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The collective volume under review examines literary commentaries on ancient texts composed during the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods (from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries). The book addresses many crucial questions, including: (i.) the practices and strategies according to which the Byzantine scholars read, interpreted and commented on ancient works; (ii.) the institutional/didactic, sociocultural, and intellectual contexts within which these exegetical materials emerged; (iii.) the role of imperial patronage in motivating the production and circulation of these commentaries; and (iv.) the identity and self-representation of the commentators. The volume is divided into thirteen chapters and covers various types of commentaries on ancient works.

Panagiotis A. Agapitos, in his contribution "The Politics and Practices of Commentary in Komnenian Byzantium" (pp. 41–60), analyses a broad spectrum of exegetical production during the Komnenian period, exploring the practices and strategies of reading, teaching, and composing literary commentaries on ancient works. In this context, he examines various texts, including the thirteenth-century prose paraphrase of the Homeric *Iliad,* Tzetzes' commentary on the *Iliad*, and grammar and spelling exercises, such as Theodore Prodromos' *schede*, and his vernacular poems known as the *Ptochoprodromika*. He also discusses laudatory orations, such as Eustathios' second oration in praise of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael III (1170/8), biblical commentaries on the Psalms by Niketas of Herakleia (c. 1050–after 1117), and philosophical exegetical works, such as Eustratios of Nicaea's commentary on the second book of Aristotle's *Posterior* and Michael of Ephesos' commentaries on a substantial part of the Aristotelian corpus. Additionally, he explores dogmatic treatises, including the anti-heretical collection *Armour of Dogma* by Euthymios Zigabenos and *Sacred Armoury* by Andronikos Kamateros; admonitory literature, which displays a florilegium-like gnomologic structure, such as the *Dialexis* by Philip Monotropos (written in 1097) and the anonymous *Spaneas* (written in the first half of the twelfth century); and commentaries on Byzantine hymnography, such as Gregory Pardos' grammatical/linguistic commentary on twenty-three canons by, or attributed to, John of Damascus and Kosmas of Jerusalem.

Michele Trizio, in his paper "Forging Identities between Heaven and Earth: Commentaries on Aristotle and Authorial Practices in Eleventh- and Twelfth--Century Byzantium" (pp. 61–99), provides a thorough survey of Aristotelian philosophical commentaries produced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He presents the challenges that arise in determining the intended audience of these commentaries, reconstructing their institutional framework, and examining the material aspects of the transmission of Byzantine philosophical texts. He also discusses the significance of orality conceived by Byzantine scholars as complementary to written literature. Furthermore, he explores the methods by which Byzantine commentators approached ancient philosophical texts (e.g. Eustratios of Nicaea and Michael of Ephesos), pointing out that that they not only incorporated material from the late antique commentarial tradition into their exegetical works but also introduced innovative elements absent from the works of their ancient predecessors. In addition, he provides little-known Byzantine philosophical material composed in the twelfth century, such as *Par. gr.* 1917, which transmits *scholia* on certain words from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* by the Metropolitan of Nicomedia (fols. 70r-73r), and Michael of Ephesos' *scholia* on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (fols. 17r-45r). Finally, he addresses questions of identity and self--representation among Byzantine philosophers and commentators. In this regard, he refers to two distinct modes of life adopted by Byzantine intellectuals during the later Komnenian period: the dominant political *bios*, which combined philosophical and rhetorical skills, and the austere monastic life.

Aglae Pizzone's study, "Cultural Appropriation and the Performance of Exegesis in John Tzetzes' *Scholia on Aristophanes*" (pp. 100–129), discusses the idea of exegesis as performance based on Tzetzes' commentaries on Aristophanes, with particular attention to *Frogs* 843a. Furthermore, she demonstrates that several of Tzetzes' literary works underwent multiple redactions, authorised by him at different points in time and composed for different addressees. These successive redactions, as she explains, show the hybrid nature of exegetical practices, positioned between performance and manuscript culture, and offer insights into the educational setting in which these performative exegetical practices were conducted. Finally, she emphasises that non-Hellenic cultural traditions (e.g. Jewish) had a visible impact on Tzetzes' exegetical activities.

