

*Petrarchism at Work: Contextual Economies in the Age of Shakespeare.*

William J. Kennedy.

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016. xiv + 334 pp. \$55.

William J. Kennedy's *Petrarchism at Work* is a masterful study of aesthetics, poetics, and economics from Petrarch to his Renaissance imitators. It traces a subtle shift from a poetics founded upon Platonic furor to Aristotelian craftsmanship. While Kennedy focuses on craftsmanship, he does not exclude or devalue the role of Platonic notions of vatic inspiration in the poetic collections he studies. Rather, he highlights the tension between the two, using the figure of Mercury—the god of writers, orators, poets, and musicians, as well as merchants and mercantile activity—as an anchor for his analyses. Thus, alongside his close readings of the poetry, including their emendations, revisions, and redactions, Kennedy highlights the contextual economies that influenced new concepts of authorship and poetry as a *mestiere* (professional trade) as represented in the poetry and poetic practices of Gaspara Stampa, Michelangelo, Pierre de Ronsard, and Shakespeare.

The book is divided into three parts, covering Italy, France, and England. In part 1 Kennedy argues that Petrarch's most heavily edited poems (1350s to 1360s) focus on the materiality of poetry, style, technique, and labor as a direct response to changing cultural approaches to exchange and labor value, and use and utility, in the wake of the devastation of the 1348 Black Death. He presents Petrarch as a *homo economicus*, convincingly showing that, despite Petrarch's well-documented disdain for Scholasticism's use of Aristotelian terminology, his poetic redactions reveal his steady yet subtle move from a predominantly Platonic theory of artistic inspiration to (pre-) Aristotelian craftsmanship. Kennedy then turns to Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* and shows how through her poetic persona she exposes an apparent disconnect between the Venetian Republic's emphasis on *unanimitas* (the devaluation of personal ambition and self-identity) and its strict social order. Kennedy's reading of the inversion of the Proserpina myth in poem 173 is especially commendable: unlike Proserpina, Stampa remains in Venice—separated from her beloved—where she presides over a salon culture, enabling her to construct her professional identity among the city's culture and art. The final chapter concerns Michelangelo's artistic relationships with Tommaso de' Cavalieri and Vittoria Colonna, and focuses on the way in which the construction of his professional identity, his attention to the value of versus compensation for an artistic product, was an attempt to make up for his lack of patrician ancestry by emphasizing his craftsmanship.

Part 2, dedicated entirely to French poet Pierre de Ronsard, is really the tour de force of the book. Kennedy convincingly shows how over the course of three decades Ronsard created a market for his poetry, rather than responding to the literary tastes of readers or patrons. His entrepreneurial genius was in recognizing that while his published works would bring him small, incremental profits, the investment of his social and cultural

capital in publishing multiple, revised, and annotated editions of his poetic collection *Les Amours* would lead to more profitable long-term patronage. This approach to craftsmanship is reflected both thematically in his poetry and economically in his publishing practices. Kennedy reveals how Ronsard recycled poems between one collection of poetry dedicated to Cassandra Salviati and a later one dedicated to Marie de Bourgueil, making his complaints against the beloveds interchangeable. Ronsard also cleverly profited twice from the set of poems commissioned by French king Henri III for his recently deceased lover Marie de Clèves, when he repurposed and published them in a new collection, *Sur la Mort de Marie*, dedicated to his beloved Marie de Bourgueil.

Part 3 analyzes Shakespeare's sonnets within the framework of the Petrarchan *homo economicus* and a "dynamics of maturation" that characterized the poetry of Sidney and Spenser. Kennedy theorizes that, based on the opaque quality of the Young Man poems, Shakespeare continued to revise them after he composed the Dark Lady poems, and right up to the quarto's publication in 1609. Indeed, it is in the Young Man cycle, where the figures of the *homo economicus* and *homo literarum* come together, where we see more explicit references to economics, enterprise, and work alongside the poetic expression of love, desire, and male friendship/homosociality. Kennedy closes the book by returning to the "shape-shifting" figure of Mercury as a model for the poets—and their respective contextual economies—examined throughout the book. He ultimately shows how Petrarch's legacy was as economic as it was poetic, that the act of poetic revision and emendation should be understood within both theoretical frames of Platonic furor and Aristotelian craftsmanship. Kennedy's command of the source materials and close readings of poetic variants are exceptional. With *Petrarchism at Work* he has written another authoritative and original study of Petrarch's legacy that will greatly impact the field.

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*Poetry in a World of Things: Aesthetics and Empiricism in Renaissance Ekphrasis.*  
Rachel Eisendrath.

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*Poetry in a World of Things* argues that the Renaissance underwent a decisive shift toward an empiricist world view, privileging objective forms of experience—as expressed in an increasing interest in the material world and its objects—over subjective, imaginative experience. Poetry registers this shift while simultaneously serving as a "complex repository" of the "partially renounced subjectivity" (3). Drawing on Adorno's modernist aesthetics, Eisendrath sees the work of art as resisting forms of