

# APOCALYPSE IN ROME



COLA DI RIENZO

AND THE POLITICS OF THE NEW AGE

RONALD G. MUSTO

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Bronze statue of Cola di Rienzo. Rome, Capitoline. Girolamo Masini, 1887. Italcia Press Archive.

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Politics of the New Age

Ronald G. Musto

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*In memory of John D'Arms*



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## Preface and Acknowledgments

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Many statues adorn the Capitoline Hill in Rome: gods and demigods, heroes legendary and forgotten. But only two historical figures stand out from the stone and brick to carry on the ancient tradition of commemoration in bronze. The first dominates the center of Michelangelo's grand plan for the hill and its piazza: the emperor Marcus Aurelius, long mistaken by medieval Romans for Constantine the Great. The other stands down the grand stair, and a little to the periphery: that of the fourteenth-century Roman Cola di Rienzo. Rienzo's place there is not accidental, for in the minds of modern Romans, and Italians, he both symbolizes the rebirth of the dreams of united Italy so massively spelled out by the power and authority of Marcus Aurelius and to an extent, he rises as a counterpoise and interrogation mark to that very imperial power. The commoner Rienzo too, like Emperor Marcus, gazes out over their city, arm outstretched; but while the equestrian emperor's gesture is one of unifying power and command, the tribune's is one of exhortation: to community, and to the unity achieved by the joint goodwill and effort of his equals.

I first encountered Cola di Rienzo when I was an undergraduate at Fordham University, amid the social, political, and cultural changes of 1968, in a class on Renaissance and Reformation history taught by John C. Olin. I had come upon Cola through a circuitous route. In the Peasant's Revolt in Germany there appeared to be deep-rooted religious motivations that found their origins perhaps among the visionaries of medieval Italy, including Rienzo. This interest continued into graduate school at Columbia University, where I completed a master's thesis in 1970 un-

der the supervision of Robert Somerville, investigating parallels between early concepts of the Renaissance and late medieval ideas of reform and renewal. I had the opportunity to pursue this theme in a graduate seminar conducted by Louis Pascoe, S.J., in 1972. A doctoral dissertation in 1977 under John Mundy on the Italian Spiritual Franciscan leader Angelo Clareno, several articles on Clareno and other Italian Joachites, and several books that sometimes touched on the medieval practice and ideas of peace and justice eventually brought me back to Rienzo. In 1986, I completed a revised edition of Mario Cozenza's *Francesco Petrarca and the Revolution of Cola di Rienzo* for Italica Press. Other projects and interests intervened over the succeeding decade; but my fascination reemerged in the late 1990s to synthesize all these research interests into this contextual biography.

This contextualization has, I hope, allowed me to examine and usefully synthesize many of the current trends in the study of Roman and Italian urban culture in the fourteenth century. At the same time, I have looked at all the available sources for Rienzo, his Rome, and its dealings with Avignon. With fellow medievalist, publisher, and life companion, Dr. Eileen Gardiner, I have discussed my ideas for this book at length, and during campaigns from 1998 to 2000 I had the pleasure with her of visiting Avignon and all the places in Lazio, southern Tuscany, and the Abruzzi described in the following pages. Many returns to Rome since my fellowship at the American Academy in 1978 and the ongoing hospitality of the Academy have allowed us to know and to feel the many layers of history beneath and around Rome's gently undulating streets and hills. For this, my thanks to successive Directors, including Joseph Connors, Caroline Bruzelius, and Lester K. Little, to Administrative Director Pina Pasquantonio and Library Director Christina Huemer, and to Norm Robertson for his extensive knowledge of the topography of northwestern Lazio.

My thanks are due to the libraries of Fordham and Columbia Universities and the collections of the New York Public Library, especially the Humanities Center. I owe a great debt to both the personal inspiration and the prior work of Robert Brentano in and on Rome, to the work of Richard Krautheimer, and the numerous publications of the Ecole Française de Rome. Their influences are apparent throughout this book. Although I have newly translated all selections of the *Anonimo romano's* life of Cola di Rienzo presented here, John Wright's 1975 translation of that work has been an inestimable help. Dr. Carmen Bambach of the Metropolitan Museum of Art provided invaluable advice at a crucial stage of this project.

Eileen Gardiner of Italica Press, Amy Schwarz of the Frick Collection in New York, Benjamin G. Kohl of Vassar College, and Ronald G. Witt of Duke University read the manuscript and made fruitful and important suggestions for change. My participation in the April 2002 conference on the Cultures of Papal Avignon, sponsored by the Center for Medieval Studies of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, helped me focus many of the observations on Cola's *buono stato*. Stan Holwitz, my editor at the University of California Press, reacted with enthusiasm to my proposal for this book and guided its conceptualization and its eventual form. Rachel Berchten, senior editor, and Susan Ecklund and Kristen Cashman, manuscript editors, have provided clear and essential guidance in bringing this book to press.

Finally, it was John D'Arms who, as Director of the American Academy in Rome, guaranteed that my fellowship there would inspire a lifelong love of the city and of the scholars, artists, and other members of the Roman community who people it. Eileen Gardiner and I had the great privilege, joy, and challenge to work with John again at the American Council of Learned Societies for the past several years. He again invited us to participate in a vibrant and welcoming scholarly community, and for all that my thanks and fondest memories in dedicating this book to him.

