and what knowledge the women had, which was difficult to determine because of a lack of biographical evidence. But, having a female physician as a woman meant that she could feel much more comfortable revealing her body and as a result, seeking help in the first place. Perhaps one of the most fascinating connections between female healers and religion is through the goddess, Hygieia.

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[106] Hippocrates of Cos and W. H. S Jones, *Hippocrates* (Cambridge, Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 1981), 298-299, https://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.hippocrates_cos-oath.1923.
[107] King, *Hippocrates' Woman*, 103.

Figure 5: Statue of Hygieia.[108]

Hygieia (Figure 5), usually cited as the daughter of Asklepios, is a goddess of health, cleanliness, and hygeine. Inscriptions and texts regularly referred to her and her father as a pair and sometimes both were credited for healing those who came to the Asklepieion. For example,

[108] Sailko, Hygea, copia romana da originale greco del III sec. ac, photograph, August 31, 2011, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hygea,_copia_romana_da_originale_greco_del_III_sec._ac.JPG.

a statue base inscription from the first century CE, which was found in the Asklepieion, dedicates a statue of the healed man to both of the gods:

> ἡ βο[υλὴ]
> Σωσικλῆν Ἡσιόδου Σφή[ττιον]
> ἰαθέντα Ἀσκληπιῶι καὶ Ὑ[γιείαι]
> προστάξαντος τοῦ [θεοῦ].[109]
>
> The Council (dedicates this statue of)
> Sosikles son of Hesiodos of Sphettos,
> after he was cured by Asklepios and Hygieia,
> as the god commanded.

Much like the Hippocratic physicians who used Asklepios to seek legitimacy, by attaching Hygieia to her father the cult helped increase her popularity with the public.[110] Unlike the connection regularly drawn between Asklepios and *iatros*, there is no explicit evidence of Hygieia having the same kind of following from physicians. However, Wainwright states that her presence may have legitimized the practice of professional women, and that it "provides a distinct modeling of women healing in the divine realm at the same time that professional women emerged in the public arena even though it does not seem to be directly connected with these women."[111] In particular, Hygieia acted as an example of female healers who use magic to help patients, rather than harm them, which was a common depiction of sorceresses in ancient Greek fiction, such as Medea and Circe. Although Phanostrate's inscriptions did not mention Hygieia directly, she and other *iatrina* may have still benefited from the respect garnered by the goddess.

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[109] *IG* II^3 4 13: "Dedicatory inscription for Asklepios and Hygieia." Translated by Chris de Lisle.

[110] For an analysis of the votive reliefs found in the Athenian Agora of Asklepios and Hygieia, see: Carol L. Lawton, "Votive Reliefs," *The Athenian Agora* 38 (2017): 36-43, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26379853.pdf.

[111] Wainwright, *Women Healing/healing*, 90-91.

By associating with the cult of Asklepios, Phanostrate legitimized her practice in ways similar to other *iatros* in the fourth century BCE. Through the very act of dedication, the object shows what Lysimache and her family thought Phanostrate's role was. We may not know the extent to which Phanostrate worked with the temple, but at the very least, we can assume that she would have been able to increase the trust and comfort of her female clients by engaging with religious narrative structures.

Conclusion

In many subtle ways, Phanostrate was able to establish herself a beloved and respected medical professional in the *polis*. Her funerary monument provides several examples of the ways in which she legitimized herself, either through masculinization or maintaining a traditional feminine representation. She may have even engaged in religious narratives that could have been preferred by her female clientele. Although not much is known about Phanostrate's life, her impact on the medical world and women's roles within it is clear: she was a pioneer in creating a positive narrative around female healers in the public, at a time in which women were often expected to stay in the *oikos*. Phanostrate was the first professional female healer and with her position in the public, she opened the doors for women to work in medicine.

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Appendix 1: The Language of Healing Women

Introduction

This appendix establishes background information on the vocabulary used to discuss and label women practitioners in ancient medicine, which will be instrumental in analyzing texts and inscriptions in the second chapter. By establishing and defining the range of words used for these women and their professional roles, it helps us to understand how these women were viewed in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. In Greek and Latin, there are a large number of words to describe women's role in medicine. These words include μαῖα, ἀκεστρίς, ὀμφαλητόμος, ἰατρός/ἰατρίνη, ἰατρόμαια/*iatromea*, *obstetrix*, and *medica*. All of these terms typically mean "midwife," likely because the most common role for women in a professional medical setting was a midwife. However, they have additional, more specific meanings too, all of which will be discussed in this chapter, as well as patterns that emerge in different authors, genres, and time periods.

