



EDITED BY
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VENICE AND THE VENETO DURING THE RENAISSANCE

THE LEGACY OF BENJAMIN KOHL



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Renaissance: the Legacy of Benjamin Kohl**

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Introduction

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This book pays tribute to Benjamin Kohl as a scholar, collaborator, teacher, mentor and friend. It specifically commemorates his commitment and contribution to scholarship by offering readers a collection of historical essays which reflect both his wide range of research interests in medieval and Renaissance Italy, and the international esteem and affection in which he was held. In publishing essays it resembles other commemorative volumes, as it does by including a profile of the historian remembered – in our case, words from both the head and the heart by Reinhold Mueller, Kohl’s lifelong colleague and friend – and also a list of his publications. But this collection differs from many others in two ways.

First, by including unpublished material written by the historian commemorated, who was working hard at various projects and went on doing so for as long as he could, until just before he died. Posthumous publication entails limitations and risks, especially since living authors are inclined to modify their writings, sometimes in much more than formal details, through to the phase of proof-reading. But Benjamin Kohl’s family, friends and colleagues have encouraged us editors to publish four of his pieces, with due care in facing those limitations and risks, and they indeed form an important part of the book. The substantial essay on “Competing Saints” was virtually readied for publication by the author himself; the sources edited in “The Serrata of the Greater Council” have been brought forward from Kohl’s draft with great understanding by Mueller. “The Changing Function of the Collegio” and “Renaissance Padua as *Kunstwerk*” are shorter texts prepared as conference papers, to which editing has added polish and a few titles in the footnotes; they are included here for their capacity to stimulate scholarly debate and further research. The second difference between this and many other collections is the extent to which the single essays converge in terms of place, period and subject. Our choice of a tighter focus was primarily motivated by the desire to bracket scholarly interests cultivated by Benjamin Kohl himself, and the three sections of the book do indeed reflect those interests, as the list of his publications and the profile by Reinhold Mueller both confirm. Although we have not included a section on humanist culture, its practitioners and their writings, a subject to which Kohl devoted a significant part of his research, humanism does in fact feature in the essays, especially among

Monique O’Connell’s Chancery secretaries and the authors reviewed by John Richards in examining Altichiero’s posthumous reputation. Each single author is far better fitted than us to explain her or his work, but the short presentation that follows aims primarily to suggest the overall cohesion we have sought for.

The first and largest section is entitled “Government and Society in Venice”, and the two opening pieces are by Kohl himself, reflecting the fact that he had made a solid start on a monograph on the governance of late medieval Venice. The essay “The Serrata of the Greater Council of Venice, 1282-1323: the documents”, seeks to remedy significant flaws of omission and approximation in historians’ knowledge of the legislative sources documenting the Serrata. The Serrata notoriously influenced the short- and long-term development of Venice’s institutions of government and its ruling élite to a massive extent, and the sophistication of much previous scholarship about it is somewhat at odds with that margin of imprecision in handling the sources. This critical edition of the laws operating the Serrata constitutes an indispensable support for future, more fully informed debate.

Kohl’s “The Changing Function of the Collegio in the Governance of Trecento Venice” targets a weak point in previous research on the post-Serrata development of the Venetian Republic’s central institutions. The Collegio evolved, largely during the fourteenth century, from its original configuration as an informal group of advisors flanking the Doge, to a more numerous, formally constituted body with broad and better defined responsibilities which made it the key institution in the executive sphere of government for the rest of the Republic’s lifespan. This paper adds to sketchy previous knowledge in tracing the development of membership of the Collegio, and its role in the administration of justice and public order, and legislative policy.

Claudia Salmini’s “Il Segretario alle voci: un primo contributo sulle origini dell’incarico e la formazione dell’archivio”, addresses issues which are currently drawing increasing scholarly attention: the way in which archives took shape, and how that reflects the purposes and manner of their creation and use in the systems of government of past societies – a richer, more nuanced approach than that required by their ordering or re-ordering for consultation by historians, and one in which archivists and historians need to work together. But scholarly access and consultation of these registers of office-holders are also part of Salmini’s mandate, and her essay indeed marries research on their genesis with discussion of the creation of prosopographical data-bases concerning public offices held by members of the Venetian patriciate. She has in fact been an active member of two key database projects: the more recent “The Rulers of Venice 1332-1524”, spearheaded by Benjamin Kohl, and the pioneering “Segretario alle voci”, whose creation in Venice’s Archivio di Stato began as early as 1980.

