Estudios bizantinos 6 (2018) 89-110
Revista de la Sociedad Española de Bizantinística
ISSN: 2014-9999. DOI: 10.1344/EBizantinos2018.6.3

METRODORA'S WORK ON THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND THEIR CURES

Gemma Storti

Department of Classics
450 University Hall, 230 North Oval Mall
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
storti.4@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Abstract

The Florence Manuscript, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. Plut. 75.3, has preserved a collection of medical remedies traditionally attributed to an otherwise unknown female author called Metrodora. In this article, I reinforce the argument that probably only the first part of this text was an original composition, whereas parts two and three are excerpts from other medical authors. Moreover, I propose that Metrodora's text must be read according to three different perspectives: the production of Byzantine medical collections (*syllogai*), the Byzantine hospitals, and the role of women in the medical field in the late antique and Byzantine periods.

Key-words: Metrodora, *Syllogai*, Byzantine hospital, *Xenones*, Female medicine, Cleopatra, Uterus, Alexander of Tralles, Aetius of Amida

Resumen

El manuscrito de Florencia, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. Plut. 75.3, conserva una colección de remedios médicos atribuida tradicionalmente a una escritora, por lo demás desconocida, llamada Metrodora. En este artículo, refuerzo el argumento de que probablemente sólo la primera parte del texto era una composición original, mientras que las partes dos y tres son *excerpta* de otros autores de medicina. Por otra parte, propongo que el texto de Metrodora se lea de acuerdo con tres perspectivas diferentes: la producción de colecciones bizantinas o *syllogai* médicas, los hospitales bizantinos y el papel de las mujeres en el ámbito de la medicina tardoantigua y bizantina.

Metadata: Metrodora, *Syllogai*, Hospitales bizantinos, *Xenones*, Medicina femenina, Cleopatra, Útero, Alejandro de Tralles, Ecio de Amida

METRODORA'S WORK ON THE DISEASES OF WOMEN AND THEIR CURES

Gemma Storti

Codex Florence Manuscript, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Laur. Plut. 75.3, is a miscellany preserving, among others, a Greek text written by an author called Metrodora and entitled *On the Diseases of Women and Their Cures*. Metrodora's work was first transcribed in 1945 by Kouzis, who travelled to Florence, consulted the codex, and took photos to re-consult it later on. Subsequently, Del Guerra consulted the codex at the Laurentian Library and in 1953 published an edition of the text, along with an Italian translation and commentary.[1] Later on, an annotated French translation was published by Congourdeau in 1993.[2] Congourdeau declared that "ce text est une énigme," but little scholarship has been published on it.[3]

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, after briefly summarizing and extending the discussion about the mysterious author and structure of the text, I will suggest further textual connections that have not been identified so far. Following a textual analysis of its sources, I will point to three different ways of interpreting the text which have not yet been considered. These are the production of *syllogai* (Byzantine collections, or anthologies), the milieu of Byzantine hospitals, and the role of women in the medical field in the late antique and Byzantine period. Through these paths, which have only recently been explored by scholars, we may begin to make sense of this otherwise enigmatic text.

The Laurentian codex is the only manuscript preserving Metrodora's work (ff. 4v-33v), whose beginning is signaled by the title ᾽Εκ τῶν Μητροδώρας περὶ τῶν γυναικείων παθῶν τῆς μήτρας. The manuscript, written on thick parchment, displays three

[1] G. Del Guerra, *Il libro di Metrodora sulle malattie delle donne e il ricettario di cosmetica e terapia*, Milano 1953. Del Guerra's publication is not a proper critical edition, since it does not contain a proper critical apparatus.

[2] As for the other works preserved in the codex, only the *Praenotiones Hippocratis* have been studied, notably in the critical edition by J. Jouanna, *Hippocrate, Prognostikon*, Paris 2013.

[3] M.-H. Congourdeau, "Mètrodôra et son œuvre", in E. Patlagean (ed.), *Maladie et société à Byzance*, Spoleto 1993, 57-96: 58. Unless otherwise specified, I use Del Guerra's chapters numeration, which differs from Congourdeau's to some extent. See also E. Rubio Gómez, "Un capitulo de la ginecologia bizantina: la obra de 'Metrodora'", *Actas del IX congreso Español de Estudios Clásicos. VI. Historia y arqueología*, Madrid 1996, 213-218.

Estudios bizantinos 6 (2018) 89-110. ISSN: 2014-9999. DOI: 10.1344/EBizantinos2018.6.3

different hands and is dated to the end of the tenth/beginning of the eleventh centuries.[4] It collects several writings on medical topics, mostly by unknown authors, and can be identified as a *iatrosophion*.[5] Metrodora's work, as the title suggests, focuses primarily on the uterus, but it also contains a section of remedies for the upset stomach and other troubles. In addition, it contains several cosmetic recipes. Therefore, it is a curious mixture of both medical theories and remedies along with cosmetics-related advice. According to Kouzis, this double interest should not startle us. Talking about midwifes who had learned and practiced this side of skillful physicians, and who wrote about medicine themselves, he commented:

> "it is evident that such authoresses not only engaged themselves with and wrote about Midwifery and Gynecology, but also they interested themselves in other necessities of the sexual sphere of woman, as well as taking care of their embellishment."[6]

[4] A.M. Bandini, *Catalogus Codicum Graecorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae […],* Florentiae 1770, vol. 3, cols. 141-142, dated the codex to the twelfth century. However, the more recent dating mentioned above is preferable for two reasons. First, ff. 225r and 256r preserve two later annotations of dates on the margins, namely to the years 1098/99 and 1097, which constitutes a *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript. Second, a palaeographical analysis of the scripts suggests the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries as the most likely period for the production of this codex. For a complete codicological description, see P. Canart – S. Lucà, *Codici greci dell'Italia meridionale*, Roma 2000, 59-60. For the association of this manuscript with Southern Italy and with Calabria in particular, see A.M. Ieraci Bio, "La trasmissione della letteratura medica greca nell'Italia meridionale fra X e XV secolo", in A. Garzya (ed.), *Contributi alla Cultura Greca nell'Italia Meridionale*, Napoli 1989, 133-255: 190, 235-239; A.M. Ieraci Bio, "Testi ginecologici bizantini tra Oriente ed Occidente: 1. Metrodora ed il *Dynameron* di Nicola Mirepso; 2. Una testimonianza italo-greca sulle *Quaestiones medicales* salernitane", in D. Jacquart – A. Paravicini Bagliani (eds.), Firenze 2007, 283-314; S. Lucà, "Testi medici e tecnico-scientifici del Mezzogiorno greco," in G. De Gregorio – M. Galante (eds.), *La produzione scritta tecnico-scientifica nel Medioevo: Libro e documento fra scuole e professioni*, Spoleto 2012, 551-605: 587-588.

[5] As V. Nutton, "Byzantine Medicine, Genres, and the Ravages of Time", in B. Zipser (ed.), *Medical Books in the Byzantine World*, Bologna 2013, 7-18: 10, observes, *iatrosophion* is "a somewhat vague term that can encompass almost anything from a series of prescriptions to a medical compendium." In the case of Metrodora, we are in the presence of a therapeutic compendium dealing with the uterus in the first place, but also with the stomach and breast, alongside cosmetic recipes. For a more detailed description of *iatrosophia*, see A. Touwaide, "Byzantine Hospital Manuals (*Iatrosophia*) as a Source for the Study of Therapeutics", in B. Bowers (ed.), *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice*, Aldershot U.K. 2007, 147-174. An interesting example of therapeutic *iatrosophion* is the work, written in vernacular Greek, by a certain John the Physician, thoroughly studied by B. Zipser, *John the Physician's* Therapeutics, Leiden – Boston 2009.

[6] A.P. Kouzis, "Metrodora's Work on the Feminine Diseases of the Womb according to the Greek Codex 75,3 of the Laurentian Library", *Πρακτικά της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών* 20 (1945) 46-68: 46.

Indeed, women with medical knowledge are found in Greek and Roman literature, whether they are legendary or (at least likely) historical figures.[7] In the case of Metrodora, nothing prevents us from supposing that the author was a woman. Del Guerra rejected the possibility that the name actually referred to a male author –in which case it would have originally been written as Metrodoros and subsequently misspelled by a copyist who transcribed the text. Although Greek and Roman men named Metrodoros did exist and were associated with medical activity, none of them seems to have written about uterine diseases. In addition, a feminine participle used casually at one point in the text indicates that the author had the female hand in mind and may well be a woman.[8] In any event, speculation should not push us too far in toward reconstructing a detailed profile of this author. For example, one scholar described her as follows: "Metrodora, known as Cleopatra Metrodora, lived most probably around the seventh century AD, and according to some, was a contemporary of Soranus of Ephesus (second century AD)."[9] The pairing with the name of Cleopatra is explained by a mention in chapter 53 of the Greek text:

[7] For example, the story of Hagnodice as told by Hyginus, *Fab*. 274 is well known. Since women in Athens were prevented from accessing medical education or practicing medicine themselves, Hagnodice dressed up as a man to practice midwifery and gynecological skills. See H. von Staden, *Herophilus. The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria*, Cambridge – New York – New Rochelle – Melbourne – Sydney 1989, 39-41; Idem, "Experiment and Experience in Hellenistic Medicine", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London* 22 (1975) 178-199; and A.E. Hanson, "Phaenarete: Mother and Maia", in R. Wittern – P. Pellegrin (eds.), *Hippokratische Medizin und antike Philosophie. Verhandlungen des VIII. Internationalen Hippokrates-Kolloquims (Staffelstein, 23-28 September 1993),* Hidelsheim 1996, 159-181; H. King, "Hagnodice", at *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2016: last retrieved: 10/01/2018).

