

THE AGED BODY IN FIFTH- AND FOURTH- CENTURY GREEK LITERATURE

by

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(Under the Direction of Charles Platter)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how old age, the elderly body and the relationship of elderly persons to their bodies is understood and represented in ancient Greek drama and Greek medical writing. In my first chapter, in which I focus on the portrayal of elderly characters in Greek drama, I investigate how the playwrights represent old age as a disintegration of the physical and non-physical elements of a person. I discuss the physical features of senescence and the experience older people have with disease in my second chapter which deals with old age in medical writing. In my third and final chapter I synthesize these representations to form a portrait of the imagined aged body as well as comment upon how Greek writers found in this liminal time of life a locus from which to explore the divisibility of a person.

INDEX WORDS: Ancient Greek literature, Ancient medicine, Aging, Body, Intellectual history, Ancient Greek philosophy, Gerontology

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INTRODUCTION

What is old? The age an ancient Greek considered old would certainly be younger than our reckoning; demographic estimates would, in any case, suggest that aged people in ancient Greece were not as common as the Athenian stage, for instance, might have us believe.¹ Of course, the dearth of useful data on the subject has bedeviled scholars seeking a reliable answer about what portion of the population was "old."² Thus we turn to what the Greek literary evidence suggests about this life stage. As M.I. Finley notes, there were, as there are now, a series of social, economic and biological factors which delineate old age, but only provide rough sketches.³ Lacking a system of social security or socially instituted retirement,⁴ Greek literary evidence remains silent regarding when exactly a man becomes old and/or removes himself from public life. It might be informative that the age requirement for the *Gerousia* in Sparta, according

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- 1 Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris, and Richard P. Saller, *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40. Walter Scheidel's mortality table (fig. 3.1) gives a notional mean of ca. 10 percent for those who would survive to age sixty-five in Greco-Roman populations. For comparison, eighty percent of those born in 1991 in America are expected to live to age sixty-five. United States Census Bureau. "Longevity and Health Characteristics," <http://www.census.gov/prod/1/pop/p23-190/p23190-g.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2013).
 - 2 Bessie Richardson, *Old Age among the Ancient Greeks: the Greek Portrayal of Old Age in Literature, Art, and Inscriptions, with a Study of the Duration of Life among the Ancient Greeks on the Basis of Inscriptional Evidence* (1933; repr., New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 231-6. Richardson gives a table of ages based on inscriptional evidence in this nearly 100 year-old monograph, which somehow remains the only study of its scope concerning old age in Ancient Greece. However, the pitfalls of relying on data from sepulchral evidence render this approach minimally useful. Tim Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 36-56. Parkin offers a current synthesis of these issues, although in the Roman, not ancient Greek world. The limitations of his conclusions for this era, when there is far more potential evidence, give a picture of how much more difficult a similar study for ancient Greece would be. Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 242-7. Garland offers some appropriately modest insight into the life expectancy and age at which someone might be considered old in ancient Greece.
 - 3 M.I. Finley, "The Elderly in Classical Antiquity," *Greece and Rome* 28, no. 2 (1981): 156-7.
 - 4 Parkin, *Old Age*, 217. Parkin informs us that there was apparently an exception for Olympic victors according to Plato (*Apol.* 36d) and Plutarch (*Mor.* 970b).

to Plutarch, was 60,⁵ and that Aristotle tells us an Athenian man could no longer be called upon for military service at 59.⁶ In *Solon* 27, the poet claims that a decline in speaking ability begins in the eighth hebdomad of life, that is, between the ages of 63 and 70. The Hippocratic corpus provides a few answers to the question of when old age begins: 60 in *On Joints* 41 and 63 in *Coan Praenotions* 5.30.502. In *On Hebdomads*, the author delineates two stages beyond maturity: a man becomes a πρεσβύτες at age 49 and a γέρων at age 56 (*Hebd.* 5).⁷ Largely we find, however, that the Greeks took relatively little interest in recording age numerically or even in a standardized classification of age groups.

More compelling to the Greeks was a simple dichotomy between "young" and "old" which could play out in the theater or law courts in the form of generational conflict. Barry Strauss discusses the prominence of this phenomenon in fifth-century Athens, attributing the tension between the older and younger generations to a number of sociological and political changes.⁸ Therefore, while we see a strong interest in the tension of this age dichotomy, we lack any real quantification of old age. We are then left with relative terms such as πρέσβυς, γέρων, γεραιός and less frequently of people, παλαιός, which we can contrast with even less scrutable terminology for periods of youth and adulthood. Old age must have some beginning, but the threshold between maturity and senility is not well discussed in our sources; we only seem to see

5 Plutarch *Lyc.* 26.1

6 Aristotle *Ath.* 53.4

7 Clearly many of these values are based on the principle of divisibility by the number seven. There does not seem to be a differentiation between a πρέσβυς and a γέρων traditionally; the author of *On Hebdomads* probably fabricated this difference to accommodate the ages of man into seven categories.

8 Barry Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens: Ideology and Society in the Era of the Peloponnesian War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 130-78. Strauss names four causes for the increased tension between the younger and older generations during the late 5th century: the Athenian empire, making younger men wealthier than their fathers, the Areopagos' loss of prestige, the emergence of sophists who taught young men rhetoric, and a possible demographic change following the Athenian epidemics in the late 420's; the plague potentially thinned out the population which would have been in their 30's at this time, making social ascendancy easier for younger men. For more on the theme of generational conflict throughout antiquity see this

the "γέρων" in Greek literature after he is squarely past the demarcation. Who is old (and what that entails) often depends heavily on the genre in question as well. Suffice it to say, the term "old" is relative, and depends on the social context, the apparent physical or mental condition of the referent, and the purposes of the speaker.⁹

It is clear, however, that old age was a distinct social category with its own connotations and ideological framework in ancient Greek writing. Although older people might not have been socially marginalized in "any systematic way,"¹⁰ Greek writers certainly did mark them as "other." The representation of the aged body in particular, its physiology and mechanisms, serves as a useful lens through which we can access what ancient Greek writers understood about this time of life. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, I explore these conceptualizations of the aged body in select genres in the 5th and 4th centuries. In my first chapter, I examine how 5th- and 4th- century playwrights portray the physicality of their elderly characters and problematize their relationship to their bodies. My second chapter deals with how Greek medical writers conceptualized the aged body. In this chapter, I discuss the medical writers' ideas both about the physiology and the pathology of old age.

These chapters introduce a number of themes concerning the bodily aspects of aging as well as their implications for an aged person and his relationship to his physicality. Among these themes, the liminal, morbid state of the aged body and its lack of integrity are central. As early as Homer, one of the most important facets of old age was the liminality between life and death

collection of essays: Stephen Bertman, ed., *The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1976).

9 On the Athenian stage we see a range of representations of the elderly; tragic playwrights tend to cast them as impotent and pitiful commentators on the disasters that befall them and their house. In contrast, Aristophanes adapts this basic theme to comedy, having his older characters, however impotent, very actively try to avert misfortune. Their tragic pity easily translates into ridicule in comedy. Therefore our image of the elderly varies considerably by the genre in question.

10 Tim Parkin, "Ageing in Antiquity," in *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, ed. Paul Johnson and Pat

which it involves.¹¹ With this liminality comes a certain anxiety concerning the physical integrity of the body. Greek literature prior to the 5th century already presented the aged body as a natural locus for the contemplation of death and of the integrity, or lack thereof, of the *soma*.¹² Just as Homer invites us to wonder at the threshold of personhood as we gaze at objectified, broken corpses, he, and Greek writers after him, have us examine the slow-motion disintegration of the aged body; through these representations of older people, we consider the possibility of a disjunction between thought and physical ability that creates a dotted line along which one could cut and examine in isolation these elements of a person.¹³ This potential result of these representations of the aged body comes into play in my third and final chapter.

To complement my analyses from chapters one and two, I look at Plato and Aristotle's more explicit models for the physical process of old age in my concluding chapter. Additionally, I end this chapter with a coda, speculating on how these sort of inquiries into the aged body might have contributed to a new ideological niche for old age which Plato introduced in his *Republic*. Through his character Cephalus, Plato represents older men who are past their sexual maturity as especially good candidates for higher thinking, an intellectual activity quite different from the experiential knowledge the elderly traditionally can offer. I argue that this perspective on old age became imaginable as a result of the sorts of inquiries into the aged body which we see in Greek

Thane (London: Routledge, 1998), 39.

11 Homer's γήραος οὐδός "threshold of old age" (eg. *Il.* 22.60, 24.486; *Od.* 15.246, 15.348, 23.212)

12 Brooke Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject: the Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Holmes argues that the term *soma* connotes an anxiety concerning the physical integrity of a living person and expresses the uncomfortable, liminal space between life and death. As Snell notes, Homer's use of the word *soma* seems to be largely limited to dead, not living, bodies (33-4); to refer to this physical element of a person is to refer to their vulnerability. The *soma*, so understood, is a liminal space between existence and non-existence, porous and penetrable by alien, supernatural forces (41-83).

13 I am not presenting the development of this split as the inevitable discovery of the "natural" way to dissect a human. I am interested in how the aged body participated in, and transformed through, this particular division which happened to emerge.

drama and medical writing. These analyses contributed to a new outlook on old age that considered the ideological potential in this physical disintegration.¹⁴

Richardson begins her chapter entitled "Mental and Emotional Endowments of Old Age" with this passage from the *Republic*. In fact, this scene tends to be mentioned early and often in any discussion of old age in ancient Greece. Yet we risk anachronism if we consider Plato's claim about old age to be equally imaginable throughout the entire Classical Greek era; written around 380BCE, the *Republic* is closer to the end of that era. For my conclusion, I will contextualize Plato's view, viewing it as an endpoint rather than representative of ancient Greek ideas on old age generally. I argue that Plato's conception of old age became a viable through these inquiries into the aged, their bodies, and their relationship to their bodies which I examine in the Greek theater and medical writing.

14 The disconnection between the aged body and mind as well as the morbidity itself of the elderly body would appeal to Plato's interest in demarcating the *soma* and the *psyche*.

CHAPTER 1

THE AGED BODY ON THE ATHENIAN STAGE

In this chapter, I will investigate the Greeks' "traditional,"¹ non-scientific perspective of old age, against which I will examine the conception the medical writers had of aging and the elderly in my second chapter. Of course, while the evidence of the γέρων in non-scientific literature is not lacking, his presence in medical writing is infrequent. This limitation obliges me to address the majority of instances of the Hippocratic "old man," but to be more selective with the literature, using what I think would be most useful to explore along with my investigation of the medical image of the elderly and for my exploration of the aged *soma* in general. To that end, I will begin by looking at images of the elderly, their bodies, and their relationship to their bodies in 5th- and 4th- century theater.

The Athenian stage was a particularly rich and useful venue for the demonstration and exploration of the the aged body; ancient Greek playwrights cast elderly characters frequently in both tragedy and comedy, finding in them an especially effective medium for the exploration of loss, pain, and the liminal space between personhood and non-existence, whether for pathetic or comedic effect. The stage also offers many accounts of old age framed in a first-person

1 The designation of Greek theater as representative of "traditional" ideas about old age and the Hippocratic Corpus as representative of "new" ideas about old age is fraught for a number of reasons. Greek medicine clearly influenced Greek plays, and these "traditional" Greek notions of disease and the body of course are easily found in any Hippocratic treatise. Nor is it possible to be dogmatic about a chronology. Although I am splitting theater and medical writing into different chapters, it is impossible to disentangle them or compare them chronologically, especially due to our deep ignorance of dates for the Hippocratic corpus and its precursors. Rather, my choices are primarily for organizational purposes. For these reasons, the content I examine will tend to be more important than a precise dating of sources—an approach which allows me to access what ideas began to fall into place during the course of the 5th and early 4th centuries which produced an alternate view of old age without holding me accountable for unanswerable details.

perspective, which is especially helpful for my investigation into views on the aged body and its relationship to the self. Certain themes arise in the portrayal of elderly characters which I will discuss throughout this chapter. The playwrights explore old peoples' proximity to death in several ways: the elderly can be described as non-entities, whether spirits, disembodied voices, or corpses. They are desiccated in their physical constitution, a metaphor which participates in the comparison of the human life-cycle to that of plants. Greek playwrights are also particularly interested in verbally dissecting the aged body, having the audience observe in isolation the broken parts of a person who was once whole. This disintegration which the playwrights portray in the aged body also suggests a connection between old age and the "limb-loosening" bodily dissolution imagined in erotic experiences, sleep and, of course, death.² Through all of these representations, the playwrights present the aged body as a place for the consideration of the boundaries of personhood and of the body. Together with my examination of the medical perspective of the elderly body, this look at the theatrical portrayal of old age will shed light on the shift in the potential and purpose of old age which we see Plato's Cephalus represent around the first quarter of the fourth century BCE.

The aged body features prominently as a locus of suffering and impotence, often serving as metonymy for an old person's lack of agency in their social environment. One of the ways in which playwrights express the impotence of elderly characters is through comparing them to non-physical entities such as shadows or dreams. These terms evoke the idea that the elderly are near death and practically non-existent, an idea these writers also evoke by representing the elderly metonymically with words which are thematically similar such as "tomb" or "corpse." Aeschylus

2 Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 145-62. Vermeule gives a succinct survey of the similar *modi operandi* of death, *eros* and sleep; notably writers imagine that, among other similarities, both loosen limbs (134-6).

participates is this idea with his chorus of elders at the beginning of the *Agamemnon*. While lamenting how they are dishonored because of their aged flesh (ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ) (*Ag.* 72), they compare themselves to a daydream: ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον (*Ag.* 82). This metaphor, which appears in Euripides and Sophocles as well, expresses how the elderly are somehow disembodied, formless, and perhaps already dead. A dream has no physical dimension, and while it often has the power to speak, it cannot directly affect the real world. Euripides also uses the comparison in his *Phoenician Women*. In perhaps the most detailed self-negation we hear of an old person in tragedy, Oedipus says to Antigone:

τί μ', ὦ παρθένε, βακτρεύμασι τυφλοῦ
ποδὸς ἐξάγαγες ἐς φῶς
λεχίρη σκοτίων ἐκ θαλάμων οἰκ-
τροτάτοισιν δακρύοισιν,
πολὶν αἰθέρος ἀφανὲς εἶδωλον ἢ
νέκυν ἔνερθεν ἢ
πτανὸν ὄνειρον; (*Ph.* 1539-45)

Oh child, why did you lead me, bedridden,
with your pitiful tears out of my shadowy
bedroom into the light by supporting my
blind foot? Me, an invisible phantom,
or a corpse from below, or a flitting dream?

Oedipus describes himself in succession as a πολὶν αἰθέρος ἀφανὲς εἶδωλον "gray, unseen phantom of the air," a "corpse from below" (νέκυν ἔνερθεν) and a "fleeting dream" (πτανὸν ὄνειρον). All the metaphors he employs suggest, in addition to his hopeless inefficacy as a human being, that he has no form whatsoever and is practically invisible. A few years later in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Antigone compares her blind father's step to a dream as she helps him walk: τᾷδε τᾷδε βᾶθί μοι,/ τᾷδε τᾷδε πόδα τιθείς,/ ὥστ' ὄνειρον ἰσχύν. "Over here, step with me, here. Here, set your foot here; it has the strength of a dream." (*OC* 1720-22). Again, Oedipus, or at least his foot, is compared to a dream in its old age. This theme also appears with the aged chorus

leader near the beginning of Euripides' *Heracles*. The old man compares himself to an aged bird, disembodied words, and a vision of dreams in the night:

ὑπόροφα μέλαθρα καὶ
 γεραιὰ δέμνι', ἀμφὶ βάρκτροις
 ἔρεισμα θέμενος, ἐστάλην
 ἠλέμων γόων ἄοι-
 δὸς ὥστε πολὺς ὄρνις,
 ἔπεα μόνον καὶ δόκη-
 μα νυκτερωπὸν ἐννύχων ὀνείρων (HF 107-13)

Making the eaves of the roof and old beds
 my support, I fall around my staff, a singer
 of sorrowful dirges just like a gray bird,
 only words and visions of dreams in the night.

This passage expresses the idea that elderly are somehow audible but not visible, a notion that emerges in other plays as well.³ We find another in Euripides' *Andromache*, where Menelaus insults aged Peleus by calling him a "shadow standing opposite" him, who has a voice, but is powerless to do anything but speak: σκιά γὰρ ἀντίστοιχος ὧς φωνὴν ἔχεις,/ ἀδύνατος, οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν λέγειν μόνον. (*Andr.* 745-6). An isolated phrase from Euripides is sufficient for us to see yet another instance of this "shadow" metaphor applied to an old person: "σκιά γέρων ἀνὴρ."⁴ In Euripides' *Heracles*, Amphytryon calls himself "nothing but the sound of speech:" πρὸς δ' ἔμ' ἀσθενῆ φίλον/ δεδόρκατ', οὐδὲν ὄντα πλὴν γλώσσης ψόφον. (HF 228-9). The metaphors of intangible beings (dreams, shadows, sounds) imply an impotent, disembodied non-existence, where one has the ability to see, but has little effect upon, the world around them. With the inability of their bodies, they can only protest with a voice, which they claim is the only remaining part of themselves.

3 Homer also suggests this communicativeness in old age without physical agency when he compares the Trojan elders to cicadas, creatures not known for their commanding physical presence, but rather their high-pitched sound. (*Il.*3.150-1).

4 Kannicht 509. Richard Kannicht, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta. Vol. 5 Part 1, Euripides* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

Playwrights employ other imagery thematically similar to the "shadow" and "dream" metaphors; they also compare the elderly to corpses or tombs. Both terms, of course, engage with the idea that these people are not far from death, in addition to insinuating, like the dream imagery, that the elderly are somehow non-entities. Hecuba, like Oedipus, likens herself to a spirit as she laments her future servitude in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. She calls herself "a form of a corpse, a flitting spirit of the dead:" νεκροῦ μορφή,/ νεκῶν ἀμενηνὸν ἄγαλμα (*Tro.* 193). In Euripides' *Electra*, Orestes is at first skeptical of an old servant of the household whom he does not recognize, calling him an old remnant of a man: παλαιὸν ἀνδρὸς λείψανον (*El.* 554). The herald calls Iolaus, who is protecting the titular *Children of Heracles*, "a tomb, virtually nothing:" ἢ κακὸν λόγον/ κτήσῃ πρὸς ἀστῶν, εἰ γέροντος οὐνεκα,/ τύμβου, τὸ μηδὲν ὄντος, ὥς εἰπεῖν ἔπος,/ παίδων <τε> τῶνδ' ἐς ἄντλον ἐμβήσῃ πόδα. (*Heracl.* 165-8). In Euripides' *Medea*, Creon calls himself a tomb when he, in despair, addresses his dying daughter: τίς τὸν γέροντα τύμβον ὀρφανὸν σέθεν/ τίθησιν. (*Med.* 1207-8). In a comedic context, Aristophanes appropriates this term "tomb" in his *Lysistrata* as a playful insult. The chorus of women call to the old men: "Why are you holding a torch, you old tomb? So that you can cremate yourself?:" τί δαὶ σὺ πῦρ ὃ τύμβ' ἔχων; ὥς σαυτὸν ἐμπυρεύσων; (*Lys.* 372). In a fragment of Aristophanes, someone calls an old man a σορέλλη (*Fr.* 205), a word related to σορός, a funerary urn.⁵ Thus sepulchral terminology becomes metonymy for the aged body itself.

Related to the comparison of old people to corpses or sepulchers is that idea that old age has a drying effect, which will also be relevant for my later comparison to medical writing. The idea that dryness is a physical property of the aged body has a presence on the Athenian stage just as in Greek medical writing. This notion probably belongs to the familiar metaphor between

5 Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1983), 124-5.

humans and plants which we find at least as early as Homer in his "generation of leaves" simile in *Iliad* VI.145-9. In this way, we are to imagine that the aged body is dried out, much like a plant becomes withered at the end of its own life cycle. We also often see this correlation between old age and dryness in Greek iambic poetry. Lovers or objects of love become overripe and dried out before our eyes as the poet describes them. Poets in fact even engage in the idea that erotic activity itself hastens the aging process, particularly for women. Archilochus describes a previous lover as "already withered with furrows" (κάρφετα[ι γὰρ ἤδη/ ὄγμοις]) in fr. 188.⁶ In his Cologne epode (196a), he calls Neoboule overripe (πέπειρα) presumably not because she is actually a γυνή by age, but by sexual experience.⁷ In Anacreon fr. 432,⁸ a female speaker complains that she is overripe (πέπειρα) because of, we are lead to believe, an over-indulgence in sex. Aristophanes Therefore, the comparison of humans to plants is familiar, especially in the context of focusing on the sexuality of a body, its agedness, or both.⁹ In the *Agamemnon*, the chorus of old men employ a vegetative metaphor for "extreme old age:" "When its leaf already has withered away, extreme old age walks with three feet:" τό θ' ὑπέργηρων φυλλάδος ἤδη/ κατακαρφομένης τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοῦς/ στείχει. (*Ag.* 79-81). Here the abstract concept of age itself has become the plant, already transformed into "extreme old age" even before we reach the participle κατακαρφομένης. The comic value of the desiccated old man hardly escapes Aristophanes as well, as Simon Byl notes.¹⁰ In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* the chorus of women pours water on the chorus of old men, taunting: "I'll water you so you'll bloom:" ἄρδω σ' ὅπως ἂν βλαστάνῃς. (*Lys.*

6 The numeration of Archilochus fragments follow West. M.L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati 1, Archilochus, Hipponax, Theognidea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

7 Cologne Epode (196a) line 26

8 The numeration of Anacreon follows Page. D.L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2003).

9 Anne Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 135-69. Carson analyzes these "ripeness" terms with an eye to their heavily gendered meanings.

384). The old men reply: "But I'm already withered from trembling:" ἀλλ' αὖτός εἰμ' ἤδη τρέμων.

(*Lys.* 385). They play on the pun in αὖτός, which means both dried out and shaking, imaginably like leaf ready to fall. The aged body is imagined as decaying like flora, drying out at the end of its lifespan. The dried out vegetative analogy appears in Aristophanes again. In *Wealth*,

Chremylus compares an old woman to an old olive branch that would catch fire if he held a torch too close: ἐὰν γὰρ αὐτὴν εἷς μόνος σπινθήρ λάβῃ/ ὥσπερ παλαιὰν εἰρεσιώνην καύσεται (*Pl.*

1054). The implication is that the wrinkles apparent on the surface of both betray the absence of moisture within. In the *Knights*, the chorus accuses the audience of discarding a poet when he becomes old. Cratinus serves as an example: ἀλλὰ γέρων ὦν περιέρρει,/ ὥσπερ Κοννᾶς,

στέφανον μὲν ἔχων αὖτον δίψῃ δ' ἀπολωλώς,/ ὦν χρῆν διὰ τὰς προτέρας νίκας πίνειν ἐν τῷ πρυτανείῳ, (*Eq.* 533-5) His laurel is dried out, just as he and his artistic career.

The characterization of an aged person as σαπρός, another organic metaphor, also appears in Old Comedy multiple times. This word, related to the verb σήπω "to rot," means rotten, stale.

In *Peace*, Trygaeus calls Sophocles "γέρων ὦν καὶ σαπρὸς" (*Pax* 698). In *Wealth* when

Chremylus makes a comment about drinking the dregs along with the wine, a clear sexual reference to the old woman, the youth responds: "they are certainly old and rotten:" ἀλλ' ἔστι

κομιδῇ τρυξ παλαιὰ καὶ σαπρά. (*Pl.* 1086). In the *Assemblywomen* the young woman calls an old

woman twice "ὦ σαπρά" (*Ecc.* 884; 927). The chorus of men in the *Lysistrata* address the chorus

of women with the same term (*Lys.* 376). This insult engages with the idea of an old person as an

organic substance at the end of its life-cycle, that is, beginning a decomposition process. Thus we

are asked to look at a much more objectified body when we look at the elderly on the Athenian

stage. This organic imagery invites us to focus in particular on the physical element of the aged

10 Simon Byl, "Le vieillard dans les comédies d'Aristophane," *L'antiquité classique* 46 (1977): 53.

person and the process of bodily deterioration which it involves. When we look at these poets' and playwrights' portrayals of the elderly body we see the uncomfortable liminal space between personhood and loss of personhood, between life and death.