Members of the ducal chancellery and their careers feature strongly in Salmini’s analysis, and the major supporting role played for the patrician regime by these functionaries has an even higher profile in Monique O’Connell’s “Legitimizing Venetian Expansion: Patricians and Secretaries in

the Fifteenth Century”. Humanist training was a salient characteristic of a small group of Venetians, both patrician and non-patrician, who used the skills thus acquired in defence of Venice’s reputation during the fifteenth-century phase of territorial expansion. Focusing more specifically on Lorenzo de Monacis, Nicolò Sagundino and Antonio Vinciguerra, the essay reconstructs their careers and their connections within the patriciate, so bracketing the whole century and analyzing the parallel evolution of the Republic’s dominions and the rhetoric of its self-justification.

Dennis Romano’s “The Limits of Kinship: Family Politics, Vendetta, and the State in Fifteenth-Century Venice”, addresses the relationship between politics and family ties within the patriciate, highlighting how the latter could damage rather than strengthen the cohesion of the Venetian ruling class. Politically sensitive criminal trials towards the mid-Quattrocento, especially those concerning doge Francesco Foscari and his son Jacopo, engendered fear of possible vindictive action by those who had been put on trial or their kinsmen. They were therefore disqualified by the Council of Ten from roles in future judicial proceedings concerning both those who had conducted the trials and an increasingly broadly defined group of their relatives. Such judicial vengeance was a real risk, as documented by the Foscari-Loredan rivalry, but the Ten then realized that it was courting a much worse danger, of strengthening factional divisions, and in 1458 they set severe limits to this sort of restriction of patricians’ exercise of their rights.

Like Foscari, Andrea Gritti was a controversial doge, but unlike Foscari he died in office, and the political and ceremonial implications of a doge’s death are examined in Tracy E. Cooper’s “On the Death of Great Men: A Note on Doge Andrea Gritti”. The essay focuses on the management of the interregnum between doges, investigating the connection between the continuity in the life of the state and the rehabilitation of the physical body of the defunct doge, which represented a key element of the ceremonial. Cooper’s analysis draws important information from an unpublished contemporary account of Gritti’s funeral, included here as an appendix to the essay, which also identifies his immediate place of burial as the church of San Francesco della Vigna.

Stanley Chojnacki’s “Willing Patronesses: Choosing, Loosing, and Binding in Venetian Noblewomen’s Wills”, is also connected with the implications of death but focused on a less public sphere, in which women could exercise choice in social and political patronage (understood in terms of exchanges between members of social networks). It examines a broad sample of patrician women’s wills from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, categorizing their choice of benefactions, legatees and executors according to such criteria as piety, family loyalty and personal disposition. It pays special attention to reciprocity between wives and husbands, particularly in relation to their children’s prospects in adult life; the sources examined also extend to the womens’ husbands’ wills and to the records of sponsors in the Barbarella registrations for the sortition of young patricians given early access to the Great Council. The hierarchies of choice which emerge map women testators’

loyalties and also register their evolution over time, especially in connection with the passage from natal to marital family.

The implications of Venetian territorial expansion and their discussion by humanists, already at the base of O'Connell's essay, return with attention to a rather special humanist in Humfrey Butters' "Politics, War and Diplomacy in late fifteenth-century Italy: Machiavellian thoughts and Venetian examples". The essay takes statements in Machiavelli's "The Prince" and "Discourses" as theory, against which to set practical aspects of Venetian foreign policy in later fifteenth-century Italy. By the way it liquidates Machiavelli's candidature as an ideal founder of the Realist school of International Relations. It dwells on such core concepts of his thought as the nexus between foreign affairs, war and political life, the difference between power and force, and the importance of reputation, as well as his comparison between ancient Rome and Venice. It also offers discussion of Roberto di Sanseverino's career as positive proof of Machiavelli's conviction about the unreliability of condottieri.

