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Readers who approach this collection expecting papers on a wide range of technical handbooks will find themselves misled by the title. Out of 14 contributions, all but three focus, some rather narrowly, on rhetoric, which is the editor's main specialty and also the topic of a similar collection published by her in 2004.

The volume betrays its origin as conference proceedings in the usual ways: quality and pitch vary; the individual bibliographies at the end of each paper end up repeating themselves; and some papers could have done with a bit more finish. The order, which follows that of the conference program, is more or less chronological, from the fourth century BC to the early Middle Ages. The reader (at least, this reader) would have greatly benefited from a more extensive introduction by the editor, offering some general reflections and/or drawing some overall conclusions and/or—as seems customary for editors these days—giving an inkling of what the papers contain. To supply this latter, in what follows I will provide brief summaries of the individual articles, in the order in which they appear in the book. My reflections on the volume as a whole will come at the end.

Marie-Pierre Noël opens '*La place du judiciaire dans les premières τέχνηαι λόγων*' with the question, Were there two traditions of rhetoric in classical Greece, judiciary and non-judiciary? The latter tradition, more philosophically inclined, was taught by the sophists and thus emphasized oral performance and transmission. The former, on the other hand, was communicated through textbooks. Noël comes to the conclusion that the distinction did not necessarily reflect the state of things in classical Athens. Instead, it may have

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originated from the desire on the part of Plato to draw a line between rhetoric and philosophy, with his questioning, especially in *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*, of the status of rhetoric as a *techne* and, in particular, as a *politike techne*.

Two papers on Isocrates follow: Maddalena Vallozza, in her '*Isocrate, il πολιτικὸν πρᾶγμα e la τέχνη impossibile*', explores the possibility that he wrote a textbook of rhetoric, particularly given that there is a tradition attributing such a *techne* (here in the sense of written account of a *techne*) to him. Most scholars have rejected such a tradition as unreliable, but Vallozza is more interested in understanding how the attribution originated in the first place [20]. This leads her to an interesting analysis of the notion of *tetagmene techne*, which recurs in Isocrates' *Against the Sophists*, and of the issue of whether something like rhetoric can be formulated in terms of written and, hence, fixed rules and prescriptions ('*rigidi precetti di un manuale*') [20]. Again, Antonino M. Milazzo's '*L' A Demonico attribuito ad Isocrate*' describes the contents of a pamphlet attributed (perhaps spuriously) to Isocrates. Milazzo inclines for its authenticity [33], albeit admitting that the text was heavily reworked in the course of its manuscript tradition [36]. He underlines the significance of *Ad Demonicum*, which purports the importance of *paideia* for political life, for the history of ideas and a better understanding of fourth-century Athenian society.

The next two papers are linked by their emphasis on papyrological sources. Maria Rosaria Falivene's '*A scuola nell'Egitto tolemaico: testi dalla "biblioteca" di Al Hiba*', which is more than a fully argued article, is a programmatic declaration of intents, or, as Falivene herself says, a sketch of a research project [48], prefaced by some historiographical remarks on using papyri as evidence. The issue Falivene addresses is in itself extremely interesting: What were the textbooks for the first generation of Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt? She aims to reconstruct the content of ancient libraries through papyri, and her specific case-study is the library (or libraries) of Al Hiba, a town that perhaps had its own school of rhetoric. In '*Gli Hermeneumata. Testi scolastici di età imperiale tra innovazione e conservazione*', Eleonora Tagliaferro focuses in particular on a bilingual (Greek and Latin) text for language learning which was known as *Interpretamenta pseudodositheana* or *Hermeneumata* and probably dated largely to the

third century AD, with parts from the early fourth century. Tagliaferro relates this text to the wider issue of Roman literary education and briefly suggests that it addressed the necessity, arising in late antiquity, of learning Latin (a point also made by Lucia Calboli Montefusco in her contribution [127]). The practical character of the *Hermeneumata* is indicated by the fact that it provided no grammatical instruction; that in it verbs tends to be declined in the forms most commonly in use, rather than in all their possible forms [57]; and that it contains instances of spoken, everyday language.