The Homeric poems feature female characters associated with medical knowledge as well, such as Agamedes (*Iliad* 11.741-742) and Helen of Troy (*Odyssey* 4.227-232). Other names show up in the works of Pliny the Elder (*Nat. Hist*. 28.3; 28.81-82; 32.47) and Galen (*De comp. med. sec. locos* 9.13.311; *De comp. med. per genera* 13.840). See K.C. Hurd-Mead, *A History of Women in Medicine from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Haddam 1938; V. Gazzaniga, "Phanostrate, Metrodora, Lais and the Others. Women in the Medical Profession", *Medicina nei secoli* 9.2 (1997) 277-290; E. Samama, *Les Médecins dans le Monde Grec*, Geneva 2003; R. Flemming, "Women, Writing and Medicine in the Classical World", *Classical Quarterly* 57.1 (2007) 257-279; H. King, *Gynecology*. *Midwifery, Obstetrics, and the Rise of Gynaecology*: *The Uses of a Sixteenth-Century Compendium*, Aldershot 2007; V. Boudon-Millot – V. Dasen – B. Maire, *Femmes en médecine. Etudes réunies en l'honneur de D. Gourevitch*, Paris 2008; C. Petrocelli, "La donna nella storia della medicina", *Quaderni della Società Italiana di Farmacologia* 6.23 (2010) 55-59.

[8] Congourdeau, "Mètrodôra et son œuvre" (cit. n. 3), 70, noticed how the verb λαβοῦσα (chap. 23 Del Guerra, 25 Congourdeau) "est au participe féminin, ce qui semble indiquer que cette recette s'adresse à une femme médecin ou sage-femme."

[9] Th. Gregory et al., "Metrodora, an Innovative Gynecologist, Midwife, and Surgeon", *Surgical Innovation* 20.6 (2013) 648-649: 648. Very similar descriptions are adopted by M. Karamanou et al., "Uterine Cancer in the Writings of Byzantine Physicians", *J Buon* 20.4 (2015) 1645-1648 and

> ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΝ ΛΑΜΠΡΟΝ ΠΟΙΗΣΑΙ. Τοῦτο ἐχρήσατο Βερονίκη ἡ βασίλισσα τῆς Αἰγύπτου, ἡ μετακληθεῖσα Κλεοπάτρα. Ἐλάφειον κέρας, βαλοῦσα εἰς χύτραν καινήν, ὤπτησεν εἰς καμίνιον καὶ ἐξελοῦσα εὗρεν κατάλευκον· τοῦτο λειώσασα μετὰ γάλακτος ἐχρίετο. Ἄλλο· Μελάνθιον καὶ τήλην καὶ λινόσπερμον λειώσας σὺν οἴνῳ εὐώδει κατάπλασσε. ('Make the face bright. Berenice, the queen of Egypt called Cleopatra, made use of this. After tossing stag horn in a new pot, she roasted it in the oven, and after taking it out she found it whitened; after triturating this with milk, she anointed herself. Other [recipe]: after grinding fine with sweet-smelling wine black cumin and fenugreek and linseeds, she applied it as a poultice.')[10]

In the jumble of legends and traditions that arose during the centuries after her death, the Egyptian queen Cleopatra was often linked to the preparation of cosmetics and drugs. Her name was also associated with two medical texts: the first was written by a woman named Cleopatra who lived in the Roman imperial period, around the second century AD; the second is Metrodora's *On the Diseases of Women and Their Cures*, attributed to the Egyptian ruler because of the "Berenice who was later renamed Cleopatra" of chapter 53. But we can explain this error. At an unknown time, Metrodora's Greek text was translated into Latin, and medieval scribes who copied the text must have circulated the Latin version –or excerpts from it– under the more alluring name of Cleopatra.[11] The queen's name was subsequently maintained by the German editor Caspar Wolf, who printed the Latin text in 1566.[12] Only at the beginning of the twentieth century was Metrodora's work recognized by scholars as a text distinct from that of Cleopatra "the alchemist" mentioned within it.[13] Unfortunately, it is not possible to date the Latin translation that led to this error. All the codices containing it are now lost, and we have to rely on the printed edition of the sixteenth century.

It is worth noting that famous historical personalities are cited by other authors too in order to validate medical remedies and cosmetic recipes.[14] For example, Aetius of

by G. Tsoucalas – M. Sgantzos, "Aspasia and Cleopatra Metrodora, Two Majestic Female Physician-Surgeons in the Early Byzantine Era", *Journal of Universal Surgery* 4.3 (2016) 55-59.

[10] About plant-based remedies used in antiquity, see L. Giannelli, *Medicina tradizionale mediterranea*, Milano 2006.

[11] For an overview of medical treatises associated with the name of Cleopatra and their possible linkage with Metrodora's work, see Flemming, "Women, Writing and Medicine" (cit. n. 7), 276-278.

[12] C. Wolf, *Gynaeciorum libri*, Basel 1566.

[13] See Congourdeau, "Mètrodôra et son œuvre" (cit. n. 3), 57-58, and M.M. Miles, *Cleopatra*: *A Sphinx Revisited*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2011, 141-142.

[14] I use the term 'remedy' when referring to a set of instructions aimed at curing health-related problems; the term 'recipe' is better applied, in my view, to instructions dealing with cos-

Amida (sixth century) thus introduces a recipe in his *Iatricorum libri* 8.6: Σάπων ᾧ ἐχρήσατο Πελαγία πατρικία πρὸς τὸ λαμπρύναι τὸ πρόσωπον ('soap used by the patrician Pelagia to make the face bright').[15]

Medical authors also tended to hark back to their predecessors' works. The formula 'recipe against the disease *x*, taken from the author *y*' occurs consistently in the majority of medical authors, and it creates a complex system of quotations and traditions. Congourdeau has pointed out that the last part of Metrodora's text is nothing other than a selection of quotations (partly abridged, partly uncut) from the works of the sixth-century medical writer Alexander of Tralles.[16] However, there are a few portions of the text –in its middle section– that can be connected to other authors and have not been fully investigated, as I will show below. The identification of a larger number of authors will give us the opportunity to discuss the literary genre of Metrodora's text and its socio-historical context.

The Greek text of Metrodora can be divided into three parts, namely: 1) chapters 1-31, on uterine diseases and obstetrics, by an author called (or calling him- or herself) "Metrodora"; 2) chapters 32-95, *miscellanea* by several other authors; 3) chapters 96-137, excerpts from Alexander of Tralles.[17]

Let us begin from the last section listed, to see how references to other medical works are incorporated into the collection. Chapters 96-137 consist almost entirely of a selection of Alexander of Tralles' recipes from his works *De febribus* and *Therapeutica*. Some of the recipes are quoted almost verbatim, as the following example can illustrate:

metics-related needs that do not involve sick body-parts requiring to be healed.

[15] For the text of Aetius, I use the critical editions of A. Olivieri, *Aëtii Amideni Libri Medicinales I-IV*, Leipzig 1935, and *Aëtii Amideni Libri Medicinales V-VIII*, Berlin 1950. It is not certain who Pelagia was. According to the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vols. 2 and 3, s.v. "Pelagia", she might be identified with 1) a woman married to a patrician named Aetius, born around 390 AD; 2) an *inlustris femina* who inherited a property in 446, as a constitution issued by Valentinian III records; or 3) a widow who "was given the management of the family estates" and supported her son's religious life, in the mid-sixth century. In any event, these identification are purely hypothetical.

[16] For an introduction to Alexander, see A. Garzya et al., *Medici bizantini*, Torino 2006; J. Scarborough, "The Life and Times of Alexander of Tralles", *Expedition* 39.2 (1997) 51-60. The passages of Alexander's work reproduced in this paper are drawn from the edition by T. Puschmann, *Alexander von Tralles. Original Text und Übersetzung nebst ein einer einleitenden Abhandlung*, vol. 2, Wien 1879. See also T. Puschmann, *Nachträge zur Alexander Trallianus*, Berlin 1886.

[17] Since recognizable quotations only start from chap. 60, it would have been possible to extend the first section to chap. 59. However, the subject of the first 31 chapters is homogeneous, since they deal primarily with uterine issues and feminine diseases, whereas after chap. 31 the text becomes more miscellaneous. For this reason I have divided the text according to the division outlined above.