Andrea Mozzato's "Oppio, triaca e altre spezie officinali a Venezia nella seconda metà del Quattrocento" stands partly aside from the other essays, but acts as a timely reminder that despite all the research done on Venice's part in the international trade in spices – a hallmark of the scholarship of Frederic Lane (Benjamin Kohl's mentor) and other historians of his generation – the considerable use of those spices in Venice itself has attracted much less investigation. Mozzato examines dealing in medicinal substances by the Aretine apothecary Agostino Altucci via close scrutiny of account books documenting his activity in Venice from 1465 to 1475. He pays special attention to two products which were in fact closely linked – theriac, the panacea for whose production Venice was famous, and opium, one of its ingredients – and also seeks to determine theriac's toxic effects on patients treated.

The second section is entitled "Government and Society in the Terraferma", and it too starts with an essay by Benjamin Kohl: "Renaissance Padua as *Kunstwerk*: Policy and Custom in the Governance of a Renaissance City". Here Kohl distinguishes contrasting emphases in historiography of the mainland empire: general Venetian heavy-handedness and high tax demands, on the one hand; and, on the other, a lighter touch in dealing with a plurality of jurisdictions via retention of local custom and leadership where compatible with central government's priorities. He argues that Venice's policy choices remained largely in line with custom, using the old urban communal structures and accepting the signorial élites as the class charged with local government, and he offers a positive verdict of fifteenth-century Padua's experience of this overall arrangement.

Michael Knapton's "Land and Economic Policy in Later Fifteenth-Century Padua" argues rather differently from Kohl's conclusions about Padua, emphasizing the greater weakness of the city's institutions and élite as compared with elsewhere in the Venetian Terraferma state. The essay briefly surveys economic relations in general and then analyzes the profile of various issues connected with land in the Paduan civic council's activity, highlighting

hitherto rather underestimated features of relations between Padua and Venice, especially those concerning the latter's assertion of rights over land. It also attempts to measure the degree of the council's autonomy in policy-making and its perception of its role in relation to Venetian authority, identifying a significant degree of Venetian initiative and intervention, and also of irritation among the Paduan council élite over these issues.

Civic councils in the mainland are also targeted by Gian Maria Varanini's "Il consiglio maggiore del comune di Verona nel 1367", which concentrates on the signorial phase preceding Venetian Terraferma expansion, and examines very rare examples of surviving Veronese documentation concerning 1367 and 1369. His analysis focuses firstly on the functions of the commune of Verona's *maius consilium* under the Della Scala regime, with comparative reference to the overall experience of the Veneto cities' councils under signorial government. It then offers a detailed prosopographical examination of council membership as documented by these Veronese sources, identifying the signs of a process of transition from the dominant profile of established aristocratic families towards the creation of a more composite patriciate, where the significant presence of men linked to the guilds and manufacturing demonstrates the extent of social dynamism during the Scala period.

Alison A. Smith's "Expansion, Instability, and Mobility in the Urban Élite of Renaissance Verona: The Example of the Verità Family" offers an in-depth investigation over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of a leading family which emerged from just that process of transition. Her demographic and economic survey of all the Verità households aims to map the changing nature of local élites in Terraferma cities: families maintained or improved their economic and social position by adapting to changing circumstances via a considerable variety of strategic solutions – though the incidence of rapid and spectacular increases in wealth in some households and branches of the Verità was offset, in others, by instability and decline. Allegiance to the patriline had both ideal and practical valency, but maintaining the economic independence of individual branches and households was the fundamental principle of estate organization, just as the social geography of the family was mostly characterized by residential independence.

The third section, entitled "Society, Religion and Art", presents a cross-disciplinary blend of scholarly interests present in much of Benjamin Kohl's later research (a blend in which art history becomes an important tool for social history). It starts with Trevor Dean's "Storm, suicide and miracle: Venice 1342", centred on a hitherto unpublished version of a story set in the Venetian lagoon, in which Sts Mark, George and Nicholas quell a storm. The text analyzed is rich in layers of meaning: not only is it unique as chronicled history in the context of environmental historiography, but its elaboration of an account of a storm into a major piece of hagio-history poses a series of questions about the when and why of that development. Possible answers are provided by consideration of the evolving character of Venetian chronicle-writing, and also of the overlaps between the apparently separate categories of history, hagiography and exemplary literature.

