

Citation style

Camargo, Martin: Rezension über: Florian Hartmann / Benoît Grévin (eds.), *Ars dictaminis. Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Briefstillehre*, Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann Verlag, 2019, in: *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, 55 (2020), 2, S. 340-344, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36191/mjb/2020-55-2-14>, heruntergeladen über Website



copyright

This article may be downloaded and/or used within the private copying exemption. Any further use without permission of the rights owner shall be subject to legal licences (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

Ars dictaminis. Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Briefstillehre (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters), hg. von Florian Hartmann and Benoît Grévin, Stuttgart 2019 (Hiersemann), 720 S.

When I began to do original research on the *ars dictaminis*, the most comprehensive overview available was Chapter 5 of James J. Murphy's then recently published ›Rhetoric in the Middle Ages‹ (1974: 194–268); and that was still the case more than a decade later, when I was compiling a brief guide to the study of the *ars dictaminis* for the ›Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental‹. Along with my contribution to the Typologie (1991), Murphy's chapter remains a first destination for Anglophone scholars seeking more detailed orientation to the field than what an encyclopedia article provides, and its lasting value has been enhanced by Morris Tichenor's update in ›Rhetoric in the Middle Ages (1974): A Bibliographical Supplement to 2016‹, edited by James J. Murphy (2019: 81–135). Thanks to the combined efforts of Florian Hartmann, Benoît Grévin, and another thirteen scholars from France, Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic, we now have, in the book under review, what neither Murphy nor I could have produced a generation ago: a systematic and truly comprehensive guide to the vast body of dictaminal texts that survive from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries.

As the editors acknowledge, their achievement would not have been possible without the groundbreaking scholarship on the *ars dictaminis* that has been published over the past three decades, much of it by contributors to this volume. Along with more focused study of individual works, authors, and traditions, that essential scholarship includes several reference tools that map out the primary materials. Chief among these are Emil Polak's three-volume census of manuscripts (1993, 1994, 2015) and two repertories of authors and treatises, by Franz-Josef Worstbrock, Monika Klaes, and Jutta Lütten (1992) and by Claudio Felisi and Anne-Marie Turcan-Verkerk (2015). Much of the territory mapped by these works has yet to be explored, and even as the contributors to ›Ars dictaminis. Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Briefstillehre‹ (hereafter ›Handbuch‹) expertly survey what is known already, they constantly emphasize how much remains to be discovered.

Because the ›Handbuch‹ is directed to an audience that is not already conversant with the *ars dictaminis* and the scholarship on it, the editors begin with a co-authored Introduction (11–43) that provides a synopsis of the book's contents, starting with the complex task of defining the *ars dictaminis* and including overviews of previous scholarship and of the structure, dominant themes, and goals of the ›Handbuch‹ itself. Chief among those goals is to facilitate new scholarship that will fill the gaps in our knowledge of the primary texts as well as their relationship to the social and intellectual contexts that

shaped them and were shaped by them over a span of more than four centuries and across all regions of Europe: »Das Handbuch soll also primär ein Hilfsmittel für künftige Arbeiten sein, von denen hoffentlich eine Vielzahl folgen wird« (42).

Chapter 2 (45–332), the longest in the book, traces the history of the *ars dictaminis*, from the existing traditions out of which it arose and the earliest treatises in the 1080s through its coexistence with other epistolary theories and practices and its eventual decline by the sixteenth century. Following a roughly chronological order, the chapter is divided into twenty major sections, most of them defined by time-period and/or region (e.g. 2.4. France in the twelfth century), but others by a major figure (e.g. 2.2. Alberic of Montecassino, 2.7. Peter of Vineia) and in one case a subgenre (2.18. metrical *artes dictandi*). These sections can be read in sequence by those who seek the most comprehensive and up-to-date *Gattungsgeschichte* of the *ars dictaminis* available in print; but the individual sections are also written in a way that allows them to stand on their own, which results in a certain amount of redundancy across sections when they are read together or in combination with Chapters 3 and 4, which approach the same materials from different angles. The depth of coverage for individual authors and works varies, depending in part on the extent to which the person writing a given section relies on his or her own scholarship or summarizes that of others; but no important figure is omitted and many of those discussed will be unfamiliar even to scholars who have worked on the *ars dictaminis* for years. In all cases the best scholarship is cited, older misconceptions are corrected, current controversies are delineated if not resolved, and, perhaps most important to the chief goal of the ›Handbuch‹, gaps in the scholarship are identified. More than once we are told that the history of the *ars dictaminis* is largely unknown for entire regions (e.g. Central Europe [246] and France [265] in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), or that significant developments have never been studied systematically (e.g. the transition from Latin to the vernacular languages, 305).

