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‘Bring the Puppy here’

Sophron fr. 4A Hordern (PSI XI 1214a) and Hippocratic Gynaecology

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Abstract

As recent scholarship has demonstrated, the Hippocratic treatises include many ritual elements. Taking this blurred boundary between medicine and ritual as a starting point, I will focus on a particular operation in the Hippocratic treatise *Barrenness* (*Steril.* 18.3)—which stands out because of the exceptional specificity of the procedure described. I wish to argue that this specificity can be best accounted for by comparing the procedure to a ritual described in Sophron’s fragment 4A. Reading these texts together and pointing out their correspondences not only helps in explaining the procedure in *Steril.* 18.3 more satisfactorily than has been done to date, but also allows me to propose a new interpretation of the title of Sophron 4A and the contents of its ritual.

Keywords

Gynaecology – Hippocratic Corpus – Magic – Medicine – Ritual – Sophron

•••

Ἦλεο δὴ ποτε καὶ σὺ πολὺρριζον παρὰ θάμνον,
Λόκρι, φιλοφθόγγων ὠκυτάτα σκυλάκων,
τοῖον ἔλαφρίζοντι τεῶ ἔγκάτθετο κῶλῳ
ἰὸν ἀμείλικτον ποικιλόδειρος ἔχισ.¹

1 Anyt. 10, Gow and Page 1965, 37.

You perished, even you, once beside a many-rooted bush,
 Locris, swiftest of noise-loving puppies,
 Into your nimble limb a speckle-necked snake
 put such harmful poison.²



In this epigram—one of her pet epitaphs—, the Hellenistic poetess Anyte laments the death of her puppy Locris. It has been suggested that the expression of sympathy for deceased animals in these epitaphs, in almost humanizing fashion, is consistent with woman's perceived nurturing role in ancient Greek society. By using Homeric diction verbatim in her lament, Anyte even elevates Locris to the status of an epic hero, a veritable puppy-Hector.³ Conversely, deceased puppies can be considered to have taken care of Greek women; both in the treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus and in ritual, puppies are used as ingredients to restore women to health.

As Helen King notes in her introduction to the 2005 volume *Health in Antiquity*, there are broadly two modern definitions of health. The first is a biomedical one: health as the absence of disease; the second definition involves 'well-being', including social and cultural elements. This social and cultural well-being does not necessarily involve only the individual, and can even extend to the relationships between a human and deities or spirits, adding a ritual element to health.⁴ In fact, as we will see, modern scholarship has often emphasized that the dichotomy between medicine on the one hand and ritual and magic on the other does not hold.⁵

2 Translation Greene 2005, 148-149. Greene's Greek text deviates slightly from Gow and Page's in that she accepts Pollux' *ὠκυτάτη*, 'swiftest', whereas Gow and Page prefer Baale's emendation to *ὠκυτάτα*. This has no bearing on the translation.

3 For a discussion of this epigram, see Greene 2005, 148-150, and her references there.

4 King 2005, 2-4. Her introduction presents an excellent overview of the problems of defining 'health' and several modern theories of it.

5 The definition of magic in the ancient world is problematic. Practices usually considered 'magical' in scholarship on the ancient world, such as binding spells, purifications, and rituals linked to the goddess Hecate, are often contrasted to religion. For example, magic has been suggested to be more directly goal oriented while religion is rather about supplication; or magic is private and secretive, while religion is open and practiced by state cults. However, magical practices are not always clearly separable from practices more commonly labelled as religious; see the preface to Faraone and Obbink 1997, and Fowler 2000.

Both arguing from and continuing the blurring of this dichotomy, which will be treated in more detail in part 1, this paper purports to establish a connection between two excerpts of texts which are at first sight very different. In part 2, I will discuss the first of these texts, a very specific operation in a Hippocratic treatise which aims at bringing out a woman's suppressed menses; the second, analysed in part 3, is a papyrus fragment of a poem by a Sicilian-Greek poet from the fifth century BCE which lists the preparations for a magical ritual. These two excerpts are linked by several elements, including the use of puppets. Reading these texts together, as I will in part 4, I will explore how the specific operation in the first can be accounted for by the ritual procedure in the second.

1 Medicine and Ritual

Before discussing these two texts in more detail, however, it is necessary to address the medicine vs. ritual divide of the Hippocratic treatises.

For James Longrigg, author of the often mentioned *Greek Rational Medicine. Philosophy and Medicine from Alcmaeon to the Alexandrians*, the ancient Greeks "... first evolved rational systems of medicine for the most part free from magical and religious elements and based upon natural causes", an "emancipation from superstition" which was possible only because of the influence of natural philosophy on the nascent art of medicine.⁶ As King has observed, there is a discrepancy in how the word 'rationality' is used here: "[i]t may denote a type of medicine which searches for the cause in order to decide on treatment, or it may carry value-judgements about whether or not an argument makes sense in modern scientific terms."⁷ According to the first definition, all ancient medicine is rational, whereas the second brings in modern values; a 'rational' system of medicine, according to the second definition, does not include supernatural elements.⁸

A Hippocratic treatise which was often considered to confirm this rejection of the supernatural in the Corpus is *The Sacred Disease*. The author of this treatise reacts negatively to those 'magicians, purifiers, charlatans and quacks' (μάγοι τε και καθάρται και ἀγύρται και ἀλαζόνες) and their methods in curing the

6 Longrigg 1993, 1.

7 King 1998, 6, with reference there.

8 See also Totelin 2009, 187 on Longrigg and King. The introduction to Horstmanshoff and Stol 2004 addresses the problem that scholars often consider Graeco-Roman medicine to be more rationalising than its Near Eastern counterpart, a false presumption the volume seeks to remedy.