The word-histories below are based, in part, on the dictionary entries in the most comprehensive Greek and Latin lexica, mentioned above, which compile what they consider to be the most significant or representative uses of the word. This starting point was supplemented with a full-text search of the surviving corpora of Greek and Latin using the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) and Packard Humanities Institute (PHI). This step was critical for discovering additional references for obscure and uncommon words, such as ὀμφαλητόμος and *iatromea*. To find additional sources, I also searched for key terms within the Loeb Classical Library Online. The references presented throughout this chapter are the ones that seem to be the most relevant and interesting because of how the authors use the words in context or the history surrounding the text.

Each word will have its own section, which will focus on its history, but some sections include multiple words that have similar roots or forms. One section, for instance, is bilingual: it will look at two words that are nearly identical, but one is in Greek, ἰατρόμαια, and the other is in Latin, *iatromea*.

In chronological terms, we aim to gain a sense of when these words started acquiring popularity and usage in the ancient world. Some have their first noted reference quite early in the history of recorded Greek (the eighth to sixth century BCE), but others will not have recorded use until a few centuries later. For example, μαῖα's first reference was in Homer's *Odyssey* from the eighth century BCE, whereas ἰατρόμαια has its first reference in a legal text, called the Basilica, from the ninth century CE. Our primary focus will be on texts from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE because the inscriptions and texts that we are reviewing in the second chapter were composed within that time frame. However, it is still important and interesting to briefly look at the full range of texts that fall outside of that timeline.

As to the range of sources, we will use a variety of written Greek and Latin: literary texts (including fragments), inscriptions, and medical texts. For example, words for female medical practitioners occur in texts as diverse as Plato's *Theaetetus*, Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, Soranus' *Gynecology*, Varro's fragments, Horace's *Epodes*, and Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*.[112] We will not limit the type of sources we look at in this chapter so that we can get a full picture of how these words were used. Also because although some medical texts are useful for learning about a midwife's role in birth, most texts are limited in how they discuss women as medical practitioners. The Hippocratic Corpus and Soranus' *Gynecology* are an apt example for how medical authors choose to include midwives in their discourse. While the Hippocratic Corpus

[112] Specific references in these texts will be cited throughout the chapter.

mentions midwives a handful of times in passing, Soranus dedicated two sections of his text solely to midwives and the ideal qualities needed to become one. Medical texts are limited further by their authorship because the writer was projecting the experience of a man onto a woman.[113] For the purpose of this inquiry, our attempts at better understanding women and specifically female healers in the ancient world will always be through the perspective of men. In this chapter, it is important to explore the lack of discussion about midwives in the Corpus, but in future chapters, we will place much more emphasis on looking at medical texts like Soranus' *Gynecology*.

For each reference, I use published translations, but it is important to review how these key terms are being translated and to highlight any discrepancies in the English translations so that we are getting as close as possible to an accurate translation for our analysis. In addition to the meanings given by translators, other definitions for the Greek words were found within *A Greek-English Lexicon*, often referred to as Liddell-Scott-Jones (*LSJ*), and for the Latin words, alternative definitions were found in *A Latin Dictionary*, usually called Lewis and Short (*L&S*).[114]

By the end of this chapter, we will have established necessary information about how women in the ancient medical world were regarded, based on how they were referred to in written forms.

μαῖα

By far, the most common word with the richest history is μαῖα, which, in a medical context, means "midwife," "deliverer," or "lady doctor." It also has alternative meanings of

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[113] Hanson, Ann Ellis. "THE MEDICAL WRITERS' WOMAN." In *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by Halperin David M., Winkler John J., and Zeitlin Froma I. PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY: Princeton University Press, 1990: 314.

[114] These lexica have an online version on a website called philolog.us, which is where I found these definitions.

"mother," "grandmother," "foster mother," and "wetnurse," among others.[115] The context for each use of μαῖα especially matters because of how many meanings this word can have. All of them ultimately seem to hint towards a women's role in caring for children, whether that means being the mother, the deliverer, the caretaker, or the wet nurse. The earliest uses of μαῖα began around the 8th century BCE to broadly mean "nurturer" or as a term of respect for older women. Its use extended well into Late Antiquity in medical and fictional texts. Most notably, authors used it to mean "midwife" starting around the 4th century BCE in passing references in non-medical texts and inscriptions. It was not until the 2nd century CE that Soranus discussed midwives and their role in the medical community extensively in his *Gynecology*. Before that point, many other poets, playwrights, and authors employed μαῖα with its full range of meanings.