Maria Tomadaki's contribution, "Uncovering the Literary Sources of John Tzetzes' *Theogony*" (pp. 130–147), examines Tzetzes' didactic poem *Theogony*, which narrates the origins and genealogies of mythical gods and heroes. The poem consists of approximately 850 political verses and is dedicated to the *sebastokratorissa* Irene. Regarding the literary sources of Tzetzes' poem, Tomadaki, in the first part of her study, demonstrates that Tzetzes, in the section on the

genealogies of the gods, relies mainly on Hesiod, while in his heroic genealogies, he adopts mythological elements from Homer's *Iliad*, the fragmentary epic poem *Catalogue of Women* (attributed to Hesiod), Pindar, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Theocritus, and other ancient authors. Furthermore, she hypothesises that, for the genealogy of heroes, Tzetzes may have drawn material from an expanded version of Hesiod's *Theogony*, which also included a genealogy of the heroes of the Trojan Wars, or that he adopted mythical elements from an unidentified work called *Heroogony* (attributed to Hesiod in Proclus' *Prolegomena* to Hesiod's *Works and Days* and in Tzetzes' *Theogony*).

The second part of the article deals with Tzetzes' self-identification and his attitude towards the ancient poets. In this regard, Tomadaki shows that, in *Theogony*, Tzetzes presents himself as a superior narrator of genealogies compared to his predecessors, not only due to his ability to synthesise different sources with brevity and clarity but also because of his stylistic choices. Furthermore, she addresses the didactic features of the poem (e.g. the employed didactic techniques, style, language, and metre), which reflect both the relationship between a professional poet and a patron and that between a teacher and a student. Finally, based on Tzetzes' concerns regarding his opponents' reactions to the content and style of the poem, Tomadaki proposes that the work may have been intended for a larger audience capable of understanding its numerous sources. As a result, the poem could be situated within both the exegetical tradition of ancient texts and the literary *epideixis* at the literary salons of the Komnenian period.

In the first part of her study, "Odysseus the Schedographer" (pp. 148–168), Valeria F. Lovato examines an excerpt from Eustathios' *Parekbolai on the Odyssey*, in which he explains and analyses the rhetorical stratagem by which Odysseus tricked Polyphemus and saved his comrades. As Lovato argues, in his analysis of this Homeric passage, Eustathios incorporates a lengthy digression on schedography, demonstrating how an urbane rhetor should compose pleasant and effective *schede*, while simultaneously illustrating the dangerous and ridiculous consequences that exegetes may face if they fail to adhere to the principles of *paideia* and do not recognise the limits set by good taste. The second part of the study focuses on an extract from Tzetzes' *Histories*, in which Odysseus and his adventures – much like in Eustathios' *Parekbolai* – serve as a starting point for reflections on contemporary schedography. Lovato also highlights a series of similarities between the ideas of Tzetzes and Eustathios, particularly regarding the inaccuracies of schedographers, which threaten the canons of the art of grammar, and their rising popularity, which may endanger the moral and behavioural norms underlying the concept of *paideia*. On the other hand, while Eustathios advocates a refined and moderate use of the contemporary practice

of schedography, Tzetzes maintains a conservative attitude towards this rhetorical practice and its impact on education, adhering closely to the traditional concept of education.

Baukje van den Berg's study, "Eustathios of Thessalonike on Comedy and Ridicule in Homeric Poetry" (pp. 169–194), explores Eustathios' conception of ridicule in Homeric poetry. As van den Berg points out, Eustathios addresses various aspects of ridicule, including its narrative function, its effects on characters within the narrative and on the narratees, and its role in Homer's compositional process. Regarding the role of ridicule in storytelling, Eustathios explains throughout his commentaries how Homer skilfully incorporates laughable and comic not only to entertain his audience outside the narrative but also to cheer up monotonous or too-gloomy battle scenes. He further illustrates that ridicule may affect characters and primary narratees in different ways. In discussing Homer's compositional process, Eustathios refers to some of the poet's rhetorical choices, such as the strategy by which Homer refrains from uttering mockery in his own voice; instead he distances himself by placing such words in the mouths of his characters. As for the moral and ethical aspect of ridicule, Eustathios repeatedly illustrates how Homer avoids the potential dangers that inappropriate ridicule might pose to his seriousness and dignity as a poet. Finally, van den Berg argues that Eustathios' commentaries provide abundance of Homeric material which could be reused, with or without adaptation, by Byzantine prose authors in contexts of ridicule, thereby facilitating the practice of citing from Homeric poetry.