'sacred disease', which in their view is inflicted by the gods.⁹ On first glance, this treatise indeed seems to do away with magic and the divine in medicine. As Julie Laskaris has argued in a 2002 analysis of the treatise, however, *The Sacred Disease* should rather be considered a rhetorical piece in which the author makes a case for his own superior knowledge in order to attract patients and students.¹⁰ If this author reacts negatively to magico-religious elements in the treatment of the 'sacred disease', he does so because ritual healers are competitors in the medical marketplace, rather than because he would consider these elements to have no place in medicine. Indeed, the author brings the divine element of the disease within his own area of expertise, instead of wholly rejecting it.¹¹

The treatise fits well in the wider tendency of ancient science to distance itself from magic and religion. As Geoffrey Lloyd has argued, this trend is again more likely due to a competitive element than to an actual rejection of magico-religious elements, and science and religion sometimes even existed in symbiosis.¹² This seems to have been the case for temple medicine, which rose to popularity in the same period in which the Hippocratic treatises were written.¹³ Especially the cult of the healing hero/god Asclepius seems to have been endorsed by the Hippocratic physicians, and shared techniques with them.¹⁴

Another treatise which seemingly rejects ritual healing is *Diseases of Young Girls* (*Virg.*), in which the author disapproves of the practice of girls who dedicated their clothes to the goddess Artemis after menarche.¹⁵ Authors of other gynaecological treatises of the Corpus, however, are quite willing to include magico-religious elements in their treatments. A particularly poignant example here is *Diseases of Women* 1.77, which includes in a list of 'therapies that

9 Hp. *Morb.Sacr.* 2.2-3; Jones 1923, 140-141 for text and translation (6.354.13-14 Littré). My primary point of reference for the Greek of the Hippocratic texts are the Loeb editions. I have also added references to Littré's *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate* where appropriate.

10 Laskaris 2002, 2.

11 Ead. 2002, ch. 3 for an analysis of the speech. See also Lloyd 2003, 43-50 on this treatise and its inclusion of the divine.

12 See Lloyd 1990. That competition was fierce can be inferred not only from the strong reactions in *The Sacred Disease* against magico-religious medicine, but also because the natural causes put to the fore by Hippocratic physicians were not necessarily more visible and thus not more easily provable than divine causation was. Furthermore, the Hippocratic treatments were perhaps not that much more effective than, say, ritual purifications: many of the case studies in Hp. *Epid.* end in the death of the patient.

13 Lloyd 2003, 40. Additionally, Laskaris 1999 and 2002, ch. 1 argues that Archaic healing cults may have been a prime source of medical knowledge later included in the Corpus.

14 King 1998, 103 and Wickkiser 2008, 53-55.

15 Potter 2010, 362-363 for text and translation (8.468.17-20 Littré).

promote quick delivery' (ὠκυτόκια) for women in labour an amulet fashioned from 'scarlet wool' (εἰρίω φοινικέω).¹⁶ Incidentally, at the very beginning of Theocritus' second *Idyll*—in which Simaetha, together with the help of her servant girl Thestylis, performs a binding spell to keep the attention of her lover Delphis and impede him from having sexual relationships with another girl—the libation bowl to be used in the binding ritual is circled with 'finest scarlet's sheep wool' (φοινικέω οἶδος ἄώτῳ).¹⁷ It seems apt here to quote Robert Fowler's insistence that "the border between magic and science is easily crossed".¹⁸ Contrary to Longrigg's view, magico-religious elements were thus very much integral to the treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus. 'Ritual' healing and 'secular' healing were inextricably intertwined.

2 *Barrenness* 18.3 (= 230, 8.440.6-14 Littré)

The first excerpt of text under consideration in this paper is a very specific operation described in one of the gynaecological treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus: *Barrenness* (*Steril.*).¹⁹ Although Emile Littré in his magisterial nineteenth century edition of the Hippocratic Corpus considered this treatise as belonging with *Mul.* books 1 and 2—thus naming it *Mul.* 3—, it is now generally taken to be a separate work.²⁰ This is due mainly to the testimony of Erotian, who mentions the treatise Περὶ ἀφόρων, 'On barren women', separately from Γυναικείων α' β', *Mul.* 1 and 2.²¹ Much like most other treatises in the Hippocratic Corpus, its date is hard to determine more specifically than the second half

16 Hanson 1998, 82-83 for the magical connotations of this treatment. The text reads: "Ἐτερον ὠκυτόκιον. τοῦ σικύου τοῦ ἀγρίου, ὅστις ἂν ἤδη λευκὸς ᾖ, τὸν καρπὸν ἐμπλάσας κηρῷ, εἶτα εἰρίω ἐνελιξας φοινικέω, περιὰψον περὶ τὴν ὀσφύν, 'Another *okytokion*: smear fruit of a wild cucumber already white on wax, wind up on red-coloured fleece and fasten around the parturients' loins.' Translation Hanson 1998, 83. For the Greek text, see 8.172.2-4 Littré. For *Mul.*, Littré's nineteenth century edition is still the best available.

17 Hopkinson 2015, 38-39 for text and translation.

18 Fowler 2000, 322.

19 Although it is by now widely accepted that Hippocrates, the legendary 'father of medicine' did not compose any of the treatises in the Corpus, this article will use the term 'Hippocratic' to denote those treatises later collected under his name and their authors. See Totelin 2009, 4-13 for a good general introduction to the Hippocratic Corpus and its gynaecological treatises.