The first instance of μαῖα being used was in the *Odyssey* by Homer, in which characters would use the vocative form to address Odysseus' nurse, Eurycleia, or other older women.[116] Although Homer does not reference midwives or healers using μαῖα, it is important to acknowledge that μαῖα has origins in discussing caretakers, and particularly, caretakers who were regarded highly.

In the 4th century BCE, Plato uses various forms of μαῖα in a dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, in which Socrates compares his work as a philosopher to the work of his mother as a midwife: "Have you then not heard, you absurd boy, that I am the son of a noble and burly midwife, Phaenarete?"[117] Some scholars assume that the phrasing of Socrates' question implies that midwives have positions of great renown in their communities.[118] Later in that section,

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[115] *LSJ*, s.v. "μαῖα"
[116] Hom.*Od*.20.129
[117] Pl.*Tht*.149a; "εἶτα, ὦ καταγέλαστε, οὐκ ἀκήκοας ὡς ἐγώ εἰμι ὑὸς μαίας μάλα γενναίας τε καὶ βλοσυρᾶς, Φαιναρέτης;"
[118] Retief, FP, and L. Cilliers. "The Healing Hand: The Role of Women in Graeco-Roman Medicine." *Acta Theologica* 26, no. 2 (March 10, 2010): 168.

Socrates briefly describes the characteristics needed to become a midwife, as well as some of their tasks in assisting births.[119] He also draws parallels between a midwife's ability to assist women in childbirth and a philosopher's ability to help men in mental anguish.[120]

A prime example of μαῖα is the inscription on the funerary monument for Phanostrate. The inscription reads, "Midwife (maia) and doctor (iatros) Phanostrate lies here, she caused pain to no-one and, having died, is missed by all."[121] She is one of the few female physicians who has physical evidence of her existence in the ancient world. There are about a dozen other inscriptions that use μαῖα, but none as explicit as Phanostrate's in clarifying her midwife status rather than the alternative meanings of "mother" or "nurturer."[122]

Given the word's use as a term for a female medical practitioner in Plato and inscriptional texts, the lack of this word in the Hippocratic Corpus is significant. As will be discussed with other words in this chapter, the Corpus rarely acknowledges female healers formally, instead using participles and calling them ἐσαφάσσουσα— "a woman who is touching/feeling." In Chapter 8 of *Hippocrates' Woman*, Helen King states that women were rarely allowed to work with male patients because of how unnatural it seemed to the Greeks.[123] As a result, they are not acknowledged in the Hippocratic Corpus with any detail beyond the occasional help with female bodies. Another possibility for its absence in the Corpus is that the broad range of meanings for μαῖα made it less of an official title in medicine and instead a casual one assigned to mothers and other regular caregivers. A final reason could be that the discussion of female healers and midwives specifically was more often spoken rather than written, as

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[119] Pl.*Tht.*149b-d.
[120] Ibid.,150b.
[121] *IG* II^2 .6873.
[122] See Christian Laes's "Midwives in Greek Inscriptions in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity" for a collection of these inscriptions.
[123] King, Helen. *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge, 1998: 171.

indicated by many of the remaining inscriptions that do use μαῖα to mean "midwife," unlike the Hippocratic Corpus. The language used for inscriptions is more likely to resemble regular ancient Greek speech than literature and medical texts.

In contrast to the Hippocratic Corpus, however, the medical writer Soranus uses μαῖα almost exclusively in his discussion of midwives several centuries later. In the 2nd century CE, he wrote *Gynecology*, in which he examines women's bodies, how they function, how pregnancy and childbirth work, the nature of different diseases, and also the role of midwives and the requirements to gain that title.[124] The primary purpose of the text was to aid midwives in their caring for other women, which was indeed successful, as midwives used *Gynecology* as a textbook for centuries after its creation.[125] He references μαῖα thirty times throughout his work, mainly within the first book. For instance, he writes μαῖα in the first two section titles, "What persons are fit to become midwives"[126] and "Who are the best midwives."[127] Those two sections, in particular, are of great relevance for our examination of women in the ancient medical world.

