

The feminisation of magic in classical Greek  
literature: The subversive potential of women in  
the *polis*

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## **MA thesis abstract**

### ***The feminisation of magic in classical Greek literature: the subversive potential of women in the polis***

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This thesis examines the apparent over-representation of women (by comparison with non-literary evidence) as magical adepts in the classical literary tradition. A fluid and ideologically based ancient definition for magic is posited, and will be demonstrated throughout. Methodologies based on theoretical insights drawn from structural and symbolic anthropology, and from feminist scholarship will be employed in an effort to unravel a number of the forces at work in the construction of women as most expert in the deployment of magic.

Having identified women as marginalised, or 'other' to Greek ideas of personal and political selfhood, their appearance in fifth century drama as amateur and experienced users of magical arts will be assessed, with reference to other 'intruders', as a perceived threat to the order and integrity of the community (*oikos*, *polis* and *Hellas* variously).

The relationships of women and of magic with divinity, otherness and liminality will be explored in various guises. In Chapter one, different ancient and modern ways of understanding magic will be explored, with a view to establishing a useful theoretical framework. Chapter two will approach the

interconnections of liminality, magic and private ritual through the figure of Hekate. Chapter three will discuss women's control over dangerous and important transformative processes, and the relationship between transformations and the idea of magic.

Chapters four and five will examine prominent themes in the construction of magic as a disruptive art dominated by women. Chapter six, on the other hand, will explore the treatment of magic under law in the reality of Athenian society, and the ways that literary stereotypes informed this social reality.

Chapter seven will explore the idea, prevalent in classical discussions, that magic is ultimately foreign in origin. The assimilation of various ideas of otherness – including femininity, animality, divinity and barbarity – in the creation of a powerful category of magic will be discussed. Finally, it will be suggested that magic was powerfully symbolic of subversion of accepted social and metaphysical hierarchies. Women's prominence in representations of the deployment of magic may thus be viewed as an expression of the tensions inherent in gender relations in classical society.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction to ancient Greek magic: definitions and social contexts

#### The literary evidence

This thesis has been written in response to the prevalence, in the ancient Greek literature, of magical female figures. Such representations co-exist with indications - explicit or otherwise - that women were the magic users *par excellence* of the ancient world. This gendered pattern in representations of magic users also has a diachronic dimension, as female magical figures continued to outnumber and overshadow their male equivalents in the literature of the Roman world, and in diverse folk tales of the European cultural tradition. Stories about female witches from later periods frequently owe something to their Graeco-Roman roots, and attest to the power and longevity of certain ideas about women.<sup>1</sup> One might also cite the historical phenomena of the sixteenth century witch-hunts and -trials in western Europe and north America as evidence for interest in (or obsession with) the subject even closer to the present time.

The most well-known and high profile practitioners of magic in classical Greek literature are women. Medeia and Deianeira, from Euripides' *Medeia* and Sophokles' *Trachiniai* respectively, so fired ancient

imaginings that they reappeared in Roman guise centuries later in the works of Seneca, by which time their sorcery and savagery was much embellished.<sup>2</sup> To these we may add a myriad of passing references in poetry, drama, and philosophical and legal texts to wise old women, anonymous stepmothers and the like who are identified as amateurs or adepts in the magical arts. These discussions, in depth and brief alike, help to build up a picture of women as the keepers of arcane wisdom in ancient Greece.

#### Non-literary evidence for magic use in the classical period

A glance at the epigraphical, archaeological and papyrological evidence for magic from the ancient Greek world, on the other hand, reveals a rather different demographic of adherents to magical ritual practices, from that suggested in the poetic works. For instance, the extensive depositions of &#x2190; &#x2191; &#x2192; &#x2193; &#x2194; &#x2195; &#x2196; &#x2197; &#x2198; &#x2199; &#x219A; - also known as curse inscriptions or *defixiones* - attest, by their varied aims and textual qualities, to the extremely diverse nature of the people who made and commissioned them. Nearly six hundred of these inscribed tablets - usually thin lead sheets - have been published thus far.<sup>3</sup> Early depositions of curse

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<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to the persistent theme of women as witches and poisoners in Western literature see especially Margaret Hallissy, *Venomous Woman: fear of the female in literature* (New York, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Seneca wrote a *Medea* of his own. His version of Sophokles' *Trachiniai*, entitled *Hercules Oetaeus*, makes Deianeira's nurse and confidante the woman with some command of magical knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Good surveys of patterns of deposition are to be found in Christopher A. Faraone, 'The agonistic context of early Greek binding spells' in Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford, 1991), 3-32; H. S. Versnel, 'Beyond cursing: the appeal to justice in judicial prayers' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 60-106; Lindsay Watson, *Arae: the curse poetry of antiquity* (Leeds,

inscriptions are most concentrated in wells and tombs within Attika,<sup>4</sup> and inscriptions are particularly plentiful for the classical period.<sup>5</sup> Of the classical and Hellenistic inscriptions of any length and clarity,<sup>6</sup> prominent motivations for men and women to seek magical assistance are the need to defeat rivals in business or opponents in lawsuits.<sup>7</sup> The same competitive mood is retained among the Roman evidence, which is dominated by amatory and athletic curses. Indeed, Faraone has found this agonistic aspect to be inherent in the nature and functions of cursing in Mediterranean societies.<sup>8</sup>

The fourth and fifth century judicial curses in particular attest to the use of magic by the most powerful elements of Athenian society during the classical period. Prominent political figures were frequently targeted for curses by their similarly prominent (male) rivals,<sup>9</sup> challenging the idea, popular in mid-twentieth century scholarship, that such practices were

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1991). Texts are collected in R. Wunsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* (henceforth *DTA*) (Berlin, 1897); Auguste Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (henceforth *DT*) (1904).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, 'An accusation of magic in classical Athens (*Ar.*, *Wasps* 946-48)', *TAPhA* 119 (1989), 156.

<sup>5</sup> E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> The brevity of many curse inscriptions impedes interpretation in many cases: Faraone in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-16. The four-pronged categorisation of curses suggested by Faraone - commercial, athletic/circus, amatory and judicial - constitutes a variation of the categories used by Audollent (1904).

<sup>8</sup> Faraone in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 10-17; and cf. Versnel in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 62-3.

<sup>9</sup> *DTA* 28, 47-51, 87, 89, 167; D. R. Jordan, 'Two inscribed lead tablets from a well in the Athenian Kerameikos', *MDAI (A)* 95 (1980), 225-39. The epigraphical evidence for magical cursing among the male elites of society is accompanied by a tradition of accusations: Demosthenes accuses Aechines of possessing magical knowledge: *Dem.*, *de Cor.* 258-60; Cicero, *Brutus* 217.

largely confined to foreigners,<sup>10</sup> women, or the poorly educated<sup>11</sup> in classical society.

Papyrological evidence, too, contributes to the picture of a society in which magic was a possible means of redress for a broad cross-section of society. The Greek Magical Papyri collection (henceforth *PGM*<sup>12</sup>) constitutes a particularly rich source of magical data. This body of papyri, consisting of spells, formulae, hymns and rituals, assumed written form between the second century B. C. E. and the fifth century C. E.,<sup>13</sup> but in many cases its contents have been shown to be much older.<sup>14</sup> The *PGM* are understood to be, in most cases, actual spells kept for use or sale by professional magicians of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, and thus governed by the laws of supply and demand. Spells of erotic attraction figure prominently in the collection in generic format,<sup>15</sup> suggesting considerable demand for such merchandise. Such attraction spells

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<sup>10</sup> A. A. Barb, 'The survival of magic arts' in Arnaldo Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1963), 102; and Ludwig Edelstein, 'Greek medicine in its relation to religion and magic', *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine*, 5, 3 (1937), 219 associate magic with foreign cults, not native Greek practice.

<sup>11</sup> Both A. A. Barb and E. R. Dodds contend that magic constituted a debased and uninformed variant of philosophy or religion: Barb (1963), 108; Dodds (1951), p. 192.

<sup>12</sup> Abbreviated thus after Karl Preisandanz (ed.), *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (henceforth *PGM*) 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1973-4).

<sup>13</sup> See especially Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, vol. 1, *Texts* (Chicago and London, 1986), pp. xli.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, 'Magic and mystery in the Greek magical papyri', in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 249.

<sup>15</sup> *PGM* IV.2471-92; VII.462-66; XXXVI.81-82; XXXVI.142; 147-52; LXI.23-29 (among many examples) each follow the same ritual pattern of forcibly attracting the beloved female, with spaces left in the manuscript for the insertion of the appropriate male and female names.



invariably assume that the client will be male, and that their target will be female.<sup>16</sup>

It is against this backdrop of the use of magic by people of both sexes and diverse social backgrounds in ancient Greece that I frame my investigation of the construction of magical practitioners in the literary tradition of the classical period. This study will confine itself, as much as is feasible, to evidence from the classical period. This is in acknowledgment of the considerable transformations undergone by magic (however one defines it) between the archaic period, before a language existed to adequately describe the concept,<sup>17</sup> and the beginning of the Common Era, by which time there had evolved a strong culture of self-defined professional magicians, and elite philosophical magic.

#### Defining magic with reference to religion and science

Much of the abundant recent work on ancient Greek magic has been concerned with the issue of how magic is to be defined. The debate has focussed upon the extent to which the theories of Sir James Frazer - who posited a radical opposition between religion and magic on the one

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<sup>16</sup> In 'The constraints of Eros', in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 214-43 John J. Winkler explores gender divisions and role reversals in the *PGM*.

<sup>17</sup> For the idea that the practice of magic preceded the language of magic see Richard Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman magic', Part Three in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. 2: *Ancient Greek and Roman Magic* (London, 1999), 165. On the development of terms denoting magic and the lack of a dedicated terminology before the classical period see below, pp. 14-16 and Fritz Graf, 'Excluding the charming: the development of the Greek concept of magic', in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden, 1995), 29-42, esp. 37-8.

hand,<sup>18</sup> and an intellectual evolution from magical through religious to scientific outlook on the other<sup>19</sup> - are to be retained as a useful framework. The notion of a 'radical opposition' between magic and religion is problematic in itself, as indicated by the debates among subsequent anthropologists and ancient historians. Generally speaking, anthropologists have largely dispensed with the Frazerian model of a magic-religion dichotomy,<sup>20</sup> preferring instead to see magic, religion, sorcery and witchcraft as a number of different points on a shared spectrum.<sup>21</sup> In the field of ancient history, though, a number of scholars have retained and refined the Frazerian dichotomy, whereby magicians are those who hubristically attempt to constrain and coerce deities, or else attempt to manipulate people without divine mediation. Fearing and respecting the gods, and praying for assistance with an attitude of meekness, on the other hand, is deemed religious piety by this logic.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a study in magic and religion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., vol. 1 (London, 1913), pp. 224-6.

<sup>19</sup> Frazer (1913), pp. 220-4.

<sup>20</sup> Fritz Graf provides a bibliography of important contributions to the subject among anthropologists in his 'Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual', in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 188, n. 1. See especially the following: O. Petterson, 'Magic-Religion: Some Marginal Notes to an old Problem', *BritJournSoc* 12 (1961), 142-64; M. Wax and R. Wax, 'The Notion of Magic', *CurrAnthr* 4 (1963), 495-518; D. Hammond, 'Magic: a Problem in Semantics', *AmAnthr* 72 (1970), 1349-56; R. Grambo, 'Models of Magic', *Norveg* 18 (1975), 77-109; D. E. Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity' *ANRW*, vol. 2, pt. 23, sec. 2 (1980), 1507-23; M. Winkelmann, 'Magic: a Theoretical Reassessment', *CurrAnthr* 23 (1982), 37-66.

<sup>21</sup> R. Firth in I. C. Jarvie and Joseph Agassi, 'The Problem of the Rationality of Magic', *BritJournSoc* 18 (1967), 55. Still others believe that the only difference between magic and religion is a semantic one: see especially Hammond (1970). Frazer himself concedes that despite being 'radically opposed', magic and religion did coexist in individual practitioners' repertoires for a long time: Frazer (1913), 226.

<sup>22</sup> See, most recently, Jens Braavig, 'Magic: reconsidering the grand dichotomy' in David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic: papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997* (Bergen, 1999), 52; Fritz Graf (1995), 35. cf. Barb (1963), 100-25, esp. 101; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: magic and the occult in the Greek and Roman worlds* (Baltimore and London, 1985), esp. p. 4; F. B. Jevons, 'Graeco-Italian Magic', in idem, *Anthropology and the Classics* (Oxford, 1908), 93-120, esp. 109-15.

A more recent trend among ancient historians is to acknowledge that this neat, diametrical opposition does not fit with literary, inscriptional and archaeological evidence for both Greek and Roman civilisation. As a number of scholars have pointed out, the division of ritual acts and words into 'religious' and 'magical' is largely an artificial and modern distinction, which obscures the breadth and meaning of Greek ritual. In a recent study Roy Kotansky points out that word sequences traditionally considered to be 'magical' incantations<sup>23</sup> often coexist on amulets with words which are traditionally considered to be of a 'religious', prayerful nature.<sup>24</sup> Plentiful examples of this phenomenon present themselves in the *PGM*.<sup>25</sup> At *PGM VII.745* the magician prays thus:

Emphatically I beg, I supplicate, I your servant...<sup>26</sup>

displaying none of the hubristic forcefulness which supposedly characterises magical incantation.<sup>27</sup> Again, at *PGM V.400*, the magician concludes his/her request for an oracle with submissive piety:

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<sup>23</sup> According to the traditional religion/magic dichotomy, magical incantations directly invoke action or compel intended victims with no reference to higher powers. The magician's tone is commanding, and forces gods or daemons to act. Religious language or prayer, on the other hand, characteristically employs a submissive and praising tone of address, and requests deities to act on behalf of the person praying: Frazer (1913), I:222, 225.

<sup>24</sup> Roy Kotansky, 'Incantations and prayers for salvation on inscribed Greek amulets' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), esp. 122.

<sup>25</sup> Eg. *PGM II.9*; II.13; III.498; III.590IV.3008-78; IV.2785-2870; IV.2242-2355; VII.756-94; XII.103-6; XXXVI.211-30.

<sup>26</sup> Transl. Fritz Graf in Faraone and Obbink (1991), n. 43. cf. XIII.72.

I ask you lord: be gracious and without deceit appear and  
prophecy  
to me.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, in at least five cases, spells are actually entitled  $\mathfrak{M} \blacklozenge \epsilon\tau\mathfrak{M} \mathfrak{z} \mathfrak{z} \blacklozenge$   
(prayer),<sup>29</sup> and the same word appears in the body of many other spells.<sup>30</sup>  
Furthermore, so called 'incantations' and 'prayers' were explicitly  
acknowledged to coexist in the repertoires of professional magicians by  
Plato as early as the fourth century B.C.E.<sup>31</sup> Compositions identified as  
prayers can similarly exhibit elements traditionally identified as magical.  
Sappho's *Prayer to Aphrodite* possesses a classic tripartite prayer  
structure.<sup>32</sup> Opening with an invocation of the deity, the prayer goes on to  
remind Aphrodite of her past loyalty to Sappho, in an effort to secure the  
goddess' aid once again. Finally, Sappho makes her demand,  
commencing:

Come to me now...<sup>33</sup>

The language here suggests coercion, although the format is otherwise  
classically prayerful, which once again helps to suggest that coercion and

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that coercion of divinities does not feature in the *PGM*. The point is that coercion is not a good indicator of the boundary between prayer and magical incantation.

<sup>28</sup> Transl. Fritz Graf, *ibid.*, 193-4.

<sup>29</sup> *PGM* IV.2785-2870; VI.5-46; VII.756-94; XII.103-6; XXXVI.211-30.

<sup>30</sup> *PGM* II.9 and 13; III.498 and 590; IV.2545, 2566, 2973, 2998.

<sup>31</sup> Plato, *Laws* 10.909B; *Rep.* 2.364B.

<sup>32</sup> On prayer forms see J. M. Bremer, 'Greek hymns' in H. S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, hope, and worship* (Leiden, 1981), 193-214.

submission are not appropriate ways of distinguishing magical texts from pious prayerful texts.<sup>34</sup>

A comparable degree of ambiguity between religious and magical sentiment and intent is detectable in the ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮⱮ. ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖, although being a genuine ancient term, is a modern categorisation given to an artefact identified as magical. H. S. Versnel identifies the 'typical' ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖ as: a). of anonymous authorship; b). addressed to Chthonic or sometimes foreign deities; c). seeking to coerce deities; d). demonstrating a lack of piety towards the gods in question; and e). furtively enacted and concealed, due to the malicious, wrongful or self-serving sentiments or wishes expressed.<sup>35</sup> However, in reality a significant number of texts inscribed on lead (or other material) tablets have been found which fulfil only some of these criteria.<sup>36</sup> Given that pious prayers are traditionally held to exhibit the opposite features to those of ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖ listed

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<sup>33</sup> ⱮⱮ❖◆ⱮⱮ❖ ⱮⱮⱮ ⱮⱮⱮ ⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮ ⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮ ⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮ Sappho Frag. 1.25. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>34</sup> O. Petterson notes that an attitude of submission was considered crucial in the teachings of Paul, and later Luther and Calvin. Modern Western scholars' observance of the Frazerian dichotomy seems to have its basis in Christian influence, rather than ancient evidence: Petterson (1957), 111. The prayers of Sokrates, as recorded by Plato and Xenophon, are in fact quite singular in their humble piety among the ancient evidence: Pl., *Phaedrus* 257a-b, 279b-c; Xen., *Oec.* 5.19-20, *Mem.* 1.3.1-4. cf. p. A. Meijer, 'Philosophers, intellectuals and religion in Hellas' in Versnel (1981), 216-63.

<sup>35</sup> H. S. Versnel, 'Beyond cursing: the appeal to justice in judicial prayers, in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 60-8.

<sup>36</sup> In fourth century B. C. E. tablet *DTA* 100 the writer names herself and submissively pleads for the intervention of Hermes and Ge, in an otherwise typical ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖. Versnel provides numerous other examples of curse inscriptions which do not support the modern categorisation of ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖ given above: (1991), 64-8. Faraone points out that the great bulk of published ⱮⱮ◆Ɱ❖ⱮⱮ◆ⱮⱮ❖ are so brief that it is impossible to gauge the tone of address. Coercive imperatives (eg. ⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮ❖❖❖) or submissive imperatives (eg. ⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮⱮ) are frequently left to be assumed: Faraone in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 6, 18.

above,<sup>37</sup> such texts fall rather awkwardly between the two supposedly diametrically opposed practices of praying and magically binding. The official 'constitutional' curses issued collectively by cities in the classical period work to further undermine modern definitions of ancient prayer and magical incantation, given that they are public and piously issued and displayed, and most commonly addressed to Olympic deities. One example will suffice here:

If anyone should transgress these provisions (to refrain from settling upon the accursed territory of Kirrha)...let the offender be accursed in the sight of Apollo and Artemis and Leto and Athena Pronoia...neither should the earth bear them fruits nor their wives give birth to children...but rather monsters, nor should their cattle bear young in accordance with nature...<sup>38</sup>

Versnel suggests that it is more accurate to say that the Greeks moved quite freely along a supernatural spectrum stretching from curses to prayers.<sup>39</sup> This theory finds support in the fact that the Greek language<sup>40</sup> observes no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' prayers.

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<sup>37</sup> That is to say: a). the person offering the prayer identifies themselves; b). the person praying is submissive, and begs the gods to act on his or her behalf; c). the gods are praised and flattered; and d). the prayer is made public, or at any rate not concealed. See Versnel in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 62.

<sup>38</sup> The curse of the Amphiktyones is recorded in Aeschines, *ag. Ctesiphon* 110-1. cf. Pl., *Kritias* 119e, *Laws* 871b. cf. Watson (1991), pp. 18-21.

<sup>39</sup> Versnel (1991), 66.

<sup>40</sup> Latin similarly uses a single term to denote diverse kinds of prayer.

Christopher Faraone has argued that any speculation regarding the piety or malevolence on the part of the practitioner consists of subjective responses by the modern reader, and that this approach is irrelevant.<sup>41</sup> For Greeks of the fifth century B.C.E., he continues, the practitioner has already demonstrated piety, by believing that the gods will respond appropriately to certain ritual observances.<sup>42</sup> As far as the &#x2666; issue - be they individual or collective - is concerned, Faraone's thesis may hold true.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, it is clear that some issuers of &#x2666; did so with a firm sense of righteousness of their act, and that magical (by modern definitions) curses could fulfil a law-affirming role in classical Greek communities. However, the literature of the period overwhelmingly conveys the idea that practitioners and suspected practitioners of magic arts are most impious, and a threat to society. This would suggest that either: a). modern understandings of classical Greek magic remain at odds with ancient conceptions; or b). the ancient Greeks' opinions about magic, as stated in the literature of the period, are at odds with actual practice. In the course of this thesis I will suggest that both of the above contribute to the troubled and ambiguous status of magic, in modern and ancient literature alike.

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<sup>41</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, 'The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells,' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 18.

<sup>42</sup> Faraone, *ibid.*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Faraone makes this statement in the context of a discussion of depositions of &#x2666;.

Besides having close associations with divinity and religious ritual, magic also has a complex affiliation with science, and especially the healing transformations of medical science. In Homer and Pindar, the most esteemed physicians were those who were taught by deities. Asklepios, and his sons Machaon and Podaleirios all practised arts they learnt from the centaur Cheiron. Asklepios was eventually elevated to divine status on account of his excellence in healing, underscoring that healing was closely connected to the divine or 'miraculous'.<sup>44</sup> Incantations (ἄρρητα and ἄρρητα) and amulets were celebrated and accepted tools and techniques for healing. The sons of Autolykos, for instance, treat Odysseus' injury with a bandage and a spoken incantation.<sup>45</sup> In Pindar, Asklepios gives his patients ἄρρητα and ἄρρητα, either as liquids to drink or as amulets to attach to their bodies.<sup>46</sup> In the Archaic period it was believed that illnesses could have a number of causes, variously punitive, daemonic, traumatic or environmental.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, for the self-defined healers of the period and their customers,<sup>48</sup> purifications and appeasements for divine anger were important elements of healing repertoires. These self-defined healers incorporated the itinerant diviners, healers and charlatans of whom we hear so much in the

<sup>44</sup> The divine associations of healers and healing technologies are explored further in Pedro Lain Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, transl. L. J. Rather and John M. Sharp (New Haven and London, 1970), p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Homer., *Od.* 19.457-9. The binding of bandages and the recitation of incantations are both described using the word ἄρρητα in Greek, suggesting that these acts and words together constitute an early, sympathetic 'therapeutic idea': Lain Entralgo (1970), p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.47-54.

<sup>47</sup> Lain Entralgo (1970), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Such medical markets developed on an informal, supply and demand basis: Vivian Nutton, 'Murders and miracles: lay attitudes towards medicine in classical antiquity', in Roy Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), 26.



classical period.<sup>49</sup> Amulets were used with the same theoretical framework in mind, wherein illness was an affliction from without, and could be warded off accordingly. Such amulets (often with accompanying incantations<sup>50</sup>) were extremely popular throughout ancient civilisation, and were used variously to ward off daemons, illness and adverse magic or the evil eye.

The polemical attitude of the Hippocratic treatise *On the sacred disease*, which attacks belief in divinely sent illnesses, suggests that such beliefs were still prevalent in the classical period.<sup>51</sup> However, practitioners of rationalistic Hippocratic almost inevitably continued to relate their healing techniques to divinity. Some rationalistic physicians believed in the phenomena of miracles and divine or mantic dreams. Dreams of this type may have necessitated the services of a diviner or priest. Certain Hippocratic physicians advise prayer in combination with their own medical treatments.<sup>52</sup> Even the firmly anti-magical author of *On the Sacred Disease* asserts that all things - illnesses and cures alike - are

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<sup>49</sup> See especially my discussions of ☐☺ ○☉❖ γ♁☐✕ and ☐☺ γ♁☐❖⚡✕ below, pp. 16-19.

<sup>50</sup> On this topic see especially Roy Kotansky, 'Incantations and prayers for salvation on inscribed Greek amulets' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 107-37.

<sup>51</sup> This Hippocratic author attacks very specific fallacious beliefs about diseases, that certain symptoms point to attacks by particular gods: piercing cries like a horse indicate that Poseidon is to blame, other symptoms indicate attacks by the 'mother of the gods', Einodia, Apollo Nomios, Ares or Hekate: Hipp., *OTSD* 4.22-33. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244c argues in a similar vein to the Hippocratic writer, against the belief that offering to Chthonic deities and obtaining purifications will produce a cure for illness, while another Platonic dialogue has Sokrates revealing an effective headache amulet: Pl., *Charmides* 155e-156e. Belief in such cures evidently stretched into late antiquity, even among the educated: Lucian, *Philops.* 7-11 gives numerous examples of effective amulets and incantations; cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, 'Aspects of the interrelations of medicine, magic and philosophy in ancient Greece', *Apeiron* 9, 1 (1975), 10.

divine, thereby upholding the traditional relationship between healing and divinity.<sup>53</sup> Where Hippocratic medicine failed to bring relief, there is some evidence to suggest that patients were directed to Asklepan temple medicine as a sort of tacitly accepted last resort.<sup>54</sup> Thus the Asklepan dream-healings and various marginalised rituals of the ἄσπετα (accent?) were incorporated into the self-avowedly 'anti-magical' outlook of rational science. This relationship between divinity, medicine (traditional and rational) and magic is explored in more detail in Chapter Three below, in the context of *rhizotomia*.

#### The terminology of literary magic

In an effort to grasp specifically classical literary notions of magic, and to sidestep some of the problems associated with modern attempts to define magic, we shall now investigate episodes and acts that are explicitly identified by ancient writers as magical. Three terms (and their cognates) will be particularly relevant here - *magia*, *pharmakeia*, *pharmakia*, *pharmakia*, *pharmakia* and *pharmakia*. Of these, the first two terms are attested quite early in Greek literature, and it is to these that we shall turn first.

<sup>52</sup> Hipp., *Regimen* 4 (=Dreams) 87-93 constitutes a lengthy discussion of divine dreams and dream interpretation; *Regimen* 4, 87.14 and 90.63 encourage prayer. cf. Arist., *On the generation of animals*, IV.4.770b9; Ludwig Edelstein (1934), 240-2.

<sup>53</sup> Hipp., *OTSD* 1.5. Cf. Hipp., *Airs, waters, places* 1, *Regimen* 4, *Prognostic* 1.20, and a corrupted section of *Decorum* 6 for similar ideas. These Hippocratic authors are clearly giving expression to a popular (as opposed to elite) philosophical doctrine of the period: Pl., *Sophistes* 265c, *Laws* 10.886a, d-e, 899b-c; Xen., *Mem.* I.1.12; Plutarch., *Nikias* 23; as against the assertions of Anaxagoras, Protagoras and Diagoras, that all these things are mere objects and blind forces: Plutarch, *Perikles* 32; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Mathematicos* IX.56; Aristoph., *Birds* 1073.

<sup>54</sup> Diodorus frag. XXXI.43; Pliny, *NH* XXX.98; Plutarch, *De Facie in orbe Lunae* 920b, *Per.* 38, *Spartan Sayings* 223e; Diogenes Laertes IV.54; cf. Edelstein (1934), pp. 244-5.

In Homer the word  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  has the sense of a drug-like substance bearing either healing or harming properties. Kirke, a divine nymph in Book ten of the *Odyssey*, feeds a  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  in beverage form to Odysseus' companions, thereby turning them into swine.<sup>55</sup> Odysseus is able to resist Kirke's charms with the aid of the counter-acting  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  -  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  - with which Hermes supplies him.<sup>57</sup> Also in the *Odyssey* Helen gives an Egyptian  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  with grief-assuaging properties to Menelaus' troubled guests.<sup>58</sup> In each of these instances the substance in question is of strange (variously divine or foreign<sup>59</sup>) origin and remarkable efficacy, which locates it in the realm of the magical.<sup>60</sup> An Homeric  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$  could have medicinal, healing qualities.<sup>61</sup> Here again divine connections assert themselves.<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere in Homer, the same term is used to denote poison, such as that which Odysseus smeared on

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.388ff.

<sup>56</sup> This drug is discussed in more detail in my Chapter three below, pp. 72-73.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.287.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.221.

<sup>59</sup> On which see further below, pp. 19-20.

<sup>60</sup> Faraone, Versnel and D. R. Jordan all define magical strategies as those which act by *supernatural* means. More recently, though, Derek Collins has convincingly argued that the Greeks may not in fact have viewed magic as intervention of the supernatural, hence my more cautious identification of 'magical' readings of  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omicron\sigma$ : Derek Collins, 'Theoris of Lemnos and the criminalization of magic in fourth century Athens', *CQ* 51.2 (2001), 479-82; Derek Collins, 'Was magic "supernatural" for the Greeks?', unpublished conference paper, *Hecate at the crossroads: magic in the ancient world*, Armidale seminar in Mediterranean antiquity, 5, 26-8 September 2001 (University of New England: 2001); Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge: 1999), 16; H. S. Versnel, 'Some reflections on the relationship magic-religion', *Numen* 38 (1991), 177-97, esp. 187; D. R. Jordan, 'A survey of Greek defixiones not included in the special corpora', *GRBS* 26 (1985), 151.

<sup>61</sup> Homer, *Il.* 4.191, 4.218, 5.401, 5.900, 11.515, 11.830, 15.394.

<sup>62</sup> See above pp. 10-2. The divine associations of new technologies, especially medical technologies, and their relationship with magic will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter three below, pp. 72ff.

his arrowheads.<sup>63</sup> The use of a single term to denote substances which had such diverse effects may seem surprising to the modern reader, but was apparently logical to Greeks of the Archaic period.<sup>64</sup> The defining issue for the ancient Greeks seems to have been that  $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$  are able to effect surprising changes or transformations. We shall see in subsequent chapters that substances and rituals which were believed to defy normal boundaries and distinctions tended to be feared, revered or scorned, and were frequently categorised as 'magical'.

In the *Laws*, Plato makes clear that in his own day the single term  $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$  could refer equally to poisons 'acting according to nature', medicinal substances, and the substances used by experts in more arcane lore.<sup>65</sup> By this time, experts in such lore were known by names built on the  $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ -root.<sup>66</sup> The medical usages of  $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$  that appear in Homer also continue into the classical period and beyond.<sup>67</sup> Plato explicitly dwells upon the diversity and confusion of

<sup>63</sup> Homer, *Od.* 1.261; cf. 2.329.

<sup>64</sup> On this non-differentiating approach see Graf (1995), 36-7; John Scarborough, 'The pharmacology of sacred plants, herbs, and roots' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 139.

<sup>65</sup> Plato, *Laws* 932e-933e, transl. R. G. Bury. There are many other instances of classical usage of this ambiguous term. Only a sample of relevant passages is supplied here. As magical potion: Eur., *Andr.* 355 ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ ); Aristoph., *Pl.* 302 ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ ); Pl., *Phaedrus* 230d ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ , used figuratively, of 'charming' speech).

<sup>66</sup> Arist., *HA* 616b23 (=9.17.1) ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ ); Pl., *Phaedrus* 229c, *Symp.* 203d; Soph., *Trach.* 1140 ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ ); Aristoph., *Nub.* 749; schol. Aristoph., *Pl.* 884; Demos. 793.27; Arist., *HA* 6.22.18 ( $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$ ).

<sup>67</sup> Of many references see especially Arist., *Problems* 33.5; Pl., *Prot.* 354a, *Tim.* 89b, *Charmides* 155b; Xen., *Mem.* 4.2.17.  $\alpha\lambda\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\alpha$  is used in Pl., *Theaet.* 149c with reference to the ambiguously magical-medical skills of midwifery. This ambiguity will be explored further in chapter three below.

ἄθεσμιότατοι employed by physicians, poisoners and sorcerers, and suggests different ways of legislating against their abuse.<sup>68</sup>

Words related to ἄθεσμιότατοι tend to be used in a more unequivocally negative sense than ἄθεσμιότατοι. Like ἄθεσμιότατοι, ἄθεσμιότατοι appears only from the classical period onwards, but it has roots in older Greek custom. The word is related to ἄθεσμιότατοι - the ritual lament that helps the dead make the transition out of the realm of living.<sup>69</sup> Like the singers of ritual laments, the ἄθεσμιότατοι of classical literature were invariably marginal, or marginalised figures, associated variously with ecstasy and lamentation, healing rites and divination.<sup>70</sup> Herodotos, Euripides and Plato all use the term to describe charlatantry as much as genuine sorcery,<sup>71</sup> which fits with Plato's assertion that it is difficult to discern the truth about sorcery and superstition.<sup>72</sup>

The first uses of ἄθεσμιότατοι known to us are in Heraklitos and Herodotos. Herodotos refers to members of the Persian priestly class by

<sup>68</sup> Pl., *Laws* 932e-933e.

<sup>69</sup> Aesch., *Pers.* 687.

<sup>70</sup> Graf (1995), 32.

<sup>71</sup> Herodotos is doubtful about the Neuri people's alleged ability to transform themselves into wolves: *Hdt.* 4.105. He also refers to the powerful utterances of the Persian priests with the same term: 7.191. Euripides' Pentheus disregards the powerful Lydian stranger as 'ἄθεσμιότατοι ἄθεσμιότατοι ἄθεσμιότατοι', just as Theseus accuses his son of lying with the words 'ἄθεσμιότατοι ἄθεσμιότατοι': Eur., *Bacc.* 234, *Hipp.* 1038. Plato uses the term to mean both trickery: Pl., *Symp.* 203d, *Rep.* 584a, *Phil.* 44c and sorcery: *Symp.* 203a, *Phaedo* 81b, *Gorgias* 483e.

<sup>72</sup> Pl., *Laws* 932e-933e.

this name, and the word never lost this original association.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, Heraklitos of Ionia (himself a subject of the Persian king), associates ὄρασις γυναικῶν with bacchantes, maenads and *mystai* who 'err in the night'.<sup>74</sup> That is to say, for Heraklitos the ὄρασις γυναικῶν were not an elevated religious caste, but simply another group who practised rituals at the margins of society, that were variously feared and ridiculed.<sup>75</sup> The groups with which Heraklitos associates Persian ὄρασις γυναικῶν are all practitioners of non-civic ritual. In classical literature words related to ὄρασις γυναικῶν come into use to describe magic arts, usually in a hostile sense. In Sophokles' play, for instance, King Oidipous rejects an unwelcome prophecy of Tiresias, and denigrates the seer by referring to him as a ὄρασις γυναικῶν.<sup>76</sup> This works to identify the esteemed seer with the more socially dubious itinerant priests (ἄρασις γυναικῶν ἰατροῦ), seers (ὄρασις γυναικῶν ἰατροῦ), and γυναικῶν ἰατροῦ.<sup>77</sup> There is some fourth century evidence that at least some Greeks perceived that the functions of the Persian priesthood were being misconstrued by their own culture. The ethnographer Pseudo-Aristotle for example, explicitly challenges prevailing beliefs by asserting that:

...the ὄρασις γυναικῶν do not know magical sorcery.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Hdt. 1.101, 7.37. cf. Xen., *Cyr.* 4.5.14, 4.5.51, 8.3.24; Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 6.29.7; Strabo, *Geog.* 15.1.68, 15.3.15.

<sup>74</sup> Heraklitos *DK* 12 B 14, from Clement, *Protr.* 22.2.

<sup>75</sup> Graf (1995), 31.

<sup>76</sup> Soph., *OT* 387. But see Eur., *Or.* 1497 for a more ambivalent usage.

<sup>77</sup> On these religiously marginal and distrusted figures see Pl., *Rep.* 364b, *Phaedrus* 244e, *Symp.* 202e; Derveni Papyrus col. 16, 3s. cf. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early Archaic period* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1991), ch. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Pseudo-Aristotle, *Magikos*, transl. Graf (1995), 33-4.

Words related to  $\square\odot$   $\bullet^{\ast}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\bowtie$  and  $\square\odot$   $\gamma\flat\square\blacklozenge\text{⌘}\blacklozenge$  both appear from the fifth century onwards, and are associated with foreign, incomprehensible or dubious practices. Nonsensical (ie. non-Greek) vocalisations are associated with both terms, as  $\gamma\flat\square\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$  suggests animalistic howling, and Persian  $\bullet^{\ast}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\text{⌘}$  used language and rituals which were deeply enigmatic to the Greeks of the fifth century.<sup>79</sup> It is notable that both of these words lack a good Greek pedigree.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, A. D. Nock has located the origins of  $\square\odot$   $\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\bowtie$  and  $\text{⌘}\odot$   $\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\gamma\flat\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\text{⌘}$  in the religious language of Persia.<sup>81</sup> This is relevant to the Greeks' own beliefs, that foreign places and peoples were the primary source of magical knowledge.

### Magic as marginal and distanced 'other'

Magically effective substances are most commonly attributed to distant and exotic places in both the scientific and poetic literature throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity. It has been noted that already in Homer

$\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}$  are attributed to divine or foreign sources.<sup>82</sup> Medeia, a

<sup>79</sup> Herodotos tells that the  $\bullet^{\ast}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\text{⌘}$  are not buried at death, but allow their bodies to be mauled by a bird or dog, and that in life they like to kill creatures indiscriminately with their bare hands: Hdt. 1.140. He also tells that the  $\bullet^{\ast}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\text{⌘}$  calmed a storm with 'sacrifices and spells'

( $\square\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$   $\&\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}$   $\&\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$   $\gamma\flat\square\blacklozenge\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}$   $\square\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}$   $\bullet^{\ast}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\text{⌘}\text{⌘}$   $\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$   $\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$ ). cf. Nock (1972), 318.

<sup>80</sup> Graf (1995), 35.

<sup>81</sup> A word closely resembling the Greek  $\text{⌘}\text{⌘}\blacklozenge\gamma\flat\square\bowtie$  appears in the sixth century Behistun Inscription: A. D. Nock, 'Paul and the Magus' in idem, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 308-30.

<sup>82</sup> Helen's grief-assuaging drug is said to be Egyptian. Kirke is both an immortal nymph, and a denizen of the far edge of the world Marinatos, Nanno, 'Circe and liminality: ritual background and narrative structure' in Anderson, O. and Dickie, M. (eds.), *Homer's World: fiction, tradition, reality*, Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 3 (Bergen, 1995), 133-40. See above pp. 14-15.

magical figure of great importance from the classical period onwards brought her knowledge from Kolchis beyond the limits of the known world in the east.<sup>83</sup> Deianeira's 'love charm' came from the blood of a hydra. In Aristophanes, as elsewhere, emphasis is placed upon relatively remote Thessaly as the home of all the most powerful sorceresses.<sup>84</sup> The *PGM* betray a continuing belief in the magical prowess of various exotic cultures, in their indiscriminate use of the names of Christian, Hebrew and other gods.<sup>85</sup> The Greeks' tendency to assign their magic a foreign origin is accepted as fact in some modern scholarship on the subject. Walter Burkert, for instance, explores the influence that Near Eastern augury techniques had upon Greece in the Archaic period through trade and travelling ritual experts.<sup>86</sup> Others go further, to suggest that all magic in Greece was essentially foreign in nature.<sup>87</sup> Jonathan Smith has cautioned that to take this stance is to make the same mistake that the Greeks themselves made.<sup>88</sup> For to identify rituals as foreign is to render

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<sup>83</sup> On which see further chapter four, pp. 121ff.

<sup>84</sup> Aristophanes mentions a Thessalian witch in the context of magically drawing down the moon at *Clouds* 749. This was clearly a popular motif, recurring as it does at Pl., *Gorg.* 513a; schol. Apol. Rhod., *Arg.* 4.53. In Roman literature Apuleius' character Lucius travels to Thessaly to study magic (*Meta.* 3.21-8), such is the reputation of the place. The Latin word for a male witch is in fact *thessalus*, from the Greek locality: Gordon (1999), 165.

<sup>85</sup> Christ, christian archangels, Yahweh (or IAO) and Mithras are called upon as powerful and useful 'daemons' in spells from Graeco-Roman Egypt: *PGM* III.1-164, 187-262, 282-409, 424-66; IV.1227-64; VII.1009-16, among many examples.

<sup>86</sup> Burkert (1992).

<sup>87</sup> Barb (1963); Edelstein (1934), 219.

<sup>88</sup> The Greeks' tendency to believe magic to be foreign to their culture is taken up in altered form by Roman culture. While Plutarch believes magic reached Greece through the barbarian peoples, Ovid finds that all magic at Rome is foreign, and much of it is Greek: Plutarch in Ovid, *Fasti* II.38; Ovid, *ibid.* II.35-7.



them both marginal, and more powerful by virtue of the mystery they thereby convey.<sup>89</sup>

In the course of this thesis I will argue that these fifth century developments in defining and viewing magic are part of a pattern of defining the Greek self by its opposition to the deeds (real or perceived) of foreign and marginalised groups.<sup>90</sup> The presence of indigenous and foreign elements in particular rituals and figures identified as magical will be assessed. Processes by which indigenous Greek practices became associated with foreignness will be identified. Processes by which acceptable practices developed a magical identity will also be explored, in an effort to cast light on the way that Greek culture identified itself by contrast with foreign or unacceptable behaviour.

It will be shown that this 'Greek self', created through the conglomeration of myths and dramatic and philosophical writing, is overwhelmingly male and citizen in profile.

#### Chapter two: the transformations of Hekate

Chapter Two will trace the development through time of a specific deity - Hekate - from her first appearance in evidence of the Archaic period through to her much-altered fourth century identity. Some suggestions will be made as to why this esteemed deity evolved into a marginal, fearful figure with strongly magical Underworld associations. Greek ideas

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<sup>89</sup> Smith, Jonathan Z., 'Towards interpreting demonic powers in Hellenistic and Roman antiquity', *ANRW* II.16.1 (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 1978), 425-39.

about firmly delineated states of being and spaces, and how they relate to radically opposed states and spaces, will help inform this discussion. As a number of scholars have argued, Greek culture grew increasingly concerned with boundaries during the Archaic period and later, and corresponding concerns with transgression of these boundaries emerged simultaneously.<sup>91</sup> On the subject of the creation and crossing of boundaries, Richard Gordon imagines that magic was, to Greek and Roman minds, a paradoxical meeting of opposites between powerful/helpless, traditional/new, beneficent/nightmarish and indigenous/foreign.<sup>92</sup> It will be suggested that Hekate's role as a guardian of boundaries was one catalyst for her own transformation into an especially dangerous and magical deity. The fact that Hekate was worshipped in private, rather than civic, cult also contributed to her profile as a goddess of magic.

Chapter three: the dangerous potential of women's knowledge

Chapter Three will approach the rituals, language and imagery of  $\text{☿} \text{☽} \text{♁} \text{♂} \text{♀} \text{♃} \text{♄} \text{♅}$  in their relation to the feminised roles of cookery, herbalism and midwifery. It will be noted that each of these crafts constituted a more or less exclusive technology, and that they were imbued with special powers and dangers because of this exclusivity.

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<sup>90</sup> This approach owes something to the work of Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self-definition through tragedy* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>91</sup> On which see chapter two below, pp. 51ff., chapter three, pp. 67ff. On the cross-cultural importance of the notion that traversing boundaries invites pollution see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (London, 1966).

These inherent dangers were magnified, I shall argue, because the knowledge was believed to reside mainly with women.

#### Construction of feminine behaviour in the tragic tradition

Chapters Four and Five will return our attention more especially to constructions of magic and magic users in the classical literary tradition. The focus will be upon the characters of Medeia and Deianeira in turn, primarily in the plays by Euripides and Sophokles, to examine closely how magic was subtly constructed as a feminine, threatening realm of knowledge.

Beyond offering an analysis of the obvious contrasts and more subtle similarities between the motivations and actions of the two female figures, this approach is intended to reveal a consistent ideological framework that informs them both. Moreover, it is intended to show that the images are consistent with the two most prevalent stereotypes available in the construction of women in classical Greek culture. Through innovation and the deployment of certain literary techniques in the writing of the *Trachiniai* and the *Medeia*, it may be posited that both authors reveal a consciousness of the dangerous power and gender asymmetries inherent in the ideologies they simultaneously maintain.

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Gordon, 'Aelian's Peony: the location of magic in Graeco-Roman tradition', *Comparative criticism* 9 (1987), 61. On the centrality of such oppositions to Greek thought see below, pp. 18-20.

The heavy use in these two chapters of literary, specifically dramatic, evidence requires some introduction and explanation. The intention is emphatically not to reconstruct the largely invisible category of real women's voices by way of the plentiful and voluble voices of female characters in classical drama. The phenomenon of women's visibility and power to bring about political watershed in drama has been the focus of much feminist scholarship over the past three decades. The pitfalls of seeking 'real women' in these sources have been amply explored in pioneering works by Helene P. Foley, M. Shaw and others, and the plethora of responses that these inspired.<sup>93</sup> Instead, new ways of gleaning information about women and gender from this literature have developed, incorporating psychoanalytical, structural anthropological and post-structuralist theories and methodologies.<sup>94</sup>

Of particular concern to us here are the ideas expressed in Levi-Strauss' important works on structural anthropology.<sup>95</sup> This discipline seeks to isolate and identify the encoded units of meaning upon which societies are founded. In the case of the ancient Greeks (and many other societies

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<sup>93</sup> J. P. Gould, 'Law, custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in classical Athens', *JHS* 100 (1980), 38-59; Helene P. Foley, 'The conception of women in Athenian drama' in Helene P. Foley (ed.), *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (New York: 1981), 127-68; M. Shaw, 'The Female Intruder: women in fifth-century drama', *C. Phil* 70 (1975), 255-66; P. E. Easterling, 'Women in tragic space', *BICS* 34 (1987), 15-26.

<sup>94</sup> Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Playing the other: theater, theatricality, and the feminine in Greek drama', in J. J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Nothing to do with Dionysos?* (Princeton, 1990), 63-96 (originally published in *Representations* 11 (1985), 63-94); Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: speech and gender in Athenian drama* (Princeton, 1999); John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: the anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990).

<sup>95</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, 'History and anthropology' in idem, *Structural anthropology*, transl. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (London, 1963), pp. 1-30, esp. 21.

besides<sup>96</sup>) these units of meaning are configured as a relationship between binary opposites, thus describing a system of tensions. In his *Polarity and Analogy* G. E. R. Lloyd finds that the conscious application of binary oppositions to problems is firmly entrenched in Greek thought as early as the Presocratic philosophers.<sup>97</sup>

#### Gender and symbolic structuralism

The primacy of dualism in Greek thought is also evident in tragedy and myth, where it is expressed through discord and antagonism. Few of the conflicts explored in drama constitute simple black and white cases,<sup>98</sup> but the emergent patterns have nonetheless proved to be a useful platform from which to assess the plot- and theme-patterns in the extant tragic corpus.<sup>99</sup> Exploration of the interplay of these implicit 'units of meaning' in Greek myth and literature has been led by French classicists such as Marcel Detienne and J.-P. Vernant.<sup>100</sup> In applying structuralist methodologies to classical drama, numerous feminist scholars have

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<sup>96</sup> Working with comparative data, Lloyd notes a similarly conscious dualism in the thought of the East Timbira tribe of South America, the people of Amboyna, Indonesia, and the Meru people of Kenya: G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: two types of argumentation in early Greek thought* (Bristol, 1992), pp. 32-5.

<sup>97</sup> Anaximander, Empedokles, and especially Pythagoras and his followers held oppositions between substances and abstract principles to be central to the structure of the universe. Primary among the Pythagorean pairs of opposites were the Even and the Uneven, Female and Male: F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: a study in the origins of western speculation* (New York, 1957), pp. 60-70; Lloyd (1992), *passim*.

<sup>98</sup> For an introduction to the debates and an outline of the dangers inherent in applying simple structural dichotomies such as female:nature as male:culture or female:domestic as male:public see Foley (1981), 127-68, esp. 140-63.

<sup>99</sup> Segal observes that Levi-Strauss' formulation is well-suited to the genre of tragedy, which uses myth to mediate fundamental contradictions through bipolar oppositions: Charles Segal, *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: myth, poetry, text* (Ithaca and London, 1986), p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: spices in Greek mythology*, transl. Janet Lloyd, with introduction by J.-P. Vernant (Hassocks, Sussex, 1972); Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and tragedy in Ancient Greece*, transl. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1990).

identified the category of 'woman' as a powerful tool available to poets for exploring both intrafamilial and broader socio-political conflicts. The present study accepts that this category of 'woman' is frequently used in rhetoric to signify either nature or the *oikos* - the balancing or opposing ideas<sup>101</sup> to the symbolic equations of man:culture or man:*polis*. While neither set of opposites fits all the scenarios presented by the literature, whether artistic, philosophical, litigious or scientific, both are useful to varying degrees, depending on the individual context. One ought not to expect unanimity in such patterns in the case of the ancient Greeks, at least, as they applied the bulk of these dichotomies self-consciously and rhetorically, and thus were in a position to alter them according to the needs of particular arguments.<sup>102</sup> Among various Hippocratic and competing theorists on anatomy, for instance, women were ascribed various combinations of hot/cold and dry/moist constitutions (with men exhibiting the opposite combination). Such perplexing variations and contradictions may be attributed to the diversity of scientific opinion, or just as often to the need for a neat and persuasive explanation of the phenomenon under investigation.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The ambiguity of this inversion, equally suggestive of conflict and harmony, is essential to the interpretation of conflicts in drama (and to my thesis of the outsider within the social system, and to Foley's idea of the complementary/antithetical relationship between *oikos* and *polis*).

<sup>102</sup> David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society: the enforcement of morals in classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1991), 71. Lloyd, too, notes that the subjects of his anthropological study tended to view their own cultures as defined by dualism, although empirical evidence for this seemed to be lacking: Lloyd (1992), 31-41.

<sup>103</sup> Presocratic philosophers, upon whose works the fifth century medical writers based their own theoretical outlook, were not in agreement as to the man:woman relationship with hot:cold. Empedokles, like the Pythagoreans asserted that men were hotter than women, and that this was why they were darker, hairier and more powerful. Parmenides on the other hand claimed that women were hotter, and that menstrual bleeding proved that this was so. Aristotle records his surprise at the ongoing dispute over such basic and self-evident qualities. Empedokles: H. Diels and W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente*

What is important to the present analysis, though, is that a diametrical opposition between male and female genders invariably features prominently in some fashion in the dramatic texts. As recognised by post-structuralist approaches to art, the audience is as involved in the construction of the meanings of a work as the writer is. With women and matters of gender being so prominent in Greek drama, it is not surprising that much ink has been spilt over the issue of whether women themselves - particularly citizen women, formed a part of this audience.<sup>104</sup>

Some scholars favouring female citizen presence cite the vocality of officially silenced groups (such as women, slaves and foreigners) as evidence of the implicit egalitarian ideals of Athenian drama.<sup>105</sup> However, the stock nature of many minor characters such as slaves and nurses would seem to detract from this argument. Furthermore, symbolic, mythological and literary constraints mean that dramatic figures are simultaneously much more and much less than representatives of the

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*der Vorsokratiker* (Zurich, 1967), frs. 62 b 65, 62 b 67; Pythagoreans: Arist., *Metaph.* 986a23-b5, *PA* 670b17-22; Parmenides: Arist., *PA* 648a29-30; Aristotle: *PA* 648a34. The Hippocratic writers lacked consensus on this issue too: Hipp., *Mul.* 1.1 (Littre viii.12.21) and *Nat. Puer.* 15 (vii.494.22-3) find women to be hotter than men, while *Steril.* 216 (viii.416.20-3) and *Vict.* 1.34 (vi.512.13-9) imply that men are hotter than women. cf. Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford, 1994), 44-5.

<sup>104</sup> Recent scholarship has tended to favour the presence of citizen women at the city Dionysia: J. J. Winkler, 'The ephebe's song' in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990), 39 n. 58; E. Csapo and W. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (1995), 286-7; J. Henderson (ed. and transl.), *Three Plays by Aristophanes: staging women* (New York, 1996), 16. For the opposite view, though, see S. Goldhill, who argues persuasively that the case for female citizen participation requires a rather selective reading of Aristoph., *Peace* 962-7; Plato, *Gorgias* 502d and *Laws* 7.817b-c, and that the Great Dionysia constituted one of the important socio-political spaces from which citizens' wives were routinely excluded: 'Representing democracy: women at the Great Dionysia' in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (eds.), *Ritual, Finance, Politics* (Oxford, 1994), 347-69. cf. S. Goldhill, 'The audience of Athenian tragedy' in P. E. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1997), 62-6.

<sup>105</sup> Henderson (1996), pp. 26-8.

*demos*. Detractors from the argument for female audience presence have highlighted the frequency with which male-authored and male-acted female characters voice male concerns rather than reflect social reality.<sup>106</sup> While no firm conclusions on the matter may be drawn from the evidence as it stands, the present writer tends to favour the dissenting arguments of the latter group of scholars. Seeking a firmer ground on the issue, J. Henderson and Laura McClure argue that, regardless of the presence or otherwise of citizen women, the poets nonetheless addressed their ideas to a "notional audience of men".<sup>107</sup> Such an approach views the Athenian dramatic festivals as another forum for discussion on matters of political (ie. masculine) concern. It is through their interactions with this 'ideal' audience of citizen men that the poets contributed to the construction of the 'Greek self', discussed previously.<sup>108</sup> Keeping this notional audience of men in mind, then, we shall consider how Deianeira and Medea interact with their own myths and gender stereotypes.

#### Chapters four and five: women's magical schemes in tragedy

It is both fortunate and telling that two surviving plays should feature female figures of divergent character portrayed resorting to a common

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<sup>106</sup> E. Hall, 'The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy' in Easterling (1997), 93-126, esp. 125; Zeitlin in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990); Ruth Padel, 'Women: model for possession by daemons' in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (Detroit, 1983), 3-19; Helene P. Foley, 'Women in Greece' in M. Grant and R. Kitzinger (eds.), *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome* (New York, 1988), 1301-2; D. Halperin, 'Why is Diotima a woman?' in D. Halperin, J. Winkler and Froma I Zeitlin (eds.), *Before sexuality* (Princeton: 1990), 257-308. Cf. E. Stehle, *Performance and gender in ancient Greece* (Princeton: 1997), esp. ch. 3 for the same tendency in archaic lyric poetry.

<sup>107</sup> J. Henderson, 'Women and the Athenian dramatic festivals', *TAPhA* 121 (1991), 133-47; McClure (1999), 6, n. 10.

<sup>108</sup> pp. 20-21 above.



source of illicit power - magic. It is significant to the present study that both Deianeira and Medeia suffer hardship on account of the gender inequities permitted by the Greek marriage contract, and that the reactions of each take the shape of seizing upon the supernatural powers made accessible to them. In each play the morality of using such subversive forms of power constitutes a dominant theme. Both the *Trachiniai* and the *Medeia* deal with the use and abuse of power both in marriage and on the divine, universal level. Here, magic becomes an avenue for redress, a tool offering leverage to those in a position of powerlessness.<sup>109</sup>

#### Two faces of magic: accusation and self-admission

Chapter Five will draw attention, once again, to the fact that two very different attitudes to magic present themselves, depending whether it is one's own or another's magic that is at issue.<sup>110</sup> Discussions of the use of magic in dramatic literature tend to take one of two forms: accusations of the use of magic by others; and narrative descriptions or admissions of personal magic use. We shall turn first to *accusations* of magic use. In Euripides' *Bacchai* Pentheus, the reigning king of Thebes refers to the foreign evangelist who is actually Dionysos in disguise, as

ἄλλοτρίαν ἐπιπέμπειν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν ἄλλοθεν ἄλλοθεν.<sup>111</sup> Again, in

Sophokles' *Oidipous Tyrannos*, the king himself refers to Tiresias as

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<sup>109</sup> The uses of magic in negotiating uneven relationships - especially between the sexes - will be surveyed in my concluding remarks, pp. 241-47.

<sup>110</sup> On which see p, 11 above.

<sup>111</sup> Eur., *Bacc.* 234.

○☞❖γ♠✂.<sup>112</sup> A third accusation of something resembling magic is to be found in Euripides' *Hippolytos*, where Theseus reviles his own son Hippolytos as ♣♣♠♠♠♠♠♠ &☞⊕ γ♠❖♣♣♣♣.<sup>113</sup>

In each of the examples I have given the speaker is in an absolute rage, from which we may assume that vile insults against Dionysos, Tiresias and Hippolytos respectively are intended. It is also worth noting that the accuser in each case - all three are in fact kings - enjoys a firmer and considerably higher status than the target of their accusation. In each case the target is of unusual (and therefore vulnerable) status. Dionysos comes under fire on account of his effeminacy, his foreignness, his strange powers of influence and his dislocation as a foreign religious figure. The seer Tiresias is targetted on account of the unwelcome truths he speaks. Hippolytos is an overtly pious, chaste devotee of Artemis whose offence is to calmly, if somewhat tactlessly, deny a charge of rape with which his father has confidently, though wrongly, charged him. The great potential of such figures to upset the natural order of society, or to bring shame upon their accuser, is matched by their vulnerability to charges of fraudulence.