The most frequently repeated explanation for the gaps in historical knowledge is the fact that so many primary texts, including some of the most influential ones, are available only in unreliable or incomplete editions, if they have been edited at all. At every turn, the contributors to Chapter 2 point to the need for critical editions grounded in careful study of the manuscript record. Accordingly, a separate Chapter 3 is devoted to the sorts of problems one encounters when editing dictaminal texts, whether theoretical treatises or collections of model letters (333–67). These range from the often profound changes made in texts with transnational reach as they were adapted to the needs of specific times and places of their reception, to the highly localized concerns of the many texts that exist in a single copy and appear to have had no impact

beyond the place and time of their creation. Such editing problems are first enumerated in an introductory section and then illustrated with five sample cases, representing a variety of text types dating from the earliest to the latest stages in the history of the *ars dictaminis* surveyed in Chapter 2.

Had it consisted only of the detailed chronological survey in Chapter 2 and the practical advice to aspiring editors in Chapter 3, the ›Handbuch‹ would have been an impressive achievement and an extremely valuable resource for future scholarship. Its value is increased by a lengthy Chapter 4, ›*Ars dictaminis* zwischen Theorie und Praxis‹ (369–612), devoted to what the editors call ›der Systematik der *ars dictaminis*‹ (42–43). Here the focus is more consistently on the directions in which scholarship on the *ars dictaminis* needs to go or has begun to go, especially the opportunities and challenges associated with a movement beyond the older, more exclusively philological approach centered on individual texts in isolation from the larger contexts that informed those texts and were informed in turn by them. To show how both dictaminal theory and practice were contextually determined, the chapter begins with complementary major sections on each. ›Das Regelsystem der *ars dictaminis*‹ (4.1) provides superb accounts of the origins and development of the two essential components of dictaminal theory – the rules for the parts of a letter and for the rhythmical cadences known as the *cursus*, as well as a theoretical component that frequently appears in *artes dictandi* but is not exclusive to them – the figures known as *colores rhetorici*. The history of dictaminal theory is here shown to be one characterized by great variations but also important continuities – not a linear evolution but a process in which innovations coexist with rather than supplant earlier formations. A much shorter second section, ›Anwendung beim Diktat – von der Theorie zur Praxis‹ (4.2), sketches some of the ways in which these three sets of theoretical rules may have been applied in epistolary practice, while conceding that ›Wie genau und in welchem Umfang die Regeln angewandt wurden, muss jedoch noch als weitgehend unbekannt gelten‹ (462).

To varying degrees, the same uncertainty applies to much of the research territory marked out in the remaining three sections of Chapter 4, due both to insufficient access to the relevant data and to methodological challenges. All three sections model the kinds of contextualizing research that are highlighted in Chapter 1 and evoked throughout Chapter 2. ›Orte der Wissensvermittlung‹ (4.3) situates the teaching and practice of the *ars dictaminis* within a variety of institutional contexts, including schools and universities, monasteries and convents, and chanceries, to show how the discipline adapted itself to different circumstances and requirements. ›Darstellung und Reflexion gesellschaftlicher Praktiken‹ (4.4) asserts that the *ars dictaminis* is a rich and largely unexploited source of insight into societal practices and supports the claim with

subsections on politics in the Italian city states (4.4.1), on private life as depicted in letters (4.4.2), on women and gender (4.4.3), and on German-language *ars dictaminis* as index of social hierarchy (4.4.4). Benoît Grévin provides a fitting conclusion to the book with a long and wide-ranging section on the many intersections between the *ars dictaminis* and other disciplines (4.5). The connections he explores include those with traditional disciplines, such as rhetoric, music, and law, as well as specifically medieval disciplines, such as the arts of poetry and preaching. Framing the entire discussion of specific disciplinary overlaps is a broader question about the definition of the *ars dictaminis* as a discipline, which was posed early in Chapter 1. Is it best understood as a collection of practical techniques for producing letters and documents, as most modern scholarship has regarded it, or can it be seen as a universal art of communication, a discipline that encompasses many or even all other disciplines, as some of its most influential medieval proponents claimed it was? A formidable obstacle to seizing the fascinating research opportunities disclosed in Chapter 4.5 is the multiplicity of disciplinary competencies each of them requires – an obstacle that probably can be overcome only by cross-disciplinary analogues of the collaboration that made the present volume possible.

