

# A Word for Woman?

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IN GREEK LITERARY USAGE the feminine ἡ ἄνθρωπος inevitably carries pejorative or diminutive connotations. Women referred to in this way are the objects of contempt or derision: slaves who give testimony under torture, prostitutes who plot to capture legacies, women who commit sexual improprieties. But ἡ ἄνθρωπος may also express pity when it applies to women who are raped or otherwise degraded, who suffer from physical or psychological maladies, or who are trapped in an otherwise unpleasant situation. The semantic spectrum of ἡ ἄνθρωπος is already known to a limited degree (cf. the sparse entry in LSJ *s.v.* ἄνθρωπος II), although it appears not to have been the object of sustained study. Athenian orators referred to wicked prostitutes and pitiable girls with the term. Ancient antiquarians applied ἡ ἄνθρωπος to women who have sex with and give birth to snakes and other beasts. But how was this appellation used and received by real people outside the world of literature?

## I

Before we address the documentary evidence, a survey of literary usage is called for. At Pindar *Pyth.* 4.96f Pelias, on first seeing Jason's bare foot, attempts to hide his fear (κλέπτων θυμῷ), but blurts out καὶ τίς ἀνθρώπων σε χαμαιγενέων πολιῶς ἐξανῆκεν γαστρός; (98ff), as if to ask "What creature bore you?" Of the freakishly tall woman whom Pisistratus dressed as Athena, Herodotus writes that the Athenians πειθόμενοι τὴν γυναῖκα εἶναι αὐτὴν τὴν θεὸν προσεύχοντό τε τὴν ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἐδέκοντο Πεισίστρατον (1.60). Aristotle (*EN* 1148b 20) refers to a mysterious female creature that gores pregnant women and devours their fetuses as τὴν ἀνθρώπην.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LSJ (*s.v.* II) cites all three instances under the questionable heading, "as fem. *woman*." Pelias imagines a monster; Pisistratus exploits an abnormal giant; Aristotle draws analogy with a mythical female monster. These are not, in the ordinary imagination, typical women.

Antiphon refers to a *pallake* on the verge of delivering a deadly draught of poison as ἡ ἄνθρωπος (1.17.2f). Lysias' defense of Euphiletus describes the pathetic jilted lover of Eratosthenes, as she lurks around Euphiletus' house with the intent to inform him of Eratosthenes' impropriety; Lysias calls her ἡ ἄνθρωπος (1.16). Demosthenes recounts how after Philip seized Olynthos, the debauched members of his staff required an innocent, young, free-born, Olynthian girl to dine with them and even to sing at the table. When the captive refused to sing she was thrashed; she is called ἡ ἄνθρωπος (19.197). A slave who is a key witness is also so termed by Demosthenes (47 *passim*). This same designation also appears in Ps.-Demosthenes for Neaira, the ex-prostitute charged under γραφή ξενίας (59.9, 21, 46, 51, 54, 59, 72, and *passim*). Isocrates names a slave who has been drawn into a fraudulent charge of murder τὴν ἄνθρωπον (18.52). Isaeus so describes an ex-prostitute of servile descent who insinuates herself into the graces and inheritance of the old and feeble Euctemon (6.21, 38f).<sup>2</sup>

The meaning does not appear to change over time: ἡ ἄνθρωπος is frequently derisive or contemptuous in postclassical authors as well. Aelian applies it to an old woman who has sex with a slave (*NA* 7.15), a poor woman afflicted with intestinal worms (9.33), an adulteress whose eyes are gouged out by a stork (8.20), a lowly hawker who becomes the object of the amorous gropings of an elephant (7.43), and a woman who has sex with a snake (6.17). Elsewhere he uses ἡ ἄνθρωπος to describe a woman who has the audacity to propose marriage to a man (*VH* 10.2), a courtesan visited by Demetrius Poliorcetes (12.17), and a courtesan who was asked to marry the king of Egypt on the strength of the beauty of her slipper (13.33). Chariton (2.1.9) describes a slave-girl as ἡ ἄνθρωπος. Strabo so calls a prophetess whom the Boeotian army burns alive under suspicion of treason (9.2.4). Pausanias applies the title to a mysterious woman who gives birth to a snake and in so doing destroys an entire army of Arcadians (6.20.4). Lucian (*Abdicatus* 7) calls a pitiable insane woman ἡ ἄνθρωπος. With perhaps a greater range of meaning Plutarch uses the term for an Amazon (*Thes.* 27.6), a woman contemplating abortion (*Lyc.* 3.3), a concubine (*Mar.* 40.12), Arsicas' wife who is slated for