Laurent Pernot's '*Gregorio di Nazianzo (or. 33, 6–7) e l'elogio retorico delle città*' discusses in detail a passage in one of the fourth-century AD bishop's speeches. Pernot argues that the text can be understood by relating it to a treatise attributed to the rhetorician Menander. In his contrast of small town and big city, Gregory appears to have followed a number of *topoi* put forth in Menander's work. The possibility of such a link points to the fact that the boundary between Christian and pagan literature at the time was blurred [79, 90].

A change in course from papers dealing with rhetoric is represented by Eleonora Rocconi's '*L'Introduzione pitagorica alla musica di Tolemeide di Cirene*', which discusses the extant evidence for a treatise on music written by a woman, Ptolemais. The title of the treatise along with some fragments has been preserved by Porphyry in his commentary on Ptolemy's *Harmonics*. The date of Ptolemais is uncertain, but Rocconi inclines for the early Empire, and 'certainly not after the first century AD' [101]. The transmitted title of her treatise and the fact that many women seem to have been associated with Pythagoreanism point to Ptolemais' philosophical affiliation. Yet, we know from Plato's *Republic* that Pythagorean musicologists downgraded the use of sensory experience in the study of music—experience however was at the core of Aristoxenus of Tarantum's investigations on sound. Now, Ptolemais cites the followers of Aristoxenus with little hint of disagreement, and could thus cast light on a phase of research where divergences between groups and methodologies were not yet crystallized [104–105]. The epistemic debate she reports on appears to have been much less polarized than it would seem from Plato, with both *kanonikoi* and *mousikoi* (the former more in the Pythagorean, the latter more in the Aristoxenian line) recognizing the role of *both* reason *and* sensory experience, while

formulating their relationship in different ways. Ptolemais even describes a third group of musicologists, who put reason and experience on the same footing [107]. Rocconi concludes with the following assessment: ‘Ptolemais of Cyrene’s *A Pythagorean Introduction to Music* thus presents itself (at least the parts that survive) as a handbook of rather good scientific calibre, careful in impartially describing the ancient music-theory scene [...] and correct [...]’ [108]. The article is accompanied by an appendix with Ptolemais’ fragments in Greek and an Italian translation. The interest of the topic is obvious, and, while Rocconi’s account of it seems persuasive, she does not push her argument very far, or take any big risks in, for instance, revisiting sources like Plato or the Hibeh papyrus in the light of Ptolemais’ fragments. Some lines of enquiry which I expected to be explored further are surprisingly left on the side: what role Ptolemais’ fragments play in Porphyry’s commentary is one; the second is Ptolemais’ gender itself, especially given that Nicomachus of Gerasa’s treatise on harmonics was dedicated to a woman (a fact Rocconi must be familiar with).

I admit that Paolo d’Alessandro’s piece ‘*Un’ interpretazione metrica varroniana da Cesio Basso a Rufino d’ Antiochia*’ defeated me. After several readings, my best guess is that d’Alessandro comes to the conclusion that a grammar text by Diomedes contains (*via* Caesius Bassus and Carisius) some fragments from Varro’s *De sermone latino* book 7. One wonders whether this—in itself important—result needed to be expressed in such cryptic, high-academic-style language that even a well educated native speaker is left in a bit of quandary about it. As it happens, I also had reservations, albeit of a different nature, about the next piece.

‘*La Disputatio de rhetorica et de virtutibus di Alcuino*’ shifts the chronological focus to the early Middle Ages, and to a text which is in the form of a dialogue between Charlemagne and Alcuin. Ancient sources for the *Disputatio* appear to include Cicero’s *De inventione*; and Lucia Calboli Montefusco discusses whether and how Alcuin could have had access to this text [129–131], and what he seems to do with it. Unfortunately, a great deal of the paper is devoted to an indictment of the medieval scholar’s understanding of his sources and of his knowledge of rhetoric. Several instances where Alcuin diverges from his (alleged) source are explained (or rather, explained away, in my view) on the basis of his general incompetence or patent mistakes [137], which repeatedly leave Calboli Montefusco ‘flummoxed’ [136].