In the instances surveyed here, it is notable that all of the accused are in fact male, as are their accusers. We also have instances where male figures accuse females, as for example in the *Trachiniai*. Herakles,

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<sup>112</sup> Soph., *OT* 387.

<sup>113</sup> Eur., *Hipp.* 1038.

horrified and astounded at the damage wrought by Deianeira's 'love potion', demands to know:

...and who, of the Trachinians, is such a sorcerer?<sup>114</sup>

Hermione's accusation against Andromache, that the Trojan woman used  $\chi\theta\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\lambda\alpha$  to render her infertile, constitutes a relatively rare instance of one woman accusing another of using magic.<sup>115</sup> Such accusations by women against men are not attested at all in the literary sources (to the best of my knowledge). This fact may of course be attributed to the incompleteness of the classical dramatic sources. On the basis of other ancient treatments of the subject of magic, though, I will suggest that accusations of magic are primarily a masculine weapon, issued from a position of power and used against those of less secure status. Accusations of all kinds – with or without foundation – played an important role in agonistic public life in ancient Mediterranean societies. Accusations of the practice of magic by others proved to be an effective tool for disrupting and renegotiating one's status, relative to their peers.<sup>116</sup> The vulnerability of women and other marginal groups to such accusations - formal or tacit - will be reiterated throughout this thesis.

When it is the reality of magic that is at issue in tragedy, as opposed to rhetorical description of one kind or another, a rather different generic

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<sup>114</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 1140.

<sup>115</sup> Eur., *Andr.* 157. Andromache responds to this accusation at *Andr.* 205.

<sup>116</sup> This aspect of the public face of magic will be explored further in chapter six below.

scenario presents itself. The users of magic and divine or otherwise privileged substances are, as previously noted, overwhelmingly female. When, in fifth century B.C.E. tragedy, female characters have recourse to magic, they tend to do so with an attitude of apology or self-justification. This is certainly the case with Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytos* and Deianeira in Sophokles' *Trachiniai*, both of whom are presented as otherwise good, chaste citizen wives, who are painfully aware of the need to maintain a good public reputation. Their apologetic and desperate uses of witchcraft are at odds with the images of purveyors of magic suggested by the tone of the accusations of  $\text{☉} \text{☽} \text{♁} \text{♂} \text{♁} \text{♁}$  and  $\text{☉} \text{☽} \text{♁} \text{♂} \text{♁} \text{♁}$  I mentioned earlier. In those accusations, ideas of *hubris* loom large, along with at times conflicting notions of fraudulence and access to great power.<sup>117</sup> In the *Trachiniai*, on the other hand, Deianeira goes to some effort to distance herself and the love charm she plans to use from the 'evil bold deeds' of other women. Deianeira is daring enough to use the love charm, yet fearing for her reputation she rejects the notion that she resembles a  $\text{♁} \text{☽} \text{☉} \text{♁} \text{♁} \text{♁} \text{♁}$  in any way.

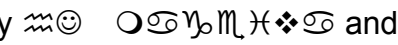
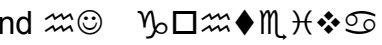
Even within these two plays - *Trachiniai* and *Hippolytos* - I think we can observe a critical split between the thought of being regarded by others as a  $\text{♁} \text{☽} \text{☉} \text{♁} \text{♁} \text{♁} \text{♁}$ , and the actual use of magical devices. This constitutes literary evidence in support of a tendency among the Greeks to espouse opinions about magic which are at odds with actual practice. This may be viewed as an illustration of the tensions existing between

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<sup>117</sup> Perhaps capturing another of the paradoxes inherent in Greek understandings of

public morality and private enterprise, observed and discussed by Henk Versnel.<sup>118</sup> Thus it is possible to justify to oneself the use of a helpful potion, although the same behaviour in others would be considered a threat to social stability and lawful process. Or, stated differently, magic is the product of a shared imagination. Magic is thus considered to pose the most powerful threat when it is the *imagined* magic of others.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, when practised by oneself, magic is barely regarded as such.

### Chapter six: Magic and the *polis*

Discrepancies in the way that magic is viewed in the literature - as a powerful tool or mere charlatanry; as a gross impiety or a helpful little philtre - remind us that Greek culture possessed no central religious, scientific or ethical canon. Instead, the legitimacy of practices such as magic were subject to constant negotiation through public (ie. political) debate.<sup>120</sup> Continuing the focus upon accusations of magic, Chapter Six examines the way  and  were constructed and pursued in the Athenian legal framework. It will be suggested that the secrecy and individual enterprise that are central to magic set the practice at odds with the public ethos of the democratic Athenian legal system. By the same process, magic was increasingly constructed as a socially and politically disruptive - ie. undemocratic -

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magic, of which Gordon (1987) speaks: see p. 21, n. 92 above.

<sup>118</sup> Versnel (1991), 62 argues that an 'amoral familist' ethos operates in (ancient and modern) Mediterranean cultures. Simply stated, one does anything possible that will benefit one's family, and assume that others will do the same. Some such actions may be publicly boasted, others must never be admitted. In accordance with this double moral standard, one would denounce another for acting in unacceptable ways, but surreptitiously practice the same methods.

<sup>119</sup> Gordon (1999); Gordon (1987).

force. The increasing concern about magic in literary and political discourse at Athens will be correlated with the emergence and rise to prominence of a democratic *polis* identity. As public life became valorised in the classical period, private initiatives increasingly risked being characterised as magic, or otherwise uncitizen-like behaviour.

#### Chapter seven: Magic and Greek identity - otherness and foreignness

The democratic rhetoric of the expanding Athenian empire of the fifth century helped to connect ideas about magic and Persia as foreign, imminent threats to Greekness. Chapter Seven looks at magic's relationship with foreignness (real and imagined variously), and at ways that ideas of 'Greekness' were solidified by contrast with magical and cultural 'otherness'.<sup>121</sup> The Greeks' extensive ideas of otherness presuppose a rather circumscribed notion of selfhood. Their preference for defining with reference to binary oppositions means that the category 'Greek citizen adult male' was opposed to barbarian, non-citizen, non-democratic, female, animal and divine. Thus it is that we find explicit correlations of feminine/magical /Persian/barbarian/divine/beast in the literature.<sup>122</sup> In their oppositionary role, all of the above categories are constructed as potential threats to order in the pre-eminent, masculine, public discourse of the period.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gordon (1999), 162.

<sup>121</sup> On the role of the idea of otherness in relations between the sexes see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, transl. H. M. Parshley (London, 1953), esp. pp. 15ff.

<sup>122</sup> Magic proves to be most powerful when it is performed by women, and when the magical technology is of foreign or divine origin. cf. my discussions of Kirke and Medea in particular.

<sup>123</sup> Thus it is that even Deianeira, a good and Greek wife, still reveals herself to be a threat to the *oikos*.

### Magic as a threat to legitimate power structures

In my concluding remarks I will explore the magical associations of erotic love in the *PGM*, and in the poetic literature of the classical period.

Gender inversion is a recurrent feature of literature pertaining to erotic love and especially erotic magic. This relates directly to ancient Greek understandings of erotic love as a sort of disease, and to the mechanics of romance, wherein the beloved is always of subordinate status and yet is felt to exert control over the otherwise dominant lover. Ideas of gender inversion suggest that erotic magic was understood to be a subversive tool with the potential to disrupt accepted power hierarchies to the advantage of otherwise weaker parties. Indeed, magic more generally seems to fit this profile. The curse inscriptions, for instance, are frequently issued with the intention of attaining justice when one's inferior social position makes formal or public means of redress inaccessible.<sup>124</sup> Once again, we see magic operating privately in contempt of, or disregard for formal *polis*-sanctioned avenues for redress.

Magical activities, as identified by the ancient sources, are invariably private in nature. Because such rites were exclusive of the *polis*, there was a tendency to believe that their aims were not merely self-serving, but openly hostile towards the broader community. This inclination towards distrusting the intentions of others was a corollary of the agonistic, duplicitous nature of classical Greek society. Throughout this

thesis it will be shown that private, covert and unseen activities were stigmatised as antagonistic towards the ideals of public life. Private activities, and especially those activities that dealt with transformative processes, were particularly vulnerable to accusations and intimations of magical dealings. By virtue of their reproductive potential, women were closely connected with transformations and boundaries. Being also confined (as far as was feasible) to the unseen interior of the house,<sup>125</sup> and excluded from public life women were especially open to accusations of magical misdemeanour. The Greek conception of magic was conceived as alien to the world of civic-focused, citizen males, and thus consanguineous, by virtue of a binary pattern of thought, with feminine 'nature'.

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<sup>124</sup> Versnel (1991), esp. 68ff.

<sup>125</sup> Indeed, women were themselves understood, biologically, as constituting a kind of enclosed space: Padel (1983), 3-19.



## Chapter Two

### Hekate: traversing dangerous boundaries

In Attic drama of the fifth and early fourth centuries Hekate is implicitly connected with Chthonic and unsavoury areas of Greek religious belief and practice. In subsequent centuries this goddess came to be firmly connected with the rituals, preferred locations and language surrounding magic, as known from the elite literary tradition. Disparities in representations of this deity, however, indicate that she may not have always presided over such activities. The present chapter will be devoted to an examination of the evolving relationships between the goddess Hekate and magic and the Underworld in Greek myth, cult, literature and iconography.

In his *Medeia*, first performed in 431, Euripides has the heroine declare:

By the mistress whom I revere / most of all and (whom) I  
choose as a partner in schemes / Hekate, inhabiting the  
inmost recess of my hearth.<sup>1</sup>

Medeia's invocation of Hekate occurs during the speech in which she first reveals that she intends to kill the offending trio of Jason, his new bride, and Kreon by her skilful use of ἄστυχία. As discussed in chapter one above, the term ἄστυχία may be used to

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<sup>1</sup> Eur., *Med.* 395-97.

designate poisons, or magical potions, or both.<sup>2</sup> Given the barely fathomable boldness of Medeia's character in this play, and the terrible deeds she is calmly devising, it is difficult to accept that the naming of Hekate here is meant to be other than a morally and dramatically loaded term. A fragment of Sophokles' *Rhizotomoi* connects Hekate with Helios (possibly as the goddess' partner in a lunar-solar parallelism<sup>3</sup>), with roads and the associated Greek goddess Enodia, and with crossroads in particular:

⊗⦿●✠ℳ    ⚡ℳ❖♦□□◆⊗    &⊗✠≡    □◆♁□    ✠⊙ℳ□□❖■⊗  
◆⍈♁✠    ℳ✠⊗■□⚡✠⊗    ⊙⊗&⊗❖◆⍈✠    ℳ⊙⦿⊗□✠⊗  
◆□≡    ⚡✠✍    ♁◆⊗●◆❖○□□◆    □□□□□●□◆♁⊗    ✠ℳ  
❖□ℳ✠⊗    &⊗✠≡    ⦿⍈✠    ⊗⊗■✠□◆♁✍    ✠⊙ℳ□⊗≡✠    ◆  
□✠□❖⚡□◆✠⊗  
◆◆ℳ✠⊗■◆◆⊗○ℳ■❖⍈    ⚡□◆✠II    &⊗✠≡    □●ℳ&◆⊗  
✠♁✠⊗    ◆⊗○◆♁    ◆□ℳ✠❖□⊗✠✠    ⚡□⊗&□❖■◆◆<sup>4</sup>

Chorus: Lord Helios and sacred fire, weapon of Hekate of the road,

Which in service to you she brings down through Olympos and the terrible crossroads of the sacred land, wreathing herself with oak leaves and the winding coils of savage serpents.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter one, pp. 14-16.  
<sup>3</sup> A. C. Pearson (ed.), *The Fragments of Sophokles*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1917), p. 176.  
<sup>4</sup> Soph., *Rhiz. Frag.* 535: Richard Konnicht and Bruno Snell (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (henceforth *TrGF*), vol. 4 (Göttingen, 1981), p. 411.

In a recent and insightful work on how the Greeks related to their dead, Sarah I. Johnston has interpreted the context of this fragment to be an invocation and request of Hekate for assistance in preparing a spell, although such a specific reading does not appear to be justified by the text.<sup>5</sup> The subject matter of the play and the presence of language suggestive of invocation, however, may go some way to justifying such an interpretation.

Passing remarks elsewhere in tragedy and comedy indicate other of Hekate's areas of apparent expertise, concern and protection during the classical period. A character in a tragic fragment of unknown authorship asks another:

(ἑρμῆσιν) ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν  
 ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν  
 ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν ἑρμῆσιν<sup>6</sup>

Chorus: But perhaps you fear a phantom in your sleep, and have received a visitation from Chthonic Hekate.

Hekate's role as a leader or sender of phantoms is re-affirmed by Menelaus' exchange with the wife whom he believed he had carefully concealed in a cave:

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: encounters between the living and the dead in ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> *Trag. Adesp.*, 375; *TrGF*, vol. 2, p. 115.

Menelaos: You, my wife? What sort of wife? Do not touch my robes!

Helen: (The wife) whom my father Tyndareos gave to you.

Menelaos: Oh, Light-bearer Hekate, send favourable visions!

Helen: It is no nocturnal minister of the Road Goddess whom you are seeing, but me.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the fourth century Hippocratic treatise *On the sacred disease* tells us that practitioners of 'dubious arts' attribute nocturnal attacks by phantoms to Hekate-Enodia.

(If) in the night there occur terrors and fears, madness and leapings up off the bed and flights outside, they say it is an infliction from Hekate, or an attack by Heroes.<sup>8</sup>

The efforts at persuasion and the apparent exasperation expressed by the Hippocratic author here suggests that this belief had a strong following. Other factors which may have coloured this Hippocratic writer's view of such 'superstitious' beliefs are discussed in chapter three below.<sup>9</sup> Again, in his *Plutus*, Aristophanes makes light of the practice of setting out 'Hekate's Suppers' at the beginning (new moon) of each month.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Eur., *Hel.* 567-70.

<sup>8</sup> Hipp., *On the Sacred Disease*, 4: 30-33.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter three, pp. 85ff.

<sup>10</sup> Arist., *Plut.* 593-97; cf. Athen., 7:126.

From the above-mentioned extracts and fragments it is apparent that in the fifth century Hekate is connected in various ways with dreams, chthonic terrors, the Thessalian goddess Enodia, magical spells, and the complex of Greek ideas surrounding crossroads.<sup>11</sup> To this collection may be added a fragment of Aeschylus, which asserts that *hekataia* (images of Hekate) were placed at the entrances of houses of kings, for apotropaic purposes:

Chorus: Mistress Hekate, placed before the doors of the homes of kings.

This may be viewed as somewhat of an inversion of the more ambivalent or even sinister roles, which classical writers ascribed to her, but as we shall see, these protective and harmful functions are logically and especially, connected in the case of Hekate. In a fragmentary *paian* the slightly earlier Pindar rejoices on behalf of the Abderitans of Thrace for a propitious and genuine oracle of the ‘gracious maiden’ Hekate, and connects her once again with lunar cycles

But when (the enemy) has come near the river he will confound

<sup>11</sup> On which see further below, pp. 50-56; Sarah I. Johnston, ‘Crossroads’, *ZPE* 88 (1991), 217-24, esp. 220.

<sup>12</sup> Aesch., *Frag.* 388, *TrGF*, vol. 3, p. 435.

them using a few powerful arms against a great army." That day fell on the first of the month, and the ruddy-footed, gracious maiden Hekate announced the prophecy, which was eager to be fulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

In each of the instances given the references to Hekate are brief and unelaborated, besides certain epithets. This is commonly interpreted, by modern scholars, as indicating that Greeks of the classical period must have been thoroughly familiar with such information, and so did not require elaboration on meanings in each context.

Modern scholarship, of course, does not have the benefit of this unstated body of knowledge. Indeed, the fragmentary state of our knowledge is testified by disagreement and trepidation regarding the reconciliation of Hesiod's singular 'Hymn to Hekate' in *Theogony* (lines 411-52) with archaeological findings from the same period, and with the later classical (and Hellenistic and late antique) figure/s of the goddess.

The singularly rapturous and lengthy hymnal tribute to Hekate in Hesiod's *Theogony* has been dismissed as an intrusion by a number of highly regarded scholars<sup>14</sup> largely on historico-religious grounds, although more recently it has been accepted as stylistically and thematically consistent

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<sup>13</sup> Pind., *Pa.* 2.75-9.

<sup>14</sup> Deborah Boedeker, 'Hekate: a transfunctional goddess in the *Theogony*?', *TAPhA* 113 (1983), 80 includes a good bibliography on this debate.

with, or relevant to the work as a whole.<sup>15</sup> Taking a somewhat different approach, Berg finds the ‘Hymn to Hekate’ to be archaic if not actually Hesiodic,<sup>16</sup> and so valuable nonetheless from a broader perspective.

The Hesiodic Hekate, who dates to c. 750-650, retains a share in the earth, sea and sky, but is notably absent from chthonic affairs, which later become central to her spheres of influence.<sup>17</sup> It is also clear that Hekate specifically aids men,<sup>18</sup> in contrast with the feminine cultic and mythic associations which she later displayed.<sup>19</sup> The only child of Asteria and Perses,<sup>20</sup> Hekate is honoured by Zeus, despite belonging to the disgraced Titan order, and with his grace her powers are even extended to include the role of *kourotrophos* – ‘raiser of youth’. Froma I. Zeitlin understands Zeus' generous dispensation of honours upon Hekate to be a reconfirmation of her status in the new divine order, or perhaps even a 'second birth' into the Olympic pantheon.<sup>21</sup> Hekate's powers in the *Theogony* (and indeed elsewhere, as we shall see), overlap those of numerous Olympic deities, although the poet assures the listener/reader that such encroachment is entirely harmonious. Her mediation in the

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<sup>15</sup> Froma I Zeitlin, ‘Signifying Difference: the myth of Pandora’ in Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments* (London and New York: 1995), 58-74, esp. 62; Boedeker, *ibid.*, 79-93; Jenny Strauss Clay, ‘The Hecate of *Theogony*’, *GRBS* 25 (1984), 27-38; P. Marquardt, ‘A Portrait of Hecate’, *AJP* 102 (1961), 243-60, esp. 250-1; M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 276-80.

<sup>16</sup> William Berg, ‘Hecate: Greek or “Anatolian”?’, *Numen* 21 (1974), 129.

<sup>17</sup> West, *ibid.*, 277; Marquardt (1961), 257.

<sup>18</sup> Hekate aids men in law, politics, battle, athletics, horse-handling and sea-faring (*Th.* 430-43). Zeitlin (1995), n. 11.

<sup>19</sup> In my use of the term 'feminine', it is not my wish to subscribe to any notion of sex essentialism. I am merely acknowledging the essentialist ideas present in the Greek sources. On this subject see David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: 1990).

<sup>20</sup> Hes., *Theog.* l. 426. The fact that Hekate is a  $\text{O}\square\square\square\gamma\text{b}\text{M}\text{L}\text{■}\text{☿}\text{♁}\text{♂}\text{♁}$  underscores that she is not a member of the Olympian order: Marquardt (1961), 245.

<sup>21</sup> Zeitlin (1995), 63-4.

realms of Poseidon and Hermes serve as evidence and examples of this divine accord.<sup>22</sup> This theme of Hekate as mediator between humans and gods, and between the gods themselves is an enduring one, detectable, for example, in theurgic philosophy in late antiquity.<sup>23</sup> It also presages her liminal status and role in classical ritual, as guardian of the boundaries which divide physical spaces, and of the chronological boundaries which are experienced as transitional periods. In combination with her unfixed mythological genealogy,<sup>24</sup> it also suggests that the goddess herself may have been superimposed onto pre-existing, and rather more fixed, myth structures.<sup>25</sup>

Before leaving the *Theogony*, it should be noted that while Hekate is most beneficent and very powerful, the poem repeatedly adds that her blessings may be enjoyed only ‘if she so wills it’. While the poem offers Hekate the lavish praise appropriate to a hymn, it also implies unpredictability<sup>26</sup> and wilfulness, as the goddess may withhold her blessings, or even bestow them on one’s adversaries. The repetition, in this connection, of subjunctive forms of the word  $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota$  at lines 429, 430, 432 and 439 is most notable, and other adjacent uses of  $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota$ -based words at lines 435 ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\sigma\epsilon\iota$ ), 443

<sup>22</sup> In her mediation of these realms, Hekate’s role overlaps with that of Demeter. Hes., *Theog.* 439-47.

<sup>23</sup> See p. 47, n. 42 below.

<sup>24</sup> Bacchylides, *Frag.* 1b (Campbell) calls Hekate the daughter of Night; Pherecydes, 3f4 - the daughter of Aristseus; Sophron, *ap. schol. Theocritus, Id.* 2:12 – the daughter of Hera and Zeus; Hekate is identified as the daughter of Demeter by Euripides (*Ion*, 1048), Callimachus (*Frag.* 466) and Orphic writers (*Orph. Frag.* 41), apparently operating as a double for Persephone.

<sup>25</sup> See Johnston (1999), p. 246.

<sup>26</sup> Marquardt (1961), 245.



(ἡ ἑρμῆς ἐπιβουλή), 444 (ἡ ἑρμῆς ἐπιβουλή) and 446

(ἡ ἑρμῆς ἐπιβουλή) serve to further highlight the ‘wilfulness’ of Hekate’s character.<sup>27</sup> It can be argued that even Hesiod’s archaic portrait suggests a capacity for malice by Hekate, although this may be indistinguishable from Zeus’ own wilfulness or capriciousness in *Works and Days*.<sup>28</sup> Repetition of the word ἡ ἑρμῆς ἐπιβουλή similarly occurs in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, thereby constituting a literary parallel with the *Theogony*. In this work the poet is discussing the power and wilfulness of a deity, but here the subject is a predatory hawk – an allegory for Zeus’ power to determine the fate of mortals. Hekate’s behaviour here is in keeping with the gods of Homeric epic, whose intervention in human affairs is also guided by caprice and bias.<sup>29</sup> I would suggest that it is Hekate’s mythical (if somewhat generic) wilfulness, in combination with the cultic developments and associations to be discussed below, which led to her nature to becoming increasingly chthonic and malevolent in the course of the classical period and increasingly during the Hellenistic period.

Hekate features once again in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where she is introduced as the only divinity, besides Demeter herself, who both knows that Persephone has been abducted, and is sympathetic to her

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<sup>27</sup> West (1966), p. 285. This repetition also indicates the ritualistic aspect of the hymn.

<sup>28</sup> Hes., *WD*, 207-11

<sup>29</sup> Hom., *Il.* 4:1-130. This belief in wilfulness and bias on the part of the gods is also well represented in the classical literature. Cf. Isok. 12:54; Eur., *Hel.* 38-41; Ar., *Plut.* 87-94; Hdt., *Hists.* 1:32:1, 3:40:2; although the idea that gods were ultimately benevolent was also articulated, cf. Dem. 20:126; Lysias 2:40; Eur., *IT* 380-91. See K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 75-81.

plight. In this hymn, which has been dated to c. 650-550 on stylistic grounds,<sup>30</sup> Hekate emerges from her cave, bearing a torch. Richardson interprets the cave and torch as being relevant to her chthonic links,<sup>31</sup> although such connections are not pronounced elsewhere in this text. There was, however, a second version of the story of Persephone's abduction and marriage to Hades, recorded by Callimachus, in which Hekate herself enters the Underworld and leads Persephone out.<sup>32</sup> This alternative version constituted a popular theme for vase paintings.<sup>33</sup> In the *Hymn*, when Persephone and Demeter are reunited, Hekate is established as Persephone's chief servant (ἡγεμένης ἐκείνης) and companion (ἑταίρα).<sup>34</sup> The wording at line 438 which introduces this role, ἡγεμένης ἐκείνης... has been identified as characteristic of mythological aetiologies for the institution of rituals, and this may explain Hekate's role in the Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>35</sup>

In the two archaic poems discussed above, Hekate is largely free from the chthonic or otherwise sinister undertones that are detectable to varying degrees in classical and later writings. An assessment of the archaeological and documentary evidence for the cultic development of

<sup>30</sup> Helene P. Foley (ed.), *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: translation, commentary and interpretive essays* (Princeton, 1994), p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> N. J. Richardson (ed.), *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), p. 136.

<sup>32</sup> Kall., *frag.* 466 ap. Schol. Theocr. 2.12.

<sup>33</sup> See J. D. Beazley, *Attic Red-figure Vase-painters*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. (Oxford: 1942), 1012.1; Richardson (1974), pp. 295-96; Foley (1994), p. 61.

<sup>34</sup> *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 438-40; cf. Hesiod, *Theog.*, 450-52.

<sup>35</sup> Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: form and meaning in the major Homeric myths* (Princeton, N. J., 1989), p. 257; Richardson (1974), 294-5; Robert Parker, 'The Hymn to Demeter and the Homeric Hymns', *G&R* 38 (1991), 1-17, nn. 22, 28.

this divine figure will now be undertaken in an effort to expand upon the rather specific scope of the literary evidence.

Modern scholars almost unanimously accept that Hekate originated as a goddess of Asia Minor – specifically Caria – whose worship reached mainland Greece by 700 B.C.E., or earlier.<sup>36</sup> William Berg seems to constitute a lone voice of dissent, arguing that the evidence from Asia Minor is weak and largely dates to late antiquity, suggesting instead that Hekate is no more an import to the Greek mainland than Dionysos.<sup>37</sup> Berg's questioning of the meagre Carian evidence is valid, but his arguments for her Greekness rest on at least equally shaky grounds.<sup>38</sup>

One of the earliest pieces of archaeological evidence for Hekate consists of a late sixth century altar in the precinct of Apollo Delphinios at Miletus, inscribed to Hekate in *boustrophedon*-style. Its location front of the *prytaneum* would indicate an elevated, official cult status for her there. Also dating to the late sixth century – this time from Athens - is a terracotta statuette, dedicated to Hekate by a man, and presumably representing the goddess herself. This female figure is indistinguishable from any other Greek goddess.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> T. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg, 1960), pp. 24-56. Discussions in English language tend to rely heavily upon Kraus. These include West (1966), pp. 276-80; Johnston (1999), pp. 205-8; Marquardt (1961), 250; Boedeker (1983), 80.

<sup>37</sup> Dionysos' name appears as early as Bronze Age linear B tablets, despite being of eastern origin in mythology. Berg does concede that there is no such positive, early evidence for Hekate in Greece; Berg (1974), 128-40; cf. n. 12 above.

<sup>38</sup> Clay makes the same criticism of Berg's thesis: Clay (1984), 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899*, Band I, Heft 3 (Berlin, 1906-), p. 153, illustration no. 41 (Kawerau); *ibid.*, p. 275, no. 129, illustration no. 71 (Rehm); Johnston (1999), p. 204.

From at least Hellenistic times, Hekate's titles in Caria included  
 ○𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 (greatest), 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 (most manifest  
 goddess) and 𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆𐌆 (saviour),<sup>40</sup> and in nearby Lagina Hekate's  
 was the largest precinct in the city. Further evidence for Hekate's  
 elevated cult status in Asia Minor, much of it Hellenistic, is surveyed by  
 Kraus.<sup>41</sup>

It is the lateness of this evidence which lends the most credence to Berg's  
 refutation of Hekate's Anatolian origins, although his thesis is not wholly  
 convincing. Given that Hekate was subject to a great deal of syncretism  
 between the archaic, classical and Hellenistic periods,<sup>42</sup> it is imprudent  
 either to project her status and popularity backwards to earlier periods, or  
 to assume a predictable, steady development of her cult. An observation  
 and a suggestion made in an article by Jonathan Z. Smith may provide  
 useful guidance here.<sup>43</sup> He notes that modern scholars share the

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<sup>40</sup> Kraus (1960), pp. 54-6; Johnston (1999), pp. 205-6.

<sup>41</sup> Kraus (1960), pp. 24-56. Of English language studies, Johnston (1999), pp. 204-8, is the most up to date and comprehensive, whilst also being heavily reliant upon Kraus for evidence and analysis.

<sup>42</sup> Hekate's evolution throughout the archaic and classical periods is amply attested below, *passim*. The greatness with which Rome appears to have endowed Laginetan Hekate in late antiquity, for political reasons, is a cause for caution: Berg (1974), 133. Hekate enjoyed particular eminence in the late antique Chaldaean literature. While the context here is distinctly specialist and elite, it is notable that Hekate functions as a membrane, both linking and dividing the realms of the intelligible and the sensible, in Theurgic philosophy: John D. Turner, 'Gnosticism and Platonism: the Platonizing and Sethian texts from Nag Hammadi in their relation to later Platonic literature' in Richard T. Wallis (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (Albany, 1992), 425-60, esp. 441. In this philosophy Hekate is also identified with *dynamis*, and is thus an intermediary through whom humans may communicate with the noetic world: Rowland Smith, *Julian's Gods: religion and philosophy in the thought and action of Julian the Apostate* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 100-1.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity', *ANRW*, II.16.1 (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 1978), 425-39, esp. 436-7.

ancients' habit of tending to seek the origins of marginal or demonic beliefs and powers amongst 'outside', frequently eastern, influences. He is echoed by Johnston in suggesting that a more productive approach would be to examine how the demonological beliefs held by the Greeks or the Romans operated within their cultures.<sup>44</sup> It is notable that at no stage in her development is Hekate declared to be foreign, by Greek writers.<sup>45</sup>

Tentatively maintaining an eastern origin for Hekate, then, we shall turn now to her functions within mainland Greek cult and myth, and how this relates to the Ephesian, Milesian and Carian evidence. We have already discussed Hekate's connection to the Eleusinian Mysteries in her role as Persephone's eternal attendant in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, composed circa the seventh or sixth centuries. This would appear to underscore the idea of Hekate as *kourotrophos*, which was propounded in Hesiod's *Theogony* at lines 450-2 with much emphasis but little explanation. In the Hymn to Demeter, Hekate's role of *kourotrophos* is linked, through Persephone's Underworld marriage, with that of *psychopompos*. By the fifth century the identification of Hekate as a leader of the Underworld's denizens was clearly a useful and familiar theme. Hence a fragment of unknown authorship, discussed previously, which has a character inquire of another whether they expect to be

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<sup>44</sup> Sarah I. Johnston, 'Defining the dreadful: remarks on the Greek child-killing demon' in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient magic and ritual power* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1995), 361-87, esp. 362.

<sup>45</sup> Dionysos and Orpheus, by way of contrast, were most often said to be of eastern origin, although all evidence suggests that these figures were indigenous to Greece: For this phenomenon see chapter seven, pp. 221-22.

attacked in their sleep by the phantoms in Hekate's entourage.<sup>46</sup> A similar theme is recorded in Euripides' *Helen*.<sup>47</sup>

In curse tablets of the fifth and subsequent centuries, Hekate, along with Persephone and Hermes, is the deity most commonly called upon as part of the process of rousing the dead spirits into action on behalf of the living.<sup>48</sup> Such an invocation is depicted in Aeschylus' *Persai*, where Hermes and Hades are called upon by the Persian chorus to raise the spirit of Darius.<sup>49</sup> Hermes was well established as a *psychopompos*,<sup>50</sup> yet unlike Hekate he never came to be portrayed as a leader of a rabble of restless phantoms.<sup>51</sup> The parallel functions of *Hermai* and *Hekataia*, which afforded protection along roadways, constitutes further overlapping of the roles of Hermes and Hekate on the Greek mainland.<sup>52</sup> *Hekataia* were more specifically associated with entrances to cities and homes,<sup>53</sup> thereby also overlapping the guardianship duties of such city-goddesses as Hera and Athene.<sup>54</sup> It has been argued that, with all this doubling of divinities for limited functions, Hekate was a superfluous deity to the mainland Greek communities. As with her genealogy, Hekate's duties are apparently superimposed onto pre-existing belief structures. These

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<sup>46</sup> *Trag. Adesp.*, 375; see n. 6 above.

<sup>47</sup> Eur., *Hel.* 569-70; see n. 7 above.

<sup>48</sup> John Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells From the Ancient World* (New York and Oxford, 1992), p. 12; Johnston (1999), p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> Aesch., *Pers.* 628-30.

<sup>50</sup> Hermes conducts deceased souls to the Underworld: Hom., *Od.* 24.1-10; Soph., *Aj.* 831-2; Eur., *Alc.* 743-4; Hermes is called upon to allow contact between the living and the dead: Aesch., *Pers.* 628-30, *Choe.* 124.

<sup>51</sup> Johnston (1999), p. 210.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston (1991), 217-24, esp. 220.

<sup>53</sup> Aesch., *Frag.* 388; Arist., *Vesp.* 804, *Lys.* 64 and Schol.; Plut., *Apotheg. Reg.* 193ff.

<sup>54</sup> Johnston (1999), p. 207.

duties, moreover, appear to mirror those she fulfilled in Asia Minor. Fifth century Miletus had a temple to Hekate at its city gates,<sup>55</sup> and a statue of her was erected with the new gates behind Lagina.<sup>56</sup> In (admittedly Hellenistic) temple friezes at Lagina Hekate is represented in a manner suggestive of a city- and mother-goddess,<sup>57</sup> and inscriptions reveal her to have been a 'keeper of the key' to that city.<sup>58</sup>

It is in her guardianship of thresholds, gates and especially crossroads that Hekate's increasingly Chthonic and magical connections are most fathomable. A number of Hekate's epithets, such as  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$ ,  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$ ,  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$  and  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$ , indicate that she, like Hermes,<sup>59</sup> was particularly concerned with points of intersection and transition.<sup>60</sup> Given the importance of spatial definition and polar oppositions to Greek conceptions of the cosmos,<sup>61</sup> transgression of such boundaries, or occupation of the undefined boundary zones themselves constituted a cause for considerable unease.<sup>62</sup> While boundaries gave order to the world, they were themselves a point of weakness, or boundlessness.

<sup>55</sup> *Milet*, I.3, 392, no. 172 (Rehm); Johnston (1999), p. 206.

<sup>56</sup> *LSAM* 50.25-9; J. Robert, 'Inscriptions de Carie', *RPh* 14 (1940), 231-44, esp. 234-8.

<sup>57</sup> Kraus (1960), pp. 54-55.

<sup>58</sup> For discussion see Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: a study of Hekate's roles in the Chaldaean Oracles and related literature* (Atlanta, 1990), pp. 41-2.

<sup>59</sup> Hermes' epithets included  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$  and  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$  and  $\text{Μεγαλοπόρθητος}$ .

<sup>60</sup> As liminal guardians, these deities apotropaically guarded the interior spaces from the dangers without, as well as from the dangers inherent in the transitional spaces themselves: Johnston (1991), 218, 220, n. 15; C. M. Edwards, 'The running maiden from Eleusis and the early classical image of Hekate', *AJA* 90 (1986), 307-18, esp. 317.

<sup>61</sup> For the importance of polar oppositions to definition see G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: two types of argumentation in early Greek thought* (Bristol, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (London, 1966), chs. 7 and 8; Johnston (1990), ch. II.

This sentiment may be detected behind an expression by Pindar in his eleventh *Pythian* ode, that he had been "whirled at the path-shifting crossroads" in a moment of creative perplexity.<sup>63</sup> It is the uncertainty and boundlessness of such liminal spaces that necessitates protection by *hermai* and *hekataia*, and the performance of special rituals.<sup>64</sup>

Some scholars have argued for a marked increase in emphasis upon such spatial distinctions between the archaic and classical periods, which both impacted upon the profile of Hekate as a liminal guardian, and increased fears of pollution associated with the transgression of boundaries, although such ideas should be approached with caution, given the dearth of evidence for archaic Greek society.<sup>65</sup> As explored in an article by Nanno Marinatos, ideas of perilous liminality are detectable in literature as early as Homer, when Odysseus and his companions come into contact with the sorceress Kirke in book ten of the *Odyssey*. Kirke dwells at a confusing, liminal point at the edge of the world, near the entrance to the Underworld. Kirke herself resists stereotypes, and

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<sup>63</sup> Pindar, *Pyth.* XI.38.

<sup>64</sup> Johnston (1990), ch. II.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Parker, *Miasma: pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 70-3 raises the argument that increased demarcation of spaces, particularly for the living and the dead, led to increasing fears of pollution, but is cautiously undecided; firm support for a growing concern in this period for definition of spaces can be found in Ian Morris, 'Attitudes towards death in archaic Greece', *CA* 8 (1989), 296-320; this position is directly challenged by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, '*Reading*' *Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 421-35, who argues that political, economic and intellectual developments were behind the classical trend against intramural burials, and that ritual, social and burial spaces were well-defined in archaic Greece. In *Restless Dead*, p. 210, Johnston makes the attractive proposition that an increased interest in the demarcation and definition occurred in many facets of society, and increased the demand for a liminal goddess such as Hekate. However the bulk of evidence for this trend towards demarcation and separation of spaces occurs in a funerary context, and so ought not to be projected onto wider society.



transgresses boundaries by being powerful, dominating and unmarried, and is even capable of violating the human-beast opposition.<sup>66</sup>

The spirits of the dead were believed to sometimes remain on earth, often as a result of dying violently or prematurely, or of not being properly, ritually conveyed to the Underworld. They were, it would seem, believed to gather at liminal places.<sup>67</sup> While there is no explicit confirmation of this belief in the ancient sources, Plato tells us that crossroads were a preferred location for the deposition of such magical paraphernalia as waxen 'voodoo' dolls.<sup>68</sup> Hellenistic and late antique *PGM* texts both indicate that magical rites were performed specifically at crossroads in the hope of making contact with the spirits of the dead in later centuries.<sup>69</sup>

Plutarch tells us at *Quaest. Rom.* 290d that Hekate was present at crossroads in a beneficent capacity, averting evil there, and at *Quaest. Conv.* 708f he lists her together with the danger-averting deities as recipients of 'Hekate's Suppers'. Such suppers were placed at crossroads at the new moon of each month. Modern scholars have

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<sup>66</sup> Nanno Marinatos, 'Circe and liminality: ritual background and narrative structure' in O. Anderson and M. Dickie (eds.), *Homer's World: fiction, tradition, reality*, Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 3 (Bergen, 1995), 133-40. I would note, in passing, Kirke's resemblance in character and background to Medeia, with whom she even shares a genealogical connection through descent from Helios: Eur., *Med.* 745, 958, 1320; Hom., *Od.* 10.138.

<sup>67</sup> Consider, further, the conceptual thrust of the *Chyrtoi*, a ritual cry issued at the close of the Anthesteria festival: "Doorwards, spirits of the dead, Anthesteria is over". The emphasis, in this ritual expulsion of spirits, is upon the liminal points - the doors - of defined spaces, rather than a return to the Underworld, as one may expect. Photius, *Lexicon* s.v. "Thyraze Kares" in David G. Rice and John E. Stambaugh (eds.), *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion* (1979), p. 205.

<sup>68</sup> Plato, *Laws* 933b.

<sup>69</sup> *PGM* IV 2943-66, XXXVI 256-64, LXX 16-7: Hans Dieter Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: including the demotic spells*, vol. 1, texts (Chicago and London, 1986).

frequently overlooked the beneficent side of Hekate, though, instead considering offerings of suppers, together with the separate category of  $\square\epsilon\tau\boxtimes\blacklozenge\square\blacklozenge\circ\text{X}\blacklozenge\text{C}$  - the polluted remains from purifications<sup>70</sup> - at crossroads to be fearful propitiations of a dangerous divinity.<sup>71</sup> Classical and early Hellenistic writers differentiate between the two types of material deposited at crossroads,<sup>72</sup> although even by late antiquity there had developed some confusion between purification waste and offerings to Hekate.<sup>73</sup> Plutarch's explanation that Hekate both averted evil and accepted polluted offerings appears somewhat nonsensical to a modern reader, but does not appear to have vexed the first century C. E. author.<sup>74</sup>

Crossroads were a hub for diverse kinds of religious activity. They were equally associated with purification and pollution, and so functioned as a membrane between the two ritual states of being. The dramatic and psychological potential of the use of crossroads in a Greek tragic context is explored in an article by Stephen Halliwell.<sup>75</sup> In the extant classical sources the word  $\blacklozenge\square\text{X}\blacklozenge\square\text{C}\text{X}$  - a meeting of three roads - is rarely

<sup>70</sup> Suda, Photius and *Etym. Magn.* s.v. " $\square\epsilon\tau\boxtimes\blacklozenge\square\blacklozenge\circ\text{X}\blacklozenge\text{C}$ ". Instead of associating such refuse with offerings of suppers to Hekate,  $\square\epsilon\tau\boxtimes\blacklozenge\square\blacklozenge\circ\text{X}\blacklozenge\text{C}$  may be more closely associated with the Athenian custom of expelling polluted corpses (such as those of murderers) to crossroads: Plato, *Laws*, 873b-c; Eupolis, *fr.* 132 PCG; the messenger's prayer to Enodia may also suggest that Polyneices' corpse lay at a crossroads at Soph., *Ant.* 1199ff.

<sup>71</sup> Parker notes a distinction between such suppers and depositions of polluted material at crossroads, but nonetheless considers all such material to be a way of "pinning the dangerous goddess at the crossroads by prophylactic offerings: Parker (1983), p. 30, n. 65; Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: the cult of souls and belief in immortality among the Greeks*, transl. W. B. Hillis (London, 1925), p. 296-7.

<sup>72</sup> Dem. 54.39. In late antiquity Lucian also distinguishes between the two categories of substance at *dial. Mort.* I.1 and again at *Catapl.* 7.

<sup>73</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 280c, 290d. However, see previous note for late antique Lucian's awareness of the distinction between the two.

<sup>74</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 280c, 290d, *Quaest. Conv.* 708f.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Halliwell, 'Where three roads meet: a neglected detail in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*', *JHS* 106 (1986), 187-90.

used in other than a religiously or morally loaded sense.<sup>76</sup> The complex of ideas which made crossroads such a place of possibility and trepidation may be used to elaborate upon our picture of the kind of divinity that Hekate was in the classical period.

It should be remembered that Hekate was not different from Artemis or Apollo insofar as she might just as easily withhold the graces that it was in her power to bestow. This ambivalence is detectable in the representations of gods in Homer, Hesiod and classical drama, and so was clearly an accepted element of divinity for most Greeks,<sup>77</sup> but may also be somewhat responsible for errors in the analysis of Hekate's character.<sup>78</sup> Artemis could, if her mood tended towards the wrathful, choose to kill women, rather than protect them, during childbirth.<sup>79</sup> Hekate, similarly, could choose to allow spirits of the dead or other evils to gain access to people, either to punish them for neglect of her, or even despite their best efforts to gain her support.<sup>80</sup>

The risks associated with encountering Hekate or spirits at liminal points when the goddess happened to be ill-disposed may have been exacerbated by the classical period, as a result of newly adopted beliefs about the potential of spirits for interference in the world of the living. A

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<sup>76</sup> Eur., *Suppl.* 1212; Soph., *OT* 1400-1 is rich with Erinyes and chthonic imagery; Aristoph., *Frag.* 209 *PCG* (=500-01 Kock), *Plut.* 594-7; Kallim., *Hymn* 6.114; Plato, *Gorg.* 524a2-4, *Laws* 873a-b; *Phaedo* 108a.

<sup>77</sup> See n. 29 above.

<sup>78</sup> See nn. 70 and 71 above for a brief bibliography of such compromised analyses.

<sup>79</sup> Johnston (1999), 212

<sup>80</sup> The two sides to Hekate's nature, and her wilfulness, are discussed above at pp. 43-44 in the context of Hesiod's *Theogony*. See also Johnston (1999), 209.

number of scholars have posited that interactions with Mesopotamian and Egyptian peoples led Greeks of the archaic period to move away from their belief in a passive and insubstantial afterlife, towards new conceptions of the dead as potentially active and able to interact with the living.<sup>81</sup> The fact that the two apparently contradictory notions coexist after Homer may suggest just such a transition in beliefs about the dead.<sup>82</sup>

Hekate's esteemed duties of guarding liminal places and leading the souls of the dead may have been altered somewhat by new polis emphases upon boundaries and new beliefs about the dead, but this does not explain why her evolution was so different to that of Hermes. I would suggest that there was a two-fold reason why Hekate became increasingly associated with morally questionable or unacceptable

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<sup>81</sup> Prominent explorations of this idea include Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age*, transl. Margaret E. Pinder and Walter Burkert (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan horses: guardian statues in ancient Greek myth and ritual* (New York: 1992); Johnston (1999), chs. 1-3. One may of course argue that this is simply another case of looking to 'exotic' foreign cultures for explanations to seemingly incongruous or even 'un-heroic' or 'unclassical' beliefs and practices. For a cautious approach to the matter, see Christopher A. Faraone *et. al.*, 'Talismans and Trojan Horses: guardian statues in ancient Greek myth and ritual, a review feature', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4, 2 (1994), 270-89.

<sup>82</sup> There are some suggestions of inconsistencies in afterlife beliefs even in Homer. The dead in *Od.* Book 11, for instance, are unable even to communicate with Odysseus without his nourishment and without him actually entering the Underworld. Indeed, Antikleia exclaims how difficult it is for the living and the dead to meet at 11:155-60. On the other hand, Patroklos appears to Achilles unprompted, and lamenting that he cannot even enter the Underworld on account of lying unburied, but once buried he is certain that he will never return to the realm of the living: *Il.* 23:65-74. The slain suitors of *Od.* 24, however, are both unburied and capable of contacting heroes such as Achilles and Aias, who have received proper burial. In *Restless Dead*, ch. 1, Johnston surveys subsequent epic, Hesiodic, lyric, tragic and other literature up to the fourth century, detailing the development of beliefs in an active or even dangerous host of dead souls.

religious behaviour.<sup>83</sup> The lack of public rituals and temples devoted to her on mainland Greece,<sup>84</sup> and her absence from the Homer's Olympic pantheon, indicate that she was worshipped primarily in private, not civic, cult. Indeed, even the exception to this rule of public silence - the hymn to her in Hesiod's *Theogony* - has been interpreted in a context of private cult observance by Hesiod's Boeotian family.<sup>85</sup> Here, too, though, one is left to wonder the source of Hesiod's information regarding Hekate's esteemed genealogy. As an outsider to Olympic and civic religion, Hekate's profile might be expected to suffer some neglect at the hands of civic-focused writers of the classical period.

The *Theogony* (and arguably also the *Hymn to Demeter*) identifies Hekate as *kourotrophos*, and Aristophanes, Pseudo-Herodotos and Apollonius Rhodius all indicate that this was a popular attribute of the goddess.<sup>86</sup> As a raiser of children, Hekate could reasonably be expected to play a role in childbirth as well. Hekate's association with Artemis should be noted in this connection. According to Aeschylus, Artemis-Hekate brings labour pains to women.<sup>87</sup> I would note that childbirth is yet

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<sup>83</sup> See chapter one, p. 35 for my definition of magic as religious behaviour which is considered publicly unacceptable or immoral (uncitizen-like), but efficacious in achieving personal gains.

<sup>84</sup> While Johnston lists evidence for shrines at gates in Thasos (Maritime Gate; Gate of Silenus; Gates of Hermes) and Athens (near the Sacred Gate; at the entrance to the Akropolis), Deborah Lyons notes the rarity of temples to Hekate on the mainland: Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: heroines in ancient Greek myth and cult* (Princeton, 1997), p. 153. According to Marquardt, Hekate may have been the subject of private and family cult from the archaic period: Marquardt (1961), 253.

<sup>85</sup> West theorises that Hesiod's family observed and encouraged a private cult to Hekate: West, *Hesiod: Theogony*, 277.

<sup>86</sup> Schol. Aristoph., *Vesp.* 804; 'Herodotean' *Vit. Hom.* 410-20; Ap. Rhod. 3:861; also Orph., *Hymn* 1:8.

<sup>87</sup> Aesch., *Supp.* 676. To this may be added two episodes from myth in which Artemis causes women to 'become Hekate'. A fragment of Stesichorus tells that instead of

another transitional zone over which Hekate presided, although this time the conceptual journey is specific to women. In her associations with birth and the raising of children Hekate would have been popular as a household deity, and certainly favoured by women.<sup>88</sup> This association with childbirth also underscored Hekate's affinity with situations involving pollution.

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Given that Hekate seems to belong firmly within the sphere of private cult, with limited Olympian associations it will be fruitful to explore, at this point, the relative values of masculine and feminine lifestyles and forms of worship in classical Greek society. The ideal of strict gender segregation upheld by Greek, and especially Athenian, society has been widely explored by social historians in recent decades. The largely male-authored literature of the fully-fledged Athenian *polis* projects the notion that political life is the highest ideal to which a man could and should aspire. On the other hand, according to the (arguably ideology-tinged<sup>89</sup>)

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letting Iphigeneia be killed or removed (to Tauris), Artemis transformed the girl into Hekate: Stesich., *Frag.* 215 *PGM*. In his *Catalogue of women*, Hesiod says the girl's name was Iphimede, and that Artemis immortalised her and called her Artemis-Enodia: Hes., *Cat. Wom. Frag.* 23a M-W 17-26. In a second story in Callimachus' *Hypomnemata*, Artemis visits Ephesos and punishes a woman who mistreats her by briefly transforming her into a bitch. Human once more, the woman hangs herself out of shame. Artemis then dresses the woman in her own garments and names her Hekate: Call., *Fr.* 461. These works draw Hekate into the 'dying maiden' paradigm, with which Artemis was invariably connected. For the 'dying maiden' in Greek myth, see esp. Lyons (1997), Johnston (1999), ch. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Johnston (1999), pp. 213-4.

<sup>89</sup> David Cohen advises caution in the interpretation of the literary sources, which are overwhelmingly elite, and ideological in content. He makes use of modern Mediterranean sociological data in his arguments: David Cohen, 'Seclusion, separation,

statements of Perikles and Xenophon, women were relegated almost wholly to what may be termed the private or domestic sphere.<sup>90</sup> Through the mouth of Andromache in his *Trojan Women* Euripides too gives voice to the sentiment that feminine virtue is best displayed through silence and public invisibility.<sup>91</sup> On the basis of such beliefs an oppositional framework of 'public *versus* private' has been utilised as a mode of analysis in many recent studies of gender relations in classical Greek cultures.<sup>92</sup>

However, a number of scholars have instead encouraged the use of more nuanced and 'mutually defining'<sup>93</sup> institutions of *polis* and *oikos*. Ancient writers themselves identified this pair of concepts as significant to social structure.<sup>94</sup> Sally C. Humphreys, for instance, observes that the separation of the sexes in social life constituted an extension of public life into the private domain. From fourth century family law cases (themselves an exercise in governance of the *oikos* by the *polis*) we know that women had relatively secure quarters, separate from those belonging

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and the status of women in classical Athens' in Ian McAuslan and Peter Walcot (eds.), *Women in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996), 134-45.

<sup>90</sup> Xen., *Oec.* 7-10; Thuk. 2:45

<sup>91</sup> Eur., *Troj. Wom.* 642-51.

<sup>92</sup> See especially Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill and London, 1991).

<sup>93</sup> Foley (1981), 127-68, esp. 156.

<sup>94</sup> Sally C. Humphreys, 'Oikos and polis' in *ibid.*, *The Family, Women and Death: comparative studies* (London: 1983), 1-21; D. Cohen, 'Public and private in classical Athens' in *idem*, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: the enforcement of morals in classical Athens* (Cambridge: 1991); see also Foley (1981), 149.

to the men of the household.<sup>95</sup> The men's quarters only were used for *symposia* and other social transactions with the wider *polis* community.<sup>96</sup>

On the subject of the proper separation of the spheres of the sexes, Xenophon advises men to avoid spending too much time at home, lest they be thought ill of by their peers.<sup>97</sup> Pushing an idea to its logical, if hypothetical, extreme, Plato champions the abolition of the *oikos* in his ideal city-state.<sup>98</sup> One may cite Sophokles' *Antigone* as an expression of the reality of social and moral conflicts of authority between *oikos* and *polis*. Such tensions are presumed to have informed Plato's and Xenophon's views. The value of personal or familial activities is thus derided, albeit subtly, in the rhetoric of the (elite) Athenian civic ideal.<sup>99</sup>

Some recent studies on this issue have suggested that the sexes in ancient Greek society occupied separate spheres, and had their own tools for exerting influence, thus enjoying "psychological independence" from the opposite sex<sup>100</sup>. Such approaches contest the view that women were segregated and subjugated. By introducing modern Mediterranean

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<sup>95</sup> Lysias 1:6-14.

<sup>96</sup> This was, of course, only relevant to the wealthier sections of society. Many were too poor to afford such intricately designed houses. Similarly, a lack of slaves would have necessitated female engagement with society (see for example Aristotle, *Pol.* 1300a, 1323a; Xen., *Mem.* 2:7:1-12; Dem., *Ag. Eubulides* 35). Separation of the sexes remained powerful as an ideal.

<sup>97</sup> Xen., *Oec.* 7:2:20. Greek ideas about secrecy and solitary pursuits, and their interconnections with the ideal of the unseen, un-heard of wife, and the importance of secrecy to the efficacy of much Greek magic, will be explored in depth in a later chapter.

<sup>98</sup> In Plato's *Republic*, communal living is instituted in place of *oikos*-based social organisation.

<sup>99</sup> See chapter one, pp. 34-35 above.

<sup>100</sup> Cohen (1996). 139. Eva Keuls examines the way this gendered monopoly on power is evident throughout the social, religious, political and artistic life of the *polis*: Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: sexual politics in ancient Greece* (New York, 1985), *passim*. The implications for female-dominated cults deserves further exploration.



parallels, though, such arguments ignore the fact that ancient Athenian women were excluded from the highly esteemed mechanisms of formal political power.<sup>101</sup> Women's so-called informal influence *through* citizen males of the household was correspondingly mediated *by* their *kyrios* or other male relatives.

Whether one employs a public-private or *polis-oikos* mode of analysis, the issue remains that the realms properly occupied by women present more limited opportunities for the active exercise and display of civic and religious virtue. Indeed, the very invisibility of women in society would tend to draw suspicions of impiety or other misdeeds. For appropriate behaviour in religion was, as an aspect of lifestyle, similarly governed by the need to maintain an orthodox and transparently 'citizen-like' public profile. Those who deviated from such norms of public worship were open to charges of impiety, atheism and other publicly abhorred religious behaviours. Hence Plato's ruling, parallel to that which abolishes the *oikos* itself, that private shrines be proscribed.<sup>102</sup>

While it may be argued that private worship of minor deities was, in reality, deemed acceptable to the *polis*, along with kinship-based cults, most of these were subject to degrees of public scrutiny and imposition.<sup>103</sup> For devotees of foreign deities to establish shrines, for

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<sup>101</sup> Foley (1981), 129.

<sup>102</sup> Plato, *Laws* 909d-910d.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Parker, *Athenian religion: a history* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 8.

instance, the consent of the assembly had first to be secured.<sup>104</sup> In fifth century Athens priesthoods that were formerly passed along *genos* lines were now chosen by lot from the citizen body,<sup>105</sup> or were subject to public audit.<sup>106</sup> As with classical Athenian society generally, religious practices are not readily divisible into 'public' and 'private' categories. Robert Parker observes that even those who erected a shrine using private funds would commonly be expected to allow others to use it.<sup>107</sup> Humphreys asserts that Greek religion was so intrinsically social that "a sacrifice in which there was no sharing of food outside the everyday family circle (or *oikos*) could barely find a place in it."<sup>108</sup> The partial supersession of the *oikos*' hearth in classical Athens may be discerned in the establishment of a city hearth.<sup>109</sup>

It may be posited, then, that the machinery of the classical Athenian *polis* directly undermined the religious and social validity, and indeed the piety and justice of the *oikos*. We have already identified magic in its classical context, as a ritual with primarily non-civic aims.<sup>110</sup> This will have particularly impacted upon the status of a goddess such as Hekate.

Absent from the works of Homer, Hekate was predominantly a hearth

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<sup>104</sup> Such consent was obtained by Thracian devotees of Bendis at Athens: *IG* II:2:1283; Xen., *Hell.* 2:4:11.

<sup>105</sup> While our evidence for priesthoods is very scant, we know that this alteration was made to the selection process for the priestess of Athene Nike: *IG* I:3:35=M/L 44.

<sup>106</sup> Aeschin. 2:18.

<sup>107</sup> *IG* I:3:987 (*CEG* 744); Parker (1996), 6.

<sup>108</sup> Humphreys in Humphreys (1983), 15.

<sup>109</sup> Humphreys, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>110</sup> See chapter one, pp. 34-35 For the importance of civic sharing to Greek religion see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'What is *Polis* Religion?' in Richard Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2000a), 13-37; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Further Aspects of *Polis* Religion' in Richard Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2000b), 38-55.

goddess, whose cult was maintained in individual *oikoi*, as that of Zeus Herkeios, Apollo Agyieus, Hermes and Hestia were.<sup>111</sup> Her significance to women's transitions at marriage and childbirth, and to thresholds, made her indispensable to the *polis* as a whole. However, her attendant involvement with uncertainty and pollution (in childbirth, death, at crossroads, through restless dead spirits) constituted unwelcome, but unavoidable facts of *polis* life. Ideas about Hekate in the classical period seem to correspond quite closely with mythological and ideological approaches to women, such as Hesiod's story of Pandora. Both Hekate and mortal Greek women were strongly associated with transitions and transformations. It will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters that such liminal states tended to attract negative valence in many cultures, including that of classical Greece, and that this contributed to the association of women with magic – an art that works to manipulate boundaries and possibilities.