Returning to mythical literature, similar to our earlier analysis of the *Odyssey*, Nonnos, in the fifth century CE, wrote the *Dionysiaca*, which references midwives casually four times, in the birthing scenes of the gods Aphrodite and Dionysos. For Aphrodite, her midwife was Nature, and later on, her daughter Harmonia addresses her as "Cythereia, root of life, seedsower of being, midwife of nature."[128] For Dionysos' birth, Nonnos wrote that "Lightning was the midwife, thunder our Lady of childbed; the heavenly flames had mercy, and delivered Bacchos struggling from the mother's burning lap when the married life was withered by the

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[124] See *Soranus' gynecology* for a full translation by Owsei Temkin.
[125] Retief, FP, and L. Cilliers, "The Healing Hand": 171.
[126] Sor.Gyn.II.4; Τίς ἐστιν ἐπιτήδειος πρὸς τὸ γενέσθαι μαῖα
[127] Ibid., 5; Τίς ἀρίστη μαῖα
[128] Nonnus, *Dion.*, XLI.315-317.

mothermurdering flash."[129] Plato's earlier description of a midwife is both held up and refuted within this one text. Nature helped along Aphrodite's birth as she was born from genital foam, but Lightning as a midwife triggered the birth too early and managed to kill Dionysos' mother, Semele, in the process. Although it is unlikely that Nonnos wrote these scenes thinking about the importance of midwives, I still find that this acts unintentionally as a cautionary tale to find a midwife who is qualified for the position.

In Tryphiodorus's *The Taking of Ilios*, from the third century CE, Cassandra attempts to convince the Trojan men not to bring the wooden horse into Troy. She tells them of their fates that the horse is filled with Greeks, and then she provides imagery through a pregnancy metaphor, saying: "Athena, sacker of cities, midwife of a dolorous birth, shall herself undo the pregnant belly and utter her cry."[130] Although not traditionally a goddess of childbirth, Athena does have a cult in Athens where there is some evidence that women would pray to her, begging for fertility.[131] While midwifery might be an unusual role for Athena, her being a herald for battle makes absolute sense, so the parallels between Cassandra's imagery and reality are quite fascinating. Athena's role as a midwife for the wooden horse is also interesting because of the descriptor "dolorous," which raises the question of whether it is describing the pain during the birth itself or the bloodshed that would follow. Tryphiodorus was likely considering the nuances of midwifery and its relation with the gods when writing that line, in order to create compelling imagery of Athena and the Trojan Horse.

Revealing an even deeper history for the word, Μαῖα is the name of the oldest of the

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[129] Ibid., XLI.396-399.

[130] Tryphiodorus, *The Taking of Ilios*, 389-90; γαστέρα δὲ πλήθουσαν ἀνακλίνασα βοήσει μαῖα πολυκλαύτοιο τόκου πτολίπορθος Ἀθήνη.

[131] Robertson, Noel. "Greek Ritual Begging in Aid of Women's Fertility and Childbirth." *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 113 (1983): 162-4.

seven Pleiades and is known as the mother of Hermes and the caretaker of Arcas. She is referenced several times in ancient Greek literature, notably by Lucian in *Dialogues of the Gods*,[132] Hesiod in *Catalogue of Women*,[133] Alcaeus,[134] and Apollodorus in *The Library*[135]. In the Homeric Hymns, one is addressed "To Hermes" and briefly describes Hermes' parentage, Zeus and Maia, and their union.[136] Obviously, being Arcas' guardian is a direct allusion to the base meaning for μαῖα that was mentioned at the very beginning of this section—carer for children—and her being the mother of a prominent god could have influenced the respect that came with the title of μαῖα.

ἀκεστρίς

On the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of frequency, ἀκεστρίς has limited use in ancient Greek literature: it has only one reference in its LSJ entry. It is the feminine form of ἀκεστήρ, (which has alternate forms of ἀκεστής and ἀκέστωρ), all of which mean "healer." ἀκέστωρ has an additional feminine form, ἀκεστορίς.[137] All these closely related words are used infrequently in Greek literature. The typical meanings for ἀκεστρίς are "healer," like its other forms, and "midwife."[138] Due to its rarity, a time frame for when this word was used is difficult to specify, but the most prominent reference comes from the Hippocratic Corpus, so at the very least, it was used in the 4th century BCE.

