

ROSSANA GUGLIEMMETTI

TWENTY YEARS OF WORK ON THE SONG OF SONGS

AN APPRAISAL AND A PROPOSAL FOR EXEGETIC STUDIES

For scholars dealing with the Middle Ages, it is clear that Biblical exegesis represents a fundamental genre in order to understand medieval literature and, in general, medieval culture. During the Middle Ages, the Bible was the centre and a necessary reference for all forms of knowledge and social organization. Every field of study obligatorily referenced it; every human relation, as well as every ideological justification of power structures, was necessarily based on it. In the cultural production, among all the greatest *auctoritates*, the Bible was the only source whose authority could not be questioned, and thus biblical quotations were the main support for authors to discuss any argument. However, usually the references to the biblical passages do not come from a direct and individual approach to the Holy Scriptures: the activity of reading and quoting from the Bible involves necessarily the recourse to the interpretation of the biblical text as a traditional and authoritative background, which basically consists in exegetical writings. Learned people knew them at least in a popularized and scholastic form, if not through a close reading of the major commentaries. The Bible, for people who read and use it, is never *only* the Bible, but rather the synthesis of the biblical text and the whole *corpus* of biblical interpretations layered in the tradition.

Whoever reads and seeks to understand medieval writings is aware that the meaning and the purpose of every biblical quotation can be appraised

only in comparison with this set of potential sources of inspiration. A clear knowledge of the commentaries that were read in each time and place, and of their exact form, is a necessary condition for an informed assessment of the use of citations and biblical allusions, as texts of the most various kind employed them to argue and to convey their content. Despite their importance, the access to the sources of exegesis is still limited: a large part of the exegetic literature is hitherto unpublished and often not satisfactorily classified (a limit that generally affects ‘technical’ genres, more neglected than the fully literary ones). As is predictable, modern printed editions, and successive critical editions, have filtered a canon of major commentaries, from the patristic period onwards; then repertories have been based on that canon, which often includes false attributions and inappropriate choices of the manuscript basis.

The whole Medieval Latin literature is a victim of this inevitable hermeneutical circle moving between the limits of the published corpus and the limits of repertories. In this respect, the situation of exegesis is even worse, considering that it is characterized by the fluid multiplication of minor and derivative texts, as its object, the Bible, was the main object of reading and study, around which each centre or scholar was shaping its or his personal set of interpretative tools. In fact, whenever the interpretative history of a biblical book is studied systematically, a lot of minor writings – often anonymous – emerge, and show their key role in the transmission of the exegetic contents within the Middle Ages (consider, for example, the work of Roger Gryson on the exegesis of the Apocalypse¹, in addition to the case of the Song of Songs which is the main focus of this paper).

1. As a whole, in about twenty years Gryson has published the exegetical writings on the Apocalypse of Bede, Apringius of Beja, Cassiodorus, Beatus of Liébana, Victorinus of Pettau and Caesarius of Arles, the part which can be reconstructed (through indirect tradition) of Tyconius’ commentary and five anonymous expositions, showing the interrelations among all. See: Bedae Venerabilis *Opera* II. *Opera exegetica* 5. *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Turnhout 2001 (CCSL 121A); *Commentaria minora in Apocalypsin Johannis: scilicet Apringi Pacensis Tractatus de fragmenta, Cassiodori Senatoris Complexiones, Pauca de monogramma excerpta, incerti auctoris Commemoratorium, De enigmatibus ex Apocalypsi, Commemoratorium a Theodulpho auctum*, Turnhout 2003 (CCSL 107); Tyconii Afri *Expositio Apocalypseos; accedunt eiusdem expositionis a quodam retractatae fragmenta Taurinensia*, Turnhout 2011 (CCSL 107A); Beati Liebanensis *Tractatus de*

This lack of knowledge and systematization carries consequences of no little importance: the absence of thorough reconstructions of how the interpretations of each single Bible book was transmitted from one commentator to another, that is of the genealogical relationships between all the texts, authorial or anonymous. Some links in these chains have been recognized when a study or an edition have identified the sources of a given text, and its impact among other authors. However, the entire exegetic history of a book has never been traced: it would mean, drawing an outline to determine, on the basis of philological evidence, which sources have been used by each commentary, and for which new commentaries they have become a source in their turn, in a framework that encompasses them all. Individual scholars and editors have published sample works and expressed remarks about the need to place commentaries into a precise chain of dependencies, and to study the tradition of the sources of each commentary, as this tradition was known to its author: i.e. Gryson as already cited for the Apocalypse, Louis Holtz and Paul-Irénée Fransen for the *Collectedanea* by Florus of Lyon², Sara D'Imperio for Alcuin on the Ecclesiastes³. On the theoretical perspective of the editorial practice for the exegesis, I have myself published two contributions⁴. However, these are isolated in-

Apocalypsin, adiuv. M.-C. de Bièvre, 2 voll., Turnhout 2012 (CCSL 107B); *Incerti auctoris Glossa in Apocalypsin: e codice Bibliothecae universitatis Cantabrigiensis Dd. 10. 16*, Turnhout 2013 (CCSL 108G); *Victorini Poetovionensis Opera quae supersunt*, Turnhout 2017 (CCSL 5) – with the *Explanatio in Apocalypsin una cum recensione Hieronymi* at pp. 9-291; *Caesarii Arelatensis Expositio de Apocalypsi sancti Iohannis*, Turnhout 2019 (CCSL 105).