We also find that the Greek playwrights had strong interest in staging a disintegration of the aged body which was even more conspicuous than this vegetative decay. They frequently verbally dissect the body parts of elderly characters, what Falkner calls a "litany of their aged anatomy."¹¹ These representations transform aged characters onstage into an amalgamation of feet, knees, eyes, mouths, or backs, all of which are qualified with adjectives expressing the decrepitude of old age. There is a sense in which the physical bodies of aged people experience a kind of disintegration parallel to their powerlessness in their role in society. Homer's vivid portrait of the aged Priam begging Hector not to leave the walls of Troy doubtlessly serves as an exemplum for the playwrights as they modeled their elderly characters. In his plea, Priam describes how his own dogs would tear his corpse apart, illustrating the scene by listing his gray hair, gray beard and genitals:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολὺν τε κάρη πολὺν τε γένειον
αἰδῶ τ' αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο γέροντος,
τοῦτο δὴ οἴκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν. (Il. 22.74-6)

But when an old man is dead, the dogs disfigure
his gray head and gray beard and genitals,
this is the most pitiful thing that befalls wretched mortals.

This catalogue of body parts compels the audience's imagination to dwell on the helplessness of the the aged person, while highlighting the lack of control he has over his own body and, in turn, the world that surrounds him. Holmes cites this passage as an example of the anxiety surrounding

11 Falkner, *Old Age*, 172.

a person and his *soma*, since "even what looks solid is imperceptibly crumbling below the surface, undermining the coherence of form."¹²

Priam's body becomes an expression of the uncertainty concerning the physical form of personhood and this compilation of body parts becomes a standard trope for the elderly on the Athenian stage. Yet while Homer's dismemberment of Priam is in the context of violence, the playwrights often verbally separate the elderly body without mentioning any potential of outside harm. In addition to listing their aged body parts, aged characters in tragedy also often carry a staff, a stage prop to which they often refer. This idea of a staff as a "third leg" further suggests the dissipation of their physical strength and encourages us to view their body parts as isolated testimonies of the strength and independence they lack. Playwrights engage as well with the theme of old age as a second childhood, where elderly characters are compared to, or compare themselves, to children in their physical and social impotence, dependent on others for care or even supervision. I will address these interconnected representations for the remainder of my chapter.

In fracturing the aged body, ancient Greek playwrights have us consider in isolation different body parts separated from a once integrated whole. As Falkner observes, playwrights often describe and catalogue the body parts of elderly characters, either through other characters or through the elderly characters themselves.¹³ Euripides frequently uses the phrase "aged foot" to qualify the step of the old person or enhance the effect of the actor walking unsteadily across stage.¹⁴ In Euripides' *Electra*, when Electra's aged husband returns from Orestes' grave, he lists his physical infirmities that made the journey difficult:

¹² Holmes, *The Symptom and Subject*, 106.

¹³ Falkner, *The Poetics of Old Age*, 171-9.

¹⁴ Euripides *Andr.* 546; *Ion* 1041; *Tro.* 1275; *Ph.* 303, 848, 1537

ὥς πρόσβασιν τῶνδ' ὀρθίαν οἴκων ἔχει
 ῥυσῶ γέροντι τῷδε προσβῆναι ποδί.
 ὅμως δὲ πρὸς γε τοὺς φίλους ἐξελκτέον
 διπλῆν ἄκανθαν καὶ παλίρροπον γόνυ. (*El.* 489-92)

How steep the way is to her house for
 a wrinkled old man to climb up with this foot!
 Nevertheless, I must drag my doubled spine and bent knee
 towards my friends.

The old man directs our attention to his "aged foot" with the demonstrative τῷδε. He expresses his movement in terms of individual body parts: his feet, his crooked back and his knees, verbally separating each piece from the whole. The agency is distributed into discrete body parts which, instead of conducting him effortlessly, he must drag. Hecuba is also a very prominent example of staging the elderly body as dismembered. In Euripides' two plays which feature Hecuba, we hardly see her as a whole person at all, but rather as a series of physical elements, to which she and other characters refer. Polyxena begs her mother not to resist slavery and have her "aged skin" wounded: γέροντα χρῶτα (*Hec.* 406); later Talthybius tells her to lift her "white head:" τὸ πάλλευκον κάρα (*Hec.* 500). In *Trojan Women*, Hecuba also references her white hair and her need for a staff to show both her invalidity and how absurd slavery would be for a woman her age:

ἐγὼ δὲ τῷ
 πρόσπολος ἅ τριτοβάμονος χειρὶ
 δευομένα βάκτρον γεραίῳ κάρα; (*Tro.* 274-6)

And on whose hand shall I attend?
 I need a staff as a third leg and my hair is white.

Her individual, aged body parts serve as testimony to her uselessness and her brokenness as a person. In light of Euripides' emphatic and frequent presentation of Hecuba's body as dis-

integrated, is not surprising that scholars have found the devastation of her family and kingdom expressed metaphorically in her own failing body.¹⁵

The simple modifier "aged" for physical elements of the elderly also appears often, producing an effect which dismembers aged bodies through singling out parts, and qualifies the ability of these isolated pieces to serve their purpose. Tyndareus in Euripides' *Orestes* and the chorus of old men in *Heracles* twice describe their tears as "old."¹⁶ By calling their own mouths aged "γεραιῶν ἐκ στομάτων (*Supp.* 43)," the chorus in Euripides' *Suppliants* demonstrates its ineffectiveness, while the chorus in *Heracles*, using a similar phrase, brings attention to the fact that its voices are only useful for praising gods: *πολιᾶν ἐκ γενύων* (*HF* 693). Thus these adjectives which modify physical parts of an old person tend either to underscore the uselessness of old age or at least to qualify its usefulness. In all these references to isolated pieces of the aged body, we are invited to see the elderly as a set of poorly integrated parts —a once whole person who now verbally displays the disjuncture between their individual body parts, making this phenomenon observable to the audience.

This breaking up of the aged body is perhaps even more strongly expressed through the rhetorical trope of apostrophe. As Falkner notes, Euripides often has his elderly characters apostrophize their body parts. It is useful for us to review his examples of this literary trope for our examination of alienated agency.¹⁷ Falkner mentions how the tutor in Euripides' *Ion* commands his aged foot to action: ἄγ', ὦ γεραιὲ πούς, νεανίας γενοῦ/ ἔργοισι, κεῖ μὴ τῷ χρόνῳ πάρεστί σοι (*Ion* 1041-2). Iolaus addresses his arms, reminding them how they once sacked Sparta with Heracles:

15 Jacqueline de Romilly, *L'évolution du pathétique d'Eschyle à Euripide* (Paris, 1961), 80-3.

16 Euripides *Or.* 529; *HF.* 450, 1209

17 Falkner, *The Poetics of Old Age*, 173.

φεῦ:
 εἴθ', ὦ βραχίων, οἷον ἠβήσαντά σε
 μεμνήμεθ' ἡμεῖς, ἥνικα ξὺν Ἡρακλεῖ
 Σπάρτην ἐπόρθεις, σύμμαχος γένοιό μοι
 τοιοῦτος. (Heracl. 740-3)

Alas:
 oh arms, would that you
 could become such an ally to me
 as I remember you were when you were young,
 as you sacked Sparta with Heracles.

Iolaus personifies his arms, as if they had agency, memory, and youth of their own outside of Iolaus himself. We also find this apostrophization of arms lamenting martial inability in Euripides' *Heracles*. A chorus member bemoans that he cannot hold a spear as he addresses his right arm: — ὦ δεξιὰ χεῖρ, ὡς ποθεῖς λαβεῖν δόρυ,/ ἐν δ' ἀσθενείᾳ τὸν πόθον διώλεσας. (*HF* 268-9). Hecuba apostrophizes her head and neck, bidding her head to raise itself: ἄνα, δύσδαιμον, πεδόθεν κεφαλή:/ ἐπάειρε δέρην (*Tro.* 98-99). In his *Hecuba* as well, Euripides has his titular character apostrophize her body, ordering her feet to guide her to the tent: ὦ τλάμων ἄγησαί μοι πούς,/ ἄγησαι τᾷ γηραιᾷ/ πρὸς τάνδ' αὐλάν (*Hec.* 169-71). In *Trojan Women*, she commands her trembling legs to bear her steps to slavery for her final lines of the play: ἰώ:/ τρομερὰ μέλεα, φέρετ' ἐμὸν ἵχνος:/ ἴτ' ἐπὶ, τάλανα,/ δούλειον ἀμέραν βίου. (*Tro.* 327-30). In all these examples, the body parts of the elderly characters have become somehow alien and detached from them. No longer an integrated, whole person, the aged people on stage have difficulty controlling or even recognizing the pieces of their own bodies. Furthermore, in their exploration of this bodily disjunction, the playwrights examine a disconnect between the will and physical capability of an old person. We clearly see in these examples the deteriorated link between the old people's will and their physical bodies. They must address and command their body parts which no longer move so unconsciously and effortlessly with the unseen will of the speaker. This disintegration of, and lack of control over, the elderly body often poetically parallels and reinforces a lack of

social agency. Older peoples' inability to effect change in their surroundings is superimposed onto their physical ability, which the audience can readily see. Yet this representation of the aged body also has important consequences for the meaning of old age. As the audience watches and hears this disconnect of the person and body, they consider this threshold of personhood which the playwrights have highlighted for our scrutiny.

Playwrights explore another very tangible medium for portraying the elderly with the staffs which their older characters use. These staffs, characterized as a third leg, also have the effect of representing the elderly body as poorly integrated and its strength as dissipated and dependent on outside support. This physical support can serve as metonymy for social dependency of the elderly, which is made explicit by the fact that loved ones and attendants can take the place of a staff in propping up the elderly. Because of the metaphor of the staff as a third leg, this stylized image of the elderly character with this prop leads us to imagine that their physical strength, now diminished, is divided into three instead of two legs. The chorus of Argive elders in the *Agamemnon* refer to their staffs as a third leg by calling their step "three-footed:" τρίποδας ὁδοὺς (*Ag.* 80-1); they literally distribute (νέμοντες) their strength onto staffs: ἰσχὺν /ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκῆπτροις (*Ag.* 74-5). Elderly characters often mention their staff along with a list of his or her infirm body parts, as if the staff itself is another piece of their body, just as unrecognizable as the natural limbs. At the beginning of Euripides' *Hecuba*, the titular character directly compares her attendants who are helping her to a staff, enumerating their outside help along with her own body parts:

ἄγετ', ὦ παῖδες, τὴν γραῦν πρὸ δόμων,
 ἄγετ' ὀρθοῦσαι τὴν ὁμόδουλον,
 Τρῳάδες, ὑμῖν, πρόσθε δ' ἄνασσαν:
 λάβετε φέρετε πέμπετ' αἰείρετέ μου
 γεραιᾶς χειρὸς προσλαζύμεναι:
 κἀγὼ σκολιῷ σκίπωνι χερὸς

διεπειδομένα σπεύσω βραδύπουν
ἤλυσιν ἄρθρων προτιθεῖσα. (*Hec.* 59-67)

Lead an old woman in front of the house, slaves,
Lead and lift up your fellow slave,
Trojan women, who was once your mistress:
Take me, carry me, escort me, lift me, taking my aged hands too:
And I, by leaning upon the curved staff that is your arm,
will hurry the slow step of my legs forwards.

We see and hear her need for physical support in great detail: she repeats ἄγετ' in the first and second lines; she then gives a series of four imperative requests for assistance in line 62. She calls her hand γεραιᾶς and her step βραδύπουν, the latter governing the genitive ἄρθρων. She lists her hands, footsteps and joints, qualifying them with adjectives which only express their weakness, as we have seen before. Therefore, in addition to dissecting her body, inviting us to consider her deterioration through her broken frame, she describes in great detail her need for support from her servants, whom she likens to staffs. The aid she requires from her attendants becomes almost an externalization of her own body, just as the staff is considered a third leg. The invisible will which an able-bodied person uses to guide his or her own limbs becomes audible and visible as Hecuba commands her servants. The workings of her body, and their relationship to her will, are laid bare for pathetic effect for the eyes of the audience. When portrayed in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Hecuba engages in similar rhetoric. As we saw before, she asks the herald Talthybius whose slave she will be, reminding the audience of her invalidity and emphasizing how absurd servitude is at her age by pointing out her need for a staff which serves as a third leg: τριτοβάμονος... δευομένα βάκτρον (*Tro.* 275-6). In *Phoenician Women*, Tiresias has his daughter help him walk. Here, not only is she his "third leg" but his eyes: ἡγοῦ πάροιθε, θύγατερ: ὡς τυφλῷ ποδὶ/ ὀφθαλμὸς εἴ σύ, ναυβάταισιν ἄστρον ὥς (*Ph.* 834-5). Tiresias thus relies both on his daughter's legs and eyes to supplement his own which are deficient. A few lines later he asks how much longer the journey will take because his knees are tired from the pace his

companions are keeping: ὥς ἐμὸν κάμνει γόνυ,/ πυκνήν δὲ βαίνων ἤλυσιν μόλις περῶ (*Ph.* 823-4). Creon answers that they are near their destination, and tells Tiresias' daughter: "Take his hand, child/ just as every chariot is used to waiting for the help of an outside hand, so do the feet of an old man:" λαβοῦ δ' αὐτοῦ, τέκνον:/ ὥς πᾶς ἀπήνη πούς τε πρεσβύτου φιλεῖ/ χειρὸς θυραίας ἀναμένειν κουρίσματα (*Ph.* 846-8). This simile summarizes well a facet of staging of the elderly body; an old person needs help from a "θυραῖος" hand, i.e. "from a stranger, outdoors, from abroad" —yet it is not a "stranger" in the sense of someone he does not know, but the liminality of the adjective instead expresses the idea that the agency comes from outside of and beyond his own body. Again, by drawing our attention to the displaced agency of an elderly person, either with a staff or with other people, the playwrights ask us to contemplate the limits of a person and where their physical self is located in this liminal area.

In a couple of instances we see this dependence also expressed in organic metaphors. Euripides likens two elderly characters to parasitic plants growing onto their children, thereby emphasizing their reliance on someone else, even if this need is emotionally, and not physically motivated. Hecuba, in Euripides' play of the same name, tries to prevent Polyxena from being dragged off to slavery as she cries, "Just as ivy does an oak, I will hold onto her:" ὅποῖα κισσὸς δρυός, ὅπως τῆσδ' ἔξομαι (*Hec.* 398). In his *Medea*, Euripides has the herald describe the death of Creon with this same comparison. Creon embraces his daughter whom Medea's poisonous gift is burning alive and quickly becomes immobilized by the curse:

ἐπεὶ δὲ θρήνων καὶ γόων ἐπαύσατο,
 χρῆζων γεραῖον ἐξαναστῆσαι δέμας
 προσείχεθ' ὥστε κισσὸς ἔρνεσιν δάφνης
 λεπτοῖσι πέπλοις, δεινὰ δ' ἦν παλαιίσματα:
 ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἤθελ' ἐξαναστῆσαι γόνυ,
 ἢ δ' ἀντελάζυτ': εἰ δὲ πρὸς βίαν ἄγοι,
 σάρκας γεραίας ἐσπάρασσ' ἀπ' ὀστέων. (*Med.* 1211-7)

And when he stopped lamenting and mourning,

although he wanted to raise up his aged body,
 it attached itself onto her fine dress
 just as ivy branches of a laurel tree,
 and there was a terrible struggle:
 for he wished to lift up his knee,
 but she held him back: and if he tried
 with force, he tore his aged flesh from his bones.

He clings to her like ivy clings to branches of a laurel tree. Interestingly, in both of these scenes the parent expresses a wish to die along with (συνθνήκω) their child. Here dependence takes on the extreme form of parasitism; the old peoples' desperation reduces them to parasitic organisms which attach themselves to much larger, stable objects which enable their existence. Therefore we again find that the playwrights stress the dependence of older characters on something, or more often, someone. The parasitic notion behind the similes restates the lack of self-sufficiency of the elderly and tends to project their agency beyond their own person.

Yet the disintegration of the elderly on stage and their dependence on outside support is not exclusively dreary. Sophocles' last play *Oedipus at Colonus*, provides an alternative image of an old man, as Falkner observes.¹⁸ Oedipus has been given an oracle which discloses his fate, presumably some kind of painless removal from the mortal world, about which the audience in fact is never told. In this way we see an Oedipus more comfortable with his fate than the typical old people in tragedy who lament having lived to see the destruction of their world while lacking the power to remedy it. In Sophocles' play, the titular character never complains of his failing body or invites the audience to dissect him visually as the other aged characters on the Athenian stage do, but he is instead dignified in accepting his old age and imminent death. When he calls for his daughters to prop him up on both sides, he expresses this dependence much differently than most aged characters: "Prop me up on both sides, child/ cling closely to your father, and rest from our desolate and wretched wandering:" ἐρείσατ', ὦ παῖ, πλευρὸν ἀμφιδέξιον/ ἐμφόντε τῷ

φύσαντι, κἀναπαύσατον/ τοῦ πρόσθ' ἐρήμου τοῦδε δυστήνου πλάνου. (OC 1112-4). Sophocles employs strong vegetative metaphor with "ἐμφύντε τῷ φύσαντι." Here Oedipus asks his daughters to cling to their father, literally to "implant" themselves onto the one who "sprouted" them. This wordplay engages with organic imagery of the human body, perhaps also hinting at the common characterization of the aged as "dried out" —except, instead of an image of a withering old man, Sophocles offers us a regenerative look at this Oedipus. We also see very different imagery than the parasitic simile in Euripides; instead of Oedipus expressing a hopeless dependence on his daughters, he emphasizes the cyclical and regenerative aspect of the child-parent relationship. This image parallels well the tone and content of this play, which Falkner keenly describes as an unusually optimistic outlook on old age, one with dignity and acceptance of death. We will return to Oedipus' acceptance of old age when I examine his expression of the "soma versus self" division in the context of aging.

There are other instances in which playwrights use the aged body to explore a possible cyclical nature of the stages of life, although largely with less positive implications than in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. While the more "official" accounts of life stages make the process of aging linear (such with Solon's or Aristotle's), Greek playwrights have us contemplate another model. The concept of old age as a return to childhood is a common theme on the Athenian stage. We find perhaps the most familiar example in the the riddle Oedipus solves. Here we imagine an increase and then decline in strength during the life course; according to this notion, old age compels a person to return to a former state of dependence where he needs more than his own two legs in order to walk. The chorus of Argive elders in the *Agamemnon* compare themselves twice to children:

18 Falkner, *The Poetics of Old Age*, 211-59.

ἡμεῖς δ' ἀτίται σαρκὶ παλαιᾷ
 τῆς τότ' ἄρωγῆς ὑπολειφθέντες
 μίμνομεν ἰσχὺν
 ἰσόπαιδα νέμοντες ἐπὶ σκῆπτροις.
 ὃ τε γὰρ νεαρὸς μυελὸς στέρνων
 ἐντὸς ἀνάσσων
 ἰσόπρεσβυς, Ἄρης δ' οὐκ ἔνι χώρα,
 τό θ' ὑπέργηρων φυλλάδος ἤδη
 κατακαρφομένης τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοὺς
 στείχει, παιδὸς δ' οὐδὲν ἀρείων
 ὄναρ ἡμερόφαντον ἀλαίνει. (Ag. 72-82)

But we remain, dishonored because of our aged flesh,
 left without aid, and distribute our strength,
 equal to a child's, upon our staffs.
 For youthful marrow springs up in our breast,
 equal to an old man, although Ares is not at his station,
 and, when its leaf has already fallen, extreme old age
 has a three-legged step, and, no better than a child,
 this day-dream wanders.

The chorus complains that they are ἀτίται, dishonored, because of their aged bodies and explains how their body has deprived them of their agency; they twice mention their need for the support of a cane and twice characterize their strength as equal to a child's: "ἰσχὺν ἰσόπαιδα" (Ag. 74-5). They repeat this sentiment, saying that they walk on three feet, no better than a child: τρίποδας μὲν ὁδοὺς/ στείχει, παιδὸς δ' οὐδὲν ἀρείων (Ag. 80-1). Later in the play, Aegisthus reinforces their similarity to children in a conflict between himself and the chorus, exclaiming that the old men, despite their age, must be taught to behave:

γνώση γέρων ὦν ὡς διδάσκεσθαι βαρὺ
 τῷ τηλικούτῳ, σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον.
 δεσμὸς δὲ καὶ τὸ γῆρας αἶ τε νήστιδες
 δύαι διδάσκειν ἐξοχώταται φρενῶν
 ἱατρομάντεις. οὐχ ὀρᾷς ὀρῶν τάδε; (Ag. 1617-4)

As an old man, you will learn how burdensome
 it is to be taught at such an age to be prudent.
 Bondage and old age and hunger and misery,
 healers of the mind, are excellent at teaching.
 Even though you see this, do you not see?

Aegisthus expresses the idea that learning at an old age is difficult, yet the discomforts of old age, as well as the other conditions mentioned, can "cure" their imprudence. He uses verbs which

denote learning four times: γνώση, διδάσκεσθαι, διδάσκειν, and ὁρᾶς, metaphorically used to mean "realize." Especially because we have already heard the chorus compare themselves to children at the beginning of the play, Aegisthus' emphasis on how the chorus must learn, recognize and realize (literally "see") has the effect of reducing the chorus to a stage of life when most of one's learning occurs, i.e. childhood. Although his animus toward the chorus of elders clearly influences his attitude about old age, this passage reveals that this deprecatory comparison of old people to children was a part of the cultural discourse with which Aegisthus could engage. We see this theme also play out in Aristophanes' *Wasps*. Philocleon complains to a flute girl that his son controls him because he (Philocleon) is "too young:" νῦν δ' οὐ κρατῶ 'γὰρ τῶν ἐμαντοῦ χρημάτων/ νέος γάρ εἰμι καὶ φυλάττομαι σφόδρα. (V. 1354-5). A scholiast responds to this scene with the proverb "δῖς παῖδες οἱ γέροντες (CPG 31)."¹⁹ We also find Pheidippides using this exact phrase as a sophistic justification for sons to beat fathers:

φήσεις νομίζεσθαι σὺ παιδὸς τοῦτο τοῦργον εἶναι:
ἐγὼ δέ γ' ἀντίποιμι' ἂν ὥς δις παῖδες οἱ γέροντες:
εἰκὸς δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς γέροντας ἢ νέους τι κλάειν,
ὅσῳ περ ἐξαμαρτάνειν ἥττον δίκαιον αὐτούς. (Nu. 1416-9)

You'll say you think this is a child's matter:
And I would say in return that old men are children twice over:
that it's more fitting to beat old men than young men,
to the same degree that it's less acceptable that they (old men) misbehave.