<sup>2</sup> On usage in the passage from Antiphon, Demosthenes (19.197), Isocrates, and Isaeus, LSJ (*s.v.* II) note appropriately: "contemptuously, of female slaves."

execution (*Artax.* 2.3), the notorious Aspasia (*Per.* 24.2), and the fearsome mother of Alexander, Olympias (*Alex.* 2.5). Usage at Josephus *AJ* 5.329 expresses only moderate pity, though elsewhere in the same work it is clearly negative (16.194). Dionysius of Halicarnassus applies ἡ ἄνθρωπος to good women who are victims: Lavinia, hiding out in the woods like a commoner (*Ant.Rom.* 1.70), Ilia, the mother of Romulus and Remus, after having been raped by a god (1.78), and Lucretia, after having been raped (4.65).

Moreover, in the medical writers, whose descriptive precision might lead one to expect use of ἡ ἄνθρωπος with the simple meaning female, the feminine denotes wretchedness. It appears in the Hippocratic corpus in two treatises. At *Virg.* 1.37 (VIII Littré) ἡ ἄνθρωπος is applied to a young girl suffering from bloating, fever, and delirium apparently tied to the onset of menstruation. In the treatise on feminine ailments ἡ ἄνθρωπος applies to women suffering illnesses ranging from unpleasant to horrible: one undergoes treatment (*Mul.* 1.11) for what appears to be morning sickness (1.1ff: "Ὅσῃσι δὲ ἑκταῖα καὶ ἑβδομαῖα τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς κατασηπόμενα χωρέει, ταύτησιν εἰκὸς γίνεσθαι ὑπὸ ἀμφοῖν ἐπιρροῇ, χολῆς καὶ ἄλμης); another suffers the grotesque bloating of dropsy (61.3, 18, 20, 42); another endures uterine ulcers (66.4, 13); and still another is juggled and manipulated in an effort to extract the miscarried fetus that is lodged inside her (68.18). Similarly Galen so describes women consumed by gruesome lethal fevers (10.687.5; 17.1.609.9, 788.12, 15 Kühn) or wracked with sickness resulting from miscarriage (17.1.638.5 Kühn).

In Greek literature of the Classical period the meaning of ἡ ἄνθρωπος is evident. Its use is reserved for women who are somehow unwomanly, as a result of physical, moral, or legal characteristics. Pelias can only envision a monster as having given birth to Jason. Pisistratus' giant not only towers above men, but is instrumental in a political coup. As to Aristotle's fetus-eating creature, not even her species is certain. The rest are slaves or are treated as slaves. In postclassical literature the number of examples of the use of the feminine broadens, but the semantic range remains constant: ἡ ἄνθρωπος is pejorative or expressive of extreme pathos.

## II

We are on much less firm ground with epigraphical evidence, which provides a single instance of the feminine ἡ ἄνθρωπος. The account of the Delian *hieropoioi* for 279 B.C. records a payment of 120 drachmas made τῆι ἄνθρωπῳ εἰς τὰ ἐπιτήδεια (*IG XI.2 161 A.83*). The entry is grouped among payments for a builder (83), a *hyperetes* (83), stonemasons (83f), clothing (84), a scribe (84), a herald (84), *neokoroi* (84f), a *krenophylax* (85), a female flute player (84), etc.; the list goes on to include building materials, statues, carts, incense, oil, and other items. The context of the account does not give any hint of the identity or status of the woman. The text's original editor, Homolle, was at a loss, suggesting that she must surely be a slave.<sup>3</sup> If he was correct, then she is a comparatively well-paid slave. The same account records the wages of a scribe at two-thirds that of the woman (84). The herald and one of the *neokoroi* earn only half her wage (84f). The *krenophylax* commands only three-fourths the pay of the woman (85). The female flute player earns the same as the woman (85). It is possible that the flute player is both a slave and our ἡ ἄνθρωπος, but we cannot be sure.