2. L. Holtz, *La minuscule marginale et interlinéaire de Florus de Lyon*, in *Gli autografi medievali. Problemi paleografici e filologici. Atti del convegno di studio della Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, Erice, 25 settembre - 2 ottobre 1990*, eds. P. Chiesa - L. Pinelli, Spoleto 1994, pp. 149-66; Id., *Le manuscrit Lyon, B. M. 484 (414) et la méthode de travail de Florus*, «Revue Bénédictine» 119 (2009), pp. 270-315; *Flori Lugdunensis Opera omnia VI. Expositio in epistolas Beati Pauli ex operibus s. Augustini 3. In epistolam secundam ad Corinthios, in epistolas ad Galatas, Ephesios et Philippenses*, ed. P.-I. Fransen et al., Turnhout 2011 (CCCM 220B).

3. *Le fonti nella recensione dei commentari biblici carolingi: Alcuino lettore di Girolamo*, «Filologia mediolatina» 15 (2008), pp. 19-43.

4. *Il commento Vox ecclesie al Cantico dei Cantici: il contributo delle fonti al riconoscimento della versione originale*, «Filologia Mediolatina» 15 (2008), pp. 45-67; e *L'editore di esegesi altomedievale tra fonti sommerse e tradizioni creative*, «Filologia Mediolatina» 20 (2013), pp. 25-68.

stances which have not led to a shared method and a common practice in this direction.

It is true that the availability of the authorial works – that were provided with the strongest and more solid theological content, and that have been most impactful – gives us a good picture of the fundamental lines of each Bible book's exegesis. But this is neither enough in order to understand the real contribution of each author, nor for the critical definition of the texts: both require the need to identify the sources actually used to compose each new comment, and the exact textual shape of them available to the author. In this respect, the 'minor' works take their revenge, and the lack of editions of them really affects the investigation.

There are two essential points of criticism, which the case study of the Song of Songs manifests with full evidence. First, there is a high risk of not recognizing the real sources of an individual work, and thus to see false filiations between two similar but independent texts. Once again, this is by no means a problem of exegesis only, but it tends to increase in the genres characterized by a typical imitative texture and by the literal repetition of extended textual sections. Second, when preparing the critical edition of a specific text, if the manuscript tradition of its sources is not yet known, inevitably the textual variants are liable to be misinterpreted. An author may have drawn from the manuscripts of his sources some readings no longer attested within the printed editions and the critical apparatus of the sources themselves, so that, at first sight, we regard them as erroneous.

To date, the only systematic inventory of exegetical writings and their manuscript transmission is still Friedrich Stegmüller's *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi*⁵, impressive for its capacity to store a colossal amount of information, but now obsolete: in the half century since it was published, a lot of new critical editions and discoveries of new texts, several identifications of multiple redactions and textual shapes, and many new attributions of anonymous or wrongly attributed works have followed one another. It is

5. Madrid, 1950–1961; the repertory is accessible as a digital resource at <http://repbib.uni-trier.de/cgi-bin/rebihome.tcl>. Hereafter, the reference will be *RBMA*.

only occasionally that these new acquisitions have been integrated and systemized into new tools (for their nature partial and not devoted specifically to exegetical literature) such as the several *Claves*, geographical handlists⁶, thematic repertories⁷, and the digital archive MIRABILE with all the databases it now includes⁸. This mass of new information and details may often escape scholars who are no specialists of exegesis, who still largely rely on Stegmüller for orientation, without carrying out the extensive complementary research needed in order to integrate it. The newer tools, in their turn, sometimes present contradictions in the data, due to the chronological gap between them (examples to follow).

Therefore, the problem is twofold: on the one hand, a lot of work is still needed to widen the *corpus* of edited works; on the other hand, it would be necessary to promote a new systematic effort of census and of synthesis – however, such a result would rely on the achievement of the first goal, but at the same time would be the best condition to attain it.

6. Just to mention the most important ones: *Clavis patrum Latinorum*, eds. E. Dekkers - E. Gaar, Turnhout-Steenbrugge 1995 (from now on *CPL*); *Clavis Patristica pseudepigraphorum Medii Aevi*, 4 voll., ed. I. Machielsen, Turnhout 1990-2003 (from now on *CPPM*); *Clavis des auteurs latins du moyen age. Auctores Galliae, 735-987*, eds. M.-H. Jullien - F. Perelman, Turnhout 1994- (from now on *CAG*), at its fourth volume in 2015; *Clavis scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi: auctores Italiae (700-1000)*, ed. B. Valtorta, Firenze 2006; M. C. Díaz y Díaz, *Index scriptorum Latinorum medii aevi Hispanorum*, 2 voll., Salamanca 1958-1959; *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature, 400-1200*, eds. M. Lapidge - R. Sharpe, Dublin 1985; R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Turnhout 1997.

7. *Bibliotheca Hieronymiana Manuscripta: la tradition manuscrite des oeuvres de saint Jérôme*, ed. B. Lambert, 4 voll., Steenbrugge 1969-1972; R. Guglielmetti, *La tradizione manoscritta dei commenti latini al Cantico dei Cantici (origini-XII sec.) - Repertorio dei codici contenenti testi inediti o editi solo nella Patrologia Latina*, Firenze 2006 (book + database); *La trasmissione dei testi latini del Medioevo. Mediaeval Latin Texts and Their Transmission. Te.Tra*, 6 voll., eds. L. Castaldi - P. Chiesa, Firenze 2004-2019; *TraPat. Traditio Patrum. The Textual Transmission of the Latin Fathers, I. Scriptores Hispaniae*, ed. E. Colombi, Turnhout 2015 (this is the first of a series of volumes that will include all the geographical areas in which the *CPL* is organized).

8. <http://www.mirabileweb.it>, that include also the data from *BISLAM. Bibliotheca scriptorum Latinorum Medii recentiorisque Aevi / Repertory of Medieval and Renaissance Latin authors*, ed. R. Gamberini, Firenze 2003, with the new edition of 2010 and the addition of 2015; and *C.A.L.M.A. Compendium auctorum Latinorum Medii Aevi (500-1500)*, Firenze 2000-; «Medioevo latino. Bollettino bibliografico della cultura europea da Boezio a Erasmo (secoli VI-XV)», published since 1980.