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<sup>111</sup> For the apparent contradiction between Plato's disapproval of *oikos*-based cults, and traditional prescription of cults such as that of Zeus Herkeios, see Parker (1996), 6; Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b).

## Chapter Three

### Cooking and Midwifery: dangerous knowledges and technologies

In approaching bodies of knowledge identified in the literary sources as magical<sup>1</sup> - particularly such *technai* as root-cutting, pre- and non-Hippocratic medicine,<sup>2</sup> and cooking and the production of *pharmaka* in its broadest sense - associations with exclusive or divinely introduced technologies assert themselves. Such consanguinity between magic and science or technology does not invalidate the much debated issue of the relationship between magic and religion,<sup>3</sup> although it clearly conflicts with the linear model of development from magic to religion to science advocated by Frazer<sup>4</sup> and his followers.

In the following chapter I shall examine some of the technologies employed by women in their day to day life, and those ascribed to women in the literary tradition as they relate to divinity and magic. The limited scope (written evidence is once again largely Athenian, or else mythological) and quantity of data will be supplemented where

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<sup>1</sup> On the boundaries of magic, religion and science in the classical world and in modern scholarship see Chapter one, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> On the affinities shared by magic, medicine and science see Lloyd (1975), 1-16. Lloyd notes that the boundaries of the supernatural were debated for centuries in the field of Greek scientific endeavour: *ibid.* 10.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz Graf provides a bibliography of important contributions to the debate among anthropologists in Graf (1991), 188-213, esp. 188, n. 1. See also Versnel (1991), 60-106; Betz (1991), 244-59.

<sup>4</sup> Frazer (1913), pp. 220-4. The direction of linear development is reversed by A. A. Barb and E. R. Dodds, who propound a model of magic which is a deterioration of 'high'

appropriate with the findings of anthropological investigations of modern, rural Greek communities. The use of evidence from Greek communities so distant, temporally, from those of classical Greece obviously requires some justification. There has been demonstrable continuity with the past in the technologically isolated and conservative cultures of rural Greek communities. This is especially so with regard to the patriarchal structures of authority, and the strongly gendered nature of social and occupational roles. Consistency in the relations between the sexes persists diachronically despite obvious religious, economic and legal differences between the ancient and modern societies.

The ancient Greek word for cookery, and especially baking, is

ἄρτοποιος. In the classical literature this term and its cognates, including ἄρτοποιός - a cook - are invariably present in their masculine forms. The public butcher or meat cook was always male, particularly on account of the sacrificial nature of his role.<sup>5</sup>

Specialist bakers, butchers and chefs are also referred to in classical sources, the majority of which are Platonic, in the masculine. From taxation records and other formal lists preserved on papyri, though, it would appear that women too were well-represented in these trades.<sup>6</sup>

More to the point, though, is that the bulk of an *oikos*' culinary

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classical religion. Here again, though, evidence conflicts with theory: Barb (1963), 100-25, esp. 101; Dodds (1951), pp. 191-94.

<sup>5</sup> On women's symbolically important exclusion from the blood-letting aspects of sacrifices (and exceptions to this rule) see Marcel Detienne, 'The violence of well-born ladies: women in the Thesmophoria' in Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (eds.), *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, transl. Paula Wissing (Chicago and London, 1989), 129-47, esp. 132-3.

<sup>6</sup> *P. Mil.* 60; *P. Tebt.* 873; *P. Ryl.* 562.

requirements will have been fulfilled privately by an adult female of the household. Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, and archaeological evidence both make clear that considerable space in the physical edifice of the *oikos* was allocated to the storage of grain and other foodstuffs, to be prepared or baked as required.<sup>7</sup> More to the point is that cooking was strongly associated with women, by virtue of culinary symbolisms surrounding the female body. The female sex is variously represented as a bread-oven, a blackened hearth or a cooking hole, just as a woman's belly is likened to a kettle.<sup>8</sup>

Terms with the stem ὄστρον ἡσπαστήν relating to cookery - bear obvious resemblances with ἡσπαστήν ἡσπαστήν and ἡσπαστήν ὄστρον ἡσπαστήν, although this semantic link may be more apparent than real. That the ideas of cooking and ἡσπαστήν ὄστρον ἡσπαστήν were connected in the Greek mind is suggested, though, by a discussion about definitions in Plato's *Republic*. In seeking the essence of the way that justice is to be implemented, Plato's speaker Simonides introduces the parallel example of medicine. Medicine is rightfully implemented, it is suggested, by:

"...the art that renders to bodies drugs (ἡσπαστήν ὄστρον ἡσπαστήν),  
foods (ἡσπαστήν ὄστρον ἡσπαστήν),

<sup>7</sup> Xen., *Oik.* 7-10; on household layout see Sarah B. Pomeroy's commentary to Xenophon, *Oeconomicus, a Social and Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 291-6.

<sup>8</sup> Woman as bread-oven: Hdt. 5.92.3; woman's belly as a kettle: Hdt. 1.59; cf. Detienne, 'Violence' (1989), 133, n. 28.

and drinks (φαρμακία).<sup>9</sup>

This art is identified, in turn, as φαρμακία - the culinary art. It has already been established that the term φάρμακον is used ambiguously by Greek writers to indicate herbal or other substances, which may be variously beneficial or harmful.<sup>10</sup> Attempts by modern scholars to definitively categorise individual appearances of the word into 'magical' or 'medicinal' contexts risk introducing modern distinctions into ancient debates.<sup>11</sup> For as John Scarborough has demonstrated, such multicomination of approaches to phenomena - which may be described as variously religious, magical and rational - is a feature of Greek thought observable from Homeric epic to the third century research efforts of Theophrastos and Herophilos.<sup>12</sup>

What is clear from the statement above is that Plato associates comestibles with φάρμακον by virtue of their shared capacity to affect the human body. Given that they are grouped together under the rubric of φαρμακία, the possibility of further resemblances ought to be considered.

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 332c, transl. Paul Shorey, Loeb edn., vol. V. (Cambridge, 1937).

<sup>10</sup> See my chapter one, pp. 14-16 on the scope of the term φάρμακον in Greek thought. For a discussion of the similar ambiguity of the Latin word *venenum* see C. Pharr, 'The interdiction of magic in Roman Law' *TAPhA* 63 (1932), 269-95, esp. 272-4.

<sup>11</sup> That the boundary line between 'the rational' and 'the magical' was keenly contested in the classical period is nowhere more explicit than in such medical works as the Hippocratic *On the Sacred Disease*, which seeks to discredit popular beliefs about the divine causation and magical curing of illnesses. *On Airs Waters Places*, ch. 22 argues in similar terms. See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Methods and Problems in Greek Science* (Cambridge, 1991), 296; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience: studies in the origin and development of Greek science* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 15-29.

<sup>12</sup> Scarborough (1991), 138-9.

The association of food, drinks, and  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\mu\alpha\theta\epsilon\sigma$  becomes clearer again when it emerges that all are the potential products of the domestic kitchen. When we attempt a more detailed study of kitchen-based tasks within the *oikos*, we draw an unfortunate but unsurprising blank with most of the literary sources, which exhibit little interest in the subject.<sup>13</sup> It is in such instances that modern Greek rural communities may provide clues as to ancient ideas about the nature of kitchen processes and its products.

In her study of the roles of cooking and kitchens in modern, rural Greece, Jill Dubisch observes that married women's day to day duties centre upon transforming raw products of nature into edible or otherwise usable cultural products.<sup>14</sup> She cites in particular the women's careful and time-consuming 'preparation' of all raw produce - even fruit - in order to render it culturally palatable.<sup>15</sup> The women of the house are also responsible for keeping anything which is unclean out of family living areas, cleaning what has become soiled, and keeping the vessels used for food, laundry and personal cleaning separate.<sup>16</sup> A less tangible corollary of this task of

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<sup>13</sup> Myths, with which we will soon deal, are an exception to this rule.

<sup>14</sup> Jill Dubisch, 'Culture enters through the kitchen: women, food, and social boundaries in rural Greece' in Jill Dubisch (ed.), *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton, 1986), 195-214.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-7. On the cross-cultural import of cooked and uncooked substances see Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: introduction to a science of mythology: I*, transl. John and Doreen Weightman (London, 1969), esp. pp. 335-9.

<sup>16</sup> Dubisch notes that the porch - a transitional area between the outdoors and the interior kitchen - is the usual site for cleaning vegetables and washing laundry among the village women of the Cycladic Islands. Boundaries of purity and pollution are thus maintained by women in line with the interior and exterior spaces of the home: Dubisch (1986), 201-3.



controlling what is unclean is the guarding of information that would sully the reputation of the household.<sup>17</sup> This requirement of women to maintain the cleanliness and sanctity of the house bears obvious parallels with standards of personal conduct and deportment demanded of women.

Against the argument that women are viewed as potential polluters and a weak point in the maintenance of the household's reputation,<sup>18</sup> Dubisch suggests instead that women are the controllers of pollution and boundaries. Village women work to reinforce and maintain established boundaries, and mediate such boundaries in effecting transformations necessary to the society. This challenges somewhat the prominent structural anthropological view that women, cross-culturally, are considered to be more 'natural' than men.<sup>19</sup> The idea of woman:nature and man:culture as opposing categories is blurred by women's guardianship, in modern villages, over the transition between the opposing states of nature and culture.

The structuralist equations of woman:nature and man:culture have been mapped onto ancient Greek symbolic systems and notions of the order of the universe, adapting theoretical insights from the work of Levi-

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 200, 208-10.

<sup>18</sup> Women as potential polluters: Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is female to male as nature is to culture?', in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Lousie Lamphere (eds.), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, 1974), 70; Susannah Hoffman, 'The ethnography of the islands: Thera', in M. Dimen and E. Friedl (eds.), *Regional Variation in Modern Greece and Cyprus: towards a perspective on the ethnography of Greece* (New York, 1976), 268: 328-40, esp. 338. Women as a point of weakness in the integrity of the family unit: Renee Hirschon, 'Open body/closed space: the transformation of female sexuality' in S. Ardener (ed.), *Defining Females* (New York, 1978), 66-88; Juliet du Boulay, 'Women - images of their nature and destiny in rural Greece' in Dubisch (1986), 139-68, esp. 140.

Strauss.<sup>20</sup> The essence of this dichotomy is that human consciousness, occupied with the endeavours of comprehending and managing its surroundings, deems everything above its controlled realm of culture to be 'of divinity', and everything below it to be 'of nature'. Women, characteristically excluded from official power structures, are conceived to be 'other' to culture, and more often below culture by virtue of their close association with the 'animal' processes of reproduction. The sub-cultural status of women, relative to men who constitute the cultural norm, also places them in a position to mediate between nature and culture for men, asserts Helene P. Foley, foreshadowing the findings of Dubisch above.<sup>21</sup> In their mediation of boundaries, women are exposed to the possibility of pollution.<sup>22</sup> In their otherness, women are also apt to be associated with the transcendental and mysterious powers of divinity.<sup>23</sup>

As Foley points out in her analysis of the uses of structural methodologies in the classics, the categories of divinity, culture and nature are all culturally defined assumptions, and highly unstable even within their cultural contexts.<sup>24</sup> Thus it is that heroic males may take on the characteristics of beasts, and Hesiod's first woman Pandora is an artifice

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<sup>19</sup> See especially Ortner, (1974), *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> See especially works by M. Detienne, J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet.

<sup>21</sup> Foley (1981), 141.

<sup>22</sup> See chapter two above (esp. pp. 54-57) on the pollution and boundary associations of that goddess. On the cross-cultural idea that the crossing of boundaries invites pollution see Douglas (1966).

<sup>23</sup> Consider the behaviour and powers of the women in Euripides' *Bacchae*. Cf. The introductory remarks in Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (eds.), *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* (London and New York, 1998); Ruth Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons' in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (1983), 3-19.

<sup>24</sup> Foley (1981), 140-8.

- a product of culture - contrary to simple gendered oppositions.<sup>25</sup>

Oppositions between culture and nature are rendered more complex again by fifth century sophistic debates which explicitly discuss the relationship between *nomos* and *physis*. Faced with the problems inherent in this methodology, then, we must be alert to the idiosyncratic uses of this dichotomy in each source-text.

Let us build upon the basic premise that cooking is a transformative technology, by which cultural objects are wrought from natural 'raw' products.<sup>26</sup> The origin of fire, by which such transformations became possible, is divine in Greek mythology, and particularly connected with the god Hephaistos. This technology reaches humanity via theft from the gods by Prometheus. The figure of Prometheus is presented in Aischylos' *Prometheus bound* as a culture hero, who is also credited with introducing skills and sciences to humanity.<sup>27</sup> Hesiod and Aischylos alike recognise Prometheus as epitomising cunning intelligence, or *metis*.<sup>28</sup> The myth of Prometheus and his punishment illustrates the dangers inherent in such cunning ingenuity. For despite (and because of) its capacity to permit the defeat of more powerful adversaries, the deployment of *metis* may invite divine retribution upon those who would overturn the proper order.

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<sup>25</sup> Foley draws attention to these and other deviations from the formula of 'woman:nature as man:culture': *ibid.* 142-6.

<sup>26</sup> On which see especially Levi-Strauss (1969).

<sup>27</sup> Aisch., *Prom.* 442-525. cf. J. G. Frazer, 'The origin of fire' in Apollodorus, Loeb edn. vol. 2, appendix 3; M. L. West, *Theogony* (1966); J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (1980), 168-85.

The myth of Prometheus' gift of divine fire, and his punishment by Zeus, indicates a certain ambivalence towards the use of this divine - and hence 'unnatural' - yet civilising technology. When we consider arts and practices which share a reliance upon fire technology - namely metalworking and cooking - comparable notes of ambivalence present themselves.

Let us first consider metalworking. Homeric epic makes clear that metalworking, like fire itself, belonged to the realm of Hephaistos.<sup>29</sup> The god himself had been rendered lame, and elite writers of the classical period argued that human metalworkers were prone to being similarly marred by the nature and working conditions of their trade.<sup>30</sup> Given the social stigma adhering to physical deformity in ancient Greece,<sup>31</sup> such themes point to a certain uneasiness about metalworking. There was a sense that exploiting metal technologies challenged the gods, and invited divine retribution. Such wariness existed in tandem with the obvious pride that the Greeks (and later Romans) felt for their cultural achievements in transforming raw ores into refined metal products.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Hesiod even gives the divine figure's name the sense 'Forethought'. On *metis* see my chapter four below, pp. 138-39; Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Chicago and London, 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Hephaistos as the god of fire: Homer, *Od.* 24.71, *Il.* 9.470, 21.330-80; and of metal trades: referred to as such throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 495d-e. In Homer, too, Hephaistos is presented as comically grotesque: *Il.* 1. 600. Alison Burford, 'Crafts and craftsmen' in Michael Grant and Rachael Kitzinger (eds.), *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean* (New York, 1988), vol. I, 367-88.

<sup>31</sup> Homer., *Il.* 1.607-8: gods laugh, watching the crippled god's movements; Homer, *Od.* 8.308-11: Aphrodite despises Hephaistos for his lameness.

<sup>32</sup> Homer, *Od.* 6.233, 23.160; J. Donald Hughes, *Pan's Travail: environmental problems of the ancient Greeks and Romans* (Baltimore and London, 1994), p. 113.

That metal technology was viewed as a dangerous blessing is unsurprising, given that it allowed increasingly destructive wars to be waged in the Mediterranean and Near East, while also revolutionising agriculture and other peacetime pursuits.

Myths that deal with the introduction and circulation of the secrets of metalworking are closely bound up with myths about magic. Dumas has credibly argued that the myth of Jason and the Argonauts is based on early journeys aimed at gaining new smelting and forging techniques.<sup>33</sup> The Telchines, a race of smiths who dwelt at the periphery of the earth in myth, were believed to possess a spectacular command of the secrets of metalworking.<sup>34</sup> Like magic, metalworking was thought to belong to the fearful yet marvellous margins of the earth, in close communion with divinity.

Perhaps we should regard Odysseus' *moly* in similar terms to fire-management and metalworking, for here, too, danger and benefit mingle in a single exceptional tool. This plant is, like the aforementioned cultural achievements, a gift from the divine realm in Homeric epic. Hermes plucks a *moly* plant for Odysseus' benefit, teaching him how to use it as an antidote to the powerful magic of Kirke. Homer tells us that:

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<sup>33</sup> C. Dumas, 'What did the Greeks seek in Colchis?', *Hermathena* 150 (1991), 31-41; cf. Peter Green's introduction to Apollonios Rhodios, *The Argonautika* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 21.

"...it is a dangerous plant for mortal men to dig up. But the gods, after all, can do anything."<sup>35</sup>

While metalworking technology has the capacity to draw extraordinary transformations and creations from mineral ores, Hermes' *moly* is able to forestall Odysseus' impending transformation into a pig by the malevolent nymph. Or, stated differently, metalworking enables humans to transform natural or raw substances into cultural products, just as *moly* can protect humans from being reduced to powerlessness and animality by more powerful aggressors. Wondrous things that allow such control over important metamorphoses are fitting for use by gods, but present risks for humans who would venture to appropriate them.

With this background of the use of fire as a divine and inherently dangerous transformative, civilising art in mind, we shall now return to cookery more specifically. In the absence of explicit ancient information about contemporary domestic cooking, data are drawn largely from the evidence of mythological accounts, and from sacrificial ritual. If I appear to emphasise fire and sacrifice at the expense of cookery itself, it should be remembered that the three were almost always inextricably linked for the Greeks, as the Hesiodic accounts of the myth of Prometheus demonstrate.

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<sup>34</sup> Diod. Sic. 5.55.2-3; Richard Gordon, 'Imagining Greek and Roman magic' in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: ancient Greece and Rome* (London, 1999), 178-9.

Jean-Pierre Vernant has provided an important and multi-dimensional analysis of this myth, presented as it is with different temporal aspects and focal points in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.<sup>36</sup> He has demonstrated ways in which the myth of Prometheus' deceitful sacrificial meal with the gods articulates the divisions between men<sup>37</sup> and gods at the close of the Golden Age, with reference to the use of fire, agriculture, and the need for marriage (and by inference, sexual reproduction) for survival. Before Prometheus' fateful sacrificial act there was no such division between the realms of men and gods.<sup>38</sup> Nor did an opposition exist then between nature and civilisation, for naturally occurring grains and fruits were available to men in a cultivated, palatable state.<sup>39</sup>

Prometheus' sacrifice is thus itself an act of transformation, creating the oppositions between divinity and men, and men and nature. The various corollaries of Prometheus' action - social and religious institutions, marriage rituals, sacrificial procedures, and use of fire and agriculture for the production of food - are in turn the determining features of 'culture', by the Greeks' own definitions. Such practices are both evidence of humanity's rise above mere nature, and the products of the fall from the divine Golden Age.

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<sup>35</sup> Homer, *Od.* 10.305, transl. E. V. and D. C. H. Rieu, (London, 1991).

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'The myth of Prometheus in Hesiod' in Vernant (1990), 183-201.

<sup>37</sup> Women are a later invention in the Hesiodic account, and are thus outside of, or else passively involved in the division of, realms suggested by the myth.

<sup>38</sup> Men were not then subject to sickness, toil or old age: Hes., *WD* 90-104.

<sup>39</sup> Wheat presented itself for use, immediately edible: *WD* 116-7; cf. Vernant in Detienne and Vernant (1989), 42.

There is strong, admittedly late evidence to suggest that the ancient Greeks held some of the attitudes about raw and cooked foods revealed in Dubisch's study of a modern, village community. Plutarch, in his *Quaestiones Romanae*, explains that flour is 'incomplete' in its uncooked state. Freshly killed raw flesh, with which he compares flour, is described further as 'hideous like an ulcer' in its physical aspect. Such incomplete and unpalatable substances have lost their capacity to live and reproduce themselves, but are yet to gain a new usefulness as edible foodstuffs. This intermediate stage in their transmutation from living things to edible cultural objects is marked by a form of impurity, by which it is rendered more or less untouchable until the transformation is complete.<sup>40</sup>

Ambivalence regarding the skill of cookery is clearest in myths when it is flesh that is being prepared and transformed, no doubt because this introduces the additional issue of boundaries between humans and animals. Such uneasiness is counterbalanced through the ritual of sacrifice, wherein the symbolic consent of the selected victim is sought,<sup>41</sup> and animal death is incorporated into the spiritual wellbeing of the community. It is not my intention to enter into the complex nature and functions of sacrificial ritual here.<sup>42</sup> What is important to the present discussion is that an intricate set of ritual practices was deemed

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<sup>40</sup> Plut., *Quaest. Rom.* 109 (289e) - 110 (290a); Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'At man's table: Hesiod's foundation myth of sacrifice' in Detienne and Vernant (1989), 42, n. 75.

<sup>41</sup> Plut., *Quaest. Conviviales* 729 ff; Aisch., *Ag.* 1297; Arist., *Peace* 956-8; Marcel Detienne, 'Culinary practices and the spirit of sacrifice', in Detienne and Vernant (1989), 9; Burkert (1983), 3-4, and nn. 10 and 13.

<sup>42</sup> On which see especially Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: the anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth*, transl. Peter Bing (Berkeley, 1983); Detienne and Vernant (1989).



necessary to sanction the slaying, cooking, distribution and consumption of animal flesh. Such ordinances applied as much to large public sacrifices as it did to meats consumed in conjunction with smaller, more private sacrificial offerings, and to meat purchased from the butcher (ἄγορῃ) in the market.<sup>43</sup>

Stories about the killing, cooking and consumption of human flesh are among the most spectacular mythological accounts of transgression of the customs pertaining to meat and killing. Such meals are most often served intrafamiliarily, giving greatest emphasis to the ties of allegiance which are vulnerable if human customs are desecrated. Perverse meals of human flesh may be contrived for the purpose of revenge. Prokne served Tereus a meal made of his own child to avenge Philomela, whom the king had raped. Atreus served Thyestes' children up to him in vengeance for seducing his wife and challenging his kingship. Harpagus was treated to a similar feast by the angered Persian king Astyages. Tantalos earned eternal torment for himself by serving his own son Pelops to the gods. Lykaon offered to Zeus a male child at Arkadia, and was turned into a wolf as punishment by the angry god. Such transformations into animal form are a recurrent feature of the omophagia motif in myths. Prokne and Philomela were turned into birds for their unacceptable mode of vengeance, as was Tereus, for eating the flesh of family. These transformations made complete the transgressions of the

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<sup>43</sup> Fish seems to be a notable exception to the rule that all meat eaten must first have been sacrificed, probably on account of their undomesticated and relatively chthonian

customs separating humanity from animality and nature, of which all three were guilty.<sup>44</sup>

Medeia's act of killing king Pelias of Iolkos by means of her cauldron may be viewed as an extension and variation of this theme of transgressive cookery. According to Apollodoros and Pausanias, Medeia promises to rejuvenate the ageing monarch by a process that involves cutting him up and magically boiling him in her cauldron.<sup>45</sup> The fact that Pausanias preserves this episode among his Arkadian stories suggests that the story may be especially old. Medeia's power to perform such a rejuvenation was evidently a well-established element of her myth, as Aischylos also depicts her rejuvenating elderly mortals, in his *Trophi*.<sup>46</sup> Having demonstrated her ability to enact the rejuvenation with an old ram, and gained the confidence of the king's daughters, Medeia enjoins the Peliades to assist her in the task. They do so, stabbing and slicing their father, but Medeia withholds all her magical skills. Pelias is killed, cut up and boiled (although not consumed) by his own daughters. Conspiring as they are with Medeia to perform a beneficial magical procedure upon their father, the Peliades instead are duped by the sorceress, to perpetrate a crime no less grave than Prokne's. In this instance, an act of *pharmaka* would have been infinitely preferable to one of cookery.

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status: Julian, *On the mother of the gods* 17; Detienne, 'Culinary practices' (1989), 3, n. 8, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Burkert (1983), ch. 2; as observed by Judith Maitland, in unpublished lecture.

<sup>45</sup> Apollod. 1.9.26-7; Pausanias, *Arkadia* (8), 11.1-5; cf. Diod. Sic. 4.51ff.

It has been noted above that the chemical changes produced in foods with the application of heat were viewed in Greek culture in terms of a transformation from one distinct state - nature - to another - culture. By her rejuvenation of the ram Medeia enacts a parallel transmutation with her cooking pot/kettle (☐☺ ●♣❖♠♣♣). Just as cooking traverses the hazardous boundary between nature and culture, or the raw and the cooked, rejuvenation effects an impossible progression from old to new. Cooking ordinarily controls the natural processes of decay, and its product - fermentation. Medeia's deed may be viewed, technically, as a complete reversal of the cooking process.<sup>47</sup>

A relationship between cooking and magic is made quite explicit in this episode from legend. For here Medeia performs first an act of magic, and then an act of cookery masquerading as a second act of magic. The efficacy of her plot to kill Pelias relies upon the fact that the techniques of Medeia's cooking outwardly resemble those of her magic. Of course cooking only resembles potion-brewing if it is boiled, using a cauldron. This means that the public cookery functions fulfilled by the (male) *mageiros* are clearly identifiable as non-magical.<sup>48</sup> Private (feminised) cookery on the other hand, which often involved boiling, did not enjoy this distinction and so was open to suspicions and accusations.

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<sup>46</sup> Aisch., *Troph.* fr. 246a Radt; Jan N. Bremmer, 'The old women of ancient Greece' in Josine Blok and Peter Mason (eds.), *Sexual Asymmetry* (Amsterdam, 1987), 200.

<sup>47</sup> Breadmaking is reliant upon fermentation, while roasting and boiling are based upon the principles of putrefaction: Judith Maitland, in unpublished lecture.

<sup>48</sup> See p. 81 and n. 58 below.

Medeia's masquerade of cooking as potion finds numerous parallels in the literary sources and legal texts of the classical period, albeit with particulars reversed. In a case prosecuted by Antiphon,<sup>49</sup> for instance, the client's stepmother stands accused of poisoning her husband. The woman's defence is that she had intended the substance to function as an aphrodisiac rather than a poison. That a single substance was understood to have aphrodisiac qualities at one dosage but harmful or lethal consequences at a larger dosage is discussed below in a later section.<sup>50</sup> However in cases of poisoning and subjection to magic *philtr* alike, the *pharmakis* administers the substance disguised as or concealed within ordinary food or drink. In a parallel case reported in the *Magna Moralia*<sup>51</sup> one may imagine the woman in question administering a *pharmakon* in the form of a beverage - presenting a magical act as a common domestic act. Plutarch, too, makes numerous references to situations where it is feared that women have added aphrodisiacs and other herbs to the cooking pot in an effort to manipulate their unsuspecting diners.<sup>52</sup> It was clearly feared that in the confines of the kitchen women would take the small step that separated cookery - itself a mysterious and ambivalent art - and magic, in pursuit of their own ambitions.

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<sup>49</sup> Antiphon, *Against the Stepmother*, 1.9.2.

<sup>50</sup> See my chapter five below, pp. 6-7, nn. 26-30; also Christopher A. Faraone, 'Deianira's mistake and the demise of Heracles: erotic magic in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*', *Helios* 21, 2 (1994a), 124-5; Christopher A. Faraone, 'Sex and power: male-targetting aphrodisiacs in the Greek magical tradition', *Helios* 19 (1992b), 97-8.

<sup>51</sup> *Magna Moralia* 16 (= Ps.-Arist. 1188b30-38).

It is clear both from the classical literature, and from the spell texts preserved in the magical papyri collections, that *pharmaka* were understood to take a number of equally effective forms. A magical concoction could work by being worn as an amulet, applied externally as an ointment, or by being eaten or (more commonly) consumed as a liquid.<sup>53</sup> A fourth century lead amulet, offering protection against magic, declares that would-be attackers

"...shall not harm me with ointment or with application or with drink"<sup>54</sup>

and other instances attest to the multiplicity of ways in which a *pharmakon* may act.<sup>55</sup> In their consumable forms, *pharmaka* were referred to, variously, as Ⲕⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓ, ⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓ, ⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓ and ⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓ - terms which elsewhere describe mundane solid and liquid foods. Thus it is only the context and the use of modifying adjectives, which distinguish ordinary foods from consumable *pharmaka* in cases where the above terms are used.<sup>56</sup>

The perversion of food production, or the masking of harmful substances as nourishing foods arguably mirrors an aspect of the myth we examined

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<sup>52</sup> Plut., *de tuend. san. praec.* 126a, *conj. praec.* 139a, *mul. virt.* 256a-c; John J. Winkler, 'The constraints of desire: erotic magic spells', in his *The Constraints of Desire: the anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990), p. 81.

<sup>53</sup> Faraone(1994a), n. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Translation by P. Maas, 'EPENIKTOS', *Hesperia* 13 (1944), 33-34.

<sup>55</sup> Other examples and discussion in Maas (1944), 33-34; D. R. Jordan, 'The inscribed lead tablet from Phalasarna', *ZPE* 94 (1992), 191-4. *PGM XXXIV.1-24* provides a later Roman example of the same phenomenon.

earlier. In his unfair division of the meat at the first sacrifice shared by men and gods Prometheus uses his *metis* to pervert his duty as *mageiros*, giving only bare bones to the gods, dressed up to appear succulent under a thick layer of fat. Prometheus' cunning deceit, and his subversion of sacrificial ritual, angered Zeus and resulted in the introduction of toil and mortality for the race of men. Humans who pervert the transformative rites of cooking are guilty of a similarly grave offence. In myth, this is particularly indicated by crimes of omophagia and the harsh punishments they elicit from the gods.

As in political life, women were largely excluded from adult roles in community sacrificial rituals.<sup>57</sup> The *mageiros* who led the physical act of the public sacrifice was male, without any known exceptions.<sup>58</sup> In the lived reality of classical society, on the other hand, women were undoubtedly the real possessors of knowledge of, and responsibility for, cooking technology on behalf of their *kyrios'* *oikos*. This fact is well illustrated by the symbolic bringing of torches from the bride's natal home to her marital *oikos* in the evening procession transmitting her from old hearth to new. In this wedding rite, the taking of a wife is inseparable from the introduction of fire to the hearth for culinary and sacrificial purposes.<sup>59</sup> The transfiguring technology of cookery was, I have

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<sup>56</sup> As at Aesch., *Prom.* 479f; Eur., *Hipp.* 516; Arist., *Pl.* 717; Theok. 11.2.

<sup>57</sup> Exceptions to this rule are discussed in Detienne, 'Violence' (1989), 131-3

<sup>58</sup> Detienne, *ibid.*, p. 94. cf. Pherekrates, fr. 64 Kock (=Athenaeus 612 a-b).

<sup>59</sup> The provision of the torches by the bride's mother helped ensure the legitimacy of the marriage: Eur., *IA* 732-4; Schol. Eur., *Phoen.* 344. This inseparability recalls the Hesiodic myth of Pandora: William D. Furley, *Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion* (Salem, New Hampshire, 1981), pp. 186-98.

attempted to show, a source of some anxiety for the Greeks, the more so within the *oikos* where it was under the control of women, who were systematically excluded from most positions of authority in Greek society.

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The inter-relations of Greek ideas about cooking and magic cannot be viewed without reference to the variegated corpus and practices of herbal lore. This is particularly evident in light of the fact that the Greeks observed no clear cut distinction between drugs and diet in their medical prescriptions. The Hippocratic doctors' approach to treatment, for instance, would now be termed 'holistic', with advice pertaining to diet, exercise, rest, clothing, living environment and sexual activity.<sup>60</sup> Even in prescriptions for what a modern observer would consider drug therapy, mundane ingredients such as barley groats, olive oil, honey and wine are prominent. This further highlights the inter-connections of cookery and *pharmaka* - magical and medical - I have suggested in the previous section.

As indicated in my discussion of the relationship between medicine and magic,<sup>61</sup> traditional and temple medicine coexisted with the more or less rationalistic (and literate) Hippocratic medicine. My focus in this section will be the older, largely undocumented lore of traditional, especially

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<sup>60</sup> E.g. *On regimen* chs. 57-66; Jerry Stannard, 'Hippocratic pharmacology', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 35, 6 (1961), 512, 516.

<sup>61</sup> Chapter one pp. 11-14

herbal remedies. I hope to demonstrate that these areas of therapy were strongly associated with women, and contributed to ideas of women as wielders of exclusive, dangerous, magical power.

Folklore of any kind is, by nature, largely unwritten. This is because, in part, such knowledge had a strong tradition of oral transmission before literacy took hold in the society, or because the information resided with the non-literate elements of a literate society. Goody suggests (with some reservations) in *The domestication of the savage mind*, that literacy is the primary catalyst for the development of rational scientific inquiry out of folkloric origins.<sup>62</sup> Considering the uneven distribution and standards of literacy in fifth- and fourth-century Greece,<sup>63</sup> this thesis would suggest a transitional stage in the dichotomy between a folkloric and a rational basis to Greek thought at this time. Theophrastos and especially the Hippocratic writers are conscious of a degree of separation between their own work and the ideas of the uneducated or illiterate keepers of 'superstitious' medical knowledge. Hence our sources are primarily those of self-conscious 'outsiders' to the community of lay practitioners of folk-medicine.

Dichotomising tendencies, though, by ancient and modern scholars alike, need to be approached with caution. G. E. R. Lloyd has suggested that the growth of literacy also raised obstacles to progressive scientific

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<sup>62</sup> J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 36-51.



inquiry, particularly by contributing to the barriers against communication between bodies of knowledge and schools of thought. Thus the spread of literacy would have encouraged exclusivity of fields of knowledge, rather than a democratic sharing of scientific ideas.<sup>64</sup> Lloyd's stance is supported by Rosalind Thomas' more recent study of the relationship between oral tradition and written records in Athens (and elsewhere). Focussing upon the histories of prominent Athenian families, Thomas finds that the oral traditions remained strong and important in the fourth century, and unaffected by the literary tradition that had developed alongside it.<sup>65</sup> While there is clearly an awareness of separate, indeed opposing systems of medical practice, the extent to which these actually conflicted with each other in terms of philosophy or practice is open to debate.<sup>66</sup>

The earliest surviving systematic appraisal of classical knowledge of and beliefs about plants is contained in Theophrastos' *History of Plants (HP)*, written c. 300. Book nine of this work constitutes a dedicated study of plants deemed pharmacologically active, and provides numerous insights into the practices of the *rhizotomoi*, or root-cutters, of the Greek world.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> For a recent assessment of the degrees and kinds of literacy at Athens see Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore and Ideology: studies in the life sciences in ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1983), 115-7.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas (1989), pp. 95 and 286.

<sup>66</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd has pointed out that elite medical and scientific writers had much to gain, professionally, from distinguishing their own techniques and theories from those of their rivals in the medical marketplace: *Magic, Reason and Experience: studies in the origin and development of Greek science* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 38-40.

<sup>67</sup> Some scholars have questioned the authorship of book nine of Theophrastos' *History of plants*, although the manuscripts have more recently been found to support its

A student of Aristotle, Theophrastos sought to uncover the complexities in the identification, preparation and administration of various plants as *pharmaka*. He did so with reference to scholarly, common and arcane authorities on plants, cutting across the rational science-folklore dichotomy described above. Theophrastos employs a combination of Aristotelian reasoning and 'common sense' to reconcile herbalists' assertions with the avowed rationalism of his elite, medically expert contemporaries.<sup>68</sup> He is critical, for instance, of the claims of the *rhizotomoi* that one risks blindness or prolapse of the anus if seen by a woodpecker whilst harvesting peony, but cautiously accepts that one should first anoint oneself and then stand upwind when plucking the plant *thapsia*.<sup>69</sup> Again, he finds it reasonable to pray whilst cutting medicinal plants, but absurd to believe that one must offer unburnt sacrifices to Asklepios when cutting all-heal.<sup>70</sup> The distinctions observed by Theophrastos between what is scientifically possible or impossible, and between what is proper and pious or absurd and superstitious appear hazy or even contradictory to the modern reader. Such ambiguities serve to remind us that the boundaries between magic, religion and rational science were as flexible as they were debated, and could thus be manipulated according to the will of a powerful speaker or group.

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authenticity: Scarborough in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 152, n. 154; Benedict Einarson, 'The manuscripts of Theophrastos' *Historia Plantarum* CP 71 (1976), 67-76; cf. Lloyd (1983), p. 121.

<sup>68</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd (1983), pp. 119 and 126 examines the constant negotiation of and modifications to 'common sense' understandings of herbal *pharmaka*, highlighting the subjectivity with which the Greeks engaged with their universe in the absence of any religious or scientific canon.

<sup>69</sup> Theophr., *HP*. 9.8.5-6.

The boundary between rational scientific wisdom and folk wisdom, on the other hand, seems to have been more firmly perceived by elite ancient authors. Oral folk traditions are clearly deemed to be worthy of recording to Hesiod and Theophrastos, as they were to Pliny centuries later, although they are invariably identified as such, and may be subject to suspicion on that account. In *Works and Days* Hesiod makes note of the best days of the month for various agricultural activities, before adding that different people's traditions invariably contradict each other, and that each claims to possess superior, exclusive knowledge.<sup>71</sup> Book nine of the *History of Plants* includes many accounts which Theophrastos rejects as products of exaggeration by self-interested *rhizotomoi*, who wished to enhance their own reputation, or that of their craft.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Pliny attacks his own non-literary sources, the *herbarii*, for dishonesty, and for withholding full accounts of plants not well-known by outsiders to the craft.<sup>73</sup>

G. E. R. Lloyd has demonstrated that ancient writers' sense of the division between Hippocratic and folk medicine could persist even though there was considerable borrowing on the part of the newer, rational medical tradition.<sup>74</sup> Cyclamen (𐤀𐤌𐤍𐤏𐤃 & 𐤀𐤌𐤍𐤏𐤃), for instance, is recommended by the authors of *On the Diseases of Women* (*Mul.*) I and II, *On Superfoetation* (*Superf.*) and *On the Nature of Woman*

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<sup>70</sup> *HP.* 9.8.7.

<sup>71</sup> Hes., *WD* 824.

<sup>72</sup> *HP.* 9.8.5, 9.19.2-3.

<sup>73</sup> Pliny, *HN* 21.144, 26.24, 27.67; Lloyd (1983), 148, n. 102.

<sup>74</sup> Lloyd (1983), 131-2.

(*Nat. Mul.*) for use in pessaries for various gynaecological purposes.<sup>75</sup> It is similarly recommended by Theophrastos, who adds that his sources also use it as an amulet for childbirth, and as a *philtre*.<sup>76</sup> The Hippokratic texts omit these last two uses from their discussions.<sup>77</sup> Peony (☾☺ ♀●◆&◆♦✠❖♁☽) and mandrake (☐☺ ○☾■♁☐☾♀☐❖☐☾✠), which are clearly important substances in *rhizotomia*, are similarly embraced by Hippokratic medicine.<sup>78</sup> Theophrastos recounts traditional harvesting rituals for these plants. Peony requires special ritual attention.<sup>79</sup> When cutting mandrake one should first draw three circles around the plant with a sword, and then dance around speaking at length about love.<sup>80</sup> Once again the Hippokratic writers omit the details they consider ritualistic and superstitious.

That herbal folklore retained its identity and status as a relatively exclusive medical tradition beyond the classical period, and discrete from the appropriations of rational medicine,<sup>81</sup> is suggested by the appearance

<sup>75</sup> Hipp., *Mul.* I, ch. 60, Littré (henceforth L) VIII 120.17f, ch. 74, L VIII 154.19; *Nat. Mul.* ch. 9, L VII 324.15; *Morb.* II ch. 47, L VII 68.2. Lloyd (1983), p. 129, nn. 45-8 gives further references.

<sup>76</sup> Theophr., *HP* 9.9.3.

<sup>77</sup> In the gynaecological works, though, the Hippokratic writer includes prescriptions for amulets without criticism: p. 98, n. 128.

<sup>78</sup> Peony: Hipp., *Nat. Mul.* ch. 6, L VII 320.9, ch. 8, 324.2, ch. 25, 342.14, ch. 32, 350.6, 352.7, 10, 17-8, 358.7, 10, 18, 360.1, *Int.* ch. 40, L VII 266.9. Mandrake: Hipp., *Mul.* I ch. 74, L VIII 160.12, 15, ch. 80, 202.1, *Mul.* II ch. 199, L VIII 382.6, *Morb.* II ch. 43, L VII 60.10f, *On the Places in Man* ch. 39, L VI 328.17, 19.

<sup>79</sup> As discussed on p. 84, n. 69.

<sup>80</sup> *HP* 9.8.8.

<sup>81</sup> See above p. 84, nn. 64 and 65.

of comparable plant manuals by Dioskorides, Galen and others in the early centuries of the common era.<sup>82</sup>

Although Theophrastos' is the first surviving plant list in Greek, it belongs to a much older tradition of such lists in Mediterranean and Near Eastern civilisations.<sup>83</sup> The *History of Plants* betrays an awareness of cross-cultural indebtedness for some of its content. Tyrrhenia, Latium, Ethiopia, Skythia and Thrace are cited as sources of abundant herbal *pharmaka*.<sup>84</sup> Theophrastos cites Egypt as the source of *nepenthes*, the calming drug famously used by Helen in the *Odyssey*.<sup>85</sup> If Majno is correct to identify Helen's drug as opium, though, exotic origins seem historically unlikely, as opium poppies were plentiful in the Greek world.<sup>86</sup>

Beliefs, correct or otherwise, about the exotic origins of much herbal lore helped to construct a sense of history and prestige for empirical, herbal medicine and its practitioners.<sup>87</sup> Aside from Theophrastos' notes on the procedures and observances of the semi-professionals who harvest and/or sell medicinal plants, we possess several intriguing fragments

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<sup>82</sup> On the continuous transmission of herbal lore through later centuries, as documented by the pharmacological knowledge of Theophrastos, Diokles of Karistos, Nikander of Kolophon, Dioskorides, Galen and Byzantine encyclopaedists see Scarborough (1991), 152-4.

<sup>83</sup> On the combination and confusion of Syrian, Greek and Roman plant lists over time see John Scarborough, 'Theophrastus on herbals and herbal remedies', *Journal of the History of Biology* 11 (1978), 357.  
On the matter of orientalism, real or imagined, in the history of Greek magical knowledge see my chapter seven below.

<sup>84</sup> *HP.* 9.15.2-3.

<sup>85</sup> Theophr. *HP.* 9.15.1.

<sup>86</sup> Guido Majno, *The Healing Hand: man and wound in the ancient world* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 144.

<sup>87</sup> Such beliefs belong to a wider trend of locating special magico-medical substances and practitioners as foreign, or spatially 'other': see chapter seven below.

from Sophokles' *Rhizotomoi*. The subject of the play seems to be Medeia's deception of the Peliades, and the killing of Pelias with feigned magic. In one fragment Medeia is depicted in terms that strongly evoke the ritual aspects of root-cutting:

ἄλλοτ' ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸν ἑσπέρην ἵππευον ἅμα  
 ἔχουσα κελύφῃσι χρυσοῖσιν ὕδατος  
 ὀφείλουσ' ἀγνοῦσα τὸν δόρυ μιν, ἢ γὰρ  
 ἴσται ἃ γὰρ ἔστ' ἐπιτακτικῶς ἰσοῦσιν  
 ἅμ' ἄλλοι καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἑσπέρην ἵππευον ἅμα  
 ἔχουσα κελύφῃσι χρυσοῖσιν ὕδατος ὀφείλουσ'  
 ἀγνοῦσα τὸν δόρυ μιν, ἢ γὰρ ἴσται ἃ γὰρ  
 ἔστ' ἐπιτακτικῶς ἰσοῦσιν ἅμ' ἄλλοι καὶ

ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸν ἑσπέρην ἵππευον ἅμα  
 ἔχουσα κελύφῃσι χρυσοῖσιν ὕδατος ὀφείλουσ'  
 ἀγνοῦσα τὸν δόρυ μιν, ἢ γὰρ ἴσται ἃ γὰρ  
 ἔστ' ἐπιτακτικῶς ἰσοῦσιν ἅμ' ἄλλοι καὶ

So, turning her eye from her hand she collects the milky juice dripping from the cut in bronze vessels. Covered chests conceal the root cuttings which she, crying out and screaming incantations, gathers naked with bronze sickles.

Medeia's demeanour is comparable with that of a maenad, which immediately connects her ritual behaviour with dangerous, chaotic, and specifically feminine behaviour.<sup>89</sup> She uses bronze ritual instruments to

<sup>88</sup> Soph., *Rhiz.* Fr. 534, TGrF. P. 410.  
<sup>89</sup> See especially Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and tragedy in the developing city-state* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 258-61 on maenadism's role as a 'safety valve' for women in Greek society, which re-affirmed their roles in society by means of

cut the plant and collect the sap, and as in Theophrastos' account of the technique employed in the harvesting of *thapsia*, her head is averted from the task. Sophokles' association of *rhizotomoi* with Medeia the plotting murderess points to a rather marginal status for historical root-cutters in the classical period.<sup>90</sup> A note about Epimenides, the semi-legendary purifier of Athens, suggests a spatial element to the marginality of root-cutting. A tradition preserved in Diogenes Laertius tells that Epimenides eventually sought complete solitude, and practised root-cutting.<sup>91</sup>

The historical, or quasi-historical notes of Theophrastos and Diogenes Laertius remind us that *rhizotomia* was far from an exclusively feminine pursuit in the classical period. Epimenides' status as an elevated, purificatory figure perhaps renders him exceptional. However, numerous *rhizotomoi* are named by Theophrastos, Pliny, Galen and Athenaeus, and almost all of these historical figures bear masculine names too.<sup>92</sup>

The picture we get from the poetic works concerning the gender slant of *rhizotomia* conflicts with the ostensibly factual evidence of scientific writers. Women, and especially older women, are presented as the

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temporary reversals. It is generally accepted that maenadism was not practised in Athens, and that by the fifth century it was practised only in a muted, state-controlled fashion by women in other city-states: A. Henrichs 'Greek maenadism from Olympias to Messalina', *HSCP* 82 (1978), 121-60, esp. 123, 152-3; Dodds (1951), p. 270. The bloodthirsty maenads of Euripides' *Bacchai* were thus more an imaginary than a real threat to order, although the association of Medeia with maenads and root-cutters is notable nonetheless.

<sup>90</sup> Lloyd (1983), p. 120.

<sup>91</sup> Diog. Laert. 1.112; Lloyd (1983), p. 120.

<sup>92</sup> Thrasyas of Mantinea: Theophr., *HP*. 9.16.8, 9.17.1 and 9.17.2; Alexias: *HP*. 9.16.8; unnamed male drug vendor: *HP*. 9.17.1; Chian Eudemos: *HP*. 9.17.3; Scarborough (1991), n. 38.

keepers of knowledge about pharmacologically active plants. We have already noted Medeia and the Peliades.<sup>93</sup> Alexis' *Mandragorizomene*, a work of the New Comedy genre, evidently concerns the harvesting and use of mandrake, almost certainly by an elderly woman. Later works by Theokritos and other poets confirm the lasting popularity of the theme of old women's expertise with botanical *pharmaka*.<sup>94</sup> The conflicting data from poetic and historical sources are consistent with a point made previously, regarding the profile of magic users according to poetic and documentary sources. Most of the surviving *katadesmoi* and magical papyri from the *PGM* collections were used or intended for use by men.<sup>95</sup> It is women, though, who are presented in poetic works as the primary users of spells. One is drawn to consider whether women's use of root-cutting was indeed less prevalent than men's, or whether women's involvement was simply of a less visible, public and professional character.<sup>96</sup> The male *rhizotomoi* named by Theophrastos are apparently professionals of public renown. The many 'wise old women' to whom female figures in literature can turn, on the other hand, are generally unnamed, low-profile figures. Are we then to imagine, as Aline Rousselle

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<sup>93</sup> This may also constitute evidence for an ancient perception of the passing of herbal knowledge from one generation of women to the next. This notion of the transmission of herbal knowledge is posited by Rousselle and Demand (on which see below, p. 93, n. 102).

<sup>94</sup> Alexis, *Mandragorizomene*; Theokritos, *Id.* 2.91, 6.40, 7.126ff; Loukianos, *Dial. meretr.* 4; Seneca, *Medea, passim*, but esp. 705-70; Macrobius, *Sat.* V.19.9-10; Petron., *Sat.* 137-8; Bremmer (1987), 204-5.

<sup>95</sup> Chapter one, pp. 3-4.

<sup>96</sup> Women's limited access to money and literacy is cited as a possible reason for the gender bias towards males in the curse inscriptions and spell texts. In any case the poetic and legal literature of the fifth century demonstrates that women were more open to charges of adding *philtrai* to food and drinks than to issuing curses and *agoge* spells: Winkler (1990c), 90.



does,<sup>97</sup> that women requiring medicinal plants had access to perhaps several such wise women through their own private networks?

The question of the existence of a discrete, unwritten corpus of women's herbal knowledge continues to divide modern scholars of ancient medicine, magic and poisoning. Arguments in favour of such a tradition are necessarily based, to some extent, upon the near silence of the elite medical sources regarding childbirth and women's illnesses. The Hippocratic *Epidemics* contain twice as many case histories for men as for women.<sup>98</sup> This gap in the medical data is used to suggest that women were more likely to seek out the expertise of a sympathetic and knowledgeable woman,<sup>99</sup> or else temple medicine.<sup>100</sup> Such arguments assume that wise-women were generally less literate than their male peers in the medical industry, hence the lack of medical literature pertaining both to women's complaints, and to traditional medicine. Positive evidence for women's preference for non-Hippocratic medicine is admittedly not abundant.

The Hippocratic treatises on diseases of women are notable exceptions from this pattern, containing as they do a plethora of treatments for, and

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<sup>97</sup> Rousselle (1988), pp. 24-6.

<sup>98</sup> Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford, 1994), p. 34.

<sup>99</sup> Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (London, 1995), p. 111; Dean-Jones (1994), p. 34; Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore and London, 1994), p. 66.

<sup>100</sup> Throughout antiquity women's dedications to Asklepios considerably outnumbered men's: Helen McClees, *A Study of Women in Attic Inscriptions* (New York, 1920), 17-22, cited in Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (New York, 1975), p.

discussions of, women's ailments.<sup>101</sup> Rousselle was the first to posit that Hippocratic medical writings about women's illnesses owe their knowledge to a broad-based empirical lore which had until the fifth century been commanded and transmitted orally by women.<sup>102</sup> This idea of rational Hippocratic medicine appropriating folklore, or more precisely, women's lore finds support in the scholarship of Lesley Dean-Jones and Ann Ellis Hanson, who cite the singularly rich supply of medicaments and superstitious elements in Hippocratic works which purportedly contain women's own testimonies.<sup>103</sup>

Against such arguments, Helen King cautions that the male, Hippocratic authors could afford to be selective about which women's testimonies they accepted, and thus were in a position to construct 'women's knowledge' for women.<sup>104</sup> The issue of women's secret knowledge about their own fertility is a case in point. Both Aristotle and the Hippocratic author of *On the nature of the child* (*Nat. Puer.*) assert that an experienced woman is able to discern whether and precisely when she has conceived by monitoring whether the man's seed stays within her,

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84, n. 21. Such inscriptions and dedications were frequently written on behalf of women, rather than being physically written by women.

<sup>101</sup> On the relevance of the reproductive organs in the diagnosis of most of women's illnesses in ancient thought see Hipp., *Mul.* 1.62, 112.23-114.7 Grensemann; Dean-Jones (1994), pp. 110-11, who points out that all women's illnesses fell under the rubric 'gynaecology', and offers the term 'andrology' for what the Hippocratics present as general medical practice. cf. Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: on desire and the body in antiquity*, transl. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford, 1988), p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Rousselle (1988), pp. 24-6. cf. Demand (1994), pp. 63, 65.

<sup>103</sup> Dean-Jones (1994), p. 30; Ann Ellis Hanson, 'The logic of the gynecological prescriptions', quoted in Helen King, *Hippocrates' woman: reading the female body in ancient Greece* (Routledge: London and New York, 1998), p. 133; *contra* King (1998), p. 133.

<sup>104</sup> King (1998), pp. 135-8.

and noting when her womb seals itself.<sup>105</sup> The author of *Fleshes (Carn.)* echoes the sentiment that women know immediately when they have conceived, and adds that upon learning that she is pregnant, the experienced woman can cause the foetus to be destroyed and drop out of her body, if she so wishes.<sup>106</sup>

A logical extension of women's knowledge of and control over conception is contraception, although anti-fertility substances and recipes are not well attested until a somewhat later period in the Graeco-Roman world. Indeed, contraceptives (in the modern sense of the word<sup>107</sup>) are almost entirely lacking from the Hippocratic corpus and other classical works.<sup>108</sup> Thus it is on Roman evidence that scholars such as Sue Blundell and John Riddle base their suppositions of an orally transmitted Greek contraceptive technology.<sup>109</sup>

Abortifacients, on the other hand, have some presence in the classical Greek sources, and it is to such cases that we shall turn instead.

Recourse to abortive substances and techniques appears not to have

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<sup>105</sup> Aristot., *HA* 582b10-12, 583a35-b3; Hipp., *Nat. Puer.*13, L. 7.488-90.

<sup>106</sup> Hipp., *Carn.* 19 = Loeb 8.160.

<sup>107</sup> There exists no Greek analogue to our word 'conception'. Hippocratic writers observed numerous milestones in the development of the foetus, regarding when it became a living thing, and when it is able to move, both of which were thought to vary according to the sex of the child: Hipp., *NC* 14-21 L 7.492-512. John Riddle identifies a number of Hippocratic remedies which he considers to be 'contraceptives', although he acknowledges that these are actually early-stage abortifacients in modern terminology: John M. Riddle, *Contraception and Abortion From the Ancient World to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), cited in King (1998), p. 144.

<sup>108</sup> Aristotle does note that conception is most unlikely for the duration of lactation: *GA* 777a13-19, cf. Soranos, *Gyn.* 2.18, T 90; Plut., *Mor.* 3d5 for Roman references to the same phenomenon; King (1998), pp. 142-4.

been proscribed outright in the classical period. A slave-entertainer, for instance, is openly advised by a Hippocratic physician on how to abort a seven-day-old conceptus.<sup>110</sup> Plato states that midwives can bring on a miscarriage "if that is what seems best".<sup>111</sup> While the exact meaning of such a judgement is unclear, it would appear that the social status and health of the female patient are relevant factors in determining if abortion is appropriate.

Abortion seems to have been forbidden in classical Athens where the woman's husband had died.<sup>112</sup> This was in the interests of producing a male heir, underscoring the fact that the rights of the *kyrios* outweighed those of his expectant wife.<sup>113</sup> It seems equally unlikely that most married women would or could freely obtain abortions from Hippocratic physicians while their husbands still lived, especially given the importance of producing heirs, and the difficulty with which ancient Mediterranean families raised their offspring to maturity.<sup>114</sup>

Depending how we interpret the references to 'experienced women' earlier in this discussion,<sup>115</sup> it appears that wives were believed to

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<sup>109</sup> Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (London, 1995), p. 108; Riddle in Bruce W. Frier, 'Natural fertility and family limitation in Roman marriage', *CP* 89 (1994), 318-33, esp. 328-9.

<sup>110</sup> Hipp., *Nat. Puer.* 13, L 7.488-90.

<sup>111</sup> Pl., *Theaet.* 149d-e. Other examples are to be found at Hipp., *Epid.* 4.6, 5.53 (=v. 238.8), *NC* 13 (=7.490.12-492.2).

<sup>112</sup> According to a disputed fragment attributed to Lysias: fr. 10 Gernet.

<sup>113</sup> King (1998), p. 139, n. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Xen., *Mem.* 2.2.4; Keith Bradley, 'The nurse and the child at Rome: duty, affect and socialisation', *Thamyris* 1 (1994), 137-56, esp. p. 143; Roger S. Bagnall and Bruce W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 330.