Saints are conjugated with civic ritual from the communal through to the early Venetian period in Benjamin Kohl's "Competing Saints in Late Medieval Padua", which investigates elements of permanence and change in the city's devotional life. It presents a systematic analysis of the patronage of saints' days in Padua, drawing heavily on three different redactions of the city's statutes but also on the iconographical data offered by the massed representation of saints painted during the 1370s in the cathedral baptistery by Giusto de' Menabuoi. It identifies both universal and local saints revered in the dedications of the city's churches and chapels and in the Paduan calendar, pointing up their significance in the yearly cycle, simultaneously civic and ecclesiastical, of festivals, processions, holidays and fairs.

Carrara family patronage, especially that of Fina Buzzacarini, wife of Francesco I, was fundamental in the pictorial transformation of the Paduan cathedral baptistery just mentioned, and a focus of Benjamin Kohl's research. The Carrara family's sense of dynastic identity and its ambitions for Padua are the general subject of Meredith J. Gill's "The Carrara Among the Angels in Trecento Padua". Her specific focus is the decorative scheme completed in the 1350s by the Paduan painter Guariento di Arpo for the palatine chapel of the Reggia, seat of the Carrara ruling dynasty. As well as two tiers of subjects in fresco drawn from Scripture, he executed over thirty panel paintings representing a celestial vision – the Virgin and Child, the four evangelists, hierarchies of angels – with extraordinary use of colours. Gill relates the paintings to various preceding models, and also to Guariento's own previous and subsequent production, especially the Paradise painted for Venice's ducal palace, and seeks to elucidate their biblical and theological *ratio*.

Individual devotion and commemoration after death are the focus of Robin Simon's essay about a Paduan extraordinarily famous for his patronage of the arts (and also for enmity with the Carraresi): "The monument I have had constructed'. Evidence for the first tomb monument of Enrico Scrovegni in the Arena Chapel, Padua". Scrovegni's heirs realized a wall monument to him in the Arena Chapel about fifteen years after his death in 1337, but the overall original scheme remains obscure. Simon suggests that the marble Madonna and Child with flanking angels by Giovanni Pisano, currently on the high altar of the chapel, and a standing statue of Enrico (by a different sculptor, now in the Museo Civico), were intended as key elements of a tomb monument. His hypothesis is supported by inferences from Carrara tomb monuments, iconographical characteristics of the Pisano group, and the very history of the building and decoration of the chapel, whose apse seems to have been the intended site of the original monument.

Florence and Padua were the main focal points of Bonifacio Lupi's distinguished career as condottiere and diplomat, though his closeness to the Carraresi was soured in the late 1380s, complicating life for his wife too. Louise Bourdua's "'Stand by your man': Caterina Lupi, wife of Bonifacio. Artistic patronage beyond the deathbed in late medieval Padua", reconstructs Caterina di Staggia's patronage, both artistic and social, from the 1370s to her will (made

in Venice in 1403-1405, and published as an appendix to the essay). She points up Caterina's role in the refurbishment and decoration of the chapel of St. James in the Santo, conventionally but erroneously considered as solely her husband's creation. Analysis of her gifts in life as in death suggests that despite self-imposed exile to Venice, Caterina remained true to her adopted city of Padua; it also shows her acting on her dead husband's behalf, to honour his memory and provide for his soul.

John Richards' "Altichiero in the Fifteenth Century: the Instability of Fame" closes this Paduan sequence of art historical essays, contrasting Altichiero's reputation when alive with his later fall into obscurity. He was the leading north Italian painter of the later Trecento, active in Padua in the 1370s and early 1380s for patrons close to Petrarch and his circle. In the 1568 version of Vasari's *Vite*, however, he only features in little more than an appendix to the life of Carpaccio, and his work has regained knowledge and esteem only in the last fifty or so years. But Vasari is not specially to blame: the essay detects and seeks to explain the ignorance and neglect of his work already evident in such fifteenth-century humanist authors as Michele Savonarola, Flavio Biondo and Marino Sanudo.