Inmaculada Pérez Martín's study, "Geography at School: Eustathios of Thessalonike's *Parekbolai* on Dionysius Periegetes" (pp. 195–213), examines Eustathios' commentary on the *Periegesis* or *Description of the Known World*, a second-century didactic poem by Dionysius of Alexandria, which is dedicated to John Doukas Kamateros, the son of Andronikos Doukas Kamateros. In her contribution, Pérez Martín discusses the textual transmission of the poem during the Byzantine period, noting that it was primarily circulated on the periphery of geographical miscellanies and was copied mainly in combination with scholastic texts. She also investigates the literary sources of Eustathios' commentary on *Periegesis* including Strabo, Stephanus of Byzantium, and Ptolemy, as well as the use of marginalia. Additionally, Pérez Martín addresses the intended audience of the commentary, arguing that such materials likely originated from a school environment to provide students with elementary knowledge about the inhabited world. Furthermore, she attempts to shed light on Eustathios' relationship with members of the Kamateros aristocratic family. Regarding Eustathios' methodology, Pérez Martín demonstrates that the commentary

was not intended to criticise the validity of Dionysius' global vision or to correct potential errors or ambiguities. Instead, Eustathios sometimes transfers Dionysius' verses into a paraphrase that explains or expands upon the poem, while at other times he retains the original verses and provides additional information on certain obscure terms.

Margaret Mullett's study, "Painting and Polyphony: *The Christos Paschon* as Commentary" (pp. 214–239), analyses the twelfth-century *Christos Paschon*, an anonymous drama comprising 30 + 2602 iambic lines and three plays on the story of the Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ. This contribution primarily addresses the engagement of the trilogy with ancient literature, in particular *Medea*, *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae* of Euripides, and the *Rhesus*. Additionally, Mullett explores the use of source texts in *Christos Paschon* in painting (pointilliste or sloshed on texture). She further argues that the use of source texts can be seen as polyphony, as one source text may be interwoven or combined with another(s) in a certain episode within the narrative. Finally, Mullet discusses the Byzantine reception of Euripides based on the under-discussion trilogy, and its performative setting in the twelfth century.

Krystina Kubina's contribution, "Parodying Antiquity for Pleasure and Learning: *The Idyll* by Maximos Planoudes" (pp. 240–272), discusses Maximos Planoudes' dialogic poem *Idyll*, composed in 250 hexametric verses. The poem is a humorous piece, heavily influenced by numerous ancient hypotexts, particularly the bucolic poetry of Theocritus and Lucian. The first part of the study provides a detailed analysis of the poem, exploring key themes such as love and homoeroticism, the alterity of other worlds, magic, and the marvellous. Then, it gives a detailed account of the *Idyll* within the context of Byzantine literary traditions and Planoudes' scholarship as a whole, examining its extensive intertextual connections with ancient works. The reception of the poem in Byzantium is also addressed. Finally, Kubina offers insights into the nature of the *Idyll* as a parody.

Paula Caballero Sánchez's paper, "Teaching Poetry in the Early Palaiologan School: Manuel Holobolos' and John Pediasimos' Commentaries on Theocritus' *Syrinx*" (pp. 273–303), focuses on the commentaries of Manuel Holobolos (1243–1310/14) and John Pediasimos (c. 1240–1310/14) on Theocritus' pattern-poem *Syrinx*. The study provides a detailed discussion of Holobolos' commentary on the *Syrinx* within its educational context. It also addresses Holobolos' methods and practices of reading, interpreting, commenting and adapting this ancient source to his didactic needs. Caballero Sánchez highlights that Holobolos primarily focuses on the poem's didactic possibilities, such as metrics and lexicon, but does not show a particular interest in the mythical elements of the poem.

