

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Knapton, Michael, John E. Law, and Alison Smith, eds. *Venice and the Veneto during the Renaissance: The Legacy of Benjamin Kohl*

Mark Crane

Volume 39, Number 3, Summer 2016

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086527ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i3.27736>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Crane, M. (2016). Review of [Knapton, Michael, John E. Law, and Alison Smith, eds. *Venice and the Veneto during the Renaissance: The Legacy of Benjamin Kohl*]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 39(3), 188–190. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i3.27736>

sometimes unexpected ways in which private histories do in fact emerge as the result of archival work, social geographical work, and the like. But the point Huebert makes about the constructedness of privacy as an ongoing phenomenon is well taken, and certainly holds throughout the arguments he unfolds.

In a closing parable, Huebert focuses on a passage from Sir Thomas Browne's "most private work" (299) *Religio Medici* (1642): "but to call ourselves a Microcosme, or little world, I thought it onely a pleasant trope of Rhetorick, till my nearer judgement *and second thoughts* told me there was a reall truth therein" (301; emphasis mine). The very idea that one can have "second thoughts" and that they can arise out of an originary interiority that allows us to modulate the microcosm of self in relation to a greater emergent reality is a remarkable intuition. Huebert's reading of this passage avers that the more Browne "says about the world out there, as he sees it, the more he reveals about his inner self" (301). In the resilient if not oxymoronic co-creative interchange that emerges is a foundational episteme for the ways in which private and public contingencies are reciprocal, inseparable aspects of world-making that encompass us in ways we cannot help but continue to invent.

DANIEL FISCHLIN
University of Guelph

Knapton, Michael, John E. Law, and Alison Smith, eds.

Venice and the Veneto during the Renaissance: The Legacy of Benjamin Kohl.

Reti Medievali E-Book 21. Florence: Firenze University Press, 2014. Pp. xxx, 516. ISBN 978-88-6655-663-3 (paperback) €38.

During a scholarly career spanning nearly five decades, Benjamin Kohl (1938–2010) left his mark not only on the study of late medieval and early modern Venice and Padua, but more generally on the study of the Italian Renaissance. Some will know Kohl from his many books and articles which deal with the intersection of politics, humanism, and society. Others will know him for his editions and translations of documents, or his databases like *The Rulers of Venice, 1332–1524*. Anyone who has used his *Major Problems in the History of the Italian Renaissance* (edited with Alison Smith) as a textbook for an undergraduate course is keenly aware of his commitment both to the twentieth-century scholarship on this topic and the documentary evidence that forms its basis.

This volume aims—by publishing four of his unpublished essays, and sixteen by colleagues who are leaders in the field—to encapsulate Kohl's legacy to the study of Venice and the Veneto during the Renaissance period. In so doing, the editors have also captured a valuable snapshot of the current state of scholarly discourse in this field.

The volume is organized into three sections, each of which aims to encapsulate one of Kohl's main interests. The first two are defined first and foremost geographically; one deals with Venice, the other with the Terraferma (primarily Padua and Verona). Both of these sections bear the broad title "government and society," reflecting Kohl's twin interests in government structures and their relation to society. The former shows his continuity with an earlier generation of scholars, like Frederic C. Lane under whom he studied, the latter his engagement with the social history that gained prominence in the 1960s and 70s, and now takes centre stage among historians.

The first and longest section includes a series of documents edited and translated by Kohl from the Serrata of the Greater Council of Venice (1282–1323) which limited the participation of government in Venice to patricians. Further, it includes an article by Kohl on the *Collegio* of Venice, which acted as a sort of cabinet of the Venetian state. Kohl's article discusses the changing role of this body between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Other contributors in this section, all eminent scholars of Venice, include Claudia Salamini, Monique O'Connell, Dennis Romano, Tracy E. Cooper, Stanley Chojnacki, Humfrey Butters, and Andrea Mozzato.

The second and shortest section begins with an unpublished article by Kohl on Venice's state policy towards Padua during the fifteenth century. Contrary to received opinion that emphasized a heavy-handed Venetian policy, Kohl argues that Venice tended to respect the customs of Padua, in an arrangement that seemed beneficial to the Paduans. An article by Michael Knapton assesses land and economic policy in Padua in the later fifteenth century. This section is rounded out with two articles dealing with Verona, one by Gian Maria Varanini on the city's *Consiglio maggiore*, the other by Alison A. Smith on the Verità family.

The third and final section, entitled "Society, Religion and Art," aims to capture the interdisciplinary interests that characterized Kohl's later career, reflecting the influence of the cultural turn in historical studies that came to prominence in the 1990s. Kohl's essay in this section, "Competing Saints in Late

Medieval Padua,” examines patronage of saints’ days during the 1370s, in an effort to understand the significance of these saints to both civic and ecclesiastical rituals. Other contributors in this section include Trevor Dean, Meredith J. Gill, Robin Simon, Louise Bourdua, John Richards, and John E. Law.

This is a volume from which both specialists and generalists can benefit. For the former there are articles that focus on particular areas of interest to scholars of late medieval Venice and the Veneto. For non-specialists, it offers a tantalizing overview of the current state of study on this topic, as well as an appreciation for a scholar who spent half a century working in its archives and trying to make sense of its political, social, and cultural life. The volume includes a touching and revealing memorial by his friend and colleague Reinhold Mueller, as well as a complete bibliography of Kohl’s works. The reader also gets the impression that this is the kind of book that Kohl himself might have enjoyed: one that is rich and diverse in its methodological approaches and engagingly presented.

MARK CRANE

Nipissing University

Malvasia, Diodata.

***Writings of the Sisters of San Luca and Their Miraculous Madonna.* Ed. and trans. Danielle Callegari and Shannon McHugh.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 38. Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. xiv, 142. ISBN 978-0-8669-8534-5 (paperback) US\$31.95.

Thanks to the teamwork of two scholars from NYU, Danielle Callegari and Shannon McHugh, this contribution to our understanding of early modern women’s lives focuses on the study of Diodata Malvasia (ca. 1532–post 1617), a scholarly Bolognese Dominican nun and *gentildonna* of the convent of San Mattia. After uncovering an unknown manuscript at Bologna’s Archiginnasio, the editors contextualize and translate it together with a previously known work by Malvasia for this thirty-eighth edition of the Toronto series *The Other Voice* (and the ninety-eighth edition of the series overall).

The editors refer to Malvasia as the author of a history of the Madonna di San Luca (*The Arrival*, 1617), but with the newly discovered manuscript they