20 Vol. 8 Littré.

21 Erot. 36.16-17. See Nachmansohn 1918, 9 for text. See Potter 2012, 327 for other ancient comments on the treatise.

of the fifth or first half of the fourth century BCE, and its place of composition is similarly unclear.²²

The bulk of *Barrenness* is concerned with identifying causes of sterility and providing treatments promoting conception in women.²³ As King observes, in the ten gynaecological treatises of the Corpus “[t]he definition of women’s health is very closely and explicitly linked to women’s reproductive functions”, and especially to menstruation.²⁴ It is important to note here that although many of the treatises of the Corpus contradict each other, the gynaecological works show a high enough level of internal agreement to attempt a coherent overview of woman’s health within them.²⁵ According to these treatises it is necessary for women to menstruate and so evacuate excess blood, the correct amount of menses being carefully monitored, because women’s flesh is considered looser and spongier than that of men, and thus retains more blood converted from nutriment in their bodies.²⁶ The Hippocratics thought of health in terms of balance and of disease as imbalance, particularly of fluids in the body, by which logic too much blood would make a woman sick; suppression of menses would lead to suffocation of different parts of the body.²⁷ The womb is the main organ responsible for the blockage of the menses, as it was believed to be able to turn and move through the body, thus turning the mouth of the womb away from the vagina and so impeding menstruation.²⁸ A dry uterus, for example, would turn to wetter parts of the body.²⁹ Sexual intercourse is

22 See Dean-Jones 1994, 6. The uncertainty over the place of composition of the treatises is further complicated by the classical tradition of writing scientific prose in Ionic.

23 For an overview of the contents of the treatise, see Totelin 2009, 11 and Potter 2012, 328.

24 King 2005, 156.

25 Dean-Jones 1994, 11 and King 1998, 21. There are, of course, several differences to be found as well. For example, as clarified below, most gynaecological treatises seemed to posit woman’s wet nature and risk of retaining too much blood in their bodies as the main cause of disease. The gynaecological chapter Hp. *Loc.Hom.* 47, however, explicitly mentions the womb as the primary causative agent of disease; see Craik 1998, 219.

26 King 1998, 28-30. Also Totelin 2009, 197 for a translation of *Mul.* 1.1 on the texture of women’s flesh.

27 King 1998, 29. King 2005, 151 and 156, and Totelin 2009, 197-198 on health as fluid balance and disease as imbalance. King 2005, 156 remarks that, for women, diseases in many cases inevitably result in death in the Hippocratic treatises, opposing health to death rather than disease.

28 King 1998, 35-36.

29 Hanson 1998, 86. There is some discussion over whether the Hippocratics considered the womb a living creature, capable of moving on its own and hungry for childbearing as in Pl. *Ti.* 91c, or that it rather simply turned according to the principle of opposite attracting opposite, or both. See for example Dean-Jones 1991, 122-124. See Totelin 2009, 197-198 on the principle of curing through opposites implicit in the gynaecological treatises. Faraone 2011 provides an insightful discussion of the wandering womb throughout Greek

considered very healthy for women, especially if it leads to pregnancy.³⁰ The foetus weighs down the womb, keeping it in place, and the dangerous surplus of menstrual blood is used as nutriment for the unborn child. Parturition is similarly beneficial, as the lochia would provide an additional purge of blood and because of the whole process the woman's body would 'be broken down' (καταρρήγνυται), allowing more room for blood in the future, hence decreasing further risk of disease.³¹ Conception and pregnancy were thus generally considered signs of health in women.³² Problems with conception would prompt medical intervention by the Hippocratics, for example when the womb—and specifically its mouth—was too hard or dry.³³

Steril. 18 discusses such an impediment to conception and the subsequent therapy in twelve stages, opening with a cure for when the mouth or neck of the uterus is hardened. The second stage of the therapy provides another treatment, presumably for the same problem, but with the additional specification that a woman's menses have first appeared and then ended again. The patient in question should undergo a five day fomentation—of brine and leeks—of her womb on an elaborate vapour bath apparatus constructed out of a bottle gourd, followed by another ten days of a brine-and-garlic fomentation, and another couple of days of a pure brine vapour bath.³⁴ It is part three—directly continuing the treatment of part two—with which this paper is concerned:

Τὴν τελευταίαν δὲ πυρίην, ὅταν μέλλης ἀφιέναι τῆς θεραπείης, σκυλάκιον ὅτι νεώτατον ἀνασχίσας, ἀρωμάτων παντοδαπῶν ὅτι εὐωδεστάτων καὶ ξηροτάτων κόψας, τὰ ἐντοσθίδια ἐξελῶν τοῦ σκυλακίου ἐμπλήσαι καὶ σάξαι ὅτι μάλιστα τῶν ἀρωμάτων, ξυλήφια δὲ ὑποθείς, ἐς τὸν ἐχίνον ἐνθεὶς τὸ σκυλάκιον, οἴνου ὡς εὐωδεστάτου ἐπιχέαι, καὶ πυριῆν διὰ τοῦ αὐλοῦ· καὶ ὅπως κατὰ δύναμιν εἶναι ὄλην τὴν ἡμέρην ἐπὶ ταύτης τῆς πυρίης, πυριῆσαι τε καὶ ἐρωτᾶν αὐτήν, εἰ ὁδμὴ διὰ τοῦ στόματος δοκέει ὄζειν τῶν ἀρωμάτων· σημεῖον γὰρ οὐ σμικρὸν ἐς ξύλληψιν τῇ θεραπευομένῃ.³⁵

antiquity, arguing that medical and magical approaches to this phenomenon often competed with each other, but also shared techniques.

30 King 2005, 157.

31 King 2013, 61-62. See 62-67 on women who become pregnant too often, in which case it is no longer beneficial. For the body being broken down, see e.g. *Mul.* 1.1.6 (8.10.6 Littré).

32 See King 2005, 157-158 for some passages that seem to allow that a woman can be healthy but sterile, "... healthy in the body, but not in the womb" (158).

33 King 1998, 31. Also Totelin 2009, 198.

34 *Hp. Steril.* 1-2; Potter 2012, 366-367 for text and translation.