Homolle (480) noted also that the accounts for 282 B.C. contain payments to a female breadmaker (*IG XI.2 158.38-57*), speculating that she might be the same person. This breadmaker, named Artemisia, drew a monthly wage that ranged from 3 drachmas, 5 obols (44) to 6 drachmas, 3 obols (38). Payments to her are listed for seven months (*Lenaion-Bouphonion*). Artemisia received wages for only six of those months; Abittis was the breadmaker for the month of *Hieros*. Artemisia earned an average of 4 drachmas, 5 obols per month, if we exclude the month of *Hieros*; the unnamed woman drew more than twice that amount. In light of the two women's earnings Homolle's conjecture may be unwarranted.

But unfortunately the identity and status of this mysterious woman cannot be assessed with certainty. There is nothing in the text to suggest that she is the object of derision or pity. None of the other payees in the account for 279 B.C. is explicitly described as slave or free, nor for that matter can we be sure that Artemisia, the breadmaker is a slave. It is possible, nevertheless, that ἡ ἄνθρωπος implies 'slave' in this instance as it does

<sup>3</sup> T. HOMOLLE, "Comptes et inventaires des temples Déliens en l'année 279," *BCH* 14 (1890: hereafter 'Homolle') 389-511 at 480.

so often in the Attic orators, though apparently here without the contempt. On this point Homolle is probably correct, although he does not acknowledge the classical parallels for this meaning of ἡ ἄνθρωπος.

### III

The papyri offer a picture not nearly so clear as that from literary sources. ἡ ἄνθρωπος occurs in the papyri only three times and in each instance its meaning is perhaps mildly pejorative, if not neutral. In a petition dated to 13 January 218 B.C., Nicaea, daughter of Nicias, asks the king to initiate the process of appointing her a new guardian. Her husband and guardian Pausanias died, and then his son, who had been appointed as her guardian in accordance with his will, died also. In his subscription to the petition the *strategos* of the Arsinoite nome, Diophanes, assigns Dioscurides, an *epistates* (most likely of a village) to the case (*P.enteux.* 22.14):

Διοσκουρίδει. παραλαβὼν τινὰς τῶν ἐκ τῆς κώ(μης)  
 Νίκαιαν  
 πρεσβυτέρων εἰσελθε πρὸς τὴν [ἄνθρωπον].

The editor does not comment on Diophanes' error and subsequent correction. In the dozens of extant petitions on which Diophanes' subscriptions appear, his words are few, business-like and impersonal without exception (*P.enteux. passim*). Diophanes' treatment of the other petitions by women (e.g. *P.enteux.* 6, 10, 13, 20, 21) differs in no way from the manner in which he handles men's petitions, so the appearance of ἡ ἄνθρωπος cannot be attributed to simple misogynistic reflex. Nicaea's petition, moreover, is not intrinsically abrasive or even extraordinary. If ἡ ἄνθρωπος is pejorative here, then we must assume that Diophanes has independent cause for disliking the petitioner, a cause weighty enough to discourage this bureaucrat from his otherwise perfect record of businesslike subscription-writing. It is unlikely that ἡ ἄνθρωπος is an expression of Diophanes' pity. Nicaea's request for a guardian is a simple legal necessity. Although Diophanes may have shown pity for his petitioners, surely it was at their hearings, not in the curt subscriptions that served as inter-office memos. We must either conjecture a history of ill feeling between Nicaea and

Diophanes or conclude that the phrase τὴν ἄνθρωπον was corrected for its lack of precision, not its tone.

The second example comes from a roughly contemporary petition concerning a dispute over tax collection (*P.Hels.* I 1; 194/193–180 B.C.). Asclepiades and two partners who together hold the tax contract for collection of the sixth on gardens have co-opted a fourth partner, Petaus. The latter has apparently lent seven talents of bronze to Asclepiades' wife Aunchis instead of producing a proper surety for his obligations as collector. Asclepiades claims to have returned the loan, but Petaus disagrees. At lines 18f Asclepiades reports that Petaus has already brought one suit against his wife, Aunchis: κατ' Αγγχιος τῆς γυναικός μου. In the next sentence, however, Asclepiades refers to the loan transacted between Petaus and his wife (22), τὴν ἄνθρωπὸν μου. Nothing gives the impression that Aunchis is lowly or reprehensible; Asclepiades is not maligning his own wife. The editor's suggestion (p.22) that the phrase reflects the actual words of Petaus (which we are to assume were derisive?) is not in evidence. Asclepiades does not make clear exactly how this admittedly labyrinthine deal came to be transacted, and it is possible that he is attempting to win the sympathy of the petitioner's recipient by stressing that his 'poor wife' was swindled by Petaus. As with the former petition, this is not explicit in the text, but at best a plausible reading.