In the Hippocratic Corpus, midwives are mentioned pointedly only a handful of times, one of which comes from *Fleshes*, section 19. The author of this section discusses how fetuses

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[132] Luc. *Dial. D.* 4; This is a dialogue between Hermes and Maia.
[133] Hes.*Cat.*118.
[134] Alc.308b.
[135] Apollod.Bibl.X.1-2.
[136] Hom. Hymn to Hermes, 18.
[137] For all of these terms, see *LSJ* ad loc.
[138] *LSJ*, s.v. "ἀκεστρίς"

and children operate on a sevenfold pattern, including the possibility of a child being born within seven months. The reference to midwives stems from the author telling his readers that: "If anyone wishes proof, the matter is easy: let him go to the midwives that attend women who are giving birth and ask them."[139] This is only one of two specific references to midwives in the Hippocratic Corpus, and unfortunately, it does not offer any specific information about their roles in assisting births. However, the author does imply that midwives are both knowledgeable and trustworthy enough for people to learn certain information from them.

There are two more instances of ἀκεστρίς in surviving Greek, once in Olympiodorus' *In Platonis Gorgiam commentaria*[140] and another under the entry for ἀχήματα, "cures," in the *Etymologicum Genuinum*[141]. These ancient scholarly works were written during the Byzantine era in the sixth and ninth centuries CE respectively, so one possible reason for the large gaps of time in between the Corpus' use and these texts is because they are discussing and referencing texts from around the fourth century CE. Olympiodorus is, of course, writing a commentary on Plato, and the entry in the Etymologicum Genuinum references Homer's Iliad.

ὀμφαλητόμος

The word that truly describes the role of a midwife is ὀμφαλητόμος, which literally means cutter of the navel-string. In the LSJ, it is defined as the Ionic word for μαῖα, which is typically an Attic word, and scholars often translate it as "midwife."[142] The stem of ὀμφαλητόμος comes from the words for "umbilical cord" or "navel-string," ὀμφαλός and ὀμφαλίς, which also form the base of other words revolving around midwifery, such as

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[139] Hp.Carn.19; εἰ δέ τις βούλεται καὶ τοῦτο ἐλέγξαι, ῥηΐδιον· πρὸς τὰς ἀκεστρίδας αἳ πάρεισι τῇσι τικτούσῃσιν ἐλθὼν πυθέσθω.
[140] See Chapter 41, Section 7, Line 27 in text for the reference.
[141] See Letter α, Entry 325, Line 7 in text for the reference.
[142] *LSJ*, s.v. "ὀμφαλητόμος"

ὀμφαλητομία (“midwifery”) and ὀμφαλοτομητέον (“one must sever the navel-string”).[143] The earliest known instance of ὀμφαλητόμος is in the fragments of Hipponax from the 6th century BCE. Its use extends well into Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, most often in lexicons and encyclopedias in the later years.

In Fragment 19, Hipponax was insulting someone’s intelligence and possibly the abilities of the midwife who helped deliver that person. He wrote, “What navel-snipper wiped and washed you as you squirmed about, you crack-brained creature?”[144] Unfortunately, beyond the insult, there is not much else to glean from it. However, the existence of ὀμφαλητόμος during this time period shows that midwifery was a profession for women to pursue, even if the tasks were limited to snipping the umbilical cord and cleaning the baby.

The Hippocratic Corpus uses ὀμφαλητόμος once in Diseases of Women, and in contrast to its use of ἀκεστρίς, the author mentions a potential ignorance by midwives: “… or the midwife through ignorance trims the child’s umbilical cord before the placenta has been expelled from the uterus.”[145] This comment also provides some valuable information about a midwife’s role and potential knowledge, specifically in knowing when to cut an umbilical cord, as implied by ὀμφαλητόμος. If a midwife does not have this knowledge, then she could trim the cord too early and create health problems for the mother or child.

As with most other terms in this chapter, these terms related to the cutting of the navel-string appear in lexical encyclopedias, as well as other reference texts in Late Antiquity and during the Middle Ages, but not much of note beyond that. Its appearance in those reference

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[143] For all of these terms, see *LSJ* ad loc.