Therefore both tragic and comic playwrights participate in this idea that childhood and senility could potentially be viewed as comparable life stages from a societal perspective. Perhaps this connection between these two life stages seems obvious. Without much difficulty we can imagine

19 Ernst von Leutsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Schneidewin, *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum. Vol. 1, Paroemiographi Graeci* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the parallels in the social spaces of children and the elderly; both age groups are not part of public life and are dependent on the care of their family.²⁰

This cyclical perspective on aging goes beyond the stage as well; we also find inklings of this notion in Greek prose. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian describes extenuating circumstances for committing crimes. According to him, if someone is insane, ill, senile or a child they should not be subject to the same penalties as able men:

ἦν δὲ ἡμῖν κείμενα περὶ τε τῶν συλόντων, οἷμαι, τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ τὰ περὶ προδοτῶν, ἔτι δὲ τῶν τοὺς νόμους διαφθειρόντων ἐπὶ καταλύσει τῆς παρούσης πολιτείας. τούτων δὴ τις ἂν ἴσως πράξειεν τι μανείς, ἢ νόσοις ἢ γήρᾳ ὑπερμέτρῳ συνεχόμενος, ἢ παιδίᾳ χρώμενος, οὐδέν πω τῶν τοιούτων διαφέρων. (Leg. IX 864d-e)

We established the matters concerning those who despoil the gods and concerning traitors, and furthermore concerning those who ruin the laws for the purpose of dissolving the current government. Perhaps one of them might commit this if he's somehow insane, either afflicted by diseases or extreme old age, or subject to childishness, in which case he is in no way different (than an insane man).

This statement assumes a lack of mental ability –and therefore of culpability– on the part of the perpetrator; old people and children are put in the same category in this model. Furthermore, the obligation of a child to care for his parent in old age also reflects this idea of old age as a second childhood. The elderly could expect this kind of care from their children, called *threpteria*. This social obligation served in principle as a repayment to one's parents for his upbringing as a child.²¹ Hence, as Falkner tells us, the verb ἀποδοῦναι "to pay back" often accompanies *threpteria*. In his *Life of Solon*, Plutarch has Solon enact a law that relieved sons of the responsibility of *threpteria* if their father did not teach them a trade: νόμον ἔγραψεν υἱῷ τρέφειν τὸν πατέρα μὴ διδασκόμενον τέχνην ἐπ'ἀνάγκης μὴ εἶναι. (Sol. 22). Thus a father must give his son training as part of his upbringing in order to receive care in his old age; as Don Cameron

20 Herbert Covey, "A Return to Infancy: Old Age and the Second Childhood in History," *International Journal of Aging & Human Development* 36, no. 2 (1992-3): 81-90.

21 Falkner, *The Poetics of Old Age*, 12-14.

remarks, this law therefore implies that *threpteria* was conceived of as a *quid pro quo* obligation, and not purely out of filial love.²² A child's failure to fulfill this duty revealed a moral turpitude, potentially even with legal consequences.²³ Xenophon and Aristotle discuss the importance of this obligation in the abstract,²⁴ and later sources inform us that not caring for one's parents could be an official charge as well. Diogenes Laertius describes a law implemented by Solon that the penalty for not fulfilling this duty was loss of citizenship.²⁵

Furthermore we also find many references to this social expectation from the failure of certain adult children to perform this duty in Greek plays (either because the children are deceased or unwilling). In Euripides' *Alcestris*, Admetus has a confrontation with his aged father Pheres, in which the son upbraids his father for not dying in his place; he even refuses to bury Pheres, suggesting that the old man should bear more children to take care of him

(γηροβοσκήσουσι) in his old age:

τοιγὰρ φυτεύων παῖδας οὐκέτ' ἂν φθάνοις,
οἱ γηροβοσκήσουσι καὶ θανόντα σε
περιστελοῦσι καὶ προθήσονται νεκρόν. (*Alc.* 662-4).

Then you should hurry and produce children
who will take care of you in your old age and,
when you die, dress and lay out your corpse.

Here we clearly see a self-consciously shameless denial of the filial responsibility which

Admetus realizes a son normally has. Admetus clearly feels it necessary to explain how Pheres has voided his claim to *threpteria* by refusing to die in his son's stead. Upon hearing that she must leave Corinth and her children, Medea also recalls in despair how she hoped to have this care from her children in her old age: ἤ μὲν ποθ' ἡ δύστηνος εἶχον ἐλπίδας/ πολλὰς ἐν ὑμῖν, γηροβοσκήσειν τ' ἐμὲ. (*Med.* 1032-3). Therefore the cyclical sense of repayment contained in

22 Don Cameron, *Studies on the Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 90.

23 Richardson, *Old Age*, 55-8.

24 Aristotle *EN* IX1165a15-35 and Xenophon *Oec.* VII.19

threpteria also encourages us to consider a kind of circularity of growing up and growing old. This decline into a state of dependence, here a second childhood, implies that the body and intellect decline in tandem.

Yet the Greeks do not always represent the "self" and the "body" losing their capabilities together. We have observed how the agency of the elderly can be projected onto their verbally disassembled body parts, staffs, and the people around them. Elderly characters need support from the outside (*θυραῖος*) and must project their will onto agents outside themselves in order to conduct their bodies. They give verbal commands, either apostrophizing their own body parts, or bidding their attendants to help, because the aged are portrayed as incapable of performing the unnarrated, unaided movements of an able person. These instances often not only imply the dissolution of body parts from each other but also suggest a severing of the self from these deficient pieces. When an elderly character has difficulty moving his foot, it is not just the foot that is alienated from the rest of the body; a gap is formed between his body and his will, a non-physical element of the self, which becomes a locus of inquiry into that space between the visible and non-visible elements of a person.

Playwrights have us consider this conspicuous disjunction between the physical capability and will of the elderly in their stagecraft of old age. Very often elderly characters lament that their body cannot fulfill what they wish to do. Falkner observes that the bodies of Euripides' aged characters are presented as something "alien and unequal to the powerful stirrings of their hearts."²⁶ Falkner offers Iolaus as an example; in *Children of Heracles* the chorus tells him that although his spirit is young, his body is gone: *λῆμα μὲν οὐπω στόρνυσι χρόνος/ τὸ σόν, ἀλλ' ἥβῃ, σῶμα δὲ φροῦδον*. (*Heracl.* 702-3). At the surface, this statement sounds very recognizable

25 Diogenes Laertius 1.55

from a perspective which considers the split between a person's mind and body self-evident. Yet as Holmes discusses, we must recognize that, while the *soma* was becoming arguably more identifiable with the English word "body" with the emergence of Greek science in the 5th century, this translation still flattens considerably the *soma*'s system of meaning lingering in the background. The *soma* was still an expression of the anxiety of personhood. Therefore, the elderly *soma* here serves as an opportunity to speculate on another outlook.

In fact, we see this split between will and body is described often, mostly in the context of aged characters. Aeschylus expresses this idea twice. He has Danaus in his *Suppliants* describe a messenger as old, but young in his well-spoken *phrenes*: ἄγγελον δ' οὐ μέμψεται / πόλις γέρονθ', ἡβῶντα δ' ἐνγλώσσω φρενί. (*Supp.* 774-5). The playwright also expresses a reversal of this idea in *Seven against Thebes*. Eteocles says that he will station a gatekeeper who is old in his *noos*, but young in the flesh: ὅμως δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ φῶτα, Λασθένους βίαν,/ ἐχθρόξενον πυλωρὸν ἀντιτάξομεν,/ γέροντα τὸν νοῦν, σάρκα δ' ἡβῶσαν φύει, (*Th.* 620-2). Therefore, the playwright expresses a contrast between physical and intellectual ability through the perspective of the more familiar contrast between youth and old age. Old age was already a threshold that was seen as useful for this kind of inspection of the divisibility of a person. We also hear this notion in Euripides. Creusa's tutor in *Ion* says that the track (ἵχνος) of his foot is slow, but that of his mind is quick: "τὸ τοῦ ποδὸς μὲν βραδύ, τὸ τοῦ δὲ νοῦ ταχύ." (*Ion* 742). In Euripides' *Heracles*, Amphytryon gives a pathetic speech expressing his inability to prevent Lycus from killing Heracles' children, his foster grandchildren:

ρώμη γὰρ ἐκλέλοιπεν ἦν πρὶν εἶχομεν,
γῆρα δὲ τρομερὰ γυῖα κάμαυρόν σθένος.
εἰ δ' ἦ νέος τε καὶ σῶματος κρατῶν,
λαβὼν ἂν ἔγχος τοῦδε τοὺς ξανθοὺς πλόκους

καθημάτωσ' ἄν, ὥστ' Ἀτλαντικῶν πέραν
φεύγειν ὄρων ἄν δειλία τοῦμὸν δόρυ. (HF 230-5)

For the strength which I had before has left,
my limbs tremble with age and my strength is faint,
But if I were young and still powerful in my body,
I would take this spear and sprinkle his blond hair
with blood, so that he would flee out of fear beyond
the pillars of Heracles when he sees my spear.

He describes in painful detail his lost vigor, his trembling knees, and his shadowy strength. Then he tells us in a contra-factual conditional statement the what he would do if he were young.

Peleus gives a similarly defensive speech in Euripides' *Andromache*, although he claims he is actually capable of inflicting harm despite his age. He answers Andromache's remark that he is an old man and cannot protect her and her son, his own great-grandchild:

ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτ' ὀρθοὶ κοῦ γέροντες, ὡς δοκεῖς,
ἀλλ' εἷς γε τοιόνδ' ἄνδρ' ἀποβλέψας μόνον
τροπαῖον αὐτοῦ στήσομαι, πρέσβυς περ ὦν.
πολλῶν νέων γὰρ κἂν γέρων εὐψυχος ὦν
κρείσσων: τί γὰρ δεῖ δειλὸν ὄντ' εὐσωματεῖν; (Andr. 761-5)

I'm still upright and not an old man, as you think,
but in fact, if I glance at such a man once, I'll set up a trophy
of his defeat right here, although I'm an elder.
For even old man who's stout-hearted is stronger
than many young men. For what need is there for
a coward who's able-bodied?

Although the content of Peleus' statement is much different than Amphytryon's, they both express the potentiality of the independence of the will from the body in the context of the aged body.

Peleus presents his case in concessives, reversing the expectations Andromache has of an old man. He will defeat Menelaus although he's an old man "πρέσβυς περ ὦν;" he says that even an old man, if he's stout-hearted, (κἂν γέρων εὐψυχος ὦν) is stronger than many young men. Thus he makes his claim based on an argument that courage, a non-physical part of a person, can trump the physical. For this assertion, he must sever the *soma* and *psyche*, which he does through

his use of the words εὐσωματεῖν and εὐψυχος. Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* implies the potential of this disjunction as well when speaking of old age:

ὦ φίλτατ' Αἰγέως παῖ, μόνοις οὐ γίγνεται
θεοῖσι γῆρας οὐδὲ κατθανεῖν ποτε.
τὰ δ' ἄλλα συγγεῖ πάνθ' ὁ παγκρατὴς χρόνος.
φθίνει μὲν ἰσχυρὸς γῆς, φθίνει δὲ σώματος,
θνήσκει δὲ πίστις, βλαστάνει δ' ἀπιστία,
καὶ πνεῦμα ταῦτόν οὔ ποτ' οὔτ' ἐν ἀνδράσιν
φίλοις βέβηκεν οὔτε πρὸς πόλιν πόλει. (OC 607-13)

Dearest son of Aegeus, to the gods alone
old age does not happen, nor death.
And omnipotent time confounds all other things.
The strength of the earth decays, and that of the body,
and trust dies, while distrust grows,
and the same spirit never comes among the same
friends, nor the same city towards another city.

Oedipus speaks of the *soma* as decaying, not the whole person. The distinction which he makes harmonizes with the play's themes of dignity in old age and the cyclical nature of life. Indeed, this passage is another instance of the aged body providing a venue for the contemplation of the limits of the *soma*, and in turn of the person. The interest the Greek playwrights take in this gap between the visible and invisible self confronts us aggressively with the uncomfortable zone of the *soma*, what Holmes describes as an ideological area of anxiety.

My examination of the aged body in Greek theater in this chapter offers a useful basis with which I can look at the elderly in Greek medical writing and later speculate on the ideas that fell into place which made an alternate perspective on old age imaginable to Plato in the early fourth century. Of course, the portrayals of the elderly found in Greek drama cannot be considered representative of all classical Greek literature. Yet Greek plays provide an especially abundant cache of detailed representations of the aged body in addition to affording an expedient boundary for a work of this scope. On the Athenian stage we have seen several modes of portrayal of the elderly body with many thematic overlaps. Elderly characters offer a special

opportunity to examine the discomfiting ambiguity between life and death, between the visible and invisible elements of a person. Greek playwrights can have elderly characters describe themselves as disembodied spirits or voices, even corpses. They can be dried out and decaying like a plant, imagery which also makes us conceptualize the elderly as not quite alive nor dead. The playwrights also verbally dissect their aged characters, having us contemplate the divisibility and lack of integrity of the body in old age, in addition to witnessing an externalizing of their physical agency. This schism can also occur between the will and body of an old person, the former remaining strong, the other, weak. Alternatively, the mind and body of an old person can be seen as aging together, reducing the elderly to a state similar to childhood. All of these portrayals and ideas, some even conflicting, will be important for when I follow the elderly body into Greek medical writing, then reemerge with Plato's Cephalus where I will shed light upon what Plato found in old age to be so conducive to philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

THE AGED BODY IN GREEK MEDICAL WRITING

The Greek medical writers, among whom I am including the Hippocratics as well as Aristotle *qua* natural scientist, are an especially useful source for continuing my analysis of the aged body and the relationship of an older person to his body. Although, as I have discussed, the elderly were a minority in ancient Greece, the Hippocratics name them among their clientele. In the *Epidemics*, six patients are specifically marked as old (out of 388 individuals),¹ so they did in fact exist as part of a "real" patient demographic, however small. On a practical level, the minority of the elderly demographic forces us to ask the question: to what extent did these writers come across older patients in their practice? Probably infrequently.² Yet the Hippocratics did demonstrate an interest in a patient's age. As Giordana Pisi observes, older people feature in the Hippocratics' more theoretical approach to medicine, wherein the medical writers make prognoses and tailor treatments on the basis of a patient's location, season, gender, exercise/diet regimen and age.³ In so far as the Hippocratics were interested in treating patients differently based on age as a relevant medical factor, they were interested in the older people as a demographic.

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- 1 Tim Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 249. Parkin observes γέρων once, a πρέσβυς once, πρεσβύτερης once, γράϊη twice and πρεσβυτέρη once. However, the writers of *Epidemics* mostly do not mention a patient's age, neither in specific nor general terms.
 - 2 Mirko Grmek, "On Ageing and Old Age: Basic Problems and Historic Aspects of Gerontology and Geriatrics," *Den Haag*: Junk, 1958), 106. Notably there was no concept of geriatric medicine nor are there any specific treatises dedicated to issues specific to older patients. Evidence for the elderly in the Hippocratic corpus is scattered throughout a variety of works.
 - 3 Giordana Pisi, "La medicina greca antica," in *Grecia*, ed. G. Calboli, E. Degani, E. Ghiselli, I. Mariotti and A. Traina, vol. 1 of *Senectus* (Bologna: Pàtron editore, 1995), 453.

Furthermore, the Hippocratics were also particularly concerned, as late 5th-century authors in general seemed to be,⁴ with the dichotomy between young and old. They couple references to "older people" very frequently with "younger people," including only on occasion more specific age classifications such as child, youth, adult, and aged person. Thus in many cases, the medical writers do not refer specifically to an old man (γέρων, πρέσβυς, or substantively γηραιός). Rather, they often speak in relative terms, contrasting the effects of a disease on younger versus older men instead of speaking in absolute terms about old men per se. Of course, the word "older" is an ambiguous comparative which requires a referent, and this tendency for the Hippocratics to use such imprecise comparatives complicates our quest for a medical image of the elderly body, since "older" as opposed to "younger" tells us virtually nothing about the possible age distinctions. However, in most cases this comparative undoubtedly refers to an adult man who has begun his physical decline, as opposed to a young man who has not yet reached that decline. Therefore, this discussion of the contrast between this age dichotomy can shed light upon what the Hippocratics imagined changing as a man aged, if not the aged body itself.

In this chapter I will examine the Hippocratics' and Aristotle's conceptualization of the constitution of the aged body, including its temperature, moistness, and density. The medical writers often juxtapose these features against the constitution which they imagine that younger men have, an opposition which provides a useful context for making sense of these otherwise very abstract bodily characteristics. After this discussion I will analyze how and why the medical writers see various diseases affecting older men differently than younger men. This discussion will also include an examination of how both the physical constitution and the mindset of an

4 See chapter 1 n. 8.

elderly patient might contribute to this reaction. We will find that in the Hippocratic corpus older men can succumb to disease more easily because of their weakness. Conversely (and paradoxically), the weakness of the aged body and looseness of its flesh can result in a milder reaction to disease, producing a chronic, instead of deadly, affliction. This chronic, as opposed to terminal, prognosis for disease also suggests that the elderly's experience with disease is less agonistic than that of younger men. To confirm this idea, I will explore how the medical writers express chronicity with two unusual verbs: συναποθνήσκειν "to die along with" and συγγηράσκειν "to grow old with," whose contexts outside medical literature will strongly suggest a non-hostile relationship between its subject and referent. This investigation will shed light on the conceptualization of the relationship between the elderly and disease. My synthesis of the medical image of the elderly body will be important for my final chapter where I explore how these representations of the aged in both Greek drama and medical writing might have helped carve out a hitherto unarticulated ideological niche for old age.

The Hippocratic corpus does not offer a consistent image of the aged physical constitution, yet there seems to be a consensus regarding the relative temperature of an old person: older people were colder than younger ones. This latter notion seems to participate in the idea that warmth was a characteristic of vitality, and coldness was suggestive of death.⁵ As for the moistness of the elderly, the Hippocratics do not agree on whether the aged body is naturally dry or moist.⁶ Some treatises, most notably *On the Nature of the Human* and *On the Regimen*, depict

5 G. E. R. Lloyd, "The Hot and the Cold, the Dry and the Wet in Greek Philosophy," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 84 (1964): 101-2. Lloyd demonstrates how Greek writers prior to the Hippocratics also associated coldness and dryness with death and warmth and wetness with vitality. The concept of temperature and moistness as fundamental elements of a person which pervades Hippocratic medicine has its roots in Presocratic philosophy.

6 Simon Byl, "Le vieillesse dans le Corpus Hippocratique," in *International Hippocrates Colloquium*, ed. François Lasserre and Philippe Mudry. *Formes De Pensée Dans La Collection Hippocratique: Actes Du IVe Colloque International Hippocratique: Lausanne, 21-26 Septembre 1981* (Genève: Droz, 1983), 87-88.

the elderly as moist, whereas other biological writings, such as Aristotle's, describe them as dry. In any case, the aged body is described in opposition to the young body, which is almost invariably warm, versus cold, and is either moist or dry, depending on whichever older people are not. An examination of the imagined change in constitution that occurs in old age reveals how the Hippocratics were very interested in marking older people as the physiological opposites to their younger counterparts. This differentiation has the effect of highlighting and defining the difference between the time before and after a person's physical decline and in this way marks older men as "other."

The medical writers agree that the elderly body has less innate heat than younger bodies, a theory they both intimate and say directly.⁷ In *On the Nature of the Human*, the writer states that man is warmest on his first day and coldest on his last:

Εὖ γὰρ χρή εἰδέναι, ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν ἡμερῶν θερμότατός ἐστιν αὐτὸς ἑωυτοῦ, τῇ δὲ ὑστάτῃ ψυχρότατος· ἀνάγκη γὰρ αὐξανόμενον καὶ χωρέον τὸ σῶμα πρὸς βίην θερμὸν εἶναι· ὁκόταν δὲ ἄρχηται μαραίνεισθαι τὸ σῶμα, καταρρέον πρὸς εὐπέτειαν, ψυχρότερον γίνεται· καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον, ὁκόσον τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν ἡμερῶν πλεῖστον αὖξεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τοσοῦτον θερμότερος γίνεται, καὶ τῇ ὑστάτῃ τῶν ἡμερῶν, ὁκόσον πλεῖστον καταμαραίνεται, τοσοῦτον ἀνάγκη ψυχρότερον εἶναι. (*Nat Hom.* 12).

For it is necessary to know that a human is warmest on his first day and coldest on his last. For a body must be warm which grows and advances with force, but when the body begins to fade, declining easily, it becomes colder. And according to this reasoning, a human grows most on his first day, and becomes that much warmer, and on his last day he fades the most, and must be that much colder.

The writer describes the body as warm because of its growth and cold when it declines; thus the vital warmth associated with the young body is directly correlated to the bodily growth and progress at this life stage and when this growing stops, the body continuously cools off. The author of the second "constitution" in *Epidemics* 1 also designates older men as colder⁸ and the

7 Pisi, *Senectus*, 458-60

8 He describes how a particular disease affects children, women and older people, listing the afflictions which appear in each: "For older men, and those whose warmth is already being lost, there is paralysis, madness, and failing vision:" "πρεσβυτέροισι δὲ καὶ ὅσοισιν ἤδη τὸ θερμὸν κρατέεται, παραπληκτικὰ, ἢ μανικὰ, ἢ στερήσεις ὀφθαλμῶν" (*Epid.* 1.12). The fact that the writer pairs these two together as high-risk groups is suggestive of

author of *On the Sacred Disease* suggests that old people are cooler in temperature when he describes the blood of the "very old" (πρεσβυτάτοισιν) as too cold (ψυχρόν) to overcome the attack of phlegm which causes the sacred disease (*Morb.Sacr.* 9.1). Aristotle too considers the aged body cold, giving his reasoning for its coldness in his treatises *On Length and Shortness of Life* and *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death and Respiration*:⁹

δεῖ γὰρ λαβεῖν ὅτι τὸ ζῶν ἐστὶ φύσει ὑγρὸν καὶ θερμόν, καὶ τὸ ζῆν τοιοῦτον, τὸ δὲ γῆρας ξηρὸν καὶ ψυχρόν, καὶ τὸ τεθνηκός· φαίνεται γὰρ οὕτως. ὅλη δὲ τῶν σωμάτων τοῖς ζώοις ταῦτα, τὸ θερμόν καὶ τὸ ψυχρόν, καὶ τὸ ξηρὸν καὶ τὸ ὑγρὸν. ἀνάγκη τοίνυν γηράσκοντα ξηραίνεσθαι· (*Long.* 466a18-23)

For we must understand that a living thing is by nature moist and warm, and that life is this way as well. But old age is dry and cold, like something dead. This is how it is. And the following materials constitute the bodies of living things: hot and cold, and dry and moist. One necessarily dries out as he grows old.

To Aristotle, an aged person is similar to a corpse in his cold and dry bodily constitution. If life is moist and warm, death must be dry and cold because, he has us assume, death must be the opposite of life. And just as death must necessarily be the opposite of life, he feels no need to justify with syllogism why the constitution of an aged body resembles a dead body; we must infer that the proximity of old age to death validates this comparison.¹⁰

In his *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death and Respiration*, Aristotle describes how destruction of a body's vital heat, imagined as kind of internal flame,¹¹ is the ultimate cause of all

their similarity. The connective καὶ with the statement beginning with ὅσοισιν implies that older men are losing their bodily heat just as the second group is.

9 Aristotle states this principle again in his *GA* 784a 31-4; *PA* 2.648b5; [Aristotle] *Prob.* 871a-6; 875a; 955a

10 Aristotle also correlates old age and putrefaction when he explains the reason for white hair in his *GA*. White hair is caused by a lack of "concoction" (the internal "cooking" of nutrients which produces various bodily materials); this failure the hair to be properly concocted causes it to putrefy, much like mold. Hoar-frost looks similar to mold because they are both vapor, although the former is caused by congealment, and the latter, putrefaction. From observing this similarity, he tells us, comic poets call white hair the "mold" (εὐρώτα) and "hoar-frost" (πάχνην) of old age. (*GA* 5.784b8-24); he later tells us that wearing hats can make one gray more quickly since the cool air cannot prevent the putrefaction (*GA* 5.785a26-31). In this passage Aristotle presents his theory of putrefaction as corrective, stating that some others think of gray hair as a withering process (αὐανσις). However, in his *On Respiration* he likens old age to the withering process of plants, using the same word (*Resp.* 478b28).