A new papyrological example is found in an unpublished papyrus in the Duke collection.<sup>4</sup>

P.Duk. inv. 315

31.8 × 6.8 cm.

early II B.C.

Oxyrhyncha

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/records/315.html>

A tall, slender strip of light brown papyrus, complete except for the bottom right corner. The text runs with the fibers in a heavy but neat, blockish hand.

Ἡφαιστίων  
Ἰμούθῃ χαίρειν·  
ἀπῆλθον ἀπὸ σοῦ

4 τῇ κ' τοῦ

Hephaestion  
to Imouthes greeting.  
I left you  
on the 23<sup>rd</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The papyrus was acquired in 1984 with ten others (P.Duk. inv. 313–14, 315–23). See *DPA*, <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/acquisitions.html>>, 1998. Digital scans and catalogue records may be found on the *DPA*, <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/>>, 1998.

	Τῦβι ὡς ἀνακοινω- σόμενος τῆι πα- ρ' ἐμοῦ γυναικί	of Tybi in order to consult with my wife concerning
8	περὶ τῶν Α (δραχμῶν) ὧν ἐληλύθην πρὸς σέ. σὺ οὖν ἀπέφαι- νες λέγων Τὸ	the 1000 drachmas about which I had approached you. You had made a proposal, saying,
12	μὲν ἥμισυ οἶνον τὸ δὲ ἄλλο ἥμισυ ἔντοκον	"Half wine, the other half bronze with interest."
	χαλκόν. Ἐμοῦ δὲ ἀνακοινωσαμένου	When I consulted her,
16	οὐκ ἔδοξεν τῆι ἀνθρώπῳι. καθότι δ' ἐμοὶ ἐτά- ξω διότι λάβει δύο	it was not agreed to by the woman. Insofar as you proposed to me "Take two minas without interest," I
20	μνᾶς ἀτοκί, εὐχα- ριστῶ. καλῶς οὖν ποιήσεις, ἐάν σοι φαίνηται, δούς μο[ι]	accept. Please, therefore, if you will, give me three
24	τρῖς μνᾶς ὧν τὸ[ν] τόκον οἴσω ἐξ ἐ[μοῦ] κ (δραχμάς). κομισάτω [δὲ] Ἵρρος ὁ παραδ[ίδους].	minas for which I will pay from my (own money) interest at 20 drachmas. Let Horus, the one bringing (this letter), deliver them.
28	ὧν ἂν δὲ χρῆαν [ἔχης] γρ[ά]ψον εσου[ . . . . . ] προθυμ[ . . . . . ] μισυ μοί [ . . . . . ]	Of whatever you have need, write ...
32	τῶι χρ[ . . . . . ]	

Verso: Ἰμούθηι

To Imouthes

5-6: corr. from ἀνακοινωσομένου. 12: read ἥμισυ. 13: read ἥμισυ. 24: read τρεῖς.

On palaeographical grounds the papyrus may be assigned to the early second century B.C., roughly contemporary with the other two texts. This date is consistent with the dates of the other texts from this batch of cartonnage.<sup>5</sup>

Hephaestion sought a loan of 1,000 drachmas from Imouthes (8ff). After consulting the woman Hephaestion rejected Imouthes' initial offer and took up another loan, evidently

<sup>5</sup> P.Duk. inv. 313; III/II B.C. = W. H. Willis, "Comoedia Dukiana," *GRBS* 32 (1991) 331-53; P.Duk. inv. 314; 200 B.C. = J. D. Sosin and J. F. Oates, "P.Duk.inv. 314: Agathis, Strategos and Hipparches of the Arsinoite Nome," *ZPE* 118 (1997) 251-58, esp. 251 n.2 for the rest of the lot.