The experience of a twenty-years research on the early medieval exegesis of the Song of Songs proves to be an instance of such a paradox: a project that has gradually taken shape beyond its initial intentions and of which it is now time to take stock. I take the liberty of recalling here this personal experience because it sums up, I think, precisely the limits, the stumbling blocks, the frustrations that the working conditions just described impose upon the philologist (among them: mistakes in the critical reconstruction of the texts; misleading evaluation of each author's knowledge and exegetical method, confusions between different commentaries and vice-versa) – and together, it suggests some possibly different ways to experiment.

A first recognition in the history of the Song's exegesis⁹ has exposed a series of confusions and loose ends in the identification and attribution of the different texts that have suggested to me an ambitious idea, however naïve it might be (I can say that today): the creation of a new repertory limited to this biblical book, that – at least for it – could assess the number of commentaries dating up until the 12th century still unpublished or edited only in the *Patrologia Latina*. With these premises, what I will define *Project n. 1* (the numbering will help for the final outcome) began in 2000. Here follows the situation of the bibliography related to the texts I was going to directly deal with. For each, I will also briefly outline the results that the checks on the tradition have brought about not only within this first project, but also all the others that came out of it¹⁰.

9. The research was related to the critical edition of a 12th-century commentary, then published in 2002: Gilberto di Stanford, *Tractatus super Cantica Canticorum - L'amore di Dio nella voce di un monaco del XII secolo*, Firenze 2002.

10 Thanks to these in-depth examinations, some of the manuscripts presented here separately turned out to be witnesses of a same text, as explained below; however, we maintain this presentation because it is the one still found in the *Repertorium Biblicum* and in the other repertories and studies.

Alcuin

Editions – PL 100, 639–64, that draws the text from Frobenius Forster's edition of 1777¹¹, which is at its turn a reprint of Patrick Young's edition (1638)¹²; this text relies on a manuscript that was held at the time in the Royal Library in London (currently not identified).

RBMA – N° 1092 records three mss.; n° 1092,1 of the *Supplementum*, upon remarks provided by Helmut Riedlinger¹³, refers to n° 5266 as a *redactio brevior*: this is the text also known as Ps-Isidore of Sevilla (see below).

Further sources – The CAG II, ALC 15, on the same basis, identifies a *recensio* 1 (*longior*), with three witnesses (two of them have been already recorded by Stegmüller, the third was unknown); and a *recensio* 2 (*brevior*), witnessed by 27 mss., including the third ms. recorded by Stegmüller, and the three he referred to the Ps-Isidore. The CPPM treats the subject within Isidore's entry (see below). CALMA ALC I n° 10 proposes again the existence of a *recensio prima*, identical to PL 100, and of a *recensio altera* identical to the Ps.-Isidore.

Knowledge to date – The double *recensio* is a historiographic flaw: there is only one redaction in the manuscripts, and it is the one published under the name of Isidore; the PL 100 form is due to a later interpolation (if we want to call it a redaction, it is not the first – possibly, not even medieval).

Pseudo-Bede

Editions – None.

RBMA – N° 1672 records two mss., Heiligenkreuz, 234 and Zwettl, 269 (hence = H and Z)

Further sources – In the paragraph devoted to the anonymous text of ms. Paris, lat. 2822 (see below), Riedlinger remarks that this text is to a large extent identical not only to that of the two mss. under consideration, but also to that of ms. Bruxelles 479¹⁴.

11. *Beati Flacci Albini seu Alcuini abbatis (...) opera*, Ratisbona 1777.

12. *Gilberti Foliot episcopi Londinensis Expositio in Canticum canticorum, una cum Compendio Alcuini; nunc primum e bibliotheca regia in lucem prodit, opera et studio Patricii Junii bibliothecarii regii*, Londini 1638 (notably from p. 275).

13. *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche in den lateinischen Hoheliedkommentaren des Mittelalters*, Münster 1958, p. 89 note 1. Riedlinger's monography – although its title highlights only that the research topic regards a specific aspect of the exegesis of the *Song* – provides a lot of valuable remarks both about the tradition of the texts, and about the network of relationships between them; frequently, Riedlinger's insights have provided the necessary ground to allow further assessments of the matter.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 90 note 1.

Knowledge to date – The Bruxelles ms. is confirmed to be a third witness of the text; this commentary was written in the first half of the 9th century and proves to be a compilation from Alcuin and from the anonymous of ms. Paris, lat. 2822.

Justus of Urgell

Editions – PL 67, 961-994 (ep. I from Luc D'Achéry's *Spicilegium*, and commentary from Marguerin de la Bigne's *Bibliotheca Patrum*¹⁵); PLS vol. IV p. 1, coll. 235-237 (ep. II and prologue from García Villada's edition¹⁶).

RBMA – N° 5332 + *Supplementum* registers 22 mss., with the *Supplementum* distinguishing no less than three versions: a first *recensio* corresponding to the PL edition, a *recensio longior* found in one of the mss., and a third *recensio brevior* identified in the ms. Paris, lat. 2822 (see below). The repertory also advises that Justus has been employed by Angelomus of Luxueil, and refers to ns. 1672 (Pseudo-Bede) and 9621 (ms. London, Harley 213, for which the reader is merely directed back to the Paris, lat. 2822, suggesting that they contain a very similar text).

Further sources – Riedlinger, as the *RBMA*, identifies a *recensio longior*; among the authors that employed Justus' commentary, he counts the anonymous Paris, lat. 2822 and lat. 2673 (see below), Alcuin and the XIV century Augustinian monk John of Sulmona¹⁷. Eva Schulz-Flügel, within the *prolegomena* to her prospective edition of the Song in the *Vetus Latina*¹⁸, ascribes to the *recensio brevior* the other printed editions and some of the known witnesses. The *CPL* 1091 does not mention any existence of different redactions.