<sup>115</sup> p. 93 above.

possess a wealth of privileged knowledge about, and control over, the heirs to their husbands' *oikoi*. The author of *Fleashes* admits that his experienced female sources are in fact prostitutes and midwives, which is plausible.<sup>116</sup> The Hippokratic writer of *On the nature of the child*, on the other hand, makes the more dubious and hazy claim of having gleaned his information from 'women as a group'. Knowing how to produce an abortion would certainly be valuable to 'ordinary' women who were involved in pre- or extra-marital sex. It does not follow that all women would know such things as a matter of course. Once again, prostitutes and midwives were likely to be the keepers of most of this information, as Plato suggests.<sup>117</sup>

Helen King asks the reader to consider whether the authors' claims of seeking women's opinions might instead be pure invention, aimed at outdoing medical rivals and persuading potential customers of their expertise.<sup>118</sup> This is a valid theory, when one considers that Hippokratic physician-writers were at times arguably more concerned with the competitive aspects of their trade than with scientific inquiry.<sup>119</sup> If this was the case, the writers' unsubstantiated claims that women have their own private ways of knowing whether they are pregnant, and can also control the outcome of their pregnancy, belong to the same pattern of dangerous feminine knowledge I have previously identified in the contexts

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<sup>116</sup> *Carn.* 19; cf. Ann Ellis Hanson, cited in King (1998), p. 136.

<sup>117</sup> *Pl., Theat.* 149d-e.

<sup>118</sup> King (1998), pp. 136-7.

of magic and cookery. In such cases, women are believed to wield potentially dangerous power against the community by virtue of their control over special knowledge.<sup>120</sup>

King's criticisms aside, there is substantial evidence to suggest that certain of the Hippocratic writers did indeed appropriate at least some 'folk-wisdom' in their treatises concerning the diseases of women. In the gynaecological works<sup>121</sup> in particular, we find medical recipes featuring animal excrement.<sup>122</sup> Excrement was most frequently used sympathetically, to treat impurities or draw out trapped waste products from the (female) body.<sup>123</sup> Lesley Dean-Jones has compiled numerous other recommendations for diagnostic and healing rituals in the gynaecological works, along with folk axioms which have little regard for the rationalising efforts of other Hippocratic texts.<sup>124</sup> The author of *Diseases of Women*, for instance, advises the use of a ritual spanning several days and nights and using menstrual rags and cinders to

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<sup>119</sup> Hippocratic writers criticise and compete with their medical rivals in several Hippocratic treatises, the attacks preserved in *OTSD* 1-4 being the best known example; cf. *Mul.* 1.2, L 8.20; 1.65, L 8.134; 2.114, L 8.246; *Airs, Waters, Places* 22

<sup>120</sup> King (1998), p. 156.

<sup>121</sup> These being *On the Nature of the Child* (*Nat. Puer.*), *Diseases of Women* (*Mul.*), *On the Seventh Months' Child* (*Septim.*), *On the Nature of Woman* (*Nat. Mul.*), and *Superfoetation* (*Superf.*).

<sup>122</sup> Hipp., *Nat. Mul.* 2.203, viii.390.11-12 and 390.16-392.4; 2.195, viii.376.23-378.3; 2.195, viii.378.17-19; 1.59, viii.118.8-9 (Littre). Further references to medicinal excrement contained in Ann Ellis Hanson, 'Talking recipes in the gynaecological texts of the *Hippocratic Corpus*', in Wyke (1998), 71-94, esp. 87ff, and nn. 57-71; also Heinrich von Staden, 'Women and dirt', *Helios* 19 (1992), 7-30.

<sup>123</sup> On the theory of 'sympathetic communication' in pre-Hippocratic medicine and the gynaecological works see Lloyd (1983), pp. 83-4, 171, 177-81.

<sup>124</sup> Dean-Jones (1994), p. 30, n. 90. *On the Sacred Disease* constitutes a harsh attack upon irrational, superstitious beliefs in the field of medicine. cf. *Airs, Waters, Places* 22.

determine the balance of humours in the menses.<sup>125</sup> From non-Hippocratic sources we learn that menstrual blood itself was a popular ingredient in fertility and contraceptive recipes,<sup>126</sup> which helps to suggest that similar rituals appearing in the medical writers belong to a corpus of medical lore which is older and quite distinct from that of the Hippocratics.<sup>127</sup> The writer of *Diseases of women* also recommends certain amulets to ensure an easy birth, whereas the author of *On the Sacred Disease (Morb. Sacr.)* openly attacks the use of amulets as 'superstition'.<sup>128</sup>

Infirmities that would be remedied with enemas, emetics, exercise and fumigations<sup>129</sup> if the patient were male are invariably treated with emmenagogues in the case of female patients.<sup>130</sup> It is in these emmenagogic recipes, which tend to take the form of pessaries and draughts, that we find the use of animal dung and other arcane ingredients, which are a feature of the gynaecological works.<sup>131</sup> These

<sup>125</sup> Hipp., *Mul.* 1.11 (=viii.42.9-16). Hipp., *Nat. Mul.* 22 (=vii.340.15-20) preserves a similar diagnostic practice involving menstrual blood and sand.

<sup>126</sup> *PMag* xxxvi.320-32; cf. John Scarborough, 'Contraception in antiquity: the case of pennyroyal', *Wisconsin Academy Review* 35 (1989), 19-25, esp. 22.

<sup>127</sup> The use of menstrual blood in such recipes suggests a theory of sympathetic efficacy, whereas the Hippocratics believed that opposites cured opposites (especially regarding the humours and elements): Hipp., *Nat. Hom.* 9.1-2, *Flat.* 1.5, *Morb.* 2.16, *Loc. Hom.* 12 and 34; cf. Hanson (1998) 72-3. Sympathetic theory as v. old: see von Staden (1992), 7-30, esp. 12-3 and n. 42 (?).

<sup>128</sup> Hipp., *Mul.* 1.77 (=viii.172.2-4 Littre); *OTSD* 2

<sup>129</sup> Such courses of action worked to re-balance the humours according to Hippocratic rational medicine.

<sup>130</sup> See n. 101 above on the centrality of menses in the treatment of women, even in illnesses which are not at all gynaecological by modern definitions. At Hipp., *Morb.* 4.57 (=vii.612.19-21), for example, the writer consciously groups female cases of dropsy with other 'women's diseases', rather than with 'normal' (ie. male) cases of dropsy.

<sup>131</sup> Hipp., *Nat. Mul.* 32 (=vii.346.14-18); cf. similar lists at end of both *Mul.* 1 and 2; Dean-Jones (1994), pp. 132-3. King (1998), p. 133, on the other hand, argues that many of the ingredients used in the gynaecological works do appear elsewhere in the Hippocratic corpus. This could be construed as evidence for extensive appropriation and re-

and other recipes and rituals from the gynaecological works are at odds with the more or less rational approach of Hippocratic medicine, and with the prevailing theoretical framework, with its emphasis upon the elements and humours.<sup>132</sup> The comparative lack of rationalisation and theoretical re-contextualisation in these parts of the gynaecological works<sup>133</sup> is significant, suggesting as it does that the informants' words are not overly mediated or 'corrected' by the Hippocratic writer.

The multiple authorship of the Hippocratic corpus means that some inconsistencies in outlook are inevitable between authors and treatises. However, it is also reasonable to assume that the testimonies of women - especially midwives and prostitutes<sup>134</sup> - were sought by some writers, and that folk remedies entered the elite medical literature in this way.<sup>135</sup> Whether this constituted an exclusively feminine folk medical tradition is less secure. Helen King has contested the claims of Dean-Jones and Hanson<sup>136</sup> that the gynaecological works are unique in their *range of materia medica*, noting that most substances named in these works also appear elsewhere in the Hippocratic corpus. This does not, in itself, diminish the case for an orally transmitted corpus of women's medical

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contextualisation of folk-remedies throughout the corpus, with the 'women's recipes' simply being less rationalised and adulterated than most. On the appropriation and re-contextualisation of folk remedies and women's remedies see Lloyd (1983), pp. 133-5; Hanson (1998), 73-4.

<sup>132</sup> According to this theory illnesses are due to an imbalance of hot/cold and dry/wet elements, and cures are sought by administering the deficient element.

<sup>133</sup> See n. 125 above.

<sup>134</sup> Besides being better versed in such matters, these women would, presumably, be able to impart such knowledge without drawing undue suspicion or shame upon themselves.



knowledge. It highlights that women's medical tradition exists in close dialogue with the broader folk medical tradition. It is logical that there would be considerable overlap of knowledge between the two, and some scope for specialised 'women's knowledge', particularly among health- and sex-workers. There is little to suggest, in the Hippocratic accounts, that the information about birthing amulets and the like constituted well-guarded or exclusive knowledge. Rational medicine inevitably drew upon folk medical traditions, as discussed previously, and some of this oral tradition will have been relevant to women alone, and so logically kept predominantly by women.<sup>137</sup>

Insofar as midwives did function as repositories of medical knowledge pertinent to women and birthing, their status in Greek society was quite significant. Plato tells us that midwives were experienced women who had given birth themselves but were now beyond child-bearing age.<sup>138</sup> As such, these older women effectively stood outside the primary functional identity of married citizen women as producers of legitimate heirs.<sup>139</sup> They consequently enjoyed greater freedom of movement in

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<sup>135</sup> Hipp., *Praec.* 2 (=ix.254.4-5) explicitly commends this type of research. cf. Hipp., *Epid.* 6.8.10 (=v.348.3-5) and *Septim./Oct.* 4 (=vii. 440.14-442.1), which tentatively support the trustworthiness and value of women's own information about childbirth.

<sup>136</sup> Dean-Jones (1994), p. 30; Hanson (1998), p. 73.

<sup>137</sup> See pp. 83ff above. It is important to note that *rhizotomoi* - many of them male - would have been another viable source of information about pharmacologically active plants. Pennyroyal, for instance, seems to have been widely known, specifically for its uses by women: Theophr., *HP* 9.16.

<sup>138</sup> Pl., *Theaet.* 149b-c. cf. Hipponax, fr. 33 Degani (=fr. 19 West); Arist., *Thes.* 505-16, *Ekkles.* 528f.

<sup>139</sup> Jan. N. Bremmer, 'The old women of ancient Greece', in Blok and Mason (1987), 191-215, esp. 191.

Greek societies (both ancient and modern<sup>140</sup>), which made it more appropriate for them to leave their homes when they were required to assist at a birth.

Jan Bremmer has highlighted a number of motifs by which these older women were targetted for invective in Greek and Roman cultures.<sup>141</sup> Besides engaging in such vices as drunkenness, obscene language, and corrupting younger women, old women were said to be responsible for perpetuating ignorant suspicions and 'old wives' tales'.<sup>142</sup> The flip side of this reputed foolishness is their aptitude for magic - a motif which Aristophanes and subsequent writers amply exploit.<sup>143</sup> There is clearly some ambivalence, from the classical period onwards, as to the quality and status of knowledge possessed by old women. Bremmer notes that images of older women as drunkards, and as lacking in good sense, are not discernible in Homer. This could simply be because such themes were inappropriate to Homer's genre. It is also possible that these changes are genuine, and help to mark changing attitudes towards women in general in the classical period. That such changes could have

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<sup>140</sup> Hyperides, fr. 205 Blass; see Bremmer (1987), 192-7 for modern anthropological findings.

<sup>141</sup> Bremmer (1987).

<sup>142</sup> Pl., *Rep.* 377f, *Gorg.* 527a. Such attitudes towards 'old wives' tales' continued into the Hellenistic period and beyond: Diog. Laert. 1.34 (Thales), 7.185 (Chrysippos); Cicero, *Div.* 1.7, 2.19, *Nat. Deorum.* 2.70, 3.92, *Dom.* 105, *Tusc.* 1.93.

<sup>143</sup> Aristoph., *Nub.* 749-57; that Aristophanes' witches were portrayed as old women is supported by Alkiphron 3.8.1 and Loukianos, *Dial. meretr.* 4; Alexis, *Mandragorizomene*; Theokritos 2.91, 6.40, 7.126f; Loukianos, *Dial. meretr.* 1; cf. Pherekrates (Photios a 1771 Theod.), which also seems to refer to an older woman. See Bremmer (1987), 205 for Roman and later examples.

arisen, in part, from the emergence of a literate, public culture will be explored in a subsequent chapter.<sup>144</sup>

Midwives belonged to the marginalised demographic of older women, which adds complexity to their already mixed reputation in the literary sources. Plato's Sokrates describes the midwife as having knowledge of pain-relieving drugs and incantations, and paints a positive picture of the role upon which he bases the metaphor of himself as 'midwife of ideas'.<sup>145</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Aristophanes repeatedly implicates midwives in the act of helping women pass off strange babies as legitimate offspring.<sup>146</sup> While this is clearly Aristophanic excess, it nonetheless points to an important tension in the role of the midwife. A woman with knowledge of *pharmaka* and ritual is in control of what is normally an all-female occasion<sup>147</sup> - an event that is, however, vital for the *kyrios* to attain eternal glory through his heirs.

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Like cookery, folk medicine and more especially midwifery are bodies of knowledge which were viewed with some ambivalence in Greek society, and were subtly imbued with ideas about magic. Cooking, a wondrous transformative art, is endowed with a divine origin, having been brought

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<sup>144</sup> See Chapter six below.

<sup>145</sup> Pl., *Theaet.* 149c-d, 157c-d.

<sup>146</sup> Arist., *Thes.* 338-40, 505-16.

<sup>147</sup> The legend of Agnodike also points to women's preference for only female attendants: Hyginus, *Fab.* 274.

to humanity by Prometheus. The healing arts are similarly regarded as having divine associations, notwithstanding the rational façade of Hippocratic medicine. Asklepios, for example, eventually gained status as an immortal by virtue of his legendary healing capacity, as did other 'first discoverers' in the field of medicine.<sup>148</sup> *Rhizotomia*, located as it is along a continuum it shares with comestible and medicinal substances, has similarly divine associations.<sup>149</sup>

Where women were the repositories of these mysterious transformative and creative bodies of knowledge, certain tensions disclose themselves. In domestic kitchens, in contrast with *polis* sacrifices, women were the primary controllers of the transformations of cookery on behalf of the *oikos*. It is in this context that women are suspected, in the literature, of perverting the mysterious and powerful transformation of cooking through the feminised vices of trickery and secrecy. Magical *philtroi* are constructed as the product of such deceptions, and as a subversion of proper power hierarchies within the *oikos*. Analogies of cookery and magic are repeatedly presented in the literature by means of narrative and iconographic assimilation.

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<sup>148</sup> On Asklepios see Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: the role of the temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel* (Atlanta, Georgia, 1995), p. 38; and see also Pedro Lain Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, transl. L. J. Rather and John M. Sharp (New Haven and London, 1970), p. 41.

<sup>149</sup> Knowledge of *moly*, for instance, reached humanity through the gods' messenger Hermes. The association of *rhizotomia* with semi-legendary Epimenides also helps to locate the art in the realm of the divine.

Within the field of folk medicine we have attempted to locate a distinct strand of women's medical lore, despite the source problems inherent in finding 'real' women in male-authored texts. Ancient suggestions of a discrete corpus of women's medicine, and especially 'old women's remedies' need to be viewed critically in any case. This is because, as John Scarborough, Helen King and others point out, such statements may simply be reiterating gendered impressions of women as predisposed to 'cooking up' schemes of damage and deception.<sup>150</sup>

Also, ancient perceptions - as opposed to historical reality - of a clear dichotomy between rational medicine and folk-*pharmaka* can tell us something about the construction of sorcery in Greek society. This is evident in the treatise *On the sacred disease*, which accuses its rivals of trickery and magical superstition. By modern standards, the Hippocratic text's avowedly superior rationale is no less fanciful, and similarly without validation by evidence.<sup>151</sup> The efficacy of the accusation rests primarily upon its persuasive force, rather than any fixed canon of what is magical and fanciful and immoral, and what is scientific and reasonable and pious.

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<sup>150</sup> Scarborough points to the role of female figures - particularly Helen and Kirke - as herbal specialists, with elements of sexual sorcery: (1991), 140, n. 37. King, citing Johns, suggests that attribution of a tradition of *pharmaka* to women may tell us more about fear of death at the hands of a woman than about divisions of labour in Graeco-Roman healing: Catherine Johns, 'Poisons and witchcraft in the ancient world' (MA Dissertation, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1995), cited in King (1998), p. 163.

<sup>151</sup> Lloyd (1979), 21.

Evidence for certain enduring medical folk traditions does assert itself, though. Whether these are to be considered 'folk traditions' or more specifically 'women's traditions', the medicaments involved are still invariably cooked, which implicates women regardless, by virtue of their kitchens. Ancient demands for feminine modesty make an overwhelmingly female birthing tradition likely. The fact that births were an occasion normally barred to men is supported by the literary evidence, and is consistent with the structuralist equation of females with polluting transformations and creative potential. Given the highly sexually segregated nature of much of Greek society,<sup>152</sup> distinct 'masculine' and 'feminine' knowledges may be assumed, with masculine knowledge being the more literate and socially valorised of the two. Feminine medical knowledge, real or imagined, was thereby rendered less accessible, and thus more mysterious and unsettling.<sup>153</sup> As with women's symbolic control of the transformative art of cookery, women's perceived knowledge of and control over their reproductive potential was particularly threatening to the notion of the *kyrios* as the ultimate holder of power in the context of the *oikos*. On a larger scale, women's control over these important creative processes was at odds with their 'necessary' subjugation in classical society, since in almost all other matters women functioned as perpetual minors in a male dominated society. The disruptive potential of these female-dominated areas of activity was thus

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<sup>152</sup> See especially David Cohen, 'Seclusion, separation, and the status of women in classical Athens' in Ian McAuslan and Peter Walcot (eds.), *Women in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996), 134-45.

<sup>153</sup> The role of the Athenian democratic ethos in shaping interpretations of such inaccessible or exclusive knowledges will be explored in chapter six below, pp. 198ff.

an unknown, feared quantity. This threat is reflected in the literary and mythological evidence by the assimilation of images of midwives with those of ignorant and superstitious, yet cunning and intricately skilled users of magic.

## Chapter Four

### Medeia: barbarian sorceress and divinity

Euripides' *Medeia* is a complex and compelling work, which has engaged critics since it was first performed in 431 B.C.E. Its place in the current discussion of magic is itself a matter of contention, as modern critics are divided as to whether or not *Medeia* is presented as a sorceress in classical terms in this most enduring Euripidean play. Thus it is that I shall begin with a review of the recent treatments of the subject. Recent developments in ways of conceiving of ancient magic naturally play a critical role in the course of such debates. Like the *Trachiniai*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, this play lends itself to feminist and structuralist modes of analysis. Impossible as it is to distil the *Medeia* down to a single essence or theme, we may say at least that its action centres upon an explosion of tensions within the marriage of *Medeia* and Jason in one strand of their myth. It explores and is constrained by the dichotomising tendencies of the Greeks' dominant worldview regarding the sexes and ways of relating to others.

Denys Page, in his important and definitive 1938 edition of the play, can comfortably identify *Medeia* as "a barbarian sorceress"<sup>1</sup> and "a witch"<sup>2</sup> and rationalise the course and outcome of the tragedy with reference to these concepts. Towards his interpretation of a magically expert *Medeia*

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<sup>1</sup> Euripides, *Medea*, edited with introduction and commentary by Denys L. Page (Oxford, 1938), p. xiv.



Page cites the heroine's foreign origins, her familial descent from "the most notorious of all witches, Circe and Hekate", her ready access to strange poisons and the winged chariot, and indeed the whole story of the Golden Fleece.<sup>3</sup> The explicit linking of Medeia with Hekate, it should be pointed out, may not have occurred before Dionysios Skytobrachion in the third century.<sup>4</sup> Contemporaries and near-contemporaries of Page such as Grube, Elliot, Lucas and Conacher have tended to follow his reading, usually in no more than passing remarks.<sup>5</sup> More recent works on the meaning of the play and the character of Medeia, and on the nature of ancient magic itself have permitted rather more subtle analyses of Euripides' heroine. Led by B. M. W. Knox's 1977 publication,<sup>6</sup> such assessments have tended to question the assumptions and interpretations of Page listed above.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. xix-xxi.

<sup>4</sup> It was probably Dionysius Skytobrachion, writing around the time of Apollonios Rhodios in the third century, who first made Medeia the daughter of Hekate and sister of Kirke: Fritz Graf, 'Medea, the enchantress from afar', in James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston (eds.), *Medea: essays on Medea in myth, literature, philosophy, and art* (Princeton, 1997b), 21-43, esp. 25.

<sup>5</sup> G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London, 1941), pp. 152-4; Alan Elliot, in his edition of Euripides, *Medea* (London, 1969), p. 102 and in note to 395-7; D. W. Lucas, *The Greek Tragic Poets*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London, 1959), p. 199; D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama: myth, theme and structure* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 185-6, 188-9. See also Kenneth J. Reckford, 'Medea's first exit', *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 330-1, 346; and more recently S. P. Mills, 'The sorrows of Medea', *CP* 75 (1980), 291-3; Margaret Visser, 'Medea: daughter, sister, wife and mother. Natal family versus conjugal family in Greek and Roman myths about women' in Martin Cropp, Elaine Fantham, S. E. Scully (eds.), *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: essays presented to D. J. Conacher* (Calgary, 1986), 158-9.

<sup>6</sup> B. M. W. Knox, 'The Medea of Euripides', *YCS* 25 (1977), 193-225. Another to refute Medeia's magic altogether in Euripides' play is Jennifer March, 'Euripides the misogynist?' in Anton Powell (ed.), *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (London and New York, 1990), 32-75, esp. 38.

<sup>7</sup> See n. 3 above.

Against Page's assertion that Medeia's invocation of Hekate is suggestive of the magical associations of these two female figures,<sup>8</sup> Knox argues that Hekate is an ambiguous deity with a far broader sphere of influence than magic alone.<sup>9</sup> This is certainly true, as shown previously in my chapter two above, although Knox's assertion that the context at lines 395 and following do not warrant such a reading is more problematic. For as Knox himself observes, the audience is made aware by the nurse's introductory words<sup>10</sup> that Medeia is a "brooding menace", as she laments loudly within the house.<sup>11</sup> Having emerged from the house and persuaded Kreon to allow her to stay in Korinth for one more day, Medeia declares to the women of the chorus that she is plotting to destroy her enemies. At 384-5 she resolves to do so by means of *pharmaka*, the art in which she professes to be 'most wise' (ἄλλοτρεπέστατον ἔργον ἔσθ' ἡμεῖς, ἡμεῖς δὲ φάρμακα). Since the invocation of Hekate occurs just twelve lines after this,<sup>12</sup> it would seem reasonable to infer that she is being called upon in one of her more dangerous guises,<sup>13</sup> despite Knox's arguments to the contrary.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Page (1938) on lines 364, 397; also Grube (1941), p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> Knox (1977), 204.

<sup>10</sup> The nurse laments that Medeia and Jason ever met: 1-11; the nurse fears that Medeia will hatch a deadly scheme against her own children, herself or the royal family of Korinth: 36-45.

<sup>11</sup> Knox (1977), 196.

<sup>12</sup> Eur., *Med.* 395-8, esp. 397.

<sup>13</sup> Hekate's spheres of influence included, by the classical period, dreams, crossroads and the chthonic beings believed to congregate there, thresholds and magical spells: see my chapter two above, p. 3. The goddess was particularly associated with women on account of her further role as *kourotrophos*: see chapter two, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Graf concurs that Knox overstates his case that Euripides does not present Medeia as a sorceress: Graf (1997b), 29, n. 24.

Throughout the play Euripides reiterates that Medeia is the granddaughter of Helios, the Sun.<sup>15</sup> This is consistent with the genealogy given for her by Hesiod in his *Theogony*, who adds that Kirke is sister to Medeia's father.<sup>16</sup> Considering that Euripides maintains for his Medeia the ancestry that Hesiod had ascribed to her, mention of the goddess Hekate would appear to have further significance, linking Medeia as much with magical *pharmaka* as with divinity.

Medeia is never referred to by other characters in this play as ἰατρομαντις, ἰατρομαντιστὴς or ἰατρομαντιστὴς - a sorceress, and so we are left to consider whether she is otherwise portrayed in a manner that would suggest such an interpretation to the original audience. We have, for instance, repeated references to Medeia's cleverness or wisdom (σοφία). This σοφία is stressed with reference to her aptitude for *pharmaka*, plotting, and equally to her ability to comprehend oracles and other worldly conundrums. By the mid to late fifth century the term σοφία had begun to develop new and ambivalent subtleties of meaning, particularly at Athens, as the sophistic schools of rhetoric and learning grew prominent. The sophists enjoyed notoriety for encouraging their pupils to be wise or clever (σοφία) enough to argue either side of an argument, rejecting the absolute moral value of either argument as subjective.<sup>17</sup> This new ambivalence is perhaps detectable in the repeated

<sup>15</sup> *Med.* 406, 746, 752, 954-5, 1251-55, 1321-2.

<sup>16</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 957 ff.

<sup>17</sup> The amorality or otherwise of the sophists' 'double argument' style of rhetorical training received considerable attention in the philosophical writers: Plato, *Theaet.* 116d ff, 167 ff, *Gorg.* 457a-c, 483d-e, *Phaedr.* 266d; Xen., *On Hunting* 13, as in the works of

attribution of  $\diamond\Box\lambda\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$  and synonymous terms to Medeia, by her friends and enemies alike.<sup>18</sup> Jason admonishes Medeia, arguing that because of him all Greeks know that she is clever ( $\diamond\Box\lambda\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$ ),<sup>19</sup> and similarly credits her with a subtle mind ( $\blacksquare\Box\blacklozenge\Upsilon\Upsilon \bullet\mathfrak{M}\Box\blacklozenge\Box\Upsilon\Upsilon$ ).<sup>20</sup> Kreon openly fears Medeia, which he justifies to her thus:

‘You are wise and adept in many evil skills...’<sup>21</sup>

The king's use of the words  $\diamond\Box\lambda\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon\Upsilon$  and  $\&\mathfrak{E}\&\diamond\blacksquare$  in combination is suggestive of magic,<sup>22</sup> and Medeia's own explicit assessment of where women's wisdom lies further reinforces such a reading. At the end of the speech to the chorus (364-409)<sup>23</sup> in which she determines to inflict deadly *pharmaka* upon her enemies, Medeia issues the following statement, making (uncomfortable) faintly ironic use of traditional invective against women, invective she elsewhere challenges.<sup>24</sup>

‘And also we are women, who are in noble deeds most unskilled,

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Euripides and Thukydides: see Jacqueline de Romilly, *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens*, transl. Janet Lloyd (Oxford, 1988), esp. pp. 47-52.

<sup>18</sup> On Euripides' allusion to the debates surrounding sophistic wisdom in the *Medeia*, see de Romilly (1988), pp. 47-52.

<sup>19</sup> *Med.* 539-40.

<sup>20</sup> 529. Jason dampens this compliment by noting that Eros forced her will regardless of her cleverness: 529-31.

<sup>21</sup> 285.

<sup>22</sup> Grube and Graf both interpret Kreon's words to mean this: Grube (1941), p. 152, Graf in Clauss and Johnston (1997b), 30.

<sup>23</sup> discussed above at p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> At 230-51 Medeia defends (Greek) women, and laments their lot in marriage; at 410-30 the chorus adds its own defense of women. In both passages, the content of traditional invective against women is reversed: see below, pp. 21 ff; cf. Laura McClure, "The worst husband": discourses of praise and blame in Euripides' *Medea*, *CP* 94, 4 (1999), 373-94.

but in the planning of all evils most clever (♦□↗♦❖♦◆◊◆◊)'.<sup>25</sup>

In the presence of Kreon, though, Medeia had made a show of lamenting that her entirely noble intellect had drawn undue suspicions and ill will from those with lesser minds in the polis.<sup>26</sup> A less than suspicious Aigeus, on the other hand, is drawn to Medeia for the interpretation of an oracle, which "needs a wise mind

(♦□↗↗↗↗ ◊◊◊◊ ◆◊◊) ↗□◊ ■□❖◊)".<sup>27</sup> This respectful (or naïve) appreciation of Medeia's ♦□↗◊◆◊ with oracles may owe something to the wandering diviners and healers of the archaic period, who were one of the precursors to classical Greek images of sorcerers.<sup>28</sup> Aigeus lauds the very knowledge and medicinal wisdom that Medeia will use against her own family, thus highlighting the dangerous potential of secret knowledges, discussed in chapter three above.

Euripides' Medeia is a creature who eludes ready compartmentalisation within the scope of the play and its characters. Assessments of other earlier versions of the myths surrounding Medeia are thus particularly valuable for elucidating the playwright's own aims and innovations, and for other clues to the meanings of the work.

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<sup>25</sup> *Med.* 407-9.  
<sup>26</sup> 292-306.  
<sup>27</sup> 677.  
<sup>28</sup> For which see Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: near eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age*, transl. Margaret E. Pinder and Walter Burkert (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 41-87.

We know, from the *Odyssey*,<sup>29</sup> that the story of the Argonauts' journey to Medeia's father's kingdom was popular and well established by the time the epic assumed its written form. There are separate mythic episodes about Medeia which centre upon Kolchis, Iolkos, Korinth and Athens. Eumelos' epic, the *Korinthiaka*, dates to the mid-eighth century,<sup>30</sup> and is recognisable as a precursor to Euripides' tragedy.<sup>31</sup> In this tradition, though, the Korinthians summon Medeia to their city as the rightful heir to the throne,<sup>32</sup> which, as D. J. Conacher has pointed out, leaves little scope for the crime of passion envisioned by Euripides.<sup>33</sup>

The children died in as many as three different versions of this early form of the myth, although Medeia was apparently innocent of the act in each case. According to the scholiast to Pindar *Ol.* 13.74 Medeia concealed the children in the temple of Hera and sought to immortalise them with the goddess' help.<sup>34</sup> Hera destroyed the children instead, and Jason would not forgive Medeia for her role in the catastrophe. One alternative version has the Korinthians kill the children,<sup>35</sup> and yet another records that Kreon's kin were responsible for these murders, but spread rumours

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<sup>29</sup> Hom., *Od.* 12.70.

<sup>30</sup> or perhaps the seventh century: Graf (1997b), 34.

<sup>31</sup> Page, p. xxii. The fragments of other early works involving Medeia - the *Korinthiaka* of Naupaktos and the *Building of the Argo* and the *Journey of Jason to the Kolchians* of Epimenides - also date to at least the eighth century: Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Helios gives Korinth to Aietes. When his heir Bounos dies Medeia is called to be queen, with Jason as king: Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 13.74; Schol. Eur. *Med.* 9; Paus. II.3.10-11.

<sup>33</sup> Conacher (1967), p. 185.

<sup>34</sup> This part of the myth finds a parallel in Demeter's concealment and attempted immortalisation of Demophon in the *Hymn to Demeter*. This action does not make explicit that Medeia has knowledge of *pharmaka*, as it is only with Hera's help (which is not forthcoming: Schol. Pind. 13.74) that she seeks to perform this deed.

<sup>35</sup> Parmeniskos in Schol. Eur. *Med.* 264.

that Medeia was to blame instead.<sup>36</sup> This third version implicates Medeia in the prior murder of Kreon (and Glauke too if Page's analysis of the two poisoned garments is correct<sup>37</sup>).

Medeia's familial connection with the goddess Hekate and the Homeric *nymph* Kirke is established in Hesiod's *Theogony*, although her position in this catalogue suggests that she is considered to be an immortal heroine rather than a true goddess.<sup>38</sup> Euripides retains this descent from Helios for his Medeia.<sup>39</sup> In his *Pythian* 4 of 462 B.C.E. Pindar calls Medeia  $\square\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{♠}\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{❖}\square\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{⌘}\square\text{✂}$  just as Kirke is  $\square\square\bullet\blacklozenge\text{♠}\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{❖}\square\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{⌘}\square\text{✂}$  in the *Odyssey*.<sup>40</sup>

Medeia was the subject of numerous tragedies in the fifth century. Euripides' *Peliades* (and probably also Sophokles' *Rhizotomoi*) dealt with her murderous 'rejuvenation' of Pelias at Iolkos. Euripides and Sophokles each also produced an *Aigeus*, covering Medeia's attempted murder of Theseus at Athens, and Neophron wrote a tragedy parallel to Euripides' *Medeia*, on the infanticide at Korinth. There is considerable debate concerning the relative dates of production for Neophron's and Euripides' plays because of the striking similarities in characterisation and dramatic

<sup>36</sup> Kreophylos, paraphrased by Didymus: Page (1938), p. xxiv.

<sup>37</sup> Page (1938), p. xxvi.

<sup>38</sup> M. L. West in his commentary to Hesiod, *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), line 992. cf. Alc. 163, Pind., *Pyth.* 4.11.

<sup>39</sup> See n. 15 above.

<sup>40</sup> Hom., *Od.* 10.276. Kirke is also referred to as a  $\square\text{M}\square\text{❖}\text{✂}$  /  $\square\text{M}\textcircled{\text{O}}\text{❖}\text{✂}$ : 10. 136, 220, 571.

effects.<sup>41</sup> Such debates are of secondary importance here, given that we are primarily discussing the social and ideological frameworks that inform fifth century conceptions of the figure of Medeia. What is to be gleaned from this collection of fifth century fragmentary plays about Medeia is that they centre upon cunning ploys by her, repeatedly involving horrible murders of rivals or enemies, usually by feminine or magical means.<sup>42</sup>

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Although some prominent scholars locate her origins in folk-tales,<sup>43</sup> most tend to follow the argument that Medeia was originally a deity, at least in Korinth and Thessaly.<sup>44</sup> If so, the development of her myth in early and classical literature may perhaps be viewed as documentation for her displacement by the newer order of Olympian divinities. We have already mentioned Medeia's early presence in Korinth, as collated and composed in Eumelos' eighth century *Korinthiaka*.<sup>45</sup> Also dating to the eighth

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<sup>41</sup> Both plays treat Medeia with a degree of sympathy lacking from other tragic and earlier treatments; both have Medeia foretelling Jason's demise from 'on high'; both observe the tradition of utilising only two actors per scene: Ann N. Michelini, 'Neophron and Euripides' *Medea* 1056-80', *TAPhA* 119 (1989), 125; Page (1938), p. xxxi. On this debate more generally see Ann N. Michelini, 115-35; Page, xxxi; Dolores M. O'Higgins, 'Medea as muse: Pindar's *Pythian* 4', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 123; Deborah Boedeker, 'Becoming Medea: assimilation in Euripides', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 127.

<sup>42</sup> The slaying of her own children in Euripides' play is an exceptional, 'masculine' action, as Medeia elsewhere proceeds by trickery and cookery (the so-called rejuvenation of Pelias) and other *pharmaka* (the attempted poisoning of Theseus, the incendiary potion used on Kreon and the princess). It is remarkable that it is in the two 'most sympathetic' renderings of Medeia that she resorts to infanticide.

<sup>43</sup> D. J. Conacher finds the early figure of Medeia to be that of a "standard folk tale witch": Conacher (1967), p. 185. In light of recent advances and debates in the study of Greek magic, such statements are no longer self-explanatory or useful.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston, 'Medea and the cult of Hera Akraia', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 61; Nilsson (1906), 59; L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1896-1909), 401-4.

<sup>45</sup> p. 112 above, nn. 30 and 31.



century is a sanctuary of Hera Akraia and Medeia's children at Perachora, located just across the gulf from Korinth.<sup>46</sup>

The type of cult in evidence at this time is consistent with that prophesied by Medeia in Euripides' play, where she declares to Jason:

'...since I shall with my own hand bury them, bringing them into the sanctuary of Hera Akraia, so that no enemy may insult them by digging up their graves. And to this land of Sisyphos I shall issue a solemn festival and rites from this time forward to atone for this impious murder.'<sup>47</sup>

and other ancient authors similarly attest to the ongoing importance of such a cult.<sup>48</sup> Johnston argues that features of the cult suggest that Medeia was a local deity, displaced and replaced by Hera Akraia. In such situations it is common to find the pre-existing deity (who is frequently diminished to human or near-human status in the myth and cult) set at odds with the newer divinity in their particular sphere of influence.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> On this sanctuary and its relationship with Korinthian Medeia see Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 44-70.

<sup>47</sup> *Med.* 1378-83.

<sup>48</sup> Pausanias 2.3.6-8.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 62. See also Johnston (1999), pp. 218-48 for other examples of this pattern, eg. Hekate/Artemis in Asia Minor, Iphigeneia/Artemis at Brauron, or Tauris.

In the 'attempted immortalisation' strand of the Korinthian myth of Eumelos, Medeia seeks Hera's aid as a *kourotrophic* goddess - a deity of nurturing and motherhood.<sup>50</sup> Hera's *kourotrophic* role was widely recognised in archaic Greece, as evidenced by votive offerings and other artworks,<sup>51</sup> and votive offerings at the sanctuary of Hera Akraia indicate that it, too, particularly attracted women.<sup>52</sup> In the Korinthian myths it is Medeia herself rather than her children who remains the most consistent element, as she is forced out after a conflict concerning her children and Hera. This is in spite of the fact that the cult is one of adolescents' initiation and transitions.<sup>53</sup> Thus it appears to be Medeia's displacement that lies at the heart of the Korinthian tale. This displacement came to be a significant element in later myth.<sup>54</sup>

Euripides' *Medeia*, rich as it is with newer discourses on magic and foreignness, retains some traces of this divinity for its complex heroine. Her use of a chariot in the closing scene is, as Knox notes, iconographically more appropriate for a deity than a sorceress.<sup>55</sup> A

<sup>50</sup> As with other deities concerned with the birth and raising of children, such as Hekate and Artemis, it was recognised that Hera could just as easily withhold protection of her charges: see my chapter *Hekate*, p. 13 and Johnston (1999), p. 212; Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 53. Hera known to cause women to destroy their own children: Ino, Aedon, Lamia: Johnston (1997), 54.

<sup>51</sup> Hesychius, s.v. ἑκάτορ; T. Price, *Kourotrophos: cults and representations of the Greek nursing deities* (Leiden: 1978), *passim*; Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 52-5. Hera as *kourotrophos* in myth: Homer, *Il.* 24.59-60; Hesiod, *Theog.* 313-4, 327-8.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 51, 55.

<sup>53</sup> Medeia was also associated, through myth and ritual, with initiations at the Athenian Delphinion. This initiatrix role, argues Graf, is well-suited to her divine character: Graf (1997b), 39-41.

<sup>54</sup> See Gordon (1987), 59-95, esp. 80; also below, pp. 122-23.

<sup>55</sup> By sitting aloft on the *mechane*, a space usually occupied by divinities, prophesying Jason's fate and instituting a cult Medeia faithfully mirrors the role of a deity in the play: Knox (1977), 212; M. P. Cunningham, 'Medea ἑκάτορ', *CP* 49

Lucanian bell krater of ca. 400 depicts this Euripidean scene in a manner that aligns Medeia and the chariot with Helios - and divinity itself - by enclosing them in the sun's rays.<sup>56</sup> The device of the chariot, with its suggestions of divinity, finds a pre-Euripidean analogue in a representation of Medeia and the Peliades from a neck amphora predating 430 B.C.E. Medeia is represented here in Greek dress, but is rendered unique by her wearing of a *polos* - a type of hat associated with divinities and women connected with divinities.<sup>57</sup>

Medeia's early (and to a lesser extent, ongoing) identification with divinity is well established. Her identity as a sorceress in ancient terms is less so. Even Graf, who argues that Medeia has the character of a *pharmakeutria* (expert in herbal lore) from the archaic period (by way of her Hesiodic genealogical connection with Kirke) concedes that this is quite different from her powerful command of sorcery in the classical period (and beyond).<sup>58</sup> Chris Mackie has theorised that knowledge of drugs was originally ascribed to Jason and that this knowledge was passed to Medeia - a foreign woman - instead because it was increasingly viewed as a dangerous art, and thus inappropriate for a

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(1954); Boedeker (1997), 140; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Medea at a shifting distance: images and Euripidean tragedy', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 259.

<sup>56</sup> By depicting her in ornately foreign costume, the artist doubly distances his Medeia from the four Greek figures below: bell krater, Cleveland Museum of Art, in M. Schmidt, 'Medeia', *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (henceforth *LIMC*) 6 (Artemis: Zurich and Munich, 1992) no. 36, s.v. 'Medeia'.

<sup>57</sup> *ABV* 321.4, Add. 87; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 266. Sourvinou-Inwood finds that this work is earlier than 430.

<sup>58</sup> Graf (1997b), 31.

Greek hero.<sup>59</sup> Jason (whose own name means 'healer'<sup>60</sup>) was raised by the medically expert Cheiron, who famously taught Asklepios, another of his pupils, medicine beyond human knowledge. Mackie cites early visual material, most importantly a Korinthian column-krater of ca. 575 depicting Jason's healing of the blindness of Phineus, as evidence for an alternative tradition in which Jason did have special knowledge of herbal lore.<sup>61</sup> He further argues that the healing knowledge imparted to Cheiron's pupils, especially Asklepios, was a matter of unease in the ancient sources, being conceived as a "fundamental challenge to the order of the world".<sup>62</sup> This unease is indicated, Mackie suggests, by Asklepios' harsh punishment by Zeus for his transgressions in some accounts, and the careful silence on the matter of other sources.<sup>63</sup> Unease was doubtless attached to Asklepios' ability to raise the dead, although Mackie perhaps pushes the evidence too far to suggest that all such 'magical' healing is inappropriate to the heroes of Greek epic.<sup>64</sup> Further, Jason's subtle magical associations are never more than understated, and there is little to support the suggestion that Medeia's medicinal skills were newer or ever overshadowed by Jason's.

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<sup>59</sup> Chris J. Mackie, 'The earliest Jason. What's in a name?', *G&R* 48, 1 (2001), 14. Mackie does not enter the discussion as to how this change in attitudes towards *pharmaka* came about.

<sup>60</sup> On which see B. K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (Berlin and New York, 1988), p. 370; Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: tracks of biology in early religions* (Cambridge and London, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>61</sup> J. Neils, *LIMC*, vol. V no. 7 s.v. 'Iason'; Mackie (2001), 7, with image on p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Mackie, *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Mackie, *ibid.*, 1-2, 13-4; Asklepios' transgressions are condemned by Hesiod, frs. 50, 51, 53, 58 (M-W), and Pindar, *Pyth.* 3. In Homer, *Il.* 2.731, 4.194, 11.518 Asklepios is mentioned, but is presented, according to Mackie, as a good, entirely human doctor.

<sup>64</sup> The sons of Autolykos use incantations to heal Odysseus, drawing no negative judgments: Hom., *Od.* 19.455-8. If Jason relinquished his magical abilities at this stage it seems more likely that the *pharmakis* role was passed to Medeia in full, rather than that Jason should have no association with *pharmaka* at all.

That Medeia's divinity is largely suppressed in Euripides' play, and replaced by foreignness,<sup>65</sup> is consistent with structuralist theories and analyses of the Greek worldview. The prominence of dichotomising tendencies in Greek philosophical, and especially tragic literature, and positioning of women as 'other' in such dualisms has been discussed previously.<sup>66</sup> Suffice it to say, then, that Euripides' *Medeia* constitutes a most elaborate, explicit and subtle exploration of such structures. Through careful blurring and inversion of accepted categories, mapped as relationships between (or intersections of) Greek/barbarian, beast/mortal/divine and masculine/feminine,<sup>67</sup> Euripides unravels, challenges (and perhaps reaffirms) these models for relating to others. If initially Medeia was separated from humanity by virtue of her divinity, in Euripides' play she retains some of the qualities of a goddess, but they are understood as pertaining more importantly to her signifying status as a foreigner. Such modern efforts to distil Medeia into primary categories are complicated by the fact that Euripides has maintained for his heroine a distinctly liminal, or more precisely shifting, status.

Having early moved from the status of divinity to that of humanity, Medeia at some point also becomes both non-Greek and a powerful sorceress,

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<sup>65</sup> Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the traffic in women* (Ithaca and London, 1993), p. 136.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter one, pp. 24-27.

<sup>67</sup> These three groups of concepts are identified by Rabinowitz (1993), p. 126; Page duBois, *Centaur and Amazons: women and the pre-history of the great chain of being* (Michigan, 1982), 4 ff. To these may be added, more generally, *polis/oikos*, as espoused by Margaret Williamson, 'A woman's place in Euripides' *Medea*' in Anton

more or less simultaneously. This close association between magic and foreignness - especially where it is constructed as the 'barbarian other' - is crucial to the understanding of Euripides' play. Setting aside for the moment the knowledge that the earliest Medeia in Corinth was Greek, we shall turn to the role of her foreignness in Euripides' play. Establishing this important theme early in the play, Jason boasts to Medeia that he has saved her from ignominious barbarian origins to enjoy a Greek way of life:

'Firstly, you live on Greek land, instead of in a barbarian place, and you know both justice and the rule of law, and (need) give no favour to force. All Greeks have learned that you are clever, and you have gained a reputation.'<sup>68</sup>

In the early scenes of the play one is almost convinced that Medeia has become Greek. Indeed, Knox and others have concluded that Medeia must have worn Greek costume in the early scenes of the play for her behaviour and interactions to have been believable.<sup>69</sup> In her early meek comportment in public Medeia's behaviour accords well with the wifely ideals repeatedly espoused by writers of the elite classes.<sup>70</sup> She clearly enjoys a great deal of sympathy and fellow feeling with the wives of

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Powell (ed.), *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (New York, 1990), 16-31 and George B. Walsh, 'Public and private in three plays of Euripides', *CP* 74 (1979), 294-309.

<sup>68</sup> *Med.* 536-40.

<sup>69</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 291; B. M. W. Knox, 'The *Medea* of Euripides', in E. Segal (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1983), 272-93, esp. 287.

<sup>70</sup> Medeia leaves the *oikos* apologetically: *Med.* 214-5. Her behaviour finds support in Xen. *Oec.* 7-10; Thuk. 2.45; Eur. *Troj. Wom.* 642-51. See also chapter two, pp. 57-60.

Korinthian citizens as she grapples with marital problems which are entirely familiar to them.<sup>71</sup>

As the play progresses though, the audience is made distinctly aware of Medeia's barbarian 'otherness', by repeated, if subdued and undeveloped allusions to her history. The heroine has come to Korinth from beyond the limits of the known world, past the Symplegades.<sup>72</sup> In this detail we may align her with the immortal Kirke, who in the *Odyssey* similarly occupies a distant, liminal part of the world.<sup>73</sup> In Euripides' play some emphasis is placed upon the extremity of Medeia's physical displacement.<sup>74</sup> This displacement, however, is not initially permitted to impact meaningfully upon Medeia's interactions with others.

It is only in this final scene, with a devastated Jason confronting Medeia aloft in the chariot with her slain children that the switch from Greek to oriental costume occurs, according to Sourvinou-Inwood.<sup>75</sup> She notes that images which date to just after 431, and which evoke the Euripidean tragedy depict Medeia as oriental when the chariot of Helios is also present.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, images known to be earlier than 431,<sup>77</sup> along with

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<sup>71</sup> *Med.* 214-66, 576-8. The chorus continues to embrace Medeia's cause even (or especially) when she is plotting to destroy her rivals in marriage with deadly *pharmaka*: see below, n. 106.

<sup>72</sup> *Med.* 1-2, 1263. For the Syplegades as the boundary to the Otherworld, see Mills (1980), 292; Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford, 1922), p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> Homer, *Od.* 10.129-2. cf. Marinatos (1995), 133.

<sup>74</sup> *Med.* 1-2, 210-12, 431-3, 1262-4.

<sup>75</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 291.

<sup>76</sup> Most striking is the bell krater of ca. 400 discussed above at pp. 116-17 and n. 56. Another is a Lucanian hydria of ca. 400, Louvre CA 2193, pictured in A. D. Trendall and T. B. L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (London, 1971), III.3.35.

<sup>77</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 266.

those that do not evoke Euripides' play<sup>78</sup> tend to depict Medeia in Greek dress. Given that images which appear to be based on this play but depict the murder of children - which does not occur onstage - adopt varying degrees of Greekness and orientalism,<sup>79</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood is led to consider whether this was the point during the play at which a change of costume was introduced.<sup>80</sup> Early in the play, Medeia's barbarian heritage is repeatedly presented as something that has been left behind in favour of Greekness.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, oriental dress would most likely detract from one's early impression that Medeia is accepted by much of the Greek community.<sup>82</sup> Jason's exclamation at the beginning of the chariot scene, that:

'No Greek woman would have dared to do this (ie. kill her children)'<sup>83</sup>

marks a logical point, dramatically, for Medeia to be distanced - culturally, ethnically and geographically - by the introduction of oriental costume.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> An Apulian amphora depicting the chariot scene with Medeia in Greek dress deviates from the Euripidean version by having the chariot at ground level and by indicating the influence of Lyssa and Selene on a humanised heroine: Schmidt (1992), no. 37. It is thus excluded from Sourvinou-Inwood's study.

<sup>79</sup> Apulian volute krater Munich 3296 = Schmidt (1992), no. 29; Campanian neck amphora Cabinet des Medailles 876 = Schmidt, *ibid.*, no. 30; Campanian neck amphora Louvre K 300 = Schmidt, *ibid.*, no. 31.

<sup>80</sup> She rightly notes that while Euripides is believed to have inspired visual artists to represent Medeia in oriental costume thereafter, a broader trend of the depiction of literal and metaphorical orientalism was beginning to take hold in the later fifth century.

<sup>81</sup> *Med.* 256, 536-40.

<sup>82</sup> The chorus clearly accept Medeia as such: see nn. 70 and 71 above. Kreon relents to Medeia's demands only when she appeals to him as a suppliant and a fellow parent - that is, by values which stress their common humanity (or 'Greekness', according to more xenophobic sources): *Med.* 336-51. Aigeus' bearing towards Medeia certainly indicates that he embraces her as a member of the community: 663 ff.

<sup>83</sup> *Med.* 1339-40.



In contrast to his earlier boast of having Hellenised Medeia, the motif of taking her from a barbarian environment is now used to underscore that she has *a/ways* been a barbarian.<sup>85</sup>

Medeia's barbarian status is thus crystallised by Jason's response to her infanticide<sup>86</sup> in combination with the tangible fact of Medeia's costume. That Medeia should be depicted orientally of course has a more meaningful function than merely to confirm Jason's opinion of her as a savage foreigner.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Euripides destabilises the very dichotomies that make her action comprehensible to Jason. Medeia is both a fully enculturated Greek wife and a savage foreign woman with divine and magical associations. This technique of "shifting distances" has important repercussions for the relationship between ordinary Greek women or wives and magic, as will be explored below.

Edith Hall has argued that the conception of barbarians (as opposed to foreigners) as the antithesis of the qualities upheld by Greeks was

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<sup>84</sup> Medeia's elevation on the *mechane* here simultaneously spatially isolates Medeia from normal humanity, aligning her with divinity rather than foreignness. See pp. 116-17 and nn. 56 and 57 above. In the second half of the play, even as Medeia's more than human nature becomes apparent, she is simultaneously aligned with less than human creatures, by the use of metaphor: see n. 93 below. The nurse had foreshadowed the emergence of these inhuman and divine aspects of Medeia in her prologue, likening her mistress to a rock or a wave (28-9), an angry bull (92-3), a lioness (187-9), and lightning (94, 106-8). The chorus eventually agree that Medeia is rocklike (1279-80), as Jason eventually concedes that she is a lioness (1342).

<sup>85</sup> *Med.* 536-40 (see n. 66 above), 1330-31.

<sup>86</sup> The chorus similarly reject Medeia's intended infanticide, although nowhere do they invoke her foreignness in an effort to comprehend the heinous act, preferring to focus upon her experience (and to some extent perversion) of womanhood, wifeness and motherhood: *Med.* 811-13 ff.

<sup>87</sup> For as Reckford observes, it is Jason alone who views Medeia as a barbarian: Kenneth J. Reckford, 'Medea's first exit', *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 329-59, esp. 356. See also the previous note.

primarily a fifth century innovation.<sup>88</sup> The wealth of discussion and comparison on this subject in tragedy<sup>89</sup> constituted an exercise in self-definition, which had not been deemed necessary before the rise of Persia as a formidable neighbour and threat in the last half of the sixth century. The re-conceptualisation of the *polis* by the imperialist democracy of Athens during the later fifth century is also cited as an influential factor.<sup>90</sup>

Oriental dress appears in art and drama not simply as a literal signifier of eastern origins, but also as an indication of metaphorical (and inevitably distasteful) orientalism.<sup>91</sup> The stereotype capitalised upon the emerging idea that foreigners were variously emotional, cruel, tyrannical or subservient, cowardly, and stupid or naive.<sup>92</sup> Other disagreeable traits could equally be attributed to lack of Greekness, as the context required. Thus even Greek figures such as Aigisthos (in the *Oresteia*) and Kreon (in the *Antigone*) could be depicted as somewhat oriental on vase paintings, thereby communicating the luxury, effeminacy and

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<sup>88</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet had earlier suggested that barbarians were largely a fifth century notion: Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: forms of thought and forms of society in the Greek world*, transl. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore and London, 1983), pp. 3-4.

<sup>89</sup> Of the almost three hundred plays from the fifth century of which something is known, almost half included barbarian characters or had a non-Greek setting: H. H. Bacon, *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* (New Haven: 1961), pp. 7-9 and n. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self-definition through tragedy* (Oxford, 1989), *passim*, but see esp. pp. 1-17. Cartledge follows Hall's understanding of barbarians as largely a fifth century ideological construct: Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: a portrait of self and others* (Oxford, 1993), esp. pp. 38-41.

<sup>91</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood notes that 'good' barbarian characters, such as Andromeda come to be depicted in Greek costume, or with limited visual concessions to her Trojan origin, at the point when Medea begins to be depicted orientally: Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 282, 286-7.

<sup>92</sup> Page (1938), p. xviii; Hall (1989), p. 17.

transgression of the one, and the tyrannical kingship of the other.<sup>93</sup>

Medeia, a 'real' barbarian, rejects the proper (Greek) mode of wifely conduct, thus aligning herself with the radical inversion of gender roles supposed to exist among the Amazons and other barbarian peoples.<sup>94</sup>

The introduction of barbarian costume in the aftermath of Medeia's final outrage immediately crystallises all of the scattered references to her foreignness, which had not been permitted to colour all other characters' impressions of the woman.

The idea - both ancient and modern - that the magic known in Greece was a foreign, specifically eastern practice, introduced by outsiders, has been noted previously.<sup>95</sup> As early as Hesiod Medeia is explicitly associated with the Median people who later become synonymous with Persians, in Greek thought. That her son is named Medeios (or Medos) and included in this part of Hesiod's catalogue is taken by M. L. West to indicate he was presented as an archetypal and eponymous Mede as early as the mid-sixth century.<sup>96</sup> Medeia herself was closely aligned with the Medes (who were synonymous with Persians for the Greeks) according to Herodotos, who records that the Medes changed their name

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<sup>93</sup> Aegisthos: Apulian bell krater, New York Fleischman collection F 93, see O. Taplin, *Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Drama Through Vase-paintings* (New York, 1993), pp. 55-63; Kreon: Lucanian nestoris, London British Museum F 175, see Taplin (1993), p. 119, no. 21.116; Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 284; Hall (1991), pp. 202-6.

<sup>94</sup> Role reversal in Egypt: Hdt. 2.35; Soph., *OC*. 337-45; Amazons: duBois (1982); Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The dynamics of misogyny: myth and mythmaking in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*', in Zeitlin (1996c), pp. 87-119, esp. pp. 89-94.

<sup>95</sup> See my chapter one above, and chapter seven below.

<sup>96</sup> Hesiod, *Theog.* 1001; M. L. West, commentary to *Theogony* line 1001.

from Arians after Medeia fled to their country from Athens.<sup>97</sup> The appearance of Medeia in oriental costume is thus equally germane to her foreignness as her expertise in magic, both of which are only subtly felt in the early stages of the play.

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Deeds which Jason interprets in terms of Greek and Barbarian mores, or else those of one who is less than human<sup>98</sup> are discussed by the female chorus as they relate to Medeia's experience as a Greek woman, wife and mother. The heroine thus occupies an ambivalent position *vis a vis* Greek ideas about belonging. To the male citizen Medeia is a cultural outsider, but to citizen wives - themselves a marginalised group - she is embraced as a peer. Underscoring the gendered basis of their support is that these women only challenge her when she rejects maternal instinct in favour of an heroic masculine concern for honour at any cost - in this instance by killing her own children.<sup>99</sup> While Jason rails against his wife's infanticide as the work of a barbarian, a lioness, a creature more savage

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<sup>97</sup> Hdt. 7.62. For the idea of Medeia as symbolic of Persia in her conflict with Theseus (here symbolic of Hellas) in the Athenian episode of her myth see Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 277 (and like Persia consorts with the enemy: 278).

<sup>98</sup> See n. 103 below.