35 *Id.*, 368-369 for text and translation of *Steril.* 18.3 (8.440.6-14 Littré). I have slightly adapted Potter's translation from 'no small indication of conception' to 'no small indication of the

At the time of the final vapor bath, just when you are about to terminate the therapy, cut open a very young puppy, pound all manner of aromatic substances that are very fragrant and dry, remove the inward parts of the puppy, and fill it up and pack it as tight as possible with the aromatics; place wooden sticks under the puppy, set it in the pot, pour in some very fragrant wine, and foment through the pipe.³⁶ As far as the woman’s strength will allow her to be on the vapor bath apparatus for the whole day, continue the fomentation; also ask her whether the odor of the aromatic herbs seems to be given off in her mouth, for this would be no small indication of the ability to conceive in the patient.

Fumigations and fomentations are among the most common treatments in the Hippocratic Corpus, especially in the gynaecological treatises, in which they are often used to treat the womb and promote menstruation.³⁷ Similarly, the fomentation of *Steril.* 18.3 aims at softening the mouth of the womb and bringing out the menses. This particular treatment, however, is striking in its specificity, as this is the only instance in the Corpus in which a puppy—or any animal to my knowledge—is used as the basis for a fomentation. Puppy meat as ingredient to promote menses and conception is in itself not unusual, as it is used throughout the Corpus, including the gynaecological treatises.³⁸ For example, *Superf.* 29 describes a long treatment aimed at softening the mouth of the womb, which had become petrified, and so bringing out the menses again. The therapy includes vapour baths, widening the mouth of the uterus using tin or lead spatulas, and having the patient eat ‘puppies and octopus boiled in sweet wine’ (σκυλάκια ἐφθὰ καὶ πουλύποδα ἐν οἴνῳ ἐφθὸν γλυκεῖ), then drink the sauce of this.³⁹ Why puppy meat is so beneficial to women can be gleaned

ability to conceive’, which in my view better conveys the fact that the treatment itself is not considered to impregnate the patient, but rather prepares her for conception.

36 The emphasis here on the fragrant qualities of the herbs and wine speaks in favour of the womb as a creature drawn by attractive smells. They may also have masked the scent of the burning puppy, as noted by Gourevitch 1996, 211.

37 See Gourevitch 1996 for a long list of fumigations and fomentations in the gynaecological treatises. She also attempts to establish a difference between treatments that ask for fumigating (θυμῆν) and those that call for fomenting (πυριθῆν), but concludes that the terms are used more or less interchangeably.

38 The boiled meat of the puppy, σκυλάξ, or of a small puppy, σκυλάκιον, and the sauce cooked from it are recommended foods in several Hippocratic treatises, for example *Epid.* 7.1.62; *Morb.* 2.44, 2.56; *Int.* 27.

39 See Potter 2010, 340 for the Greek text (8.496.16-17 Littré). The translation is my own. The same treatment—close to verbatim—occurs at *Steril.* 5, which includes having the woman under treatment eat σκυλάκια σιαλώδεα διεφθα καὶ πουλύποδα ἐν οἴνῳ ἐφθὸν

from another treatise, *Regimen* 2. Here, in a long list of the properties of the meat of different animals, it is stated that '[d]ogs' flesh dries, heats, and affords strength, but does not pass by stool. The flesh of puppies moistens and passes by stool, still more by urine' (κύνεια ξηραίνει και θερμαίνει και ἰσχὺν ἐμποιεῖ, οὐ μέντοι διαχωρεῖ· σκυλάκεια δὲ ὑγραίνει και διαχωρεῖ, οὐρεῖται δὲ μᾶλλον).⁴⁰ Contrary to the dry dog meat, then, puppy meat is moistening and laxative: ideal for softening the mouth of the uterus and bringing about menstruation.⁴¹

None of this, however, satisfactorily accounts for the specificity of the treatment; not only the use of the puppy as a vessel for the fumigation is exceptional, but also its treatment is unique—it is cut open and stuffed with herbs.⁴² The solution to this is perhaps found outside of the Corpus, as the theories and therapies of the Hippocratic authors—as was demonstrated above by the magico-religious influences in the treatises—were situated in a wider cultural framework. When considering puppies as therapeutic ingredients, one may recall King's remark that "the substances used in the pharmacopoeia should not only be investigated in terms of their 'efficacy'; all natural matter carries rich cultural values, and these are not necessarily best determined by laboratory tests."⁴³ Thinking further about this, Laurence Totelin suggests reading Hippocratic recipes on several levels, both within the logic of the treatises, where opposite cures opposite, and in a wider cultural framework. After all, the Hippocratic authors—even if they tried to avoid any ritual connection of their treatments by adding a layer of medical theory and by actively deriding ritual

γλυκυτάτω· και τοῦ ζωμοῦ πινέτω, 'fat, well-steamed meat of puppy together with octopus boiled in very sweet wine, drink the sauce from this'. See Potter 2012, 344-345 for text and translation (8.420.11-12 Littré). For the recurrence of similar treatments, and especially recipes, in Hippocratic gynaecology, see Totelin 2009, especially chapters 1 and 2 on series of parallel redactions of recipes and possible oral and written sources for these. For the difficulty of separating recipes for purgative medicine from substances used dietetically, see Totelin 2009, 135 with reference to King 1995b, 355-356.

40 Hp. *Vict.* 2.46; Jones 1931, 318-319 for text and translation (Littré 6.546.14-16). As the treatises of the Corpus are the products of many different authors, as noted above, reading one treatise together with another is always somewhat risky.

41 On the properties of the flesh of dogs and puppies, see also King 1998, 25, especially her remark that "[i]ntercourse moistens the womb, discouraging it from moving elsewhere to seek moisture, and agitates the body, easing the passage of blood within it. Similarly, puppies moisten the female body, encouraging reproduction." Also Totelin 2009, 198. For dogs as sacred to several birth goddesses, see Johnston 1999, 212.

42 The word ἀνασχίζω, to cut/rip open, is quite violent, and is further only used in the Corpus in *Superf.* 7, which provides instructions on how to abort a dead foetus with the aid of a surgical tool called 'the claw'.

