Introduction
Identifying the Hippocratic

Lesley Dean-Jones

Since 1972, scholars interested in the works collected under the name Hippocrates in the Corpus Hippocraticum (CH) have met triennially in the Colloque Hippocratique/Hippocratic Colloquium to discuss various issues relevant to the CH. In 2008 the Colloque was held at The University of Texas at Austin and the theme was ‘What is Hippocratic about the Hippocratics?’ All the papers collected in this volume were presented at that meeting and all address in some way or other the question of what led 60–70 medical treatises, clearly written over more than a century, by a number of different authors, from different parts of the Greek world, with different styles, who subscribed to different—sometimes contradictory—medical theories, to be collected under one name. This is not an attempt to locate the works of the original Hippocrates, but to identify what it is that the Hippocratic treatises have in common that caused them to become associated with one another. The first chapter in the collection, that of Philip van der Eijk, in addition to making its own argument, acts as an admirable introduction to the problems of finding any unifying theory, theme or element among all the works in the CH which is not so broad as to be shared with all the medical texts from the same time period which were not included in the CH, so I will not rehearse this material here myself. In this Introduction I confine myself to outlining the argument of each chapter and explaining what I see as the connections between chapters or groups of chapters.

In the first section the chapters deal directly with the formation of the Corpus. In the very first chapter, Philip van der Eijk argues for the ‘dismemberment of the Corpus’ on the grounds that any characteristics which all the texts share are very general ones and can also be found in medical writings outside the Corpus. He argues that continuing to treat the treatises gathered together in the CH as forming some sort of unity, however much the general dissonance within the Corpus is acknowledged, has led to the comparative neglect of other medical material from the same period and hampered our understanding of the medical thought of ancient Greece. One cannot deny that non-Hippocratic medicine of the 5th and 4th c. BCE has received short shrift from scholars, and that more comparisons between this material and the treatises of the CH are profoundly to be wished. One aim of this collection is to provide more varied parameters along which the coherence of the treatises among themselves
and their divergence, if any, from other medical material of the period can be gauged.

Papyrus fragments offer external evidence of the evolution of the CH. Ann Hanson explains in her chapter that the structure, format and content of many unascribed medical fragments are hard to distinguish from those of treatises included in the CH. Although these *adespota* are written in Koine Greek, she argues that dialect alone cannot have been the reason they were excluded from the Corpus, because the papyrus fragments of recognized Hippocratic texts themselves exhibit Attic forms as often as Ionic, as is the case of the papyrus fragments of Herodotus, who, like the Hippocratics, has been transmitted in the manuscript tradition as a highly ionicized author. Many of these *adespota* papyri were copied between Erotian’s edition of roughly 30 Hippocratic treatises in the 1st c. CE and the much larger collections of the Byzantine era and so were possibly available for inclusion in the later collections. While in the case of unrelated *adespota* fragments we cannot tell if they derive from the same treatise, we can identify fragments that belong to one and the same Hippocratic treatise, and of these, fragments of *Aphorisms*, of which we have 7, outnumber those of any other treatise at least 2 to 1. Three of these contain marginal notations, which reflects the fact that many more commentaries were written on the *Aphorisms* than any other treatise. Although we know the names of many of the commentators it is impossible to identify the marginal notations on the papyri as belonging to any one of them specifically. *Aphorisms* was, of course, already identified as a Hippocratic treatise very early in the tradition, so it is not surprising that it should survive as a subject for exegesis into later centuries. But if we flip the causal chain it may be worth investigating whether it was having commentaries written on them that led to the greater survival rate of some treatises over others, regardless of their supposed authorship.

Paul Demont investigates the role Plato may have played in helping to determine which treatises would earn the designation ‘Hippocratic’. He demonstrates that Plato, despite noting differences in medical practice in different geographical locales, acknowledging the development of the medical art over time and apparently reversing himself on the value of dietetics in medicine (all of which can be seen as resulting from the valorization of medicine for the soul over medicine for the body), throughout his dialogues conceives of the medical art as unified around definitions and descriptions that are, for the most part, compatible with the texts of the CH as we have it. The medical τέχνη is usually discussed as the province of unnamed doctors, past and present, but the two times Hippocrates is cited in the Platonic corpus he appears as the paradigm exponent of this art. Several dialogues make it clear that medical writings were widely available to the general public in Plato’s time, but also that it was