[144] Hipponax, Fragment 19; τίς ὀμφαλητόμος σε τὸν διοπλῆγα ἔψησε κἀπέλουσεν ἀσκαρίζοντα;

[145] Hp.Mul.46; ἢν ῥαγῇ βίῃ ὁ ὀμφαλὸς ἢ ἀμαθίῃ ὑποτάμῃ ἡ ὀμφαλητόμος τὸν ὀμφαλὸν τοῦ παιδίου πρόσθεν ἢ τὸ χορίον ἐξιέναι ἐκ τῶν μητρέων

texts obviously shows that ὀμφαλητόμος was used in the Greek world, but it is possible that it was more often spoken than written.

ἰατρίνη / ἰατρός

Although a word commonly associated with men in the ancient medical world, ἰατρός has a brief history with female physicians as well. In the masculine form, ἰατρός is often translated as "physician," "surgeon," or "doctor,"[146] and in the feminine form, ἰατρίνη is translated as "midwife."[147] One of the earliest uses of referring to women as ἰατρός was in the 4th century BCE in an inscription. Galen in the 2nd century CE uses ἰατρίνη, which also has a life in other medical and legal texts from the Middle Ages.

As mentioned in the section for μαῖα, the inscription on the funerary monument for Phanostrate also uses ἰατρός.[148]

Somewhat similar to Plato's *Theaetetus*, Flavius Josephus, in *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, discusses his parentage: "Now there was one Joseph, the son of a female physician, who excited a great many young men to join with him."[149] Unfortunately, Josephus mentions his mother only briefly, but it is interesting not only that she is an ἰατρίνη rather than a μαῖα but also that the translator chose "female physician" instead of "midwife" for her role. This word choice on both ends could indicate higher education or skill level than a midwife might have.

ἰατρόμαια / *iatromea*

ἰατρόμαια is a fascinating word because it combines two words we have already discussed, ἰατρός and μαῖα. But it has only one known reference in Greek, making it the least

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[146] *LSJ*, s.v. "ἰατρός"
[147] *LSJ*, s.v. "ἰατρίνη"
[148] *IG* II^2 .6873.
[149] J.Vit.37; Ἰώσηπος δὲ τῆς ἰατρίνης πολλοὺς νεανίσκους θρασεῖς προτρεψάμενος αὐτῷ συνάρασθαι

common term of those discussed so far. Much like the previous words, ἰατρόμαια means "midwife," but it is not clear if the meaning expands to "physician" as well.[150] It was used once in a legal text, The Basilica, in the ninth century CE.[151] Unfortunately, there are no known references to the term in classical Greek.

iatromea is the Latin equivalent of ἰατρόμαια, in spelling, meaning, and frequency. This word does not have its own entry in the Lewis and Short dictionary, and instead is noted under *iatraliptice*, which means "the art of healing with ointments."[152] *iatromea* only appears in a couple of inscriptions between the second and third century CE, both located in Rome—one for Valeria Berecunda, a freedwoman who was described as "the premier doctor-midwife of her region,"[153] and another for Valia Calliste, also a freedwoman[154].

obstetrix

Similar to μαῖα, *obstetrix* has a long history in Latin texts; however, it is only translated as "midwife" and has no alternative meanings. It has alternative forms: *obstitrix*, *opstetrix*, and *opstitrix*, and it stems from the verb *obsto*, "to stand before." The first available instance of *obstetrix* in Latin literary texts is by Titus Macchius Plautus in the second or third century BCE, and again like μαῖα, its use extends well into Late Antiquity, being used by renowned Christian writers, Augustine and Jerome, in the fourth century CE.

Plautus' plays are the earliest texts to survive in their entirety from the second and third centuries BCE. In his comedy *Captivi*, often translated as "The Captives," Tyndarus responds to Hegio and Aristophanes' questioning at his status as a freedman by saying, "How do you know?

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[150] *LSJ*, s.v. "ἰατρόμαια"
[151] See *Basilica*, Book 60, Title 3, Chapter 9, Section 1, Line 2 for reference.
[152] *L&S*, s.v. "*iatraliptice"*
[153] *CIL* VI.9477; *iatromeae regionis suae primae*
[154] *CIL* VI.9478.

Were you, perchance, the midwife of my mother, since you dare to affirm this so boldly?"[155] This dialogue speaks more to the intricacies of freedmen and slaves rather than midwifery, but it is important to know that *obstetrix* has origins in the beginning of the Latin language.