The ›Handbuch‹ concludes with an array of tools for navigating its contents, most of them collected in an Appendix (613–711) that includes lists of medieval manuscripts and early printed books (617–27) and a bibliography of primary sources and secondary studies cited (629–92), as well as indices of medieval authors and works, persons, and places referenced in the main text (693–711). The ›Handbuch‹ does not have a subject index, an absence that is only partially filled by a detailed table of contents that lists every subheading, at the end of the volume (713–20). Using that table, for example, someone interested in medieval love letters could find the single subheading for ›Liebesbriefe‹ (4.4.2.2: 535), but not the other places where they are discussed without being mentioned in the titles of the respective subsections (e. g. 546–47, 557–58). Names of contributors are provided in the main text, only, following the sections they wrote. A separate list of contributors, with institutional affiliations and/or contact information, would have been a useful addition.

As is unavoidable in a book of this size and complexity, there are a smattering of minor typographical errors, none of them likely to impede comprehension, even for readers whose first language is not German. More serious but also difficult to avoid entirely are omissions from the Bibliography of items cited in the main text. I noticed two missing entries: ›Beach 2004‹ (543 n. 77) and ›Zingg 2012‹ (545 n. 85), which appear to be (in the ›Handbuch‹'s formatting): Beach, Alison (2004), *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria*, Cambridge; and Zingg, Roland (2012), *Die Briefsammlungen der Erzbischöfe von Canterbury, 1070–1170*.

Kommunikation und Argumentation im Zeitalter der Investiturkonflikte (Zürcher Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft 1), Wien.

Whether read in its entirety or consulted selectively, the ›Handbuch‹ is now the most comprehensive, systematic, and reliable resource available in any language to scholars who want to know what the *ars dictaminis* is, as well as why and how it might be relevant to their research interests. It almost certainly would get a wider readership if it were written in English; but scholars capable of doing the kinds of research it promotes will need strong command of Latin and so are likely to have at least a working knowledge of German. In any case, Anglophone medievalists whose research focuses on the *ars dictaminis* are ever fewer, despite a burgeoning interest in letters and ›epistolarity‹. If the *Handbuch* is to have its desired effect, as I hope it does, the new scholarship it envisages is likely to come primarily from Continental Europeans like the outstanding team of experts who joined forces to create it. Martin Camargo

Das Christentum im frühen Europa. Diskurse – Tendenzen – Entscheidungen (Millennium-Studien 75), hg. von Uta Heil, Berlin/Boston 2019 (De Gruyter), IX + 508 S.

Du 6 au 8 avril 2017 s'est tenu à Vienne un colloque interdisciplinaire dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche intitulé ›Die Formation des westlichen Christentums im frühen Mittelalter‹. Les organisateurs se sont posé la question de savoir »wie und in welcher Form der geographische Raum Europa im Übergang von der Spätantike zum Frühmittelalter erst christlich wurde« et »wie und in welcher Form das Christentum ›europäisch‹ wurde« (3). Une grande attention est accordée au développement de la théologie (4), alors que la période étudiée s'étend de 450 à 650 (mais Wolfram Kinzig a examiné des textes qui vont jusqu'au IX^e siècle inclus, bien qu'il s'agisse de textes qui ont une longue histoire, et Richard Price a pris en compte des documents qui vont jusqu'au VIII^e siècle inclus).

Dans une excellente introduction (3–31) Uta Heil et Volker Henning Drecoll présentent leur projet de recherche et les 19 communications faites au colloque. Ces études sont groupées sous cinq titres: ›Universal und regional‹, ›Konfisziert und kodifiziert‹, ›Bekennen und verdammen‹, ›Christen und Juden‹ et ›Gelehrtes und Gelerntes‹. Il n'est pas utile de reprendre ici une présentation des contributions l'une après l'autre; d'ailleurs, l'ampleur du volume rend cette tâche presque impossible. Je ne traiterai pas explicitement de chaque étude mais j'attirerai l'attention sur quelques thèmes récurrents.

La partie centrale du volume porte le titre ›Bekennen und verdammen‹. Uta Heil et Volker Henning Drecoll insistent sur l'importance de la réflexion