New York City  
May 2002





## Abbreviations

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- AMA Emmerson, R. E., and Bernard McGinn, eds. *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- AR Anonimo romano. *Vita di Cola di Rienzo. Cronica*. Ed. Giuseppe Porta. Milan: Adelphi, 1979.
- ASRSP *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*.
- Baluze Etienne Baluze and Guillaume Mollat, eds. *Vitae paparum avenionensium*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1914–22, 1960–61.
- BBCR Cola di Rienzo. *Die Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*. Ed. Konrad Burdach and Paul Piur. *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation*. Vol. 2.1–5. Berlin: Weidmann, 1913–29.
- BFLT Bynum, Caroline Walker, and Paul Freeman, eds. *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- BISIMEAM *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo e Archivio Muratoriano*.
- BLSSH Brezzi, Paolo, and Egmont Lee, eds. *Sources of Social History: Private Acts of the Late Middle Ages*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984.
- Brentano Brentano, Robert. *Rome before Avignon: A Social History of Thirteenth-Century Rome*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

- CFP Cammarosano, Paolo, ed. *Le forme della propaganda politica nel Due e nel Trecento*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 201. Rome: EFR, 1994.
- CLC Clement VI. *Lettres closes, patentes et curiales intéressant les pays autres que la France (1342–1352)*. Ed. Eugène Déprez and Guillaume Mollat. Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, ser. 3.3. Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1901, 1960–61.
- CRCR Cosenza, Mario, ed. and trans. *The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo*. 3d ed. rev. Ed. Ronald G. Musto. New York: Italica Press, 1996.
- DBI *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1961–.
- DHP *Dictionnaire historique de la Papauté*. Ed. Philippe Boutry and Philippe Levillain. Paris: Fayard, 1994.
- DKPSP Duncalf, Frederic, and August C. Krey. "The Coronation of Cola di Rienzo." In *Parallel Source Problems in Medieval History, 177–237*. New York: Harper and Row, 1912.
- D'Onofrio 1 D'Onofrio, Cesare, ed. *Visitiamo Roma mille anni fa. La città dei Mirabilia*. Rome: Romana Società Editrice, 1988.
- D'Onofrio 2 D'Onofrio, Cesare, ed. *Visitiamo Roma nel Quattrocento. La città degli Umanisti*. Rome: Romana Società Editrice, 1989.
- Eisenbichler Eisenbichler, Konrad, ed. *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute, 1990.
- Fam.* Petrarch, Francesco. *Rerum familiarium libri*. Various editions as cited.
- Gabrielli Gabrielli, Annibale, ed. *Epistolario di Cola di Rienzo*. Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo. Fonti per la storia d'Italia 6. Rome: Forzani e Compagnia, 1890.
- Gregorovius Gregorovius, Ferdinand. *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Annie Hamilton. 8 vols. in 13. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1903–12. Reprint, New York: AMS, 1967. Reprint and CD-ROM, New York: Italica Press, 2000–.

- HBD Horrox, Rosemary, ed. *The Black Death*. Manchester Medieval Sources. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Marvels *The Marvels of Rome. Mirabilia Urbis Romae*. Ed. and trans. Francis Morgan Nichols. 2d ed. Ed. Eileen Gardiner. New York: Italica Press, 1986.
- Papencordt Papencordt, Felix. *Cola di Rienzo und sein Zeit*. Appendices. Hamburg: A. Perthes, 1841.
- PLFM Petrarch, Francesco. *Letters on Familiar Matters. Rerum familiarium libri*. Ed. Aldo S. Bernardo. 3 vols. Albany: SUNY Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975–85.
- RIS Muratori, Ludovico Antonio, ed. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*. 25 vols. Milan: RIS, 1723–51. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*. 5th ed. Ed. Giosus Carducci and Vittorio Fiorini. Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1931–39. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores. Indexes*. Ed. Carlo Cipolla. Hildesheim, N.Y., 1977.
- RRA *Roma Anno 1300*. Ed. Angiola Maria Romanini. Rome: Bretschneider, 1983.
- Seibt Seibt, Gustav. *Anonimo romano. Scrivere la storia alle soglie del Rinascimento*. Trans. Cristina Colotto and Roberto Delle Donne. Rev. ed. Rome: Viella, 2000.
- Theiner Theiner, Augustin, ed. *Codex diplomaticus domini temporalis S. Sedis: Recueil de documents pour servir à l'histoire du gouvernement temporal des états du Saint Siège*. 3 vols. Rome: Vatican Press, 1861–62.
- TPPO *Les textes prophétiques et la prophétie en Occident (XIIe–XVIe siècles)*. Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Age. 102(2): 1990.
- VCT Valentini, Roberto, and Giuseppe Zucchetti, eds. *Codice topografico della città di Roma*. Fonti per la Storia d'Italia. 4 vols. Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1940–53.
- Villani Villani, Giovanni. *Cronica, con le continuazioni di Matteo e Filippo*. Turin: Einaudi, 1979.
- Wilkins Wilkins, Ernest Hatch. *Life of Petrarch*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.