43 King 1995a, 139.

healing, as discussed above—would have been unable to escape the cultural connotations of the ingredients they used.⁴⁴

This invites a consideration of possible wider cultural influence on the puppy procedure in *Steril.* 18. It is worth noting that women and dogs seem to have been strongly interconnected culturally, as can already be tentatively glanced from Anyte's tenth epigram, with which I opened this article. Another—and much more negative—example is Semon. 7, an invective catalogue of different kinds of women. Semonides' typology is based mainly on comparing women to certain animals, and third on the list is the woman made from the bitch. She is characterised by uncontrollable nosiness, always 'barking', even when threatened.⁴⁵ This chimes well with the impudent behaviour characteristic of the dog in ancient Greek texts, but also with descriptions of the first woman, Pandora, whom Hesiod considered to have the mind of a bitch. As King has explored, the dog reflects the ambiguous traits of women, for whom Pandora serves as the archetype: there is, on the one hand, the untamed sexual appetite which dogs share with human women. This voracity can dry out the male body, much like fire, which recalls the Hippocratic characterisation of the meat of a mature dog as drying, just mentioned. On the other hand, there are the prolific fertility and ease in giving birth ascribed to the dog, which in turn explain the laxative properties of puppy meat and its effectiveness in bringing out the menses and so restoring female fertility in the Hippocratic treatises.⁴⁶

Due to the exceptional specificity of the therapy, however, one might even take this analysis one step further, and argue that there is a particular procedure that has influenced the puppy fumigation, for which we will now turn to another text.

3 Sophron fr. 4A Hordern (PSI 1214a)

Next to nothing is known about the Sicilian-Greek Sophron, a shadowy poet usually placed in the second half of the fifth century BCE.⁴⁷ Apart from a short biographical entry in the *Suda*—which states, among other things, that he is

44 Totelin 2009, 207-208, 300.

45 Semon. 7.12-20; Campbell 1997, 14 for the Greek text and idem, 187-188, and Lloyd-Jones 1975, 67-69 for commentaries on the passage.

46 For these and other connections between dogs and women in classical Greek texts, and relevant source material, see King 1998, 24-25.

47 Olson 2007, 11 places him in the early fifth century BCE, but see Hordern 2005, 2-3 on the chronological issues.

from Syracuse, one of the most prosperous Greek settlements on Sicily—his life remains a mystery.⁴⁸ His mimes were likely short dramatic compositions in prose on everyday comic scenes. They were divided into women's mimes and men's mimes, presumably reflecting the sex of the main character—a division likely to be Sophron's own.⁴⁹ Somewhat defiantly, considering the influence of Ionian prose at the time, his mimes were composed in a Syracusan form of Doric.⁵⁰

Ritual is not a popular theme among the 170 odd fragments of Sophron's work still extant, but the fragment this paper will concern itself with is an exception.⁵¹ Fr. 4A Hordern is the most substantial of only four papyrus fragments of Sophron's work extant from Oxyrhynchus. On the basis of the script, the papyrus can be dated to the first century CE.⁵² The text reads as follows:

- 1 τὰν τράπεζαν κάτθετε
 2 ὥσπερ ἔχει·
 2 λάζεσθε δὲ
 3 ἀλόσ χονδρὸν ἐς τὰν χήρα
 4 καὶ δάφναν πὰρ τὸ ὦα.
 5-6 ποτιβάντες νυν πὸτ τὰν | ἰκτίαν θωκεῖτε.
 6-7 δὸς μοι τὺ | τῶμφακε·
 7 φέρ' ὦ τὰν κύλακα.
 8 πεί γὰρ ἄ ἄσφαλτος;
 8 :: οὔτα::
 9 ἔχε καὶ τὸ δαίδιον
 9-10 καὶ τὸν | λιβανωτόν
 10 ἄγετε δὴ
 11-12 πεπτάσθων μοι ταὶ θύραι | πάσαι.
 12-13 ὑμέσ δὲ ἐνταῦθα | ὀρήτε
 13-14 καὶ τὸν δαελὸν | σβήτε
 14 ὥσπερ ἔχει.
 14-15 εὐκαμίαν | νυν παρέχεσθε
 15-16 ἄς κ' ἐγὼν | πὸτ τὰνδε πυκταλεύσω.
 17 πότνια,
 17-18 δείπνου μὲν τυ κα[ἰ | ξ]ενίων ἀμεμφέων

48 *Suid.* σ 893; Hordern 2004, 2 for text and translation.

49 Hordern 2004, 4-10 on the mimes.

50 *Id.*, 11-25 on Sophron's style and language.

51 *Id.*, 5-6.

52 See Hordern 2002, 167. A high quality picture of the papyrus fragments can be found at <http://www.psi-online.it/documents/psi;11;1214>.

sacrificed to her.⁵⁹ Dogs, and specifically puppies, seem to have some connection to purification rites.⁶⁰ Additionally, salt, laurel, and pitch all have apotropaic qualities and are associated with purification; these ingredients may later in the mime have been thrown on the fire.⁶¹ Frankincense also has some ritual reverberations.⁶² Sophr. 4A thus represents what was most likely a ritual purification accompanied by a puppy sacrifice to Hecate, who is addressed at the end of the fragment.⁶³ On the basis of this, Hordern, following several other scholars, connects fr. 4A with one of the few extant titles of Sophron's work: *The women who say they are expelling the goddess* (Ταὶ γυναῖκες αἰ τᾶν θεῶν φαντι ἐξελεῖν), mentioned by Athenaeus when quoting Sophr. 3—which mentions a 'triad of protective drugs' (τριπτὺς ἀλεξιφάρμακων) buried deep within a cup.⁶⁴ Hordern concludes that this mime, to which fr. 4A also seems to belong, "depicted a group of women who were performing a purification rite to counteract the malignant influence of a particular goddess."⁶⁵ Since the title implies a women's mime, one might speculate that the main speaker in the fragment is female.⁶⁶ The reading in lines 15-16, πῶτ τᾶνδε, 'in these women's names' would imply that the goddess who is being expelled had some control

59 The ἄμφακες, 'hatchet', mentioned in 6-7 can be used to stun a sacrificial animal, see Hordern 2004, 131-132.

60 See for example Thphr. *Char.* 16.13: 'If he ever notices someone at the crossroads wreathed in garlic he goes away, takes a shower, summons priestesses and orders a deluxe purification by sea onion or puppy (σκύλαξ)'. See Rusten and Cunningham 2002, 100-101 for text and translation. Rusten, however, translates the final word as 'dog', which lacks the specificity of σκύλαξ. 'Puppy' is also preferred by Diggle 2004, 112-113, in his commentary on Thphr. *Char.* See also Hordern 2002, 169.