Knowledge to date – The foregoing was misleading: there is no multiple redaction; Justus has not been directly employed neither by Angelomus, nor by John.

Pseudo-Isidore of Seville

Editions – PL 83, 1119-1132, from the edition in the *opera omnia* of Isidore by Faustí Arévalo¹⁹, who picked up the text contained in all the previous editions and, correctly, allocates it to the Appendix collecting the spurious works.

15. L. D'Achéry, *Spicilegium sive collectio veterum aliquot scriptorum qui in Galliae Bibliothecis maxime Benedictinorum latuerant*, Parisiis 1655-1677, t. III, pp. 119-20; and *Sacra bibliotheca sanctorum patrum supra ducentos, qua continentur, illorum de rebus divinis opera omnia et fragmenta, quae partim nunquam hactenus, partim ita ut raro iam extarent excussa: in perfectissimum corpus coaluerunt. Distincta in tomos octo (...) per Margarinum de la Bigne*, Parisiis MDLXXVI, t. VI coll. 471-98.

16. Z. García Villada, *Historia Ecclesiastica de España* II 2, Madrid 1933, App. I, pp. 265-6.

17. *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche* cit., pp. 62-4, 89 note 1, and, as for the anonymous and John, 90-2 e 356-7 respectively.

18. *Canticum canticorum* 1. *Einleitung*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1992, pp. 74-5.

19. Faustí Arévalo, *Sancti Isidori Hispalensis episcopi opera omnia denuo correctata et aucta...*, Roma 1797-1803.

RBMA – N° 5266 + *Supplementum* records three witnesses in all.

Further sources – As already mentioned, Riedlinger regards the text as an abridgement of the commentary by Alcuin; on these grounds, the *CPL* definitively rejects any Isidorian attribution. The *CPPM* assigns two items of the Isidorian section, ns. 2371a and 2371b, to the two versions: the first one is still ascribed to Alcuin, while for the second the date of the 9th century is proposed. See above for *CAG* II ALC 15.

Knowledge to date – See Alcuin above.

Anonymous Arras, Bibliothèque Municipale, 235

Editions – None.

RBMA – No mention.

Further sources – The catalogue of the Bibliothèque Municipale ascribes the text to Bede (surely because the text is next to another work by Bede in the manuscript)²⁰.

Knowledge to date – This is the same commentary as the one transmitted by the ms. Paris, lat. 15679 (see below).

Anonymous Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 76

Editions – None.

RBMA – Registered at n° 11558.

Further sources – The catalogue of the Palatini mss. collection does not propose any identification; from *incipit* and *explicit*, however, it is possible to argue that the prologue is similar to that of the anonymous text transmitted in two mss. from Orléans and Wolfenbüttel (see below) and that the *explicit* coincides with Alcuin's one²¹.

Knowledge to date – The text is an epitome of the anonymous text in Orléans and Wolfenbüttel, it is mutilated, and put side by side with a quire that conveys the final part of the Alcuinian commentary.

Anonymous Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, B. 3

Editions – None.

RBMA – No mention.

20. *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des Départements* IV, Paris 1872, pp. 104-5.

21. *Codices Palatini Latini Bibliothecae Vaticanae*, I (codd. 1-921), cur. H. Stevenson jr. - I. B. De Rossi, Città del Vaticano 1886 (repr. 1975), p. 13.

Further sources – The text is already recognized as an epitome of Bede's one²².
 Knowledge to date – Confirmed.

Anonymous Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, 56 – Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Novi 535.18

Editions – None.

RBMA – No mention.

Other repertoires – In his renowned *Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter*²³, Bischoff records the text besides his numbering; the editors of Apponius and Gregory of Elvira identify in this text an important instance of indirect tradition of those two authors²⁴.

Knowledge to date – There is a third witness, that conveys an epitome (see above ms. Vaticano); the sources are confirmed, but not the Irish origin.

Anonymous Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 2673

Editions – None.

RBMA – Recorded at item n° 10352.

Further sources – According to Riedlinger²⁵, this text is an abridgement of the commentaries by Bede and Justus of Urgell.

Knowledge to date – Confirmed.

Anonymous Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 2822

Editions – None.

RBMA – Registered at item n° 10365; the n° 9621, regarding the commentary of the ms. London, Harley 213, contains a reference to n° 10365, but here a similar reference to n° 9621 is missing.

Further sources – Riedlinger²⁶ knows the text of Paris ms., recognizes that it closely depends on Justus of Urgell, and remarks that Angelomus of Luxeuil made

22. See, lastly, *Die Mittelalterlichen Handschriften der signaturengruppe B in der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf*, eds. E. Overgaauw – J. Ott – G. Karpp, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 45-52.

23. In *Mittelalterliche Studien: ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, 1, Stuttgart 1966, pp. 229-69, p. 239.

24. Apponii *In Canticum Cantorum expositio*, ed. B. de Vregille – L. Neyrand, Turnhout 1986 (CCSL 19), pp. xxxiv-xxxvi; and *Epithalamium, sive Explanatio in Canticis canticorum*, ed. E. Schulz-Flügel, Freiburg im Breisgau 1994, pp. 68-70 e 268-273.

25. *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche* cit., p. 89 note 1.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-2.

use of it; Silvia Cantelli's inquiry on the sources of Angelomus confirms this information²⁷.

Knowledge to date – It has been confirmed that the mss. from Paris and London convey the same text, and two further and later witnesses (see below) do as well; but this text was the source of the 'Pseudo-Bede' (see above), not directly of Angelomus.

Anonymous Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 15679

Editions – None.

RBMA – No mention.

