

Two Notes on Byzantine Scholarship

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I

The Vienna Dioscorides and the History of Scholia

A FEW YEARS AGO I tried to demonstrate that scholia may have assumed their present form in late antiquity.¹ This was the traditional view, but had been generally abandoned after the powerful criticisms made by Zuntz.² Recently I came across evidence which seems not to have been used in discussion of the problem.

One of the crucial points at issue is whether books written in late antiquity were ever designed to accommodate in the margins commentary drawn from more than one ancient scholarly monograph. Although it is not possible to find among ancient books an indisputable example with the kind of composite scholia known from manuscripts of the ninth century or later, at least one ancient book (*POxy.* 2258 of Callimachus) exhibits enough marginal commentary to suggest that such books may have existed before the middle Byzantine period.

In this context it would have been appropriate to cite also the Vienna Dioscorides (*ms. med.gr.* 1), which can be dated to the year A.D. 512 or thereabouts. This famous herbal has a feature of great significance for the present purpose. The large format of the page (360/370 × 300 mm.) often leaves a good deal of empty space beneath the text, which consists of a description of one plant. The scribe has sometimes used this space to insert in a smaller script notes drawn from two other authorities on pharmacology, Galen and Crateuas. Whether the format was planned in advance for this purpose or to allow for large-scale illustrations must remain uncertain. By an oversight these marginal additions are not recorded in the most accessible recent descrip-

¹ "A Chapter in the History of Scholia," *CQ* n.s. 17 (1967) 244–56.

² G. Zuntz, "Die Aristophanes-Scholien der Papyri," *Byzantion* 13 (1938) 631–90, 14 (1939) 545–614.

tion of the manuscript,³ but those interested should consult either of the two facsimiles that now exist.⁴ The quotations of Galen occur on folios 16^r, 20^r, 22^r, 23^r, 24^r, 25^r, 28^{rv}, 30^v, 32^r, 34^r, 35^r, 38^r, 39^r, 42^r, 73^r, 74^r, 75^r, 76^r, 82^v, 94^v. Excerpts from Crateuas are found on 18^r, 19^v, 25^r, 26^r, 29^r, 31^r. On 71^r and 72^r there are excerpts without an author's name. What is more important is that on a few folios, 27^r, 30^r, 33^r, 40^r, there are two such excerpts, one from each author. The use of material from more than one source in this way is a most important step in the formation of marginal scholia. In the Vienna Dioscorides we see the process in embryo. The possibility that the same process was occurring in other books of large format produced at the time must be seriously entertained. The significance of the marginal notes for the history of scholia needs no further comment.

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³ H. Hunger/O. Kresten, *Katalog der griechischen Handschriften der Oesterreichischen Nationalbibliothek II* (Vienna 1969) 37–41.

⁴ Ed. J. von Karabacek (Leiden 1906), and (in colour) H. Gerstinger (Graz 1966–70).

II

Photius' *Bibliotheca*: a Supplementary Note

RECENTLY I suggested that Photius' statements about the circumstances in which he compiled the *Bibliotheca* may deserve to be taken at their face value.¹ The chief difficulty lies in his assertion that he composed from memory. I cited a modern example to show that such prodigious powers of memory are not necessarily to be regarded as fictitious. Even if we do not take Photius literally at his word, his claim may be largely true. The purpose of this note is to insist on the value of the modern analogy, which has not been fully understood in some quarters, and to mention some other cases which have since come to my notice and may be relevant.

The reason for citing Lord Macaulay as an analogy to Photius is the statement by his biographer that as a young man he could retain in his memory anything that sufficiently interested or amused him. This should not be taken to refer only to verse, where metre undoubtedly assists memory; S. Impellizzeri in a reply to my note² forgets that *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a work of prose and does not notice the other prose example that I gave. I have no doubt that Macaulay could repeat, with little or no variation from the correct text, substantial portions of many other books. And he is not the only person in modern times of whom similar feats are recorded. Scaliger knew the *Iliad* by heart, and Casaubon said of him "nihil legerat, quod non statim meminisset."³ Porson evidently knew by heart enormous quantities of English, Greek and Latin verse and prose.⁴

It is just possible that other Byzantine scholars should be regarded as possessing powers of memory of approximately the same order as Photius. In his new edition of Eustathius' commentary on the *Iliad* M. van der Valk comes to the conclusion that a high proportion of his quotations from classical literature were made from memory.⁵ Van

¹ "The Composition of Photius' *Bibliotheca*," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 451-55.

² *RivStBizNeoell* 16-17 (1969-70) 64 n.2.

³ Sir J. E. Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Cambridge 1903-08) II.204.

⁴ D. L. Page, *ProcBrA* 45 (1959) 233.

⁵ *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes* I (Leiden 1971) lvi n.6, lvii.

der Valk has accumulated other instances, one of which I have exploited above. His other Byzantine example is John Tzetzes,⁶ but here the claim is less easy to evaluate, since Tzetzes was not given to underestimating his own ability and does not make many *verbatim* quotations. On the other hand his examples from antiquity, Isocrates and Theophrastus, seem to rest on a dubious interpretation of Tzetzes, *Histories* 9.928–35; here I should be inclined to take the word *μνημονέστεροι* as meaning ‘memorable’.

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⁶ *Histories* 1.278–81 (ed. Leone); in *Ar. Ran.* 1318 (ed. Koster).