- Metrodora, chap. 108: ΠΡΟΣ ΕΜΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΩΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΜΑΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΤΕΡΩΝ ΠΟΙΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΕΠΤΟΥΣΙ ΗΠΑΤΙΚΟΙΣ ΒΗΧΙΚΟΙΣ ΕΦ' ΩΝ ΨΥΧΡΟΝ ΤΟ ΑΙΤΙΟΝ. Πεπέρεως Γο γ′, λυβιστικοῦ ἄμμεως ἀνὰ Γο β′, ἐπιθύμου καθαροῦ σπέρματος γλήχωνος ξηρὰς ἀνὰ Γο α′, μέλιτος ἀπηφρισμένου τὸ ἀρκοῦν τινὲς δὲ καὶ σελίνου σπέρματος προσέπλεξαν καὶ πηγάνου Γο ς′. Ἡ δόσις κοχλιάριον ἕν.
- Alexander of Tralles, *Therapeutica*, ed. Puschman (1879, 275): Πρὸς ἐμπνευμάτωσιν τοῦ στομάχου καὶ ἐντέρων ποιοῦν, πρὸς ἀπεπτοῦντας, ἡπατικοὺς, βηχικοὺς καὶ μάλιστ' ἐφ' ὧν ψυχρὸν τὸ αἴτιον. Πεπέρεως οὐγγ. γ′ λιβυστικοῦ ἀνὰ οὐγγ. α s′′ ἄμμεως ἀνὰ οὐγγ. α s′′ ἐν ἄλλῳ ἀνὰ οὐγγ. β′ ἐπιθύμου καθαροῦ σπέρματος. οὐγ. α′ γλήχωνος ξηροῦ οὐγ. α′ μέλιτος ἀπηφρισμένου τὸ ἀρκοῦν. τινὲς δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ σελίνου σπέρματος οὐγ. α′ προσέπλεξαν καὶ πηγάνου σπέρματος οὐγ. s′′. ἡ δόσις κοτύλ. α′.

In other chapters, Alexander's recipes have been copied in an abridged form. In this case, they retain crucial information, but omit further explanations of the disease examined or alternative remedies appended to the main one (see, for example, chaps. 125, 129, 131). In some recipes, the Laurentian codex also omits ingredients that are instead present in Alexander (see, for example, chaps. 106 and 118).

The middle section of Metrodora's text adopts the same principles of faithful reproduction or quotation with variants. Chapters 32-95 are a selection of recipes drawn from various authors, and for some of them it is possible to suggest literary parallels that have not yet been discovered. Specifically:

1. Chapter 60 appears to be nearly identical to a recipe by Aelius Promotus, doctor and writer of the first half of the second century:[18]

Metrodora, chap. 60: ΘΗΡΙΑΚΗ ΑΛΛΗ. Ποιεῖ πρὸς τὰ τῶν θηρίων καὶ ἑρπετῶν δήγματα καὶ πρὸς κωλικοὺς καὶ δυσεντερικούς· καστορίου, στύρακος, ὑοσκυάμου σπέρμα, ὀπίου, μήκωνος, ἀσάρου < α′, μέλιτος ἑφθοῦ τὸ ἀρκοῦν.	Aelius Promotus, *Περὶ τῶν ἰοβόλων θηρίων καὶ δηλητηρίων φαρμάκων*, 10.16-19: ἄλλη θηριακὴ πρὸς τὰς τῶν θηρίων καὶ ἑρπετῶν πληγάς, νύγματα, δήγματα. ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ πρὸς κωλικοὺς καὶ δυσεντερικούς· καστορίου, στύρακος, ὑοσκυάμου σπέρματος, ὀποῦ μήκωνος, ἀσάρου ἀνὰ γο α′, μέλιτος ἑφθοῦ τὸ ἀρκοῦν. ἡ δόσις κυάμου Αἰγυπτίου τὸ μέγεθος.

[18] Quotes from Aelius Promotus are taken from the critical edition of S. Ihm, *Der Traktat περὶ τῶν ἰοβόλων θηρίων καὶ δηλητηρίων φαρμάκων des sog. Aelius Promotus*, Wiesbaden 1995. A more recent edition of the text alongside an Italian translation is found in D. Crismani, *Elio Promoto Alessandrino, Manuale della Salute (Dynameron)*, Alessandria 2002.

2. Chapter 61 seems to partly come from Aelius Promotus, though the caption claims that the recipe belongs to Andromachus. The text also resembles remedies prescribed by Aetius of Amida, making it a composite entry with diverse sources:

Metrodora, chap. 61.1-7:	Aelius Promotus, *Περὶ τῶν ἰοβ.*, 10.20-27:
ΑΝΔΡΟΜΑΧΟΥ. Θηριακὴ πρὸς τὰς τῶν θανασίμων φαρμάκων καὶ πρὸς ἀσπιδοδήκτους καὶ ἐχεοδήκτους καὶ σκορπιοπλήκτους καὶ φαλαγγίων. Ἴρεως, ὀποπάνακος, λιβανωτίδος ῥίζης ὀπίου, ζιγγιβέρεως ἀνὰ Γο δ′, ἀριστολοχίας Γο Θ′, πηγάνου ἀγρίου Γο ς′, κυμίνου < γ′, ζιγγιβέρεως, καστορίου, ἑρπύλλου ἀνὰ Γο γ′, ἀλεύρου ὀροβίου Γο ις′, μέλιτος τὸ ἀρκοῦν.	ἄλλη ἰσοδυναμοῦσα τῇ θηριακῇ πρὸς τὰ ἰοβόλα τῶν θηρίων καὶ τὰ θανάσιμα τῶν φαρμάκων, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς ἀσπιδοδήκτους καὶ σκορπίων πληγὰς καὶ φαλαγγίων· ἴρεως, ὀποπάνακος, λιβανωτίδος ῥίζης, ὀπίου, ζιγγίβεριν ἀνὰ < δ′, ἀριστολόχης < ε′, πηγάνου ἀγρίου σπέρμα < ς′, κυμίνου Θηβαϊκοῦ < γ′, σμύρνης < γ′, καστορίου < γ′, ἑρπύλου < γ′, ἀλεύρου ὀροβίνου < ι′ ἀνάπλαττε οἴνῳ Χίῳ καὶ ποίει τροχίσκους τριωβόλους καὶ πάρεχε σὺν οἴνῳ· εἰ δὲ βούλει, μετὰ μέλιτος μίξας ποίει ἀντίδοτον.

Metrodora, chap. 61.7-30:	Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum liber* 1.38:
Θερμαίνει καὶ ξηραίνει κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τάξιν· ἐστὶ δὲ λεπτομερὴς καὶ διὰ ταῦτα διαφορητικὴ καὶ ἀραιωτική. Εἰ μὴ οὖν εἴη χλωρόν, ἐναφεψεῖν αὐτὸ δεῖ τῷ ἐλαίῳ, ἐν ᾧ βραχὲν τὸ ἄνθος ἡλιώθη. Εἰ δὲ ξηρὸν εἴη, ὄξει ὀλίγῳ προνοτισθὲν ἔπειτα ἐψόμενον σὺν τῷ ἐλαίῳ ἐπιτήδειον γίνεται. Ἐφ' ὧν ὁπότε τὸ ἔλαιον ἡ ὕλη πέπαυται τοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν διαφορεῖ καὶ ἑτέραν οὐκ ἐπισπᾶται, οὗπερ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων συντετύχηκεν φαρμάκων. Νεχεψῶ δὲ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος παρακελεύεται αὐτὸ τὸ ἄνθος τῆς χαμαιμήλου καθαρὸν ἀκμαιότατον συλλέγειν καὶ κόπτειν ἐν ὅλμῳ, ἔπειτα λύειν εὖ μάλα ἐν θυΐᾳ καὶ ἀναπλάττειν τροχίσκους συμμέτρους καὶ ξηραίνειν ἐν σκιᾷ ἀκριβέστατα καὶ ἀποτίθεσθαι. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας λειώσαντα τροχίσκον ἕνα καὶ ἐπιβάλλοντα ἐλαίου πρωτείου τὸ ἀρκοῦν, χρίειν τὸ πᾶν σῶμα ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς μέχρι ποδῶν, ἐπὶ τῶν πυρεσσόντων πάντων καὶ θάλπειν τὸ σῶμα σκέπῃ, κινηθήσεται γὰρ ὁ ἱδρῶς χρηστός φησιν ἐπὶ τῶν σωθησομένων καὶ ἀπαλλαγήσονται τοῦ πυρετοῦ καὶ πεπείραται τοῦτο ἐπὶ πλείστων καὶ ἁρμόδιόν ἐστι μάλιστα ἐν ὁδοιπορίαις ἔχειν τοῦτο ἁρμόδιόν ἐστι μάλιστα ἐν ὁδοιπορίαις ἔχειν τοῦτο διὰ τὸ εὐμετακόμιστον [εἶναι]· παρακελεύεται δὲ καὶ ποτίζειν τοῦ τροχίσκου τοὺς πυρέσσοντας· ὅσον ἀνὰ < α′, μεθ' ὕδατος θερμοῦ.	Ἀνθεμὶς ἢ χαμαίμηλον θερμαίνει καὶ ξηραίνει κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τάξιν· ἐστὶ δὲ λεπτομερὴς καὶ διὰ ταῦτα καὶ διαφορητικὴ καὶ ἀραιωτικὴ καὶ χαλαστικὴ τὴν δύναμίν ἐστι. εἰ μὲν οὖν εἴη χλωρόν, ἐναφεψεῖν αὐτὸ δεῖ τῷ ἐλαίῳ, μὴ παρόντος δηλονότι τοῦ χαμαιμηλίνου ἐλαίου ἐν ᾧ βραχὲν τὸ ἄνθος ἡλιώθη. εἰ δὲ ξηρὸν εἴη, ὄξει ὀλίγῳ προνοτισθέν, ἔπειτα ἐψόμενον σὺν τῷ ἐλαίῳ, ἐπιτήδειον γίγνεται ἐφ' ὧν οὔπω τέλεον ἡ ὕλη πέπαυται τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀναφορᾶς· τὴν γὰρ οὖσαν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διαφορεῖ καὶ ἑτέραν οὐκ ἐπισπᾶται, ὅπερ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων συντετύχηκε φαρμάκων. Νεχεψὼ δὲ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος παρακελεύεται αὐτὸ τὸ ἄνθος καθαρὸν τοῦ χαμαιμήλου ἀκμαιότατον συλλέγειν καὶ κόπτειν ἐν ὅλμῳ, ἔπειτα λειοῦν εὖ μάλα ἐν θυίᾳ, καὶ ἀναπλάττειν τροχίσκους συμμέτρους καὶ ξηραίνειν ἐν σκιᾷ ἀκριβέστατα καὶ ἀποτίθεσθαι. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας λειώσαντα τροχίσκον ἕνα καὶ ἐπιβαλόντα ἐλαίου πρωτείου τὸ ἀρκοῦν, χρίειν τὸ πᾶν σῶμα ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς μέχρι ποδῶν ἐπὶ τῶν πυρεττόντων πάντων καὶ θάλπειν σκέπῃ. κινηθήσεται γὰρ ἱδρὼς χρηστός, φησί, ἐπὶ τῶν σωθησομένων καὶ ἀπαλλαγήσονται τοῦ πυρετοῦ. καὶ πεπείραται τοῦτο ἐπὶ πλείστων καὶ ἁρμόδιόν ἐστι μάλιστα ἐν ὁδοιπορίαις ἔχειν τοῦτο διὰ τὸ εὐμετακόμιστον. παρακελεύεται δὲ καὶ ποτίζειν τούτου τροχίσκους τοὺς πυρέττοντας ὅσον < β μεθ' ὕδατος θερμοῦ.