Further sources – The presence of an *abbreviatio* of Origen's commentary in this ms. (which is the exegetic miscellany arranged by Theodulph of Orléans) was reported by Michael Gorman²⁸. The remaining part of the section about the Song has been obtained by adding to the Origenian epitome, without any mark of the switch, the commentary by Justus of Urgell, from the exact point where the Origenian text stopped.

Knowledge to date – This is not an isolated epitome; on the contrary, the fusion between Origenes and Justus was already in existence, and is witnessed by the anonymous of Arras ms. too (see above).

Anonymous Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1110

Editions – None.

RBMA – No mention.

Further sources – The catalogue of Wien's manuscripts records the commentary without any other remark²⁹.

Knowledge to date – The ms., actually held in Naples (ex Vindob. lat. 28), transmits the same text as *RBMA* 9060 (see below, Anonymous: *Vox est synagogae*).

Anonymous: incipit *Vox est synagogae*

Editions – None.

RBMA – N° 9060 registers three witnesses.

27. *Angelomo e la scuola esegetica di Luxeuil*, 2 voll., Spoleto 1990, specifically pp. 387-426 for the chart of the sources.

28. M. M. Gorman, *Theodulf of Orléans and the Exegetical Miscellany in Paris Lat. 15679*, «Revue Bénédictine», 109 (1999), pp. 278-323, p. 304.

29. *Tabulae codicum manuscritorum, praeter graecos et orientales, in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi asservatorum*, I (codd. 1-2000), Wien 1864 (repr. Graz 1965), pp. 195 and 197.

Knowledge to date – There are three further witnesses (the ms. *olim* Wien 1110 is among them), as well as an enlarged redaction in the ms. Napoli, ex Vindob. lat. 15 (*olim* Wien 739).

Most of the writings included in the list are anonymous or wrongly attributed writings, while the remaining are authorial works for which multiple redactions have been signalled. The latter ones required the greatest effort of rearrangement, also considering the dimension of their manuscript tradition. As soon as the verifications on the witnesses had revealed a series of important problems with regard to the *status quaestionis*, my attention was drawn to the situation of Alcuin. First of all, no manuscript seemed to correspond to the edition in PL 100 – traditionally considered the authentic one – not even the codex assigned to it by the *RBMA* and *CAG*. Moreover, the *CAG* incorrectly identifies the ms. London, British Library, Royal 5. E. XIX as the witness used by Young for the edition that later was to be integrated in PL 100 (even though it encompasses it among the manuscript of the *brevior!*). Furthermore, the same *CAG* records six manuscripts actually not relevant to the text under consideration – among them are the mss. H and Z recorded in *RBMA* 1672 (the ‘Pseudo-Bede’) – while it omits as many witnesses that would have emerged later³⁰.

This last observation opened another front: the *CAG*, in fact, had some reason to connect these two manuscripts closely with Alcuin, because their content clearly depends upon him. But, just as clearly, it is evident that they transmit a different commentary, at the same time related to the one recorded in *RBMA* items ns. 9621 and 10365 (mss. Paris, lat. 2822 and London, Harley 213), as correctly reported by Riedlinger.

In this way, from *Project n. 1* two secondary branches originated, that seemed necessary to solve the above-mentioned questions: *Project n. 2*, aimed at the critical editions of Alcuin’s *Compendium* and of what was supposed to be an abridgement of it; *Project n. 3*, aimed at a critical edition of the two collateral commentaries (*RBMA* 1672 and 9621+10365). The col-

30. For more details on what is mentioned here and beyond, I refer to the edition: Alcuin, *Commento al Cantico dei cantici* – con i commenti anonimi *Vox ecclesie* e *Vox antiquae ecclesie*, Firenze 2004.

lation of all the witnesses has allowed an easy solution to the different ‘mysteries’ connected to these texts. In fact, the 17th-century editor of Alcuin had the extraordinary misfortune to pick up an interpolated manuscript, which extended the first chapters of Alcuin’s original text with further parts taken from Bede: this means that a real ‘shorter version’ never existed, because the alleged ‘shorter version’ – the Pseudo-Isidore in PL 83 – is nothing but the original text.

It has been possible to confirm that *RBMA* 9621 and 10365 are the same commentary (with the incipit *Vox ecclesiae*), effectively dependent upon Justus of Urgell, but also for some sections upon Gregory the Great, and above all upon Gregory of Elvira for the first part – an aspect that had not been brought into light before, because this anonymous text was unpublished and this relation is not as evident as that with Justus. The commentary probably dates from the 8th century in its primitive version, still attested by the London manuscript, while the Parisian manuscript features a slightly extended version.

Finally, *RBMA* 1672 (with the incipit *Vox antiquae ecclesiae*) is a compilation from both Alcuin and *Vox ecclesiae*; this compilation is the actual source employed by Angelomus of Luxeuil, and not Alcuin and the Paris lat. 2822 independently; for this reason it is possible to date it in the first half of the 9th century. In 2004, the outcomes of *Project n.2* and *Project n.3* were published in the above mentioned edition of the commentary by Alcuin and the two anonymous ones³¹.

Meanwhile *Project n.1*, the repertory, continued, and a *Project n.4* originated both from the work on these three texts, connected to Justus of Urgell, and from the necessities raised by the repertory itself (remember the problem, also for him, of multiple redactions): this new project was directed at the edition of Justus himself. Moreover, two further works were connected with Justus of Urgell: the Anonymous *RBMA* n. 9060 (Incipit *Vox est synagogae*, dating back to the beginning of the 12th century) – whose explicit coincides with that of Justus’ text – and the Anonymous *RBMA* 10352 (ms. Paris, lat. 2673), according to the report of Riedlinger.

31. Alcuin, *Commento al Cantico dei cantici* cit.

The editions of these two anonymous commentaries became, at this point, *Project n. 5* and *Project n. 6*.