11 Peter H. Niebyl, "Old Age, Fever, and the Lamp Metaphor," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* (1971): 351-8. Niebyl discusses how Aristotle and the Hippocratics employ a lamp metaphor in their

deaths.¹² He differentiates between two causes for this destruction: the vital flame either dies out (μάρανσις) or is put out (σβέσις), the former due to old age and the latter, to violence. The destruction of the flame is due in both cases to a lack of fuel: ὑπολειπούσης γὰρ τῆς τροφῆς, οὐ δυναμένου λαμβάνειν τοῦ θερμοῦ τὴν τροφήν, φθορὰ γίνεται τοῦ πυρός. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐναντίον παῦον τὴν πέψιν κωλύει τρέφεσθαι (Juv. 469b24-8). Aristotle explains how respiration functions as a cooling system of the body's vital flame, comparable to how one must bank a fire in order to keep it alight. In a "violent" death, such as occurs when the body is not cooled through respiration, too much internal heat consumes the fuel and thus destroys the flame. He explains how death in old age occurs in his treatise *On Respiration*: this manner of death is due to the failure of the internal refrigeration of the body which respiration provides; in this way, the flame is not properly fanned and consumes itself. When speaking of animals of advanced age (humans included), he observes:

διὸ καὶ μικρῶν παθημάτων ἐπιγινόμενων ἐν τῷ γήρᾳ ταχέως τελευτῶσιν· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ὀλίγον εἶναι τὸ θερμόν, ἅτε τοῦ πλείστου διαπεπνευκότος ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῆς ζωῆς, ἥτις ἂν ἐπίτασις γένηται τοῦ μορίου, ταχέως ἀποσβέννυται· ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀκαριαίας καὶ μικρᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ φλογὸς ἐνούσης διὰ μικρὰν κίνησιν ἀποσβέννυται. διὸ καὶ ἄλυπός ἐστιν ὁ ἐν τῷ γήρᾳ θάνατος· οὐδενὸς γὰρ βιαίου πάθους αὐτοῖς συμβαίνοντος τελευτῶσιν, ἀλλ' ἀναίσθητος ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπόλυσις γίνεται παντελῶς. (Resp. 479a16-24)

On account of even small ailments they die quickly in old age. Because their heat is little, since most of it was breathed away during their long life, if there is any strain in any part, [the heat] is quickly extinguished—as if, because its flame is short and small, it is extinguished through a small movement. Therefore death in old age is painless. For they die without violent disease coming upon them, but the release of their spirit goes entirely unnoticed.

Aristotle again compares the innate heat of a person to a flame which becomes smaller as one grows older and is ultimately goes out easily and peacefully when one dies of old age. Therefore Aristotle explained this decline in heat as one aged through the model of an internal flame which gradually diminishes.

account of innate heat and old age; the imagery is apparently long-lived, later adopted by Galen and enduring until the 17th century.

12 R. A. H. King, *Aristotle on Life and Death* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 95-106.

Furthermore, the medical writers imply that the aged body is cold through their conception of nutrition and an aged person's nutritional needs.¹³ One explanation (or result) of the coldness of the elderly is that they do not require as much food as younger men do, since they are not growing, but "diminishing," a concept we have seen in *Nat.Hom.* 12. Bodily heat is relevant for food intake because the medical writers conceive of digestion as a kind of cooking process. Digestion, like cooking, involves a person "overcoming" the raw material of food and turning it into something serviceable for their bodies.¹⁴ The author in *On Ancient Medicine* discusses how humans originally cooked food in order to make it soft enough for their bodies to overcome (ἐπικρατεῖν) for growth, nourishment and health (VM 3.47-8). The softening of the food outside the body mirrors the digestion within. In fact, the word used for digestion is the same for cooking "πέσσω," which means to ripen, cook, digest or "concoct" (a medical term denoting the successful processing of harmful bodily elements into excretions such as pus).¹⁵

This idea of gastric cooking, implicit in the verb πέσσω, implies bodily heat, of which the elderly have less. Because older men have less innate heat and do not need to grow, they require less food and could not actually digest a larger amount. *Aphorisms* 1.14 states:

Τὰ αὐξανόμενα πλεῖστον ἔχει τὸ ἔμφυτον θερμόν· πλείστης οὖν δεῖται τροφῆς· εἰ δὲ μὴ, τὸ σῶμα ἀναλίσκεται· γέρουσι δὲ ὀλίγον τὸ θερμόν, διὰ τοῦτο ἄρα ὀλίγων ὑπεκκαυμάτων δέονται· ὑπὸ πολλῶν γὰρ ἀποσβέννυται· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ οἱ πυρετοὶ τοῖσι γέρουσιν οὐχ ὁμοίως ὀξέες· ψυχρὸν γὰρ τὸ σῶμα. (*Aph.* 1.14)

Things which are growing have the most innate heat, so they require the most nourishment. Without it, the body wastes away. But in old men the warmth is less, because of which they require less fuel. For he is extinguished because of too much fuel. Therefore fevers in old men are not so severe. For the body is cold.

We again see the metaphor of the internal flame in a discussion of bodily temperature. Aged bodies are colder, which explains their need for less "fuel" and their milder fevers. The fact that

13 Pisi, *La medicina greca antica*, 465.

14 Jouanna Jacques, *Hippocrates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 314.

old men are not growing also factors into the idea of the aged body as cold and in need of less food; their bodies, instead of increasing, are instead only maintaining themselves or even shrinking. The writer of *On Nourishment* expresses this idea with the statement: "One is nourished for growing and for existence, but for existence alone for an old man." Τρέφεται δὲ τὰ μὲν ἐξ αὐξήσιν καὶ ἐς τὸ εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ἐς τὸ εἶναι μόνον, οἷον γέροντες. (*Alim.* 34.2). This theory also explains why old people bear fasting most easily, as *Aphorisms* 1.13 claims: "Old men bear fasting best, second, those who are adults [lit. established], youths very badly, and children worst of all, and those who are more active than usual:" Γέροντες εὐφορώτατα νηστείην φέρουσι, δεύτερον, οἱ καθεστηκότες, ἥκιστα, μειράκια, πάντων δὲ μάλιστα, παιδιά, τουτέων δὲ αὐτέων ἃ ἂν τύχη αὐτὰ ἐωυτέων προθυμότερα ἔοντα. The youngest endure fasting most difficultly because they need food for growing, if we apply the logic of the writers of *On Nourishment* 34.2 and *Aphorisms* 1.14 cited above.

The last sentence of *Aphorisms* 1.13 also suggests that one's level of physical activity plays a role in a body's constitution. More physical activity requires more fuel, and older men are not so physically active. The author of *On Regimen* states that inaction moistens and weakens the body while exercise dries and strengthens it (*Vict.* 60.11-4); the same treatise also describes the older demographic as moist and cold in constitution, which probably stems from the same kind of reasoning. Presumably, according to this principle, he also advises running for old people because of the coldness of their bodies: "διὰ ψύξιν τοῦ σώματος." (*Vict.* 63.11).¹⁶ *Aphorisms*

15 Aristotle also explains digestion as a form of cooking in his *Meteorologica*, using the term πέψις: μιμεῖται γὰρ ἡ τέχνη τὴν φύσιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ τῆς τροφῆς ἐν τῷ σώματι πέψις ὁμοία ἐψήσει ἐστίν· (*Mete.* 381b7).

16 He also recommends sexual activity in the wintertime to counteract the cold and "congealment" of the season, especially for older, rather than younger men: Χρησθαι δὲ καὶ λαγνείῃ πλέον ἐς ταύτην τὴν ὥρην, καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς νεωτέρους (*Vict.* 68.32). This statement suggests that older men must take greater measures to stay warm in the winter because of the natural coldness of their constitution. Jan Godderis, *Antieke geneeskunde over lichaamskwalen en psychische stoornissen van de oude dag* (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 54-5.

3.18 also considers the relationship between seasons and age, deeming summer and early autumn the best seasons for old men: τοῦ δὲ θέρεος καὶ τοῦ φθινοπώρου, μέχρι μὲν τινος οἱ γέροντες· The reasoning behind this statement resembles that in *On Regimen*; the warmth of these times of year balances the cold temperature of the elderly body.

The author of *On Regimen* also discusses the relationship between warmth and bodily growth, but instead expresses it in terms of a vital fluid in the body which he calls the *psyche*, a blend of fire and water which circulates throughout the body. In young bodies, the circulation is fast and the *psyche* is consumed quickly for bodily growth, whereas in older bodies, the circulation is slow and the body is cold. This consumption of the *psyche* results in diminishing the body:

Αὐξεται δὲ οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐν μὲν τοῖσι νέοις τῶν σωμάτων, ὅτε ταχείης ἐούσης τῆς περιφορῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος ὄντος αὐξίμου, ἐκπυρουμένη καὶ λεπτυνομένη καταναλίσκεται ἐς τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ σώματος· ἐν δὲ τοῖσι πρεσβυτέροις, ὅτε βραδέης ἐούσης τῆς κινήσεως καὶ δὴ ψυχροῦ τοῦ σώματος, καταναλίσκεται ἐς τὴν μείωσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὅκόσα δὲ τῶν σωμάτων ἀκμάζοντά ἐστι καὶ ἐν τῇσιν ἡλικίῃσιν τῇσι γονίμῃσι, δύναται τρέφειν καὶ αὐξεῖν· (Vict. 25)

But [the *psyche*] does not grow equally in everyone, but in young bodies, because the circulation is fast and the body is growing, the *psyche*, igniting and thinning, is used up for the body's growth. But in older men, because the movement is slow and the body is cold, the *psyche* is used up for a human's diminishment. Bodies in their prime are at their reproductive peak, and are able to nourish and increase it.

Here the coldness of the body, in addition to the slowness of this fire-water circulation, explains how the aged body in some way shrinks. Older people do not use the *psyche* for bodily growth as young bodies do and they are not able to nourish and make the *psyche* grow as is the case with those in their prime. Aristotle also uses this idea to explain why old men, children, and sick people have no semen: children are using up the "concocted matter" for growing and thus have none left over to produce semen (the highest level of concoction, according to him¹⁷), while old

Godderis observes other instances of this sentiment that winter is inimical to the elderly in other Hippocratic texts.

17 GA 725a11-22

men simply cannot concoct it.¹⁸ The author of *On the Nature of the Human*, who claims that people cool as they age, attributes this process implicitly to how a person uses up the heat for growth, as we have seen before in *Nat.Hom.* 12.4. This theory of innate heat and growth marks older people as very different than men in their prime whose *psyche* is at its peak, while hinting at a similarity between old men and children in both of whom the *psyche* is consumed. The parallelism suggests that in childhood and old age are times of life when the body is inferior, although in both cases for very different reasons.

So far, we have seen different imagery, explanations and consequences of the cold temperature of the aged body. The aged body has less innate warmth than the younger body because its vital flame is diminished, which results in its requiring less nourishment. There is also a strong connection between the coldness of the aged body and the fact that it is shrinking, rather than growing. The heat of the younger body is required for, and associated with, its growth and old age implies a degeneration and diminishment in opposition to this vital growth. The medical writers therefore establish a theory for the bodily temperature of the elderly in direct opposition to young men. Theories of the decline of an essential bodily flame strongly reinforce the connection between old age and death as opposed to the vitality of youth. Yet we also see how a cold bodily constitution can result in milder fevers and a greater tolerance for fasting;¹⁹ for the Hippocratics at least, this loss of vital flame is not categorically deleterious, rather it tends to have ambivalent consequences for the preservation of health.

In addition to coldness, the author of *On Regimen* attributes moistness to the elderly body. He gives a remarkable set of different constitutional permutations which people could have. According to the author, all people have the bodily elements of fire and water, but their fire and

18 GA 725b19-22

water are both either fine/rare or strong/thick. He describes how these different constitutions fare under different conditions, including stages of life. A mixture of "strong" fire and "fine" water makes a constitution that is dry and warm:

Εἰ δὲ σύγκρησιν λάβοι πυρὸς τε τὸ ἰσχυρότατον καὶ ὕδατος τὸ λεπτότατον, ξηρὴ φύσις καὶ θερμὴ, νοῦσος μὲν τοῖσι τοιούτοισιν ἐν τῇσι τοῦ πυρὸς ἐφόδοισιν, ὑγείη δὲ ἐν τῇσι τοῦ ὕδατος· ἡλικίῃσιν ἀκμαζούσῃσι πρὸς σαρκὸς εὐεξίην νοσερώτατοι, ὑγιηρότατοι δὲ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τὰ ἔγγιστα ἐκατέρων. Δίαιται ὀκόσαι ψύχουσι καὶ ὑγραίνουσι, καὶ τῶν πόνων ὀκόσοι ἥκιστα ἐκθερμαίνοντες καὶ συντήκοντες πλείστην ψύξιν παρασχέσουσιν· αἱ τοιαῦται φύσεις μακρόβιοι καὶ εὐγηροὶ γίνονται (*Vict.* 32.57)

If the strongest fire and finest water should comprise the mixture, his nature is dry and warm. Sickness occurs for such people under the influence of fire and health under the influence of water. They are sickest at the prime of life when the condition of their bodies is best, and they are healthiest when they are older. The regimen should cool and moisten, and exercises, which are the least dissolving and melting, should provide the most cooling. These sorts of natures are long-lived and have a good old age.

The constitution he describes makes people the sickliest in the prime of life and healthiest when they are older. He recommends that they have a regimen that cools and moistens, which is also, of course, what he claims that aging itself does. Therefore the naturally dry and warm constitution fares best in old age because it balances out the cold and wet nature of this advanced life stage. The writer also expresses this idea directly in the following section when he describes the bodily constitutions based on age: “Old men are cold and moist, because the fire is gone and water is present. And there is a loss of the dry and an establishment of the moist.” Οἱ δὲ πρεσβῦται ψυχροὶ καὶ ὑγροὶ, διότι πυρὸς μὲν ἀποχώρησις, ὕδατος δὲ ἔφοδος· καὶ ξηρῶν μὲν ἀπάλλαξις, ὑγρῶν δὲ κατάστασις. (*Vict.* 33).

Yet another medical perspective asserts that the aged body is instead dry. We have already seen how Aristotle describes old age as cold and dry in his *On the Length and Shortness of Life*, and remarks that old age necessarily has a drying effect (*Long.* 466a18-23).²⁰ He uses the idea

19 *Aph* 1.14, 1.13

20 He also claims that ejaculation and physical labor have a drying effect, and therefore, have the potential to age a person prematurely: ξηραίνει γὰρ ὁ πόνος, τὸ δὲ γῆρας ξηρόν ἐστιν (*Long.* 466b14-5). This phenomenon explains how some men do not live as long as some women, despite how men in general have greater longevity.

that age has a drying effect to explain why the hair, feathers and scales on animals becomes harder and thicker as they age, and also why men bald.²¹ The gynecological writers also imagine older women as drier than younger women, which is another case of the Hippocratics discussing the set of two comparatives, "older" and "younger," modified with comparative adjectives such as "drier." However, we can imagine that "older" versus "younger" in this context probably does not refer to virginal as opposed to adult women, but rather to women of reproductive age as opposed to women past this age. Lesley Dean-Jones argues that older women are imagined as drier than younger women because they are menopausal and thus lack a fluid in the body in the form of blood.²² In *Diseases of Women*, the writer suggests as much with his juxtaposition of the adjectives "drier" and "having little blood" when he describes older women: "For young women are moister and have much blood for the most part, but older women are drier and have little blood." αἱ μὲν γὰρ νέαι ὑγρότεραι καὶ πολύαιμοι ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πούλυ· αἱ δὲ πρεσβύτεραι ξηρότεραι καὶ ὀλίγαιμοι· (*Mul.* 2.111).

Yet we see that older men can also be imagined as having less blood. The author of *On the Sacred Disease* describes the blood of the "very elderly" as "little" multiple times: τὸ αἷμα ὀλίγον τέ ἐστι καὶ λεπτὸν καὶ ὕδαρές (*Sac.Morb.* 9.1). A few lines later he restates: τὸ αἷμα... λεπτὸν ἐὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν καὶ ὀλίγον (*Sac.Morb.* 9.1). In both cases the blood is ὀλίγον and λεπτὸν in the elderly. In *Diseases* 1.22, the writer, while contrasting older and younger bodies, calls the vessels of younger men "filled with blood" (ἐναίμων). Aristotle also notes on the difference in the

A man's reserve of innate warmth, which is by nature greater than a woman's, can be used up through too frequent sexual activity (*Long.* 466b15-6).

21 GA 783b5-8; 18-19. Men bald because they lose their warm moisture; a lack of innate heat which prevents coction from happening also causes gray hair.; he attributes cataracts in the elderly to their dry constitution (GA 780a18-9).

22 Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 105-8.

quality of blood in youth and old age; in the very young, blood is plentiful and ichor-like (ἰχωροειδές) and in old men, it is thick, black, scant, and congeals quickly; similarly the marrow of younger animals is sanguineous, but becomes fatty in old age (*HA* 521a33ff); Thus there seems to be a conflation between the ideas of dryness and lack of blood; in both cases, there is an absence of bodily fluid associated with vitality.

We find this idea that older people have less blood in a couple of instances indirectly. The author of *On Places in Man* states that the menstrual fluid of younger women is bloodier than that of older women, whose menstruation is more mucous (*Loc.Hom.* 47). For two different diseases, the author of *Coan Praenotions* expresses an expectation that younger men are more likely to have hemorrhaging which would aid in their recovery. In both instances the author refers to those younger or older than 35, which is by no reckoning the threshold between maturity and old age, yet it does offer possible insight into aging in general.²³ In *Epidemics* 1, the author relates the effect of a particular disease on a city. He notes that a salubrious hemorrhaging occurred the most in youths and men in their prime, and those who hemorrhaged did not die. Older men, on the other hand, suffered from jaundice and disordered bowels; the writer even gives us an example of the latter: Bion who is sleeping at Silenos' place. Based on the principle that hemorrhaging was a way to resolve disease because it rids the body of a surfeit of blood, we can imagine that the Hippocratics thought this blood was more plentiful within younger bodies.²⁴

23 The author states how nasal bleeding is helpful for a particular disease, but that it occurs more in men younger than thirty-five: “καὶ μᾶλλον εἰς ταῦτα προσγίνεσθαι προσδέχου τὴν ῥῆξιν, ἡλικίῃσι δὲ πέντε καὶ τριήκοντα ἐτέων, τοῖσι δὲ πρεσβυτέροις ἥσσον.” (*Coac.* 274). In another section, the author is more direct, saying that one should expect a flow of blood in those younger than thirty-five but of pus in those older than this age: “μάλιστα μὲν νεωτέροις τῶν τριήκοντα πέντε τὰς ῥύσιας, τοῖσι δὲ πρεσβυτέροις τὰς ἀποστάσιας προσδέχεσθαι” (*Coac.* 156).

24 Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, 159-60.

Through these Hippocratic analyses of constitutions based on age, we can see the physical differences imagined between older men and younger men. Older men are cold, a fact which is connected to their diminished innate heat and, ultimately, as Aristotle makes explicit, their nearness to death. Whether old people became moister or drier with age depends on the particular text, but in either case older men are marked as physiologically opposed to younger men.

Aphorisms seems to encapsulate this ambivalence about the moisture of people based on age group. In this treatise, a writer describes how the moistness of one's bowels reverses as one ages: "Moist bowels in young men dry out as those men age. Dry bowels in young men become moister when those men become old." Ὀκόσοισι νέοισιν ἐοῦσιν αἱ κοιλίαι ὑγραί εἰσι, τουτέοισιν ἀπογηράσκουσι ξηραίνονται· ὀκόσοισι δὲ νέοισιν ἐοῦσιν αἱ κοιλίαι ξηραί εἰσι, τουτέοισι πρεσβυτέροισι γινομένοις ὑγραίνονται (*Aph.* 2.20). Whichever sort of bowels one has in youth, wet or dry, becomes the opposite in old age. Thus old age again is figured as a time for a reversal of the bodily constitution one had as a youth.

This notion that aging changes one's physiological make-up also contributes to an interesting idea found in a few treatises that some people fare better in youth and others in old age because of their personal constitution. We have already seen in *On Regimen* how the author believes those with "strong fire" and "thin water" are healthiest in old age, but sickest in their youth although, paradoxically, the most physically fit. Those with an opposite constitution are, conversely, healthiest at the prime of life. Ironically, therefore, one's ἀκμή (youthful prime) might not actually be the time when he is most healthy. In two instances, Hippocratic writers imply that being a particularly physically fit youth might not be ideal as one ages; the implication of such a sentiment is similar to what the author of *On Regimen* suggests: the sort of person who enjoys excellent physical condition in his youth would find himself at a disadvantage when he passes

this time of life. The author of *On the Nature of the Human* discusses a disease to which men are prone who were once very robust but have now have "gone to seed."²⁵ He imagines the flesh of these sorts of men becoming soft "μαλθακή" as early as their mid-thirties and he observes how this change from physical fitness to a sedentary life results in this ailment:

ἀνάγκη γὰρ τουτέους ταλαιπώρους τε γενέσθαι καὶ φιλοπόνους τῷ σώματι καὶ ἐργάτας νεηνίσκους ἐόντας, ἔπειτα δὲ ἐξανέθεντας τῶν πόνων σαρκωθῆναι μαλθακῇ σαρκὶ καὶ πολὺν διαφορῶσιν τῆς προτέρης, καὶ πολλὸν διακεκριμένον ἔχειν τὸ σῶμα τό τε προϋπάρχον καὶ τὸ ἐπιτραφέν, ὥστε μὴ ὁμονοεῖν. (*Nat. Hom.*12.4)

For those [suffering from the disease] must have been youths who were hard-working, industrious and did manual labor, and when they stopped their work they put on weight with soft flesh much different than their previous flesh, and they must have a body which is much different than the former, robust one, so that the [two conditions] do not harmonize.

The author of *Aphorisms* also tersely remarks that a large body is noble (ἐλευθέριον) in a young man, but not in an old man, for whom it is inconvenient (δύσχρηστον) (*Aph.* 2.54). In this example, we see how a person's natural physique can determine whether he fares relatively better in his youth or old age. Thus the Hippocratics took an interest in defining bodily constitution based on age and thus in defining older people as physiologically opposed to young men. Yet from this opposition comes the possibility that old age is potentially positive for one's health. Therefore, according to this particular strain of thought in the Hippocratic corpus, people with certain constitutions could actually enjoy better health past their "youthful prime," an idea which opens up the possibility for old age to become more nuanced: its approach does not always exclusively signal the grim decline of one's body.

25 Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, 331-2. This concept is also related to the Hippocratic idea that being excessively athletic is dangerous for one's health because there is a fine line between peak fitness and sickness (*Salub.* 7; *Aph.* 1.3). The author of *On the Regimen in Health* discusses a type of diarrhea which occurs most often in athletes who are πυκνόςσαρκος "having dense flesh" and which is less acute in those who have body types that are more ἀραιότερος "loose, rarified" (*Salub.* 7). This risk factor (having dense flesh) for this sickness is also reminiscent of the disease described in *Diseases* 1.22 which attacks younger men more severely than older ones. Indeed the reason why an athletic man would have a disadvantage with certain diseases seems to be parallel to why a youthful man would --both have especially, perhaps excessively, compact flesh.

In addition to the aged body's temperature and moistness, the Hippocratic writers also describe it as less compact and more “rarified” than the younger body. They imagine that as one ages the flesh and vessels of the body become looser and more porous; even bones can spread apart in old age. The author of *On the Regimen in Health* explains how, in addition to having colder and moister bodies in comparison to younger men, older men also have soft (μαλθακά) bodies. Younger men instead have bodies which are solid (πέπηγεν). For this reason, older men must have a drying regimen (*Salubr.* 2.8).