Metrodora, chap. 61.30-33:	Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum liber* 1.344:
Ἄλλο· Τῶν μὲν ῥόδων ἡ δύναμις ἐξ ὑδατώδους καὶ θερμῆς σύγκειται δυνάμεως, ἐκ δύο ποιοτήτων ἀναμεμιγμένης πικρᾶς καὶ στυφούσης, διὰ τοῦτ᾽ ἔστι καὶ εὐστόμαχα γῆς ἔντερα.	Ῥόδα. Ῥόδων ἡ δύναμις ἐξ ὑδατώδους θερμῆς ἀναμεμιγμένης δύο ποιότησιν ἑτέραις, τῇ τε στυφούσῃ καὶ τῇ πικρᾷ, σύγκειται. τὸ δὲ ἄνθος αὐτῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον τῶν ῥόδων στυπτικόν ἐστι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ξηραντικόν.

Metrodora, chap. 61.33-41:	Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum liber* 1.234.19-23:
Ἄλλο· Μεγάλως δὲ πεπίστευται ἡ ῥίζα τῆς κυκλαμίνου· καθαίρει ἰκτερικοὺς καὶ οἷς ὑποχύσεις χολῆς εἰς ὅλον τὸ σῶμα περίκειται, δίδονται δὲ ἀνὰ Γο β′, ἢ καὶ πρὸς δύναμιν. Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἔρρινον κεφαλῆς θαυμαστόν, τῆς μὲν ῥίζης ἀνὰ Γο α′, καρυοφύλλου δὲ κόκκους Κγ′· καὶ ἐμφυσωμένη διὰ μυκτήρων καθαίρει καλῶς τοὺς παχεῖς καὶ γλίσχρους χυμούς, ὅθεν ἰᾶται τὰς χρονίας κεφαλαλγίας.	κοπτομένη δὲ ξηρὰ καὶ σηθομένη λεπτοτάτῳ κοσκίνῳ μετὰ καρυοφύλλου κόκκοι κα, ὡς εἶναι τῆς μὲν ῥίζης Γο α, τοῦ καρυοφύλλου δὲ κόκκους κα, καὶ ἐμφυσωμένη διὰ μυκτήρων καθαίρει ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς παχεῖς καὶ γλίσχρους χυμούς, ὅθεν ἰᾶται τὰς χρονίας κεφαλαλγίας καὶ τοὺς ἐπιληπτικοὺς ὀνίνησι μεγάλως.

3. Chapter 64 closely resembles a recipe by Aetius of Amida. The ἱερὰ βοτάνη ("sacred herb"), a plant also known as περιστερεών, is also found in a remedy by Galen, from which Aetius might have derived it:[19]

Metrodora, chap. 64:	Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum liber* 1.318.1-10:	Galen, *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, 12.565.10-15:
ΠΕΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΙΕΡΑΣ ΒΟΤΑΝΗΣ. Λέγει δὲ Ἀρχιγένης ὅτι ἑψομένη σὺν ἐλαίῳ ἡ βοτάνη αὕτη ἰᾶται πᾶσαν χρονίαν κεφαλαλγίαν καὶ τὰς ῥεούσας τρίχας ἐπέχει. Τὸ δὲ ἀφέψημα τῆς ῥίζης διακρατούμενον ὀδονταλγίαν παύει καὶ τὰ ἐν στόματι ἕλκη ἰᾶται· πρὸς ἐλεφαντιῶντας δίδου ὁμοίως τὸ ἀφέψημα.	Περιστερεὼν ὀρθός. Ταύτην ἱερὰν βοτάνην καλοῦσι· κεφαλαλγίαν δὲ ἄκρως ἀπαλλάσσει, φησὶν Ἀρχιγένης, στεφανουμένη καὶ λεῖα μετ᾽ ὄξους καὶ ῥοδίνου ἐπιχριομένη. καὶ ἑψομένη δὲ ἐν ἐλαίῳ καὶ ἐμβρεχομένης τῆς κεφαλῆς ἰᾶται πᾶσαν χρονίαν κεφαλαλγίαν καὶ τὰς ῥεούσας τρίχας ἐπέχει. τὸ δὲ ἀφέψημα τῆς ῥίζης διακρατούμενον θερμὸν ἐν τῷ στόματι <καὶ> ὀδονταλγίας παύει, καὶ κινουμένους ὀδόντας κρατύνει καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ στόματι ἕλκη ἰᾶται. πρὸς δὲ κολικοὺς τὴν ῥίζαν ἁδρομερῶς κόψας ἕψε μεθ᾽ ὕδατος ἕως εἰς τὸ ἥμισυ καὶ δίδου πίνειν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ε· ἐστὶ γὰρ διὰ πείρας. πρὸς δὲ λιθιῶντας καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐλεφαντιάσεως δίδου ὁμοίως πίνειν τὸ ἀφέψημα μετὰ μέλιτος.	καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν περιστερεῶνα καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν, εἰ ἀφεψήσας τῷ ἐλαίῳ ἐμβρέχοις τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἰάσῃ πᾶσαν κεφαλαλγίαν χρονίαν ἐπὶ ψύξει γινομένην ἢ ὑπὸ παχέων χυμῶν. τὰ μέγιστα δὲ ὠφελοῦσι καὶ οἱ ὑπὸ τὰς ὑδρίας ὄνοι σὺν τῷ ἐλαίῳ ἑψόμενοι.

[19] I use the critical edition of C.G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, vols. 12-13, Leipzig 1827.