61 Hordern 2002, 169. See especially Diph. 125 Kassel and Austin, in which, among other ingredients, pinewood (δαῖς), pitch and sea water (salt!) are used to purify the daughters of Proetus. See also von Staden 1992a, 17-20 for the use of pitch and laurel in ritual purification. Ritual purifications could include fumigations: see von Staden 1992a, 17 for an example in the *Odyssey* and on Burkert's suggestion that to fumigate may be the original meaning of καθαίρω, 'to purify'.

62 See Sapph. 44.30-34 for the ritual use of frankincense for Apollo Paeon during the wedding ceremony for Hector and Andromache. See also Laskaris 1999, 5-6 on the herbs employed in this fragment. See also Clements 2015 for the significance of frankincense in classical Greek religion.

63 See Hordern 2004, 127-137 for a commentary on the whole fragment.

64 Ath. 11.480b, see Olson 2009, 332-333 for text and translation. See Hordern 2004, 40-41 and 126-127 for text, translation, and commentary of fr. 3. As Hordern notes, ἀλεξιφάρμακα can here mean both protective drugs and apotropaic spells, see also Hordern 2002, 170.

65 Hordern 2002, 170.

66 Ibid.

over a group of women.⁶⁷ The goddess is, as was established earlier, most likely Hecate, who in Theoc. 2 is also invoked in the binding of Delphis. Where in Theoc. 2 Hecate is called upon to place a binding spell on a victim, the ritual in Sophr. 4A is perhaps an attempt to release women previously bound by Hecate from her influence.⁶⁸ To conclude, then, Sophr. 4A most likely represents a ritual—including a puppy sacrifice and perhaps a fumigation with apotropaic ingredients—to release a group of women from the malign binding influence of the goddess Hecate.⁶⁹

4 A Case for Ritual Influence on *Barrenness* 18.3

It is now time to turn to the interconnections of Sophr. 4A and *Steril.* 18.3: both are purgative operations—the one aiming to purge the binding influence of a goddess, the other to purge blood from a woman’s body, and so unbind it. Both likely include fumigations, and both make use of a puppy.

The first to see some connection between the ritual in Sophron and Hippocratic gynaecology was Heinrich von Staden in his 1992 article *Women and Dirt*. As an example of “[t]he [material and conceptual] continuities between magico-ritual purification and Hippocratic therapy of the uterus” he mentions the use of pitch, or asphalt, in Sophr. 4A, which is also used in Hippocratic

67 The papyrus reading is πὸτ τάνδε, but Vitelli has suggested to emend to πὸτ τάνδε, ‘against this (goddess)’, which would aid in establishing a link between 4A and the title, but as Hordern 2002, 170 notes: “[o]n either reading it seems extremely obtuse not to connect the title of this mime with the papyrus fragment, unless sound counter-arguments are forthcoming.” In his 2004 edition of Sophron’s fragments, Hordern is much more careful in connecting mime and title, but he still groups fr. 4A together with fr. 3 under this heading, see Hordern 2004, 40–43, 128.

68 The word Simaetha uses is καταδήσομαι, see Hopkinson 2015, 38–39. Hecate often appears in κατάδεσμοι, or ‘binding spells’, used to restrain a victim, that are found all over the Greek world from the fifth century BCE onward—some of the earliest examples of these spells are from Sicily. Amatory binding spells similar to the one Simaetha employs are found in Attica from the classical period. See Faraone 1997 for an overview and the formulae used.

69 Hordern 2002, 171–172 suggests to place fragment 4A in the context of curing a love spell by magical means—including the use of fumigations—to connect the fragment more closely to Theoc. 2. The sources he adduces for this, however—Tibullus, Lucian, Propertius, Horace, and Vergil—are all somewhat late to be compared to the fifth century BCE Sophron. In any case, the use of fumigation in purifications is attested far earlier, see n. 61 above, and the scholia to Theocritus never specify what kind of φάρμακα Theocritus borrowed from Sophron.

therapies, mainly for the purification of female patients.⁷⁰ This purification with pitch very often takes the form of fumigations, conceptually linked to ritual purifications, of the female patient in the gynaecological treatises. Von Staden explains the usage of these ingredients, usually considered ritually polluting, by the Greek belief that women were particularly susceptible to pollution—the womb being the most concentratedly ‘dirty’ part of their body. Thus, he holds, dirt is here used to treat dirt, the polluting pitch used to cure the polluting uterus.⁷¹ This, however, is where von Staden’s comparison ends. Interestingly, the other ingredients used in Sophr. 4A—‘salt’, ‘laurel’, and ‘frankincense’ (ἄλς, δάφνη, and λιβανωτόν)—are all used in gynaecological therapy, two of them in vapour baths.⁷² These ingredients also seem to have purgative properties in Hippocratic gynaecology, used to bring about the menses or purge the lochia.⁷³ Laurel seems to have particularly strong purifying properties in ancient Greek myth, magic, and ritual.⁷⁴ As discussed earlier, puppies too are often used in gynaecological purgative treatments.⁷⁵

70 Von Staden 1992a, 16–18. See also n. 61 above on the apotropaic qualities of the ingredients used and the ritual context of fumigations.

