

Reading Journal for “Writing Instruction in Late Medieval Europe,” by Martin Camargo and Marjorie Curry Woods

There were three main concepts of writing instruction in the late medieval period. They studied *facilitas*, the ability to compose artful discourse easily through practicing techniques that generate *copia* or abundance (132). The studied *proprietas* for the suitability or decorum of their writing and it was essential for writing in a stratified, hierarchical society (132). They studied *auctoritas* or authority, as an effective writer needed to command a broad spectrum of authoritative materials including proverbs and anecdotes, scholarly treatises, classical poetry, the Bible, and Biblical commentary. Permanent writing was not widespread as people did not have access to paper, unlike the Egyptians who had all the papyrus that they wanted to write on. Therefore, writing instruction was mainly conducted orally. We do have three good written examples of writing instruction from the period: *Poetria Nova*, *Tria Sunt*, and the *Hunterian Manuscript V.8.14*. These works included student exercises. The chapter gives a number of examples of these exercises, and all of them are really good, but for the sake of the journal I will choose a favorite: a proverb expansion from “I teach” given in *Tria Sunt*, “The one whose mind the streams of knowledge have flowed should not refuse a drink to those who thirst, but those streams should be dispersed abroad and he should distribute those waters at the street corner.”