<sup>99</sup> Medeia's language closely mimics that of heroic epic at 482, following Achilles' language at Hom., *Il.* 18.102. Her famous speech at 1021-80 captures the tensions inherent in her paradoxical outlook. Here, as with her shifting status as a barbarian, Medeia confounds accepted categories. On her feminine/masculine concerns see E. B. Bongie, 'Heroic elements in the *Medea* of Euripides', *TAPhA* 107 (1977), 27-56; Helene P. Foley, 'Medea's divided self', *CA* 8, 1 (1989), 61-85; Michelini (1989), 126 ff; Knox (1983), 202.

than Skylla, and finally a polluted, child-murdering lioness,<sup>100</sup> the chorus are at pains to instead reiterate Medeia's status as a woman and a mother.<sup>101</sup> Deborah Boedeker argues that the chorus' repeated emphasis upon the word 'woman' after she discloses her planned infanticide is ironic, and is used to try to define Medeia as something other than she really is.<sup>102</sup>

Earlier in the play the chorus responded favourably to Medeia's plot to murder those who endangered her marriage, by use of *pharmaka*.<sup>103</sup> Compelled by Medeia's insistent appeals to their common plight as women, the chorus readily colludes with her in secretive plotting and poisoning - a group of themes which occur together most notably in Sophokles' *Trachiniai* and elsewhere in contemporary discussions about women.<sup>104</sup> The legitimacy of this call to common womanhood is questionable, given Medeia's demonstrated bestial, divine and masculine

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<sup>100</sup> Medeia as barbarian: 1330-31, 1339-40; lioness: 1342, 1407; more savage than Skylla: 1342; polluted, child-murdering lioness: 1393, 1406-7.

<sup>101</sup> Chorus refers to Medeia as woman: 816; most wretched of women: 818; unhappy mother of the children: 997-8; wretched and accursed woman: 1274. When the chorus seeks others with whom to compare Medeia they think of Ino, who was Greek, and of course a mortal.

<sup>102</sup> The chorus eventually refer to Medeia as an Erinys (1260) and like rock or iron (1279-80) as though they too have begun to see that 'woman' is not an adequate term for her: Boedeker (1997), 134.

<sup>103</sup> The chorus vows to keep secret Medeia's plans to avenge her husband's wrongs: 267-70; this support is gladly maintained even when the murders of Kreon, the princess and Jason are intended (374-5), and is only withdrawn when infanticide is at issue (792-3 ff).

<sup>104</sup> See my chapter five, pp. 156ff., also Soph., *Trach.* 596-7, 665, 668, 723-4; cf. Antiphon's prosecution of a woman who prescribed a poisonous *pharmakon* for her own husband and another woman's lover, deceptively claiming that it was a love potion instead. On women's penchant for scheming and deception as general themes for anti-feministic invective see Eur., *Hipp.* 480-1, *IT* 1032, *Andr.* 85; Zeitlin (1996b), pp. 341-76, esp. p. 361.

traits. However the rhetorical eloquence<sup>105</sup> with which she likens a distant stranger like herself to the position of all fifth century Greek women in marriage<sup>106</sup> is as revealing as it is persuasive, not least because of the negative juxtaposition of oriental costume and *oikos*-destroying behaviour in the final scene. Through Medea's speech to the chorus and their subsequent support for her, Greek citizens' wives are equated with foreignness and the potential for *oikos*-destroying behaviour. While the support of the chorus eventually falters, its earlier sentiments and role in the successful execution of Medea's plans are not forgotten.

The idea that women were a kind of foreigner - a barbarian even - to the conjugal *oikos*, complete with questions of loyalty and value, clearly had some currency in Greek thought. The identification of women with barbarians is clearly present in the work of Aristotle.<sup>107</sup> Ensuring a bride's loyalty to her new family was the symbolic function of the burning of the wedding cart axle on arrival at her husband's *oikos*, for instance.<sup>108</sup> A major *topos* of the literary genre of invective against women, or *psogos gunaikon*, gives voice to nervousness about the virtue of wives. The iambic poetry of Archilochos and Semonides constitutes an early

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<sup>105</sup> Medea here appropriates the traditionally masculine pursuit of publicly performed persuasive *logos*, confounding the very gender definition she is seeking to affirm. cf. Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: speech and gender in Athenian drama* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 8-15.

<sup>106</sup> In a single speech Medea identifies herself as a stranger, and thus socially vulnerable (222-4) and describes a bride's experience of her new *oikos* as similarly fraught with powerlessness and precarious social relations (238-47), and invokes their common womanhood (230-31, 259-66).

<sup>107</sup> Pythagorean table of opposites preserved in Arist., *Metaph.* A5 986a22-64, *Poetics* 1454a19-20, *Pol.* I 1254a16-19; see Vidal-Naquet (1983), pp. 2-7; Hall (1989), pp. 201-2.

<sup>108</sup> Plut., *Mor.* 271e.

exploration and elaboration on the theme.<sup>109</sup> The most prominent example of such invective, though, is Hesiod's treatise on Pandora - the first woman (and therefore the first and archetypal<sup>110</sup> wife) - sent by the Olympian deities to the Titan Prometheus as punishment for his theft of fire.<sup>111</sup> Here 'woman' is presented as an attractive but baneful artifice, and one who is crucial for the production of offspring, yet simultaneously an insatiable devourer of the provisions and wellbeing of man (and so also his *oikos*). That is to say, woman is an alien evil, which is nonetheless essential for the continuance of one's family.<sup>112</sup> Hesiod even goes so far as to say that even in a 'worthy' wife, her evils are a match for her benefits.<sup>113</sup>

The *topoi* of invective literature are put to several uses in the course of the play. Medeia deliberately inverts such ideas, to celebrate the virtue of women and equally to scorn the wickedness of Jason and all men on the subject of their conduct in marriage. In lamenting that women must buy a husband and only learn his character later, and that they must also endure the perils of childbirth, Medeia is directly answering to a discourse about the vices of wives found in Hesiod, as indeed in the words of

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<sup>109</sup> Archilochos, *Clogne epode* = fr. 196a 24-41; Douglas E. Gerber (ed.), *A Companion to the Greek Lyric Poets* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 66-7; Semonides in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Females of the Species: Semonides on women* (London, 1975). cf. Loraux (1993).

<sup>110</sup> It is a characteristic of *psogos gunaikon* literature that all women are denigrated for the misdeeds of a single woman: Laura McClure (1999), 377.

<sup>111</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 561 ff, *WD* 59 ff.

<sup>112</sup> Zeitlin (1996c), pp. 53-86; Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'The myth of Prometheus in Hesiod' in *idem, Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, transl. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1990b), 183-201.

<sup>113</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 608-10.

Euripides' *Hippolytos*.<sup>114</sup> By the act of engaging in blame discourses Medeia transgresses the custom (or ideal) whereby women avoid strong and abusive language.<sup>115</sup> The chorus soon adopts Medeia's stance, observing that the source of undue criticism of women is the male-authored poetic tradition.<sup>116</sup> However, in the interest of winning Jason's favour, the better to wreak her vengeance, Medeia willingly applies this invective to herself. Having chastised herself for her foolishness and excess of emotion, Medeia declares to Jason:

'Well, we women are what we are - I won't say evil.'<sup>117</sup>

Towards the end of the play the chorus begin to yield in earnest to the substance of such invective, conceding men's superior wisdom, and eventually lamenting:

'Oh womankind and marriage-bed full of suffering, how many evils you have already created for men!'<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Med.* 232-6, 248-51; Hes., *Theog.* 607-10; Eur., *Hipp.* 618-68. Euripides' interest in *psogos gunaikon* is elsewhere explored in his *Melanippe Desmotis*, fr. 499 N2; cf. Arist., *Thesm.* 786-99.

<sup>115</sup> Pl., *Rep.* 549c-e; Arist., *Pol.* 1269b20-25; Laura McClure (1999), 374-5. Evidence for violation of this ideal behaviour by Athenian women: Pl., *Rep.* 395d2-e2. Abusive language by female characters in tragedy and epic is rare, although prevalent in male speech.

<sup>116</sup> *Med.* 420-30.

<sup>117</sup> *Med.* 889-90.

<sup>118</sup> *Med.* 1081-9, 1290-91.



In her use of invective, ostensibly to champion the cause of women,<sup>119</sup> Euripides' *Medeia* once again proves transgressive and liminal. An exceptional woman, she nonetheless uses a traditionally male style of discourse to draw attention to genuine grievances of ordinary Greek women concerning the system of marital exchange which dominated their lives. The same 'bad' woman reveals herself as a justifiable target for all such invective, having destroyed her husband's *oikos* out of jealousy and emotional rage.

*Medeia* proves threatening because, consistent with the *psogos gunaikon* tradition, she employs deceptive or double language,<sup>120</sup> is emotional to excess,<sup>121</sup> and is dominated by sexual lust (or so her behaviour could be construed). In these idiosyncrasies she simply represents an extreme example of the dangerous potentialities latent in all women.<sup>122</sup>

Dangerous female sexuality and its magical associations are features of the *Medeia*. In her excessively eager pursuit of Jason, and concomitant

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<sup>119</sup> Given that *Medeia* champions the cause of women when she needs to gain the chorus' confidence, and reverses such arguments to win over Jason, ulterior motives are to be detected in her speech.

<sup>120</sup> Zeitlin and Vernant have observed that by her divinely wrought nature Pandora - an important Hesiodic contribution to the *psogos gunaikon* tradition - is duplicitous and ambiguous: Hes., *Theog.* 589, *WD* 83; Zeitlin (1995), 58-74; Vernant (1990b), 186. *Medeia* speaks with duplicity regarding the virtue of women: see previous note. Her abrupt shifts in speech pattern, from feminine lamentation (96-7, 111-14, 144-7, 160-7) to calm persuasive masculine *logos* (214-66) to plaintive supplication (324-47) which proves to be a calculated performance (368-9). Ann L. T. Bergren has demonstrated that skilful manipulation of truthful speech was considered the province of female divinities and prophets, and by extension all women: 'Language and the female in early Greek thought', *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 69-70.

<sup>121</sup> Excessive displays of emotion are attributable as much to women as to barbarians: *Med.* 928. The reforms of Solon limiting female lamentation at funerals are indicative of negative sentiments about such feminine excesses: McClure (1999), 45. Page, however, has associated such excess with barbarians alone: Page (1938), p. xix.

betrayal of her natal family, Medeia represents the dangers inherent in autonomous female desire.<sup>123</sup> Early, Medeia laments that unlike the chorus she has:

'...no mother, no brother, no kin...'<sup>124</sup>

The chorus seem to respond most inappropriately to this perverse statement which follows the received tradition that Medeia betrayed her father using her expertise in *pharmaka*, and also dismembered her own brother Apsyrtus for the sake of Jason's quest.<sup>125</sup> With Medeia out of his reach in the final scene, Jason rails against his former ally for her abominations against blood relations:

'(You were) a traitor to your father and the land which nurtured you. But the gods have *visited upon me* the avenging spirit meant for you. For you killed your brother at the hearth and embarked onto the fair-prowed Argo.'<sup>126</sup>

as though to absolve himself from his part in the alliance. His particular emphasis upon the scene of the slaying of Apsyrtus - the hearth - is

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<sup>122</sup> O'Higgins (1997), 122; Rabinowitz (1993), pp. 126, 139, 142.

<sup>123</sup> On the rendering of female desire as problematic see Rabinowitz (1993), pp. 140-1.

<sup>124</sup> *Med.* 257.

<sup>125</sup> Medeia's betrayal of her father Aietes: *Med.* 166-67, 483-85, 502-3, 506-8. The killing and dismemberment of Apsyrtus: *Eur.* 166-67, 1333-35; *Apol. Rhod., Arg.* 4.452-76; *Soph., fr.* 343 (Radt); *Kallimachos, fr.* 8 (Pf.); *Pherec. FGrHist* 32 f 3. *Soph., fr.* 546 (Radt) and Apollonios make Apsyrtus only a half-brother to Medeia, as though to soften her crime. The oldest sources, Pherecydes and Euripides, give Medeia an active role in the murder, rather than one of conspiracy: Jan N. Bremmer, 'Why did Medea kill her brother Apsyrtus?', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 100, 86.

significant, drawing attention to Medeia's penchant for destroying her own *oikoi*, both natal and conjugal.<sup>127</sup> Earlier in the play Medeia had retired to the 'inmost' hearth (○◆♠□❖♣), under Hekate's tutelage, intent on creating a *pharmakon* with which to destroy the royal *oikos*.<sup>128</sup> The murders of her two children, too, took place in the depths of the house, which could only be made visible by opening the gates to the house - that is to say, by penetrating the boundary of the *skene*.<sup>129</sup>

In both the initial betrayal of her kin while in Kolchis, and her later murders of Kreon, the princess, and her two sons, Medeia is compelled by the force of her lust for Jason, with no regard for proper customs of exchange. In effect, she rejects her primary cultural function as an exchangeable commodity. In its identification of women as the point of greatest vulnerability in the system of marital exchange,<sup>130</sup> the myth of Medeia is consistent with a well-established set of normative stories about marriage. Against positive myths - such as that of the Sabine women - in which natal loyalties are temperately balanced with new conjugal alliances, Medeia's myth highlights the perils of intemperately

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<sup>126</sup> 1332-35.

<sup>127</sup> Situating the murder at a hearth - a type of domestic altar - makes Medeia's act one of sacrilege in addition to kin-murder: see Jan N. Bremmer (1997), 85. cf. the slaying of Agamemnon by Aigistus and Klymnestra at the hearth, Homer, *Od.* 3.324.

<sup>128</sup> 395-97. That Medeia worships Hekate at her hearth rather than the traditional Hestia is perhaps indicative that the woman is a threat to her new *oikos*: Rabinowitz (1993), p. 139.

<sup>129</sup> 1312-13; on conceptions and gendering of such stage spaces see Ruth Padel, 'Making space speak' in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990), 336-65, esp. 343 ff; Zeitlin (1996b), pp. 341-76.

<sup>130</sup> On women as the point of both contact and greatest vulnerability in the alliance between her father's family and her husband's family see Visser (1986); Victoria Wohl, *Intimate Commerce: exchange, gender, and subjectivity in Greek tragedy* (Austin, 1998), *passim*, but esp. pp. xiii-xxxvii.

balancing these important loyalties. Nonetheless, a crisis accompanies both marriage myths.

The cultural abnormality of Medeia's sexual proactivity is signposted by the manner in which she ratifies her union with Jason. Unlike 'normal' Greek brides Medeia took an active masculine role in marriage, exchanging oaths with Jason, the partner of her own choosing.<sup>131</sup> The force behind Medeia's marriage to Jason, and her subsequent vengeance, is identified by Jason, the chorus and Medeia herself as lust, or *lechos*. This term, which literally means 'marriage couch' is rather ambiguous, encompassing as it does ideas of both sexual desire and the status attached to the marital union.<sup>132</sup> Jason defends his new marriage against Medeia's protests, challenging her:

'Did I plan badly? Not even you would say so, if lust did not vex you so.'<sup>133</sup>

and likening her unreasonable behaviour with that of all women when sexual relations are marred in some way:

'But you women have come to such a point that if all goes well in the bed you believe you have everything, but then

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<sup>131</sup> *Med.* 160-65, 488-95. The chorus and Medeia's own nurse have no experience of actively contracting a marriage, but nonetheless side with her against the breaching of oaths: nurse: 168-72; chorus: 205-12, 412-14.

<sup>132</sup> See my chapter five, pp. 152-53; also Rabinowitz (1993), p. 140.

<sup>133</sup> *Med.* 567-8.

again if something happens in bed you see your best and finest assets as most hateful.<sup>134</sup>

Jason here seems to be using *lechos* in its sense of sexual lust, although Medeia's wifely status is clearly part of the issue here.<sup>135</sup> In her deception of Jason, though, Medeia apparently yields to her husband's superior judgment and temperance on the subject of the new *lechos*, or alliance:

'So now I approve, and it seems that you are sensible and caring in the alliance for us, whereas I am the foolish one, I who should join you in your plans, help to accomplish them and stand by the bed and take pleasure in caring for your new wife.'<sup>136</sup>

before eventually conceding that *lechos* is indeed the reason for her extreme act of vengeance:

Jason: It was not my hand, I tell you, that killed them.

Medeia: No, but the offence of your brand new marriage.

Jason: And you thought it was right to kill them because of this?

Medeia: Do you believe this to be a small woe to women?<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> 569-73

<sup>135</sup> At 488-91 Medeia points out that the new marriage would have been understandable and reasonable if she and Jason had not already had children.

<sup>136</sup> 885-8. Medeia's feigning of anti-feministic sentiments in the subsequent lines thematically matches those of Jason at 573 ff.

This emphasis upon the disproportionate weight given by Medeia to matters of sex points to another familiar *topos of psogos gunaikon* - women's alleged hypersexuality. Hesiod makes reference to this theme, declaring that his archetypal woman would wither a man with her twin appetites for sex and food.<sup>138</sup> This idea continued to be influential in literary, philosophical and medical works throughout the classical period.<sup>139</sup> In the passage above, as at 569-73 we see the destructive behaviour of Medeia being related to women's conduct more generally, underscoring that the heroine's behaviour is considered to be exceptional only in its degree, not its character. In conjunction with her complaint at 244-7 that Greek women are forced by custom to limit their attention to a single man, Medeia here seems to be confirming that dangerous preoccupation with *lechos* would be systemic among (Greek) wives. Through Medeia's arguments Euripides may be seen to challenge the customs which curtailed Greek women's freedom in marriage. However, having his most eloquent spokesperson for women's freedom being at the same time a most unfathomable, sexualised feminine nightmare figure greatly undermines any support for Medeia's well-constructed arguments.

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<sup>137</sup> 1365-8.

<sup>138</sup> Hes., *WD* 704-6, fr. 275 (Merkelbach and West). Other pre-classical expressions of this idea: Sem., fr. 7.48-9, 53, 106-11 (West).

<sup>139</sup> Aesch., *Cho.* 594-601, fr. 243 (Nauck vol. 2); Soph., fr. 932 (Radt); Arist., *Lys.* 551-4, *Thes.* 478-501, *Ekk.* 468-70 615-20; see Christopher Brown, 'Ruined by lust: Anacreon, fr. 44 Gentili (432 *PMG*)', *CQ* 34, 1 (1984), 37-42, esp. 39 n. 18; K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 101-2; K. J. Dover, 'Classical Greek attitudes to sexual behaviour', *Arethusa* 6 (1973), 59-74, esp. 65; Lesley Dean-Jones, 'The politics of pleasure: female sexual appetite in the Hippocratic corpus', *Helios* 19 (1992), 72-91. cf. Arist., *Lys.* The suicidal tendencies of young virgins in Hipp., *Virg.* is attributed to pathological, unrecognised desire for intercourse and reproduction. Dean-Jones concludes that women's inferior ability to resist sexual urges was considered to be a form of passivity, itself a feminine role.

The audience is surely left instead with a sense of the deceptive, destructive potential of all such feministic debates.<sup>140</sup>

Medeia's own damning admission that she committed infanticide out of erotic (or dynastic)<sup>141</sup> jealousy<sup>142</sup> is countered by the role of the magical *iunx* wheel in the myth preceding the action of Euripides' drama. As early as Pindar Medeia is a helpless victim of the *iunx* wheel, after Aphrodite bequeaths knowledge of this magical technology to Jason.<sup>143</sup> Euripides too exploits the motif of the exotic woman who is expert in *pharmaka* yet equally a victim of divinely conferred magic. Medeia claims to have allied herself with Jason of her own free will, albeit with impaired judgment:

‘For I betrayed my father and home of my own accord and came with you to Iolkos near Pelion, with more passion than prudence...’<sup>144</sup>

Jason, on the other hand, emphasises the driving force of Aphrodite behind Medeia's decisions:

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<sup>140</sup> Rabinowitz, too, finds that this play raises the possibility that women feign helplessness and powerlessness to corroborate men's beliefs, while achieving feminine aims: Rabinowitz (1993), p. 142.

<sup>141</sup> Consider the interplay of erotic and dynastic concerns in Euripides' *Andromache*.

<sup>142</sup> Michelini considers Medeia's words here to constitute an admission of simple jealousy: Michelini (1989), 134.

<sup>143</sup> Pind., *Pyth.* 4.217-9; O'Higgins (1997), 121-2.

<sup>144</sup> *Med.* 483-5.

'(Since) you exaggerate your assistance too much, I consider  
Kypris alone of gods or mortals to be the saviour of my voyage.  
As for you,  
I'll say you have a subtle mind - but to divulge how Eros compelled  
you with unerring arrows to save me would leave me vulnerable to  
animosity.'<sup>145</sup>

This situation, in which a heroic figure is granted by a deity magical  
technology with which to counter the magic of another powerful being,  
finds an Homeric parallel in Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. Against the  
transformative and stupefying *pharmaka* of Kirke, Hermes provides  
Odysseus, the most cunning of heroes,<sup>146</sup> with a superior antidote in the  
form of a plant called *moly*.<sup>147</sup> From another perspective we may  
correlate Jason's outmanoeuvring of Medeia in her own area of expertise  
with Zeus' swallowing of his wife Metis.<sup>148</sup> Zeus appropriates all the guile  
and intelligence of this primordial deity by swallowing her whole. This act  
of turning Metis' own weapons against her proves to be judicious for  
Zeus, as it prevents her from producing a son who would overthrow his  
divine father.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> 526-31. That Jason has access here to magic - although a divine gift rather than his  
own creation - is perhaps a diminished relic of Jason's own former healing expertise.  
See pp. 117-18 above.

<sup>146</sup> On the relationships between cunning intelligence and magic, and magic and  
technology see my chapter three above.

<sup>147</sup> Hom., *Od.* 10.273-324. On this mythical plant see E. Steier, 'Moly', *RE* 14 (1933),  
columns 29-33; Jerry Stannard, 'The plant called moly', *Osiris* 14 (1962), 254-307;  
Scarborough (1991), 139.

<sup>148</sup> O'Higgins (1997), 108.



This myth of origins reveals an ongoing concern for the gender associations of cunning (which is an aspect of *metis*) and other kinds of intelligence. To prevent vanquishment Zeus adopts a feminine mode of agonistic engagement. Where women are triumphant over men in tragedy, in conflicts conceived as involving *metis* in its more pejorative sense<sup>150</sup> (with meanings involving treachery, disloyal tricks and deceitful lies),<sup>151</sup> they may be represented as somehow masculinised, with their male adversaries correspondingly emasculated. This type of gender inversion is clearly in evidence in Sophokles' *Trachiniai*. Deianeira and Herakles, initially presented as sharply dichotomised examples of feminine and masculine comportment respectively,<sup>152</sup> are drawn towards role reversal as Deianeira's magical deception unfolds. In the throes of agony after having come in contact with the *pharmakon* obtained by his wife Herakles admits to having been defeated by a woman, and to having 'become' a woman in his delirium.<sup>153</sup> Deianeira, for the destruction she

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<sup>149</sup> Aesch., *Prom.* 206-7, 213, 219, 440; Apollod. 1.2.1, 1.6.1, 1.6.3; Nonnos, *Dionys.* 1.481 ff; Hes., *Theog.* 471, 496; Detienne and Vernant (1978), esp. chs. 1 and 3.

<sup>150</sup> Loraux notes that language suggestive of feminine expertise and cunning is used of females where it most probably would not if the deed was performed by a male. The murder of Agamemnon by Klytemnestra with a (masculine) sword is framed in terms of *pharmaka* (Aesch., *Ag.* 1260-3), a woven net or web (1492), tangled robes (1580) and schemes (1611): Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, transl. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>151</sup> In its negative aspect *metis* encompasses treachery, disloyal tricks and deceitful lies: Detienne and Vernant (1978), 13. Consider the negative and feminine usage of *metis* in Aesch., *Choe.* 626.

<sup>152</sup> Malcolm Davies, introduction to Sophokles, *Trachiniae* (Oxford, 1991), p. xix; Foley (1981), 157-9; cf. Charles Segal, 'Sophocles' *Trachiniae*: myth, poetry, and heroic values', *YCS* 25 (1977), 99-158. See also my chapter five, p. 151.

<sup>153</sup> Herakles is aggrieved to admit that a woman has defeated him: Soph., *Trach.* 1062-3; cf. Hom., *Il.* 19.97 on Hera's deception of Zeus. Herakles, in his pain, behaves like and 'is' a woman: *Trach.* 1075.

has caused, kills herself in a remarkably masculine and sexual manner - by stabbing herself on the marriage bed.<sup>154</sup>

Medeia too presents a masculinised figure. Her pursuit of heroic honour, her skilful use of persuasive rhetoric and her egalitarian approach to male peers all help to assimilate her with the masculine gender.<sup>155</sup> While in her closeted, deceitful use(s) of *pharmaka* she is indubitably feminine, her final double infanticide once again calls that femininity into question. It has been pointed out by Margaret Visser that in myth (as opposed to historical reality<sup>156</sup>) female figures rarely kill their conjugal families - either husbands or children - whereas mythical males are rather more likely to exercise *Patria Potestas* - their power of life and death over their own children.<sup>157</sup> Unlike Jokasta, Deianeira or Eurydike, Medeia does not kill herself upon learning the destruction she has wrought for the Korinthian

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<sup>154</sup> *Trach.* 915-6. Elsewhere in myth *parthenoi* and women characteristically kill themselves by hanging, so much so that for a man suicide by hanging would be particularly 'womanly' and shameful for him: Johnston (1999); Loraux (1987), pp. 9, 14.

<sup>155</sup> Winkler compares Medeia's masculine bearing with that of Horace's much later literary sorceress Canidia: John J. Winkler, 'The constraints of desire: erotic magic spells' in *idem, The Constraints of Desire: the anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990c), p. 91.

<sup>156</sup> It should be stressed that it is inherited attitudes and beliefs, rather than historical facts, which are of greatest concern here. On historical data for infanticide by women in different periods and cultures see Lillian Corti, *The Myth of Medea and the Murder of Children* (London, 1998), p. 3. cf. The findings of Brandt F. Steele and Carl B. Pollock, 'A psychiatric study of parents who abuse infants and small children' in Ray E. Helfer and C. Henry Kempe (eds.), *The Battered Child* (Chicago, 1968), 89-133, esp. 89, that child-abusers and child-murderers represent "a random cross section of the general population."

<sup>157</sup> In myth, mothers succeed in killing their offspring whilst in Bacchic frenzy (Agave, Minyads and Proitids), in madness (Ino), in error (Themisto in Euripides' *Ino*), or attempt to kill their children due to error (Euripides' *Ion* and *Kresphontes*). Of fathers in myth, Kronos makes a deliberate attempt to kill his children; others do so via curses (Theseus and Oidipous), and others, like their female counterparts, succeed whilst enraged or mad (Herakles, Alkathous). Visser (1986), 157-8

royal family. Instead of choosing feminine self-destruction Medeia kills her own sons with proud heroism.<sup>158</sup>

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The connection between magical practices used by women against men and gender reversal has been a subject of investigation by Christopher Faraone.<sup>159</sup> He observes that male-targetting erotic magic, in particular, involves an 'unnatural' usurpation of male power. Hera's reason for using Aphrodite's *kestos* on Zeus, for example, was to prevent him from taking part on the divine level in the Trojan War, by distracting him and then putting him to sleep.<sup>160</sup>

Common, ancient human magical technology shares this potential for sexually arousing then incapacitating or 'unmanning' its male victims. The *PGM* collections include several examples of individual spells which can both attract (ⲉⲓⲃⲉⲛⲓⲙⲓⲗⲓⲛⲓ) and lay a person low (ⲙⲉⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛⲓⲙⲓⲗⲓⲛⲓ).<sup>161</sup> Faraone detects a parallel to such spells in the common lore about the capacity of certain individual substances to

<sup>158</sup> Rabinowitz considers whether the maleness of Medeia's children is significant to the gendered agenda of the tragedy: (1993), p. 146.

<sup>159</sup> See especially his 'Sex and power: male-targetting aphrodisiacs in the Greek magical tradition', *Helios* 19 (1992b), 92-103; and (1994a), 115-35.

<sup>160</sup> Hom., *Il.* 14.150-360. 14.158 makes clear that the seduction of Zeus with the aid of the *kestos* was not motivated by her love for him; Faraone (1992b), 92-3, 100.

<sup>161</sup> *PGM* IV.2075-8, IV.2441-57; similarly an engraved gemstone seeks on the obverse to attract a certain Achilles, son of Serapias to Dionysias, the daughter of Serapias, while on the reverse the aim is to either attract him or else lay him low: C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (1950), no. 156.

bring about both sexual arousal and either sleep, impotence or death.<sup>162</sup> Mandrake, for instance, could be added to wine as an aphrodisiac, or used as a narcotic. Plato highlights the dangerous potential of the substance to be used to disturb proper social hierarchies. In a fable about the 'ship of state', Plato describes mutineers drugging their captain with mandrake and seizing command of the ship. With the use of guile, then, a woman or an inferior may administer such substances to render their master passive, and therefore inferior and feminine. In his advice to young brides Plutarch seems to have such travesties of proper hierarchies in mind when he speaks of women who try to gain mastery over their husbands through pleasure, with the help of *pharmaka*. This idea of gender reversal and the upsetting of proper hierarchies in male-targeting love magic will be discussed further in my concluding remarks.

Female-targeting love spells frequently seek to attract and lay low their victims, and withhold their power of resistance in much the same way as the male-targeting spells. The *PGM* collections yield numerous versions of 'love' spells which invoke the torments of sleeplessness, restlessness and lust upon the named female beloved, until she brings and yields herself to the spell's issuer.<sup>163</sup> The intention of such spells is forcible constraint, as sadistic magical technology involving the piercing of wax

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<sup>162</sup> Mandrake: as an aphrodisiac (Theophr., *HP* 9.9.1), as a narcotic and also an aphrodisiac (Arist., *de Som.* 456b31), used by mutineers to overpower the captain of the ship of state in a political fable (Plato, *Rep.* 6.488c); the unnamed drug of Aristophilos, a Plataean drug-seller: an aphrodisiac, but can also cause temporary or permanent impotence (Theophr., *HP* 9.18.4-5). Faraone (1992b), *passim*; see also my chapter five below, p. 147.

'voodoo' dolls would suggest.<sup>164</sup> The aims of female-targetting spells appear to form an analogue to male-targetting spells, at least in the way that Plutarch conceives of them. In female-targetting spells, though, accepted gender and power hierarchies are not breached - women are inscribed as passive targets of masculine constraint - and so travesties of gender are not at issue.

Medeia's deployment of magical schemes is strongly connected, in Euripides' play, with the idea of the disruption of gender (and other) distinctions. Through her use of magic Medeia destroys her children, along with the *oikos* that a Greek woman would normally be expected to nurture. By this act, Medeia is effectively attempting to exert a level of influence over her surroundings to which she has no legitimate access. As a woman and a dispossessed foreign concubine, the heroine has limited lawful means of redress. Medeia's murderous, magical behaviour leads her to be constructed as 'other' to accepted modes of feminine comportment. Foreignness, divinity and masculinity are instead invoked as ways of understanding this perverse female figure. There is also some attempt to explain, if not actually justify, Medeia's behaviour with reference to the difficulties imposed upon women by the Greek system of marital exchange. The plight of the heroine, and indeed of all Greek

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<sup>163</sup> PGM IV 1496-1595, 1716-1870, 2006-2125, 2441-2621, 2708-84, 2891-3942; VII 593-619, 862-918; XII 376-96; XIV 1070-77; XXXVI 134-160; LXI 1-38, 112-117; LXII 1-24; John J. Winkler (1990c), p. 86.

<sup>164</sup> Winkler suggests we look through much of the 'violent Mediterranean passion' expressed in the female-targetting spells to see instead an attempt to transfer the real anguish of unrequited love by males onto their female subjects, and the intended torments to be born of male self-centredness not malice: Winkler (1990c), 88 ff.

women in marriage is explicitly discussed throughout this play.

Remaining carefully ambiguous in its judgments, though, the play still suggests a relationship between Medeia's magical schemes and the destructive potential of all women in marriage.

## Chapter Five

### Deianeira's philtre: Conjugal tensions in the *Trachiniae*

Sophokles' *Trachiniae* has been subject to disparaging analyses in the millennia between its ancient popularity and its twentieth century rehabilitation. Criticisms have hinged largely upon its disjointed dichotomous structure, and the unsettling characters and actions of both Herakles and Deianeira.<sup>1</sup> As Easterling observes, the bulk of the remaining difficulties with the play hinge upon the religious and cultural assumptions that underpin the action of the play, rather than technical issues of structure.<sup>2</sup> Given that the twin crises which drive the action of the play are Herakles' return to his marital *oikos* with a new 'bride'<sup>3</sup> as a spoil of war, and Deianeira's consequent decision to employ a 'love charm',<sup>4</sup> such perplexity and the diversity of interpretations of the play are unsurprising.

The first major point of contention among modern interpreters of the play is Deianeira's understanding, or lack thereof, of the nature of the love charm which Nessos the centaur gave her as he died by Herakles' poisoned arrow. While most scholars agree that Deianeira employed the

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<sup>1</sup> On the history of scholarship on the *Trachiniae* see Malcolm Davies' introduction in *Sophocles. Trachiniae* (Oxford, 1991), pp. xvii-xxi; P. E. Easterling's introduction in *Sophocles. Trachiniae* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 1; Charles Segal, 'Sophocles' *Trachiniae*: myth, poetry, and heroic values', *YCS* 25 (1977), 101-3.

<sup>2</sup> Easterling (1982), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The legal marital status of the young woman, Iole, is left ambiguous throughout the play: 428, 460, 545-6, 550-1, 1224; cf. Easterling's remarks on these lines.

<sup>4</sup> In reality, of course, the action of this charm lies at the opposite end of the  $\text{♁} \text{♂} \text{♆} \text{♃} \text{♄} \text{♅} \text{♁} \text{♂} \text{♆} \text{♃} \text{♄} \text{♅}$  spectrum discussed in my introduction above: it is a poison, not a potion.

so-called charm in naïve innocence, F. Errandonea argues that Sophokles' Deianeira killed her husband intentionally, while Christopher A. Faraone suggests that her only error was to overdose Herakles with an *eros*-inducing  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  which she knew to be potentially lethal. An assessment of treatments of this part of the myth in other texts may better illuminate the source of this impasse.

While the side of the story concerning Herakles' victory against the Oichalians and subsequent seizing of Iole was apparently inspired by the epic poem *Oichalias Halosis*,<sup>5</sup> Deianeira does not seem to have played a role in this part of the myth until a later date. The earliest extant reference to Deianeira's killing of her husband with a poisoned robe is in Hesiod's *Catalogue of women*.<sup>6</sup> As in the *Trachiniai*, the deed in Hesiod's version is carried out through the herald Lichas. The source of the  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  is not given in Hesiod's account, nor is detail provided regarding the reasons or intentions behind Deianeira's act.<sup>7</sup> Herakles' battle with the lascivious Nessos appears as early as Archilochus<sup>8</sup> and was a popular subject for vase paintings. In these works, however, Herakles favours weapons other than the bow, which

<sup>5</sup> This poem is discussed in more detail below with reference to Deianeira's jealousy or otherwise regarding Iole.

<sup>6</sup> Hes., 25 MW 14-33.

<sup>7</sup> Easterling finds the Hesiodic text (if correct) "nicely ambiguous" regarding Deianeira's motive for using the  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ : Easterling (1982), p. 16. In addressing the lacuna at 17, March considers the adjective  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\kappa\iota\kappa\alpha$  (as reconstructed by Lobel, and Merkelbach and West) to be an unlikely descriptive for Deianeira, regardless of her motive. She suggests  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\kappa\iota\kappa\alpha$  or  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\kappa\iota\kappa\alpha$  in its place, which also supports her argument for a fiercer pre-Sophoklean Deianeira: Jennifer R. March, *The Creative Poet: studies on the treatment of myths in Greek poetry*, BICS 49 (1987), 51-6, esp. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Archil., fr. 286-8 W.



makes it unlikely that these artists were familiar with a story involving Nessos' bequest of a deadly charm from his arrow wound to Deianeira. A later poem, thought to be by Bakchylides, conforms to this pattern of a simple battle between Herakles and Nessos for sexual access to Deianeira.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of such evidence it is reasonable to conclude that in pre-Sophoklean accounts, Deianeira's killing of her husband by means of an anointed robe was probably not associated with a potion from the centaur. In conjunction with other, admittedly circumstantial evidence, March and Jebb, among others, have suggested that Sophokles' portrayal of Deianeira as gentle and naïve runs counter to her otherwise fierce and 'Amazonian' mythological character.<sup>10</sup>

The state of this early evidence goes some way to justifying the disagreement regarding Deianeira's intentions in the *Trachiniae*. If we accept March's thesis, Sophokles' painstaking characterisation (and rehabilitation) of a once murderous wife underscores the poet's sensitive and pointed approach to gender in this play. While the pre-Sophoklean literature is too sparse to be certain of Deianeira's traditional role in myth, March's gathered evidence is compelling. The ramifications of Sophokles' innovation will be discussed further in my concluding remarks.

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<sup>9</sup> *P. Berol.* 16140; see March (1987), pp. 51-6.

<sup>10</sup> March (following Jebb) cites Deianeira's name, which means 'husband-slayer' or 'slayer of men' as suggestive of this ferocity, and adds that later authors and scholiasts seem to have ignored the Sophoklean version in preference for this "early Deianeira": Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.1212; Apollod. 1.8.1; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 35.89-91. March (1987), p. 51; R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles. The Plays and Fragments. Part V. The Trachiniae* (Cambridge, 1892), pp. xxxi-xxxii; T. F. Hoey, 'The date of the *Trachiniae*', *Phoenix* 33 (1979), 219 ff. Davies (1991), p. xxxi gives more cautious credence to this theory.

In a recent work discussing the love potion used in this play, Christopher A. Faraone has identified in Deianeira's words and actions an extensive knowledge of the essentially lethal quality of many love potions in common ancient usage.<sup>11</sup> He draws attention to the oft-drawn connections between aphrodisiacs and narcosis or fatal poisoning in the classical Greek sources. The fourth century B.C.E. comic poet Eubulos, for example, notes that wine in small quantities induces erotic desire, while larger quantities produce sleep.<sup>12</sup> An elegiac poem by Evenus makes the same observation.<sup>13</sup> Theophrastos, Aristotle and Plato note that a combination of mandrake and wine or vinegar produces sexual desire, sleep and paralysis, depending how much is imbibed.<sup>14</sup> Theophrastos explicitly muses on the ability of one substance to produce such conflicting results.<sup>15</sup> In light of this widespread knowledge of the toxicity of love potions Faraone reads in Deianeira's expressions of dread and regret after dispatching the anointed robe via Lichas (ll. 663-4) a realisation that she has perhaps overdosed Herakles with poison, not the first realisation that she has poisoned him at all.

Such an interpretation as Faraone's is consistent with Deianeira's acceptance of a demonstrably dangerous substance as being of aphrodisiac value. Deianeira's narration of her receipt of the centaur's potion at lines 572-5 has been the subject of much interpretative

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<sup>11</sup> Faraone, (1994a), 115-35. Cf. Faraone, (1992b), 92-103.

<sup>12</sup> Eub. *fr.* 93 (Kassel-Austin).

<sup>13</sup> Evenus *fr.* 2 (West).

<sup>14</sup> Theophr. *HP* 9.9.1; Arist. *de Som.* 456b31; Plato *Rep.* 6.488c.

<sup>15</sup> Theophr. *HP* 9.18.4-5.

disagreement.<sup>16</sup> However one reads them, though (and more importantly in the present context), the lines may be taken as proof that Deianeira was aware that the potion was drawn from blood containing Hydra's poison. Unless one reads it in conjunction with Sophoklean dramatic devices and the well-characterised figure of Deianeira, this is indeed damning evidence. On the basis of these lines F. Errandonea even finds Deianeira culpable for the intentional slaying of Herakles.<sup>17</sup>

Once we observe that late-learning is as central a theme in this play as it is in the *Oidipous Tyrannos*, and that *Eros* blinds and bewitches Deianeira as much as it does Herakles, interpretations such as Errandonea's seem simplistic and unlikely. Sophokles' deployment of theme and character similarly detract from Faraone's thesis. At lines 441-4 Deianeira proclaims that she herself is governed by *Eros*. She makes this statement in a speech justifying the improper behaviour of her similarly enthralled husband.<sup>18</sup> Here, as elsewhere in ancient Greek literature, erotic love is presented as a form of madness or disease, which results in impaired comfort and reason and a reduced sense of propriety.<sup>19</sup> Deianeira's sense of reason is further hampered, as she later tells, by the persuasive powers exercised by the cunning centaur. After the potion has been applied and the robe is taken beyond her reach and

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<sup>16</sup> Easterling and Davies discuss the technical difficulties associated with these lines at length in their commentaries.

<sup>17</sup> F. Errandonea, 'Deianeira vere DEI-ANEIRA', *Mnemosyne* 55 (1927), 145-64.

<sup>18</sup> At 354-5 the messenger explains that Herakles besieged Oichalia purely because he *Eros* had bewitched (□μ●☒μ×♁μ■) him, and Deianeira confirms Herakles' (and perhaps also Iole's) slavery to *Eros* at 445-8.

<sup>19</sup> 445; Sappho, *frs.* 48, 31.9-15; Homer, *Il.* 14.217, 14.294; Hesiod, *Theog.* 122; Plato's 'divine madness'; cf. Winkler (1990c), 82-7; Faraone (1999), pp. 43-55.

control, Deianeira laments at l. 710 that Nessos bewitched (ἄμαρτυρομαι) her. ἄμαρτυρομαι is usually translated here as 'cajoled' or 'tricked', but given that l. 355 is the only other place in the Sophoklean corpus where this word occurs, the usage is far more significant.<sup>20</sup> The nexus of ideas of persuasion, magic and sexual desire should thus be acknowledged here.<sup>21</sup> Deianeira has therefore exonerated herself from blame, citing two plausible external factors<sup>22</sup> that compelled her to make use of the poisonous substance.

In the opening scene of the play Deianeira displays a lack of inquisitiveness concerning her husband's whereabouts which confounds her more perspicacious nurse.<sup>23</sup> Upon learning of the prophecies regarding Herakles, Hyllus too is compelled to act immediately where his mother did not think to do so.<sup>24</sup> It is thus consistent with her characteristic quiet, sad acceptance of the peculiarities of her life that Deianeira is so easily persuaded of the aphrodisiac qualities of the dying centaur's poisoned blood. Studies which apply rigorous logic to the question of Deianeira's prior knowledge and aims fail to do justice to Sophokles' careful characterisation, and his exploration of the subtleties of Eros and Persuasion and their capacity to obscure truth and wisdom. In this play

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<sup>20</sup> Segal (1977), 111-2.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Aesch., *Suppl.* 1040; Gorgias, *Helen* 10 and 14. The interplay of these concepts will be discussed in my concluding remarks below.

<sup>22</sup> Poetic imagery indicates that the Greeks considered erotic love to be an affliction by exterior forces: Anacreon, *fr.* 413; Sappho, *fr.* 47; Ibycus, *fr.* 286.8-13. Cf. the much later discussion by Galen on this persistent belief: Galen 18.2.19. Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek images of the tragic self* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 114-37.

<sup>23</sup> The nurse here is a stock character, whose double might be Phaedra's nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytos*.

<sup>24</sup> 86-91. Hyllus mitigates censure of his mother by explaining that Herakles' fate made 'normal' responses to his prolonged absence impractical.

involving late learning, as indeed in the *Oidipous Tyrannos*, Sophokles does not seek to indict each character as they each discover the truth of their situations. The focus instead lies with the limits of human knowledge in contrast with that of the gods. The interwoven fates of Deianeira, Herakles, Nessos and Hyllos ultimately rest with Zeus, as the poet underscores throughout the action and in the closing lines.<sup>25</sup>

The marked diptych structure of this play, which effectively separates the worlds occupied by Deianeira and Herakles, results in a work which, more than most of the dramas, may be viewed as a confrontation between the concerns of *oikos* and *polis* respectively. The two leading characters may be interpreted as extreme polarisations of the ideals of feminine and masculine behaviour,<sup>26</sup> although Easterling is right to warn that such a subtle play as the *Trachiniai* cannot be distilled to a single, simple conflict.<sup>27</sup> In the extensive portion of the play devoted to her, Deianeira is presented as a chaste and devoted wife to the absent Herakles, whose access to information about her husband's whereabouts is greatly limited by her cloistered lifestyle, in which her primary companions are her nurse and a chorus of young Trachinian women.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 251, 983, 995, 1002, 1022, 1041, 1278.

<sup>26</sup> Davies (1991), p. xix; Helene P. Foley (1981b), 157-9. Segal sees the primary confrontation as lying between the worlds of the fifth century *oikos* and that of the heroic past, with gender conflicts being inherent in his analysis: Segal (1977), 99-158.

<sup>27</sup> Easterling notes that Herakles and Deianeira have much in common, particularly with regard to *eros* and self-destructive ignorance: Easterling (1982), p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Deianeira's chastity and anxious devotion to Herakles: 28-9, 103-111, 144-50; Deianeira's limited knowledge about Herakles present state of affairs (Hyllos is far more familiar with rumours of his father's exploits): 40-5, 67-75. The news Deianeira does receive from outside is not always reliable, as the messenger's accusation of Lichas shows; 346-74.

Her life, like her lonely death, is played out within the confines of the marital *oikos* that she keeps for her husband.<sup>29</sup>

Herakles, on the other hand, lives a life foreign to his own *oikos*, as Deianeira is quick to point out.<sup>30</sup> His primary concerns, as articulated in this play, revolve around his servitude to Eurystheos,<sup>31</sup> and the violent defeat of enemies, human and bestial.<sup>32</sup> Segal examines Sophokles' use of imagery and tone to define the radically opposed spheres inhabited by Deianeira and Herakles as "domestic and naturalistic" and "schematic and mythological" respectively.<sup>33</sup> In the radically opposed spaces occupied by Herakles and Deianeira, communication (and attempted reconciliation) between the two is enacted only through the agency of Lichas and Hyllos.<sup>34</sup> In the exchanges between Deianeira, the herald, the messenger and the enslaved Oichalian women the specific points of conflict between these two ways of life are made manifest. Upon learning of Herakles' foreign victory, Deianeira can only express amazement that he should have been away for such an incomprehensibly long period.<sup>35</sup> At ll. 242-3, 298-313, 329-31 Deianeira expresses sympathy for the harsh fate that has befallen the foreign women, and especially Iole, while

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<sup>29</sup> 542.

<sup>30</sup> 31-5.

<sup>31</sup> Eurystheos is left unnamed by Deianeira: 35.

<sup>32</sup> 18-23, 38-40, 74-5, 181-3, 240-90, 1058-61, 1089-1100.

<sup>33</sup> Segal (1977), 100. Easterling counters that there is no evidence that a fifth century audience would consider Herakles to be particularly symbolic of a primitive and mythological age, and that Segal's distinction is thus an artificial one: Easterling (1982), pp. 4-5. Accepting March's thesis (see nn. 24-5 above) above) of Sophokles' rehabilitation of Deianeira, though, the distinction Segal makes is both valid and emphatic in the text.

<sup>34</sup> Segal (1977), 125; Easterling (1982), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> 246-7.

acknowledging that her own '...joy must match (Herakles') triumph'<sup>36</sup>. Lichas, on the other hand, presents the women simply as trophies of war.<sup>37</sup> The truth, as revealed by the messenger, that it was on account of Eros, and Iole's beauty that Herakles undertook the deeds which destroyed these Oichalians' lives, is far more shocking to Deianeira.<sup>38</sup> In light of such exchanges, then, the *oikos* and its potential opponents may be regarded as elementary to the understanding of the play.<sup>39</sup>

After struggling with the threat that Herakles' erotic affliction and the nubile Iole herself pose to her marital security, Deianeira resolves to solve the conundrum with the aid of the love charm she had concealed in the house many years earlier. In a recent study on the motivations behind Deianeira's tentative decision at this point, Faraone has posited that ancient uses of 'love' spells may more accurately be classified as either erotic or dynastic in their ultimate intent.<sup>40</sup> Deianeira's greatest fear, he argues, is of being replaced as Herakles' primary wife, and the legitimate keeper of his *oikos*. That is to say, hers is a dynastic concern.<sup>41</sup> To this end he cites Deianeira's history of calmly accepting her husband's erotic exploits as evidence against a simple case of erotic

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<sup>36</sup> 295, transl. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Sophocles, Loeb edn. (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> 243-4.

<sup>38</sup> The messenger reveals the truth about the Oichalian victory: 351-68; Deianeira realises the threat thereby posed to herself and her marital *oikos*: 375-9.

<sup>39</sup> Segal finds that Deianeira epitomises fifth-century humane *oikos*-centred values, while Lichas upholds Herakles' older heroic ethos, with its emphasis upon violent energy and egotistical passion: Segal (1977), 119-23.

<sup>40</sup> Faraone (1994a), 115-35; Faraone (1999).

<sup>41</sup> Faraone (1994a), 121. Faraone offers the following definition for his use of the term 'dynastic': "...the broad range of strategies employed in the 'political' competition among subordinates for the favour of a single male, be he a king...or simply a Greek husband in his *oikos*." Faraone (1994a), n. 26.

jealousy.<sup>42</sup> Such an interpretation, however, ignores the prominent roles played by both Aphrodite and Eros in the play.<sup>43</sup> Deianeira makes clear that Herakles, she herself, and even the gods are slaves to Eros,<sup>44</sup> and it is to Aphrodite that the chorus ascribes blame when Deianeira's error becomes apparent.<sup>45</sup> That erotic jealousy is involved is made quite explicit in Deianeira's statement to the chorus shortly after she discovers Iole's identity, and her significance to Herakles:

'...So this is why I fear that while Herakles may be called my husband (ἄνδρα) / he may be called the man (ἄνδρα) of the younger woman.'<sup>46</sup>

Her fear here is clearly prompted by sexual jealousy rather than dynastic displacement, as her position as Herakles' legitimate wife and the leading woman of the household is not at issue.<sup>47</sup> By categorising attraction spells as either erotic or dynastic in purpose, Faraone risks creating artificial distinctions, especially where spells upon spouses are concerned. For it is clear that Deianeira's concern spans both of these

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<sup>42</sup> 459-63, 536-55.

<sup>43</sup> Aphrodite: 496-515, 860-1. Eros: 354-5, 441-2.

<sup>44</sup> 354-5, 441-4. The messenger confirms that *eros* prompted Herakles to attack Oichalia: 431-3, and Lichas concurs: 488-9.

<sup>45</sup> 860-1.

<sup>46</sup> 550-1.

<sup>47</sup> Such a reading finds support in Easterling (1982) on lines 550-1; Charles Fuqua, 'Heroism, Heracles, and the *Trachiniae*,' *Traditio* 36 (1980), 44; Segal (1977), 107, 114.



categories,<sup>48</sup> and the same is arguably true of the other examples from literature of women placing attraction spells upon their husbands.<sup>49</sup>

After recounting the story of how she acquired the charm from Nessos, Deianeira turns to the young women of the chorus seeking guidance on the critical decision whether to utilise it. Her plea to the Trachinian women at ll. 582-7 is clearly framed as a question of morality.<sup>50</sup> In keeping with audience expectation of a respectable citizen's wife, Deianeira is careful to guard her good reputation, and to distance herself from the kind of women with whom she normally associates such 'terrible bold deeds'.<sup>51</sup> Stealthy, destructive scheming by women constitutes a recurring motif in various genres of ancient literature.<sup>52</sup> As argued above, Deianeira's poisoning of Herakles was probably straightforward and intentional, rather than covert, in pre-Sophoklean accounts. The allusion here both underscores the partial rehabilitation of the 'husband-slaying' Deianeira's character, and prefigures the murderous role that she is destined, nonetheless, to perform.

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<sup>48</sup> Deianeira is aware that the livelihood of Hyllos and herself depend on Herakles: 83-5.

<sup>49</sup> Antiphon 1.19; *Magna moralia* 16 (= [Arist.] 1188b30-38; Plutarch, *Mor.* 256c.

<sup>50</sup> Davies (1991), p. 581.

<sup>51</sup> 582, my transl. R. P. Winnington-Ingram sees, in these words, an allusion to husband-slaying: *Sophocles, an interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 79.

<sup>52</sup> Antiphon 1.9.2, 1.14-20; (pseudo-)Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 16 (= [Arist.] 1188b30-8).

From the Roman period see also Plutarch, *Mor.* 126a, 256c; *Juv.* 6.610-11; *Suet.*, *Cal.*

50. Love charms (or the masking of poisons as love-potions) are implicated in all of these cases. C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford: 1944), 147-8; J. C.

Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles, II: Trachiniae* (Leiden: 1959), p. 233; Sarah Currie, 'Poisonous women and unnatural history in Roman culture' in Wyke, Maria (ed.), *Parchments of Gender: deciphering the bodies of antiquity* (Oxford, 1998), pp.147-67; Hallissy (1990).

In her nervous speech in defence of her plans to use magic Deianeira is echoed by Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytos*,<sup>53</sup> when she is torn between her shameful love for Hippolytos and retaining her reputation for virtue.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, when Phaedra's nurse later encourages her to use a love charm, her primary assurance to her mistress is that the spell will bring no disgrace upon her.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Deianeira seeks from the chorus both moral reassurance and an avowal of secrecy. There is clearly a distinction to be made here between the standard of morality to be publicly upheld, and the type of approval being sought from the chorus of women. That a double standard of morality is being observed is suggested elsewhere in the text, twice by Deianeira herself. Upon discovering that Lichas has omitted from the account of Herakles' sacking of Oichalia the truth of her husband's new love, the chorus aims a righteous curse at the authors of such deception:

‘A curse upon not all bad people, but / specifically he who  
furtively practises evils unseemly for him!’<sup>56</sup>

Deianeira's admonition of the herald for his evasiveness comes somewhat later, and in significantly different terms:

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<sup>53</sup> Due to unresolvable difficulties with the dating of the *Trachiniai*, it is not possible to know which of the two plays was performed first, although scholars tend to favour an earlier date for Sophokles' play than Euripides' 428 B.C.E. production of the *Hippolytos*: Easterling (1982), pp. 19-23.

<sup>54</sup> Eur., *Hipp.* 414.

<sup>55</sup> Eur., *Hipp.* 507-15.

<sup>56</sup> 383-4. Easterling notes that the imprecation is general enough for the audience to include Herakles along with Lichas: Easterling (1982) on lines 383-4.

‘...I tell you / to others be guileful, but to me be truthful always!’<sup>57</sup>

Davies rightfully points out that the first part of this statement acts as a contrasting foil for the actual statement.<sup>58</sup> The duplicity inherent in this statement ought not to be discounted as simple rhetoric, however, as it is consistent with Deianeira's earnest request of the chorus at ll. 596-7:

‘The one thing I would have from you is to conceal my plans well, for if in the dark / you act shamefully, you will never fall into shame.’

An ironic contrast is developed between Deianeira's words to the chorus here, and her lengthy address to Lichas earlier at ll. 436-69.<sup>59</sup> It is evident that Deianeira seeks not full moral clearance for her act, but the complicity of a far more exclusive group of peers.

Following Faraone's mode of analysis, H. S. Versnel finds a strong link between secretive uses of magic and the agonistic nature of Greek society.<sup>60</sup> In a society where one's status is established in relation to one's social, political and professional rivals, he argues, honour could be garnered by two distinct means. Wily tricks of an Odyssean nature could

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<sup>57</sup> 468-9.

<sup>58</sup> Davies (1991) on lines 468-9.

<sup>59</sup> Easterling (1982) on lines 596-7.

<sup>60</sup> Faraone (1991), 3-32; Versnel (1991), 60-106.

be employed, and further enhanced by means of judicious boasting.<sup>61</sup> In addition, methods which were not morally or socially sanctioned could be silently employed. Versnel identifies magic and cursing among these 'unboastable' actions against rivals.<sup>62</sup> Anthropologists of rural Greece and the Mediterranean region attest to the longevity of competitive, amoral values, and the continuing role of covert magic in these present day societies.<sup>63</sup> Faraone makes the important point that the secrecy associated with ancient competitive curses does not automatically indicate that such acts were shameful, but could simply be defensive, to minimise the risk of counter-magic by the intended victim.<sup>64</sup> Both Faraone and Versnel also note that covert magical operations may have been viewed as a rare opportunity for disempowered individuals to obtain justice.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, actions taken in silence maintained an ambivalent position in ancient Greek thought. This ambivalence gives way to negativity when applied more strictly to the female 'race', as it does in the *Trachiniai*.

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<sup>61</sup> Odysseus' use of silence and deception is highly celebrated in epic poetry and archaic literature, but by the fifth century this heroic figure is a far more equivocal character, attracting considerable negative criticism. His behaviour is in keeping with the aristocratic stance of Theognis given above, but is considered dishonourable by many fifth century sources. Odysseus' exclusive distribution of truth is arguably an undemocratic use of information: Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton, 2000), p. 266 and ff; Zeitlin (1996b), 358.

<sup>62</sup> Versnel (1991), 62.

<sup>63</sup> E. C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York, 1958), p. 83; J. Davis, *People of the Mediterranean* (London, 1977), chs. 3 and 4. Cf Dubisch, *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (Princeton, 1986).

<sup>64</sup> Secrecy could also, of course, be traditional to rituals seeking divine assistance. Faraone (1991), 17, 20. In my chapter six on magic and democracy I explore the interconnections between secrecy and socio-political and religious power.