The decreased density of the older body also in certain cases affects its reaction to disease. The author of *Diseases 1* discusses this possibility in the case of diseases that “come about from physical exertion.” For these ailments, older men fare better because of their different bodily make-up. Of course, the author only speaks in a comparative dichotomy with the terms “a younger man” and “an older man,” so we cannot assume that he is specifically discussing patients who are categorically “old;” however, the two points can shed light on the contrast between youth and old age and so we can glean much about what this medical writer thought was involved in the aging process through this opposition.

In the case of this disease, the younger man actually suffers more severely than the older; the author gives a detailed account of the reasons for this phenomenon which offer us rich insight into the imagined aged body. The tension of the younger body leaves it more vulnerable to a violent attack of this disease because the strength of the disease somehow matches the strength of the body; furthermore the density of young flesh does not allow pus to exit from the body and thus hinders recovery. The writer contrasts the physical qualities between younger and older men, explaining how the density of younger bodies makes them more prone to these diseases:

Καὶ τῷ μὲν νεωτέρῳ, ἅτε τοῦ σώματος τόνον τε ἔχοντος καὶ ξηρασίην, καὶ τὴν σάρκα πυκνὴν τε καὶ ἰσχυρὴν καὶ πρὸς τοῖσιν ὀστέοις προσκαθημένην, καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν τοῦ δέρματος περιτεταμένον, ὁκόταν τι

πονέση πλέον τοῦ εἰωθότος, μᾶλλον καὶ ἐξαίφνης, σπασμοὶ τε γίνονται ἰσχυροὶ, καὶ ῥήγματα πολλὰ τε καὶ παντοῖα τῶν φλεβῶν καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν· καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν παραντικά ἐκδηλα γίνεται, τὰ δ' ὕστερον χρόνῳ ἀναφαίνεται. (*Morb.* 1.22.21-27)

For a younger man, because his body has tension and dryness, and dense, strong flesh which adheres to the bones, and because the skin stretches around this flesh, if he somehow exerts more than he is used to, whether more or suddenly, severe spasms come about, as well as many and all sorts of ruptures of the vessels and flesh. And some of these are immediately apparent, while others become apparent at a later time.

He then contrasts this image with an explanation of the composition of older men's bodies, whose flesh is less tightly compacted and whose vessels are more spacious:

Τοῖσι δὲ γεραιτέροισι τόνος ἰσχυρὸς οὐκ ἔνι, αἱ τε σάρκες περὶ τὰ ὀστέα περιῤῥέουσι, καὶ τὸ δέρμα περὶ τὰς σάρκας, καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ σὰρξ ἀραιή τε καὶ ἀσθενής· καὶ οὔτε τι ἂν πάθοι τοιοῦτον ὁμοίως ὥς καὶ ὁ νεώτερος, καὶ ἦν τι πάθῃ, πάσχει ἀσθενέα τε καὶ παραντικά ἐκδηλα. (*Morb.* 2.22.28-32)

But in older men the strong tension is not present, and the flesh pours around the bones, and the skin around the flesh, and the flesh itself is loose and weak. [An older man] could in no way suffer as a younger man would, and if he did, he would suffer less severely (lit. more weakly) and it would be immediately apparent.

The flesh of younger men is tightly compacted and tense, whereas older men do not have this "strong tension" and their flesh "pours around" (περιῤῥέουσι) instead of "adhering to" (προσκαθημένην) their bones. As opposed to the dense (πυκνή) and strong (ἰσχυρή) flesh of younger men, the writer describes older peoples' flesh as loose, rarified (ἀραιή) and weak (ἀσθενής).²⁶ Aristotle also engages in this opposition between the tenseness of young versus older bodies. In his *On the Generation of Animals*, he states that animals in their prime derive their strength from their sinews; therefore, younger animals are weaker because their sinews are not yet taut, and old animals are weaker because their tautness (συντονία) has slackened (ἀνεῖται) (GA 787b11-15).

26 This idea does not seem to be limited to medical inquiry. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the servant asks Aphrodite to forgive Hippolytus' insolence, saying: εἴ τις σ' ὑφ' ἡβῆς σπλάγχνον ἔντονον φέρων/ μάταια βάζει, μὴ δόκει τούτων κλύειν (*Hipp.* 118-9). "If someone who has (literally) tense insides because of his youth utters thoughtless things, pretend not to hear him." By imagining Hippolytus with "tense insides" ἔντονον σπλάγχνον because of his youth, the servant participates in this conception of the tense youthful body. I will discuss this difference in bodily tension in the old and young in my final chapter, where I will demonstrate its larger implications about vitality and agency.

The writer of *Diseases 1* continues with his discussion of ailments "caused by exertion" with a description of the *modus operandi* of the condition in both younger and older men. Younger men, because their bodies are elastic and dense (ἅτε τοῦ σώματος εὐτόνου τε ἐόντος καὶ πυκνοῦ *Morb.* I.22.35), cannot sufficiently clean out the pus from the wounds in their upper cavity. The lungs are denser (πυκνότερος) and the bronchial tubes are fine and narrow (λεπτὰ καὶ στενὰ), which prevents the pus from exiting the body. In a man of a more advanced age (ἀφηλικεστέρω) the lungs are looser and hollower and the bronchial tubes are wider (ὅ τε πλεύμων ἀραιότερος καὶ κοιλότερος, καὶ αἱ ἀρτηρίαι εὐρύτεραι *Morb.* I.22.41-2). Therefore, for older men, the pus does not linger in the cavity and on the wounds, but can exit the body more easily in the form of sputum. In turn, these different bodily reactions to the disease in younger and older men result in different symptoms and prognoses. The younger men have more painful and more frequent (again, πυκνότεροι) fevers. Because their vessels are tense (ἐντόνων) and filled with blood (ἐναίμων), younger men experience shooting pain throughout their bodies instead of just in the affected area. They tend to die quickly. Older men have milder (λεπτότεροι) and less frequent fevers, and mild (λεπτὰ) pain and do not succumb to the disease immediately as their younger counterparts, but rather become chronic sufferers until they die. Therefore, in the case of this disease, the author describes entirely different symptoms and prognoses for younger and older patients based on the different density and tension of their inward parts.

In *On the Sacred Disease*, we see a more negative outcome of this looseness of the flesh for the elderly. The author discusses the effect of the "sacred disease" on different age groups: children, older children, adults, the very old (πρεσβυτάτοις).

Τοῖσι δὲ πρεσβυτάτοις ὁκόταν ἐπιγένηται τοῦτο τὸ νόσημα, διὰ τοῦτο ἀποκτείνει ἢ παράπληκτον ποιεῖ, ὅτι αἱ φλέβες κεκένωνται καὶ τὸ αἷμα ὀλίγον τέ ἐστι καὶ λεπτὸν καὶ ὑδαρές. Ἦν μὲν οὖν πολὺ καταρρύη καὶ χειμῶνος ἔη καιρὸς, ἀποκτείνει· ἀπέπνιξε γὰρ τὰς ἀναπνοὰς καὶ ἀπέπηξε τὸ αἷμα, ἦν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω ὁ κατάρροος γένηται· ἦν δὲ ἐπὶ θάτερα μόνον, παράπληκτον ποιεῖ· οὐ γὰρ δύναται τὸ αἷμα ἐπικρατῆσαι τοῦ

φλέγματος λεπτόν ἐόν καὶ ψυχρὸν καὶ ὀλίγον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ κρατηθὲν ἐπάγη, ὥστε ἀκρατέα εἶναι ἐκεῖνα καθ' ἃ τὸ αἷμα διεφθάρη (*Morb.Sac.* 12)

But if this disease affects the very old, they die from it or it paralyzes them, since their vessels are empty and what little blood they have is thin and watery. If they collapse often and it is wintertime, they will die. For [the disease] chokes respiration and the blood if a flux should happen on both sides of the body. If it is only on one side, [the disease] paralyzes them. For the blood, because it is fine, cold, and scanty, cannot overcome the phlegm, but, itself overcome, is congealed, so that whatever the blood corrupted is powerless.

The vessels of the very old are emptied (κεκένωνται), just as the author of *Diseases I* maintains.

We imagine the elderly body with "hollowed vessels," an emptiness which can either resist the onslaught of disease or exacerbate it. In *Airs, Waters, and Places*, the writer notes how a southerly, rainy and mild winter is combined with a northerly, dry and wintry spring affects certain demographics including women, people of various constitutions, and those older; older people suffer from catarrh because of the rarification and disintegration of their vessels: “διὰ τὴν ἀραιότητα καὶ τὴν ἔκτληξιν τῶν φλεβῶν, ὥστε ἐξαίφνης τοὺς μὲν ἀπόλλυσθαι.” (*Aer.* 10.55). The author of *On Affections* tells us strangury, an affliction involving difficult urination, affects older patients more often.²⁷ He observes that it occurs when the bladder is cold, dry and empty “ὅταν μὲν ἡ κύστις ξηρανθῇ, ἢ ψυχθῇ, ἢ κενωθῇ” (*Aff.* 28.8), suggesting that the bladders of older men are likelier to be all of these things, just as the aged body itself.

We also find this idea that the body loses some integration with age in the treatise *On Joints* and Aristotle's *History of Animals*. While discussing risk factors for dislocation, the writer of *On Joints* digresses into a discussion of how older oxen suffer more dislocations, which suggests that the connection between the aged animal's hip socket and leg bone has lost its integrity (*Art.* 8). This notion of dislocation has us imagine the disintegration and a compromise

27 In fact, this condition often associated with the older demographic in and outside a medical context. *Aph.* 3. 31; Aristophanes V. 810; *Th.* 616. Of course I do not mean to argue that this affliction had no medical reality; imaginably a number of older ancient Greek men suffered, for example, from an enlarged prostate. Instead, I am interested in what the medical writers imagined was the cause for such an ailment and what sort of account they gave for the invisible drama which occurs within the body.

of the joints which link together the body. Aristotle theorizes as well that bones in some way yield as one ages.²⁸ He explains the phenomenon of excessively hairy eyebrows in the elderly by theorizing that this is due to moisture being released as the bones draw apart in old age (*HA* 518b7-12). This loss of moisture also alludes to the idea which we have already heard in Aristotle's *On the Length and Shortness of Life* that the aged body is drier.²⁹

The Hippocratics also suggest that this loss of density and tenseness occurs when one ages in general, in addition to the transformation from adulthood to old age. We see this especially in the Hippocratic woman, whose purported bodily changes from virgin to woman have received much attention from scholars. The gynecological writers describe the bodies of παρθένοι as a constricted set of vessels, which only open up and dilate through menstruation, intercourse and childbirth.³⁰ The author of *Diseases of Women* 1.1.8 states that nulliparous women have more solid (στερεώτερου) and denser (πυκνότερου) flesh than women who have had children, a theory which recalls the description of the youthful bodies in *Diseases* 1.22. Therefore the Hippocratics imagine the same physical process of the flesh becoming "more loose" and vessels becoming wider happening with age, even though referring to a transformation between girlhood and womanhood. This widening in fact occurs in both sexes before sexual maturity, according to the author of *On Generation*. He explains how fluids must become agitated in the bodily vessels in order to produce ejaculate in men and menstrual fluid in women, and conjectures that this cannot happen in children because their vessels are too narrow. As children grow, their vessels grow as well, enabling sexual function (*Genit.* 2). In this model, a

28 Elsewhere Aristotle says that bones waste along with (συμφθίνει) the body and its parts in old age (*GA* 745a16-7).

29 Aristotle also classifies the body's production of hair as a "lower " grade of nutriment expenditure; thus hair grows more during disease, in old age, and even in death (*GA* 745a9-19).

30 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies*, 47-55.

person is imagined to have the most compact (πυκνός) body when he or she is young. Through the body's growth into sexual maturity, its vessels widen to accommodate the "agitation" of sexual fluids. Furthermore, there is some evidence that the female body becomes even more rarified as she passes her childbearing years. The writer of *Diseases of Women I* explains how older women suffer from disease called *pnix*, "uterine choking," more frequently than their younger counterparts because their wombs are empty and light:³¹

Ἦν δὲ πνίξ προστῇ ἐξαπίνης, γίνεται δὲ μάλιστα τῇσι μὴ ξυνιούσῃσιν ἀνδράσι καὶ τῇσι γεραιτέρῃσι μᾶλλον ἢ τῇσι νεωτέρῃσι· κουφότεραι γὰρ αἱ μήτραι σφέων εἰσί· γίνεται δὲ μάλιστα διὰ τόδε· ἐπὶν κενεαγγήσῃ καὶ ταλαιπωρήσῃ πλέον τῆς μαθήσιος, ἀνανθεῖσαι αἱ μήτραι ὑπὸ τῆς ταλαιπωρίας στρέφονται, ἅτε κενεαὶ ἐοῦσαι καὶ κοῦφαι· εὐρυχωρὴ γάρ σφίν ἐστιν ὥστε στρέφεσθαι, ἅτε τῆς κοιλίης κενεῆς ἐούσης· (Mul.1.7).

"If *pnix* suddenly appears, and this happens the most in women without husbands and in older women rather than younger ones (for their wombs are light and [*pnix*] mostly happens because of this [lightness]), when she is emptied out and suffers more than she is used to, the womb, having been dried out because of this labor, turns itself around, because it is empty and light. For she has ample space so that it turns, because the body cavity is empty.

The fact that the wombs of older women are empty (κοῖλος) seems to engage with the idea of the more rarified body with widened vessels –it implies that empty spaces have opened up in a once more tightly compact body. The author emphasizes this emptiness within the body using the words εὐρυχωρία, κενεαγγήσῃ, κοιλίης and then κενεαὶ twice.

Indeed this change seems to happen in both genders, although there seem to be clearer landmarks for the when the female body becomes successively less "dense:" menarche, sex, then childbirth.³² In the passages we have examined which apply to men (or to people in general –it is unclear), as the body transitions from adulthood into old age its flesh also continues to become

31 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies*, 106.

32 See also Helen King, "Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women" In *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World: Readings and Sources*, ed. L. McClure (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 109-127. Because these other transitional phases for women are all reproductive in nature, menopause, the endpoint of female reproductive life, perhaps would be considered yet another transition: this time from adulthood to old age. However, because of the general disinterest the Hippocratics took in menopause, we do not have much evidence for their conception of it.

looser and its vessels wider. For men, the transition from adulthood to physical decline cannot be demarcated by something like menopause nor can the increase in empty spaces be due to an empty womb or a lack of menstrual blood; nevertheless, and significantly, the medical writers imagine increased rarity and empty spaces within male as well as female bodies.

Now that we have examined the aged body and its constitution in the Hippocratic corpus and Aristotle, I now turn to its reaction to the diseases which assault it. To the Hippocratics, age is a significant factor for both what diseases a person acquires and what the prognosis is for those afflicted. In moments when the writers are more rationalizing in their medical approach, they aver that no particular age group suffers more from disease than others, but rather, that different age groups each suffer from their own particular set of ailments just as some diseases come more frequently during certain seasons.³³ According to this model, older patients are not any more subject to ailments than other age groups. A set of lists in *Aphorisms* 3 which details the different diseases found in eight different age groups exemplifies this principle (*Aph.* 3.23-31).

More often, however, the Hippocratics focus on the dichotomy between "older" and "younger" patients, ending their discussions of a particular disease with a comment on whether older or younger people are likelier to suffer from it or with an observation on its effects on older versus younger people. Most of these statements provide no explanation as to why older or younger people are a greater risk group and thus are of little use for drawing larger conclusions about our understanding of the effect of diseases on the older set. But some do in fact give more information; I will begin by looking at *Diseases* 1.22 again, this time to emphasize the aspects of an older body which make it less vulnerable to this particular disease.

33 The writers of a few treatises make general remarks about the importance of the different factors of gender, season, location, age, etc. in the practice of medicine: *Nat.Hom.* 9; *Salubr.* 2; *Epid.* 6.8.11; *Aph.* 3.3, 18; additionally, the treatise *Airs, Waters and Places* is devoted to this theory.

We have already seen how an older man's looser flesh keeps such an affliction from having a strong effect on the aged body, if the disease could manifest itself in an older man at all. Before the writer's detailed description of the different bodily compositions of older versus younger men, the author of *Diseases 1* comments more generally upon the reasons why older people suffer less from the disease:

οἱ δὲ γεραίτεροι πάσχουσι μὲν ὀλιγάκις, καὶ ὅταν πάθωσιν, ἀσθενέστερα πάσχουσιν, ἅτε ἀσθενέστεροι σέοντες, καὶ ἐπαΐουσι μᾶλλον, καὶ ἐπιμελέονται μᾶλλον τῶν παθημάτων. Γίνεται οὖν τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸ παράπαν ἥσσον τῷ γεραιτέρῳ ἢ τῷ νεωτέρῳ· καὶ ὁκόταν γένηται, τῷ μὲν γεραιτέρῳ ἀσθενέστερα γίνεται, τῷ δὲ νεωτέρῳ ἰσχυρότερα. (*Morb.* 1.22.16-21)

Older men suffer less, and when they do suffer, they suffer less (lit. more weakly), because they are more weak, and they understand better and take better care of their ailments. In the first place on average it occurs less in an older man than in a younger man. And if it does happen, it comes about less severely for an older man, and more severely for a younger man.

The author directly likens the nature of the disease to the affected person by repeating the adjective ἀσθενής: older men suffer "more weakly" (ἀσθενέστερα) because they are themselves "weaker" ἀσθενέστεροι. In contrast, he says that younger men (νεώτεροι) suffer more severely (ἰσχυρότερα), literally, "more strongly." Therefore the strength and severity of this type of disease parallels the constitution of its victim. Somewhat paradoxically, because of an older man's inherent feebleness, the disease cannot act so intensely upon him. We also might think of *Aphorisms* 1.14 which states that older people have less severe fevers than younger men due to their coldness;³⁴ their lack of vital warmth results in a milder reaction to disease. Therefore in these cases we see that the effect of disease can be perceived as only as strong as its host.³⁵ This idea is suggestive of a potential correlation between the nature of a disease and that of its victim in the consideration of the factor of age.

34 Cf. also *Prog.* 22; *Morb.* 1.22

35 Byl, *La vieillesse*, 94. Byl likewise concludes that the Hippocratics imagine diseases presenting the qualities of their aged patients: "lenteur et faiblesse."

In addition to diseases having a weaker effect on an aged person, diseases can also resolve themselves as a person ages, because the body is rarified and loosened in old age. *Epidemics* 6.5.3 states that diseases which grow up with patients leave in old age through concoction, dissolution and rarification: Νοῦσοι ξύντροφοι ἐν γήρῃ καὶ διὰ πεπασμὸν λείπουσι, καὶ διὰ λύσιν, καὶ δι' ἀραίωσιν. The writer is unclear about whether the diseases themselves become rarified or the aged body; in either case, we imagine the same process occurring within the aged body as we have seen in the earlier examples. Thus there is a λύσις "loosening" and a ἀραίωσις "rarification, becoming porous" which frees the aged body of the diseases which "grew up with" (ξύντροφοι) it. In this instance, instead of an older person's rarification preventing him from suffering acutely from a disease in his old age, it relieves him of a disease from which he chronically suffered since childhood. The imagery of "ξύντροφοι" also suggests a strong bond between the disease and host, one that was only dissolved through the loss of density old age brings. In this way, advanced age alters the interaction between a disease and a host, making the disease less potent.

The author of *Diseases* 1.22 also mentions another factor which contributes to the disease in question having a less violent effect: older men both understand the disease better (ἐπαΐουσι μᾶλλον) and understand how to take care of themselves better (ἐπιμελέονται μᾶλλον τῶν παθημάτων). Thus their experience, in addition to their body, prevents the disease from having as strong of an effect upon them as it does younger men. In two sections of *Aphorisms*, the author suggests a similar idea, stating that the elderly suffer less simply because they are more accustomed to suffering. This notion implies a conjunction between the mentality of an elderly person and their body—both are accustomed to suffering, a fact which interestingly results in less suffering. The author of *Aphorisms* 2.49 also remarks: "Those who are accustomed to bear pain,

even if they are weak or old men, fare better than strong and young men." Οἱ εἰθισμένοι τοὺς ξυνήθεας πόνους φέρειν, κῆν ὧσιν ἀσθενέες ἢ γέροντες, τῶν ἀξυνηθέων ἰσχυρῶν τε καὶ νέων ῥᾶον φέρουσιν.³⁶ Therefore old men might suffer less from disease due to their better understanding or better tolerance of suffering, both of which their experience of suffering provides them. The morbid states of old age and disease seem, in their concord, to bring about a relatively favorable situation for the aged patient.

While the Hippocratics aver that some diseases do not affect older patients as acutely, they also theorize that disease is longer-lasting and more likely to be chronic in a patient's old age.³⁷ The writer of *Aphorisms* claims that old men suffer from disease less in general, but what they do have becomes chronic and "dies along with them:" Οἱ πρεσβῦται τῶν νέων τὰ μὲν πολλὰ νοσέουσιν ἥσσον· ὅσα δ' ἂν αὐτέοισι χρόνια νοσήματα γένηται, τὰ πολλὰ ξυναποθνήσκει. (*Aph.* 2.39) The author of *Prorrhethics* is especially fond of this observation (in keeping with his exclusively pessimistic outlook for older patients), although other writers convey the idea as well.³⁸ In *Prorrhethics* 2.39, the writer advises on a type of "wasting" disease, stating that when making predictions, one should consider the age of the patient: "knowing that the oldest, worst and most grievous diseases do not respond, and those in the oldest bodies."³⁹ He mentions this idea a number of times throughout the treatise; for instance, when he describes the effects of *ischia* (*ischia*) on older patients, he describes its tendency to become chronic:

ὁκόσοισι γὰρ τῶν γεραιτέρων αἱ τε νάρκαι ἰσχυρόταται καὶ καταψύξεις τῆς ὀσφύος τε καὶ τῶν σκελέων, καὶ τὸ αἰδοῖον ἐπαίρειν ἀδυνατέουσι, καὶ ἡ γαστήρ οὐ διαχωρέει, εἰ μὴ πρὸς ἀνάγκην, καὶ κοπρώδης μύξα πολλὴ διεξέρχεται, τουτέοισι χρονιώτατον τὸ νοῦσημα ἔσται, καὶ προλέγειν ἐνιαυτὸν τὸ ἐλάχιστον, ἀφ' οὗ χρόνου ἤρξατο τὸ νοῦσημα γίνεσθαι. (*Prorrh.* 2.41)

36 The author of *Aphorisms* 1.13 hints at this idea as well by stating that an old man tolerates fasting the best.

37 Grmek, *On Ageing and Old Age*, 64-5.

38 *Prorrh.* 2.30; 2.11; 2.8; 2.39; *Loc.Hom.* 38; *Aff.* 28.8; *Coac.* 139

39 Hippocratic writers also state that medical intervention does not help older patients in the case of a couple of diseases. *Prorrh.* 2.8; *Sacr. Morb.* 2.9.

For in older men there is very severe numbness and chills in the loins and limbs, and they cannot achieve an erection; their stomach does not pass unless with force, and then very mucous excrement is passed; in those patients, the disease is very long-lasting; predict it will be at least a year in duration from the time when the disease began.

This chronicity is suggestive: just as the older body has a different physiology than the younger, it also has a different pathology. Older people are more prone to the possibility of a disease stubbornly persisting in their bodies without killing them.

Older peoples' bodily make-up or even their mentality, entirely different than that of young men, can resist attacks of disease; however, the aged tend to suffer from the chronic diseases which are not curable. Mirko Grmek smooths out these ideas into the perhaps oversimplified analysis: "As the vital heat in the old is lowered, the process of recovery in old age is comparatively slow, but for the same reason acute symptoms of diseases are less pronounced."⁴⁰ Furthermore medical intervention might after all offer little aid for older people because of their tendency to suffer from non-fatal, yet long-lasting conditions. Thus, although the Greek medical writers did not express much hope concerning the aged patient, they were interested in theoretical notions about the physical process of senescence and constitution of the elderly. How the older demographic interacts with disease, therefore, is often quite different, even the opposite, of how men in their prime did. The concept of chronic versus acute disease in the case of older patients suggests that some diseases might not be so virulent in aged bodies; in this way, therefore, the body determines the strength of the disease. I will explore further how the relationship between an older person and disease is less hostile in the following section.

