
In the modern era imperialism and world domination have become rather unpopular notions. Indeed to espouse one or aspire to the other is seen as politically incorrect, even fanatical, and perhaps worst of all, out-dated. And yet, throughout the world despots struggle to fight a rising number of independence movements, while in others, religious law or military dictatorship is being imposed in an effort to quell diversity and thereby ensure unity. At the same time, the European Community continues its quest for a unified state with a common currency and shared social values while Richard Kay, in his preface to this new edition of Dante’s *Monarchia* expresses the thought that universal peace may only be possible through the imposition of a “single world government” (ix). It would seem then, that here, in the dying days of the modern empires, British, Soviet, and some would argue, American, notwithstanding the disdain in which “monarchy” is held by “modern” thinkers, politically, the idea of a single nation, a unified community, “e pluribus unum” clearly lingers as a viable and even desirable means of avoiding the discord which inevitably follows the diminution of a ruling power.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the decline of the Holy Roman Empire engendered similar ideas and it is for this reason, perhaps more than any other, that Dante’s *Monarchia* may be as useful now in addressing the issue of world government as when it was first composed. Nonetheless, the most recent editions have looked instead to the role the *Monarchia* plays in interpreting Dante’s other works or vice versa. Prue Shaw for example, in her 1996 edition of the text suggests that the *Monarchia* was intended as a companion piece to the *Commedia*, positing a symmetry between the works which she sees as “inextricably linked” (Dante. *Monarchy*. Trans. and ed. Prue Shaw. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996, xxiv). The 1916 Moore edition notes that the *Monarchia* “owes the greater part of its importance to the fact that it was written by the author of the *Divina commedia*” (Dante. De *Monarchia*. Ed. E. Moore. Introd. W. H. V. Reade. Oxford: Clarendon, 1916. vii). It is not surprising then that most editions and translations of the *Monarchia* have been prepared for Dante scholars and Italianists. Focusing on how it may be reconciled with Dante’s other works, many of the translations of the *Monarchia* appear without the original Latin text and thereby dispense with what may be one of the most important clues to understanding the value and the purpose for the work.

Richard Kay’s recent translation and edition of the *Monarchia*, however, takes a different tack. While his approach does not ignore the existence of Dante’s other endeavours or the *Monarchia*’s literary value, this edition aims to consider the *Monarchia* as a self-standing artifact, influenced by Dante’s own personal circumstances, yes, reflecting thought evident in other works by Dante, certainly, but at all times a product of a specific set of circumstances, not merely personal. In his lengthy and comprehensive introduction, Kay proposes that the *Monarchia* was written to support Can Grande della Scala’s efforts to refute a papal bull, the *si fratum*, issued in 1317 at Avignon.
which was in essence a warning that when the empire was vacant "no one should assume the name 'vicar of the emperor'". Can Grande, along with Matteo Visconti, Passarino Bonacolsi and others, was in immediate violation of the decretal and found himself and his family plunged into a dispute which eventually turned to war. According to Kay, Dante's work therefore has significance beyond the literary. If Kay's theory is correct - and it is amply supported in his introduction - the Monarchia represents a valuable document in the study of Italian and indeed, European medieval politics and the papal/imperial struggle of the fourteenth century.

The inclusion of the Latin text in this edition is therefore essential. For Kay, the Monarchia is a document, evidence in an historical puzzle, not merely an exegetical key to the Commedia. Accordingly, the language in which it is written speaks as much to the purpose of the document as to the reception its author intended and the audience he sought to reach. The notes are extensive and address each allusion and source in an attempt to elucidate the historical context and the audience to which each of Dante's arguments is addressed. The result is a cogent picture of a manifesto prepared as a weapon in a political struggle and a show of Dante's allegiance to his benefactors, owing its genesis as much to Dante's political beliefs as to the patronage relationship between him and Can Grade della Scala. The dating of the instrument is therefore of the utmost importance. To that end, Kay devotes, with highly satisfying results, a substantial portion of his introduction to an examination of the scholarly efforts to pinpoint the precise date of the Monarchia's composition.