The second part of the paper deals with Pediasimos' commentary on the *Syrinx*, again exploring its institutional educational framework and composition date. Here, Caballero Sánchez analyses the form and the structure of the commentary, as well as the topics dealt with, identifying the similarities and differences between these two commentaries. Besides, she shows that while focusing on the lexical and grammatical aspects and the poem's content, Pediasimos seems to have neglected the metrical properties of the poem, which are present in Holobolos and the *scholia vetera*. Moreover, unlike Holobolos, Pediasimos gives a more detailed explanation of the lexical items and grammatical phenomena that do not conform to Attic Greek and engages with the mythological aspects of the poem. Additionally, Caballero Sánchez attempts to trace the literary sources that Holobolos drew upon in his commentary. Finally, she presents a comparative table in which she quotes from *scholia vetera*, Holobolos' synopsis, and Pediasimos' commentary exegetical passages on certain verses of *Syrinx*. This table illustrates how ancient sources were reworked in each commentary, how they were adapted to the didactic needs of each author, and to what extent Pediasimos used Holobolean material.

Andrea M. Cuomo's contribution, "Late Byzantine *Scholia* on the Greek Classics: What Did They Comment On? Manuel Moschopoulos on Sophocles' *Electra*" (pp. 304–338), examines Manuel Moschopoulos' *scholia* on Sophocles' *Electra*, exploring the context of their composition and circulation, as well as their intended audience. For the first time, Cuomo presents previously unpublished passages from the prologue of *Electra*, providing a translation and an apparatus criticus for each passage. Additionally, he offers an edition of the unedited preserved *glossae* and *scholia*, accompanied by an apparatus criticus, a commentary, and a translation.

Fevronia Nousia's contribution, "Theodora Raoulaina's Autograph *Codex Vat. gr.* 1899 and Aelius Aristides" (pp. 339–359), addresses Theodora Raoulaina's contribution to the reception and preservation of the highly popular orator Aelius Aristides (117–181), through copying forty-three works out of his corpus (fifty--three works), along with the *scholia vetera* on the texts in her famous autograph volume *Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr.* 1899. The first part of the study provides biographical information on Theodora, followed by a physical description of *Vat. gr.* 1899. It then examines the timeframe of its copying, the context in which the manuscript was produced, and its intended addressee. Additionally, Nousia attempts to reconstruct the exemplar that Theodora used for copying this manuscript. The study also explores Theodora's intellectual pursuits, as reflected in the extensive *Vat. gr.* 1899. Finally, Nousia offers an edition of the unedited marginal *scholia* on the Platonic Orations *Ὑπὲρ Ῥητορικῆς Λόγος Α' & Β'*.

Lorenzo M. Ciolfi's study, "The Reception of Eustathios of Thessalonike's *Parekbolai* in Arsenios Apostolis' and Erasmus' Paroemiographic Collections" (pp. 360–378), explores two of the most significant paroemiographical collections: Arsenios Apostolis' (c. 1465/69–1535) *Ἰωνιά* and Erasmus' of Rotterdam (1466–1535) *Adagia*. The contribution addresses in particular the numerous Homeric verses and their accompanying exegetical *scholia* that are inserted in the margins of Arsenios Apostolis' autograph *codex Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr.* 3058. As Ciolfi notes, these materials appear to have been part of an exegetical project on Homeric poetry, in which Arsenios Apostolis intended but finally did not manage, to incorporate *Homeric proverbs* as a fifth section into the already existing four sections in former versions of the *Ἰωνιά*. The study also examines the method according to which Arsenios received and employed Eustathios' explanations of Homeric verses. Finally, it discusses the reception of Eustathios' exegetical work among Renaissance scholars.

To conclude, the chronological frame within which the contributions are assembled makes the book a kind of guide to Byzantine intellectual scholarship during the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods. The book offers readers a comprehensive overview of Byzantine commentary production within its historical and sociocultural contexts, surveying the available exegetical materials and highlighting the challenges researchers may encounter when studying them. Moreover, the volume opens new avenues for future research on the genre of commentaries in the late Byzantine period. Accordingly, every single study in this collective volume is very appreciated. However, a more extensive investigation into Byzantine scientific writings remains an important task for future scholarship. Also, the critical edition of hidden commentaries preserved in Byzantine manuscripts, alongside their thorough analysis within their respective contexts and the revision of outdated editions, remains an essential endeavour.

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Historical writing should never be one-dimensional, it should abstain from whites and blacks, from simplification that is bound to result in some sense of