Συναποθνήσκειν, Συγγηράσκειν, and the Affinity between the Aged Patient and Disease

I will now step aside from my more generalized look at the aged patient in this chapter to explore a revealing bit of medical terminology which denotes this chronicity and incurability of disease for older people. Hippocratic writers mobilize the metaphorical sense of an unusual pair of words to express both the hopelessness of curing a particular disease and its inability to kill its host: συναποθνήσκειν "to die along with" and συγγηράσκειν or συγκαταγηράσκειν, "to grow old along with." By using these verbs, the Hippocratics present disease as an entity which can dwell within a body until death or even grow old along with it, thereby losing its virulence.⁴¹ Through examining the uses of these verbs outside the Hippocratic and Aristotelian corpora, I will argue that these verbs imply a strong kinship between the subject and referent: the subject and referent are military allies, *oikos* members, or even part of the same body. This strong context for these verbs outside the medical writing transforms the disease from a normally hostile force within the body to a relatively benign, incorporated entity. Because these words refer to a point in the future when the patient has grown old and because writers often use these words specifically for older patients, I will argue that their use belies an affinity between old age and disease which results in older patients not succumbing violently to disease but living in a "truce" with them.

The verb συν(απο)θνήσκειν "to die along with" most commonly appears in Greek tragedy, almost exclusively with the subject of the verb dying along with a family member.⁴² Ismene in

40 Grmek, *On Ageing and Old Age*, 64.

41 Heinrich von Staden, "Incurability and Hopelessness the Hippocratic Corpus," in *La maladie et les maladies dans la Collection hippocratique: actes des VIe Colloque international hippocratique*, ed. P. Potter, G. Maloney, and J. Desautels (Québec du 28 septembre au 3 octobre 1987. Québec), 100 n. 54. Von Staden speculates that Aristotle's use of the words was influenced by the Hippocratics and mentions A.'s HA and GA in his brief look at these two verbs as well.

42 Sixteen out of 28 instances outside of Hippocrates and Aristotle's biological works occur in tragedy, 13 of those refer to *oikos* members. Five out of the 28 instances refer to military leaders and their men dying with them. Another five of the 28 are thematically similar to the "φίλια" bond involved in the previous instances. Two are admittedly outliers: Herodotus tells how the Egyptians believe that fire is a living beast that dies along with what

Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Antigone in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* declare that they wish to die with their father, Oedipus.⁴³ In a few instances, a wife expresses a wish to die along with her husband, as Evadne does twice in Euripides' *Suppliants*. The first time, she states: "For it is the sweetest death to die along with (συνθνήσκειν) dying loved ones, if a god should accomplish this."⁴⁴ Yet playwrights speak of parents dying along with their children most frequently of all.⁴⁵ Thus, in all of these instances, the relationship referred to is between *oikos* members. The bond between the subject and referent of this verb can also extend to military connections, such as a leader and his men, which we find in Herodotus, Xenophon and Euripides.⁴⁶ Both the connection between *oikos* members and the connection between military allies imply a friendly relationship, a φίλια, between the subject and referent.

The φίλια type of association between *oikos* members and between military allies is clear in the verb's literal meaning, that is, a person dying along with another person. Yet συν(απο)θνήσκειν also has metaphorical usage outside the Hippocratic and Aristotelian corpora. These uses tend to refer to non-physical qualities or possessions of a person which die with them. In Aristophanes' *Frogs* Aeschylus tells Euripides that his poetry, unlike his own, died with him.⁴⁷ In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Heracles, as a *deus ex machina*, tells the titular character that reverence

it consumes (*Hist.* 3.16). However, one might argue that Herodotus intends to create an aura of "otherness" for this purported Egyptian belief and therefore purposefully uses a word which would make the belief sound more alien, connoting a cannibalistic kinship bond between animate fire and its food. For the second outlying circumstance, Aristotle narrates how the tyrant Dionysius sentenced the tragic poet Antiphon to die, vaguely mentioning others who were to die with Antiphon, presumably other men whom Dionysius condemned (*Rhet.* 1385a).

43 Sophocles *OC* 1691; Euripides *Pho.* 1681.

44 Evadne in Euripides *Supp.* 1007 and 1063; Deianeira in Sophocles *Trach.* 720; Helen in Euripides *Hel.* 1402

45 Jocasta in Euripides *Pho.* 1282; Hecuba in Euripides *Hec.* 396; Heracles in Sophocles' *Trach.* 798; Creon to his daughter in Euripides' *Medea* and the chorus (of Ino) 1210, 1289.

46 Herodotus tells of how Philippus of Croton was killed in battle with Dorieus, with whom he joined forces, "συνέσπετο δὲ Δωριεῖ καὶ συναπέθανε Φίλιππος ὁ Βουτακίδεω Κροτωννήτης ἀνὴρ" (*Hist.* 5.47). This military context reappears four other times in Herodotus, Xenophon and Euripides. *Hist.* 7.222; Euripides *Supp.* 769; Xenophon *Hell.* 4.8.39; *Oec.* 4.19

47 Aristophanes *R.* 869

for the gods (εὐσέβεια) will not die with men, but will accompany them in life and death, and will not be destroyed.⁴⁸ Plato and Xenophon use this word in the context of the soul dying (or not) along with the body.⁴⁹ Aeschines in his *Against Ctesiphon* asks the jurors whether their memory will die along with those whom he claims Demosthenes sent to their deaths, that is, whether the addressees would forget Demosthenes' wrongdoings and countenance his receiving the crown.⁵⁰ In these contexts, all of these intangible things said to die or not die with a person (an artistic product,⁵¹ reverence, the soul, memory) are a creation or permanent characteristic of a person, an inseparable part of them. These exceptions are interesting because they also involve a kind of "φιλία," albeit a metaphorical, not literal, one. In a sense, these non-physical elements of a person are inscribed within, and are integral to, him, just as literal φίλοι are inscribed within, and integral to, an *oikos*. Thus some mental possessions, which are by nature integrated and inscribed within a person, are said to die (or not die) along with that person; for the other occurrences of the verb, the inscribed area, which defines the "us" (the φίλοι) as opposed to the "other" (the πόλεμοι), instead extends to inscribe an *oikos* or larger military unit. Keeping this context of the verb in mind, I will now look at its uses in medical writing.

In the Hippocratic Corpus and Aristotle's *History of Animals and On the Generation of Animals*, the use of συναποθνήσκειν is purely metaphorical and always found in the context of a disease dying along with its host. It seems to have first appeared as a medical term in *Diseases 2* (6 instances), if we accept Jouanna's dating of this work to the mid-fifth century,⁵² then in

48 Sophocles (*Ph.* 1443)

49 Plato has Echecrates try to make an argument for the soul dying along with the body (*Phd.* 88d5); Xenophon's Cyrus gives a philosophical speech on the immortality of the soul before his death, believing the soul does not die with, but leaves, the body (*Cyr.* 8.7.22).

50 Aeschines *Against Ctesiphon* 152

51 It might be worth commenting that Euripides' poetry, which fits most poorly the pattern of "an integral part of a person" patently did not in fact die with him.

52 Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, 382-3.

Internal Affections (5 instances), *Prorrhhetics* (1), *Aphorisms* (2), *Coan Prenotions* (1) and *Diseases 1* (2). The writers all use this term as a possible prognosis of an incurable disease. In a sense, this terminology is another way of expressing that a disease has become chronic. The fact that the Greek medical writers have a direct translation of the term chronic in "χρόνιος" or "πολυχρόνιος" makes it noteworthy that they still express the concept metaphorically. To say a disease dies *with* a patient expresses something wholly different than to say he died *because of* a disease, which is also a frequent prognosis. The verb implies that there is a kind of truce between disease and its host. The author of *Diseases 1*, when listing the possible factors for, and outcomes of, disease, uses this terminology:

“And since [diseases] differ in this way, it must also be the case that they differ in duration, for some people longer, and for others shorter, and that [diseases] do or do not go away, and that they are more persistent for some, and for others milder and short-lasting, and that diseases remain for some until old age and die along with them (συναποθνήσκειν), while others die because of them after a short time.” (*Morb.* 1.22)

We find the most instances of this verb in *Diseases 2* and *Internal Affections*. The prognosis, where we find our verb συναποθνήσκειν, tends to appear at the end of a section. Often the writer will use it in the apodosis of a conditional statement whose protasis involves lack of medical intervention. Generally, as with the other prognoses, whether or not the disease will die with a patient depends on if and when the treatment described is applied. The author of *Diseases 2* explains "dying along with" as the possible outcome of αὐαντή (wasting disease)⁵³, πελῖος (livid disease)⁵⁴, ἐρυγματώδης (burping disease)⁵⁵, φλεγματώδης (phlegmatic disease),⁵⁶ φρενίτις

53 Ἡ δὲ νοῦσος χρόνιη καὶ ἀπογηράσκοντας, ἢν μέλλῃ, ἀπολείπει· ἢν δὲ μὴ, συναποθνήσκει. *The disease is long-lasting and leaves patients when they've grown old, if it will at all. But if not, it will die along with them.* (*Morb.* 2.66.18-19)

54 Ἡ δὲ νοῦσος ὡς τὰ πολλὰ συναποθνήσκει τῷ κάμνοντι *The disease for the most part dies along with the patient.* (*Morb.* 2.68)

55 Ἡ δὲ νοῦσος ὅταν μὲν νέον λάβῃ, χρόνῳ ἐξέρχεται· ἢν δὲ πρεσβύτερον, συναποθνήσκει. *The disease, when it affects a young man, departs in time. But if [it affects] an older man, it dies along with [the patient].* (*Morb.* 2.69)

56 Ἡ δὲ νοῦσος συναποθνήσκει. *The disease dies along with [the patient].* (*Morb.* 2.70)

(inflammation of the midriff?)⁵⁷, and μέλαινα (dark disease).⁵⁸ In two of these cases, the possibility of the condition lasting until the patient's death can be avoided if it is treated immediately, but for the rest, it is a natural outcome of the disease.

In *Internal Affections*, whether or not a disease is treated determines in every instance whether the disease will accompany the patient in death. The author describes six different diseases which have this prognosis if the patient does not receive treatment: κισός in the lung,⁵⁹ an ἐρυσίπελας (a type of inflammation) in the lung,⁶⁰ the first of four types of kidney disease enumerated,⁶¹ the third of five types of τῖφος (a classification of disease which occurs in summer and causes fever),⁶² the third of three types of εἰλεός (intestinal obstruction),⁶³ εἰλεός αἱματίτης (bloody ileus), and the first of four παχέα ("thick" diseases which occur when phlegm and bile mix then travel up and down the body cavity).⁶⁴

Another reason a disease might become automatically chronic, regardless of treatment, is if the patient is beyond a certain age when he becomes ill. This factor affects the prognosis of

57 Ταῦτα ποιέων ἀπαλλάσσεται τῆς νοῦσου χρόνῳ· ἢν δὲ μὴ ἐπιμελήσῃ, ξυναποθνήσκει. *If one does these things, [the patient] will escape the disease in time. But if you do not take further care, it will die along with [him]* (Morb. 2.72).

58 Ταῦτα ποιέειν, καὶ ἅμα τῇ ἡλικίᾳ ἀποφεύγει, καὶ ἡ νοῦσος καταγρᾶσκει σὺν τῷ σώματι· ἢν δὲ μὴ μελεδανθῇ, συναποθνήσκει. *Do these things, and he escapes [the disease] at the prime of life, and the disease grows old in his body. But if you do not treat it, it dies along with [him]* (Morb. 2.73).

59 Αὕτη ἡ νοῦσος χαλεπὴ καὶ θεραπευτῆς δεομένη πολλῆς· εἰ δὲ μὴ, οὐκ ἐθέλει ἐκλιπεῖν τὸν κάμνοντα, καὶ ὡς τὰ πολλὰ ἐν τοῖσι πολλοῖσι ξυναποθνήσκει. *This disease is difficult and requires much treatment. And if not, it is unwilling to leave the sufferer, and mostly dies along with many [patients]* (Int. 5).

60 Ἦν δὲ μὴ καυθῇ, ξυμπαράμενει καὶ οὐ μάλα ἐκλείπει, ἀλλ' ἕως γήρους προσέχει· πολλὰκις δὲ καὶ συναποθνήσκει, ἢν μὴ ἐν τῇσι πρώτῃσιν ἡμέρῃσι τεσσαράκοντα ἀποθάνῃ· *If [the patient] is not cauterized, [the disease] remains with him and does not at all leave, but continues until old age. Often it even dies with [the patient], if he does not die within the first forty days* (Int. 6).

61 ἢν μὲν γὰρ τμηθῇ, ἐλπίς ἐκφυγείν· ἢν δὲ μὴ, ἡ νοῦσος τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ συναποθνήσκει. *If [the patient] is cut, there is hope of recovery. But if not, the disease dies along with the person* (Int. 14).

62 οὗτοι γὰρ κρίνουσιν, ἢν τε θανάσιμος, ἢν τε μὴ, ἢν καὶ θεραπεύεται· πλὴν ἡ νοῦσος χαλεπὴ, καὶ τοῖσι πλείστοις συναποθνήσκει. *For [the six month period] decides whether it is fatal or not, if he is treated immediately. Otherwise the disease is difficult, and dies along with many* (Int. 41).

63 Αὕτη ἡ νοῦσος δέεται πολλῆς ἰήσιος· εἰ δὲ μὴ, οὐκ ἐξέρχεται, ἀλλὰ ξυναποθνήσκει τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· *This disease requires much treatment. If not, it does not go away, but dies along with the person* (Int. 46).

"burping disease" from *Diseases* 2 (see n. 53), where the disease goes away in a young man but dies along with an older man. Furthermore, this notion is reinforced by the association of advanced age and chronic disease which we have seen before, where the aged are said to be less likely to die immediately of, but more likely to become chronic sufferers of, diseases than those who are younger. In *Diseases* 1.22, the author says that while younger patients die quickly from the disease "caused by exertion", older patients die with it:

"But for older men, because their symptoms are weaker and the sputum has been cleaned out of them, their fevers are milder and seldom, and there are pains, but they are mild. Not even older men recover entirely from such diseases, but, having them for a long time, they deteriorate, sometimes spitting up pus, sometimes blood, sometimes neither. But in the end it dies with (συναποθνήσκει) them."

We also remember how the author of *Aphorisms* 2.39 states: "Old men for the most part become less sick than young men, but their diseases become chronic and mostly die along with (ξυναποθνήσκει) them." This idea reappears in *Aphorisms* 5.7: "For those before their youthful prime, seizures can go away.⁶⁵ But for those older than twenty-five, [the seizures] mostly die with them (ξυναποθνήσκει)." We glean a simple pattern. The focus of these assertions of course is not on treatment, but prognosis, i.e. on the risk factors for disease dying with a patient. In both passages from *Aphorisms*, this factor is age. For the first, being a πρέσβυς makes it likelier that disease in general will die with a patient. For the second, being older than in one's ἥβη, "youth," makes it likely that epilepsy will die with a patient.

In section 11, the author of *Prorrhethics* 2 describes what physical factors contribute to a person faring well or poorly with ἔλκοι "ulcers, wounds." He includes in this discussion a person's age, commenting on children, older children/youths, adults and old people. Of old persons, he says: "And in old men none of these sorts of growths (i.e. those that adults have) are

64 Οὗτος ἢν μὴ ἰηθῇ ἐν τοῖσιν ἕξ ἔτεσιν, προσίσχει ἢ νοῦσος καὶ ἄχρι τῶν δέκα ἐνιαυτῶν· πολλοῖσι δὲ καὶ ξυναποθνήσκει, ἢν μὴ παραχρῆμα μελετηθῇ. *If this is not cured within six years, the disease continues for ten years. And it dies along with many, if it was not treated immediately (Int. 47).*

present, but concealed and superficial cancers occur and die along with them

(ξυναποθνήσκουσιν)." This term is not used for the other life stages discussed; again, age is a factor for which a Hippocratic writer predicts a disease dying along with a patient. Thus age, especially advanced age, can put a patient at higher risk for a disease remaining with him until death.

Lack of treatment and advanced age are possible ways to acquire a disease that will "die along with" you. The prognosis is a threat of the incurability and irreversibility of disease, whether because the patient fails to seek medical attention, is beyond a certain age, or whether it is simply the nature of the disease. Why do the medical writers express this sentiment with this word? Why animate the disease in this way, transforming it into a living thing that can die along with its host? Whether or not we imagine our medical writers in the audience of the tragedies where this verb occurs, we have certainly seen a pattern of use established in the extant instances of the word in 5th and 4th century Greek writing. The contexts of its literal and metaphorical use involve a relationship between *oikos* members or between a person and a non-physical, but integral, part of him. Such specific contexts of usage must resonate behind the Hippocratic writers' mobilization of this word to express the medical idea of chronicity. Therefore the use of the verb in these medical contexts belies a sense in which a change of the disease's "alliance" has occurred. They are not the mobile, hostile forces within the body which struggle against each other like forces in the political sphere, as Cambiano and Vegetti observe.⁶⁶ In these instances, the disease is instead incorporated into the body. Just as the the verb outside this medical context

65 lit. "have a removal."

66 Guiseppe Cambiano "Pathologie et analogie politique" and Mario Vegetti, "Metafora politica e immagine del corpo negli scritti ippocratici" both in François Lasserre and Philippe Mudry. *Formes de pensée dans la collection Hippocratique: Actes du IVe colloque international Hippocratique: Lausanne, 21-26 Septembre 1981* (Genève: Droz, 1983).

must imply an alliance, a kind of *φιλία*, within a body, *oikos*, or military group, so the metaphor of a disease dying along with its host cannot but suggest the same kind of relationship —a truce, a marriage, a "naturalization." The fact that this alternate conceptualization of disease is paired with the older demographic of patients is telling. The aged body, much like how it cannot react so violently to some diseases through its coldness, weakness and porosity, is likelier to have this less hostile interaction to the diseases which assault it.

The verb *συγ(κατα)γηράσκειν* "to grow old with" occurs much less frequently than *συν(απο)θνήσκειν*. It appears only fourteen times within extant Greek literature of 5th and 4th century, eight of which occur in the Hippocratic treatises. The verb seems to have a largely metaphorical meaning —only twice is it used in its literal sense to refer to a person growing old with another person. Yet the uses of this word have the same basic contexts and connotations as *συν(απο)θνήσκειν*: someone or something can be said to grow old along with someone or something with which it is closely allied, or of which it is even a part.

Twice it is found in its literal sense. In his speech *On Menecles' Estate*, Isaeus employs this verb when trying to establish how Menecles had married his second wife, contrary to what the opposition apparently argues. The speaker, the wife's brother, tries to portray Menecles as sympathetic husband who divorces his wife because he has not given her children: "He did not think that she should profit in this way from her goodness, to grow old childless with him (*ἄπαιδα...συγκαταγηράσασαν*) (2.7). In Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, Clytemnestra pleads with Orestes not to kill her, saying that she wants to grow old with him.⁶⁷ However insincere her statement might be, it is clear she makes this plea on the the assumption that it was a maternal

67 Aeschylus *Chor.* 908

sentiment which could sway her son. Therefore, for these literal occurrences, the pattern of *oikos* members, just as with συν(απο)θνήσκειν, reemerges.

Outside the Hippocratics and Aristotle, the verb is found four times in a metaphorical sense. The context of these instances resembles the metaphorical use of συν(απο)θνήσκειν. It is used of non-physical elements of a person that the writer personifies as growing old along with him. In his *Histories*, Herodotus narrates that Democedes cures Darius' wife, Atossa, of a tumor in her breast in return for a favor: that she advise her husband to expand his military power. In doing so, she asserts that this should be done when he is still young, "αὐξομένῳ γὰρ τῷ σώματι συναύξονται καὶ αἱ φρένες, γηράσκοντι δὲ συγγηράσκουσι καὶ ἐς τὰ πρήγματα πάντα ἀπαμβλύνονται" (*Hist.* 3.134) "For your wits grow up with the body as it grows, but they grow old with it as it grows old, and are blunted for all purposes." In his *Ad Demonicum*, Isocrates tries to establish how virtue is the most enduring possession (κτηῖμα), a person can have: "Only the possession of excellence, with whomever it grows up (συναυξηθῇ) in the intellect unadulterated, grows old along with (συγγηράσκει) [a person]" (7.5). These two passages emphasize the idea that some mental possessions (φρένες, ἀρετή) both grow up and grow old with a person, being intrinsically and inseparably part of him or her.

Twice the metaphor is applied to objects or ideas growing old with each other; in both instances the authors imply incorporation or metaphorical kinship. The first example is in Herodotus' *Histories* book one, where he describes a practice of peoples who live in the Caucasus mountains. According to him, they take ground leaves and paint them onto their clothing, which last as if they were woven in, "τὰ δὲ ζῶα οὐκ ἐκπλύνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ συγκαταγηράσκειν τῷ ἄλλῳ εἰρίῳ κατὰ περ ἐνυφανθέντα ἀρχήν." (*Hist.* 2.203). "And the figures are not washed out, but grow old along with the wool, like ones woven in from the beginning." This implies that the painted

figures resemble those which were originally part of the fabric; they are incorporated into and become part of the material. Therefore, the verb in this instance implies an incorporation of the one material into the other, a prerequisite for them to "grow old together." The comic playwright Menander uses the verb to express this relationship between βίος, life, and λύπη, grief. We find this instance in a fragment which Plutarch preserves in his *Moralia*:

"Then does he say grief and life somehow are akin (συγγενές)?
It accompanies a luxurious life, it's present in a
reputable life, it grows old (συγκαταγηράσκει) in an impoverished life." (Frag. 281)⁶⁸

Here both grief and life are personified, and they are in fact also "genetically" related, συγγενές. They were born together and in turn grow old together, just as the other instances of people and intangible elements that grow old together.

The verb συγ(κατα)γηράσκειν is particularly useful for our look at the aged patient in medical writing because it explicitly expresses the idea of aging. In a medical context, the word is used mostly, like συναποθνήσκειν, to refer to a disease growing old along with a patient which fundamentally is another colorful way of denoting chronicity. However, there is one notable exception in the Hippocratic treatise *Fleshes*, where the author discusses the nature of teeth. He observes how a person's first teeth fall out at age seven and in turn another set of teeth replaces them. These second teeth grow old along with a person: οἱ δὲ μεταφύοντες συγκαταγηράσκουσιν, ἢν μὴ ὑπὸ νόσου διαφθαῖσι. (*Carn.* 12) The author of the treatise employs this term to express a contrast between the first teeth which are impermanent, and the second teeth which become a permanent part of the person, which fall out only due to disease. The teeth, of course, are an organic part of the body which belong to it and naturally arise in it, much like Darius' φρένες.

68 Theodor Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta. Vol. 3, Novae Comoediae Fragmenta* (Utrecht: HES, 1976).

