

Food is an essential part of the human experience. In the ancient Greek world, food is not only part of the culinary sphere, but is also important in medical therapies (Garnsey 1999; Wilkins and Hill 2006). Throughout the Hippocratic corpus, specific diets are prescribed to individuals based on factors, such as gender, age, time of year, and medical conditions (Hp. *Reg.* I-III). In addition, the Hippocratic authors also prescribe specific food items as regimens for the treatment of diseases. These treatments often contain such long lists of food items that they seem to be culinary recipes. While these recipes may appear to be random collections of ingredients, the choices of the food items are deliberate. In examining recipes to enhance a woman's ability to conceive, two foods—pomegranate and pennyroyal—are repeated in many of the prescribed recipes. These foods are understood to possess natural properties that can counteract the physical causes of infertility. In addition, they have mythological and symbolic associations to Demeter and fertility.

In this paper, I will examine how pomegranate and pennyroyal are prescribed to aid conception in the Hippocratic *Diseases of Women I* (Hp. *Mul.* 10-24, 75). In order to understand the inclusion and repetition of these food items, I will first discuss the ancient Greek understanding of the human body and, in particular, the nature of the female body. The human body is thought to contain four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile) and four types of constitutions (hot, cold, wet, dry) (Lloyd 1964). Health occurs when all of these aspects are balanced within the body. Excesses or deficits in any of them can lead to disease and unhealthy conditions, such as infertility (Hanson 1990; King 1995). According to *Diseases of Women I*, many different problems within the reproductive system can lead to difficulty in conceiving a child. Problems with the consistency of the menses or with conditions of the cervix and uterus are the main reasons for infertility. These particular problems are attributed to an imbalance in the humors or one's bodily constitution.

After I have discussed the causes of infertility in relation to the nature of women, I will examine the role of pomegranate and pennyroyal in the different recipes that are designed to promote conception by restoring the proper balance of a woman's body. These foods may be utilized in many different ways, including oral consumption, baths, applications to the genitals (both internally and externally), and fumigations. Despite these different uses and their combination with other food items, pomegranate and pennyroyal have natural properties to counteract bodily imbalances that can cause problems with conception. They also have symbolic meanings regarding fertility and sexuality (Totelin 2009). Most notably, these foods are connected to the mythology of Demeter. Demeter's association with fertility and these foods imparts additional authority to these medical recipes. Therefore, pomegranate and pennyroyal are integral to medical treatments that alter a woman's constitution and enhance fertility because of both their perceived natural properties and their symbolic associations with fertility and Demeter.