The next instance of the word is from Varro, whose work only remains in fragments from the first century BCE. This fragment comes from the Logistoricus, in which he wrote, "The midwife delivers, the nurse rears, the slave-preceptor instructs, the teacher informs."[156] Varro seems to be discussing the lifespan of a young person in this fragment and the roles of various caretakers throughout their life. All of the verbs in the fragment are associated with physically or mentally caring for and educating youths. *educit* is often associated with midwives and delivering babies, as seen in works by Plautus and Pliny the Elder, but it can also mean "to bring up or rear a child" like the second verb in the fragment, *educat*.[157] As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, midwives had various roles in families depending on how they chose to practice, and some acted as caretakers for their patron's children, so all intricacies of the word *educo* are important to consider for this translation and analysis.

Published in 30 BCE, Horace's *Epodes* reference a midwife once, in the final poem of the collection. Epode 17 is a palinode, which contradicts and retracts parts of the fifth poem about the witch Canidia. In a long, pleading speech by the captive boy, he says, "... the cloths washed by the midwife were red with your very own blood."[158] Horace adds a detail about one duty of a

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[155] Plaut.*Capt*.III.iv.96; *Qui tu scis? an tu fortasse fuisti meae matri obstetrix, qui id tam audacter dicere audes?*

[156] Varr. ap. Non. 447, 33; *educit enim obstetrix, educat nutrix, instituit paedagogus, docet magister*; my own translation.

[157] There are two different forms for educo, but Varro makes it clear that *educit* is referring to the third conjugation verb and *educat* refers to the first conjugation. The third declension *educo* often translates as "to lead out," which means it is more likely to mean "deliver." The first declension *educo* is primarily translated as "to bring up a child physically or mentally," and Varro's fragment here is referenced in the Lewis and Short dictionary for *educo*. For all of these terms, see *L&S* ad loc.

[158] Hor.*Epod*.17.49-52; *et tuo cruore rubros obstetrix pannos lavit*

midwife casually in this line, which continues to legitimize the theory that midwives and their jobs were respected and well-known in the ancient world. The next reference especially validates that theory.

In *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder makes reference to two specific midwives, who worked contemporary to him in the first century CE. For the first time, in Book XXVIII, he mentions a midwife by name and her recommendations for a certain remedy,

> "The midwife Sotira has said that it is a very efficacious remedy for tertians and quartans to smear with the flux the soles of the patient's feet, much more so if the operation is performed by the woman herself without the patient's knowledge, adding that this remedy also revives an epileptic who has fainted."[159]

For the second midwife, Pliny the Elder describes her process for hair removal for slaves boys and names her *Salpe obstetrix*, "Salpe the midwife."[160] Greek medical texts never gave names for the midwives that they reference, whereas Latin authors freely offer that information. As mentioned previously, this contributes more evidence to the theory about the great renown of midwives. Also important to note, Pliny the Elder makes specific references to these women and also gives credit to them for the remedies and cures. Considering how rare it is to find names for midwives outside of inscriptions, this text clearly shows respect for midwives that had not been explicitly present before.

On the other hand, in the fourth century CE, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote about a midwife who deliberately betrayed her duty to deliver a baby:

> "For once before, in Gaul, when she had borne a baby boy, she lost it through this machination: a midwife had been bribed with a sum of money, and as soon as the child was born cut the umbilical cord more than

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[159] Plin.*HN*.XXVIII.83; *Sotira obstetrix tertianis quartanisque efficacissimum dixit plantas aegri subterlini, multoque efficacius ab ipsa muliere et ignorantis, sic et comitiales excitari.*
[160] Ibid., XXXII.135.

> was right, and so killed it; such great pains and so much thought were taken that this most valiant man might have no heir."[161]

Although the Hippocratic Corpus and a couple of other texts reference ignorant midwives, this story is certainly a negative perspective on midwives. It speaks to some of the fears of male authors in the ancient world, that Helen King discusses in *Hippocrates' Woman*, including the opportunity for women in a medical role to take advantage of their power to commit nefarious deeds, like infanticide. Also interesting to note is that it references back to one of the two instances of the Hippocratic Corpus discussing midwives, in which the author warns that a midwife through her ignorance could snip the navel-cord incorrectly and cause health complications for the mother and child.[162] Although it seems that earlier Latin authors reference *obstetrix* in a positive or neutral connotation, later authors share more critical stories about them.