Nonetheless, these new 'branches' were expected to require a long effort, and it was no longer possible to wait with the publishing of the repertory (because of contingent reasons): hence, in 2006 the volume *La tradizione manoscritta dei commenti latini al Cantico dei Cantici (origini-XII sec.) – Repertorio dei codici contenenti testi inediti o editi solo nella Patrologia Latina* came into light as the results of *Project n. 1*³². Likewise, 2006 saw the edition of the commentary of ms. Paris lat. 2673³³ (i.e. *Project n. 6*, that in the *Repertorio* was still considered unpublished); here it has been possible to add Apponius and Gregory the Great to the already known sources, i.e. Justus and Bede. Except for the last one, and for the two commentaries edited with Alcuin, the other seven aforementioned Anonymous commentaries have remained recorded as they were in the previous bibliography, since the possibility of a direct investigation on each of them was lacking (with the exception of ms. Wien 1110, assigned to the comment *RBMA* 9060, thanks to the *Project n. 5* that was in progress at the time). As we will see, this represents the weakest point of the work.

In 2008 the Anonymous of *Project n. 5* was published³⁴: it is transmitted by six manuscripts, most of which are of Italian origin. Among the four already known, it has been possible to correct the shelf-mark and the holding Institution for the 'Viennese', currently Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, ex Vindob. lat. 28; moreover, the dependence on Justus has been confirmed, as well as those on Haimo of Auxerre, Origen, Gregory the Great, Alcuin, and Robert of Tombalena.

Meanwhile, *Project n. 4* was producing its first results, with consequences for that which had already been published. For the section based on Justus, the collations imposed a review of some textual choices made at the time of the *Vox ecclesiae* commentary's publication: once the branch of the tradi-

32. Printed book with CD-Rom, Firenze, SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo.

33. *L'esposizione sul Cantico dei Cantici del ms. Paris, BNF lat. 2673*, «Acme - Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano» 59 (2006/2), pp. 93-136.

34. *Un commento anonimo al Cantico dei Cantici (XI-XII secolo)*, Spoleto 2008.

tion used by the Anonymous was recognized, it has been possible to note that many readings emended as archetypical errors were actually readings inherited from the copy Justus used, and also some choices of *selectio* have, as a result, been deemed incorrect. Hence, an *errata corrige* should be provided: it has been added as an appendix to a paper about the methodological approach to the ecdotal use of the sources, published in 2008³⁵. Above all, this case highlighted the dimensions of a problem, in theory clear since the beginning, but that has become progressively more evident with the practice: i.e. the essential fragility of editing a single text on its own, without taking into account the whole *corpus* of commentaries linked to it, and without the support of the most complete knowledge of the sources' tradition – the entire constellation of sources available for each author, among which it is necessary to identify those that were actually employed. Ideally, the solution would be a virtuous circle between simultaneous census and editions of the entire exegetical corpus referred to the single biblical book. But I will return more precisely to this point at the end of the survey.

In the instance of the Song of Songs, with the exception of the authors edited at any rate in the PL, many anonymous works required a deeper investigation; although it was impossible to deal with every commentary produced throughout the whole medieval period (at a certain point, their number started to constantly increase), the years dedicated to the exegesis in High Middle Ages (or to its major later 'dependencies', as it was in *Project n. 5*) allowed – or rather, in a certain sense imposed –, the carrying out of at least a partial project, i.e. the edition of all the minor comments until the Carolingian age. This was *Project n. 7*: actually the sum of multiple single projects, because the comments of the mss. Arras 235, Città del Vaticano, Pal. lat. 76, Düsseldorf B. 3, Orléans 56 – Wolfenbüttel, Novi 535.18, and Paris, lat. 15679 still required in-depth studies at that time.

Finally, the edition of Justus (*Project n. 4*, the last edition still in progress)³⁶ was completed in 2011. The manuscripts have revealed a dif-

35. *Il commento Vox ecclesie* cit.

36. Giusto d'Urgell, *Explanatio in Cantica Cantorum. Un vescovo esegeta nel Regno Visigoto*, Firenze 2011.

ferent history from the one recorded by the repertories: there are no multiple redactions, as it was believed because of a series of misunderstandings. There is only a unique text, and its impact has been wider than it has been acknowledged up until then, even if the discovery of other intermediaries has required the reconsidering of the influence of Justus on Angelomus and John of Sulmona³⁷, for whom the media were respectively the *Vox antiquae ecclesiae* and the Anonymous *RBMA* 9060 (I had not yet realized this, by the time of the edition in 2008; yet another ‘missing link’ in the chain...). The Iberian exegete appears to depend on Gregory of Elvira, Apponius and perhaps Origen, whereas he was a source for Gregory the Great, Bede, Alcuin, Sigfrid of Corbie and for the Anonymous of Arras and Paris lat. 2673, in addition to the two we have mentioned above.

From that moment on, my possibility of working personally on *Project n. 7* has decreased dramatically, but new forces have since stepped in, i.e. students who, thanks to a series of dissertations, have progressively edited the Anonymous texts that were still unpublished, and have more clearly determined their role within the whole exegetic tradition of the Song. The text of Pal. lat. 76, after a direct study, resulted in containing an epitome of the commentary of mss. Orléans and Wolfenbüttel – with a lack from v. *Ct* 8,7 on – followed by a quire containing the last part of Alcuin’s commentary (*Ct* 7,2–8,14); the ms. Arras 235 has proven to contain the same text as the section about the Song in the Parisian lat. 15679 (epitome from Origen + part of Justus; this means that the two elements were not an impromptu combination arranged by Theodulf for his exegetical miscellany).

In 2015 Alessia Angelino published the epitome of Bede in the manuscript Düsseldorf B. 3³⁸. In 2020 Maria Galli published online an edi-

37. The work of John is still unpublished; see the ms. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, lat. 26792, ff. 11–95r.