71 Id., 16. For examples of gynaecological fumigations which call for pitch, see: Hp. *Nat.Mul.* 26, 34.6 and 34.30; *Mul.* 195, 201, 203, 206 (twice), 221.

72 Most of the Hippocratic recipes are included in the gynaecological treatises, so the fact that these ingredients figure often in them is in itself no surprise, see Totelin 2009, 2. Fumigations are also a predominantly gynaecological phenomenon. Salt is often used throughout the whole Corpus, but not for gynaecological fumigations, although it does make appearances in Hippocratic gynaecological recipes for suppositories and drinks, for example: *Nat.Mul.* 36, 42, 72, 77; *Mul.* 37 (ἄλδος χόνδρου), 52, 55, 74, 75, 78 (four times), 82, 84 (three times), 88 (two times, one of which ἄλδος χόνδρον), 92, 98 (four times), etc. See also θάλασσα, ‘brine’, which is often used in vapour baths. Laurel is often used in gynaecological recipes, also in fumigations, for example: *Nat.Mul.* 6, 18; *Mul.* 58, 131, 145; *Steril.* 29 (241 Littré). Frankincense appears in a list of softening agents in *Nat.Mul.* 32 and *Mul.* 74. It is used often in the recipes, and used for vapour baths at *Nat.Mul.* 34; *Mul.* 195, 206; *Superf.* 32 (together with laurel).

73 For example, see *Nat.Mul.* 18 for laurel in an operation to bring about retained menses, and 32 for frankincense in a recipe to clean out the lochia. Later in the same chapter, salt is used in an application to clear away bile from the uterus. *Mul.* 86 starts with a purifying recipe to draw down the menses and soften the mouth of the womb which includes both frankincense and salt. This recipe has a near verbatim parallel at *Nat.Mul.* 32.

74 Von Staden 1992a, 19–20.

75 The ingredients used in Sophron 4A would retain their purgative properties in Late Antiquity and even the Middle Ages. The fourth century CE medical author Oribasius, for example, includes in his *Coll.Med.* 8.25.17 a recipe for a douche which calls for both salt and frankincense. The medieval *Hippiatrica*, a work on medicinal treatments for horses, has a recipe to clear out pus from a horse’s pudenda which includes puppy meat and pitch at 49.5. *Hippiatr.* 103.2 lists salt and frankincense in a recipe for a purifying injection.

The δᾶδιον, the piece of pinewood likely used as a torch in Sophr. 4A, also has a role in Hippocratic medicine.⁷⁶ A recipe for a dry and biting medication in *Ulc.* 17, for example, calls for the use of a δᾶδιον, ‘a splinter of pinewood’, to help burn some greasy wool.⁷⁷ All other appearances of the word δᾶδιον in the Corpus, interestingly, occur in *Mul.* 1 and 2, in which it has a very specific function. In these treatises, the δᾶδιον denotes a pinewood stick used to dilate and straighten the mouth of the womb, thus turning the womb to its right place and so allowing the menses to pass.⁷⁸ The treatment is often alternated with vapour baths/fumigations, or even seems to serve as a preparation for it.⁷⁹ Much like in Sophr. 4A, the δᾶδιον in Hippocratic gynaecology is part of a purgative procedure which involves fumigation.⁸⁰

Another connection between the two excerpts is the treatment of the puppy—likely sacrificed in Sophron, sliced open in the Hippocratic treatise. Von Staden has suggested the inviolability of the skin as one of the cultural contexts for the absence of (human) dissection in classical Greek medicine. As “magical symbol of wholeness and oneness, of the integrity of individual or collective organisms that might become susceptible to disintegration or fragmentation”, the skin was not to be broken except in case of a crisis.⁸¹ This moment of crisis can be both collective and individual, to be resolved by a sacrifice to supplicate a deity or by surgery to secure the health of a patient.⁸² I would apply this theory to the puppy procedure as well, and consider the retained menses here as an individual crisis of health, which would justify the breaking of the puppy’s skin. Here again the supposed boundaries between a ritual context and a medical one are blurred, as the sacrifice of the puppy and the act of being sliced open for a medical procedure are strongly linked conceptually.

What conclusion is to be drawn from these interconnections between Sophr. 4A and Hippocratic gynaecology, especially *Steril.* 18.3, set out in the preceding? To my mind, the specificity of the puppy fumigation can be best

76 For the accentuation of the word in the Sophron papyrus, see Hordern 2004, 25. The Attic form is δᾶδιον.

77 For the text, see Potter 1995, 364-365 (6.422.3-5 Littré).

78 The most elaborate example of this operation can be found in *Mul.* 133, in which the pinewood sticks are alternated with leaden staffs.

79 See for example *Mul.* 13.3.

80 Δᾶις, ‘pinewood’, of which δᾶδιον is the diminutive, often appears in the gynaecological recipes for purgative drinks. See for example *Nat.Mul.* 9 (for a purification after birth complications), 32 (to clear the lochia); *Mul.* 78.89 (in an abortive). In *Mul.* 133, δᾶις is used for the same purpose, described above, as δᾶδιον.

81 Von Staden 1992b, 227-228.

82 Id., 227-230.

explained by the influence of a purification ritual similar to that in Sophr. 4A. This is likely in the context of a strong magico-religious influence on the Hippocratic treatises. Direct influence in either direction is in this case hard to argue for, and would be taking things too far. The most plausible suggestion would be that both Sophron and the author of *Steril.* drew from the same or similar shared practices, be they ritual or medical. That the Hippocratic author was drawing from a ritual source would be a more satisfactory explanation for the operation in *Steril.* 18.3 than a simple connection between puppies and fertility, as it can account for its exceptional specificity within the Corpus. In addition, the many connections between the gynaecological texts and Sophr. 4A invites a further consideration, to do with the title of Sophron's mime.