She even concludes the paper by saying: ‘I have taken the great Alcuin to trial and I have been his accuser’ [141]. This begs the question: Should historians be in the business of assessing their sources’ rhetorical (medical, mathematical, philosophical) competence? Calboli Montefusco might answer that such an approach is part of source criticism, and that it enables historians to answer questions such as, Did Alcuin access Cicero’s text, and what version of Cicero’s text? In this case, her sustained attack leads her to the conclusion that perhaps Alcuin’s mistakes were due to the fact that he had a ‘*testo rimaneggiato*’ (a text that has been worked and reworked) of *De inventione* [140]. But what excludes the possibility that the *rimaneggiamento* was by Alcuin’s himself? And what excludes the possibility that Alcuin changed (reworked, modified, rearranged) his sources deliberately (an idea not dissimilar from what Ulrich Schindel suggests for his own source [156])? Why should his rhetorical knowledge be judged on the standard of his understanding of Cicero—or rather, why should his rhetorical knowledge be judged on the standard of *our* understanding of Cicero? After all, if he is found so wanting, I for one am left wondering why we should bother to study Alcuin at all. Either we are interested in what rhetoric meant for Alcuin on his own terms, in his time and place, and for his audience, and then that is what we should try to reconstruct (Calboli Montefusco takes too easy a way out at 140); or we are not interested, and then we can just stick to Cicero and congratulate ourselves on our excellent grasp of all that he had to say about rhetoric.

In comparison to the previous two, Ulrich Schindel’s contribution is a better example of clearly-written, balanced source criticism. This time, the subject is an anonymous late ancient grammar treatise also known as *Anonymus Ecksteinii*, which was edited by Schindel himself in 1987. In ‘*Influenze reciproche tra commento esegetico e manuale sistematico*’, Schindel uses the *Anonymus*, among other things, in order to explore the mutual relationship of the two extant categories of intermediate-level handbook from late antiquity: commentaries on authors such as Virgil, Cicero, and Sallust; and *artes grammaticae*. He shows that commentaries used categories and notions found in treatises of grammar, and that in their turn treatises of grammar used illustrative examples drawn from commentaries. Somewhat reinforcing one of Pernot’s main conclusions, Schindel shows that another anonymous *ars grammatica* deployed examples taken

from commentaries to classical pagan sources as well as from texts of biblical exegesis.

Next, Gabriella Moretti in *‘Il manuale e l’allegoria. La personificazione allegorica delle arti liberali come tradizione del genere manualistico’* argues that the personifications of the liberal arts found in late ancient literature (most famously Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*) originate earlier, possibly in classical Greece. She traces a brief history of the use of such personifications, and underlines the importance of the Muses in providing a blueprint for ‘doctrinal women’ [165]. Moretti also links the personification of the liberal arts to treatises on liberal arts. Some of these reflect in their organizational structure the belief in the interconnectedness of the arts; others use personifications as a ‘literary strategy well-suited to a meta-disciplinary discourse’ [168]. This is particularly in evidence in the case of Martianus Capella, who explicitly discusses whether the personifications of the liberal arts, which are an instance of allegorical usage or a *vox ficta*, have a place in accounts that are concerned with imparting true instruction such as textbooks.

Taking his cue from a phrase by Roland Barthes, who attributed a *‘rage taxinomique’* to ancient rhetoric, Pierre Chiron, in his *‘À propos de l’hyperbole et de la « rage taxinomique »’*, starts, as he puts it, from a fact and a prejudice, and asks two related questions. The fact is that, from the first century BC until late antiquity, within the tradition of rhetorical handbooks, we find works that consist merely of lists of rhetorical figures, often without any apparent organizational criterion [187]. The prejudice is that this type of treatise marks a decline of the rhetorical art which coincides with the rise of the Roman Empire and the Second Sophistic. Chiron’s two questions are: Why the appearance of this format? and, Does it really represent a ‘sterilization of rhetorical reflection’ [188]? In order to answer them, he focuses on one example: the hyperbole, and on its definitions, rather than its usage. Hyperbole generates controversy because, while giving rhetoricians an opportunity for impressive displays of skills, it departs from reality. Thus, its use underwent harsh criticism in the name of sobriety and precision of speech. This makes it a particularly good example for Chiron’s analysis. After surveying a number of accounts of rhetoric from Aristotle to the Byzantine Choeroboscus, he concludes that the rhetorical lists are much less homogeneous than generally thought; for instance, their treatments of hyperbole vary.