Kay's summary of the fortuna of the Monarchia in the years following its author's death supports the reading which Kay urges; that it be read as a treatise intended to be used in the war between Empire and Pope for secular primacy. The reaction of the Catholic clergy to the Monarchia is perhaps the most compelling evidence in support of Kay's position. When the Roman Index – the Index librorum prohibitorum – was published in 1559, Dante's treatise, not yet printed, was on it. Further, in the same year, the editio princeps of the Latin text was published in Basel in a collection of treatises on the authority of the Roman emperor. In light of Kay's highly tenable arguments as to the timing and the purpose of the work, together with his findings as to its reception, it seems difficult to imagine that Dante intended the symmetry proposed by Shaw. As Kay points out, it was only in the eighteenth century, that is, some time after it had ceased to be read for its own sake, that the Monarchia was relegated to a mere entry in the standard opera omnia.

Kay's approach, that is, his treatment of the Monarchia as both artifact and chronicle as opposed to a merely personal or literary expression, results in a meticulous attention to detail in the many notes and appendices included in this edition. While Kay does not ignore the fact that the Monarchia was not Dante's only work and, where appropriate, includes the citations, comparisons and explanations necessary to locate it in terms of Dante's other works, this edition is as suitable for political scientists and historians as it is for Dante scholars. Like Shaw, Kay poses the question of what value the Monarchia might hold for modern readers. But for Kay, the answer lies in understanding that the Monarchia is "the product of a great rhetorician writing to persuade an audience conversant with medieval university culture" (xliii). Kay clearly sees the Monarchia as relevant political reading which can and does address issues which have by no means been resolved in the centuries following its composition.

Although as late as 1916, W. H. V. Reade implicitly acknowledged the political relevance and value of the Monarchia to modern readers ("The birth and independ-
ence of modern nations have led to mighty results; but is it so certain that they have accomplished the task imposed by Dante on the Emperor, the triumph of Justice over Force?" [xxxii]), it is only with Kay's edition that the Monarchia's usefulness is made explicit. In 1998, just as in 1916, as Europe again faces issues of nationhood, empire, unification and dictatorship, the Monarchia stands as a reminder that history very likely does repeat itself. If that is the case, the Monarchia, properly contextualized, as it is in this edition, may be studied as zealously as the treatises of modern political scientists. Richard Kay's edition is therefore not only of the highest quality and of enormous value to scholars, replete as it is with philological and bibliographical information, but extraordinarily timely. As Kay himself says in his preface, "our century has found many reasons for reading the Monarchia, but perhaps the greatest of all is the relevance of its ideals to our troubled times" (ix).

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Francesco Petrarca. "La lettera del Ventoso" Familiarium Rerum Libri IV, 1.
Commento e note di Maura Formica e Michael Jacob. Verbania: Tararà

This delightful little volume (one could easily fit it in a pocket for hiking expeditions) opens with a graceful, lyrical preface written by the almost octogenarian Trevesan poet Andrea Zanzotto. The contemporary poet makes us realize how the much debated "lettera familiare" about climbing Mt. Ventoux in 1336 still has the power to move the reader to identify with Petrarch's physical and spiritual journey. The letter's "ricchissime sollecitazioni," in Zanzotto's words (viii), seem truthful, even though the reader is forced to recognize, and try to understand, the complexities of the Trecento literary devices Petrarch used. Zanzotto's preface is a compelling invitation to read or reread a text that holds appeal for all sorts of readers, from those who know Petrarch only through the occasional sonnet to the critic who wants to resolve the crux of the internal versus external (not to say 'fictional') autobiography of the great poet.

The Latin text is the definitive critical one established by Vittorio Rossi (Edizione
nazionale delle opere di Francesco Petrarca, 1933—ristampa anastatica, Firenze: Le
Lettere, 1997). There are five pages of endnotes to this text that serve to orient the
reader by providing the necessary context of person, place and time, and by identifying
Petrarch's ancient sources, in some cases citing a lengthy Latin text without translation.
Adding to the popular appeal of this edition, the editors wisely decided to com-
bine these two objectives in order to avoid having two sets of notes, one for the text
and one for the translation, as there are in Dotti's edition. For the same reason it was
a good and necessary decision to use endnotes rather than footnotes. Since the difficul-
ties of accurately translating the meaning of Petrarch's Latin into Italian had already
been skillfully addressed by Giuseppe Fracassetti (1863), Enrico Bianchi (1955) and
Ugo Dotti (1970/74/78), Maura Formica was able to concentrate her efforts on adroit-
ness and freshness of phrasing. The resulting translation flows smoothly and is a