<sup>65</sup> Faraone (1991), 18, 20; Versnel (1991), *passim*.

While deceptive uses of knowledge constitute an important concern for male ancient authors, such practices are more commonly attributed to female characters in dramatic and other mythological texts than to male characters.<sup>66</sup> Observations of this 'natural' but objectionable propensity in women are perhaps most frequent in Euripidean drama,<sup>67</sup> but Sophokles' *Trachiniai* constitutes an elaborate exploration of the same idea.<sup>68</sup>

Much scholarly work has been done on the interactions between Deianeira and the chorus, and the nature of the complicity and moral support that these women extend to Deianeira. Firstly, it must be conceded that due to their permanent presence onstage the silence of the chorus must, by convention, be won in order for antagonists' plans to be carried out. In plays where choruses consist of male figures, silence is usually ensured by having another character order them to depart at the critical moment.<sup>69</sup> In the case of female choruses, though, knowing silence is more often sought instead. Montiglio further notes that in almost all of the latter cases, it is a female character who seeks such promises of secrecy from her female peers.<sup>70</sup> Thus Deianeira's request

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<sup>66</sup> Zeitlin sees the deployment of plot (in both the 'intrigue' and 'story line' senses of the word) as an instance of exploration of 'the feminine' in the dramatic form: Zeitlin (1996b), 357ff. cf. Montiglio (2000), p. 291.

<sup>67</sup> Eur., *IT* 1032, *Med.* 834-5, *Andr.* 85, *Hipp.* 480-1, *Ion* 483. Zeitlin (1996b), 358.

<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to note that in both the *Medeia* and *Trachiniai* these observations of women's deceptions are framed in plays which present and discuss the inequalities faced by Greek women. cf. Zeitlin (1996b), 357. cf. Sophokles' negative evaluation of cunning silence in his *Electra*, Montiglio (2000), p. 280.

<sup>69</sup> Soph., *Ajax* 814; Eur., *Alk.* 746; [Eur.] *Rhesus* 564. Montiglio (2000), pp. 252-3.

<sup>70</sup> Female characters seek the complicity of female choruses: Soph., *El.* 469; Eur., *Hipp.* 711-2, *Helen* 1387-9, *IT* 1063. Male characters attempt to swear female choruses to secrecy: Aesch., *Choe.* 581-2 (Orestes); Eur., *Iph. Aul.* 542 (Agamemnon requests silence. The chorus do not formally agree, but maintain silence on account of their lack of involvement in the action of the play); Eur., *Ion* 666 (Xouthos demands secrecy from the chorus, but they deny it to him). cf. Montiglio (2000), p. 253.

of the chorus at ll. 596-7 is consistent with a prominent pattern of all-female conspiracies of silence.

The chorus engages intimately with Deianeira regarding her intended use of Nessos' love charm at ll. 588-9 and 592-3, but ambiguities in their language here have led to divergent readings as to their precise stance.<sup>71</sup> While Deianeira frames her query about the plan in terms of its morality, it is to the issue of efficacy that the chorus turns in their response. Despite their youth and apparent naivete,<sup>72</sup> these women carefully weigh up the relative values of Nessos' advice, Deianeira's own faith and the knowledge that only experimentation can provide. The repetition of variants of  $\alpha\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta$  at ll. 586, 589 and 592 highlights this interplay of shades of thinking, seeming and judging in the dialogue of ll. 582-94.<sup>73</sup> Some scholars find in the chorus' words a note of warning<sup>74</sup> or caution<sup>75</sup> against the use of the mysterious love charm, although as Lloyd-Jones and Wilson point out, this warning could easily have been made more emphatic, if this is the sense Sophokles intended.<sup>76</sup> The ancient scholia

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<sup>71</sup> See especially Winnington-Ingram (1980), pp. 78-9; Friedrich Solmsen, 'The meaning of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* 588-93', *AJP* 106 (1985), 490-6; R. W. B. Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 59, 84; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson, *Sophoclea* (Oxford: 1990), p. 163; Davies (1991) on line 592; Easterling (1982) on line 582-93.

<sup>72</sup> The naivete of the chorus is perhaps over-played by Winnington-Ingram (1980), p. 79.

<sup>73</sup> Easterling (1982) on line 590.

<sup>74</sup> Solmsen (1985), 491.

<sup>75</sup> Easterling (1982) on line 582; L. Campbell, *Sophocles*, vol. 2 (Oxford: 1881).

<sup>76</sup> Far more emphatic warnings in Sophoclean drama are to be found in the words of Tiresias and Jocasta in *OT*, and similarly strong warnings are issued by the chorus in *Ant.* 278f, 724f, 766f, 1091f, 1098, 1103f. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1990) p. 163. Solmsen, too, concedes this point: Solmsen (1985), 495.

are similarly divided on the nature of the chorus' advice here,<sup>77</sup> and indeed the ambiguity may be intentional.

While scholars both ancient and modern have disputed the meaning of the chorus' words, Deianeira is clearly consoled by their exchange, for she resolves at ll. 594-7 to use the anointed robe, and quickly and unwaveringly requests secrecy of the chorus. Interrupted as they are by the arrival of the herald, the chorus give no further indication of their supposed disapproval. In a similar predicament in the *Medeia*, the chorus do not break their vow of secrecy,<sup>78</sup> yet are very vocal in their disapproval of her murderous scheme.<sup>79</sup> On the contrary, the chorus of Trachinian women sing in hopeful praise of the spell coming to fruition in the second antistrophe of the second stasimon, ll. 655-62. In the dialogue that follows Deianeira expresses grave fears about the nature of the love charm, and the chorus lends support to her earlier decision to use the substance.<sup>80</sup>

In the chorus' willing collusion with Deianeira, and certainly in the heroine's words at ll. 596-7<sup>81</sup> one can see a clear expression of the popular motif of women's inborn penchant for scheming and deception. Euripides in particular favours this theme, and has both female and male characters testify to its truth in his *Hippolytos*, *Iphigeneia in Tauris*,

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<sup>77</sup> Solmsen (1985), 494.

<sup>78</sup> The chorus pledges secrecy without knowing fully what Medea intends: Eur., *Med.* 267-70.

<sup>79</sup> *Med.* 811-13, 816, 818.

<sup>80</sup> *Trach.* 665, 668, 723-4.

<sup>81</sup> See p. 156 above.

*Andromache* and *Medeia*.<sup>82</sup> Plato too gives explicit voice to this received idea in his *Laws*:

'...the female race, that part of humanity which is much more stealthy (●◊□□◊◊✠□❖◆♠□□■) and cunning (♠er□✠&●□□◆❖◆♠□□■) by nature, on account of its weakness...'<sup>83</sup>

Themes of deception, secrecy and concealment run richly throughout the play, even as Deianeira is being characterised as a faithful wife to Herakles. Throughout the *Trachiniai* Deianeira is characterised as duly occupying her proper space, the *oikos*.<sup>84</sup> Her only self-conscious traversing of this threshold occurs at l. 531ff, where she shares her most recent feelings about Iole, and her thoughts on Nessos' love spell, with the chorus members. Her efforts to justify this encroachment upon the threshold of public space indicate that even this is anomalous behaviour for her. As discussed above, this exchange between Deianeira and the chorus is quite secretive and exclusive in nature, and so should be distinguished from truly public interruptions such as those of Clytemnestra or *Medeia*.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, even her most momentous deed - the

<sup>82</sup> Eur., *Hipp.* 480-1 (Phaidra's nurse), *IT* 1032 (Orestes), *Andr.* 85 (Andromache), *Med.* 834-5 (*Medeia*).

<sup>83</sup> Plato, *Laws* 781a. Ann L. T. Bergren finds that female speech throughout the Greek tradition swings at will between truth and falsity: 'Language and the female in early Greek thought', *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 69-95.

<sup>84</sup> Foley (1991b), 157-9

<sup>85</sup> Clytemnestra chooses her own partner in favour of her husband, and uses the wealth from Agamemnon's *oikos* to consolidate her own power in Aesch., *Ag.*, and *Medeia* forms her own political alliances, and steps beyond the feminine (and indeed human) sphere as something of a *deus ex machina* at the end of Eur., *Med.*



giving of the anointed robe to Herakles at ll. 598-812 - is enacted indirectly, with Lichas unwittingly playing the part of her intermediary. These two public engagements, such as they are, and their consequences are consistent with patterns of female transgression in much ancient drama, where female action in the public sphere functions overwhelmingly as a catalyst for change, or a source of (usually destructive) conflict.<sup>86</sup>

So much for the destructive results of Deianeira's rare public interruptions. It is, however, in the solitude of the marital *oikos* which she keeps for the absent Herakles that the destructive plan is brought into being. Unlike Phaidra in the *Hippolytos*, Deianeira is not persuaded by another to use magical means to achieve the desired union. Irresolute and lacking initiative though she may appear to modern commentators,<sup>87</sup> Deianeira demonstrates considerable forethought concerning Nessos' love charm and her marriage to Herakles. She herself relates that she remembered and carried out all of the centaur's instructions for the potion when she encountered him as the young bride of the hero.<sup>88</sup> The narrative of this event is highly embellished, emphasising Deianeira's care to make the spell effective.<sup>89</sup> Her calculation and composure on this occasion are striking, and lend an enigmatic and troubling richness to an

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<sup>86</sup> M. Shaw, 'The female intruder: women in fifth-century drama', *CPhil.* 70 (1975), 255-66, esp. 256; Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: gender and society in classical Greek literature* (Chicago and London, 1996a), 5-6; Zeitlin (1996b), 347-8; McClure (1999), 24.

<sup>87</sup> Winnington-Ingram (1980), p. 78; Foley (1981b), 157-8.

<sup>88</sup> 555-81, 680-88.

<sup>89</sup> Such meticulousness of detail is consistent with the procedures for ancient spells set out in the *PGM*.

otherwise mild and peaceable character. This same quiet resolve and initiative is to be found in her present-time behaviour, for even before she seeks the chorus' approval Deianeira has already applied the substance to Herakles' robe.<sup>90</sup>

Thus it is that the deadly potion is propelled into action by Deianeira (and the passions that drive her<sup>91</sup>) from the solitude of the *oikos*. The privacy, and arguably the femininity, of this operation are underscored by the text, in Deianeira's narration:

'...(he told) me to keep the  $\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  away from fire,  
 always  
 untouched by warm ray, in the inmost chamber  
 ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ ),  
 until such time as I apply it, newly rubbed, onto something.  
 And I did these deeds. And, then, when I needed to act, I  
 anointed it at home  $\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  in the chambers  
 ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ )  
 in secret ( $\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ )...'<sup>92</sup>

The repetition of synonymous terms for the physical edifice of the *oikos* and its inner chambers helps to reinforce the connections between

<sup>90</sup> 584-7. A suggestion of this premeditation and preparation may also be detected in Deianeira's words to Lichas at 492-5. cf. Easterling (1982) on lines 492-5.  
<sup>91</sup> Eros (444) and the Persuasion of Nessos (710), and over and above them both - Zeus (1278).  
<sup>92</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 685-89.

secrecy and the privacy and femininity<sup>93</sup> of Deianeira's domain.<sup>94</sup> Rather than being a creative space, and a symbol of familial unity, this *oikos* nurtures the destructive agent of Nessos' vengeance in its private confines. Thus Deianeira is both a creative and destructive symbol of the home. Herakles, too, stands as a divided symbol of culture and society in this play in his near-desertion of his own *oikos*, and the fact that his own basic passions and the bestial forces with which he does battle work to alienate him from the very culture which he protects and epitomises through his civilising Labours.<sup>95</sup> Dependent as she must be upon her husband for her continued livelihood, Deianeira responds to Herakles' perversion of his fated, beneficial absenteeism with an inversion of her own proper domestic role.

With this secretive perversion of her prescribed nurturing role, Deianeira reflects anxieties felt by masculine society regarding the status and functions of women in Greek marital relations. In observance of fifth-century ideals of feminine behaviour, Deianeira's life and death are both played out in silence, at least as far as public speech is concerned.<sup>96</sup> A corollary of esteemed female silence, though, is its proximity to secretive

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<sup>93</sup> On the conceptual alignment of the interiors of houses and women see Ruth Padel, 'Making Space Speak', in Winkler and Zeitlin (1990), 336-65, esp. 344; Ruth Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons' in Cameron and Kuhrt (1983), 3-19, esp. 8; Gould (1980), 48, n. 72; Susan Walker, 'Women and Housing in Classical Greece: the archaeological evidence' in Cameron and Kuhrt (1983), 81-91.

<sup>94</sup> Herakles' sustained absence from the *oikos* in turn reinforces the femininity, and the solitude, of this space: see n. 41 above. Dawe finds 689 suspect on account of the near-repetition of concepts, although as Davies and Easterling both indicate,  $\alpha\pi\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\sigma$  is frequently used to denote rooms or divisions within the *oikos* superstructure: Hom., *Od.* 6.303, 8.57; Eur., *Phaeth.* 56.

<sup>95</sup> Segal (1977), *passim*, esp. 116, 119-23.

<sup>96</sup> See pp. 162-63 above for the public invisibility of Deianeira's rather extensive dialogue with the chorus of Trachinian women, and her female nurse.

or deceptive silences. The duplicity inherent in silence is succinctly conveyed by Deianeira's own behaviour. Disapproving as she is of secrecy,<sup>97</sup> Deianeira conceals Nessos' poisoned blood,<sup>98</sup> plans to act under cover of darkness,<sup>99</sup> covertly addresses the chorus,<sup>100</sup> secretly anoints Herakles' robe,<sup>101</sup> and watches, hidden, while Hyllos prepares a litter for Herakles,<sup>102</sup> before killing herself, alone in their marriage bed.<sup>103</sup> Deianeira's own weighty silence is echoed elsewhere by those of the artful Kypris,<sup>104</sup> and also Herakles, on the subject of his love for Iole.<sup>105</sup>

These destructive silences lie in stark contrast to two poignant silences executed by Iole and Deianeira in turn. Iole is silent throughout the period she spends onstage (ll. 225-334). Prompted by Deianeira's sympathetic and humane attention to her individual plight, Lichas discloses that Iole has not in fact spoken since being taken from her native land.<sup>106</sup> Iole's silent dread and lamentation echo Deianeira's behaviour before her own marriage to Herakles. Deianeira recalls the fearful competing suitors she too attracted on account of her beauty,

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<sup>97</sup> Deianeira's disapproval: 449-69, 596-7; chorus' disapproval: 384; the messenger expresses some disdain for Herakles' own secret love: 360-2.

<sup>98</sup> 556-7, 579.

<sup>99</sup> 596.

<sup>100</sup> 533.

<sup>101</sup> 689.

<sup>102</sup> 903.

<sup>103</sup> 912-31.

<sup>104</sup> Kypris' silence presence is noted in the choral ode just before Deianeira's suicide: 860-1. In an earlier ode the chorus indicates that Kypris excels at deception: 496-502. cf. Aphrodite's epithet  $\alpha\mu\beta\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$  in Sappho 1.2, and her deception of Zeus in Homer, *Il.* 14.214-17.

<sup>105</sup> Bewitched as he is by 'resourceful' Eros (354-5), Herakles invents a pretext to march against the city of Oichalia in order to seize the object of his secret love: 359-62.

<sup>106</sup> 322-7.

explicitly likening the plight of the two.<sup>107</sup> Deianeira relates that she was so struck with fear (ἄρα μὲν ἰδὼν ἡρώδην ἄρ' ἄρα μὲν ἰδὼν ἡρώδην) that she could not even comprehend the struggle between Herakles and Acheloos. Deianeira's innocence and piteousness (ἄρα μὲν ἰδὼν ἡρώδην) are reiterated in a subsequent choral lyric, where she is likened to a calf bereft of its mother (ἄρα μὲν ἰδὼν ἡρώδην).<sup>108</sup> Like Iole, Deianeira resorts to total silence when Hyllos recounts how Herakles succumbed to her anointed robe, then curses her and calls the Erinyes down upon her for her role in his downfall.<sup>109</sup> This silence too, is made emphatic in the stage action, particularly by the exasperated words of the chorus:

‘Why do you creep away, silent? Don't you know that / by being silent you second the accuser?’<sup>110</sup>

Such silences could never be construed as neutral in the context of ancient Athenian society, which established strong connections between the power of speech, civic identity and power.<sup>111</sup> These two instances of complete refusal to speak may best be interpreted as mute protests against the twists of fate faced by these women. Iole's silence is the protest of the powerless against a system that makes women objects for

<sup>107</sup> Iole's beauty destroys her life: 463-7; a youthful Deianeira fears that her own beauty will cause her suffering: 24-5.

<sup>108</sup> Deianeira describes her fearful incomprehension: 21-5; the chorus characterise the as yet unmarried Deianeira in pathetic terms: 523-30.

<sup>109</sup> 749-820.

<sup>110</sup> 813-4.

<sup>111</sup> On the manifold (often negative or dangerous) uses of silence in Greek society see Montiglio (2000). On the connections between speech, democracy and political power see McClure (1999), 8-15.

commerce in war and marriage.<sup>112</sup> Lichas, once again mediating between the concerns of the heroic warrior and those of the women,<sup>113</sup> is rather sympathetic regarding Iole's refusal to speak, and even bids Deianeira to show understanding.<sup>114</sup> The muteness of Deianeira at her unwitting destruction of her husband and disownment by her son, on the other hand, is in keeping with models of female suicides in drama - most notably Sophokles' Euridike and Iokasta.<sup>115</sup> Silence in female patients close to death is also a recurring theme in the Hippocratic corpus<sup>116</sup> - more so than with male patients<sup>117</sup> - and is clearly viewed as a feminine and self-destructive act.<sup>118</sup> Deianeira's silent departure and solitary death reflect the feminine ideals she has observed throughout her life,<sup>119</sup> albeit in a perverted manner after learning Iole's true identity and significance. Upon learning the (relatively) benevolent intent of Deianeira's potion, Hyllos defends his mother from the dishonour that her own silent departure invited, in his address to Herakles:

'For things stand thus (with Deianeira) that silence would not be fitting (ὅτι μὴ ἔσθ' ἄξιον ἡσυχίας ἐν τούτοις).'<sup>120</sup>

<sup>112</sup> It is Deianeira who gives meaning to Iole's silence, as she ponders the vacillations of fate, and the former lives of the enslaved women: 242-3, 293-321.

<sup>113</sup> Segal (1977), 125; cf. p. 155-56 above.

<sup>114</sup> Having first introduced the enslaved Oichalians as the proper and fine spoils of war (244-5), Lichas shows compassion for Iole (322-8).

<sup>115</sup> Soph., *Ant.* 1244-5, *Oed. Tyr.* 1073-5.

<sup>116</sup> Hipp., *Epid.* 3.2 (case 6), 3.3 (cases 14 and 15), 4.30, 5.106 (=7.21), *Diseases* 1.4, 2.6 and 21, 3.4 and 8, *The Nature of Women* 3, *Diseases of Women* 2.127, *Regimen of Acute Diseases* 4, 5.

<sup>117</sup> Hippocratic doctors show little interest in the silences of ill males: Montiglio (2000), p. 231.

<sup>118</sup> esp. Hipp., *Epid.* 3.3.14, 3.2.6.

<sup>119</sup> For further discussion on the femininity of silent death, and especially suicide, see Montiglio (2000), pp. 238-45; Loraux (1987), pp. 48-51.

<sup>120</sup> 1126.

Deianeira's twin uses of silence in this play – in the contexts of deception and self-destruction - are consistent with Montiglio's conclusions in her study of the meanings of silence in ancient Greek culture. Female uses of silence in literature and philosophy are dominated by these two disquieting themes, which can in turn be read as a revelation of masculine anxiety with respect to women's action. The response to this anxiety was, ironically, to prescribe silence for women.<sup>121</sup>

Deianeira is largely exculpated from blame in Sophokles' retelling of the several myths synthesised in the *Trachiniai*. Within the text this exoneration is carried by the words of both Hyllos and the chorus, who each refer to the innocence of her intent. In an impassioned defence of Deianeira (whose maternity he had earlier rejected) before Herakles, Hyllos explains:

‘I have come to tell you about my mother - in what condition she is now / and how she erred completely.’<sup>122</sup>

This sentiment is underscored by reiteration:

‘She erred thoroughly in the matter, with the best of intentions.’<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Montiglio (2000), pp. 290-1.

<sup>122</sup> 1122-3.

<sup>123</sup> 1136.

In an effort to assuage their mistress' fears about already implemented love charm, the chorus had earlier advised Deianeira:

'(But) concerning those who are tripped up not of their own doing, wrath is softened, and you should benefit from this.'<sup>124</sup>

The legal underpinnings of such defence pleas are made explicit in Hyllos' initial condemnation of Deianeira in the final moments of her life, and the chorus' subsequent comments:

*Hyllos*: '...You are convicted, mother, of making these plots against my father, / and carrying them out, for which may both avenging Justice / and Erinys punish you. And if it is just, I curse you. / And it is just, since you have shown what is right to me ...'

*Chorus*: '...Don't you know that / by being silent you second the accuser?'<sup>125</sup>

The use here of legal terminology sets Deianeira up as a defendant at her own (largely posthumous) trial.<sup>126</sup> It is the chorus, in a mournful ode, who divide responsibility for the fall of Herakles' house between Nessos, Deianeira, Herakles for his siege of Oichalia, and moving behind all these

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<sup>124</sup> 727-8. Both Kamerbeek and Faraone note the strong similarities between Hyllos' defence of his mother here and a similar (and successful) defence made in a late classical lawsuit involving accidental poisoning with a love philtre: Kamerbeek (1959), 233; Faraone (1994a), 118 and n. 22.

<sup>125</sup> 807-10, 813-4.

<sup>126</sup> Easterling (1982) on lines 807-8, 814.



figures towards the fulfilment of the fateful prophecy - Aphrodite.<sup>127</sup>

Deianeira's acquittal on the basis of innocent intention is supported by Athenian law, which observes a distinction between planning and implementing misdeeds.<sup>128</sup> The Aristotelian *Magna Moralia* preserves a parallel case of an accidental (or so it is claimed) killing with a love potion. The acquittal of this defendant on the basis of her harmless intent indicates that innocence of planning could even overrule one's guilt at killing another person.<sup>129</sup> That this recorded acquittal is intrinsically linked with an admission of having used magic reminds us that Greek law did not rule against the use of (let alone define) magic *per se*. Where alleged users of magic did receive a legal sentence, it was usually under the laws governing impiety (θεοεπιβλαστέων).<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> 821-61.

<sup>128</sup> This distinction between planning (ὁμοθυμαδόν) and doing (ἐπιτελεῖν) is present in Hyllos' condemnation at 807-8. cf chapter six below.

<sup>129</sup> *Magna moralia* 16 (= [Arist.] 1188b30-38). See D. M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (London, 1978), pp. 114-5.

<sup>130</sup> C. R. Phillips III, 'Nullum Crimin sine Lege: socioreligious sanctions on magic', in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 115-130. On charges of magic / θεοεπιβλαστέων see Plut., *Per.* 32, Thuk. 2.65.3-4.

## Chapter Six

### Magic under Athenian law: a threat to the *polis*?

It was suggested in Chapter One that magic was overwhelmingly characterised as a set of privately exercised, self-seeking and unsanctioned ritual practices in the literature of the classical period.<sup>1</sup> Chapter Three examined how activities which were necessarily private, such as domestic cookery and women's medicine, were marginalised and perceived as closely akin to magic. The notion of cookery in particular was believed to lend itself to magical subversion in a context of evil ambition.<sup>2</sup> In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that Deianeira's decision to use a love philtre on Herakles - certainly for personal gain - revolved around her ability to ensure the collusion of the chorus and to carry out the procedure undetected.<sup>3</sup>

The private, secret actions of Deianeira and the destruction they wrought are held up to public scrutiny in the closing scenes of the *Trachiniae*. At this point in the drama, the dialogue assumes a form reminiscent of the language of criminal trials.<sup>4</sup> The woman is defended by her own son, Hyllos, who affirms that although Deianeira did kill her husband, she

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter one, pp. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter three.

<sup>3</sup> Deianeira admonishes the herald for his own furtive wrongdoing (*Trach.* 383-4, 468-9), but then begs the chorus to conceal her own plans from public view and shame (596-7). See also my discussions of the hidden perversions of cookery, and midwifery in chapter three above.

<sup>4</sup> Kamerbeek (1959), p. 233; Faraone (1994a), 117-8. cf. R. Sealey, *Women and Law in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill: 1990), 48-9.

acted with innocent intent.<sup>5</sup> This invites speculation as to how magic was dealt with in the reality of Athenian law.

Thus far, this thesis has concerned itself primarily with literary and mythological explorations of the use of magic. The present chapter aims to elucidate whether and how the formal, legal mechanisms of the Athenian *polis* construed and policed magic. The purpose of this endeavour is not to reconstruct social behaviour – degrees and extents of obedience and deviance among the population - from the evidence of law. Law, being concerned with the exceptional and difficult aspects of social life, rather than with the ordinary, does not permit such extrapolation.<sup>6</sup> As such, laws cannot simply be equated with norms, and used as a basis for ascertaining popular sentiments.<sup>7</sup> Laws are, rather, strategies for dealing with difficult problems. As such, a logical line of questioning is exactly *whose* strategies does Athenian law implement?<sup>8</sup>

The modern western ideal of law, according to Lin Foxhall's formulation, is that it should govern people's behaviour, and that it should serve as an impartial standard against which norms are established.<sup>9</sup> However it may be disputed whether or not the Athenian courts were primarily concerned with jurisprudence – the implementation of justice in its highest

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<sup>5</sup> See previous chapter, pp. 166-69.

<sup>6</sup> L. Foxhall and A. D. E. Lewis (eds.), *Greek Law in its Political Setting* (Oxford, 1996), introd., 1.

<sup>7</sup> But see p. 173 nn. 10 and 11 below on the conscious association of the notions of 'law' and 'custom' by the creators of the radical democracy.

<sup>8</sup> As posed by Foxhall and Lewis (1996), introd., 2.

<sup>9</sup> Lin Foxhall, 'The law and the lady: women and legal proceedings in classical Athens' in Foxhall and Lewis (1996), 133-52, esp. 133.

sense. The present chapter will approach the question of whether this ideal is in fact applicable to Athenian law, and will attempt to identify other functions which Athenian law may have fulfilled.

In the Greek language, at least, laws *are* equated with norms. The term  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  in fact incorporates a range of ideas, stretching from the strictly legal senses of ‘law’ or ‘ordinance’ to the more informal ‘custom’ or ‘usage’.<sup>10</sup> Martin Ostwald theorises that this pairing of the ideas of ‘law’ and ‘custom’ was a conscious political tactic on the part of the architects of the Athenian radical democracy.<sup>11</sup> The equation of these two notions served to underscore the normative potential of law. The mores of the  $\beta\omicron\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\varsigma$  from which jurors were selected of course played a critical role in dictating outcomes of trials in democratic Athens. However, in the present chapter I hope to draw attention to other important factors – factors embedded within Athenian social and political processes – which influenced the perception of sorcerers and sorceresses in legal contexts.

The subject of inquiry of this chapter is Athenian law, not Greek law more generally. This narrow line of inquiry is dictated, in part, by the availability of evidence. Athens is the source of virtually all literary evidence for Greek legislative processes, and of much of the papyrological<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>10</sup> As per the lexicon of Liddell, Scott and Jones (LSJ).

<sup>11</sup> According to Ostwald, Kleisthenes introduced this new denotation for legal statutes. Previously, the term  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  (‘that which is laid down’) had been in use: Martin P. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969), *passim*. For alternative opinions on the evolution of the term see R. Garner, *Law and Society in Classical Athens* (London, 1987), esp. pp. 3, 19-26.

<sup>12</sup> A. S. Hunt and C. G. Edgar (eds.), *Select Papyri*, 2 vols. (Cambridge and London, 1932-4).

inscriptional<sup>13</sup> evidence besides. There are undeniable similarities between the laws of Athens and those of other Greek city-states.<sup>14</sup> However, the fact that in Greek states laws had an organic relationship with their social and political contexts<sup>15</sup> means that practical differences between times and places will have been considerable.<sup>16</sup>

The present chapter will commence with a survey and examination of the surviving evidence for magic in a legal context. Our knowledge of classical legal procedures is heavily based upon orators' speeches for either defence or prosecution, which introduce unique interpretative issues.<sup>17</sup> I will then move on to the structure of the Athenian legal system, and its implications for the construction of magic users and purveyors as threats to law and order.

Unlike Rome, Athens seems to have had no specific legislation against the deployment of magic.<sup>18</sup> In light of this contrast Fritz Graf has suggested that the democratic *polis* was comparatively lenient on the

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<sup>13</sup> *JG* comprises specifically juridical texts. Cf. A. G. Woodhead, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Cambridge, 1981), 94-107.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the work done on marriage laws in Greece: D. M. Schaps, *The Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 1979); G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, 'Some observations on the property rights of Athenian women', *CR* 20 (1970), 273-8.

<sup>15</sup> On which see Foxhall (1996); Marilyn Strathern, 'Discovering "social control"', *Journal of law and society* 12 (1985), 111-34.

<sup>16</sup> For work on the debate concerning the conceptual validity of 'Greek law' see the summary and bibliography of Stephen Todd and Paul Millett, 'Law, society and Athens', in Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett and Stephen Todd (eds.), *Nomos: essays in Athenian law, politics and society* (Cambridge, 1990), 7-11.

<sup>17</sup> On which see especially Stephen Todd, 'The use and abuse of Attic orators', *G&R* 37 (1990), 159-78.

<sup>18</sup> The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis* was introduced towards the end of Rome's Republican period; on which see Clyde Pharr, 'The interdiction of magic in Roman law', *TAPhA* 63 (1932), 269-95.

practice.<sup>19</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston, too, finds purveyors and users of magic to be more or less unconstrained under Athenian law.<sup>20</sup> Further, the fact that Plato recommends legislation against magic is taken to indicate that Athens in particular, and the Greek city-states in general refrained from controlling purveyors of magical cures, imprecations and remedies.<sup>21</sup> Other passages in Plato, Lysias, Demosthenes and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Athēnaion Politeia* are also produced as evidence for Athens' laxity, by comparison with other cities, on the policing of purveyors of magic.<sup>22</sup> This reputation for mildness was one on which the Athenians prided themselves. However, Margaretha Debrunner Hall has shown that in reality Athenian punishments were in general no more or less humane than those of other contemporary Greek city-states.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps, though, the emphasis placed upon Plato's carefully and specifically worded legislation, and the Athenians' own assertions distract us from the positive evidence that exists for legal restrictions against the use of magic in the classical period, at Athens and elsewhere in the Greek world.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, transl. Franklin Phillip (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 25, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston (1999), p. 122 n. 100.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Laws* 10, 909a-b, 932e-933b; Johnston (1999), p. 122 n. 100; Graf (1997), p. 25; T. Hopfner, 'ἄστυγοὶ καὶ ἄστυγες', *RE* 14 (1928), pt. 1, 301-93, esp. 324; Derek Collins, 'Theoris of Lemnos and the criminalization of magic in fourth-century Athens', *CQ* 51, 2 (2001), 483.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Meno* 80a-b; Lysias 6.34; Demosthenes 19.104, 58.55; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 22.4. cf. Graf (1997), 25, who interprets the *Meno* passage in this way. Matthew Dickie offers several more convincing ways of interpreting this Platonic evidence in his *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York, 2001), p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Margaretha Debrunner Hall, 'Even dogs have Erinyes: sanctions in Athenian practice and thinking' in Foxhall and Lewis (1996), 73-90.

<sup>24</sup> In any case, Cohen has adequately demonstrated, that the presence of such impiety laws in Plato are poor evidence for their absence in contemporaneous Athenian law: David Cohen, 'The prosecution of impiety in Athenian law', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* (Vienna, 1988), 701; cf. Dickie (2001), p. 50 n. 6.

An early fifth century document, the *Dirae Teorum*, indicates that the people of Teos, at least, were extremely alert to the dangers of  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$ , and took firm measures against certain practices.<sup>25</sup> The Tean proscription against  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$  was published in the form of a curse, rather than a law, and was renewed thrice yearly by a board of magistrates chosen expressly for this purpose. Persons guilty of using such harmful substances against others were to be destroyed, along with their whole family.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of Athens we learn from both the *Athenaion Politeia* and from Demosthenes that those charged with deliberate murder or injury were tried on the Areopagos.<sup>27</sup> Demosthenes elaborates upon the specific crimes which can be prosecuted under this law, including acts of murder ( $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$ ), bodily harm ( $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$ ), arson ( $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$ ), and the administering of deadly substances ( $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$   $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$   $\mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\sigma$ ).<sup>28</sup> In light of the ambiguity surrounding the magical, medical and poisonous effects of  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$  in the classical period,<sup>29</sup> the giving of harmful magical potions could theoretically have been

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<sup>25</sup> In Russell Meiggs and David Lewis (eds.), *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B. C.* (Oxford, 1969), p. 63, no. 30a1-5.

<sup>26</sup> Collins (2001), 487 perhaps over-estimates the practical applicability of this Tean law, as the magistrates simply request that the offender and their whole family be destroyed through the vehicle of a curse, not lawful procedure and execution. The edict may have taken the form of a curse because of the difficulty with which offenders could be apprehended.

<sup>27</sup> Pseudo-Arist., *Ath. Pol.* 57.3; Demosth. 23.22.

<sup>28</sup> Demosth., *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> On the multi-facetted classical understandings of  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\omicron\tau\epsilon\mu$  see Gordon (1999), 244-5; and my chapter one, pp. 13-5, and chapter three, *passim*.

prosecuted under this Athenian law.<sup>30</sup> When it is suspected, during the Peloponnesian war, that wells have been poisoned by the Spartans, causing an outbreak of plague, the above law would theoretically have been applicable.<sup>31</sup> In comparison with Teos, then, Athens cannot be said to be lenient in its legal sanctions against harmful  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha$ . A late piece of evidence from Aelian supports the thesis that the Areopagos was called upon to try cases of murder by magical  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha$  often enough to have set procedures. Aelian records that, contrary to 'normal' practice, a convicted  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$  was given a stay of execution until after the birth of the child she was carrying at the time.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, Gordon points out that in practical terms it would be difficult to apply this law. The problem lies in the fact that the prosecution must persuade the jury of the murderous or malicious intentions of the accused.<sup>33</sup> This is because Athens' homicide laws were among its oldest,<sup>34</sup> and retained the Drakonian emphasis upon intention, as opposed to the later focus upon evidence of damage done.<sup>35</sup> Thus it is that the Aristotelian author of the *Ethika Megala* recounts a case in which a woman who gave a man a  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$ , which proved to be fatal

<sup>30</sup> Dickie (2001), p. 55; Collins (2001), 487; Gordon (1999), 248-9.

<sup>31</sup> On the plague see Thuk. 2.48.2. The necessity of identifying the culprit would of course prove difficult. Despite the fears that the ancients obviously had regarding their water supply, there is little evidence for adulteration of wells in antiquity. During the outbreak of the Black Death of the fourteenth century C. E. there were also frequent allegations of poisoning by minority groups such as Jews, Arabs, pilgrims and lepers, despite a comparable lack of evidence: Simon Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1991), p. 319.

<sup>32</sup> Aelian, *V. H.* 5.18; Collins (2001), 477 n. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon (1999), 248-9.

<sup>34</sup> On the issue of whether Drakon's homicide law remained unchanged from the seventh century see MacDowell (1978), pp. 42-43.



for him, was acquitted on the Areopagos because she successfully argued that the draught was a love potion, and had not been intended to kill him.<sup>36</sup> Hyllos' defence of Deianeira's actions in the *Trachiniai* with reference to her innocent intent<sup>37</sup> may therefore be seen to be entirely in keeping with Athenian homicide law.

Where a person was suspected or accused of a magical attack which amounted to less than murder, but rather damage to another person or their property, a damages charge (δολοφονία καὶ βλάβη) may have been brought instead.<sup>38</sup> In *The shape of Athenian law*, Todd attests to the remarkable flexibility of this charge,<sup>39</sup> which could be implemented in cases of breach of contract,<sup>40</sup> unusual material damage such as flooding of land,<sup>41</sup> as well as more ill-defined forms of damage.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Todd suggests that the charge of δολοφονία καὶ βλάβη was especially useful in cases where ill-defined or non-material damage or loss was being alleged, making it particularly relevant to accusations of magical harm.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 114-5.

<sup>36</sup> Arist., *Ethika Megala* 1188b30-38. Plutarch and Polyaeus preserve a similar story, in which Arethaphila tries to poison Nikokrates, the tyrant of Cyrene. When her plan was discovered, she claimed that the ἄφροσύνη καὶ ἐπιθυμία was a love potion, not a poison: Polyaeus, *Strat.* 8.38; Plut., *Mul. Virt.* 19, 256c. Michael Gagarin notes that in Antiphon's *Against the stepmother* the prosecution fails to prove the murderous intentions of the accused woman, making the case weak. Michael Gagarin (ed.), Antiphon, *The Speeches* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 104.

<sup>37</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 1136; cf. chapter five, p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon (1999), 248. Trevor J. Saunders, 'Plato on the treatment of heretics', in Foxhall and Lewis (1996), 99 finds that a δολοφονία καὶ βλάβη could probably have been used in cases of poisoning.

<sup>39</sup> S. C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (Oxford, 1993), p. 279. cf. R. G. Osborne, 'Law in action in classical Athens', *JHS* 105 (1985), 40-58, esp. 56-58.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Dem. 48, *Against Olympiodoros for damage*.

<sup>41</sup> Dem. 55.

<sup>42</sup> As in Dem. 39, where a prominent figure sues his half-brother for damages, for adopting a name which is his own traditional, aristocratic prerogative.

<sup>43</sup> Todd (1993), p. 281.

Unlike the charge of murder through the use of  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  discussed previously, a  $\rho\bullet\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$   $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  could be brought even if the harm was unintentional. That this charge constituted a very real threat to those who practised with  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  is perhaps indicated by a hostile statement in the Hippocratic *On the sacred disease*, that magical healers often refrained from prescribing any  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  or baths, lest they be held to account in the event their patient died.<sup>44</sup> Like a charge of deliberate murder, though, a  $\rho\bullet\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$   $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  would theoretically have been difficult to win, with the onus being on the prosecution to provide evidence or persuade the  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$  of the strength of their case.<sup>45</sup> The absence of any evidence or witnesses in Antiphon's speech *Against the stepmother* may bear testimony to the difficulty with which cases of murder or damage by magical means could be prosecuted effectively.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that, as difficult as a charge of damage by sorcery was to prove, an accusation invoked substantial fear in the accused. A sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Knidos provides us with two Hellenistic examples of  $\epsilon\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta\sigma\tau\omicron\theta\epsilon\lambda\theta$ ,<sup>47</sup> issued by women who have been accused of

<sup>44</sup> Hipp., *OTSD* 2; cf. Gordon (1999), 245.

<sup>45</sup> Todd observes that Athenian law is adversarial and *agonistic*, rather than inquisitorial. This means, in effect, that the jurors' task is to decide who has made the stronger and more persuasive case, not to discern who is speaking the truth. Todd (1993), pp. 59, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Gordon (1999), 248; Gagarin (1997), p. 104. cf. n. 33 above.

<sup>47</sup> On curse inscriptions see chapter one, pp. 2-3, 8-9.

using malicious  $\alpha\theta\psi\phi\omega\epsilon\zeta$  against men. One stands accused by a man of administering  $\alpha\theta\psi\phi\omega\epsilon\zeta$  to her husband. It is clear that the woman has become estranged from her husband on account of the allegations of this third party.<sup>48</sup> The second woman stands accused of giving a  $\alpha\theta\psi\phi\omega\epsilon\zeta\eta$  to a certain Asklapiadas, or of hiring a (wise-)woman to do so.<sup>49</sup> Both publish self-imprecatory statements as a weak strategy to prove their innocence.<sup>50</sup> Desperation is implicit in the actions taken by these women, who apparently lacked the means and influence to ensure that they escaped conviction by formal means.<sup>51</sup> It would seem that whether a person accused of using malicious sorcery was convicted or not depended upon other factors besides solid evidence. For instance the relative status of the two litigants often proved to be relevant to the outcome of a trial, as did various forms of stereotyping. Before returning to this point, we shall first complete our survey of possible avenues for the pursuit of magic in the Athenian legal system.

The case of Theoris of Lemnos is critical for any discussion of the treatment of magic under classical Athenian law. The earliest account of the successful prosecution and execution of this woman, is preserved in Demosthenes' speech *Against Aristogeiton*.<sup>52</sup> The prosecution asserts that Theoris, a Lemnian woman, was convicted for the crime of being a

<sup>48</sup> DT no. 4a = *I. Knidos* 150a1-8 = Syll. 3 1800.

<sup>49</sup> *I. Knidos* 147a6-18 = DT 1.

<sup>50</sup> Lindsay Watson has suggested that curses aimed at obtaining justice were frequently issued by those who were too powerless to have access to other means of redress: Watson (1991), p. 6. cf. Faraone (1991), 20; Versnel (1991), esp. 65ff.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon (1999), 246-7.

ἄθεοι ὄντες ἔτι ζῆτες, and was put to death, along with her whole family. This is our only ancient evidence that it was a criminal offence to simply be a sorceress, and there are reasons for doubting the veracity of the statement. If, for instance, Theoris really was put to death because she was a ἄθεοι ὄντες ἔτι ζῆτες, then Eunomos, the man who then took up her business, along with the many ritual practitioners of whom Hippokrates, Plato and others speak should logically fear for their own lives at Athens. However the ancient sources rather indicate that ritual healing procedures and minority religious observances<sup>53</sup> flourished from the eighth century world of Homeric epic through to the fourth century and beyond, apparently unimpeded by criticisms from the intellectuals of the classical period.<sup>54</sup> In a study of socio-religious sanctions on magic in Greece and Rome, C. R. Phillips III remarks upon the frequency of unsanctioned activity in the sources, and the infrequency of legal action taken against such activity. He finds, as a result, that where offenders are prosecuted, special (often political) circumstances rather than societal revulsion were frequently involved.<sup>55</sup> We shall return to this suggestion later in this chapter.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Dem., *Against Aristogeiton* 25.77-9. The speech does not belong to the genuine works of Demosthenes, although this does not discredit its worth as evidence in the present debate.

<sup>53</sup> Gordon refers to these specialist, non-civic observances as 'dominated practice' in an archaic and classical context, recognising that they were yet to be marked as strongly 'magical' in this earlier period. Gordon (1999), 244.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: guardian statues in ancient Greek myth and ritual* (New York, 1992a), 114; Collins (2001) 485; Gordon (1999), 178; Dickie (2001), pp. 22-7 *contra* Dodds (1951), pp. 188-95.

<sup>55</sup> C. R. Phillips III, 'Nullum Crimin sine Lege: socioreligious sanctions on magic' in Faraone and Obbink (1991), 261-9.

<sup>56</sup> See below, p. 186 n. 77, p. 201 n. 152.

In addition, it has been amply demonstrated that Athenian orators' recollections to the jurors were frequently unreliable, either intentionally<sup>57</sup> or otherwise.<sup>58</sup> In this speech the prosecution has much to gain from over-simplifying or over-stating Theoris' crime to one of sorcery. The principal reason for the author to include details about Theoris is to blacken the names of both Aristogeiton and his brother Eunomos by virtue of their association with her. Aristogeiton, the Demosthenic writer tells us, is a state-debtor and a convicted sycophant<sup>59</sup> who now faces the death penalty. In an effort to have the complicating testimony of Eunomos disregarded, the prosecution constructs a detailed and unsavoury profile of the man and his past. It is claimed that Eunomos acquired Theoris' store of drugs and incantations (♦ϑεῖμα ἄνευ ζυγίου καὶ ἄνευ κρητῶν ♦ϑεῖμα καὶ μὲν ἐπιπέσειν ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπιπέσειν ἐν γαίῃ) after the woman was put to death with her entire family, and that he professes to cure epileptics by means of charms and tricks (ὁ δὲ νόσος ἐπιπέσειν ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπιπέσειν ἐν γαίῃ καὶ ἐπιπέσειν ἐν γαίῃ καὶ ἐπιπέσειν ἐν οὐρανῷ), despite being sufferer of epilepsy himself. The speaker is thus describing Eunomos in similar terms to the charlatans whom the author of *On the sacred disease* identifies and derides. This would indicate that elite arguments against such practices were well-established and developed across an array of literary genres. It also suggests that negative stereotypes about traditional healers were

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<sup>57</sup> Todd (1993), pp. 54-5.  
<sup>58</sup> Thomas (1989); Collins (2001), 477.  
<sup>59</sup> See Dem. 25.38 for Aristogeiton's past conviction for sykophancy. For the charge of sykophancy more generally see Todd (1993), pp. 92-4, who adopts this spelling to differentiate the reviled ancient figure from the modern English term.  
<sup>60</sup> Dem. 25.79-80.  
<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

readily available to writers such as Pseudo-Demosthenes, to be put to various uses. As a result it is difficult to determine from this single hostile source whether or not Eunomos is genuinely a practitioner of religious, traditional or magical healing. What is clear is that the prosecution includes this detail along with other ‘dirt’, in an attempt to discredit the man’s moral character.<sup>62</sup> The idea conveyed by the orator is that if Theoris was a sorceress and was put to death for it, then Eunomos, who follows in her footsteps, is equally execrable and does not deserve the jury’s attention.

Later sources for Theoris provide inconsistent corroboration of the Demosthenic version of events. A fourth century source, the historian Philochoros, identifies Theoris as a seer (Ὀυρανομαντεία), and recounts that she was executed, along with her family, after being found guilty of εὐνομομαντεία.<sup>63</sup> This source assumes hitherto unknown details – that Theoris was a Ὀυρανομαντεία, and that the charge laid against her was one of εὐνομομαντεία. Collins suggests that Philochoros, using Demosthenes as his source, inaccurately paraphrased the speech.<sup>64</sup> However, given Philochoros’ precision as to Theoris’ social location and the charge against her, it seems more appropriate to assume that the more or less contemporary historian had other sources at his disposal. Collins concedes that this is not improbable.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Collins (2001), 486.

<sup>63</sup> Philochoros *apud* Harpokration s.v. εὐνομομαντεία, in *F.Gr.H.*, no. 328 F 60.

<sup>64</sup> Collins (2001), 490.

According to Plutarch, Theoris was a priestess (ἱερόσυλλος) who was prosecuted by Demosthenes and executed for teaching slaves to deceive,<sup>66</sup> which further complicates our picture of the trial. To account for this identification of Theoris as a priestess, Collins hypothesizes that Plutarch read the Demosthenic account and took it to be genuine, but that he then conflated the case of Theoris with that of a second executed woman, named Ninos.<sup>67</sup> Ninos was a famous priestess, whom Demosthenes mentions several times, and with whom Theoris was often compared.<sup>68</sup> Such an error on Plutarch's part could account for the identification of Theoris as a priestess, although there is no indication in any of our sources for Ninos<sup>69</sup> or for Theoris that either woman was accused of or charged with teaching slaves to deceive. Collins' theory must therefore be deemed unsatisfactory. Given that Plutarch's account of the charge against Theoris, and of the woman's location in society differ markedly from those found in the Demosthenic speech, we must accept the possibility that the writer had another source at his disposal, perhaps one belonging to the same tradition followed by Philochoros.<sup>70</sup> It is conceivable that if, as Philochoros asserts, Theoris was a ἱερόσυλλος of some kind, Plutarch confused (or oversimplified) the matter and substituted the title of one kind of ritual figure - ἱερόσυλλος - for another - ἱερόσυλλος. These two roles are not, of course,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. n. 87.

<sup>66</sup> Plut., *Dem.* 14.4.

<sup>67</sup> Collins (2001), 491-2.

<sup>68</sup> Ninos in *Dem.* 19.281, 39.2, 40.9. On comparisons between Ninos and Theoris see Collins (2001), n. 91. Ninos is discussed further below, pp. 186-87.

<sup>69</sup> *Dem.* 19.281 with scholia, 39.2, 40.9; Josephus 2.267.

<sup>70</sup> *contra* Collins (2001), 491.

entirely interchangeable. A priestess was usually formally appointed, and she performed specific duties for particular temples in fixed locations. A seer, on the other hand, could be an itinerant figure,<sup>71</sup> but could also have a more secure location and role in society. This ambiguity in the social location and religious functions of the seer, and ‘sacred’ persons more generally, along with Roman cultural influences, may explain Plutarch’s identification of Theoris as a priestess.

The source of Plutarch’s assertion that Theoris was guilty of teaching slaves to deceive is more difficult to understand, unless it is based upon an interpretation of the Demosthenic account. In the speech the prosecution explains that Eunomos, himself in bondage to the state of Athens, obtained  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  and  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$  from Theoris through the agency of the executed woman’s maidservant. On the basis of this text Plutarch may have concluded that Theoris was guilty of teaching her own and perhaps other slaves to deceive by magical means.<sup>72</sup> Versnel accepts and attempts to combine both versions of the case, finding that Theoris was a priestess who was charged with both practising magic and teaching slaves to deceive.<sup>73</sup> As has already been pointed out, though, the Demosthenic prosecution was primarily concerned with discrediting the testimony of Eunomos. As such, it probably only mentioned Theoris’ maidservant in order to link the man

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<sup>71</sup> Collins (2001), 491.

<sup>72</sup> Collins (2001), 492. cf. L. Ziehen, ‘ $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ’, *RE* 5 (1934), pt. 2, 2237-8. Issues of deception loom large in Plato’s discussions of magic, and in the term  $\gamma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\alpha$  itself.



with the so-called ‘foul sorceress’

(ὄψις καὶ φαρμακία ἐπιτελεῖται ἐν αὐτῇ).<sup>73</sup>

While accounts of the charges laid against Theoris vary greatly between our sources, Philochoros’ assertion that Theoris was executed on a count of φαρμακία ἐπιτελεῖται is particularly compelling. Unlike Demosthenes’ version of her crime, φαρμακία ἐπιτελεῖται is a recognised charge in Athenian law.<sup>75</sup> The punishment to which the woman was subjected – execution – is also consistent with the punishment meted out to those found guilty of extreme or socially inflammatory crimes of impiety.<sup>76</sup> By virtue of its hazy definition and the death penalty which it attracted, the charge of φαρμακία ἐπιτελεῖται was also a useful way of disposing of political or personal rivals.<sup>77</sup>

Since one source asserts that Ninon, too, was found guilty of concocting love-philtres for use on young men,<sup>78</sup> we shall devote some space to her in the present discussion. This woman was executed in the mid-fourth century B.C.E. for deeds in connection with her participation in Bacchic rites – an activity which was already associated with ὄψις καὶ φαρμακία by the

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<sup>73</sup> H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion I* (Leiden, 1990), p. 118 with n. 87.

<sup>74</sup> Dem. 25.79-80.

<sup>75</sup> While Philochoros was primarily an historian, it must be remembered that Demosthenes is writing within a genre which seeks to persuade rather than elucidate.

<sup>76</sup> Several of Alkibiades’ peers were put to death for φαρμακία ἐπιτελεῖται after being found guilty of mutilating Hermai in a high profile case in 415: Andokides, *On the Mysteries*; Plutarch, *Alk.* 22. Sokrates was executed for religious non-conformity: Favorinus *apud* Diog. Laert. 2.40; Xen., *Mem.* 1.1.1; Plato, *Apol.* 24c. Other cases involved the lesser punishment of exile and a heavy fine: MacDowell (1978), p. 197.

<sup>77</sup> Todd (1993), pp. 158-9; Gordon (1999), 249-50; Collins (2001), 491.

<sup>78</sup> Schol. Dem. 19.281.

time of Herakleitos.<sup>79</sup> As in the case of Theoris, our sources differ as to the exact crime the woman was thought to have committed. It is unclear whether Ninos was found guilty of conducting initiations into the foreign cult of Sabazios<sup>80</sup> or of mocking the mysteries.<sup>81</sup> Both crimes would fall under the larger rubric of  $\text{θερμ} \diamond \text{δ} \mu \chi \text{ε}$ , although only Josephus is explicit on this point. A further variation is the suggestion that Ninos was involved with the manufacture of love potions. This claim comes from a single ancient commentator, whose source and accuracy cannot be verified.<sup>82</sup> However, the apparent conflict between the charges laid against Ninos, in the various sources, are less glaring than would first appear. For as Versnel points out, prophets and professionals of foreign cults were commonly associated with sorcery throughout classical antiquity.<sup>83</sup> This association operates in tandem with the tendency to view all perceived magic as foreign.<sup>84</sup> I would suggest, then, that as the leader of a foreign mystery cult, Ninos may have been particularly vulnerable to claims that she made illicit use of ritual power – magic. Once again, the fact that Ninos, like Theoris, was brought to trial for the

<sup>79</sup> Collins (2001), 491. cf. Herakleitos DK 12 B 14, from Clement, *Protr.* 22.2, and my introduction, pp. 17-8.

<sup>80</sup> Josephus 2.267.

<sup>81</sup> Schol. Dem. 19.281.

<sup>82</sup> Schol. Dem. 19.281. See the discussion in Dickie (2001), pp. 52-4.

<sup>83</sup> Followers of foreign religions are grouped with other practitioners of magical or otherwise unsanctioned ritual practice by Plato, *Rep.* 264b-c; *Laws* 10, 908c-d, 909b; *Hipp. OTSD* 1; Herakleitos DK 12 B 14. Versnel (1990), p. 80. cf. chapter one, pp. 17-8. For the same phenomenon in later periods, see A. F. Segal, 'Hellenistic magic: some questions of definition', in R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions for G. Quispel* (Leiden, 1981), 349-75; P. Brown, 'Sorcery, demons and the rise of christianity', in idem, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), 119-46.

<sup>84</sup> On which see especially chapter one, pp. 17-9; chapter four, pp. 116ff; and chapter seven, *passim*. On the relationship between foreign cult and magic see further Gordon (1987), 72ff.

specific crime of *εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον* - which was notoriously abused for political ends – may suggest ulterior motives behind her prosecution.

There is one final piece of information at our disposal – a fable from Aesop<sup>85</sup> – which is relevant to our discussion of the charge of impiety as it relates to the use of magic. The fable tells of a female magician (*μαγιστρίδα*) who proclaimed herself to be expert in incantations (*ἐπισημαστικῶν*) and the calming (*ἡσυχαστικῶν*) of divine wrath, and profited greatly thereby. She was put to death for innovating in matters divine (*εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον*) according to an early version of the fable, while a later recension identifies the charge against her as *εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον*.<sup>86</sup> In support of the use of such a source, the earliest known collection of Aesopic fables was made near the end of the fourth century by the Athenian Demetrios of Phaleron, and Athenian elements have been detected in other parts of the older recension of the fables.<sup>87</sup> Dickie points out that the use of certain Attic terms relevant to impious actions,<sup>88</sup> along with the references to the Athenian procedure against *εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον*,<sup>89</sup> in conjunction with the

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<sup>85</sup> Aesop, no. 112 Halm = 56 Hausrath = B. E. Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, Philological monographs of the American Philological Association, 7 (Haverford, 1936), no. 56.

<sup>86</sup> On the *recensions Augustana* and *Accursiana* of Aesop see Perry (1936), pp. 71-208.

<sup>87</sup> Dickie (2001), p. 52, with n. 17.

<sup>88</sup> Dickie is particularly concerned with the terms *ἡσυχαστικῶν* and *ἐπισημαστικῶν*: (2001), p. 52.

<sup>89</sup> Socrates was, of course, charged with *εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον*, specifically for not acknowledging the gods of the polis, and instead introducing new gods: Favorinus *apud* Diog. Laert. 2.40; Xen., *Mem.* 1.1.1; Plato, *Apol.* 24c. According to Josephus, Ninos was charged with *εὐσεβείᾳ ἀνόμιμον* for the introduction of new gods, in keeping with Athenian tradition: Josephus 2.267. On this charge see further Versnel (1990), pp. 123ff.

claims made by the woman<sup>90</sup> all suggest that this fable belongs to the fourth century Demetrian collection.<sup>91</sup> The fable does not elucidate exactly what it was that this ἄγχιμαχὶς ἰατρός did to be accused of impiety. It cannot be concluded that it was the practice of magic in itself that drew the charge, and in fact this is most unlikely considering the apparent prevalence of such ritual professionals. It seems more likely that her use of magic to placate the gods was considered impious because it was perceived to be somehow innovative or non-traditional.<sup>92</sup>

While we cannot be absolutely certain, on the basis of the available evidence, of the crimes for which Theoris and Ninos were convicted and executed, ἀσεβεία seems the most probable charge in both cases.<sup>93</sup> If our sources seem lacking in consistency as to the precise offences of the two women, then it should be pointed out that Athenian law devoted scarce attention to the defining of crimes, or torts. Laws were rather more concerned to dictate *how* a crime should be pursued.<sup>94</sup>

While we do not have any documentation for the law about

<sup>90</sup> By claiming to be able to calm the wrath of the gods Aesop's ἄγχιμαχὶς ἰατρός resembles those ritual experts whom Plato describes as 'beastlike' (ἄγχιμαχὶς ἰατρός), and as predators upon the rich, in his discussions of impiety: Plato, *Laws* 909b, 933a, *Rep.* 364b. The Hippocratic author of *On the Sacred Disease* scorns those who profess superior knowledge of, and control over, the gods: Hipp., *OTSD* 1.