What is more, their apparent sterility can be read in a more positive light, as simplicity and ease of use [200–201]. Chiron also observes that lists are only one type of rhetorical handbook; and there is no reason to think they were used, or meant to be used, in isolation [202]. As for the lack of hierarchical structure in the lists, Chiron argues, taking his cue from Demetrius’ treatise, that perhaps the nature of rhetorical figures itself—forms whose efficacy and character completely change depending on their content—is such that it does not allow for systematization, but lends itself much better to the enumeration format [203].

Next, Luigi Spina’s ‘*Un uso particolare dei testi nei manuali di retorica*’ stems from a larger, collective project on the role of late ancient commentaries in shaping textual tradition. Spina presents three examples of how treatises of rhetoric not only cite earlier authors, but also change their citations to illustrate specific points or specific categorizations specific to their discipline. I find what Spina suggests generally convincing; but the paper seems still quite close to its origin as a conference contribution, addressed to a public of rhetoric specialists. The reader would have benefited from a clearer statement of the argument and conclusions, especially since the general topic of the ongoing research project is of interest for a wider audience.

And finally, in ‘*Manuale di grammatica, manuale di retorica e κρίσις ποιημάτων*’, Gualtiero Calboli explores the relation between grammar and rhetoric in the context of the Roman world, with the crucial linked issue of how Greek models were used or modified to suit the needs of Latin. Calboli points out the ethical resonance of theories of language and its massive use of examples taken from poetry, and discusses the possible influence of Stoicism on early formulations of grammar and rhetoric in Rome.

Overall, this volume prompts reflection on a well-known contemporary phenomenon: the tyranny of the publishing marketplace. Many Anglo-American publishers would, I expect, have returned the contributions in Celentano’s collection with the demand that they be rewritten or modified for a wider public, that the long passages in Greek and Latin be translated, and that the arguments be clearly stated and the conclusions even more clearly and forcefully articulated. On the one hand, one applauds the fact that somewhere in Europe someone—the Italian Ministry for Education, Universities

and Research, subsidized this publication—can be free from that tyranny and produce a volume which is unashamedly directed to experts or those aspiring to be such.

On the other hand (to reprise my comment on d'Alessandro's piece), scholarship need not mean obscurity or narrowness. It must be possible to write complex philological discussions in a way simpler than some of the papers do here; and it is definitely possible to preface and conclude a paper with a clear statement of what one wants to achieve and what has been achieved. Equally, it must be possible to be scholarly and at the same time to aspire to a little more originality or relevance. This reader would have liked to see some assumptions challenged: for instance, the idea that later authors misunderstand their sources if they do not read them in the same way we do today (an approach well in evidence in Calboli Montefusco's paper). Or the idea that we may be entitled to pass judgment on a source's correctness or scientific calibre, especially when it is technical rather than literary. (In comparison to what are such judgments to be made and what is to be gained from giving out marks to ancient authors?) Or the idea that *techne* is tantamount to a textbook, rather than being an activity or a practice—some of the papers did address the issue of how these textbooks were to be used; but I saw overall very little reference to rhetoric in practice, such as one could have reconstructed from, say, historical accounts. Indeed, the whole notion of what constitutes a handbook or textbook was taken for granted, whereas some of the contributions here would have very appropriately lent themselves to opening up the whole question of genre.

In conclusion, this volume will probably add valuable pieces to our understanding of ancient rhetoric, text transmission, and late ancient written culture; but will not, in my view, break significantly new ground. Its specialist character may put off the general reader, but historians of ancient rhetoric and grammar will no doubt appreciate its contents.