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Anna Zajchowska (eds.)

# **Glossae – Scholia – Commentarii**

**Studies on Commenting Texts  
in Antiquity and Middle Ages**

# Introduction

“The commentary-tradition, indeed, is so rich and varied in itself that we cannot claim to be comprehensive even in dealing with it alone.”

*Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100-c.1375. The Commentary-Tradition.* Ed. by A.J. Minnis, A.B. Scott with assist. of D. Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, vii.

A need to comment on a text arises when its contents is concealed before the eyes of the recipient and one must unveil it in order to ensure the text's understanding. This applies especially to sacred, revealed books, the understanding of which is not possible without proper commentaries and explanations, and also to philosophical, scientific, and medical writings which require continual clarification and elucidation of their contents.

Commentaries are also indispensable tools when a text is archaic and therefore remains obscure without the aid of explanatory comments. These types of commentaries were composed since antiquity, since the Hellenistic period in which the language of Homer and Hesiod was already archaic and in large part incomprehensible.

A commentary is the most characteristic scholarly form of the Middle Ages. It is closely connected with the medieval scholarly methodology which relied on the practice of shared reading and commenting on a text, the aim of which was to reveal the work's hidden meaning and to express one's own attitude towards it.

The present collection of studies, titled *Glossae, Scholia, Commentarii*, focuses on commentary literature coming from diverse cultural and intellectual circles and attempts to appraise similarities and differences between them in regard to methods and techniques employed. We have invited eminent specialists – orientalist, medievalist, and historians of medieval philosophy – from different Polish universities to participate in this project. This book, which is a result of their joint efforts, only partially answers the questions raised. The subject matter is extensive and insufficiently researched; therefore, despite existing previous studies<sup>1</sup>, a comprehensive synthetic overview of various forms

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1 Cf. e.g. *Le Commentaire – Le Commentaire entre tradition et innovation. Actes du Colloque international de l'Institut des Traditions Textuelles* (Paris Villejuif, 22 – 25 sept. 1999). Publ. sous dir. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, avec coll. édit. de T. Dorandi, R. Goulet [et al.], Paris 2000, *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter. Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung.* Hrsg. von Wilhelm Geerlings, Christian Schulze. *Clavis commentariorum*

and genres of commentary literature is still a long way off. The present volume is a *collectanea* of studies focused on the practice of commenting in different cultures and periods; perhaps it will lead to further interdisciplinary meetings and projects devoted to commentaries and isagogic literature.

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*Mieczysław Mejor*

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antiquitatis et medii aevi, t. 1. Leiden–Köln: Brill, 2002, *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter. Neue Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung*. Hrsg. von Wilhelm Geerlings, Christian Schulze. Clavis commentariorum antiquitatis et medii aevi, t. 2. Leiden: Brill, 2004.