<sup>91</sup> Dickie (2001), p. 52.

<sup>92</sup> As proposed by Dickie (2001), p. 52. It was shown earlier that practitioners of magic were not always brought to trial: see p. 181.

<sup>93</sup> Versnel and Dickie find it probable, though not conclusive, that both women were found guilty of ἀσεβεία: Versnel (1990), p. 118; Dickie (2001), p. 54; MacDowell concludes with more certainty that the two were executed on this charge: MacDowell (1978), p. 197. Collins alone finds favour in the theory that Theoris was charged with murder by ἀσεβεία under Drakonian law, although there is no suggestion in the ancient sources that any murder occurred. Collins concedes that a charge of ἀσεβεία cannot be ruled out entirely. Ninos falls largely outside the scope of his discussion: Collins (2001), 489-91, 493.

θεῶν τιμὰς ἠεροῦς, it has been suggested, by both Todd and MacDowell, that it probably resembled the law against ἀσέβεια.<sup>95</sup> This law, quoted by Demosthenes, declares that any entitled Athenian may submit a νόμισμα ἠεροῦς against anyone who treats another with ἀσέβεια.<sup>96</sup> Demosthenes quotes the text of the law at some length, yet at no point is an act of ἀσέβεια actually defined. The law against impiety would thus be framed along the lines of: ‘If somebody commits θεῶν τιμὰς ἠεροῦς, let (entitled person/s) submit a νόμισμα ἠεροῦς against him/her. David Cohen, in his own discussion of the repression of impiety, makes the point that this lack of definitions of crimes is a feature that Athens’ legal system shared with most pre-modern statutory schemes.<sup>98</sup>

Plato undertakes a careful and lengthy discussion of the varieties of and punishments for θεῶν τιμὰς ἠεροῦς in his *Laws*, and so one may be tempted to extrapolate Athenian legal definitions and practices from his writings. Saunders, however, warns against this methodology, arguing that we cannot confidently apply his definitions and procedures to Athenian legal reality in this instance. This is because most of the known historical cases of impiety are concerned with acts of religious impropriety that, it is feared, would endanger the wider community by arousing divine

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<sup>94</sup> MacDowell (1978), p. 199; Todd (1993), p. 60.

<sup>95</sup> MacDowell (1978), p. 199; Todd (1993), p. 310.

<sup>96</sup> Dem. 21.47.

<sup>97</sup> This term refers to a particular legal action used to try those accused of committing public offences at Athens. cf. Todd (1993), p. 307-10.

<sup>98</sup> David Cohen, ‘The prosecution of impiety in Athenian law’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanistische Abteilung* 105 (1988), 698.

wrath and spite. The Platonic gods, on the other hand, are wholly righteous, and so according to Saunders, they would not punish an entire community for the disrespectful actions of the few.<sup>99</sup> In actual fact, Plato states that those who employ the services of persons who specialise in impious rituals call down the wrath of the gods upon themselves, and indirectly upon the whole city.<sup>100</sup> This error notwithstanding, Saunders is correct to assert that Plato's main interest lies with improving public morality through educational punishments, whereas the Athenian city-state was more concerned about the need to allay divine anger.

In the absence of formal definitions, the validity of an accusation of *θερμὸν ἄσέβητον* will have been at the discretion of the jurors, on the basis of their own sensibilities and assumptions as to the nature and meaning of the crime.<sup>101</sup> Cultural assumptions were thus entrenched in the Athenian statutory system.

Aristotle ventures a definition for *θερμὸν ἄσέβητον*. For this philosopher, impiety is:

‘...an offence concerning the gods or *daimones* or about the dead

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<sup>99</sup> Plato law is, consequently, little concerned with offences against ritual, the revealing of mysteries, or the introduction of new gods, but is verbose on the subject of heretical opinions about the existence and nature of the gods. His primary concern is that such impious people will pollute the thoughts of others: Saunders (1996), 91-2.

<sup>100</sup> Plato, *Laws* 910b3-6.

<sup>101</sup> For Cohen, ‘definitions of offences were simply those inherent in the collective consciousness of the community as manifested through the 500 or more judges who happened to be sitting on a particular day to hear a particular case’: Cohen (1988), 698.

or the parents or the fatherland.’<sup>102</sup>

This well-known phrase is both remarkably broad and vague, and consistent with the wide range of cases known to have been pursued in the name of impiety. A further discussion of the precise definition comes to us through one of Plato’s Sokratic dialogues. When pressed by his companion, Euthyphro offers as a definition of  $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\iota\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$ :

‘that which is not pleasing to the gods’<sup>103</sup>

which, as Sokrates points out, is unhelpfully vague. Such definitions, we may conjecture, went some way towards expressing popular understandings of impiety, which were perhaps rarely articulated. The absence of firm definition for a religious crime such as impiety is justifiable, given that Greek religion (and indeed science) was governed by no central authority.<sup>104</sup> In such a society, what is true or untrue of the gods and of the world necessarily remains unfixed, and subject to the influences of the ‘highest political instances’, to adopt Gordon’s phrasing.<sup>105</sup> True to its vague terminology, the  $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\iota\epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$  law was successfully applied to such diverse offences as the maltreatment of

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<sup>102</sup> Arist., *Virt. Vit.* 1251a30.

<sup>103</sup> Plato, *Euthyphro* 7a.

<sup>104</sup> Phillips III (1991), 268.

<sup>105</sup> On the negotiation of truth through oratory see Gordon (1999), 162; Christopher A. Faraone, ‘An accusation of magic in classical Athens (Ar. Wasps 946-8)’, *TAPhA* 119 (1989), 159. cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, ‘The spiritual universe of the *polis*’ in idem, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca and New York, 1982), pp. 52-4, although Vernant appears to over-estimate the extent of literacy, and of the equality of access to, and participation in political processes.

priests,<sup>106</sup> the destruction of sacred groves<sup>107</sup> and of sacred statues,<sup>108</sup> as well as the dissemination or teaching of atheism or non-conformist religious belief, best known to us through the trial of Sokrates.<sup>109</sup>

Before attempting to draw any conclusions about the legal status of magic users in Athens, one must be conscious of the gulf that exists between modern western systems of justice, and the 'primitive'<sup>110</sup> legal system afforded by Athens' law courts. We have already noted that Athenian law was little concerned to define its own terms. Crimes such as  $\diamond\odot\clubsuit\delta\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma$  and  $\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma$  (and many others besides) were allowed to remain undefined, to be interpreted by individual  $\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ . The Athenian legal system was instead concerned to prescribe and govern the ways that crimes were to be handled. Or to state the matter in different terms, it was overwhelmingly concerned with matters of procedure at the expense of matters of substance. Roman and modern legal systems, in contrast, both place matters of substance (one's rights, for instance) ahead of procedural concerns.<sup>111</sup> To use the example of the previous section, an eligible member of the Athenian

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<sup>106</sup> Demosthenes accused Midias of  $\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma$  after the man hit him when he was a  $\mu\eta\delta\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma$  at the Dionysia: Dem., *Ag. Mid.* 1, 12, 20, 34, 51, 55. A group of Delians were punished for chasing and assaulting the Amphiktyons, also on a charge of impiety: *Syll.* 3 153 1. 135.

<sup>107</sup> As is the case in Lysias 7.

<sup>108</sup> The case of the defacing of Hermai has already been mentioned: see n. 76 above.

<sup>109</sup> See n. 89 above.

<sup>110</sup> Todd regards Athenian law as primitive: Todd (1993), p. 64. Foxhall and Lewis in fact regard Athenian law as being 'not yet primitive', having identified the Roman legal system as truly primitive: Foxhall and Lewis (1996), *introd.*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Foxhall and Lewis (1996), *introd.*, 2. In this it contrasts Roman law, and the modern legal systems which developed out of Roman law. Where a Roman lawyer would look first to what one's rights ('the rules') were, an Athenian litigant would first discern what means of redress were available to rectify their perceived grievance. Todd adequately



*demos* accusing others of using magical  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\mu$  could charge them, variously, with murder,  $\rho\omicron\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  (for damage, wilful or otherwise), or  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ , such was the degree of overlap between possible charges.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, the penalty faced by the accused, if found guilty, would be either compensation for damage, imprisonment or execution, depending on the sub-class of legal action chosen by the plaintiff, within each of the above charges.<sup>113</sup>

Taken in conjunction with the largely un-codified nature of Athenian legislation,<sup>114</sup> this abundance and overlap of procedural law, and dearth of substantive law meant that it was (and is) in fact difficult to discern what ‘the law’ was on any given issue.<sup>115</sup> Where laws were in place to govern particular types of behaviour, they did not carry the binding force that modern laws do. Instead, they functioned as a form of evidence, to be introduced by orators as a tool for persuasion.<sup>116</sup> Proof, in a court case, consisted of persuasion through performance, rather than

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rebuffs objections to this understanding of the shape of Athenian law: Todd (1993), pp. 64-7.

<sup>112</sup> There was demonstrable overlap between the charges of  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  and  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ : Dem. 24.177, 22.69, and see David Cohen, *Theft in Athenian Law* (Munich, 1983), ch. 3. Similarly, the charges of  $\rho\omicron\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ ,  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  and  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  can overlap, as at Dem. 21.35; Arist., *Rhet.* 1.13. cf. Arist., *Rhet.* 1374a.

<sup>113</sup> Todd gives an exhaustive account of the different procedures which could be employed to rectify a wide array of grievances. He points out that a  $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\lambda\epsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$  for  $\rho\omicron\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  involved rather more lenient punishments than did a  $\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\mu$  for  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ : Todd (1993), p. 109. In the case of  $\alpha\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ , an alternative charge of  $\mu\eta\epsilon\rho\sigma\mu$  could be brought instead, which would mean that the case was heard by the  $\rho\omicron\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$ , rather than a public official: Todd (1993), p. 99. Osborne explores the influence that status, wealth and class had on types of legal actions taken: R. Osborne, ‘Law in action in classical Athens’, *JHS* 105 (1985), 40-58.

<sup>114</sup> Todd asserts that the efforts of Drakon and Solon should best be viewed as *compilations* of laws, rather than codifications: Todd (1993), p. 55.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

precedent or application of regulations.<sup>117</sup> The necessary techniques of persuasion (and success in litigation), in turn, were best gained through an elite education in rhetoric.<sup>118</sup>

The agonistic nature of Athenian legal structures, along with the weight placed upon public, spoken performance in litigation<sup>119</sup> remind us that Athenian law was very much a masculine sphere of activity.<sup>120</sup> Given that the bulk of our legal sources for the repression of magic under Athenian law involve allegations against women, the extent to which law was a gendered sphere deserves some consideration.

Criminal trials are best viewed as being part of a larger social process, in which alliances and disputes were publicly expressed (and perpetuated) by male community members. In a society that revolved around competition between individuals and groups for prestige, litigation was an arena in which relative reputations could be negotiated.<sup>121</sup> It is quite plausible to say that conflicts could be and were created specifically so that they could be played out in the agonistic context of the lawcourt.<sup>122</sup> That is, legal procedures were aimed at dispute perpetuation as often as

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<sup>116</sup> A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens*, II: *Procedure* (Oxford, 1968-71), pp. 134-5; A. R. W. Harrison, 'Law-making at Athens at the end of the fifth century BC', *JHS* 75 (1955), 31 n. 42; Todd (1993), pp. 58-9.

<sup>117</sup> I. Worthington, *Persuasion: Greek rhetoric in action* (London, 1994); W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>118</sup> Foxhall and Lewis (1996), introd., review ways that the rich and powerful appropriate and mobilise law for their own purposes.

<sup>119</sup> On which see especially Todd (1993), pp. 147-8; Matthew R. Christ, *The Litigious Athenian* (Baltimore and London, 1998).

<sup>120</sup> For Vernant, the *polis* system rests upon the primacy of the spoken word: Vernant (1982), pp. 49-68. cf. n. 105 above.

<sup>121</sup> Todd (1993), p. 161. cf. Foxhall (1996), 137.

dispute settlement.<sup>123</sup> The public gathering at a trial was in many ways inseparable from, and a continuation of, the dispute which initiated it.<sup>124</sup> Jury duty, too, provided an important opportunity for eligible male non-litigants to contribute to the social and political agendas exercised through litigious contests.<sup>125</sup>

Legal proceedings at Athens were of a highly adversarial character. In such a system, a trial is a contest between two parties, with the judge or jury deciding who has a *better case*. In the contrasting inquisitorial system, the judge is more directly responsible for interrogating witnesses and discovering the *truth*.<sup>126</sup> With no true police force and a very circumscribed role for magistrates,<sup>127</sup> most legal actions were privately prosecuted.<sup>128</sup> The system was thus extremely conducive to the playing out of personal, political<sup>129</sup> or kin rivalries.

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<sup>122</sup> Foxhall (1996), 137.

<sup>123</sup> Todd (1993), p. 153.

<sup>124</sup> Foxhall (1996), 133.

<sup>125</sup> Isokrates complains of juries' bias against elite litigants at 7.50-4. The author of the *Ath. Pol.* also makes clear that after jury pay was introduced to encourage the multitudes (♦□≡ □●⚡⊖□□⊗) to attend, the people were indeed sovereign: Pseudo-Arist., *Ath. Pol.* 41.3, 9.1. This author too gives some indication that he feels that the common people exercise too much control over lawful process on account of Solonian reforms: 9.1. On the social and political implications of jury duty see Todd (1993), p. 153; Foxhall and Lewis (1996), introd., 3.

<sup>126</sup> On these two legal systems see Todd (1993), pp. 67-8; P. A. Stein, *Legal Institutions: the development of dispute settlement* (London, 1984), pp. 25-38.

<sup>127</sup> Todd shows that the Skythian archers who patrolled Athens neither investigated, apprehended nor prosecuted offenders: Todd (1993), p. 79. For the limited powers of court officials see *ibid.*, 78-9.

<sup>128</sup> Even 'public' (so-called because they could be initiated by a third, uninvolved party) cases relied upon the initiative of individual prosecutors. Where public officials did bring prosecutions, it was normally for offences committed against them in their official capacity, eg. Lys. 9. cf. Todd (1993), pp. 68, 92.

<sup>129</sup> The Athenian justice system was deeply politicised. For this it has earned criticisms from modern writers, although the ancients – who upheld no notion of the 'separation of powers' – voiced no such concerns about this perceived flaw. Indeed, the author of *Athenaion Politeia* comments on this feature without criticism: Pseudo-Arist., *Ath. Pol.*

Insofar as acceptable behaviour was negotiated and shaped through legal discourse, then, women had no active role to play in the establishment or enforcement of laws in democratic Athens, although the norms expressed through laws were imposed upon them nonetheless.<sup>130</sup>

A woman's own legal interests were represented through her *kyrios*. Laws concerning marriage and adultery regarded women as property, rather than active parties to a misdeed.<sup>131</sup> That said, Aristotle arguably oversimplifies women's legal disability somewhat by describing them as perpetual children.<sup>132</sup>

Ideally, women were to remain aloof from the public aspects of litigation. David Schaps has shown that litigants went so far as to avoid identifying women of their acquaintance by name in their speeches, even where their identities were relevant to the case.<sup>133</sup> Two significant exceptions to

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9.1. For discussion see Todd (1993), pp. 147, 154-63; Paul Cartledge, 'Fowl play: a curious lawsuit in classical Athens' in Cartledge, *et. al.* (1990), 42-4.

<sup>130</sup> On the degree to which women participated in law-making and legal processes see Raphael Sealey, *Women and the Law in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990); Roger Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London and New York, 1989); Foxhall (1996); MacDowell (1978), pp. 84-108.

<sup>131</sup> Foxhall points out that although women were not actively involved in the law-making process, women were not merely passive victims of men in the legal sphere. Because the reputations of women were inseparable from those of their husbands or guardians, litigation against a woman could in fact be an attack upon male members of her *oikos*. Litigation between two parties could be expressed and perpetuated by women through their own female networks. Quarrels involving women could equally be pursued in the court through male members of the household: Foxhall (1996), 140-2. It remained at the discretion of males of the *oikos* which conflicts were to be pursued in the courts, and how such conflicts were to be framed, procedurally.

<sup>132</sup> Despite Aristotle's statement about women's lack of deliberation at *Pol.* 1.1260a9-14, women could assert property rights, provide evidence for litigation, and in turn be charged with such offences as murder: Sealey (1990), pp. 40-9.

<sup>133</sup> eg. Isaios 5.5, 10.4; Dem. 57.37. David Schaps, 'The woman least mentioned: etiquette and women's names', *CQ* 27 (1977), 323-30.

this rule are women allied with one's opponent,<sup>134</sup> and women of questionable reputation,<sup>135</sup> who are identified and named without hesitation.<sup>136</sup> To name a woman in the masculine space of the court in almost any context effectively undermined her respectability.<sup>137</sup> For a woman to actually stand accused of criminal activities was quite rare, as it ran counter to the interests of both women themselves and the men with whom they shared their social identities and reputations.<sup>138</sup>

Given that the Athenian legal system was far from systematic in its implementation of justice, and that the society tolerated much recourse to unsanctioned ritual or magic, the prominence of women as sorceresses in legal disputes is most striking. It has already been noted that there is generally more evidence for the use of magic, and the offering of magical services, by males than females, yet it is women who are more strongly associated with magic use in Greek thought and literature.<sup>139</sup> Athenian legal practice consisted of a loose conglomeration over time of the publicly professed norms<sup>140</sup> of the active citizen body, weighed against the urgings of a given speaker before a particular group of jurors. Where

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<sup>134</sup> As at *Isaios* 3; *Dem.* 42.27.

<sup>135</sup> Demosthenes happily names Neaira and the seven girls she employs as prostitutes at *Dem.* 59; similarly two prostitutes named Sinope and Phanostrate: *Dem.* 22.56, along with the disgraced figures of Theoris (*Dem.* 25.79) and Ninos (*Dem.* 39.2, 19.281, 40.9).

<sup>136</sup> Other women are deemed 'nameable' if they are dead at the time of the speech, or if their identities are critical to the success of a case: Schaps (1977).

<sup>137</sup> Schaps (1977), 327.

<sup>138</sup> Foxhall (1996), 141. For a woman to be accused of a crime suggested that she had (allegedly) stepped out of her proper space and into public affairs and consequently, public scrutiny. See p. 199 below.

<sup>139</sup> See my chapter one, pp. 1-5 above.

<sup>140</sup> These publicly professed norms should not be confused with demonstrated behaviours; see pp. 172-73 above. It has also been shown that in the competitive environment of Athenian society, one may publicly deplore certain behaviours, yet

jurors were interested in the composition of a speech, and not merely its factual content,<sup>141</sup> speakers had much to gain from playing to the prejudices of their audience. As such, it is unsurprising that bias against women should also be expressed in the masculine, public sphere of litigation, consistent with that of the literature. The law court speeches, which are at least as literary as they are documentary,<sup>142</sup> may reasonably be viewed as an extension of this literary *topos*. As such, M. Shaw's observations that women function in drama as catalysts for change and sources of conflict in the public sphere have some relevance to the legal speeches.<sup>143</sup> By their very appearance in the public sphere of law court speeches, women are out their proper place in the *oikos*, away from public attention.<sup>144</sup> And because of this unwelcome intrusion into public life, accused women are treated particularly brutally in the speeches of their opponents, being presented with reference to the worst feminine stereotypes available.<sup>145</sup>

In the bulk of surviving legal texts where defendants are presented as involved in nefarious magical activities, the allegations of sorcery are not well-defined or supported. This is certainly so of the Demosthenic discussion of Theoris in his speech against Aristogeiton. The executed

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covertly employ the very same strategies and behaviours oneself: chapter one, p. 29 n. 118; cf. Versnel (1991), 62 with notes.

<sup>141</sup> Todd argues that juries ought not be judged on their 'gullibility' for accepting poor arguments, as they were frequently more interested to support a litigant who argued persuasively, rather than one who presented truthfully: Stephen Todd, 'The use and abuse of the Attic orators', *G&R* 37 (1990), 159-78, esp. 172.

<sup>142</sup> On issues around the use of orators' speeches as historical evidence see the discussion of Todd (1990).

<sup>143</sup> Shaw (1975), 256; Zeitlin (1996a), 5-6, 347-8; McClure (1999), p. 24.

<sup>144</sup> Hence their automatic loss of status.

woman is only mentioned in this unrelated case as a way of discrediting a witness – a certain Eunomos. But introducing Theoris, Demosthenes is able to suggest that Eunomos consorts with convicted criminals, and that he too deals in the worst kinds of magical charlatanry. It was shown earlier that Theoris, a *metic*,<sup>146</sup> was more likely to have been convicted of  $\Theta\epsilon\rho\iota\varsigma \diamond \Omega\mu\lambda\alpha\iota\tau\iota\varsigma$  for undisclosed improprieties in her position as a ritual professional, than for the sorcery charge that the orator alleges. In his role as persuasive advocate for the prosecution, though, the speaker is under no obligation to prove what he insinuates. The existing *topos* of woman as covert dabbler in potions would help to bolster the speaker's claims on this point.

In the case of Ninos, too, it is quite clear that the woman was a priestess, and reasonably certain that she was a priestess of a foreign cult. Her magical dealings, on the other hand, are far less apparent. The involvement of Ninos and Theoris in non-civic or foreign ritual practices alone may have been sufficient to secure their convictions, given Athenian distrust of alien cultures and private ritual practices.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> As observed by Foxhall (1996), 141.

<sup>146</sup> Collins has tentatively concluded that Theoris belonged to the  $\Theta\mu\lambda\iota\tau\iota\varsigma \diamond \Delta\iota\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\tau\iota\varsigma$  community, on basis of her Lemnian designation, and the fact that she was formally tried for her crime (a privilege which slaves did not enjoy): Collins (2001), 490. cf. Gordon (1999), 250; *contra* Dickie, who finds Theoris to be a citizen, since she is subject to Athenian laws about impiety: Dickie (2001), p. 51. Against the latter interpretation, a group of Delians were charged with impiety against the Athenian Amphiktyones, despite being non-Athenian.

<sup>147</sup> On the perceived connection between foreignness and magic-working see n. 83 above. For the identification of private and non-civic ritual practices with magic see the discussion of definitions in chapter one, p. 16-7; chapter two, pp. 60-2.

Given that both of these women were figures of some standing<sup>148</sup> and the subjects of notorious court cases, yet outsiders to Athenian civic cult, it has been suggested that their separate convictions for  $\text{θεορ}\cdot\mu\iota\ \psi\iota\ \delta\iota\mu\iota\ \chi\epsilon\iota$  - with suggestions of misuse of ritual power - may have been politically motivated.<sup>149</sup> A scholiast to Demosthenes 19.281 tells us that Ninos' conviction was secured by a certain Menekles, who is identified as belonging to a group of men who were in the habit of making such accusations. That is to say, Ninos and her alleged activities may have been offensive not to all, but only to a certain element of the elite, active 'litigating class'.<sup>150</sup>

Where magic is invoked in legal contexts, there is frequently a strong sense that the defendants' reputations are simply being manipulated and blackened by their opponents in litigation. None of the allegations of sorcery in a legal context which have been surveyed in this chapter seem to have been supported by witness statements or other solid evidence (consistent with modern definitions), although these forms of evidence do feature elsewhere in Athenian litigation.<sup>151</sup> In the case of trials for  $\text{θεορ}\cdot\mu\iota\ \psi\iota\ \delta\iota\mu\iota\ \chi\epsilon\iota$ , at least, material evidence was not a high priority,

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<sup>148</sup> Theoris had a female servant in her employ, which suggests that she was more than a simple, poor wise-woman. After Ninos' execution, her son brought a suit against the man who had her convicted, indicating that the family enjoyed some standing and wealth in Athenian society: Dickie (2001), p. 54. Nonetheless, the wealth or social standing of these women proved insufficient to ensure that they escaped capital punishment.

<sup>149</sup> On the use of the charge of  $\text{θεορ}\cdot\mu\iota\ \psi\iota\ \delta\iota\mu\iota\ \chi\epsilon\iota$  for political ends see p. 186 above.

<sup>150</sup> While the Athenian legal system purported to offer equality of justice, in reality the wealthiest five or ten percent dominated litigation, privileged as they were with a rhetorical education, leisure to participate in lengthy legal processes and the wealth to cover legal costs: J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: rhetoric, ideology, and the power of the people* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 112-3, 128-9; Dickie (2001), p. 53.

<sup>151</sup> See for example Aristoph. *Wasps* 963-6; And. 1.14, 1.18, 1.69.



and so was open to abuse when brought by political or personal opponents.<sup>152</sup> Litigants' relative status social status (in conjunction with popular stereotypes) seem to have been rather more relevant in determining the outcomes of trials.

The prosecution in Antiphon's speech *Against the stepmother* argues that two men who died after dining together were poisoned by the prosecution's own stepmother. The plaintiff claims that his stepmother induced a concubine to give the two men a poisonous draught, fooling the woman into thinking it was a love potion.<sup>153</sup> A charge of murder by  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\zeta\iota\kappa\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\&\epsilon$  was probably leveled at the woman.<sup>154</sup> There has been some controversy as to the authorship and authenticity of this speech, although Maidment argues convincingly for its authenticity.<sup>155</sup> Significantly, the prosecution advances neither evidence nor witnesses to support his allegations. Instead, he presents a highly rhetorical picture of the alleged schemes of the two women. He imagines the two men sacrificing, and contrasts their piety with the murderous conspiracy of the two women.<sup>156</sup> At 1.28 the prosecution attacks his brother for championing the woman's innocence, stating that naturally she would appear to be innocent, having concealed her scheme from everyone

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<sup>152</sup> Cohen and Garnsey have argued the case that Sokrates was convicted of holding impious beliefs about the gods, rather than the more tangible crime of publicly teaching and encouraging such impious beliefs: Cohen (1988), 699; but against this opinion see MacDowell (1978), p. 311. cf. Versnel (1990), 125.

<sup>153</sup> Antiphon, *Ag. Stepmother* 1.15-20. See p. 179 and n. 46 above.

<sup>154</sup> K. J. Maidment, introduction to *Minor Attic Orators*, Loeb edn., vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1941), p. 11.

<sup>155</sup> Maidment (1941), p. 9.

<sup>156</sup> Antiphon, *Ag. Stepmother* 1.15-18; Maidment (1941), p. 11.

around her.<sup>157</sup> In the absence of proof of wrongdoing,<sup>158</sup> the prosecution seems instead to be playing to assumptions which the jurors may share with him concerning women's predilection for covert schemes, and especially plots involving  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha$ .<sup>159</sup>

The Athenian society with which we are most familiar – which is to say, Athenian masculine society - was highly politicised, and prided itself on its strong civic ethos.<sup>160</sup> As such, a preference for privacy and solitude on the part of its citizen males was openly discouraged.<sup>161</sup> Women, on the other hand, were ideally to remain unseen and unheard within the *oikos*. Women were effectively excluded from political power, which was accessed through public speech. This exclusion, in turn, became a source of some anxiety, which finds expression as much in the poetic

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<sup>157</sup> It is worth noting that the woman in question was heavily dependant upon this son to defend her in court. Frequently, such accused women must find themselves without a *kyrios* to represent her. The woman who issued a curse inscription at the temple of Demeter and Persephone at Knidos, in which she denied that she had inflicted  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha$  upon her husband, may well have had no male family member prepared to defend her in court against these allegations: see p. 180 n. 48 above.

<sup>158</sup> Carey points out that, on the basis of the prosecution's (lack of) evidence, the men may have died of simple food poisoning, rather than any malicious plot: Christopher Carey, *Trials from Classical Athens* (London and New York, 1997), p. 41.

<sup>159</sup> The woman's innocent demeanour is thereby presented as near proof of her murderous secrecy. cf. Gagarin (1997), p. 106. Dickie surmises (without referring to the controversy) that the speech is a rhetorical exercise rather than part of a real case. In arguing that the speech therefore expresses a 'distillation of a more general reality as its author sees it' concerning women's propensity for covert use of  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha$  (Dickie (2001), p. 89), Dickie seems to imply that legal oratory is a source of transparent facts, rather than a genre which seeks to persuade its audience at all costs. In any case, Dickie seems also to underestimate the extent to which this 'reality' is socially constructed.

<sup>160</sup> Athens' penchant for spectacular public works and large festivals is an expression of this civic focus.

<sup>161</sup> Xenophon's advice to men to avoid spending too much time at home, in the interests of maintaining a good reputation among their peers, is the clearest articulation of this social expectation. See chapter two, pp. 57-60 for further discussion.

literature as in the legal speeches.<sup>162</sup> In Antiphon's speech *Against the stepmother*, for instance, the socially prescribed silence and invisibility of women is invoked as evidence of surreptitious evildoing. This serves to highlight the double bind imposed upon Athenian women of the classical period concerning access to a public voice, and the political authority that speech offered in the *polis*. Antiphon's speech constitutes evidence of one way in which women, who traditionally lived more or less concealed lives, could suffer a negative impact of the bias inherent in the Athenian justice system. Residents who lacked citizen status similarly lacked a political voice in classical Athens. As such their actions, and especially their ritual practices and beliefs were vulnerable to attack under Athenian law.

Accusations or formal prosecutions against the unsanctioned ritual practices which came to be marked as magical frequently imply that such arts threatened social cohesion. When magic was pursued through the court system as a form of impiety, for instance, it was credited with the capacity for inviting divine displeasure upon a whole community. Such damaging activities, it was argued, ought not to be tolerated to exist. Dominated as it was by the concerns of elite, citizen men, the Athenian justice system tended to target non-civic ritual and marginalised groups, insofar as these were viewed as a challenge (albeit a relatively weak one) to the hegemony of this powerful minority. Where practices which were arguably magical served to reaffirm the *status quo*, on the other hand, the

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<sup>162</sup> On this tension between silence as feminine propriety and silence as suspicious,

legal system did not construct such practices as in any way problematic. Provisional curses designed to protect new colonies from hostility,<sup>163</sup> and the *Dirae Teorum*<sup>164</sup> are among such legitimised magical rites.



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non-civic behaviour see Montiglio (2000), pp. 290-1; also chapter five, pp. 164-68.

<sup>163</sup> As discussed in chapter one above, p. 10.

<sup>164</sup> See p. 176 above.

## **Chapter Seven: The invention of the orientalism of magic**

Throughout Graeco-Roman antiquity, the exotic, distant origins of magic were seldom questioned. Critics of magic and self-defined practitioners of the art alike tended to subscribe to and promulgate the notion that the lore, rituals, language and paraphernalia of magic were sourced from distant locales. While some sources indicate that magic was indigenous to Thessaly, a geographical outpost of Greek civilisation, the majority locate magic, as it is variously defined, in the non-Greek east of the Mediterranean world. Against these claims, there are indications that statements that magic belongs to the far reaches of the world were much more (and much less) than statements of known facts. In order to gain an understanding of the role and validity of statements about the exotic origins of magic, one needs first to investigate the Greeks' various attitudes towards foreign cultures and distant lands in the classical period.

The present chapter aims to address two issues which were the subjects of important discourses, particularly in classical drama and philosophy, namely magic and foreigners. The prominence of magic and magic users in classical literature has already been elucidated. It has been shown that the idea (and language) of magic came into existence and evolved rapidly in

meaning over a relatively brief period of time, between the archaic and the Hellenistic periods, as illustrated through classical literature.<sup>1</sup> The focus on these particular centuries of Mediterranean civilisation as pivotal for the formation of the concept of magic is not meant to imply that the idea attained any real stability by the Hellenistic period. On the contrary, it will be demonstrated that by its very nature ancient magic was amenable to innovation, incorporating indigenous marginal religious practice as well as elements of 'alien' wisdom, and shaped by the social and political concerns of the literate, leisured class. For the purposes of this study, though, it will suffice to examine how the concept of magic came into being, and what this concept implied during the classical period.

At the same time that magic was emerging as a recognisable set of beliefs and practices, as constructed and presented by the literary elites of the classical period, the Greek city-states were being forced to acknowledge, interact with and defend themselves against an unparalleled foreign power – Persia. The aftermath of the Persian Wars coincided with an increase in representations of foreigners and foreign settings in literature, and especially in drama.<sup>2</sup> Edith Hall argues that, more importantly, the period following the defeat of the Persian forces saw a dramatic shift in the way that such non-Greeks were portrayed.<sup>3</sup> She observes, for instance, that earlier literature

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<sup>1</sup> On which see chapter one, 14-19 above.

<sup>2</sup> Hall (1989), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

does not appear to differentiate the Greek heroes from their foreign foes in any fundamental way. In Homeric epic particular Trojans, like their Greek foes, are singled out from the action, and represented as demonstrating bravery, military prowess and intelligence.<sup>4</sup> Epic convention dictates that Trojans speak in language indistinguishable from that of the Greeks,<sup>5</sup> and indeed they worship identical gods. That Greek and non-Greek rivals are not presented as polar opposites of each other does not indicate that this mode of thought – that of polarity and analogy – was yet to influence early Greek thought.<sup>6</sup> If polar opposites of Hellenic culture are sought in archaic literature, they are to be found in the mythical gynaeocratic Amazons and the violent, anarchic Kyklopes.<sup>7</sup> That such polarising tendencies are not discernible between Greeks and non-Greeks at this point has been taken to indicate that there was only a limited sense of Pan-Hellenism in the archaic period, and certainly no converse sense of ‘Pan-Barbarism’.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the term ἑλλήνων ἑσθλότης is not recorded until the early fifth century, during the Persian Wars.<sup>9</sup> Other, smaller units of group identity – one’s family,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 21ff.

<sup>5</sup> duBois (1982), p. 79; G. S. Kirk, *Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge, 1964), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd has shown that the Greek mode of understanding the world as an intricate series of binary oppositions was prevalent as early as the Presocratic philosophers: Lloyd (1992), pp. 32-5. On the uses of polar oppositions in Greek thought see also Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: a portrait of self and others* (Oxford, 1993); duBois (1982), ch. 3; see also chapter one, 24-26 above.

<sup>7</sup> Hall (1989), p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> See, however, Gilbert, who argues that both Hellenic identity, and the representation of non-Greeks as generically ‘barbarian’, pre-dated the Persian Wars: Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of Greek Epic* (1934), pp. 144-5.

<sup>9</sup> Hall (1989), pp. 11-2. Homer refers to the language of the Carians as ἑλλήνων ἑσθλότης, although this seems to be merely descriptive: Homer, *Il.* 2.867.

one's city-state - were far more relevant during this period than Pan-Hellenism.<sup>10</sup>

Works published after the repulsion of the Persian forces, on the other hand, demonstrate a marked departure from the archaic approach to non-Greeks, and the conventions surrounding their representation.<sup>11</sup> Aischylos' *Persai* of 472 B.C.E. provides the earliest evidence of a new way of viewing foreigners, and especially Persians. In this work, Persian ethnic vices are outlined, and serve as a foil for Greek virtues.<sup>12</sup> Emphasis is repeatedly placed upon the wealth and luxury of the Persians,<sup>13</sup> along with their deference to despots,<sup>14</sup> their nonsensical language,<sup>15</sup> and most of all, their disorderly fighting style. The numerically smaller Greek forces advance in unison with speed and confidence,<sup>16</sup> whereas the Persians show terror (ἄτακτον ἄτακτον),<sup>17</sup> and soon flee in disorder (ἄτακτον ἄτακτον).<sup>18</sup> Aischylos is partially credited with the creation of a new, polarising way of viewing

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<sup>10</sup> The heroes of the Greek contingent in the Iliad are identified with reference to their parentage and their particular area of origin. Walbank argues that even in the classical period, where Pan-Hellenism became a popular idea, it was only ever demonstrated in times of crisis. A man's (exclusive language intended) primary identification remained with the political unit of the *polis* in the fifth and fourth centuries: F. W. Walbank, 'The problem of Greek nationality', in Thomas Harrison (ed.), *Greeks and Barbarians* (Edinburgh, 2002), 234-56, esp. 239-42, 251.

<sup>11</sup> Hall (1989), p. 99; Cartledge (1993), p. 39; Harrison (2002), introd., 1.

<sup>12</sup> See especially the analysis of Simon Goldhill, 'Battle narrative and politics in Aeschylus' *Persae*', in Harrison (2002), 50-61.

<sup>13</sup> Aesch., *Pers.* 3, 9, 45, 53, 159-72.

<sup>14</sup> 234, 241. A contrast with the Hellenes is immediately given, when the chorus explains that the Greeks are not slaves (ἀσπίδα ἢ ἄσπίδα) or subjects (ἀσπίδα ἢ ἀσπίδα) to any single ruler: 242. cf. 762-4.

<sup>15</sup> 406.

<sup>16</sup> 394-8.

<sup>17</sup> 391.

<sup>18</sup> 421, 470, 481.



Greeks and Persians, since his *Persai* is the first extant dramatic evidence of what was clearly already a topical issue in the society.<sup>19</sup> Numerous dramatic explorations of the theme date to the early fifth century.<sup>20</sup> Herodotos, Ktesias and Xenophon constructed and explored the same polarities in their historical and ethnological works later in the fifth century.<sup>21</sup>

By the early fourth century the image of Persians as variously decadent, effeminate, cowardly, lawless and either foolish or cunning was a commonplace among Greek writers. Greeks, by contrast, were invested with the cardinal virtues of moderation (♦♦ ♂ □ □ ♦ ♦ ❖ ■ ❁), manliness or courage (⊕ ♂ ■ □ □ ❖ ⊕), justice (□ ❖ ⊕ ⊕ □ ♦ ♦ ❖ ■ ❁) and wisdom (♦ □ ♂ ❖ ⊕).<sup>22</sup> It is consistent with patterns of ethnic stereotyping in other cultures, ancient and modern, that Persians as a group were invested with opposite qualities to all those the Greeks, or more accurately, the Athenians, upheld in their own culture.<sup>23</sup> Further, all other non-Greek easterners were

<sup>19</sup> Aischylos was clearly not the sole creator of this topos. His *Persians* is based, in part, upon Phrynichos' *Phoenician Woman*: eg. 3 *TGrF* f 8; cf. Edith Hall (ed.), in Aeschylus, *Persians* (Warminster, 1996), pp. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of relevant works, see Hall (1996), pp. 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Herodotos tells that the Thracian Trausi celebrate deaths and lament births: Hdt. 5.4; Ktesias; Xen., *Kyr.* 8.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 4.427e10-11. At *Rep.* 4.444b7-8 Plato lists the vices which constitute the opposites to these four virtues: stupidity (⊕ ♂ ⊕ □ ❖ ⊕), cowardice (□ □ ❖ ⊕ ❖ ⊕), abandonment (⊕ ♂ ⊕ □ ❖ ⊕ ❖ ⊕), and lawlessness (⊕ ♂ ⊕ ❖ ⊕ ❖ ⊕). All of the latter are used by dramatic writers to characterise barbarian figures.

<sup>23</sup> On the idea and functions of stereotypes, see W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922); J. C. Brigham, 'Ethnic stereotypes', *Psychological Bulletin* 76 (1971), 15-38.

increasingly assimilated into this image of the Persians, thereby creating a simple opposition between all Greeks and all 'others'.<sup>24</sup>

This phenomenon, whereby rival cultures are perceived as harbouring a series of exaggerated flaws (as a given culture defines them) is best understood as an exercise in self-definition by Greeks, through which the conceptually slippery idea of 'self' is grasped through its opposition to the negative traits of those 'others' who do not belong to the identity group.<sup>25</sup>

That is to say, claims of Pan-Hellenic identity and unity were strengthened and validated through contrast with an imagined Pan-Barbaric identity. Pan-Hellenism was not, of course, a self-evident fact. Greek communities were geographically scattered and politically diverse throughout the classical period. Citizens of a particular city-state saw themselves as fundamentally different to strangers, termed ἄλλογενῆς, from other parts of Greece.<sup>26</sup>

Commonalty among Greeks lay, for Herodotos at least, with similarities in language, religion and customs<sup>27</sup> rather than any active political unity. Pan-Hellenic unity was largely a figment of Athenian political propaganda, promulgated in the interests of maintaining the compliance of its allies in the

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<sup>24</sup> Beginning in the late sixth century, and increasingly in the fifth century, images of Amazons were created with reference to Thracian and Skythian iconography. In this way all 'others' were conflated and thus became generically barbarian: H. A. Shapiro, 'Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians', *GRBS* 24 (1983), 105-15, esp. 105.

<sup>25</sup> On the idea of 'Otherness' see chapter one, 19-21, with references.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Browning, 'Greeks and others: from antiquity to the Renaissance', in Harrison (2002), 257-77, esp. 258.

<sup>27</sup> Hdt. 8.144.2.

Delian League against Persian expansionism.<sup>28</sup> In the fifth and fourth centuries, then, Persians were increasingly constructed as emblematic of the adversarial 'other' in their political organisation, customs and character. The fact that they were also considered to be masters of magical lore gave the issue of magic a powerful political dimension in Greek thought.

In their manipulation of stereotype, fifth century writers betray an awareness of the artificiality of the polarity of Greek *versus* barbarian. Aischylos presents a Greek woman, Klytemnestra, conforming somewhat to the emerging barbarian stereotype. His Klytemnestra is masculine, ambitious, and powerful in relation to Aigisthos and Agamemnon,<sup>29</sup> which is consistent with Greek images of eastern women as transgressive of the 'normal' hierarchy of men over women.<sup>30</sup> In his *Andromache* Euripides explores the validity and subjectivity of these two categories. Euripides has Hermione insinuate that Andromache, true to her eastern origins, has used sorcery to render her infertile.<sup>31</sup> However, he then turns this stereotype around, using barbarian imagery to underscore the metaphorical barbarism - the

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<sup>28</sup> Hall (1989), esp. pp. 16-7. A sense of common identity among Greeks also owes something to the period of colonisation: Hesiod, *WD* 528; Strabo 8.6.6. See also M. I. Finley, 'The ancient Greeks and their nation', in *idem*, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London, 1975), 120-33; Wilfried Nippel, 'The construction of the 'other'', transl. Antonia Nevill, in Harrison (2002), 278-310.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Zeitlin (1996c), 87-122.

<sup>30</sup> The mythical Amazones, with their masculine, autonomous lifestyle, constitute the clearest example of the Greek belief in the ascendancy of eastern women. Medeia and Omphale similarly testify to the theme of eastern woman as transgressively powerful. Persian royal women were similarly believed to wield a great deal of power, in the imperial court: Hall (1989), pp. 202-4; Helen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Exit Atossa: images of women in Greek historiography', in Cameron Kuhrt (1983), 20-34.

<sup>31</sup> Eur., *Andr.* 32, 147-8, 355.

decadence and injustice - of the Spartan woman. His enslaved Trojans, on the other hand, are presented in a very sympathetic light, and devoid of any such barbarian imagery. Euripides uses the same technique elsewhere in his extant works, to barbarise other flawed Greek characters.<sup>32</sup> Euripides and other writers apply popular ethnic stereotypes figuratively, to comment upon Greeks' capacity for categorically 'un-Greek' behaviour, and foreigners' corresponding capacity for virtue and dignity.<sup>33</sup>

Given the polar opposition of Greek *versus* Persian barbarian during the classical period, it is significant for the development of both concepts that eastern cultures in general and Persia in particular were credited with special expertise in magic. The tendency among Greeks to identify the distant east as the source of mysteriously powerful substances, lore and practitioners certainly predates the classical period. It was noted in chapter one that the most potent of Homeric  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha$  are sourced either from deities, or less often from the distant east of the world.<sup>34</sup> The substance used by Kirke to transform her captives into swine and the drug which Odysseus uses to reverse its effect are of divine origin. The strange and remarkable effects of these substances are thus rendered understandable. Helen's chosen substance,  $\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha$ , on the other hand, is said to have originated in the distant but mortal land of the Egyptians, given to her by a local woman

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<sup>32</sup> cf. the representations of Helen in *Tro.* 997 and in the *Orestes*, Klytemnestra in *El.* 998-1003.

<sup>33</sup> Hall (1989), pp. 202ff.

<sup>34</sup> Chapter one, p. 15.

named Polydamna. The poet adds that Egypt is the source of a great many such herbs, some beneficial, some harmful, and that the people of that land have the greatest knowledge of medicine of all human cultures.<sup>35</sup>

That powerful ἄθεσπιόθεσ in this period are attributed to distant or divine sources suggests that even at early period, there existed a tendency to 'locate' what would become magic beyond the boundaries of the local, the mortal, the knowable. While these substances are credited with the power to produce astonishing outcomes contrary to what one might normally expect of nature, and are somewhat distanced by their provenance, it is important to point out that Homeric ἄθεσπιόθεσ are not yet understood to belong to a category corresponding to 'magic' in the archaic period. At this time the use of ἄθεσπιόθεσ had not yet developed the association with powers to control the dead and coerce the living, or with suspect initiations and purifications which would later become so marked. By the same token it is not possible to pinpoint the moment at which the category of magic described above<sup>36</sup> came into existence, although the concept clearly had a well-developed and distinctive form by the time that Plato and the Hippocratic author of the treatise *On the sacred disease* were writing.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kirke's ἄθεσπιόθεσ: Homer, *Od.* 10.388ff; Odysseus' antidote, a gift from Hermes: *Od.* 10.287; Helen's ἄθεσπιόθεσ: *Od.* 4.221; cf Scarborough (1978), 357.

<sup>36</sup> See previous page.

<sup>37</sup> Plato refers to a class of ritual expert who promised purifications to allay divine anger: *Laws* 909a-b, *Rep.* 364b-c. *OTSD* speaks of superstitious magicians (θεσπιόθεσ), purifiers (θεσπιόθεσ), charlatans (θεσπιόθεσ) and impostors (θεσπιόθεσ): Hipp., *OTSD* 2.

Into the classical period dramatic and scientific writers remained more or less in agreement that the most abundant, powerful and terrible  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\zeta\iota\omicron\theta\&\theta$  and ritual procedures were of eastern origin. In his scientific work the *History of plants* Theophrastos assesses traditional medical lore, with a greater degree of objectivity than many of his medical contemporaries.<sup>38</sup> He confirms that the calming drug  $\mu\omega\mu\mu\omega\zeta\chi$  is obtained from Egypt.<sup>39</sup> Using statutory evidence, Guido Majno has identified this ancient substance with some certainty as opium, a substance which was plentiful within the confines of Greece. Majno concludes that the Egyptian origin ascribed to  $\mu\omega\mu\mu\omega\zeta\chi$  was probably invented to help market the product, as the efficacy of eastern  $\alpha\theta\upsilon\zeta\iota\omicron\theta\&\theta$  was already a commonplace among Greeks by the classical period.<sup>40</sup> Theophrastos also cites Tyrrhenia, Latium, Ethiopia, Skythia and Thrace as plentiful sources of herbal substances.<sup>41</sup> According to Herodotos, a whole African race of people are sorcerers ( $\gamma\omicron\zeta\omega\mu\chi$ ).<sup>42</sup> He is somehow more sceptical about the claims of the Neuri, that they practise magic and can shape-shift into werewolves.<sup>43</sup>

In classical drama, too, there is a strong emphasis upon the categorical 'otherness' of magical substances. The poisonous substances used by

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<sup>38</sup> cf. chapter three, pp. 84ff.

<sup>39</sup> Throphr., *HP* 9.15.1.

<sup>40</sup> Majno (1975), p. 144.

<sup>41</sup> *HP* 9.15.2-3; cf. chapter three, p. 88.

<sup>42</sup> Hdt. 2.33.

<sup>43</sup> 4.105.

Deianeira in Sophokles' *Trachiniai* and Kreousa in Euripides' *Ion* are both located outside of ordinary human experience, in the realm of the divine and mythological. Deianeira's potion contains the blood of the Hydra, and was a gift from a second fantastic creature – the centaur Nessos.<sup>44</sup> Kreousa, for her part, has in her possession two drops of dead Gorgon's blood, also a gift, in this instance from Athene.<sup>45</sup> Besides suggesting mythological sources for ἄθεσπιόθεσθε, classical drama also hypothesised exotic origins for magical expertise. Aristophanes finds Thessaly – a relatively marginal region of the Hellenic world to an Athenian-based playwright – to be a place where magic is much practised, and with great effectiveness.<sup>46</sup> An ancient commentator on Euripides tells us that the practice of ἄθεσπιόθεσθε originated in Thessaly.

In his *Andromache*, Euripides has Hermione suspecting and accusing the 'barbarian'<sup>47</sup> namesake of the play of hostile sorcery. Hermione accuses her

<sup>44</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 572-5.

<sup>45</sup> Eur., *Ion* 1010ff. Much emphasis is placed, in this Euripidean account, upon the dual natures of the twin droplets of blood, one of which is a miraculous healer, the other a deadly poison. The twin natures of ἄθεσπιόθεσθε with their ability to harm and heal equally was the subject of much reflection in discussions of magic. Theophrastos remarks that one half of the root of a mandrake plant works as an aphrodisiac, while the other half quells desire: *HP* 9.18.4-5. In discussing the strange race called the Idaian Daktyls, fifth century writer Pherekydes notes that the 'left Daktyls' are ἄθεσπιόθεσθε while the 'right Daktyls' are θεσπιόθεσθε - that is to say, they reversed the effects of bindings (&θεσπιόθεσθε): *FGrH* 3 f 47 = schol. in *Apol. Rhod.* 1.1129.

<sup>46</sup> Thessalian witches can draw the moon down from the sky: Aristoph., *Nub.* 749-57. cf. a fragment of the fourth century tragic writer Sosiphanes of Syracuse: *TGF* 1<sup>2</sup> 92 f1 Roman writers retained this image of Thessaly as the homeland of magic: Lucan, *Pharsalia* Book 6; Lucian, *Dial. Meret.* 1; Seneca, *Herc. Oet.* 465-72.

<sup>47</sup> At Eur., *Andr.* 663-6, Menelaus makes it clear that he understands Andromache to be a Phrygian, barbarian foe. Compare the tenderness with which Andromache is depicted in Hom., *Il.* 6.370-440 and 22.440-515. Euripides in fact presents Andromache in a very

husband's Phrygian slave of rendering her infertile by means of  
 ἄφροδισιακά, <sup>48</sup> although she does not advance any evidence in  
 support of this claim. In his *Orestes*, Euripides involves another Phrygian  
 slave in a short discussion about magic. Confounded at the sudden  
 disappearance of Hermione, the slave's first response is to consider whether  
 or not the feat was achieved by means of potions or sorcery  
 (ἄφροδισιακά & ἄφροδισιακά). <sup>49</sup> The idea that magic was a  
 foreign art, and a profession dominated by foreigners had a great deal of  
 currency among fifth and fourth century dramatic writers. While Greeks  
 might on occasion be accused of using magic, the same practices were  
 generously attributed to barbarian characters and locales.

The figure of Medeia once again provides us with a clear example of the  
 representation of magic as exotic in origin. Indeed, Euripides' play betrays a  
 keen awareness of contemporary discourses on Greekness and foreignness.  
 As discussed in chapter four, emphasis is repeatedly and increasingly  
 placed, in Euripides' *Medeia* upon the heroine's geographical displacement.  
 Medeia has come to Greece from the distant east, beyond the Symplegades  
 (in modern southern Russia). <sup>50</sup> In the course of the play her cultural  
 otherness becomes apparent. Euripides achieves this effect by multiple

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positive light by comparison with his Greek characters in this play, betraying a strong  
 awareness of the new polarising view of Greeks and Others.

<sup>48</sup> Eur., *Andr.* 32, 157, 355.

<sup>49</sup> Eur., *Or.* 1497.

<sup>50</sup> Eur., *Med.* 1-2, 1263. Rostovtzeff (1922), p. 36; chapter five, p. 121.



means. He presents his Medeia as forthright and masculine in her persuasive speech and manner. Visual evidence from the period suggests that his Medeia switched from conventional Greek costume to a striking, orientalised costume towards the gruesome climax of the action. In doing so, he was making use of new conventions surrounding the perceived binary opposition between Greek and Barbarian.<sup>51</sup> Euripides' Medeia is depicted as lacking the Hellenic virtue of moderation (ἡμερότης) in her anger, her grief and her passion. Her natural propensities for excess,<sup>52</sup> cruelty,<sup>53</sup> cunning tricks<sup>54</sup> and unwomanliness<sup>55</sup> are all consistent with representations of barbarian foes in fifth century art and literature.<sup>56</sup>

Euripides' Medeia is also quick to opt for a cunning plot involving deadly magic as soon as her security and status in Iolkos become endangered. Medeia confides in the chorus that she plans to kill her enemies by means of ἄνεμος, then calls upon her favoured deity Hekate to assist her in

<sup>51</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1997), 291. cf. chapter five, pp. 121ff. for relevant references.

<sup>52</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 4.444b7-8; excessive lamentation: Aisch., *Pers.* 120-5, 468, 931ff.

<sup>53</sup> Xerxes' cruelty: Aisch., *Pers.* 371; Thracian Tereus' cruelty: Soph., *Tereus*. See Hall (1989), s. v. 'cruelty'.

<sup>54</sup> While foolish barbarian characters are sometimes contrasted with intelligent Greeks (eg. Aristoph., *Nub.* 492; Eur., *IT*, *Helen*, *Rhesos* 763-9), barbarians are often instead invested with the vice of excessive cunning. Egyptians were known as a cunning race (eg. Kratinos, fr. 406 KA; Aisch., *Suppl.* 186-203, fr. 373; Hyperides 3.3, 13, 23)

<sup>55</sup> eg. Lydian Omphale enslaves Herakles, Soph., *Trach.* 247ff; Greeks were fascinated by the alleged ascendancy of Persian princesses and queens: Hall (1989), p. 95. Consider also Athenian interest in the warlike, masculine Amazons: duBois (1982), p. 25-77.

<sup>56</sup> Page (1938), p. xix.

this sinister venture.<sup>57</sup> That it is a Greek deity upon whom Medeia calls does not detract from her presentation in this play as a foreign ritual expert.<sup>58</sup>

The explicit association established here between Medeia, magic and the distant east was not simply Euripidean invention. Indeed, these associations developed in stages, and through layering the different versions of her myth. In earlier versions, Medeia's origins had been variously divine, distant and Kolchian.<sup>59</sup> See, however, Johnston's suggestion that there seems to initially have been two distinct Medeia figures, one familiar from the Argonauts story, the other being a deity worshipped in Korinth and Thessaly at least as early as the eighth century. This second figure was displaced by the Olympian cult of Hera Akraia, and was only then cast into the role of outsider.<sup>60</sup> Johnston's theory goes some way to explaining the marked change undergone by Medeia's character between the eighth and fourth centuries. In the mid-sixth century, Hesiod made a specific connection between Medeia and the Medes (whom the Greeks saw as synonymous with Persians).<sup>61</sup> More specifically, Hesiod presents Medeia's son Medeios (or

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<sup>57</sup> Eur., *Med.* 384-98.

<sup>58</sup> Tragic writers, like Herodotos and Homer before them, conventionally represented foreigners as observing the Greek gods, or at most saw foreign gods as exotic names for familiar Greek deities. For example, Herodotos identifies a Syrian goddess as Aphrodite Urania (1.105); Egyptian Ammon, Babylonian Baal-Marduk, and the Persian great god as Zeus (2.42; 1.181, 3.158; 1.131). cf. Jean Rudhardt, 'The Greek attitude to foreign religions', in Harrison (2002), 172-85, esp. 175.

<sup>59</sup> The story of the Argonauts' journey was already well-established by the time of Homer (*Od* 12.70), although this archaic work does not mention the precise location of Aietes' kingdom. cf. Eumelos' eighth century work *Korinthiaka*: Graf (1997), 34; see chapter four, pp. 112-14.

<sup>60</sup> Johnston (1997), 44-70. cf. chapter four, pp. 112ff.

<sup>61</sup> Hes., *Theog.* 1001.

Medos) as an eponymous Mede.<sup>62</sup> It seems clear that Hesiod was exploiting a (false) etymological link between the above names. In Hesiod as in the eighth century Korinthian cultic evidence, there is no indication that Medeia possessed any negatively marked magical talents. Any powers which she holds must instead be understood as pertaining to her divinity or divine ancestry.<sup>63</sup>

Like Hesiod, Herodotos makes a connection between Medeia and the Medes, stating that this eastern people named themselves after Medeia, after she journeyed to their land following her flight from Athens.<sup>64</sup> By the time Herodotos was writing, though, magic had begun to emerge as a clear attribute of Persians and of figures such as Medeia. From her origins in two very old Greek traditions – a cult in Korinth and Thessaly, and a distant princess in the Argonaut cycle – Medeia seems to have gradually grown in otherness, becoming progressively more outcast and sinister, foreign and magical in the course of the classical period. Having early been marked as an outcast, transgressive woman, Medeia increasingly operated as a foil for the developing sense of Greek civic and political identity, progressively becoming marked with features with which Greeks contrasted themselves.