4. Chapter 86 can be compared to a remedy for horses contained in the *Corpus Hippiatricorum Graecorum*. The association with a veterinary text might appear surprising, but "it should not be forgotten that several diseases are common to man and to horse and are often treated in the same way."[20]

Metrodora, chap. 86:	*Hippiatrica Cantabrigiensia*, 10.13:[21]
ΧΡΙΣΜΑΤΑ ΕΝΤΑΤΙΚΟΝ ΧΡΙΣΜΑ. Εὐφορβίου, εὐζώμου σπέρμα, πεπέρεως, σατυρίου ἀνὰ Γρα ς′, ὀποβαλσάμου, δαφνίνου ἀνὰ < δ′, χρῶ κατὰ τῆς ὀσφύος, ἤτρου καὶ τοῖς μορίοις. Ἄλλο· Εὐζώμου σπέρμα Γρα β′, πεπέρεως Γρα α′, λειώσας μετ' οἴνου, πότιζε. Ἄλλο· Ἀνήθου σπέρμα ὥριμον < α′, σὺν οἴνῳ λειοτριβήσας, δὸς πιεῖν.	Ἐντατικὸν ὥστε ἵππον κήλωνα πολλὰ ὀχεύειν. Οὐρὰν ἐλάφου καύσας κτλ. ἢ ἐλαίου παλαιοτάτου ϡ α′, σκώληκας τιθυμάλλων ϛ′. τούτους δὲ συνάγειν ἐν τῷ θέρει, ὅταν ἡ βοτάνη ἀκμάζει καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐλαίῳ ἐμβάλλειν καὶ ἐᾶν ἡμέρας ἑπτά. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς χρείας τρῖβε τῷ ἐλαίῳ τὴν ὀσφῦν καὶ τοὺς ὄρχεις. τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ ποιοῦσι καὶ αἱ τῆς πίτυος κάμπαι. ἢ μανδραγόρου ἄρρενος μῆλα τρίψας καὶ μίξας μετὰ μέλιτος καὶ οἴνου ἐγχυμάτιζε. καὶ ἠρυγγίου δὲ τὸ μῆλον φορούμενον ὠφελεῖ. ἢ εὐζώμου σπέρμα ἑξαγ. τὸ <′, πεπέρεως κερατ. ς′ λειώσας μετὰ οἴνου ἐγχυμάτιζε. ἢ ἀνήθου σπέρμα ὥριμον κερατ. ιη′ σὺν οἴνῳ λειοτριβήσας ἐγχυμάτιζε. ἢ σκίγκου οὐρᾶς, ζιγγιβέρεως, καρδάμου σπέρμα, εὐζώμου σπέρμα, πυρέθρου ἀνὰ ἑξαγ. α <′, πέπερι, καρυόφυλλον ἀνὰ κερατ. ιη′. ἡ τελεία δόσις ἑξαγ. β′ κερατ. ς′, ἄλλοις ἑξαγ. α <′, τὸ δὲ ἔλαττον κερατ. ιη′

5. Chapter 91 mentions a certain Ἀλέξανδρος, whom it would be tempting to identify as Alexander of Tralles. However, the only matching parallel seems to be Aetius of Amida:

Metrodora, chap. 91:	Aetius of Amida, *Iatricorum libri*, 3.136.49-53:
ΕΠΟΜΦΑΛΙΟΝ ΕΜΒΡΥΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΜΜΗΝΑ ΚΑΤΑΓΟΝ ΕΠΙΤΙΘΕΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΠΙ ΤΟΥ ΟΜΦΑΛΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΙΛΙΑΝ ΚΕΝΟΥΝ ΕΜΕΤΟΝ ΤΕ ΠΟΙΟΥΝ ΕΑΝ ΕΠΙ ΤΟΥ ΣΤΟΜΑΧΟΥ ΤΕΘΗΙ. Ἐλατηρίου < γ′, κολοκυνθίδος ἐντεριώνης < γ′, σκαμμωνίας < α′, λαθυρίδων κεκαθαρμένων < α′, τιθυμάλλου ὀποῦ < α′, λεπίδος χαλκοῦ < α′, σικύου ἀγρίου ῥίζης < α′, λαίανε μετ' ἐλαίου ἁλῶν ἔχοντος καὶ χρῶ. Ἐγὼ δὲ ἄλειμμα αὐτὸ ἐσκεψάμην ποιῆσαι καθάπερ ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐχρῆτο ἐν κρατίστοις· ἤλειφε γὰρ τὴν κοιλίαν τοῖς ξηρὰς ἔχουσι γαστέρας, καὶ ἐμαλάττοντο αὐτῇ θαυμαστῶς.	Ἄλλο. Ἐλατηρίου < γ κολοκυνθίδος < α σκαμμωνίας λεπίδος χαλκοῦ σικύου ἀγρίου ῥίζης ἀνὰ < α λαθυρίδων ἢ ἀντ' αὐτῶν τιθυμάλλου ὀπτοῦ κόψας σήσας λέαινε μετ' ἐλαίου ἁλῶν πλεῖστον ἔχοντος καὶ σφαῖραν ἐρίαν ποιήσας μεγάλην καὶ δεύσας τῷ φαρμάκῳ ἐπιτίθει ὅπου βούλῃ, λέγω δὴ ἢ τῷ ἐπομφάλῳ ἢ τῷ ὑπογαστρίῳ καὶ ὀσφύι.

[20] S. Lazaris, "Learning and memorising hippiatric knowledge in Late Antiquity and in Byzantium", in B. Andenmatten et al. (eds.), *Le cheval dans la culture médiévale*, Firenze 2015, 269-294: 275.

[21] I use the critical edition of K. Hoppe – E. Oder, *Hippiatrica Cantabrigiensia*, Leipzig 1927.

6. Chapter 94, despite the attribution to Galen, which cannot be confirmed, is similar to a medical recipe by Paul of Aegina (seventh century AD):[22]

Metrodora, chap. 94:	Paul of Aegina, *Epitomae medicae libri*, 7.17.29:
ΕΜΠΛΑΣΤΡΟΣ Η ΦΟΙΝΙΚΙΝΗ Η ΓΑΛΗΝΟΥ. Λιθαργύρου λελειωμένης λιτ. γ′, χαλκίτης. Γο δ′, ὀξυγγίου παλαιοῦ ἀνάλου ἐκτετηγμένου λιτ. β′, ἐλαίου παλαιοῦ λιτ. γ′. Πρῶτον ὀλίγον ἐλαίου φῦραι τὴν χαλκῖτιν, εἶτα μετὰ λιθαργύρου μίξας ὅλον τὸ ἔλαιον ἐπίχεε τὸ ὀξύγγιον ἐκτετηγμένον εἰς αὐτὸ καὶ βαλὼν εἰς κακάβην ἕψε, μαλθακῷ πυρί, κινῶν σπάθῃ φοινικίνῃ	Ἡ φοινικίνη. Ὀξυγγίου παλαιοῦ λι. β, ἐλαίου παλαιοῦ λι. γ, λιθαργύρου λι. γ, χαλκίτεως ὠμῆς Γο ς· πρῶτον μὲν ἡ χαλκῖτις μετὰ τοῦ ἐλαίου προλειούσθω εἰς ἰγδίον [κάλλιον δέ, εἰ καὶ ἐν ἡλίῳ], μετὰ δὲ τὸ γλοιῶδες γενέσθαι καὶ τὴν λιθάργυρον προλειωθεῖσαν ἐπεμβάλλειν, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ τὸ στέαρ, καὶ μετὰ τὸ καλῶς λειωθῆναι ἕψει ἐπὶ μαλθακοῦ πυρὸς ἕως ἀμολύντου σπαθίζων ταῖς τῶν φοινίκων ῥάβδοις

7. Chapters 32-95 also mention names such as Democrates and Nechepso, but it is not possible to identify any relevant source regarding them. Moreover, misattributions are very likely to have entered in the tradition of such medical compilations.[23]

Turning now to chapters 1-31, they do not seem to display any close textual relations with other medical works. Nevertheless, because of their homogeneous character, they can be seen as a unitary group of recipes.[24] Therefore, Congourdeau is possibly correct in arguing that, if a certain Metrodora did exist, only the first part of the Greek text we possess can properly be attributed to her. Since it is not possible to reconstruct her profile besides her name, at least three hypotheses can be formulated about such an author. First, an individual named Metrodora wrote a medical work whose *excerpta* (as the title ᾽Εκ τῶν Μητροδώρας suggests) were included by an anonymous epitomist in a broader collection of medical works. Second, Metrodora was both the author of a medical work (excerpted as the first part of the work under discussion here, down to chap. 31) *and* of the collection of medical recipes that follows it. In this scenario, she would have placed a selection of her own remedies at the beginning of the collection and appended to them recipes drawn from other authors. Third, 'Metrodora' might be viewed as a pseudonym (etymologically it means 'gift of the uterus'), or even as the title of a literary work, subsequently taken as the name of an otherwise unknown writer.[25]

[22] I use the critical edition of J.L. Heiberg, *Paulus Aegineta*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1924.

[23] On the other hand, it is possible that Metrodora's work accurately quoted texts of Galen, Democrates, Nechepso, etc. which are now lost. However, misattribution appears to be a likely hypothesis, since it was a means to connect newly written works with a longer, respected tradition of medical literature. This way, through authoritative (though sometimes incorrect) references to other authors, the new texts became more trustworthy.

[24] See n. 12.

[25] Such a misreading of names also occurred with literary works of different kind. For example, a tenth-century anthology of *gnomai* was attributed to an unknown monk called Anto-

We are unlikely to discover any more facts about the date and identity of the author of the text or the scholar who made the collection (if they were not the same person). As for chronology, the Florence codex dates to the end of the tenth/beginning of the eleventh century, and consequently constitutes a *terminus ante quem* for Metrodora. The *terminus a quo* is, as yet, indeterminate. The text quotes, among other authors, Alexander, whom Kouzis and Del Guerra correctly thought was Alexander of Tralles, of the sixth century AD. Because of this reference, they proposed a date in the sixth century for Metrodora's text in its entirety. But this would only be a *terminus post quem*.