38. *L’epitome del commento al Cantico di Bede nel ms. Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek B. 3*, «Filologia mediolatina» 22 (2015), pp. 105–47.

tion of the commentaries of Arras and Paris, and Federico de Dominicis the text contained in the manuscript Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, ex Vindob. lat. 28³⁹ (which turned out to be an extension of the Anonymous *RBMA* 9060, already published). A new edition by myself of the commentary *Vox ecclesiae* in its expanded version, two new Italian copies of which have been recently retrieved⁴⁰, is also forthcoming. The publication of the comment of Orléans – Wolfenbüttel (and of the codex Palatinus) is expected in the *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* by Pietro Baio (and for the first book by Alessia Berardi): it is now possible to affirm that among the sources of this comment, in addition to Apponius and Gregory of Elvira, there were Gregory the Great (via the *Testimonia* of Paterius) and Bede.

To complete the panorama of the ongoing research, it is worth mentioning the critical edition of Angelomus' commentary, being currently prepared by my colleague Luigi Ricci, and that of the Gregorian *Excerpta* by Taio of Saragozza, by Joel Varela Rodriguez⁴¹.

Although other authors, already published in the PL, still require new studies and a critical edition (above all Paterius, because of the material by Gregory which appeared in all the biblical commentaries throughout the whole Middle Ages; and, in particular for the Song of Songs, Haimo of Auxerre), we are able to affirm that the whole extant early medieval Latin exegesis on the Song is available, and most of it through critical editions. In this light, it has been now clarified that, on the one hand, a lot of interdependencies occurred only via some 'intermediaries'; on the other hand, that some authors, such as Gregory of Elvira and Justus of Urgell, actually had a wider impact than was previously believed. This was the aim of *Project n.7*, beyond the immediate 'internal' consequence of improving the

39. In the digital repository *E codicibus* by SISMEI: <http://ecodicibus.sismelfirenze.it>.

40. I am grateful to Federica Favero for informing me of the presence of the text in the mss. Roma, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, E 60 I (11th cent.) and Bergamo, Biblioteca Angelo Mai, MA 180 (12th cent.) – where, as in the Parisian lat. 2822, the text goes with the expositions of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the subject of her forthcoming critical edition.

41. The edition is the subject of his PhD thesis at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

correct textual reconstruction of each commentary: i.e., historians of both the Song's exegesis and the literature have now the tools to consider the entire production still preserved in its correlations, to evaluate the transmission of contents from one author to another and the working method of each exegete⁴².

To sum up, the following table shows in the left column the series of the publications which have arisen from the different projects, following the order in which they effectively appeared; in the right column, the order in which it would have been better to conclude them – if contingencies had not forced the *timing* differently:

2004 <i>Project n.2+3</i> – edition of Alcuin and Anonymous <i>Vox eccl.</i> and <i>Vox ant. eccl.</i>	<i>Project n.4</i> – edition of Justus
2006 <i>Project n.1</i> – Repertory	<i>Project n.2+3</i> – edition of Alcuin and Anonymous <i>Vox eccl.</i> and <i>Vox ant. eccl.</i>
2006 <i>Project n.6</i> – edition of Anonymous <i>RBMA</i> 10352	<i>Project n.6</i> – edition of Anonymous <i>RBMA</i> 10352
2008 <i>Project n.5</i> – edition of Anonymous <i>RBMA</i> 9060	<i>Project n.7</i> – edition of four other Anonymous commentaries
2011 <i>Project n.4</i> – edition of Justus	<i>Project n.5</i> – edition of Anonymous <i>RBMA</i> 9060
2015-20 <i>Project n.7</i> – edition of four other Anonymous commentaries	<i>Project n.1</i> – Repertory

In other words, a chronological order in the publication of the commentaries would have allowed a better use of each edition in order to study the sources of the following ones. The knowledge of Justus' tradition would have avoided some errors in the *constitutio textus* of the *Vox ecclesiae* (a risk that was possible to avoid in the edition of the Anonymous *RBMA* 9060,

42. I have published a possible synthetic diagram of this network, by taking into account also the recent acquisitions, in the appendix of «*Origenes: Osculetur me osculo oris sui*». *Le père (difficile) du Cantique des Cantiques du Moyen Age latin*, in *Transmission et réception des Pères grecs dans l'Occident, de l'Antiquité tardive à la Renaissance. Entre philologie, herméneutique et théologie: Actes du colloque international organisé du 26 au 28 novembre 2014 à l'Université de Strasbourg*, eds. E. Prinzivalli - F. Vinel - M. Cutino, Paris 2016, pp. 135-58. A previous version of the diagram was already present in *L'editore di esegesi altomedievale cit.*, where I outlined some of the methodological considerations here further analysed.

because it was prepared when the collations of Justus were already available). The Anonymous of the manuscript Naples, ex. Vindob. lat. 15 would have required to be studied at the same time with the direct witnesses of the Anonymous *RBMA* 9060. And, finally, the general repertory should have been published after the editions of all these texts, which would have allowed correction of some of the classifications, considering that anonymous texts not believed to be connected have proved to be versions of a single text. But it is equally true that, the repertory being intended to report only the unpublished texts, as a paradox the texts published in the meanwhile would have completely disappeared from it. Once again, we go back to the circularity between classification and edition already suggested.