If Sophron 4A represents a ritual to release a group of women from the binding influence of Hecate, maybe even from a binding spell, there may be a tentative connection to Hippocratic gynaecology in the figure of Artemis, the goddess who in her guise of *Λυγοδέσμη*, 'bound by the *Agnus Castus*' or *Ἀπαρχομένη*, 'the strangled one', is both able to 'unbind', or 'release the girdle' on women's bodies to start menstruation and so make the transition from *παρθένος*, young girl, to *γυνή*, a woman ready to reproduce; and to 'bind' women again, making them unable to menstruate and thus infertile. This Artemis is perhaps even reflected in Hp. *Virg.*⁸³ Artemis and Hecate, the goddess most likely mentioned in Sophr. 4A, were closely connected, often syncretised in the magical papyri, and were both honoured, together with several other goddesses, in the Gaggera sanctuary at Selinus on Sicily.⁸⁴ This syncretism, interestingly, likely came about due to the fact that Hecate too was associated with transitional moments in girls' lives.⁸⁵ Furthermore, like Hecate, Artemis was connected to dogs. Could retained menses, due to their bodies being bound as a result of illness or an earlier insult of the goddess Hecate (or both), be the binding that the women in the mime were suffering from? In other words, could the phrase in Sophron's title, 'expelling the goddess', here in fact mean 'to start menstruating again'? This is not unlikely, considering the many interconnections between the ritual fumigation in Sophr. 4A, the operation in *Steril.* 18.3 and other purgative gynaecological recipes in the Hippocratic Corpus.

We can take this argument further. Several Hippocratic gynaecological treatises posit an analogy between menstrual blood and the blood of a sacrificial animal.⁸⁶ As King has demonstrated, this analogy points to an equation between women and sacrificial animals: like a sacrificial victim, a young woman

83 King 1993 on the treatise and the 'strangled' Artemis *Lygodesma*.

84 Hordern 2002, 165.

85 Johnston 1999, 211-215.

86 *Mul.* 6.72; *Nat.Puer.* 18.

is ready to shed blood. Furthermore, there seems to be some connection between the womb and the ἀμνίον, the bowl used to catch the blood of the victim during sacrifice, as Empedocles used this term to refer to the membrane holding the foetus.⁸⁷ Moreover, the term καθαίρω, which can mean ‘to purify’ in a ritual sense, or ‘to purge’ in other contexts, is sometimes used for menstruation and the lochial flow in the gynaecological treatises.⁸⁸ Menstrual bleeding is thus explicitly closely connected to ritual sacrificial bleeding by the Hippocratics and beyond. Considering the facts that the goddess whose influence is expelled in Sophr. 4A is Hecate—herself, directly and through her syncretism with Artemis, connected to menstruation –, and that the ritual fumigation in the mime looks very much like a Hippocratic operation aimed at bringing out the menses, it seems likely that Sophron’s ‘expelling the goddess’ is a phrase used to denote menstruation.⁸⁹

There is one other interesting aspect about the mime’s title, *The women who say they are expelling the goddess*, that invites further consideration. The title could be taken to humorously imply that the ritual is doomed to fail, as the women only say they are expelling Hecate, but, I would argue, it might also point to something else. As Hordern notes, the ancient grammarian Philoxenus remarked that Sophron included intentional solecisms in his work to imitate female speech.⁹⁰ Although Philoxenus discussed two other fragments (33 and 34), his remark does indicate that Sophron was generally interested in portraying what he considered to be ‘female’ language.⁹¹ Could ‘expelling the goddess’ be such an example of ‘female’ language, a specific term used only among women?⁹² This could explain why the women of the title only *say* they are expelling the goddess, as if that is not what they are actually doing.⁹³

87 King 1998, 88–98.

88 See von Staden 1992a, 15 and his references there. See also Lloyd 2003, 9–10 on the wide semantic range of Greek καθάρσις, ‘purification’.

89 This could also mean that the δαδίων used in Sophron was not a torch, but perhaps a stick used to dilate the mouth of the womb as in the gynaecological treatises of the Corpus, although this remains speculative. At the very least, the word may have recalled its medical usage.

90 Hordern 2004, 14.

91 Id., 64–67 for the Greek text and translation.

92 I thank an anonymous reviewer of *Mnemosyne* for this suggestion.

93 Interestingly, Sophr. 33 may also have some other faint connections to Hippocratic gynaecology. It reads: ὑγιώτερον κολοκύντας, ‘healthier than a gourd’. This expression is also found in Epich. 152 Kassel and Austin. Gourds or cucumbers were often used in Hippocratic gynaecological medicine, and “were seen as emblematic of health, perhaps because of their moist character” (Crak 1998, 226). See also ead. 94–95 and 186 on Sophr. *103, which includes the same proverb, and 141 on another possible medical reverberation in Sophron’s work. These connections between Sicilian authors and Hippocratic writing, among other things, lead Crak to suggest in her edition of *Loc.Hom.* that this treatise may

What reading Sophr. 4A and *Steril.* 18.3 together doubtlessly proves is that, when it comes to healing, the secular and the divine once again appear to be inextricably intertwined; the call to 'bring the puppy here' is an integral part of both a medical procedure and a magico-religious ritual that inform and reinterpret each other.⁹⁴

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be of West Greek origin: Craik 1998, 7-8; 25-29. Considering the close correspondences between Sophron and *Steril.* 18.3, one might posit, albeit very tentatively, that *Steril.* too was composed in this area.

94 An earlier version of this article was presented at the CRASIS masterclass 'Ancient Health: Concepts, Materiality and the Experience of Life', held at the University of Groningen on the 2nd and 3d of March 2017. My thanks are due to Vanessa Cazzato, André Lardinois, Ralph Rosen, Joost Snaterse, and the anonymous reviewers appointed by *Mnemosyne* for language editing, proofreading and helpful comments.

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