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<sup>62</sup> West (1966) on line 1001.

<sup>63</sup> In an early Korinthian version of the myth, Medeia attempts to immortalise her children. Her attempt is unsuccessful, and in any case is reliant upon the intervention of Hera, and so it cannot be classified as a 'magical' act: Johnston (1997), 63.

<sup>64</sup> Hdt. 7.62.

We have seen above how foreigners became viewed as a negative projection of Greeks. Through this process of 'othering', little understood foreign ritual practices were viewed as an inversion of 'pious' Greek religious observance. As with Greek (male) representations of women, though, this tendency to see the world as a relationship or conflict between opposing qualities yielded far from a simple 'black and white' view of fixed, opposing pairs of ideas. Women, being more 'natural' and primitive than men, could be characterised in some contexts as bestial by comparison with their male equivalents, but in other contexts as being close to divinity and mystery, with men being related to mortality and reason. This contradictory view of women stemmed, in part, from the fact that 'primitive' encompassed ideas of both savagery and utopian simplicity and piety. By the same structural logic, 'primitive' foreign ritual practices were at times constructed as cruel, strange and impious, while at other times foreign ritual experts were hailed as especially pious, powerful and truthful.<sup>65</sup> Plato asserts, for instance, that Carthaginians consider human sacrifice to be sacred and lawful, while Greeks find such sacrifices reprehensible.<sup>66</sup> Herodotos tells us that the  $\text{O}\text{E}\text{v}\text{I}\text{b}\text{Q}\text{X}$  of Persia gladly kill living things with their bare hands whereas Greek priests revere all life. A further contrast is Herodotos' claim that

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<sup>65</sup> Hall relates the Greeks' 'schizophrenic' view of barbarian spirituality to their idea that civilisation is both a rise from animality and a fall from a golden age: Hall (1989), pp. 149, 211-2.

<sup>66</sup> Pl., *Minos* 315b-c. cf. Soph., *Andr. TGrF* vol. 4, fr. 126.2-3 which restates that human sacrifice is a 'barbarian' custom. Plato's assertions regarding Greek morality ignore the fact that human sacrifice constitutes a prominent theme in Greek myths about Iphigeneia, Polyxena and Erechtheus' daughter. There is evidence to suggest that in the fifth century middle eastern religions did indeed carry out this practice: Hall (1989), pp. 147-8.

☉☽❖γ♁☿ choose to be mauled by birds and dogs at death, rather than being buried.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, foreign mantic figures were very much revered by the Greeks for their moral integrity and their accurate foresight. Cassandra's integrity in Aischylos' *Agamemnon* is in sharp contrast to the depravity of her Greek captors. Amphiaraus, and the Egyptian prophets Proteus and Theonoe further exemplify the stereotype of the noble barbarian seer.<sup>68</sup> Mystic wisdom is commonly presented as being foreign to Greece, and originating in civilisations which pre-date Greek culture. Egypt was particularly prominent as a source – real or imagined – of primeval wisdom, in the work of Plato and elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Thrake was firmly connected with mystery religions and shamanism. Orpheus was certainly considered to be Thrakian, and Dionysos was believed to be variously Thrakian or Lydian.<sup>70</sup> The Thrakian warrior Rhesus turned into a prophet of Dionysos upon his death.<sup>71</sup> A lost tragedy describes prophecy as a Lydian art.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hdt. 1.140.

<sup>68</sup> Amphiaraus is self-restrained, righteous, virtuous and pious: Aisch., *Sept.* 610; Proteus is the most ❖❖❖♁❖♁ man in the world: Eur., *Hel.* 47; Theonoe is virginal and far-seeing: Eur., *Hel.* 1000.

<sup>69</sup> Hall (1989), p. 149; Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: the limits of Hellenisation* (Cambridge, 1975).

<sup>70</sup> Eur., *Hek.* 1267 calls Dionysos the 'Thrakians' prophet'; Eur., *Bacc.* Presents Dionysos as a foreign import; Aisch. *Lykurgeia* presents both Orpheus and Dionysos as Thrakian: Hall (1989), p. 107; Herodotos tells us that Dionysos is especially worshipped in Thrake: 5.7; Orpheus is depicted with a Thrakian cloak: J. D. Beazley, *Attic red-figure vase-painters*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford: 1963), p. 574, no. 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Rhes.* 970-3; cf. J. Diggle, 'The prophet of Bacchus: *Rhesus* 970-3', *Stud. Ital.* 3, 5 (1987), 167-72.

<sup>72</sup> *TGRF* vol. 2, fr. adesp. 234a.

On the strength of Greek authors' assertions, it was a commonly held belief among scholars of ancient Greek cult that Dionysos was indeed an import to Greece.<sup>73</sup> On the basis on the Pylos tablets, though, it is now conceded that his worship in Greece dates to as early as the fifteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Ancient writers' tendency to view Dionysos and his ecstatic cult as foreign to Greece owes more to the singular nature of his worship than to genuine accretions from the non-Greek world.<sup>75</sup> Dionysiac worship centres around the dissolution of the basic polarities of Greek thought, between Greek and barbarian, human and beast, human and divine, and man and woman, and so would never comfortably fit into the category of indigenous, fully acceptable ritual.<sup>76</sup> Like Medeia, Dionysos was originally a Greek figure who grew to be foreign in popular belief because he encapsulated ideas which struck Greeks as unfathomable and dangerous to the *polis*. The examples of Dionysos and Medeia prompt us to ask whether rituals which were categorised as 'magical' in the classical were genuinely non-Greek in origin, or whether they too were labelled as such because they also eluded neat categorisation, or were seen to be transgressive or contrary to Greek virtues and values.

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<sup>73</sup> E. R. Dodds (ed.), Euripides, *Bacchae*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (1960), p. xxi.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion, Archaic and Classical* (Oxford, 1985), p. 162.

<sup>75</sup> Herodotos finds Dionysiac worship to be Egyptian because it closely resembles an Egyptian rite, and has little in keeping with Greek customs: Hdt. 2.48-9; Rudhardt (2002), 177. Carpenter finds that while Dionysos had long been recognised in Greece, he was particularly subject to foreign influences on his character, especially during the sixth century: T. H. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 74-5, 124.

<sup>76</sup> C. Segal, 'The menace of Dionysus: sex roles and reversals in Euripides' *Bacchae*', *Arethusa* 11 (1978), 185-202, esp. 186.

Much work has been published on the subject of the extent of early cultural borrowing and influence between the Greek world and its eastern neighbours.<sup>77</sup> In his influential monograph *The Orientalizing Revolution*, Walter Burkert has argued that magical practices and ideas entered the Greek world via trade and wandering medical and ritual experts from the near east, especially during the early archaic period.<sup>78</sup> Burkert finds, for example, that hepatoscopy – the gleaning of omens from livers – is entirely absent from the older strata of Homeric epic, but is present in the final version of circa 700 B.C.E. Given that Greek theories and terminology concerning hepatoscopy have marked resemblances with those of both Etruria and Assyria, Burkert theorises that a single ‘school’ of liver augury spread by diffusion throughout the Mediterranean world, originating in the near east.<sup>79</sup> Burkert goes on to point out similarities between the Greek practices of purification (of both physical and moral blights) and summoning and controlling the spirits of the dead, and their near eastern parallels in Mesopotamia and Akkadia.<sup>80</sup> For Burkert, the transmission of these

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<sup>77</sup> See especially Christopher A. Faraone, ‘Molten wax, spilt wine and mutilated animals: sympathetic magic in near eastern and early Greek oath ceremonies’, *JHS* 113 (1993), 60-80; Peter Kingsley, ‘Greeks, shamans and magi’, *Studia Iranica* 23 (1994), 187-97; M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: west Asiatic elements in Greek poetry* (Oxford, 1997); M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>78</sup> Burkert (1992), esp. ch. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Models of livers with inscriptions relevant to hepatoscopy have been found from the Bronze Age onwards among Mesopotamian, Hittite, Syrian and Palestinian cultures. Etruscan examples date to the third and second centuries, although the hepatoscopy tradition is believed to be considerably older there. Plato tells us that by the fourth century hepatoscopy enjoyed greater prestige among the Greeks than bird augury: *Pl., Phaedr.* 244c: Burkert (1992), pp. 48-9.

<sup>80</sup> Burkert (1992), pp. 55-73.

specialised trades testifies to the mobility of medico-magical specialists between the Greek world and the near east during the archaic period.<sup>81</sup>

Burkert's tracing of the similarities between and transmission of rituals across numerous ancient civilisations is admirable. At no point in his monograph, however, does he make clear his definition of the term 'magic', despite making frequent use of it in his analysis. Indeed, the use of this term is anachronistic and unhelpful, given that his is a study of archaic Greek and non-Greek practices, and that there did not then exist a category of or terminology for magic.

It is of course clear that the Greek world adopted some of the specialist ritual traditions of its eastern neighbours, and *vice versa*. It is equally apparent that many of these practices were subsequently categorised as magical, both in the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries, and in the repertoires of self-defined magicians. However, to conclude from this that the Greeks imported most of their magical beliefs and practices wholesale from their near eastern neighbours is overly simplistic.

The use of Ephesian letters, or the *Ephesia grammata* in Greek apotropaic amulets helps to illustrate the dangers inherent in seeking out individual

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<sup>81</sup> cf. West's finding that theories of natural philosophy across the Mediterranean and near eastern worlds were particularly mobile during the sixth century and until Persia emerged as a threat to Greek culture: West (1971), *passim*, esp. pp. 226-7.





language more closely than Greek.<sup>87</sup> It is clearly the mystery and foreignness (however dubious) of these words that made them so powerfully arcane and effective for purveyors of magic in classical Greek and Hellenistic worlds.<sup>88</sup> ‘Ephesian’ text aside, such inscribed amulets belonged to a very old tradition, indigenous to Greece, which enjoyed widespread acceptability into the fifth and fourth centuries, even among the educated and ‘enlightened’.<sup>89</sup>

In the case of the so-called *Ephesia grammata*, then, we have the use of mock foreign language in a magical charm or phylactery (□ℓ□)✱❖☉○□■ or ✱◆●☉&◆❖☉❖□)✱(□■) that is entirely Greek in its conception, but is perceived to be foreign magic (or superstition). This example should caution one against the error of relying too heavily and literally upon the accuracy of the ancient sources as regards the origins of magic. It is more instructive to understand how concepts identified as magical, whether they be imported or otherwise, operated within Greek culture and within Greek belief systems.<sup>90</sup> To presume that magic in Greece

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<sup>87</sup> Damnameneus, for instance, was reputedly the name of one of the Idaean Daktyls: Daniel Ogden, ‘Binding spells: curse tablets and voodoo dolls in the Greek and Roman worlds’, in Ankarloo and Clark (1999), 1-90, esp. 47.

<sup>88</sup> On the importance of arcane and foreign-sounding language as *voces magicae* in classical and Hellenistic incantations see Ogden (1999), 46-50; Betz (1986).

<sup>89</sup> Perikles reputedly began to wear an amulet during the plague at Athens: Theophr., fr. L21 Fortenbaugh; the notorious atheist Bion also resorts to the use of amulets late in his life: Diog. Laert. 4.54, cf. 4.56-7; Kotansky (1991), 107-37, esp. 107.

<sup>90</sup> This methodology is espoused Sarah I. Johnston, Johnston, Sarah I., ‘Defining the dreadful: remarks on the Greek child-killing demon’ in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden, 1995), 361-87, esp. 362.

is invasive foreign ritual<sup>91</sup> also ignores the evidence of anthropology, that magic (along with other practices which seem to contradict ‘normal’, logical or conceivable behaviour or processes) within a given society is consistently perceived to be foreign by people within that culture.<sup>92</sup>

Against the argument that magic was foreign to Greek culture, it can be demonstrated the repertoires of sorcerers and sorceresses consisted of a conglomeration of almost wholly indigenous Greek marginal practices and beliefs.<sup>93</sup> The repertoires of ὄψις ἑρμῆος, ἑρμῆος ἑρμῆος and ἑρμῆος ἑρμῆος or ἑρμῆος ἑρμῆος were understood to include the conducting of initiations,<sup>94</sup> cursing, controlling and directing spirits of the dead (ἑρμῆος ἑρμῆος),<sup>95</sup> altering weather and the course of heavenly bodies,<sup>96</sup> incantations and purifications.<sup>97</sup> The bulk of these practices had a long history of use and acceptance on the Greek mainland.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Luck accepts ancient writers’ testimonies that occult techniques reached Greece from Babylonia, Assyria and Persia, probably via Thessaly: Georg Luck, ‘Witches and sorcerers in classical literature’, in Ankarloo and Clark (1999), 91-158, esp. 94. cf. Edelstein (1937), 201-46, esp. 219.

<sup>92</sup> Smith warns against such ‘demonic interpretations of the history of the demonic’: Smith (1978), 425-39, esp. 437.

<sup>93</sup> See chapter two, *passim*. See also Dickie (2001), pp. 35-6, who observes that when the responsibilities of Hekate change in the classical period, they are specifically moulded in response to the newly formed category of magic as her dominion in the fifth and fourth centuries.

<sup>94</sup> Herakleitos DK 22 b 14 = Clem. Alex., *Protr.* 2.22.2-3 associates ὄψις ἑρμῆος with those who conduct initiations as early as the sixth century; Ephoros refers to the Daktyls as ἑρμῆος ἑρμῆος, and adds that they conducted initiations and incantations: *FGrH* 70 f 104; cf. Eur., *Bacc.* 233-8, 258-62.

<sup>95</sup> This practice has negative connotations in Eur., *Alk.* 1127-8. A scholiast on the line tells that the practice originated in Thessaly. cf. Aristoph., *Birds* 1553-64.

<sup>96</sup> Aristoph., *Nub.* 749-57; Hipp., *OTSD* 4.

<sup>97</sup> Hipp., *OTSD* 2.

<sup>98</sup> Initiation was central to the Eleusinian mysteries, whose Greekness was not questioned. Cursing in Greece dates to at least the late eighth century: Christopher A. Faraone, ‘Taking

Where particular rites are absent from the earliest strands of Homeric literature – as is the case with purification, for example – it is dangerous to simply assume that this practice entered Greece at a later time.<sup>99</sup> It was shown in chapter three that root-cutting, once an accepted, traditional practice, was problematised as a dangerous or superstitious magical activity by elite, rationalising writers during the classical period.<sup>100</sup> By a similar process, Hekate<sup>101</sup> underwent a decisive transformation, changing from an eminent goddess and guardian of transitions and boundaries, to become a fearful chthonic figure who presided over the use of ἄγανϙϙ⋄⊠⊡⋄⊠ and was instrumental in mobilising hostile departed spirits against the living. The literary evidence thus offers little positive evidence to justify the representation of magic as categorically non-Greek.

Cross-culturally, magic (in the general sense of arcane, supernatural or disreputable activities) in a given society tends to be understood as being a

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the ‘Nestor’s cup inscription’ seriously: erotic magic and conditional curses in the earliest inscribed hexameters, *Clas. Ant.* 15, 1 (1996), 77-112. On the long history of the use of ἄγανϙϙ⋄⊠⊡⋄⊠ in the Greek world see chapter three. The semi-legendary Greek figure Epimenides conducted purifications.

<sup>99</sup> Parker (1983), 15f., 66-70, 115f., 130-43.

<sup>100</sup> Theophrastos discards some of the lore of the ⊠⊡⋄⊠⋄⊠⋄⊠⋄⊠⋄⊠ as superstitious nonsense, yet remains heavily reliant upon this same tradition for much of what he regards as acceptable science: chapter three, 21-2. Hippocratic writers were equally reliant upon traditional medical knowledge (see discussion at chapter three), yet were vociferously opposed to what they considered the charlatany and superstition of their more traditional rivals in the medical marketplace (as expressed in the treatise *OTSD*).

<sup>101</sup> In chapter two it was tentatively suggested that Hekate was originally a Karian deity (pp. 46ff. above). Two points need to be made regarding her inclusion as a Greek goddess here. Firstly, there is no evidence to suggest that Greeks perceived Hekate to be other than Greek. And secondly, the archaic Hekate as she appears in both Hesiodic poetry and sculpture in Greece and Asia Minor give no hint of the chthonic, sinister figure she would later become.

foreign art, standing outside of and alongside indigenous practice. The Romans of the late second century B.C.E., for example, believed that the magic in their society originated with the threateningly foreign Marsi, Paeligni and Sabelli peoples of the Central Apennines.<sup>102</sup> The Christian writer Justin wrote of devil-worship occurring especially at the margins of civilisation, or in places where civilisation was in tatters.<sup>103</sup> In each case, magic is located beyond a given culture's boundaries, and in the hands of neighbours or foes who are feared or poorly understood. Rather than simply accepting all such claims at face value, one should be prepared to consider the possibility that assertions about the foreignness of magic are tied up with ideas about cultural boundaries. Following the structural theories of Levi-Strauss, anthropologists have found that magic is invariably identified with that which is marginal, liminal, unstructured and protean. For all this apparent chaos, magic is cross-culturally a very rigidly organised realm. The supposed spatial dislocation of magic effectively justifies the presence of unexplainable elements within a culture's belief system. The understanding that magic is an invasion by exotic divinity or technology validates and underscores its capacity for overriding culturally 'normal' patterns of behaviour, nature or

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<sup>102</sup> E. Dench, *From Barbarians to New Men: Greek, Roman and modern perceptions of people from the Central Apennines* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 154-74; Dickie (2001), p. 135.

<sup>103</sup> Smith (1978), 427.

science.<sup>104</sup> The paradox of magical possibility becomes more believable and more fearsome when it is located at margins of the known world.<sup>105</sup>

We shall now approach the problem of the foreignness of magic in ancient Greece from a different angle, by considering the development of the image of the  $\text{Ο}ϞϙϛϜϝϞϟϠ$ . The supposed affinity between Persia and magic was bolstered in the Greek mind by the fact that one of the earliest and most important terms used to identify magical practitioners -  $\text{Ο}ϞϙϛϜϝϞϟϠ$  - is firmly connected with this particular civilisation. The term itself seems to be a genuine Persian loan-word, as a close homonym appears in the sixth century Behistun inscription.<sup>106</sup> In its true sense, the word refers to a member of the elevated Median caste of fire-priests, representatives of the Persian national religion. Its use by Herodotos, Pseudo-Aristotle and others indicates that this original meaning, devoid of any magical knowledge, was known to educated Greeks.<sup>107</sup>

Our earliest uses of the word  $\text{Ο}ϞϙϛϜϝϞϟϠ$  occur in the works of Greeks who lived or originated in the colonies of Asia Minor, namely Herakleitos and

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<sup>104</sup> cf. the work of Mary Douglas on the idea that things remain sacred in cultures by virtue of keeping their place. That which escapes its proper place may be viewed as especially polluted or powerful (whether negatively or positively marked): Douglas (1966).

<sup>105</sup> Gordon (1987), 59-95.

<sup>106</sup> A. D. Nock, 'Paul and the Magus', in Z. Stewart (ed.), *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford: 1972), 308-30, esp. 309; J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (London, 1983), pp. 50-2; cf. chapter one, 17 nn. 81-2.

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *Alk.* 122a; Pseudo-Aristotle and Dinon, in Diogenes Laertius, *Prooem.* 8; see n. 109 below for Herodotos on the  $\text{Ο}ϞϙϛϜϝϞϟϠ$ .

Herodotos.<sup>108</sup> It is of course quite natural that Ionian Greeks should have been pivotal in the coining of the word, given their geographical proximity to the encroaching Persian civilisation. Herodotos dutifully characterises Ὀυρεὶοὶ as a priestly tribe, responsible for interpreting dreams, making sacrifices and reading omens, all of which were inoffensive activities in the eyes of most Greeks.<sup>109</sup> Dream interpretation was an accepted part of medicine for some Hippocratic writers,<sup>110</sup> the reading of omens was widespread, and sacrifice was a crucial element of *polis* life.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, Herodotos informs us that these Ὀυρεὶοὶ are also able to calm storms by means of sacrificial victims and incantations,<sup>112</sup> thereby hinting at the manipulations of nature that so-called magic workers of the classical period would lay claim to.<sup>113</sup>

It is worth remarking that Herodotos, at least, did not draw a firm line between religion and magic when it was another culture's customs he was discussing. He could comfortably characterise Persian priests as expert in state religious functions as well as arts more akin to what Greeks considered sorcery. This is interesting in light of modern debates surrounding the

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<sup>108</sup> Herakleitos was a Milesian, while Herodotos was originally from Halikarnasos.

<sup>109</sup> Ὀυρεὶοὶ interpret dreams: Hdt. 1.107, 108, 120, 128, 7.19; officiate at sacrifices: 1.132, 7.113; read omens: 7.37.

<sup>110</sup> Hipp., *Dreams*, *passim*.

<sup>111</sup> Although see chapter three, 73ff on ambivalence towards and dangers inherent in the act of killing and cooking animals.

<sup>112</sup> Hdt. 7.191.

<sup>113</sup> In the mid-fifth century Empedokles openly boasted that he could interfere with the wind and the rain: DK 31 b 111.

relevance of the antithesis of magic and religion to Greek thought.<sup>114</sup>

Proponents of the argument favouring such a dichotomy might argue that Herodotos is discussing Persian culture here, and that he characterises foreign ritual as perverse and transgressive of such distinctions. However, one may propose that Herodotos is instead implicitly conceding here that individual Greeks had no objective criteria by which to differentiate a religious ritual from a magical one.<sup>115</sup> Such distinctions were instead culturally determined on the basis of inherited understandings of the relative centrality or marginality of a given ritual practice.

Herakleitos gives a more simplistic and unambiguously pejorative account of the actions of Ὀυρανίου ἱερέων. For this author, Ὀυρανίου ἱερέων are guilty of the same errors of judgment or morality as bacchantes, maenades and *mystai*.<sup>116</sup> West speculates that Median Ὀυρανίου ἱερέων would have emigrated to the west coast of the Persian empire, to Samos or Miletos, after Cyrus subjugated their people circa 549.<sup>117</sup> Positive evidence for such a diaspora is weak, for the Greeks of these cities seem to have had only a perfunctory knowledge about the functions of this priestly class. Herakleitos was supposedly interested in the natural philosophical theories of Persian religion, however his understanding of and sympathy for the Persian priesthood is most

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<sup>114</sup> See my discussion in chapter one, 5-13.

<sup>115</sup> See chapter one, 6-13 with notes for scholarship pertaining to this argument.

<sup>116</sup> Herakleitos, DK 12 B 14; cf. chapter one, p. 17.

<sup>117</sup> West (1971), pp. 240-1.



circumscribed.<sup>118</sup> Herakleitos' account of 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 is testimony to the immediacy with which the word 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 in its original Median meaning diverged with the derivative word, which was wholly Greek in conception. In its secondary meaning, 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 expands to incorporate purveyors of any dubious ritual arts.<sup>119</sup> When Herakleitos speaks of 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 in the Greek cities of Asia Minor in the late sixth century he associates them not with Zoroastrian beliefs but with the Greek institution of mystery initiations.<sup>120</sup> Tiresias, too, is referred to reprovngly as a 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 despite the fact that he is a Greek practising divination, an art familiar to the Hellenic world from at least the archaic period. In both cases, identification with 𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎 expresses not a statement of origins, but a specific attack on validity or value of the persons and acts involved.

The exact process by which this Persian priestly class became the standard-bearers of magic by virtue of a shared name is unclear, although some inferences can be made. Simple cultural misunderstanding – wilful or otherwise – seems to have been a prominent factor.<sup>121</sup> A. D. Nock points out that the Greeks tended to be poor observers of strange religions,

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<sup>118</sup> On debates surrounding Herakleitos' knowledge or ignorance of Persian philosophy see references in West (1971), pp. 165-70. In light of Herakleitos' understanding of the term '𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬎', such knowledge on his part seems unlikely.

<sup>119</sup> See my preliminary remarks in chapter one, 17-19.

<sup>120</sup> Dickie is rightly skeptical about whether genuine Iranian fire-priests really filtered into the Greek world. He suggests that people may instead have simply passed themselves off as eastern adepts. That is to say, they used exotic origins as a marketing tool: Dickie (2001), p. 41.

<sup>121</sup> Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 3 (Leiden, 1991), p. 513.

drawing hasty conclusions, and holding such religions in either utter contempt or uncritical awe.<sup>122</sup> The prominence of Ὀυδῶν ἱερεῖς in the entourage which Xerxes led into Greece in the early fifth century will also have figured largely in the classical construction of this priestly class. From a Greek perspective the Ὀυδῶν ἱερεῖς were authorities of a religion which was alien, dangerous, and demonstrably opposed to existing cultic practices.<sup>123</sup> In light of the eventual repulsion of the Persians from Greece, Ὀυδῶν ἱερεῖς could also be seen as proponents of a subordinate belief system to that of the Greeks.<sup>124</sup> As Gordon points out, the status of Ὀυδῶν ἱερεῖς thus had much in common with the elite, respectable opinion of practitioners of indigenous ritual observance in fifth century Athens.<sup>125</sup> The use of ‘magical’ ἄρταντα, ἄρταντα, talismans, incantations and purifications are derided as variously foreign, dangerous, impious and ineffectual in the elite, literary sources of the period, despite their evident popularity.<sup>126</sup> By linking Greek popular traditions, or folk-traditions, with the religious leadership of the Hellenic world’s most dangerous enemy, these traditions became increasingly marginalised with the passage of time.

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<sup>122</sup> A. D. Nock, ‘Paul and the Magus’, in Z. Stewart (ed.), *Essays on religion and the ancient world* (Oxford: 1972), 308-30, esp. 311, 318.

<sup>123</sup> This opposition of Persian and Greek religion was a conclusion to be drawn from the Persians’ destruction of Greek shrines in the course of their invasion.

<sup>124</sup> Gordon (1987), 79; Boyce and Grenet (1991), p. 514.

<sup>125</sup> For the Greeks magic constituted an invasion from beyond, much like the infiltration of Hellas by Xerxes’ army: Gordon (1999), 229.

<sup>126</sup> This tension between magic as dangerously powerful, and magic as ineffectual remained unresolved throughout Graeco-roman civilisation. This contradiction is common to other cultures’ views of magic: Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, transl. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (London, 1963), ch. 9. For Gordon, paradox is itself central to the meaning of magic: Gordon (1987), esp. 61.

This process of identification and marginalisation of folk practitioners as  $\text{O}\text{E}\text{v}\text{Y}\text{b}\text{Q}\text{X}$  has two distinct facets, which goes some way to accounting for the contradictory views of magic in the literary evidence of the period. For those belonging to the intellectual 'centre', it was considered desirable to regulate or rationalise the multiplicity of traditional root-cutting, divinatory and purificatory practices on offer in the spiritual marketplace.<sup>127</sup> While it was known in at least some educated circles that Persian priests did not practice magic, as defined by Greeks, the two ideas could readily be linked by virtue of their etymology if this was desirable. From the perspective of the centre, then, the transferral of undesirable indigenous practices to a genuinely alien system effectively delegitimised and marginalised such beliefs and rituals. Practices identified as magical were thereby distanced by their ethnic and geographical otherness, in addition to their pre-existing social and psychological distancing from established, sanctioned religious observance.<sup>128</sup>

While the intellectual and political centre embraced the idea of marginal practitioner as allied with Persian  $\text{O}\text{E}\text{v}\text{Y}\text{b}\text{Q}\text{X}$ , those operating at the margins of the society were equally quick to exploit the etymological linkage between these ideas. Used without the implications of charlatany or impropriety, the term imbued such practices with religious authority and

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<sup>127</sup> This is a central concern for Plato in his construction of an ideal, orderly, morally upright society.

<sup>128</sup> Boyce and Grenet (1991), p. 514.

power and exoticism. That is to say, accusations by the centre helped to enhance and justify the peripheral position of adherents of marginal ritual practice.<sup>129</sup> It is from this point onwards, too, that we begin to see the emergence of ritual experts who self-identify as magical practitioners, and style themselves with reference to the stereotype, to take advantage of the power that it offered.<sup>130</sup> From this beginning, a learned, literary, philosophical magic would emerge more fully in the Hellenistic period, especially upon the basis of Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha.<sup>131</sup> Having gained some legitimacy through association with the learning of the Persian  $\text{𐬰𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬎𐬀}$ , this strand of magic gradually became a more respectable, and also a more male-dominated art.<sup>132</sup>

In the preceding section the historicity of Greek claims as to the foreign, and specifically eastern origins of magic was questioned and assessed. We shall now turn to the significance to this thesis of the nexus of ideas concerning Persia, magic and women in Greek thought. It has been shown that Greeks tended to apprehend their world through the dichotomising criteria of polarity and analogy.<sup>133</sup> It was only with the emergence of the Persian empire as a threat to Greek autonomy, though, that particular attention was devoted to the identification of contrasts between Greek and

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<sup>129</sup> Gordon (1987), 66; Boyce and Grenet (1991), p. 515.

<sup>130</sup> Dickie (2001), p. 40.

<sup>131</sup> On which see especially Boyce and Grenet (1991), p. 515.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 515; Gordon (1987), 73.

<sup>133</sup> See Lloyd (1992); chapter one, pp. 24ff. cf. duBois, who finds that by the fourth century, hierarchies had progressively replaced polarity as the central ordering principle of Greek thought: duBois (1982), p. 5.

Persian morality and way of life. The rise of this new threat and the need for Greek speakers to unite in a common cause gave rise in Athens to intensified discussions about cultural identity. Theories and debates about Greekness and its opposites find expression, mostly implicit,<sup>134</sup> during the fifth and fourth centuries in dramatic and philosophical works alike. Given that these works are authored almost entirely by elite, citizen, Athenian men, it should not surprise us to find that Greek selfhood is implicitly defined by its freedom from servitude,<sup>135</sup> and its reasoning intellect (by which we should understand an elite, rational education). Greeks are also collectively praised, in the polarising rhetoric of the post-Persian wars period, for their moderation in temperament and ambition. Persians, by contrast, are understood to be prone to slavery and subservience to despots,<sup>136</sup> and either naïve or cunning, rather than intelligent. Persians are denigrated for their tendency towards excesses of cruelty, sorrow, luxury and ambition.<sup>137</sup>

The feminine quality of barbarian, eastern lands is confirmed by the power that women of these cultures were thought to wield.<sup>138</sup> Greek myth makes

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<sup>134</sup> duBois makes the point that the clearest assumptions of a given age are unspoken, buttressing every argument, and forming something of a shared background: duBois (1982), p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> The 'barbarians' with whom Greeks had most contact were slaves captured in war: Hall (1989), p. 196. Most citizen Greek women, though, were similarly lacking in personal freedom, and so were not fully covered by this definition of 'Greekness'.

<sup>136</sup> The Greeks associated despotism with inordinate lusts for both power and sex. Unbridled lust was a vice attributed to women as a group, and so it is unsurprising that lustful anarchy and despotism were both associated with myths of matriarchy: Zeitlin (1996c), 87-122, esp. 89-94.

<sup>137</sup> Hall (1989), pp. 121ff.

<sup>138</sup> Uncontrolled Greek women are at times presented as somewhat barbarised: Hall (1989), pp. 202-5.

frequent reference to the powerful women and gynaecocracies of the east. The existence of the warlike, self-sufficient Amazons is the clearest illustration of the tendency towards gender inversion among barbarian peoples.<sup>139</sup> The wives of the Persian despots were understood to exercise a great deal of control over the running of the vast Persian empire.<sup>140</sup> Medeia, with her heroic pride, ambition and rage is similarly presented as a somewhat masculine figure, especially in Euripides' play bearing her name.<sup>141</sup> Lydian Omphale, too, was able to dominate Herakles and effect a reversal of proper conjugal and gender roles.<sup>142</sup> This mythological barbarian woman is invoked in several plays in connection with gender inversion or conflict. Klytemnestra's usurpation of power in the *Agamemnon* and Deianeira's femininisation and destruction of Herakles by means of a 'love philtre' in the *Trachiniai* are both accompanied by references to the transgressive Omphale.<sup>143</sup>

The Greek writers' projection of selfhood is thus consistent with the Greek notion of masculinity, while Persian mores are constructed as being consistent with negative feminine traits.<sup>144</sup> This construction of Greek: male as Persia: female signified, for agonistic Greek culture, a state of permanent

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<sup>139</sup> duBois (1982). The eventual defeat of the Amazons by the race of men suggests the eventual subjugation of this barbarian, feminine other: Zeitlin (1996c), 94.

<sup>140</sup> Sancisi-Weerdenburg finds that the notorious, powerful women of the east are a literary conceit rather than a demonstrable fact: Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983), 32.

<sup>141</sup> Michael Shaw, 'The female intruder: women in fifth-century drama', *CP* 70 (1975), 255-66, esp. 263.

<sup>142</sup> Pseudo-Apollodoros 2.6.3; Diodoros 4.31; cf. Zeitlin (1996c), 93-4 with n. 13.

<sup>143</sup> Aisch., *Ag* 1040-41; Soph., *Trach.* 247ff.

<sup>144</sup> duBois (1982), p. 86; Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983), 27.

animosity. The existence of such a polarity also implied that the two categories must exist in a hierarchical relationship with each other.<sup>145</sup> The categorisation of Persia as feminine justified, and was in turn reinforced by the fact of the Greek states' eventual defeat of its Persian aggressors. Women, being necessary for procreation, but deficient in  $\diamond \times \square \square \diamond \blacklozenge \blacklozenge \blacksquare \approx$  and reason, needed to be kept under the control of males. It was understood that without such necessary controls, women's passions would be a grave threat to their individual  $\square \times \text{er} \blacklozenge \& \square \times$  and on a broader scale upset the whole order of society by installing gynaecocracy, which was equated with anarchy.<sup>146</sup> By the same token, the dangerous but categorically inferior Persians were subjugated, in the course of the fifth century, in the interests of achieving peace, and maintaining the 'rightful' hierarchy of Greek over Persian.

Persia is feminine in Greek thought. Magic is similarly deemed to be an especially feminine art in the literature of the classical period. That Persia is a key source of magic is thus consistent with the cognitive categorisations that shaped ancient Greek thought. Magic was believed to flourish at the periphery of the known world, and at the boundaries of experience, and magic itself was conceived of as a sort of confounding of the polarities of powerful *versus* powerless, beneficent *versus* sinister, and traditional *versus*

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<sup>145</sup> duBois (1982), p. 196.

<sup>146</sup> The murderous deeds of the Lemnian women are illustrative of this fear and belief: Aisch., *Choe.* 631-6. Such is the suggestion also at Eur., *Or.* 933-37. cf. Zeitlin (1996c), 89-94.

innovative.<sup>147</sup> This capacity for transgressing physical and conceptual boundaries rendered magic all the more effective and dangerous.<sup>148</sup> Both women and Persian civilisation could be viewed, from the perspective of Greek citizen males, as geographically and conceptually ‘imminent others’.<sup>149</sup> Citizens’ wives were central to the perpetuation of the *οἶκος* and yet were also strangers in their conjugal family’s home. Persian culture, too, was at once utterly foreign to the Greek way of life, yet was also the Greek world’s immediate neighbour. This juxtaposition of apparently opposite qualities – the familiar with the unfamiliar – challenged the binary structures upon which much of Greek thought was founded. Negative valence became attached to women and to Persian culture for their comparable capacity for transgressing normal boundaries. The boundary-crossing capabilities of both women and Persians contributed to their categorisation as consanguineous with magic – the transgressive art *par excellence* according to elite, classical ideology.

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<sup>147</sup> Gordon (1987), 61.

<sup>148</sup> Douglas (1966).

<sup>149</sup> Hall (1989), p. 60.



## Conclusions: the feminisation of magic in classical Greek ideology

In their depictions of the use of magic, writers of the classical period betray a keen awareness of the ability of this art to disrupt what were considered to be the normal and rightful hierarchies which preserved the order of the world. What made magic at once marvellous and fearsome was its capacity to disturb the ordained order, the *status quo*, in relationships between deities and humans, between Greeks and their culturally inferior neighbours, and between men and women. The category of magic could thus be invoked to help to make sense of the marvellous and the seemingly impossible.<sup>1</sup> Magic was thought to allow a person to achieve outcomes which were normally impossible in accordance with divine, human and natural laws. By magically cajoling the gods into obedience,<sup>2</sup> for instance, a person could impiously seize and manipulate divine power for his or her own disreputable purposes. It is this impious usurpation of divine power which forms the basis of a number of elite, philosophical attacks upon magic.<sup>3</sup>

We saw in chapter three that arts which had the power to work transformations between one state and another such as cookery, midwifery

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon (1987), 59-95.

<sup>2</sup> In magical ritual, mastery over the gods is frequently achieved through deception of the gods. In the *PGM* spell texts deities are frequently roused to action against the target person by falsely claiming that that person has slandered the gods, eg. *PGM* IV.2471-92, IV.2622-2707. cf. Winkler (1991), 214-43, esp. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Especially Hipp., *OTSD* 4.1-16.

and metalworking were viewed with some ambivalence. The labelling of such practices as magical helped to make sense of their ability to confound the boundaries between the categories through which the Greeks comprehended and ordered their world. The idea that magic possesses the fearful ability to disrupt rightful hierarchies and distinctions is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the imagery and themes surrounding the use of love magic in classical literature. In such scenarios, women's perceived proficiency with magical arts was believed to enable them to gain mastery over men, their 'natural' superordinates. In tragedy love magic is invariably performed by women, and aimed at securing the affections of men, although papyrological and epigraphical evidence tends to contradict this gender stereotype.<sup>4</sup> This incongruity among the classical sources invites speculation as to why women's use of erotic magic upon men should be such a focus of concern for elite philosophical and literary writers.

In order to grasp the implications of the literary portrayal of practitioners of love magic, several remarks first need to be made about the Greek notions of erotic and conjugal love, which constitute a marked departure from modern Western constructions of love. In Athens sexual relationships, reflecting the rigid social structures of broader society, were conducted along

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<sup>4</sup> Winkler (1991), 227 and nn. 73-5 points out that the gender bias in favour of women as practitioners of erotic magic strongly contradicts the papyrological and inscriptional evidence: Spells which are issued by a man, aimed at attracting a woman: *PGM* XVIIa, XIXa, LXXXIV, CI, CVII, CVIII, CIX, *ostrakon* O 2; *DT* 100, 227, 230, 231, 264-71, 304. Less frequent are spells issued by a woman, aimed at a man: *PGM* XV, XVI, XXXIX, LXVIII; *DT* 270, 271. Women seeking to attract women: *PGM* XXXII; *PSI* 28. Men seeking to attract men: *PGM* XXXIIa, LXVI.

hierarchical rather than mutual lines, to the extent that sexual acts between social equals were barely conceivable.<sup>5</sup> The Athenian system of sexual relationships cast the superordinate partner (who was, by definition, male<sup>6</sup>) in the active role of lover, while the subordinate partner, the beloved, could be either male or female but was always cast in a relatively passive role.<sup>7</sup> A further feature of the Greek understanding of erotic love is that unrestrained expression of sexuality on the part of males was construed as evidence of a lack of  $\diamond\diamond\text{X}\square\square\diamond\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$ . That is to say, respectable male sexuality was characterised by the ability to control, rather than express, desires.<sup>8</sup> Understood thus, uncontrolled sexual passion was considered to be more in keeping with feminine behaviour than proper masculine comportment.<sup>9</sup> Further, strong passion, sexual or otherwise, was frequently characterised as an illness or an attack by invasive forces.<sup>10</sup> These points need to be taken into consideration when approaching beliefs about erotic magic.

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<sup>5</sup> David M. Halperin, 'Why is Diotima a woman? Platonic *Eros* and the figuration of gender' in David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, Froma I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton, 1990), 257-308, esp. 265-7.

<sup>6</sup> For a rare departure from the notion that sexual relationships are led by an active male partner see Plato, *Symp.* 191e2-5.

<sup>7</sup> Lack of reciprocity between men and boys in relationships: Arist. *Nik. Eth.* 8.1155b27-1156a5; Xen. *Symp* 8.21; Aristoph. *Clouds* 979-80. Plato departs from this hierarchical format for his ideal of love: *Symp.* 255c-e. cf. Halperin (1990), 266-71.

<sup>8</sup> Faraone (1992b), 92-103, esp. 100. cf. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, II: the use of pleasure*, transl. R. Hurley (New York, 1985), read in conjunction with the comments of Lesley Dean-Jones, 'The politics of pleasure: female sexual appetite in the Hippocratic corpus', *Helios* 19 (1992), 72-91.

<sup>9</sup> K. J. Dover, 'Classical Greek attitudes to sexual behaviour', *Arethusa* 6 (1973), 64-5.

<sup>10</sup> Of many examples, see especially the medicalisation of *eros* in Eur., *Hipp*; Pseudo-Arist., *Problems* 30.1.954a52; Antiphon Soph., *On likemindedness*, FVS 87B49D-K; Plato, *Phdr* 252a-b, *Laws* 8.836b. cf. the discussion in Winkler (1990), 83-4; Winkler (1991), 222-3.

Our foremost literary example of the deployment of erotic magic by a woman, aimed at a man, from the classical period is Deianeira, in Sophokles' *Trachiniai*. In this play, which was explored in chapter five above, Deianeira is initially represented as epitomising proper feminine behaviour, by her cloistered lifestyle, her chastity and her devotion to her husband. Herakles, on the other hand, is an extreme polarisation of masculine behaviour, being an heroic warrior who has little contact with the domestic sphere.<sup>11</sup> However, once Deianeira puts into action a magical scheme to ensure Herakles' continued affection for her, these gender polarisations undergo a striking inversion. Herakles is reduced by the destructive force of the deadly charm to 'girlish' pleas for pity<sup>12</sup> and complaints<sup>13</sup>. Herakles is at pains to point out that his shameful transformation and demise was the work, not of an equal - a beast or fellow warrior - but a woman:

'A woman, a female – not the nature of a man – has destroyed me, without a sword.'<sup>14</sup>

Deianeira lives up to her own name as a 'destroyer of men', then kills herself in a strangely masculine manner – with a sword.<sup>15</sup> Rather than

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<sup>11</sup> Davies (1991), p. xix; Foley (1981), 157-9; Nicole Loraux, 'Herakles: the super-male and the feminine' in Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin (1990), 21-52. cf. chapter five, pp. 150-51.

<sup>12</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 1070-5.

<sup>13</sup> 982-6.

<sup>14</sup> 1062-3.

<sup>15</sup> Faraone (1994a), 115-35, esp. 127; Loraux (1987), p. 14.

reinvigorating the love between the two, then, the ⚡⚡❖●◆◻◻■ effectively masculinises Deianeira while it feminises Herakles, before leading to the utter destruction of both figures.

Herakles' past enslavement to the Lydian queen Omphale is invoked, in the course of the play, to underscore Deianeira's transgression of proper gender hierarchies.<sup>16</sup> For the Greeks Omphale was an archetypal exemplar of gynaeocracy, requiring as she did that Herakles wear women's clothing and perform women's work in an exaggerated expression of the unmanly indignity of slavery itself.<sup>17</sup> According to Plutarch, the comic poets of the classical period referred to Aspasia as a 'new Omphale', as well as a 'Deianeira'.<sup>18</sup> Such labels, with their implications of the use of love magic by Aspasia, were applied in an effort to justify Perikles' unseemly displays of affection towards the woman.<sup>19</sup> Later, it was reported (most probably by Octavian and his supporters) that Mark Antony was similarly enslaved by the aphrodisiacs of Cleopatra.<sup>20</sup> Such allegations had a double, normative function. They attacked the unusual prominence and political influence enjoyed by women such as Aspasia in Athenian society as being the work of reprehensible sorcery, and they challenged particular prominent citizens' manliness and fitness for public duties. Such accusations of the use of

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<sup>16</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 247ff.

<sup>17</sup> See Pseudo-Apollodoros 2.6.3; Diodorus 4.31; Ovid, *Heroides* 9.55ff; Plutarch, *Greek Questions* 45, *Theseus* 6.6. Zeitlin (1996c), 87-122, esp. 92-3.

<sup>18</sup> Plut., *Per.* 24.6.

<sup>19</sup> Faraone (1994a), 126 with n. 57.

<sup>20</sup> Plut., *Ant.* 37.

magic belonged very much to the tradition of competing for and negotiating status in the agonistic, duplicitous, classical Mediterranean culture.<sup>21</sup> In a society where a woman's reputation was both extremely vulnerable and vitally important to the status of her family, it was a popular strategy for males to sully the reputations of their male rivals by means of accusations against the women with whom they associated.<sup>22</sup>

In Euripides' *Medeia*, much emphasis is placed upon the disruptive force of magic in the hands of the barbarian heroine. While it is Medeia's mastery and use of magic that captured the attention of poets and visual artists, and their audiences, the heroine's magical prowess in this myth proved to be no match for the erotic magic of Jason.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, only oblique and passing reference is made to Jason's use of Aphrodite's ⋈⊛◆Υ⊠ wheel against Medeia in Euripides' play.<sup>24</sup> This use of a love charm to gain the affection of the eastern princess has destructive results, consistent with the damage wrought by the love potions of women. However, Jason's magical strategy is not subject to extended treatment, and there is only a limited suggestion of transgression of proper codes of conduct. Jason's access to

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<sup>21</sup> On the (unstated) acceptability of lying in public for private advantage see especially J. du Boulay, 'Lies, mockery, and family integrity' in Jean G. Peristiany (ed.), *Mediterranean Family Structure* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 389-406; P. Walcot, 'Odysseus and the art of lying', *Ancient Society* 8 (1977), 1-19; Versnel (1991), 60-106, esp. 62; chapter one, pp. 28-32.

<sup>22</sup> Foxhall (1996), 133-52, esp. 142; Schaps (1977), 323-30.

<sup>23</sup> As early as Pindar, Medeia is depicted as both expert in ⋈⊛◆Υ⊠ and a helpless victim of Jason's superior, god-given magic: Pind., *Pyth.* 4; Dolores M. O'Higgins, 'Medea as muse: Pindar's *Pythian* 4', in Clauss and Johnston (1997), 103-26, esp. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Jason questions Medeia's control over her feelings and actions: Eur., *Med.* 526-31; chapter four, p. 137.

this magical device is god-given,<sup>25</sup> rather than obtained through force or trickery, and his arrogation of female freewill in no way conflicts with what were considered proper relations between the sexes. For a man to be placed under the control of a woman, and to be compelled by a strange, illicitly mobilised force to abandon the virtue of  $\diamond\diamond\bowtie\square\square\diamond\diamond\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacksquare\text{wavy}$ , on the other hand, threatened the order which underpinned the society.

In the literary tradition, erotic magic performed by women involves a direct confrontation between sanctioned masculine authority and covert feminine schemes of subversion. As such, ideas of anarchy and inversion of the divinely ordained order of the world loom large in images of its use. On the rare occasions where males engage in love magic which is targeted at women, ideas of gender inversion and disruption of the order of the world do not figure so prominently. The gender distortions which are so prominent in literary treatments of women's use of love magic against men provide some of the clearest evidence for fears and beliefs about the use of magic, and about women, more generally.

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The assessment in this thesis of representations of purveyors of magic in the classical literary tradition, with its emphasis upon women as magical adepts,

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<sup>25</sup> Eur., *Med.* 526-31; Pind., *Pyth.* 4.217-9.

rests upon the premise that magic itself is an artificially constructed category of activity, rather than a self-evident fact. While attempts have been made by some scholars of ancient history to positively define magic in the terms used by the ancient Greeks themselves, and to identify the boundaries between magic and science on the one hand, and magic and religion on the other, the results of such projects are not convincing.

It is maintained throughout this thesis that the complex and unresolved state of modern scholarship on Greek magic is largely due to problems of definition. Scholars such as Dickie ask their readers to accept the premise that ancient conceptions of magic were more or less consistent with modern understandings of magic. Such oversimplifications do not help further our knowledge of the past. Statements of this nature also obscure the fact that modern conceptions of magic are as variable between individuals as their ancient equivalents, being shaped by a plethora of cultural, religious and social factors. In addition to the apparent conflict between ancient and modern conceptions of magic, there also seems to be some contradiction between the ancient Greeks' own declared opinions about magic (as per the literature of the period), and their actual practices (as gleaned from non-literary sources). In the course of this thesis, an attempt has been made to determine how and why the literary images of magic deviate so sharply from actual, known practice.



Philosophers and writers among the Greeks claimed that magic attempted to impiously force the will of the gods, while religious practices were associated with piety. In chapter one, though, it was shown that the surviving evidence for prayers and incantations betrays no such sharp distinction. Orthodox prayers and ‘magical’ incantations both tend to exhibit a classic tripartite structure, and the apparent attitude of the performers equally ranges from forceful to submissive.<sup>26</sup> One general distinction that can be observed is that rituals which are labelled ‘magical’ show a preference for Chthonic over Olympian deities. Given that the Athenian religious calendar placed greatest emphasis on the newer Olympian order, an associated distinction is that private devotions were susceptible to being identified as magical in a way that civic rites were not.<sup>27</sup> Private offerings to the Chthonic aspect of Hekate, for instance, were increasingly constructed as magical in the course of the classical age at Athens.<sup>28</sup>

Claims by rationalising scientific writers of the Hippocratic tradition as to the distinction between scientific healing and magical healing are similarly fraught with inconsistencies. Rather than proving that science and magic were based upon contrasting theoretical frameworks, Hippocratic invective against the practice of magic needs to be viewed as a competitive strategy

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<sup>26</sup> See chapter one, pp. 5-11.

<sup>27</sup> Consider the fact that privately issued &Ϝ◆Ϝ❖ϜⓂ♦○□✕ were classed as magical acts, while civic curses – such as provisional foundation curses – were not labelled thus, despite their similarities in form: see chapter one, pp. 8-10.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter two, *passim*.

within a varied ancient medical marketplace. Indeed, magical traditions and the classical scientific tradition were alike in the sense that they constituted specialised technologies which professed to allow people to obtain predictable outcomes in their dealings with a more or less mysterious cosmos.

While attempts to contrast magic with religion on the one hand, and science on the other have not been especially successful, ancient discussions about what did and did not constitute magic do approach consistency on several points – that magic has the capacity to enact marvellous transformations, and to bring about the seemingly impossible through morally dubious approaches to divinities (and particularly to Chthonic deities).

In literature of the classical period, women are strongly and consistently associated with expertise in magical arts. Some scholars, most recently Matthew Dickie, have taken such poetic images to be more or less accurate documents of social reality. Taken at face value, the literary evidence tends to support the theory that magic as a practice was monopolised by women of low social standing, and was invariably aimed at inflicting harm upon others. The present writer, however, sees such literary images as simultaneously both much more, and much less than straightforward social documents. Keeping in mind the complex artistic, political and social aims (either explicit or implicit) of public artworks at Athens, it seems simplistic to presume that

these should offer unbiased and unadulterated insights into community life. In artistic works, the *topos* of magic is arguably invoked as a way of exploring and delineating the boundaries of that which is ordinary/extraordinary, pious/impious, normal/abnormal and sanctioned/unsanctioned within the communally focused *polis* life. Magic, being symbolic of all that is troubling and unknowable in life, was readily appropriated for normative, moralising purposes.

Rather than seeking to uncover the realities of women's access and recourse to magic in classical Greek society,<sup>29</sup> then, the purpose of this thesis has been to identify a collection of activities and mythological episodes around which women's deployment of magic is particularly focused in ancient discussions. In separate discussions about the interconnections of women and magic in relation to Hekate worship, the arts of cookery and traditional medicine, and in literary portrayals it has been observed that a reasonably consistent set of communal and masculine concerns presents itself. For instance, the association of women as a category with the mysterious (from a male perspective) and potentially polluting transformations surrounding childbirth and death helped to strengthen their connection with magic in popular ideology.

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<sup>29</sup> Dickie's recent monograph constitutes the most comprehensive and up to date attempt at assessing the realities of the use of magic in ancient Greek society. As noted above, though, some of the author's conclusions seem to place too much faith in the reliability and accuracy of the ancient sources: Dickie (2001).

Despite attacks in the literary tradition on the validity and piety of practices that were identified as magical, non-literary evidence suggests that their broad-based popularity with both sexes did not wane. This discrepancy between the literary and non-literary evidence regarding the status of magic serves to further remind us that the literary evidence is as much a source of misinformation as of information. As indicated in chapters six and seven, the problematisation and delegitimisation of this particular class of ritual as magical seem to have been the province of the elite, educated, leisured, politically active minority, rather than the broader populace. In the absence of a single source of religious authority, or indeed an accepted body of scientific 'facts', the validity and the moral acceptability of beliefs and practices were determined in the elite-dominated, competitive arena of political debate.

In the closing remarks of chapter two it was pointed out that among the superordinate class in Athenian society (which is to say leisured, adult, citizen males), the concerns of public life enjoyed a far more elevated status than other, less civic-oriented areas of existence. Indeed, reluctance on the part of citizens to participate fully in public life was positively discouraged, being presented as un-citizenlike and positively threatening to the wellbeing of the *polis*. The Athenian political body established its identity and confirmed its pre-eminence in political, social and ritual matters through the process of contrasting its own values and behaviour with that of outsiders to

the regime. Artistic and philosophical works were a site for exploring various formulations of selfhood and otherness. In matters of politics, for instance, Persia, Sparta and the institution of tyranny were invoked as opponents of the Athenian ideal of democracy. In matters of ritual, non-civic and unsanctioned forms of religious observance came under attack as running counter to the communal aims of civic cult. The association of unsanctioned, privately performed ritual with magical or otherwise nefarious deeds in classical literature thus played an important normative role.<sup>30</sup> Despite the negative public image of magic, in practice it continued to be widely practised, doubtless with renewed concern for maintaining secrecy.

In classical Greek (and especially Athenian) society, women's access to official sources of political power was extremely circumscribed. The degree of unofficial influence to which they had access is very much contested in modern scholarship on the subject, and in any case no doubt varied greatly between individuals and social classes. In a near complete inversion of the proper place for citizen males, women of citizens' *oikoi* were properly relegated to the private sphere of family life. While this public invisibility was presented as the highest ideal of feminine behaviour, it proved nonetheless to be a source of some anxiety. In a society which tended to distrust and

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<sup>30</sup> The duplicitous, agonistic nature of ancient Greek society meant that morally dubious competitive strategies – including covert ritual operations – remained popular, despite their professed unacceptability.

delegitimise the private dealings of its (male) members, proper female comportment was especially vulnerable to criticisms and accusations.

Tensions surrounding women's activities may be referred to the paradoxically central and marginalised position they occupied in classical society. We know that women were profoundly disempowered by Greek political and social traditions. However, in a system which was heavily reliant upon the exchange of women for the making of alliances between males, the continued compliance of women in their own subjugation was critically important. Women, being the objects of marital exchange, standing outside established power structures, but also capable of making independent choices, were perceived and constructed as the point of maximum vulnerability in the Greek system of social alliances. The society's response to this perceived threat was to limit women's choices, movements and access to a public voice. Their enforced silence was, in turn, construed as a tendency towards secretive, deceptive behaviour, thereby helping to perpetuate the stereotype of woman as expert in arts with destabilising potential.

The classical poets' preference for representing magical arts as the particular province of women can also be related to the principle of 'otherness'. This category of thought is present in many societies. Its function is to permit the definition of the slippery notions of selfhood and

social belonging by contrast with that which is clearly outside the group consciousness. Ancient Greek thought, which showed a marked preference for the use of opposing principles, made heavy use of the idea of alterity in its poetic explorations of civic identity.

In the course of this thesis we have seen how classical literature works to construct selfhood with reference to the opposing qualities of such 'others' as divinities, beasts, foreigners and *xenoi* and women. The construction of such categories as distanced 'other' presupposes a very narrow sense of selfhood, limited in fact to Greek, citizen, adult males – that is to say, the profile of those who were in a position to produce literature and exert some influence on the political, cultural and religious developments within their society. In literature, magic is frequently aligned with one or more often a combination of the above categories of otherness. Medeia's sorcery, for instance, is to be understood as pertaining to her exotic origins, her divine ancestry and her femininity. The love potion of Deianeira was the product both of feminine nature and of the world of mythological beasts. Magic in myth and poetry thus comes to be imbued with multiple categories of otherness – not-human, not-Greek, not-male. Literary works both respond to and help to construct such understandings of the place of magic in the society.

Certain forms of ritual observance were open to being categorised as magical by virtue of their variously unsanctioned, unseemly, mysterious or transformative nature. In accordance with the philosophical dualisms first known to us from the Pythagorean tradition, that which is boundless, mysterious and sinister is implicitly aligned with that which is feminine, hence the tendency to view magic as an inherently feminine art.



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