In other examples, the Hippocratics and Aristotle use this verb for a physical, organic part of the body as well, but a part which is neither fully alien, like a disease, nor does it fully belong. Aristotle applies this term "to grow old with" for the same context in the two works in which it occurs: his discussion of the strange phenomenon of the *mola uteri*, a sort of growth within the human womb, which he classifies as an unconcocted fetus. In *History of Animals* book 10, what some scholars argue is a kind of Aristotelian medical treatise,⁶⁹ Aristotle compares this product to a windegg of birds (a somehow defective egg, e.g. not fertilized or lacking a yoke). Aristotle implies that the *mola* occupies some liminal space that defies precise categorization: it is neither animal, since it is not from both [sexes] nor without a soul, since it was conceived with a soul: "τότε γίνεται ἡ καλουμένη μύλη, οὔτε ζῷον, διὰ τὸ μὴ παρ' ἀμφοῖν, οὔτ' ἄψυχον, διὰ τὸ ἔμψυχον <τὸ> ληφθὲν εἶναι, ὥσπερ τὰ ὑπηνέμια" (HA 638a). In *On the Generation of Animals*, he also discusses the *mola* explaining how the fleshy mass is an imperfectly concocted pregnancy. He uses the term συγκαταγηράσκειν twice —the condition grows old with the woman: "ἐνίαις δὲ καὶ συγκαταγηράσκει τοῦτο τὸ πάθος καὶ συναποθνήσκει." The *mola* does so, he asserts, because by nature it is something neither complete nor entirely foreign: "διὸ καὶ συγκαταγηράσκει ἢ πολὺν ἐμμένει χρόνον· οὔτε γὰρ ὥς τετελεσμένον οὔθ' ὥς ἀάπαν ἄλλότριον ἔχει τὴν φύσιν" (GA 776a). Rather, it is intermediary, between a bodily and a foreign object. He calls this a πάθος, condition, which is clearly a medical condition much like the Hippocratics describe. I find his use of the word ἄλλότριος particularly interesting in this context considering what we have observed so far with the uses of the words "to grow old with" and "to die with." Aristotle seems to acknowledge the underlying assumption behind both terms, which he uses almost interchangeably, that a disease, when it becomes chronic, takes on a different modus operandi. A

69 Philip J. van der Eijk, "On Sterility ('History of Animals X'), A Medical Work by Aristotle?," *Classical*

disease, something by nature foreign (ἀλλότριος, as opposed to οἰκεῖος, "of one's house"), can become incorporated into the body, "οἰκεῖος," and exist as a liminal entity.⁷⁰

The *mola* Aristotle describes resembles the condition of an enlarged spleen the author of *On Affections* explains:

προϊόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου ἐνίοισι μὲν ἐξ ὕδρωπα περιστάται ἢ νοῦσος, καὶ διεφθάρησαν· ἐνίοισι δὲ ἐκπύσκειται, καὶ καυθέντες ὑγιέες γίνονται· ἐνίοισι δὲ καὶ ξυγκαταγυράσκει σκληρὸς τε ἐὼν καὶ μέγας (20.20)

"After awhile, the disease turns into dropsy in some [patients], and they have been killed. In others, it suppurates, and after being cauterized, they become well. But in others, it grows old, staying hard and big."

Here there is some slippage with the term νοῦσος—it is both the diseased spleen, an organ which is part of the body, and the disease itself. It makes sense for an organ to grow old with a person since it is a part of the body which ages, but we find this organ taking on another identity when it is diseased—it is also the disease itself. Another instance of an organ becoming diseased and growing old with a person we find in *Diseases of Women* 2.145 in a discussion of a prolapsed uterus: χρόνου δὲ γενομένου, ἢ τοιῆδε νοῦσος ἀνίητος γίνεται, καὶ ξυγκαταγυράσκουσιν ἔξω τὰς μήτρας ἔχουσαι. "After awhile, such a disease become incurable, and [patients] grow old along with [the disease] with their womb on the outside." While the term can refer to an organic part of the body, it can also refer to an organic, foreign entity contained within the body. This use is found in *Diseases* 4.54, where the disease is a flatworm. The disease can literally grow old with a patient because the disease and animal are one in the same: ἦν δὲ μὴ μελεδανθῇ, αὐτομάτη οὐκ ἐξέρχεται, θάνατον μέντοι οὐκ ἐπάγει, ἀλλὰ ξυγκαταγυράσκει. If the

Quarterly 49. 2 (1999): 490-502.

70 Of course the hostile, foreign characterization of disease is not the only one. Greek medical writers also conceptualized disease as an imbalance of bodily elements within a body. Yet, by using these verbs "to grow old with" and "to die along with" in these contexts, I argue that here they invoke the personified image of disease, not the purely abstract idea of disease as syndrome, a series of signs to which doctors assign vague names, which nevertheless was of course also very present in Greek medical writing of the 5th and 4th centuries. Often both concepts can be found in the same treatise. See also Brooke Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject the Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 133.

[flatworm] is not treated, it does not exit of its own accord, yet it does not cause death, but grows old along with [the patient]. Therefore a disease can be a part of someone or foreign entity, but in both cases they are incorporated permanently into the patient.

In these examples, the disease is mostly associated with an organic part of the body, an organ or "unconcocted" fetus, which grows old along with them. These objects by nature are part of, or created by, the body which they inhabit. In this way they resemble closely the abstract ideas of φρένες or ἀρετή which Herodotus and Isocrates, respectively, speak of as growing old in the body.⁷¹ They also are similar to the figures Herodotus' Caucasians paint onto their clothes, which are like those woven in "from the beginning" ἀρχήν, or Menander's life and grief which are "genetically related," συγγενής.⁷² Conceptually, they recall the pairs of family members in Isaeus and Aeschylus which are said to grow old with each other.⁷³ These inborn organs, or genetically related *mola*, grow old along with the body of which they are part. Yet they also happen to be diseased, or diseases themselves. They are a strange entity, as Aristotle says of the *mola*, between a foreign object and a perfected part of you, neither animal nor soul-less.

In other instances, the verb is used more metaphorically with the disease as an intangible, abstract concept. In *Diseases of Women* 2.116, a disease called "white flow" (ρόος λευκός) can grow old with a patient, or more specifically, the "pains" (κάματοι) that accompany it, unless some stroke of luck releases her of its own accord: αἱ τε γὰρ ἡλικίαι προβεβήκασιν, οἳ τε κάματοι ξυγκαταγηράσκουσιν, ἢν μή τι εὐτύχημα τῶν αὐτομάτων λύση γενόμενον. This prognosis is associated when a woman is beyond her prime: "αἱ τε γὰρ ἡλικίαι προβεβήκασιν."⁷⁴ For the type

71 Herodotus *Hist.* 3. 134; Isocrates *Ep.* 7.5

72 Herodotus *Hist.* 2. 203; Menander frag. 281

73 Isaeus 2.7; Aeschylus *Chor.* 908

74 Émile Littré, *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*. Vol. 8. (Paris: J.R. Baillière, 1853), 253. I accept Littré's rendering of this ambiguous phrase, understanding it as a reference to older women.

of dropsy in *Internal Affections* 26, the writer describes the prognosis "to grow old with" as a result of treating the disease too late: Ἀλλὰ χρή παραχρῆμα μελετῆν· ἤν δὲ μὴ, τοῖσι πολλοῖσι ξυγγηράσκει ἡ νοῦσος. Other metaphorical occurrences of the verb can be found in tandem with συναποθνήσκειν, essentially meaning the same thing, i.e. that a disease becomes chronic. We have seen these verbs together already in *Diseases* 2.22 and Aristotle's *History of Animals* and *On the Generation of Animals*.

For a disease to "grow old along with" a patient, however, is not always negative, as in the previous instances. The author of *Diseases* 2 describes it as a relatively favorable outcome. In *Morb.* 2.73 (see n. 56), the disease "growing old in his body" is the positive outcome of applying the treatment, while the disease "dying along with" a person is the negative outcome which results from lack of treatment. In *Morb.* 2.74, if the treatment is applied, the disease (the second μέλαινα mentioned) is not mortal but grows old along with the patient. In these examples, it seems as if the disease loses force as it grows old with the patient and ceases to be an immediate threat to his health. Here the disease literally grows old as well, instead of just lasting until the patient's old age. This phenomenon reminds us of the constitution of the aged body and how it can react differently to disease, often suffering less because of its inherent weakness. Thus when the author of *Diseases* 2 uses the verb in this way to denote a diminishment of the disease's virulence, it has the effect of conflating the aging patient and his disease.

As Falkner wryly observes in passing, there is no comparable pleasantness for the ancient Greeks concerning the idea of growing old with someone else, no happy exclamations of "let's grow old together."⁷⁵ This survey of the uses of this verb (unromantic all) tends to confirm his point. We would probably rather not grow old with Clytemnestra or an intestinal worm. Yet,

there does seem to be a relatively positive aspect to such a prognosis: a disease in this way is "neutralized" and "demobilized" through its incorporation. In the previous instances we saw συναποθνήσκειν associated with a patient's age or the timing of treatment and for συγκαταγηράσκειν, we see a clear parallel between aging and disease inherent in the verb itself—both the disease and person experience aging. Returning to the uses of these verbs outside a medical context, an interesting image emerges when we remember the strong ties between the subject and referent of these verbs outside Greek medical literature: family, part of a body, or military unit. In light of this consistent context which borders on a kind of "φιλία," the usage of these verbs in the Hippocrates and Aristotle implies that aging and disease are somehow harmonious with each other. A disease growing old or dying with a patient involves a kind of truce, exemption from the more hostile interaction between disease and host which can occur in younger men by virtue of their denser and stronger bodies. Disease can be somehow more "at home" in an aged body, incorporated into it instead of destroying it. It is no longer πολέμιος, as the Hippocratics often describe.

Yet can we really regard this as positive and ignore Byl's remark that this inherent weakness in the elderly "ne traduit nullement un réel avantage que le vieillard pourrait avoir sur l'homme jeune?"⁷⁶ Perhaps not, but the fact that the aged body could render a potentially hostile disease neutral certainly complicates Byl's reductive idea that the Hippocratics regard old age simply as negative for the preservation of health. As Kudlein notes, health was not an absolute

75 Thomas M. Falkner, *The Poetics of Old Age in Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), xii.

76 Byl, *La vieillesse*, 95.

concept in the Hippocratic mindset;⁷⁷ having a chronic condition could be favorable when compared to a prognosis of death

In any case, we see how the Hippocratics often adopted a different script when discussion the pathology of older patients. They laid open the, at times very detailed, inter-workings of the aged body, inspecting the causes and consequences of its temperature, moisture, density and porosity. We see its scarcity of an ever-diminishing, innate heat source; we see its dryness or moistness, which both manage, even in their opposition, to reflect a loss of vitality whether for its plant-like desiccation in the former or its lack of physical activity in the latter. The analogy of dried up flora which we observed in Greek drama seems to make its way to Aristotle's analysis of the aged body's dryness, especially in his *On the Generation of Animals*. Whereas in the Hippocratic works traditionally attributed to Polybus, the moistness of the aged body is a reflection of its lack of physical activity, in opposition to youths who exercise and sweat outside, thereby easily ridding themselves of excess bodily fluid. Interestingly, the medical writers do not really incorporate the conceptualization of old age as a return to childhood which we saw in drama; old age is the opposite of youth and any physiological similarities between the very young and old (such as the theory of the *psyche* in *Regimen* might suggest⁷⁸) seem to be written off as incidental.

Hippocratics also have us imagine the aged body as increasingly porous and rarified, a linear process which to some extent seems to be a part of "growing up" in addition to "growing old." This image, especially in comparison to the compact and strong flesh of young men, leads us to envision the aged body as filled with more empty spaces, less integrated, and ultimately,

77 Fridolf Kudlien, "The Old Greek Concept of "Relative" Health," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 9.1: 53-9 (1973).

78 *Vict.* 25

weaker. These physiological features also lead to different pathologies. The older patient can fall prey to diseases in his weakness, or avert them for the same reason. Commonly he will, rather than dying quickly from an ailment, become a chronic sufferer. Furthermore, the ideology behind expressions of chronicity such as συναποθνήσκειν and συγγηράσκειν, suggests an imagined kinship between the aged and disease, perhaps responding to the cultural dialogue at least as old as Hesiod which associates old age and disease as kindred evils.⁷⁹ Yet, in this case, the medical realities of this affinity may not be wholly negative; in any case, coming to the conclusion of "negative," as Simon Byl has, cannot be the fruit of a productive approach to looking at old age from the medical perspective. Nor do I believe the medical writers' frequent expressions of the helplessness and chronicity of disease in the older demographic is merely the result of a medical reality and a reflection of the marginalization of the elderly, as Garland writes them off.⁸⁰ Especially in light of what scholars such as Dean-Jones and Helen King have discovered in their investigations into the Hippocratic woman,⁸¹ we should be amply aware of the potential of Greek medical writing to reveal discourses about a human's physiological make-up which in turn shed light on larger cultural issues at play. By ignoring medical conceptions of older people which we can easily gloss over as 'recognizable' instead of clearly 'strange,' we can miss subtle yet important aspects of the Greek understanding of old age. My observations in this chapter will help flesh out the more global ideas among Greek writers about how old age relates to personhood, agency, and the divisibility of the person in my next and final chapter.

79 Hesiod WD 90-3; Aristotle also makes the connection in GA 784b33-4.

80 Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 248-9.

81 Among others, Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998). Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

CONCLUSION

In the previous two chapters we have seen a variety of images of the aging body and old age. In this chapter I will synthesize some of these ideas and examine them alongside more explicit models from Plato and Aristotle concerning the process of old age, its relationship to death, and how it alters the relationship between a person and his body. In my first chapter we saw how playwrights explored the aged body in ways which emphasized its disconnection and alienation from the person; the will and body of an older character is severed through his inability to impose his agency upon his limbs. In medical writing as well, we see a number of interesting viewpoints that also tend to find the aged person, his body, and their interaction somehow anomalous: medical writers suggest old age is a life-stage which involves its own set of affections rather than one which was intrinsically physically burdensome. Furthermore, old people might not be subject to certain physical afflictions due to the very weakness their bodies as well as their ability to cope mentally with physical discomfort. These ideas show how those inquiring into the aged body at this time tended to evaluate in isolation and distinguish between an older person's bodily and cognitive elements as well as, in some cases, to consider the possible value of bodily disintegration in old age.

I will conclude with an examination of what I argue is a part, and result, of these threads of inquiry: Cephalus' singular attitude toward his own old age in Plato's *Republic*. As I propose in my introduction, Plato introduces a remarkable (albeit familiar to us) idea about old age which

appears to be the first of its kind articulated in Greek writing:¹ the notion that old age, which makes one insusceptible to certain physical affections, is a useful time for the cultivation of one's intellect; furthermore, according to Cephalus, this intellectual ability in advanced age not only compensates for one's physical ability, but is even somehow superior to it. This concept, which would later appeal to Cicero and influence his *On Old Age*, enjoyed a long *Nachleben*² and colored our understanding of what 5th-century (and even earlier) Greek writers thought about the ideological possibilities which the physical reality of old age opened up for an aged person; in fact, it is often still assumed that this view necessarily featured in the ancient Greek literary understanding of old age since our earliest sources. I argue, however, that Cephalus' outlook could only be imaginable in the context of the perspectives I have discussed in the previous two chapters. In this passage in the *Republic* we will see an example of how the concepts I have been examining on old age and the aged body can be detected in Plato's idea about the potential and implications of this time of life.

My examination in the first chapter revealed how Greek drama often portrays old age as a kind of bodily dissolution, a loss of the connectivity and cohesion between a person's parts; furthermore, this lack of integration occurs not only between parts of the body but also between a person's body and himself. By dissecting elderly characters verbally, playwrights transform them into an amalgamation of poorly connected hands, feet, limbs or eyes. Elderly characters also address their body parts with apostrophe, which has the effect of both emphasizing the

1 Tim Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 60-1. Parkin also sees this passage as a departure from earlier views of old age: "Though brief, the passage is effective and important, both for the contrast it provides with the generally negative literary image of old age that precedes it from the time of Homer onward, and for the philosophical treatments of old age to follow; Cicero in particular was influenced by this passage of Plato when he came to write his *de Senectute* more than 300 years later."

2 Cicero actually mentions having a copy of Plato's *Republic* in his personal library in his *de Divinatione* 2.59. For the tradition that follows, see Parkin, *Old Age*, 60-79.

disintegration of the person and creating a very clear disjunction between the person and their body. In deictic laments, elderly characters express how their limbs which they can no longer control have become somehow alien to them and disconnected from their will. Indeed this disintegration is not only physical, but also closely involves the loss of integration between the elderly characters *qua* personal agents and their strange and disobedient limbs. We see this opposition often when elderly characters address their useless body parts, but also much more directly in some descriptions of elderly characters which emphasize the opposition between themselves and their body. For example, the chorus says of Iolaus in *Children of Heracles* that his spirit is young, whereas his body is gone: "λῆμα μὲν οὐπω στόρνυσι χρόνος/ τὸ σόν, ἀλλ' ἥβῃ, σῶμα δὲ φροῦδον." (*Heracl.* 702-3).³ Here the chorus pinpoints Iolaus' tragic problem which his advanced age has caused: the lack of congruity between his will and his physical means. Therefore Greek drama highlights the crumbling integration of the elderly body in its portrayal of old age and expresses how this dissolution results in a lack of agency.

The potential lack of integrity of the body also involves a loss of a clear distinction between the boundaries of a human and his environment, either through an elderly character's own projection of his will upon external objects or surrender of his will to "extrasomatic" agents. As their body parts become alien and unresponsive to their will, aged characters rely on externalizations of themselves, such as canes, servants or children for physical support and conveyance. In this way, the aged *soma* becomes more objectified than a youthful body whose inner-workings are much less transparent to an audience. Indeed we observe this phenomenon in tragedy in the anomalous way elderly characters assert their will: the mechanisms of their movement are entirely visible and very often verbalized, unlike the seamless, unnarrated actions

3 Cf. Aeschylus *Supp.* 774-5 (*phrenes*); *Th.* 620-2 (*noos*); Euripides *Ion* 742 (*noos*)

of their younger counterparts. As Creon remarks in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, an old man such as Tiresias needs the help of another, like a wagon does: "Just as every wagon is used to waiting for the help of an outside hand, so do the feet of an old man:"ὥς πᾶς ἄπῃνη πούς τε πρεσβύτου φιλεῖ/ χειρὸς θυραίας ἀναμένειν κουφίσματα. (*Ph.* 847-8). This image of an old person as a wagon captures well the implications of the dependency of the elderly on an externalized agent. A wagon is useless, in a sense even formless, without the animals which draw it. Furthermore, this analogy has the effect of pulling apart the units of a human being into the three components of a wagon: driver, wagon, and beasts (agent, means, and power, respectively). Again, we see the aged person, his parts severed from his own agency, cracked open for our inspection through Euripides' portrayal. In this way, the agency of aged characters are externalized and made as visible as strings on a marionette.⁴

In Greek drama, this lack of agency which older characters have over themselves and their environment often represents their larger social marginalization. In tragedy, this rhetorical theme of bodily disintegration and an elderly person's inability to assert his agency over his own body tends to highlight and restage on a microcosmic level the societal impotence the older characters experience in these extreme circumstances. As de Romilly observes, we see Troy crumble in the metonymy of Hecuba's personal, bodily failures in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. In fact, one can apply this kind of metonymic analysis accurately to many other instances of the elderly in tragedy. In any case, this rhetorical dismemberment reveals the playwrights' interest in portraying the failure of aged body in terms of the lack of connection and communication

4 Brooke Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject: the Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 33-4. This bodily dissolution in old age seems to involve closely the anxiety of death and inherent formlessness which Holmes argues the term *soma* connotes. In their presentation of old age as a disconnection between a person and his body, the playwrights clearly tap into this

between its disparate elements, both "physical" and "non-physical." These writers clearly found the aged body a rich means through which to poeticize certain central questions asked in tragedy concerning a person and his interactions with, and influence over, the world around him. The boundaries and limits of a person's body and his relationship with it serve as a useful narrative to complement the larger subject of that person and their community. Yet in turn we will also find that these kinds of analyses find their way into discourses about the elderly body beyond the stage.

A similar kind of disintegration plays out in medical writing, albeit much more literally; Hippocratic authors and Aristotle give us insight into the older body, revealing the slow processes of spreading out, opening, and slackening of the vessels, bones, and flesh within, although remaining largely silent on the aged body's relationship to "its person." The disconnection of body parts we find in tragedy differs somewhat from the medical writers' account of the dissolution of bodily components as one ages, especially since the medical writers are not such self-conscious participants in the cultural discourse concerning the relationship between an older person and his body. In Greek drama, this bodily disintegration strongly indicates a loss of the connection between a person's agency and his body, while in medical writing it can only insinuate this kind of loss; in order to see how they engage in a fundamentally related dialogue, we must look at the larger context of the medical writers' use of the terms *τόνος* "tension" and *λύσις* "slackening" to see how this conception of aged body might also bring in tow the issues concerning the physicality of the elderly which we saw in tragedy.

"somatic" anxiety. This anxiety can both involve a loss of integration of the body itself and loss of a person's agency over this body.

The medical processes suggest a dissolution in old age, a kind of λύσις "loosening" and ἀραίωσις "rarification"⁵ which contrast with the tension and density of younger men. As the author of *Diseases* 1 describes, this τόνος ισχυρός "strong tension" is not present in older men.⁶ This idea of the younger body as ἔντονος "tense" or "taut" appears in Euripides' *Hippolytus* as well, where the youth's servant apologizes to Aphrodite for his master's insides which are "tense" on account of his youth " ὑφ' ἥβης σπλάγχχον ἔντονον" (*Hipp.* 118). Of course, the servant means to make a remark on the rash behavior of Hippolytus rather than a statement about his physiology, but it is important for our study that this idea, in both its medical and metaphorical meanings, crosses over these different modes of discourse. Aristophanes also associates a lack of tension with Cratinus whom he characterizes as hopelessly superannuated. His worn out lyre becomes metonymy for him and his career: its pegs have fallen out (ἐκπίπτειν) and there is not a string (τόνος) left on it, having lost both its form and function.⁷ This tension and slackness are not just isolated medical theories, but clearly are part of a larger cultural rhetoric about the body as it ages. I will argue that these processes, especially "loosening," relate to a larger cultural discourse about the necessity of bodily tension for life and vitality, with an excess or deficit of this tension resulting in precarious or morbid bodily states. Furthermore, the fact that the aged body occupies this liminal space between life and death, agency and loss of agency, makes it a compelling vantage point from which authors can consider the divisibility of a person and, in turn, a possible ideological niche for old age.

To the ancient Greek writers, this notion of "tautness" is in fact essential for the basic workings of the body. This bodily tension helps form a larger picture of the ideal, youthful male

5 We recall how, according to *Epidemics* 6.5.3 diseases leave in old age through "concoction, dissolution and rarification: "διὰ πεπασμὸν... καὶ διὰ λύσιν, καὶ δι' ἀραίωσιν."

6 *Morb.* 1.22

and seems to betoken any number of his characteristics, including strength, masculinity and intelligence. In his *Physiognomics*, pseudo-Aristotle associates well-jointed, sinewy feet with courageous men.⁸ Yet the fact that this feature indicates vitality and physical prowess one recognizes perhaps most obviously in instances where authors describe what sort of people lack this tautness. The Hippocratic author of *Airs, Waters and Places* weaves this concept of bodily tautness along with its opposite, τό ῥάθυμον "flabbiness," throughout his treatise. He explains how the Scythians have moist, flabby and impotent constitutions as a result of their temperate climate and despotic system of government. The men, largely indistinguishable from the women, must cauterize themselves to become more taut (ἐντονότερα) and articulate (ἡρθρωμένα) (*Aer.* 20).⁹ People who live in dry climates which experience dramatic seasonal changes are taut (ἐντόνους) and well-articulated (διηρθρωμένους) in addition to having more intelligence and courage than average (*Aer.* 24). Therefore, authors who employ this modifier indicating physical tension clearly assume that this bodily tautness is a characteristic of ideal physiques, which in turn reveal the nature of a person. One who lacks this quality is in some way unideal or "other," like the women and foreigners described. They lack a certain level of vitality and virility which would make them reproductively viable and physically capable.