arranged in advance. Was the woman's advice sound? Imouthes' offer of half in bronze coin and half in wine (10–14) would be preferable to a loan of 1,000 drachmas in coin from Hephaestion's point of view on any of three conditions: (1) there is a shortage of currency so that he could not be certain of raising enough capital to pay back the loan; (2) the duration of the loan exceeded 25 months so that (assuming the standard rate of interest of 2% monthly on cash loans)<sup>6</sup> the 50% compensation usual for loans in kind<sup>7</sup> would have time to drop to the level of the interest accrued on the cash portion of the loan; or (3) Hephaestion expects the price of wine to drop enough to undercut the accrued interest on the cash portion of the loan. The small amount of the loan renders the latter two scenarios unlikely. The duration of the loan is unknown, but, as with other loans that are ἄτοκος or ἄτοκί it was probably short-term. Had Hephaestion's wife agreed to the first transaction, he would have owed 25% (50% for the 500 drachmas in wine) plus the accrued interest on the cash. As the latter rate is unstated, we may assume that it was the standard 2% monthly. So for a brief loan of, let us say, two months, Hephaestion would have owed just under 30% in 'interest'.

Under the terms of the second arrangement, it appears that Hephaestion will borrow the 200 drachmas ἄτοκί, this is, with the interest already reckoned with the sum (Pestman [*supra* n.7]), as offered by Imouthes (19f), plus an additional 100 drachmas at 20% interest (20 drachmas interest on the remaining 100). Only the duration of the loan and the amount of interest included with the ἄτοκί portion would tell us for sure whether the second arrangement was financially more advantageous to Hephaestion, but whether or not the numbers were better, the risks were less. It was probably safer for Hephaestion to convert goods to cash than to bet on the wine market and risk losing money in order to convert precious cash to wine. Hephaestion's wife gave good advice. Once again nothing in the

<sup>6</sup> H.-A. Rupprecht, *Untersuchungen zum Darlehen im Recht der graeco-ägyptischen Papyri der Ptolemäerzeit* (= *MünchBeitr* 51 [Munich 1967]) 73–90, esp. 74 n.7. See also his *Kleine Einführung in die Papyruskunde* (Darmstadt 1994) 118–21. Cf. also *CPR* XVIII 14, 16, 24, with introduction 45f.

<sup>7</sup> P. Pestman, "Loans Bearing No Interest?" *JJurP* 16–17 (1971) 7–29, esp. 9–14; N. Lewis, "The Meaning of ὄν ἡμιολία and Kindred Expressions in Loan Contracts," *TAPA* 76 (1945) 126–39; *P.Dion.* p.183.

text indicates explicitly that Hephaestion insults his own wife in calling her ἡ ἄνθρωπος. It is possible, however, that he is trying to salvage his reputation as an agreeable person with his creditor Imouthes, by putting the blame for the failed initial transaction on 'the old lady', as if saying, 'If it were up to *me* ....' Again, this is speculation.

ἡ ἄνθρωπος in the unique piece of epigraphic evidence is unfortunately equivocal. In all three documents on papyrus, on the other hand, one feature stands out: in each case ἡ ἄνθρωπος indicates a previously mentioned woman. Diophanes applies it to the petitioner Nicaea, in his subscripton to her petition (*P.Entreux*. 22.14). Asclepiades calls his wife γυνή in his first preserved mention of her (*P.Hels.* I 1.18f; note the lacuna at line 11, where the editor restores ἡ γυνή μου), and then ἡ ἄνθρωπος (22) when he refers to her again. In the same way Hephaestion first calls his wife γυνή (7) and then ἡ ἄνθρωπος (17). This consistency in all three instances raises an important question: did the pejorative or diminutive connotation of ἡ ἄνθρωπος exist in the Greek papyri in the third and second centuries B.C.? Unfortunately a simple answer is not yet forthcoming. We may hope only that further epigraphic and papyrological discoveries will settle question.

In the documentary evidence, in contrast to the literary, the pejorative connotations of ἡ ἄνθρωπος appear to be so mild as to raise the possibility that ἡ ἄνθρωπος is synonymous with ἡ γυνή, simply meaning wife (*P.Hels.* I 1; *P.Duk. inv.* 315) or woman (*P.Entreux*. 22; *IG XI.2* 161).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See now P. Sarischouli, "Ἄνθρωπος in Papyri of the Byzantine Period (late 3rd–mid 7th c.)," in *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses II* (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1997) 889–901, who argues that in the papyri of the Byzantine period ἄνθρωπος frequently means simply "man" or "person."