Finally, John E. Law's "The tombs of the Scaligers at Verona – a nineteenth-century English account", uses these monuments as the starting point for an investigation of attention to Verona's lordly rulers in the medieval history of the Veneto by English observers of the Victorian and Edwardian era (a historiographical approach which also drew Benjamin Kohl's interest). The essay's main focus is not on well-known and influential historians such as Julia Cartwright and Cecilia Ady, but on the Cheney brothers, Edward Cheney in particular: prominent members of the British community in Rome and Venice in the nineteenth century, who as scholarly enthusiasts and major art connoisseurs played a hitherto unrecognized, significant part in raising interest in the cultural history of Italy.

Among the issues raised by this rapid survey of the essays, one in particular merits a little more comment: Benjamin Kohl's insistent attention to historians' access to unpublished sources. As Reinhold Mueller notes in his profile of Kohl, this took the form of more than usual generosity in passing archival references and preliminary transcriptions to colleagues – which might mean really weighty gifts, as in his hand-over of a complete first transcript of the 1362 Paduan statutory codex so as to favour their publication (now near completion in an edition by Ornella Pittarello, supported by Gherardo Ortalli). But it also meant systematic action to make Venetian archival resources more accessible, including for an anglophone readership: a mission which in some ways likens him to the nineteenth-century scholar Rawdon Brown.

He was behind the project entitled "The Rulers of Venice 1332-1524", mentioned in both Mueller's profile and in Salmini's essay, and its significance was captured in a paper given by Monique O'Connell to the 2011 meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. On that occasion she appropriately stressed

Kohl's role as a "tech innovator", willing to adapt to new ways of doing history, while at the same time always keeping the sources at the center of what the project was about; and she correctly identified him as one of the first scholars of the Renaissance to see the possibilities of electronic publishing. These insights blossomed and gave fruit because of Kohl's capacity for teamwork, all the more indispensable for a scholar of the pre-"tech" generation grappling with computing, internet and the like.

They also did so because of funding, which came thanks to his advocacy from foundations sensitive to the worth of such projects; latterly these included the Hedgelawn Foundation, founded by Kohl himself and managed with much efficacy and no brashness. But public recognition of such activity is appropriate, especially when a multiplier effect may be hoped for, and these aims lay behind the event organized by Venice's Archivio di Stato on 10 June 2011: "Mecenatismo e ricerca storica. Giornata di studio in memoria di Benjamin G. Kohl" – a self-explanatory title. As to the multiplier effect, 2013 saw the launch of the project entitled "Digital Humanities Venice" by the University of Venice and the Swiss *École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*, in partnership with the Archivio di Stato and several of the city's libraries: a massive digitalization program of archival material should lead to the creation of an interactive database.

We editors are pleased to acknowledge many debts of gratitude, with few adjectives but wholly genuine feeling (and we apologize deeply if faulty memory makes us omit someone). To the contributors to this volume; to other scholars who provided assistance, like Rachele Scuro; to those who advised us over Benjamin Kohl's posthumous essays, and helped prepare them for publication – Anne Derbes, Meredith Gill, Reinhold Mueller and Monique O'Connell. The last two have been supportive in so many ways, but teamwork among contributors as Kohl practised it has been extensive, to the book's certain benefit.

Gratitude to "Reti Medievali": for welcoming this book among their publications; for accepting a good deal of formal criteria in the texts more typical of American and British than of Italian usage; for the massive and patient support provided by Paola Guglielmotti and even more so by Gian Maria Varanini, in editing and in many other ways. To Anna Zangarini, for preparing the indices and offering expert advice. To Udine University's Dipartimento di Scienze Umane and to Wagner College, New York, for funding.

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Abstract

The genesis of this essay collection is explained. There is a brief analysis of the contents of the twenty essays it contains. Four of them are by Benjamin G. Kohl himself. The others, by authors from the USA, Britain and Italy, deal with issues of Venetian and Veneto history – political, social, artistic – close to the interests of the historian commemorated by the volume.

Si dà conto della genesi di questa miscellanea di studi e si espone brevemente il contenuto dei 20 saggi che la costituiscono: quattro di essi sono dovuti a Benjamin G. Kohl, e gli altri sono dedicati da studiosi inglesi, americani e italiani a tematiche di storia politica, sociale e artistica del Veneto e di Venezia, vicine alla sensibilità dello studioso americano scomparso.