Yet what does it mean, on a physical level, to be "ἐντονος," and what is the function of a "τόνος" or "νεῦρον" according to the Greeks? As Kuriyama argues, the muscles, which we

7 *Eq.* 531

8 *Physiognomics* 810a15-31

9 Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*, (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 129-51. Kuriyama astutely observes how the Greeks viewed the quality of being ἀρθρώδης "well-jointed" as central feature of a person in peak physical condition; he focuses on this aspect of "articulation" in his citations about physiology, yet this feature is often found alongside the complementary concept of bodily "tension" which I discuss here. These two concepts very often work in tandem to create the image of an ideal physical state, and so I assert that many of his conclusions about "articulation" can be applied in turn to "tension." The tension of a body's sinews in addition to its "definition" seems to have demonstrated a person's virility and courage.

would normally think of as indicative of the youthful fitness ancient Greeks admired, did not yet exist as a concept in Classical Greece.¹⁰ Instead, we hear that sinews (τόνος or νεῦρον) or flesh (σάρξ) constitute the solid components of a body. Thus when a person is said to be ἐντόνος, it is a reference to his sinews or tendons (whatever these precisely were for the ancient Greeks), not his muscles. Yet these sinews were not simply elements of the body whose tautness or laxity could indicate a person's manliness and strength, they also seemed to be the location of agency according to Plato and Aristotle. Both, when describing the mechanisms of motion (for Plato, human, for Aristotle, animal) use the term νεῦρα (sinews) and liken them to strings which one uses to control the motion of a puppet. In his *Laws*, Plato's Athenian makes an analogy with humans and puppets; the strings, or νεῦρα, pull a person in one direction or another, but only the lawful, golden sinew directs correctly (*Leg.* 1.644d-45b). Of course, one of the definitions for νεῦρον is simply "chord" or "string," as on a lyre or bow. Yet it is notable that, in making the comparison "οἷον νεῦρα ἢ μήρινθοί," Plato includes the word μήρινθοί which is used exclusively for strings, not tendons, as if the two terms are in fact distinguished in this context. Furthermore, Plato is surely aware that he necessarily evokes the anatomical sinew when referring to the human body. Plato, therefore, seems to have already considered the sinews as a possible location for some kind of human agency, what he calls "the affections within us" (τὰ πάθη ἐν ἡμῖν). Aristotle makes a similar analogy about voluntary and involuntary motion in his *Movement of Animals*. Using the same puppet analogy, Aristotle clearly has the puppet strings (στρέβλαι) correspond to bodily sinew (νεῦρα) (*MA* 701b). Although, as David Shanks notes, the tendons were not considered to be the "ultimate" cause of movement,¹¹ it is clear that tendons were seen

10 Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body*, 111-151.

11 David Shanks, "Muscularity and the Western Medical Tradition," *Hirundo: The McGill Journal of Classical Studies* 2 (2002): 58-81, 69-70. Forces such as *pneuma* were the ultimate cause for Aristotle (*MA* 703a).

as a key piece of machinery in the translation of thought to action in a living body. Therefore these tendons are necessary means for movement, that is, the conference of personal agency onto the body.

In fact, the tendons' quality of being "strung" is not only essential for agency, but for life itself. We remember how, since Homer, the loosening of limbs "λύω" signifies morbid states: love, fear, or death.¹² The body's tendons, like a bow string or lyre string (all τόνοι in Greek) must be strung in order to retain its form and purpose. That is to say, a person's tendons must be taut in order for him to live and retain his identity. The tension of the body's sinews thus indicates a number of vital characteristics of a person, from his masculinity as we have seen in *Airs, Waters and Places*, to his agency which we see in the puppet similes, and even for his life. The slackness of this tension reduces a person to the lazy impotence of Eastern foreigners and women, while its utter failure spells death. Therefore, we see how important the implications of the loss of this quality of τόνος could be in the aging process which the Hippocratics describe. This λύσις signifies a loss of bodily form as well as integration, potentially stripping a person of his physical agency in extreme cases. We have already seen this loss of agency frequently portrayed in tragedy, albeit in a manner which leaves the tendons, i.e. the means of agency, invisible to the audience. Yet the phenomenon is the same whether we see it on stage or implied through writers who considered the bodily processes of aging from a scientific standpoint: in the aged body, a disruption occurs in the transference of personal will to action; age compromises the tendons which are the mode of this translation and the link between thought and body.

12 Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 147-8. This is also clear through the epithet used of sleep, death, and love "λυσιμελής." Vermeule addresses these connections.

With this loss of agency comes the utilization, or imposition, of another agency. The failure of elderly characters' bodies in drama results in their projecting agency beyond themselves, whether onto canes or other people, or by verbally calling upon limbs which have somehow become alienated from them and unresponsive. Furthermore, we also observe how, without their personal agencies, the elderly characters fall subject to external ones. In theories of aging expressed by Plato and Aristotle as well, we see "extrasomatic" as opposed to "intrasonic" agency feature prominently. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the titular character explains how heat and cold and all things "which have strong forces" dissolve composite bodies from without; this is the reason for a body's becoming diseased or aged:

κατανοῶν ὥς συστάτω σώματι θερμὰ καὶ ψυχρὰ καὶ πάνθ' ὅσα δυνάμεις ἰσχυρὰς ἔχει περιστάμενα ἔξωθεν καὶ προσπίπτοντα ἀκαίρως λύει καὶ νόσους γῆράς τε ἐπάγοντα φθίνειν ποιεῖ. (*Tim.* 33a).

"[The Maker] recogniz[ed] that the hot and the cold and all things which have strong forces, surround the outside of a compound body and, attacking inopportune, dissolve it and make [the body] waste away by causing diseases and old age.

In this model, old age is the result of outside forces breaking down (λύει) a *soma*. Later in his speech, Timaeus states that the process of decay happens when more material passes out of the body than enters the body, while growth happens in the reverse situation. In his theory of triangles, Timaeus defines decay and old age:

ὅταν μὲν δὴ πλεον τοῦ ἐπιρρέοντος ἀπὴν, φθίνει πᾶν, ὅταν δὲ ἔλαττον, αὐξάνεται. νέα μὲν οὖν σύστασις τοῦ παντὸς ζώου, καινὰ τὰ τρίγωνα οἷον ἐκ δρυόχων ἔτι ἔχουσα τῶν γενῶν, ἰσχυρὰν μὲν τὴν σύγκλεισιν αὐτῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα κέκτηται (*Tim.* 81b-c)

If what flows out is more than what flows in, every [body] decays, whereas when [what flows out] is less, [the body] grows. When the compound of every living thing is new and it still has fresh triangles just as if from the framework,¹³ it possesses a strong interlocking [of these triangles].

The metaphor Timaeus employs with his "ἐκ δρυόχων" is suggestive. A new body is like a ship straight from the framework on which it is built; the body is a σύστασις "construction" which has "strong connectivity" "ἰσχυρὰν σύγκλεισιν" to itself; the whole mass is συμπέπηγε, which might

remind us of the description of the youthful body in *On the Regimen in Health* as *πέπηγεν* (*Salubr.* 2.8). Timaeus emphasizes the structural integrity and unity of the young body, like a ship with its pieces tightly linked together, not admitting any leaks. In a youthful body, the triangles within overcome the triangles which enter it and must divide and assimilate them into the body for nourishment; however, when the foundations of the triangles within the body are slackened (*χαλαῖ*) over the course of time, the triangles from without invade the body and divide up the body's own triangles, thereby causing the body to decay (81c-d).¹⁴ Timaeus goes on to explain that eventually this decay causes the bonds of the triangles once "joined together" to set loose the *psyche*, as if it were until this time trapped inside a tightly compacted body. Thus Plato's Timaeus views old age and decay as a two-prong effect. First, the body's internal triangles wear and slacken through use; this phenomenon makes the body unable to overcome and assimilate exterior triangles into nourishment for its own growth. Old age is imagined in this dialogue as a life stage where the body becomes vulnerable to the outside environment which can impose itself upon a body if it has grown too slack. Plato denotes this slackness with the term *χαλαῖ* and contrasts it with the quality of being firm and closely interlocked, as is the case in a new body part. The loosening, in addition to the pressure of outside forces which the body no longer has the strength to withstand, brings about this decay.

Aristotle similarly imagines aging as the outside forces transgressing and overcoming the body. We have already seen his view of aging as the diminishment of the body's vital "flame" in his *On the Length and Shortness of Life*. Yet he explains aging in somewhat different and more complex terms in his *Meteorology* (4.378b-9b). There Aristotle describes four bodily elements:

13 The props which stabilize a ship while it is constructed ashore.

14 Harold Miller, "The Aetiology of Disease in Plato's Timaeus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 93 (1962): 183 n. 29.

two active (the hot and cold) and two passive (the dry and moist); in other words, temperature determines whether something is dry or moist, not the other way around. Decay, as well as old age, occurs when the "passive" elements (moist or dry) overwhelm the "active" elements (hot or cold) in the body, that is, when an overturning of the natural order takes place. External heat from the body's surroundings overcomes the innate heat of the body, making the body colder.

Likewise, the body becomes drier because its own heat evaporates along with its internal moisture; for, according to Aristotle, heat draws moisture to itself, and if the external heat overwhelms the internal bodily heat, the moisture will be drawn to the warmer location. As R.A.H King observes, Aristotle, for whom mastery of one element over another preserves bodily balance, understands decay as the loss of the proper proportions and order of bodily elements.¹⁵ According to this way of thinking, old age is a destabilization of this natural balance and control. Furthermore, in this model, control and agency are yielded to a body's environment, which begins to gain mastery over it, making it cooler and drier. Thus aging, as well as its secondary causes of cooling and drying, involves extrasomatic forces transgressing the body's boundary, changing, and eventually mastering it. For Aristotle, the notion of old age as a cooling and drying process is directly connected to (although it is ambiguous whether it is a cause or result of) the external forces mastering the inside of the body which lacks the innate warmth and moistness to counteract them. In this way Plato's account of the aging process expounded in his *Timaeus* resembles Aristotle's in his *Meteorology*: as one grows older, the boundary of the body becomes compromised and subject to the environment which ultimately causes its debilitation.

Lingering not far behind these ideas of bodily tension versus slackness, agency versus the relinquishment of agency to outside forces, is of course the loss of all bodily faculties in death.

15 R. A. H. King, *Aristotle on Life and Death* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 92-5.

We have already noted how death itself "loosens" or "unstrings" as early as Homer, as if the tension of a body were necessary for its vital integrity. Plato has us understand in his *Timaeus* that the soul can exit the body because the body has slackened ($\chiαλᾱ$) and no longer restrains the *psyche* with bonds ($\deltaεσμοί$). This metaphor of death as the release of the soul from bonds is in fact found throughout Plato's *Phaedo*, also with cognates of λύω (*Phd.* 67d). Furthermore, Plato has Simmias compare the body to a lyre, both of which are "strung" ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon$). If the body is too loose or too tightly-strung ($\chiαλασθῆ... \acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\omega\varsigma \eta \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\alpha\thetaῆ$), the soul dies. Of course, this account is rejected, but Simmias' account is suggestive for our study. The image of the body as a lyre implies that the body's quality of being "strung" is essential for its existence and identity; as Simmias argues, when the strings rot, so does the harmony, which is analogous to a person's soul. The analogy is so persuasive to Echecrates that he is cast into doubt as to the soul's immortality; in fact, he seems to have heard that account before, since he says that this argument has a wondrous hold on him, "now as always" (*Phd.* 88d). Therefore the strong effect this argument has on the members of the dialogue indicates that this idea might have circulated among some ancient Greek thinkers. This "soul as harmony" model evokes pre-Socratic notions about the soul as a product of the proper blend of physical bodily materials and therefore differs from the other theory we have seen in Plato that the soul is independent of the body.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Simmias' proposition still suggests that bodily tendons have an intimate relationship with a person's vitality, without which the soul, whatever it might be, departs and the person dies. The body is strung with tendons which give it its form and function, just as a lyre or puppet with strings. All

16 H.B. Gottschalk, "Soul as Harmonia," *Phronesis* 16, no. 2 (1971): 179-98. Aristotle in any case informs us that some believed in this theory (*de An.* 407 b 28). See Gottschalk for a fuller account of its background (193-4).

these νεῦρα are necessary for the use and/or life of the object they form; the loosening of these agents is associated with death, and, as I have argued, also old age.¹⁷

The notion that old age is closely connected to death and is even a kind of decay which precedes and presages actual corporal putrefaction resonates through the works I have examined. We see comparison of old people to non-entities or corpses directly in a number of instances. In Athenian drama we recall how elderly characters express the idea that they are somehow without a physical form at all. In Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, we remember how Oedipus describes himself as a πολὺν αἰθέρος ἀφανὲς εἶδωλον "gray, unseen phantom of the air" and a "fleeting dream" (πτανὸν ὄνειρον).¹⁸ The elderly in Greek drama tend to describe themselves in very self-effacing terms, drawing our attention to the failure of their bodies and the disjunction between their physical abilities and their wills or voices, expressing the idea that their non-physical parts are all that remains of them. Conversely, the playwrights focus specifically on the physicality of this loss of self in old age through portraying the elderly as if they are dead already, describing how they are corpse-like and beginning to decay physically. We find this emphasis on the physical disintegration of the aged character especially in comparisons of old people to corpses and in vegetative metaphors which liken the elderly to rotting or withering organic matter. Thus in these representations a similar sort of kinship emerges between death and old age and the threat of formlessness inherent in both. This objectification of the elderly by focusing purely on their physicality or the emphasis of their lack of any physical form interestingly is two sides of the same coin. Objectification of the human body and decay seem to be essential for isolating and exploring any disjunction between person and *soma*. Through this disintegration of the physical and non-physical elements of an elderly person, we gain an interesting viewpoint on personhood

17 This idea of the human body as a lyre also contextualizes Aristophanes' portrayal of Cratinus' lyre (*Eq.* 531).

and the different sphere this liminal time of life may occupy, one in which the physical integrity of the body becomes secondary to mental faculty and the decaying body potentially becomes a foil to the person.

In the Hippocratic corpus, however, old age is never expressed in terms of its nearness to death per se, yet the medical writers do seem to engage with imagery which implies this connection. The process between mature adulthood and death by old age seem to be one of a continuous process of physical changes which mimic the final moments in death. Aging is part of a steady process of a decrease in innate heat which begins in adulthood or even as early as birth; the association of warmth with life and coldness with death indeed has a solid tradition in Greek thought.¹⁹ The decrease of bodily moisture which Aristotle and some Hippocratics aver occurs in old age does in fact resonate with literary discourses which describe older people as withered like plants.²⁰ Yet other Hippocratics state that the opposite is true—that an increase in bodily moisture occurs, a change which, nevertheless, is also figured as a contrast to the vitality and youthfulness which dryness, in some models, characterizes. We notice as well that the concept of slackness versus youthful tension which the Hippocratics attribute to the aging process has certain connotations about vitality in the larger cultural discourse; the imagery of the body as "strung" with tendons whose tension and integrity keep one alive is at least as old as Homer and is later found in Plato and Aristotle.²¹ The body and its network of tendons loosen in old age, just as in death.

18 *Pho.* 1543

19 G. E. R. Lloyd, "The Hot and the Cold, the Dry and the Wet in Greek Philosophy," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 84 (1964): 101-2.

20 Archilochus fr. 188; 196a; Anacreon fr. 432; Aeschylus *Ag.* 79-81; Aristophanes *Lys.* 384-5; *Pl.* 1054; *Eq.* 533-5 to name a few. See my discussion in chapter one pp. 10-1.

21 Plato *Tim.* 81b-c; *Phd.* 88d; *Leg.* 1.644d-45b; Aristotle *MA* 701b

Yet these aspects of aging which resemble death interestingly do not necessarily have negative implications for an older person's health. The Hippocratics give an essentially neutral account of advanced age from a medical perspective. They discuss the aged body alongside its opposite, the youthful body, marking older men as the constitutional opposites of their younger counterparts; in this way, they designate old age as a distinct time of life which, as with all ages, has its advantages and disadvantages for one's experience of disease. This treatment of old age as a reversal of youth in every way also has the effect of presenting the possibility for this time of life to involve a different kind of relationship and interaction between a person, his body and the affections of his body.

For the Hippocratics, this evaluation of the aged body as cooler and "loose" or "rarefied" can in fact have positive consequences for one's experience with illness. In certain circumstances, this slackness, in addition to a lack of bodily heat, can make the elderly less susceptible to the sorts of diseases which violently attack the young. On the principle that the virulence of some diseases mirrors the strength of their hosts, men in peak physical health can paradoxically be affected more severely by these ailments. In this way Hippocratics present the possibility that the body in old age suffers disease in proportion to its own strength; physical weakness can lead to a kind of immunity, making the body in its debilitation not subject to the forces which physically assault it. Furthermore, the idea that they express that one's mental experience of suffering can help mitigate disease suggests as well that older people have a different relationship to their physicality than those younger, one that is somehow less integral and more distanced.

Of course, while largely agreeing with these conceptions of the aged body, Aristotle, who writes after a number of the Hippocratic treatises, tends to be pessimistic about the potential of these features of the elderly body to be at all salubrious. Nevertheless, how the Hippocratics

interpreted the consequences of aged body's constitutional features introduced a new outlook on the possible implications of old age. This nearness to death and this relative state of morbidity, which comes from the body and mind's familiarity with suffering, not only prevent the harshest onsets of some diseases, but it also introduce an interesting vantage point from which one can examine the mechanisms of a person and his body. Indeed we have already seen this disjunction of the aged person and his body presented in tragedy as well its implications for his personal agency and the potential it offers for seeing the divisibility between *soma* and its less concrete elements such as the *noos*, *psyche*, and *phrenes*. In the image Plato evokes in his *Timaeus* of the body slackening in old age and releasing its soul in death, we also see how these two elements of a person, *soma* and *psyche*, can become more divisible and recognizable in advanced age.

Yet Plato implies this disconnection can bring about something unexpectedly positive, just as the slackening of the body in old age might mitigate disease. Plato introduces this angle on old age in the character of Cephalus in his *Republic*. Of course, this representation of a content and leisurely old age spent speaking instead of doing was not a revolution in the portrayal of old age. In Homer, advanced age could bring with it experiential knowledge, such as Menelaus claims that Nestor has.²² However, I am not discussing what exactly Greek writers might have considered old man's societal value to be, rather, I wish to draw attention to how Plato's Cephalus illustrates a singular portrayal of the relationship between an elderly person and his body which seems to be the ideological fruit of the inquiry which we have seen into of the aged body so far.

Far from despairing of his loss of physical ability, Cephalus speaks of old age as a time which is happily free from bodily desires and which allows leisure for good conversation, i.e., the

22 Homer *Il.* 4.310-20

development of his "self" in distinct contrast to his *soma*.²³ "Thus know well that to the extent the pleasures regarding the body waste away, so much do the pleasures concerning conversation increase." ὥς εὔ ἴσθι ὅτι ἔμοιγε ὅσον αἱ ἄλλαι αἱ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἡδοναὶ ἀπομαραίνονται, τοσοῦτον αὖξονται αἱ περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἐπιθυμίαι τε καὶ ἡδοναί. (R. 328d). Cephalus thus presents of the decay of the body, or more specifically, the pleasures concerning the body, as involving an equal and compensatory increase in the pleasures of speaking. Notice as well how he speaks of the ἡδοναὶ wasting away instead of the body; in this way, these affectations of the body mimic the actions of the body itself. Plato's Cephalus indeed makes characterizations of the aged body and the aged person's relationship to it similar to the ones which we have seen displayed in Greek drama, medical and scientific writings. He tells Socrates: "When tense desires end and slacken, what Sophocles said does indeed happen: there is an escape from very many and raging masters." ἐπειδὴν αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι παύσονται κατατείνουσαι καὶ χαλάσωσιν, παντάπασιν τὸ τοῦ Σοφοκλέους γίνεται, δεσποτῶν πάνυ πολλῶν ἐστὶ καὶ μαινομένων ἀπηλλάχθαι. (R. 329d) His tense (κατατείνουσαι) desires have relaxed (χαλάω), the same word which Plato later uses for the bodily triangles which are worn down in aged in his *Timaeus*, and which is in opposition to the characterization of the taut or strung bodies of youths (ἐντονος).²⁴ Thus, we see how involved the term which Cephalus uses might be. Because he characterizes these ἀφροδίσια as a kind of bodily affections, we might imagine that his aged body does not react as severely to sexual desire just as the bodies of older men might not react as severely to certain diseases in Hippocrates. Plato's wording suggests that Cephalus escapes erotic desire, to which the youthful body is

23 Plato has Phaedrus express a similar sentiment that the pleasures of speaking are superior to those of the body *Phd.*258e.

24 It is also, interestingly, a term for describing the abatement of pain or fever (*Aer.* 8; *Acut.* 16).

subject, by virtue of a kind of bodily slackening similar to what we saw in scientific writing. As the body loosens and relaxes in age, the ἀφροδίσια do as well.²⁵

In contrast, Cephalus' friends lament the lost pleasures of youth; in fact, they literally sing (ὕμνοῦσιν) of the evils of old age (*R.* 329b), which is reminiscent of the sorts of statements we have heard in drama, particularly from aged choruses; indeed the performative aspect of singing certainly intensifies this comparison. Yet Plato does not have Cephalus dwell on the loss of physical strength; the aged man instead transforms this otherwise negative disintegration, the λῦσις of the body in old age (and therefore the anxiety of formlessness inherent in the *soma* which is amplified in old age) into a freeing release, focusing on the mental compensation he has for what he lacks in his body.²⁶ The disjunction that forms between him and his body, which once beleaguered him with desire just as a rabid master does his slave, is a welcome one. Yet old age is not pleasant for all; according to Cephalus, whether one has a good old age depends on the τρόπος "disposition" of the man. This sentiment perhaps reminds us of the different φύσεις which the author of *On Regimen* describes, wherein certain constitutions fair better at certain times of life. Cephalus tells Socrates one must be κόσμιος "orderly" and εὐκόλος "contented" to have a good old age; this word εὐκόλος also seems to be responding to dramatic representations

25 Of course, I do not argue that Plato's image of a desexualized old age outstripped representations of old people as comically horny. In fact, Athenaeus would later say that Sophocles, still very much so a slave to his "raging master," was robbed of his cloak by a boy offering sexual favors (*Ath.* 604). As Luc Houdijk notes, Athenaeus actually seems to be responding to and correcting Plato's account of Sophocles' admirable continence by saying that Sophocles only made such a comment after he was already impotent. Luc J. J. Houdijk and Paul Johannes Josef Vanderbroeck, "Old Age and Sex in the Ancient Greek World," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift Der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock* 36, no. 6 (1987): 58.

26 Aristotle would later in his *Rhetoric* give a scathing caricature of older people using the same evidence concerning the physical aspects of old age, although he arrives at very different conclusions; the coldness of old people makes them cowardly (*Rh.* 2.7); the fact that their desires have let up (αἱ... ἐπιθυμίαι ἀνείκασιν) explains how they seem temperate (σωφρονικοὶ φαίνονται) (*Rh.* 2.13); the implication of this last statement is, of course, that the temperance is purely incidental and not associated with, or accompanied by, any development in personal character of the sort Cephalus seems to suggest.

of old age, as its opposite, δύσκολος, and "old" seem to be somewhat synonymous.²⁷ Therefore, Plato seems also to engage in, and draw from, this examination in both drama and medical writing concerning the aged body and the aged person's relationship to his body; in this way, he produced the image of Cephalus, an older man who expresses his experiences in old age as an amalgamation, and product, of the ideas emerging at this time which articulated the physical and personal implications and potential of old age.

27 Plato's use of εὔκολος is suggestive given the way the term is used in drama. Agave says that her father is δύσκολος because of his old age in Euripides' *Bacchae* (Ba.1251). In *Wasps*, Bdelycleon also calls his old father δύσκολος (V. 942). Aristophanes also has Dionysus characterize Sophocles as εὔκολος (in comparison to Euripides, of course) (R. 82), what Plato's Cephalus interestingly seems to be saying of Sophocles in this passage as well.

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