Congourdeau is of a different opinion:

> "Le *terminus a quo* avancé par l'éditeur ne peut être retenu puisqu'il repose sur des citations d'Alexandre de Tralles;[26] or il apparaît incontestable que ce texte est composé de diverses parties, et que les citations de l'auteur médical du VI[e] s. ont manifestement été rajoutées par le compilateur."[27]

In other words, the citation of Alexander cannot be used to date the first part of the text, the only one that we can possibly attribute to Metrodora. As it seems, the manuscript itself provides the only reliable date. However, dating is not the only or the best way to contextualize a text or interpret it against its cultural background. Our understanding of this text can be enhanced if we situate it at the nexus of three specific aspects of late antique and Byzantine culture, namely: 1) the textual production of *syllogai*; 2) the socio-historical milieu and textual needs of the Byzantine hospitals; and 3) women's role in the medical profession in Byzantium. This way, the textual nature, social-practical function, and gender aspects of "Metrodora" are in fact appreciated better.

Starting with the first, Metrodora's work is a miscellaneous collection, and it fits well with the creation of collections of excerpts that was typical of Byzantine written culture. A new approach to such works has been proposed by Paolo Odorico, who criticizes the use of the term 'encyclopedism' to label the production of literary or technical works containing excerpta from earlier authors. The assembly of these "encyclopedic" works, in the view of Dain and Lemerle, would stem from a conservative attitude and would lack any creative purposes.[28] Odorico observes that these collections serve bibliographical

nios Melissa. In reality, 'Melissa' was most likely the title of the collection and was interpreted as a personal name, because of the will to associate books with authors. See P. Odorico, "La cultura della *Sylloge*. Il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. Le tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83.1 (1990) 1-21: 13 and n. 44.

[26] The editor Congourdeau refers to is Kouzis, "Metrodora's Work" (cit. n. 6).

[27] Congourdeau, "Mètrodôra et son œuvre" (cit. n. 3), 58-59.

[28] For further detail, see Odorico, "La cultura della *Sylloge*" (cit. n. 25).

and compilatory purposes, in that they represent a specialized *biblioteca* in which selected passages are arranged in a way that makes them readily available: "si tratta in definitiva di un museo letterario, di una collezione."[29] The Greek word used in the Byzantine sources to refer to such collections is συλλογή.

This "cultura della silloge", as Odorico described it, grew in particular at the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.[30] Assembling texts and excerpts so that they could be easily accessed satisfied the need for a summarized, handy knowledge organized according to thematic principles. Scholars who were experts in particular fields combed through their accumulated literature and prepared compilations of what they took to be the most useful parts. The era of Constantine VII saw this done regarding historiography, agriculture, military science, classical studies, and other fields, including medicine.[31] With regard to Metrodora, this work fits well in the group of collections of medical excerpta. The question arises as to what context such a *sylloge* might be placed in.

I propose that the collection preserved by the Laurentian codex might well have been associated with Byzantine hospitals (*xenones*). Before expanding on this idea in more detail, it is important to consider the current state of scholarship.

Scholarly discussion on the presence, development, and functions of hospitals in the Byzantine society has intensified since the publication of Timothy Miller's book *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* in 1985. Miller argued in favor of "the superiority of Byzantine hospitals over any institutional health care available in the Latin West."[32] The model for his study was the hospital attached to the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople, founded in 1136 by the emperor John II Komnenos. A detailed *typikon* regulated the management of the Pantokrator Xenon in terms of patient care, staff organization, and infirmary equipment.[33] The overall picture given by such a chart suggests a greater degree of similarity to modern hospitals than previous scholars had thought.

Miller's work caused quite a stir among historians of medicine, and to some of them it sounded "too good to be true."[34] It received criticism for relying excessively on the *typ-*

[29] Odorico, "La cultura della *Sylloge*" (cit. n. 25), 5.

[30] Odorico, "La cultura della *Sylloge*" (cit. n. 25), 12.

[31] See P. van Deun – C. Macé, *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Leuven, 6-8 May 2009*, Leuven – Paris – Walpole 2011; A. Hohlweg, "Medizinischer 'Enzyklopädismus' und das ΠΟΝΗΜΑ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΟΝ des Michael Psellos", *BZ* 81 (1988) 39-49.

[32] T.S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, Baltimore – London 1997², xiii.

[33] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 12-29.

[34] V. Nutton, "Essay Review" [review of *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, by. T.S Miller], *Medical History*, 30.2 (1986) 218-221: 218.

ikon for the Pantokrator Xenon, which was considered to represent a unique institution, instead of one among others.[35] Some also maintained that the *typikon* was not conceived as an actual set of rules to be implemented, but rather as a merely theoretical, even utopian project.[36]

To such objections Miller replied in the preface to his book's second edition, issued in 1997. He restated that the Pantokrator Xenon was not an exception, "nor did it hold the first place in prestige among Constantinopolitan hospitals […]. Two hospitals which it surely did not surpass were the ancient Sampson and the more recent Mangana."[37] He provided evidence from primary sources supporting such a view and additional examples of *typika* with information on *xenones*.[38] By so doing, Miller offered a more thorough and compelling overview of the Byzantine hospital as an institution that provided medical services to the inhabitants of Constantinople and would prove long-lasting.[39] Although

[35] See P. Horden, "The Byzantine Welfare State: Image and Reality", *The Society for the Social History of Medicine* 37 (1985) 7-10; C. Cupane – E. Kislinger, "Xenon und Xenodocheion im spätbyzantinischen Roman", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 36 (1986) 201-206; M.W. Dols, "The Origins of the Islamic Hospital: Myth and Reality", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 61.3 (1987) 367-390: 371.

[36] See Horden, "The Byzantine Welfare State" (cit. n. 35); E. Kislinger, "Der Pantokrator-Xenon, ein trügerisches Ideal?", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 37 (1987) 173-379.

[37] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xix.

[38] Miller drew on Robert Volk's study, which considered two other twelfth-century *typika*. The first *typikon* was written in 1158/1159 for the Mamas Monastery in Constantinople; the second was written in 1162 for the Heliou Bomon monastery in Bithynia. See R. Volk, *Gesundheitswesen und Wohltätigkeit im Spiegel der byzantinischen Klostertypika*, München 1983, 215-221 and 222-224.

[39] Hospital health care should be available to people belonging to various social classes, instead of being either a poorly managed shelter for destitutes or a luxurious prerogative of wealthy Constantinopolitans. According to Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xv, the evidence from the three monastic *typika* of Pantokrator, Mamas, and Heliou Bomou "suggests that Byzantine physicians of the twelfth century charged a high price for private visits. As a result, most people in Constantinople, both the poor and the middle class, came to the hospitals for treatment." Availability of medical services on a relatively large scale is better understood when one considers that, alongside law, medicine was "the other branch of learning which was both an academic discipline and a technical, lucrative profession, providing an essential social service." See P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)*, Cambridge 1993, 361. It is therefore straightforward to observe that, because of their social function, hospitals interested the initiatives of Byzantine rulers. Thus, hospitals were established by emperors (such as in the case of the Pantokrator) or rebuilt by them (such as in the case of the Sampson, rebuilt by Justinian after the Nika fire in 532. See Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xix. Moreover, "visiting hospitals of all kinds, in particular on every Good Friday, to distribute gifts to the patients was a practice not only of Porphyrogenitos but of every emperor." See D.J. Costantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*,

The Birth of the Hospital relies heavily on the Pantokrator *typikon* and this source might not hold true in the minutia for *any* Byzantine hospital, there is as yet no justification for reading this *typikon* as a *xenon*'s purely hypothetical description. [40] Therefore, in this paper I follow Miller's scholarship, and it is to the Byzantine hospital that I will now turn regarding Metrodora.

I suggest three reasons why Metrodora's text might be linked to Byzantine *xenones*. First, medical training was provided to the hospital staff, who were required to complete professional training under the supervision of a respected physician. In reply to the observation that a teaching tradition cannot be found in hospital settings before the Pantokrator, Timothy Miller takes into account Poem 59 of the "Mangana Poet". It mentions two younger doctors assigned to treat the empress Eirene, alongside an older physician supervising and guiding them; "the poem also stresses how the younger physicians had mastered the *logos* of medicine and obtained boundless professional experience as well –doubtless a reference to the hospital's training program."[41] In addition, even though we have no evidence of scholastic programs in Byzantine hospitals before the Pantokrator,

> "such a practice would be consistent both with the history of Greek medicine from its earliest days in Knidos and Kos as well as with the development of Christian *nosokomeia*. In the days of Hippocrates, Greek physicians taught medicine to apprentices who worked with them in the *iatreia*."[42]

In the Middle Byzantine period in particular, the healing of bodies "was most valued when backed up by textbook erudition. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, med-

New Brunswick 1968, 118. It would be easy to interpret this custom simply as charitable activity inspired by Christian principles; however, the social and political motive behind philanthropy – i.e. the emperor's profit in endearing himself to the populace – should not be neglected. Finally, Byzantine rulers could be cured in hospitals themselves. A case we know comes from Poem 59 of the "Mangana Poet", in which the empress Eirene, having fallen sick, is said to be occupying a bed at the Pantokrator (a bed that would be hopefully soon filled by someone else). See Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xxi; Magdalino, *ibidem,* 497.