In the fourth century CE, many Christian authors use *obstetrix*, which shows just how much this word dominated formal Latin terms to describe midwives throughout the entirety of the Latin corpus. Augustine, in *The City of God*, mentions a midwife who destroyed the hymen of a young girl and offers that it could have been "either by ill intent or clumsiness or accident,"[163] as reasons, all of which are negatively skewed words. Although the midwife's actions do not affect the holiness of the girl's body, she is still at fault for being careless. Jerome and Prudentius also briefly mention midwives but do not offer much for analysis.

There are several inscriptions that label women as *obstetrix*, and although the majority of the inscriptions were located in Rome, others were found in various provinces of the empire, including in Africa, Belgic Gaul, Etruria, Latium, and Campania. All of these locations are in the

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[161] Amm. Marc., *History*, XVI.19.; *Nam et pridem in Galliis, cum marem genuisset infantem, hoc perdidit dolo, quod obstetrix corrupta mercede, mox natum, praesecto plus quam convenerat umbilico, necavit; tanta tamque diligens opera navabatur, ne fortissimi viri soboles appareret.*

[162] Hp.*Carn*.19.

[163] August.*Conf*.I.80-81; sive malevolentia sive inscitia sive casu

Mediterranean, but it hints that the reach of Latin and the Roman concept of a midwife extends beyond Italian borders.

medica

Although a significantly less common word than *obstetrix*, *medica* still has its place in Latin texts and inscriptions. Similar to the other words we reviewed, *medica* means "midwife," but also has the additional meaning of "female physician."[164] It is the feminine form of the word *medicus*, which also means "physician." Under the *medicus* entry in the Lewis and Short dictionary, the feminine form is listed as a primarily post-classical word, but there are instances of it being used frequently in inscriptions from the first century BCE to the fourth century CE, as well as a handful of textual references throughout that time period.

The first reference in a Latin text comes from Martial's *Epigrams*, in the first century CE, in which Martial passively mentions female doctors in the set up for a lewd joke. There is a woman who is suffering from hysteria, and so is requesting the usual remedy, intercourse, at which point, Martial writes, "Straight away the men doctors approach and the women doctors retire; her feet are hoisted. Drastic therapy!"[165] In his analysis of this quote, Holt N. Parker rightfully declares, "the existence of women doctors is taken for granted; they are simply part of the backdrop to the joke."[166]

The next reference comes from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, in Book 5, which details the marriage between Psyche and Cupid. In section 10, Psyche's sisters are comparing their dismal marriages to her own, one of whom says,

> "'Well, the husband I'm saddled with is folded up and bent over double with arthritis, and he can hardly ever renew his homage to my erotic

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[164] *L&S*, s.v. "*medica"*

[165] Mart., Epigrams, XI; *protinus accedunt medici medicaeque recedunt, tollunturque pedes. o medicina gravis!*

[166] Holt N. Parker, "Women Doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire," 133.

> allure. I spend most of my time chafing his twisted, petrified fingers, irritating these tender hands of mine with smelly dressings and filthy bandages and reeking poultices. It's not a dutiful wife I look like—I play the role of an overworked nurse."[167]

While *medica* traditionally is translated as physician, Sarah Ruden and E.J. Kenney both translate it as "nurse" and "sick-nurse" respectively. There is evidence that nurses did not formally exist as an ancient medical profession,[168] but either way it is clear that a *medica* has a role beyond just midwifery and is also skilled in caring for arthritis or other ailments, as described by Apuleius.

One of the biggest differences between Greek and Latin inscriptions is that there are many more for *obstetrix* and *medica* than there are for μαῖα and ἰατρός. *medica*, in particular, appears on many funerary monuments, including one for a freedwoman in Emerita, Spain from the second century CE, named Iulia Saturnia, who was described as *medicae optimae*.[169]

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[167] Apul.Met.V.10; *Ego vero maritum articulari etiam morbo complicatum curvatumque ac per hoc rarissimo venerem meam recolente sustineo, plerumque detortos et duratos in lapidem digitos eius perfricans, fomentis olidis et pannis sordidis et faetidis cataplasmatibus manus tam delicatas istas adurens, nec uxoris osam faciem sed medicae laboriosam personam sustinens.* Trans. Sarah Ruden, The Golden Ass, Book 5.10, p. 98.

[168] See "Chapter 9: Imaginary Midwives" in Helen King's *Hippocrates' Woman*.

[169] *CIL* 11.497; "the best doctor"