This experience confirms that, because of its nature, the genre of exegesis requires a systematic approach, in order to take into account simultaneously several commentaries (namely, all those linked by a chain of dependencies); such an approach is not usually practised by scholars, and needs extraordinary resources. In fact, individual work habits and short term planning, which often characterize the research in the humanities due to the objective difficulty to create lasting teams, are a practical obstacle that becomes at the same time a methodological limit; on the contrary, the optimal way to deal with these texts would be a comprehensive work plan supported by the involvement of a cohesive group. Obviously, this proposed method cannot be fully performed by a single scholar under the normal working conditions allowed by university research, with resources being limited and disbursed in short terms (which forces the need to keep publishing again and again, regardless of the scientific needs of the investigation itself) – even considering additional resources such as students and colleagues occasionally involved in an individual project. Only strong teams provided with considerable funding may be able to tackle such a task, whose crucial point is precisely the chance of a collective and well-structured working practise.

Ideally, each biblical book would require a project of study able to integrate three goals, the first two of which could be mutually and progressively beneficial for each other. First, a renewed census of exegetical texts

and their manuscript transmission, intended to collect and summarize data scattered throughout the dozens of studies published in the half century that has followed the last inventory by Stegmüller, as well as the data obtained during this project itself. Second, an extensive program of integrated editions both of the several texts still unpublished, whose contribution to the history of exegesis has so far been either ignored or undervalued, and of the texts available only in unreliable printed editions. It is possible that some of them are already under the attention of other scholars, but in ideal conditions this should be a resource and not an obstacle. They could be invited to use the material collected for the project and the results of the work of the team for their editions, and at the same time to make available their knowledge and results in an exchange profitable for both. The third goal would be a reconstruction of the global picture of the transmission of knowledge about each Bible book, to clarify which were the sources and the fate of each commentary.

Taken together, these results would give a strong foundation both to the knowledge of the exegetic genre, and the assessment of the impact of the Bible in culture and literature. Knowing which sources the commentators actually had available, and in what precise textual form, will allow us to evaluate their working approaches, their degree of originality and their influence on the tradition. Understanding which commentaries circulated in different periods and places will allow us to evaluate the background of the use of the Bible and its interpretation in the writings of other genres, as well as in artworks. Moreover, rebuilding the relations between the various commentaries will contribute to the understanding of the paths of exchange and transmission of books over the whole medieval geographic space.

Ideally speaking, that is. In fact, we are aware of how hard is to implement what we envisage, because of time and funding reasons, and because of how difficult it is to establish the required scholarly network. Another problem cannot be ignored: significant results would come to light only slowly, at least in comparison with the set of close deadlines that characterizes scholarly work these days (and this affects even those who have a long-term position in Universities, since they must account for the funding received, and meet strict bibliometric requirements). A model of work im-

plying a project in progress for many years, and one willing to publish all the results simultaneously at the end would probably not be affordable. However, this problem could in part be avoided thanks to the opportunity of publishing online the provisional outcomes, in order to show to the community the progress of the research, while waiting for their final form⁴³. All texts to be edited could be made available in open access on a project website, and be stored there for the time needed by each edition to take its definitive shape in a traditional monograph or paper⁴⁴. The same website could be designed to host the updated census of the exegetical writings involved in the project and their manuscript tradition. The outcome in a website has the advantage of ensuring the widest accessibility and flexibility: the survey will thus remain open to continuous improvements and updates, which will incorporate the data emerging from new editions and studies even beyond the duration of the project. Perhaps, one day, a new *Repertorium Biblicum* could be arranged from the sum of a number of specific projects, that will be able to guide not through a chaotic bunch of materials not well inventoried and often badly edited, but by a tidy, overall overview of inventoried manuscripts and critical editions. Unlike what happens in the *RBMA*, it can be considered as a possibility to group the texts together not by author, but by biblical book: a kind of structure that is able to facilitate scholars in tracing the sources of single biblical commentaries, as well as in studying diachronically the interpretation of single Bible books and biblical passages.

The same approach may be extended to other research areas, where a combined study of a whole 'chain' of related works allows the investigation on each of them to take advantage of the inquiries on the others: commentaries on classic works, hagiography, treatises on medieval *artes* and disciplines, in other words, all the genres characterized by a stronger continuity and dependence from tradition.

43. I suggest something similar also in *Glosse bibliche e editori: una rassegna di problemi e soluzioni*, in *Forme di accesso al sapere in età tardoantica e altomedievale* VII, eds. M. Gioseffi - D. Paniagua, forthcoming.

44. I am not necessarily referring to digital editions with required additional task and technical knowledge, but to temporary critical texts accessible through pdf or basic html pages.

All of this – we repeat it once again – requires remarkable planning resources, as well as to implement a way of working which is not customary in the field of Humanities: namely, to work as a network, instead of individually. Considering the advanced tools we have at our disposal these days⁴⁵, perhaps it is an experiment worth trying.

45. Also in terms of ease of remote contacts and accessibility of materials, namely the increasing mass of manuscripts, editions and printed tools digitized online

ABSTRACT

TWENTY YEARS OF WORK ON THE SONG OF SONGS

The paper reconstructs a research experience that led to the *editio princeps* or to the first critical edition of many commentaries on the Song of Songs of the early Middle Ages, and to the clarification both of the relationships among themselves and of the relationships between them and the authors already published. The state of the census from which the work had started, often proved to be misleading, as was inevitable in the absence of critical editions; on the other hand, in order to make these editions effective and well founded, it proved necessary to carry them forward in parallel and make them interact. This specific experience is an example of how the exegetical genre – but in fact every literary genre made up of texts very dependent on each other – would benefit from the experimentation of a new working method: not through limited and independent census and edition projects, but through unitary projects, to be thought in teams, with the aim of an integrated census and publication of all the commentaries on the same biblical book not yet critically published. As in the case of the Song of Songs, such an effort promises to significantly transform both the reliability of the editions of the texts themselves, and our knowledge of the exegetical history of each book (with repercussions also on the evaluation of the specific contribution and *modus operandi* of each author).

Rossana Guglielmetti
Università degli Studi di Milano
rossana.guglielmetti@unimi.it