[40] Among the sources taken into account by Miller to illustrate the Byzantine hospital's longevity is a writing by Nicholas of Cusa referring to the prelate's travel to Constantinople in 1437. In this account, an officer of Constantinople is described as supervisor of the hospitals (*supremus praeerat hospitalibus*), which is likely to indicate that a system of hospitals was still functioning in the city in the fifteenth century. See Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xvii.

[41] See Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), xxi. Miller accessed this poem by courtesy of Michael Jeffreys, who, together with Elizabeth Jeffreys, is working on the edition of Manganeios Prodromos.

[42] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 157.

icine, like law, became intellectually respectable."[43] Moreover, the Pantokrator "was only the last in a long series of large imperial pious foundations which included hospitals, and must therefore have greatly increased the number of medical personnel and medical schools."[44] *Xenones* became cultural strongboxes that collected useful medical works and gradually assembled libraries. Codices prepared for hospital libraries "offer some information on *xenones* because the men who executed them had in mind the needs of hospital practice in selecting and editing the texts for the new books."[45] An example is represented by the codex Laur. Plut. 74.7, a manuscript compiled by one Niketas that contained excerpts from ancient and early Byzantine medical authors on a common subject, in this case surgery, along with illustrations and diagrams. In a few words, the codex was prepared as "a convenient reference tool for the hospital staff."[46] Consequently, medical texts exactly like that of Metrodora were available in hospitals and served as didactic tools, as well as reference works for experienced staff physicians.

Furthermore, a specific genre of professional medical literature appeared in the tenth century which is called "treatment lists" by Miller, who noticed how the manuscript headings attributed such works to hospital physicians.[47] These lists are collections of therapies that were considered effective and probably had their roots in written records of medical treatments prescribed by hospital physicians. In some instances they do not seem to follow a precise order in the arrangement of their contents.[48] Similarly, in Metrodora's collection groups of remedies revolving around distinct issues are stitched together without a necessary thematic connection.

It is true that, in the Byzantine society, collecting medical knowledge of previous centuries was a practice that started at least as early as Oribasios.[49] Indeed, passing down

[43] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos* (cit. n. 39), 361. For a change in the general attitude toward medicine in the tenth and twelfth centuries, see also A.P. Kazhdan – W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1985, 156-158.

[44] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos* (cit. n. 39), 363.

[45] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 180.

[46] Ibidem. A detailed study has been devoted to this codex by M. Bernabò (cur.), *La collezione di testi chirurgici di Niceta. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 74.7. Tradizione medica classica a Bisanzio,* Roma 2010. The contribution also emphasizes the importance attributed to Niketas' codex in the following centuries, as it became a model for the edition of medical texts during the Renaissance.

[47] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 162-180.

[48] For specific examples, see Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), chaps. 8 and 9.

[49] See P. Bouras-Vallianatos – S. Xenophontos, (eds.), *Greek Medical Literature and its Readers: From Hippocrates to Islam and Byzantium*, London – New York 2018. In particular,

what was deemed helpful in curing disease was a tradition that already belonged to classical Greece in times subsequent to Hippocrates. Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries in particular, treatments were recommended because they had withstood the tests of time and experience (*peira*).[50] It is important that explicit claims of applied experience are present in Metrodora's collection, suggesting that the collection both stemmed from and was intended for practical application. In our text, διὰ πείρας is the most frequent expression validating the efficacy of remedies: it occurs in several chapters and can be interpreted as a sort of "stamp" for proven knowledge, which is indeed a crucial feature of the medical profession. Stathakopoulos has pointed out how the *Digest* hands down earlier laws aimed at regulating the practice of physicians and ascertaining their competence. It is the case, for example, of a law dating back to Ulpian, according to which the citizens need to be "certi de probitate morum et *peritia artis*" of the doctors they entrust their health to.[51] Therefore, the inclusion of *peira* in Metrodora's chapters may also be

Bouras-Vallianatos' contribution (*ibidem,* 180-230) examines the Byzantine reception of Galen's *Therapeutics to Glaucon* and shows how Byzantine physicians selected and copied parts of this treatise in order to suit their professional needs. See also A. Guardasole, "A look at the Hippocratic treatise on Hemorroids in the Byzantine era", *Studies in ancient medicine* 31 (2005) 457-463; P. van der Eijk, "Principles and practices of compilation and abbreviation in the medical 'encyclopaedias' of Late Antiquity", in M. Horster – C. Reitz (eds.), *Condensing Texts – Condensed Texts*, Stuttgart 2010, 519-554; P. Degni, "Trascrivere la medicina a Bisanzio: considerazioni sulle caratteristiche grafiche e materiali della produzione libraria", in G. De Gregorio – M. Galante (eds.), *La produzione scritta tecnica e scientifica nel Medioevo: libro e documento tra scuole e professioni*, Spoleto 2012, 359-387.

[50] It is true that efficacy statements go back to antiquity and are not unique to Byzantine manuals. See, for example, C. Jones, "'Efficacy phrases' in medieval English medical manuscripts", *Neuphilologisches Mitteilungen* 99 (1998) 199-209; L. Totelin, "Old recipe, new practice? The Latine adaptations of the Hippocratic Gynaecological treatises", *Social History of Medicine* 24.1 (2011) 74-91. However, the importance of *peira* in Byzantine medical writings is explained by Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 164, n. 153.

[51] *Dig.* 50.9.1. Even more striking is the severity by which *imperitia medicorum* appears punishable in the laws (*Assizes*) promulgated by King Roger II of Sicily in the mid-twelfth century –a *corpus iuris* that is indebted to Roman law. In the southern Italian territory administrated by the Normans, inexperienced practitioners could be even imprisoned and deprived of their property. Although the introduction of such severe penalties can be seen as an innovation belonging to Roger's legislation, it should be noticed that "the legislator's interest in safeguarding patients from inexperienced practitioners is indeed a common impulse in both the Roman evidence and the Assize." D. Stathakopoulos, "On Whose Authority? Regulating Medical Practice in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries", in P. Armstrong (ed.), *Authority in Byzantium*, Surrey 2013, 227-238: 233. It is impossible to know whether Metrodora's text was written in a Byzantine milieu and subsequently imported in Southern Italy or it was rather assembled in Southern Italy from the beginning. Nevertheless, it may be observed that the Laurentian codex preserving the text seems to have been produced in Calabria between the tenth and the eleventh

read as a guarantee for the use of correct and tested prescriptions on the part of physicians.[52] A similar function is performed by the adjective δόκιμος referred to a specific antidote or remedy.[53] Furthermore, effectiveness stands out even more explicitly in chap. 25.5-6 as the product of individual experience, as the use of the first person singular indicates: "ἐκ πολλῆς πείρας χρῶ."

Such appeals to personal expertise may lead us to include Metrodora's work not only within the handwritten tradition of "collections" linked to Byzantine hospitals, but more specifically, albeit tentatively, within the genre of treatment-lists that developed after the tenth century in particular.

Let us return to the "culture of the sylloge" mentioned above. In his study, Odorico broadens the notion of *sylloge* as a mere compilation and rearrangement of previous material by saying:

> "Nella produzione letteraria bizantina, l'esistenza di un inventario è facilmente individuabile in tutte le sillogi: la parola stessa implica una raccolta di dati organizzati in modo più o meno razionale. La domanda che ci si deve porre è se esista una invenzione, se esistano elementi innovativi che permettano un reale progresso del sapere […]. Se […] si passa all'esame delle singole sillogi diventa anche possibile verificare se in talune di esse vi sia qualcosa di più ricco, di più articolato del semplice inventario, se vi sia cioè una qualche forma di invenzione. In altre parole se esista una produzione (certamente molto più limitata di quanto è stato finora sostenuto) che abbia in sé I germi di una nuova visione nella trasmissione del sapere."[54]

As regards medical *syllogai*, I think that the innovative element is to be found in the personal obervations and contributions penned by the medical staff. In the case of Metrodora's text, the *inventario* element is visible in that a certain number of remedies were chosen, collected, and arranged in a way that seems both systematic and miscellaneous.[55] Only for six passages of the middle section of Metrodora's text (i.e. chaps. 32-95) have I been able to identify textual parallels that had not yet been taken into account. Indeed, there may be others to be found, but we cannot exclude *a priori* the possibility that

centuries, i.e. under the Norman government that payed close attention to its physicians' ability and expertise.

[52] See chaps. 34.4; 39.3; 65.3; 71.1; 73.9; 80.1; 81.1; 87.1; 93.1-2; 103.4; 116.4; 125.3.

[53] See chaps. 67.4; 73.2; 74.7; 80.9; 81.5; 81.7; 87.6; 136.3.

[54] Odorico, "La cultura della *Sylloge*" (cit. n. 25), 12.

[55] As already mentioned, chapters 1-31, on uterine diseases and obstetrics, are associated by thematic similarity; chapters 96-137, containing excerpts from Alexander of Tralles, are associated by reference to a specific author; finally, chapters 32-95 show a variety of which we are unlikely to make sense in terms of homogeneity.

some of the remedies, rather than drawing on previous medical texts, were newly created and added to the codex when it was written. Should this ever be the case, we might think that such remedies represent the *invenzione* of Metrodora's *sylloge*.

Finally, the fact that Metrodora's collection includes precepts of female medicine and was purportedly written by a woman requires that we raise questions of gender. To be sure, tracing the history of Byzantine women as a social group is a challenging endeavor, primarily because it requires us to differentiate "the authorial posturing and the rhetorical idealization of our sources from information about what women actually did."[56] Despite the obvious difficulties of the inquiry, by examining texts such as *typika* (monastic rules and charters), fiscal registers, and legal documents it is possible to draw some conclusions about the importance of the family as the main context in which women found respect and developed skills –as mothers, midwives, and nurses. Convents, on the other hand, stood out as an alternative to the burdens of marriage and parenting, but also as a chance to govern an institution without owing meek obedience to male superiors.[57] Yet the roles that women assumed extended beyond those two spheres. Administrative documentation –including provincial landowning patterns– provides us with a picture of women as proprietors, owners of small businesses, even as employers.[58] In sum, "women can be found in a number of occupations, including that of doctor and midwife."[59] A public acknowledgment of women's medical expertise in these areas can also be glimpsed in the legal sphere. One of the laws of the emperor Leo VI (886-912) expresses overt disdain about the fact that, in the past, women had been allowed to argue in the court against men, "since untamed license of tongue brings shame to the woman

[56] L. Neville, "Taxing Sophronia's Son-in-Law: Representations of Women in Provincial Documents", in L. Garland (ed.), *Women in Byzantium: Varieties of Experience, 800-1200*, Aldershot 2006, 75-87: 77.

[57] A. Laiou, "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985) 59-102: 60 ff. For other contributions on women in Byzantium, see S. Lebecq – A. Dierkens et al., *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident (VIe-XIe siècles). Colloque international organisé les 28, 29 et 30 mars 1996 à Bruxelles et Villeneuve-d'Ascq*, Lille 1999; Garland (ed.), *Women in Byzantium* (cit. n. 56); B. Neil – L. Garland, *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*, New York 2013; M. Grünbart – M. Mullett –L. Theis, *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond: An International Colloquium. September 23-25, 2008*, Wien 2008.

[58] Primary sources are referenced and thoroughly analyzed by J. Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach", in A. Cameron –A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity*, Detroit 1983, 167-189: 169-170, and Neville, "Taxing Sophronia's Son-in-Law" (cit. n. 56), 82-83.

[59] A. Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31.1 (1981) 233-260: 245.

before the men's eyes." Thus, the empeor forbids women to intervene as witnesses in legal disputes, but he nevertheless specifies:

> "But as for those matters which are characteristic of women and which men are not allowed by the law to deal with –I am talking about the pains of childbirth and any other thing which the female eyes alone see–, let them stand as witnesses about these issues that are theirs and unseen by the male eyes (Nov. 48)".

Such a division of medical responsibilities in the middle Byzantine period can be understood when we consider that midwifery never ceased to be necessary and was practiced at all levels of society. Leo VI may refer to midwives operating as individual professionals, who might have found themselves involved in accusations and trials. For example, women could be called upon to express "expert" testimony on questions of virginity and childbirth.[60]

Byzantine hospitals in particular came to represent an institutionalized environment of a different kind for female practitioners who had acquired formalized expertise. Women played a significant role in the *xenones* both as patients and as professional staff, so much so that hospitals began to include separate facilities for women only.[61] In this sense, Metrodora's first 31 chapters might stand out as a witness to female medicine in a late antique or Byzantine hospital between the sixth and the twelfth century.

Chapters 1-31 have a parallel in Aetius of Amida's *Tetrabiblon*, as regards its accuracy in describing women's illnesses and therapies. In particular, Book 16 of the *Tetrabiblon* displays "unique and separate attention to obstetrics and gynecology, rather unusual among the handbooks of medicine produced in the Byzantine Empire before the coming of Islam."[62] Even though Metrodora's chapters 1-31 were not drawn from Aetius' work, their contents display a similar degree of accuracy in both describing gynecological illnesses and prescribing medical recipes by way of therapy. Notable also is Metrodora's precision in drug-preparation, which is indeed comparable to Aetius' "complicated formulas […] demonstrating that Byzantine pharmacy had improved upon both formulation and application."[63] Metrodora's text testifies to the broad advancement of female medicine, just as Aetius' Book 16 does.

[60] It should be recalled that superstitious customs derived from the pagan tradition and were preserved, to some extent, by such women. See Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women" (cit. n. 58), 172.

[61] Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital* (cit. n. 32), 14-16, 143-144, 201, 214.

[62] J. Scarborough, "Theodora, Aetius of Amida, and Procopius: Some Possible Connections", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013) 742-762: 744.

[63] Scarborough, "Theodora" (cit. n. 62), 751.

On the other hand, one aspect of Metrodora's work that might appear at first sight to be discordant with scientific expertise is the inclusion of remedies and concoctions which could be associated more with popular healers than with professional physicians. An example is found in Chapter 35, whose instructions are aimed at discovering a woman's lovers. Such a mixture of medical expertise and 'folkloric' wisdom is explained by Scarborough as follows:

> "Court physicians and their less renowned and generally anonymous colleagues, who practiced among the common people in the cities and the far more numerous country folk, usually provide us with seemingly straightforward details of a practice of medicine, often bereft of either a religious context or the always-present folk medicine with its panoply of botanical and magical tokens and ingredients. How much of this represents a 'pagan heritage' is the subject of continuous contention among students of Byzantine culture."[64]

Insertions of quasi-magical remedies were not foreign to highbrow medical authors. In Metrodora's text, they might be taken as hints of healing arts that were still present alongside an official, professionalized medical training.[65] In fact, a recent study brought new attention on the importance of cosmetics in the medical practice.[66] A contrast between κοσμητική and κομμοτική is already present in Galen: the former, dealing with the effort to preserve the natural beauty of the body, is seen in a positive way and included within the medical sphere; the latter represents the negative practice of altering and transforming the body in an artificial, despicable way. Therefore, cosmetics is part of medicine in that it is meant to care for beauty according to nature. This concept affects medical literature as well, since cosmetic remedies are found, among others, in the important works of Oribasius and Aetius. For example, in Oribasius, "le ricette cosmetiche compaiono in varie opera, senza essere raggruppate in sezioni o capitoli specificamente dedicati a quest'ambito. All'interno del *corpus* oribasiano […] la presenza di queste ricette è proporzionale all'estensione delle opere stesse e conferma l'importanza e la modernità di tali rimedi a quel tempo."[67] Metrodora's work should be reconsidered

[64] Scarborough, "Theodora" (cit. n. 62), 758.

[65] See also O. Temkin, "Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962) 97-115; J. Lascaratos et al., "The Roots of Cosmetic Medicine: Hair Cosmetics in Byzantine Times (AD 324-1453)", *International Journal of Dermatology* 43.5 (2004) 397-401.

[66] S. Buzzi – I. Calà, "Le ricette cosmetiche nelle enciclopedie mediche tardoantiche", in L. Lehmhaus – M. Martelli (eds.), *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, Boston – Berlin 2017, 123-246.

[67] Buzzi – Calà, "Le ricette cosmetiche" (cit. n. 66), 26.

from this perspective as well. Alongside instructions regarding the healing of specific medical problems, it abunds with chapters focusing on the 'external' care of the body. Therefore, the text may fit well in a medical environment, and such an environment may be a *xenon*, because of the features the text shares with hospital treatment-lists. Finally, even though the identity of Metrodora will probably never be revealed, it is nevertheless possible that the name refers to a female individual –be it the author of this collection's chapters in part on in its entirety, the compiler, or a female physician who collected remedies deemed worth preserving (either in a hospital or for private practice purposes).

In conclusion, Metrodora's text should be reconsidered by scholars for the following reasons. By representing an instance of the Byzantine "culture of the sylloge", it contains quotations of other known medical works. Consequently, this collection should draw the attention of philologists and historians of female medicine more than it has thus far. It can also be regarded as an example of Byzantine treatment-lists, thus offering new material to historians of medicine and possibly adding new questions to the debate about medical training.[68] Finally, Metrodora's work allows us to imagine that women, who are so often hidden behind the scenes, are not to be excluded as potential protagonists, alongside men, of the field of medicine –a field which would be men's prerogative for many centuries to come.[69]

[68] For example, the way in which medical matters are arranged in this collection may be worth further inquiry.

[69] To conclude this paper, I want to recall the story of Dr Barry. On 25 July, 1865, in London, Dr James Barry passed away after a long and distinguished career in medicine. When the maid of the household where he was lodging laid out the body, a truth which had been concealed for decades was revealed: the doctor was a woman. Born Margaret Bulkley, she decided to spend her entire adult life in disguise in order to study and practice medicine, a profession that was, at that time, precluded to women. See H.M. Preez, "Dr James Barry: The Early Years Revealed", *South-African Medical Journal* 98.1 (2008) 52-58.