

ELENA ABRAMOV-VAN RIJK

Email: meir.vanrijk@mail.huji.ac.il

---

## THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR CHARLES IV: MUSICAL AND LITERARY ASPECTS

*The Italians had conflicting sentiments regarding the visit of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV in Italy in 1355: from the enthusiastic expectations of the impact the Emperor would have on the local political life to contemptuous scepticism and even to overt disdain. Two Italian Trecento madrigals have traditionally been considered to refer to this visit: (1) the three-voice polytextual madrigal *Aquil altera*/Creatura gentil/Uccel di Dio by Jacopo da Bologna, seen as related to Charles's coronation with the Iron Crown of Lombardy in Milan; and (2) the two-voice madrigal *Sovran uccello* by Donato da Firenze, considered a celebratory piece for Charles's coronation as well. This essay explores the relevant historical contexts, Milanese for Jacopo's madrigal and Florentine for Donato's, with a view to placing both pieces.*

Any forthcoming anniversary of an important historical personage is usually a strong stimulus to revive scholarly interest and presents a good opportunity to revise certain beliefs about various aspects of his/her life and activity. For a musicologist, and especially for one who studies fourteenth-century Italian music, the 700th anniversary of the birth of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (1316–78) provided an impetus to reconsider the two Trecento madrigals, *Aquil'altera* by Jacopo da Bologna and *Sovran uccello* by Donato da Firenze, which have traditionally been viewed as associated with Charles IV's visits in Italy in 1355 or 1368. Pointedly, these madrigals do not contain unequivocal references to Charles IV: the connection derives from reading the image of the eagle, the protagonist of both pieces, as a symbol of imperial power.

This study was prompted by the invitation to present a paper at the conference *Charles IV (1316–1378) and the Musical Legacy of His Era* in Prague (10–12 November 2016), for which I am deeply grateful to Jan Bata and Lenka Hlávková. I am also grateful to Dorothea Baumann, Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens for their help and comments. Images from the Archivio di Stato, Lucca, were authorised with Prot. No. 945.

Like many other topics and notions in Trecento studies, the idea of linking both ‘eagle’ pieces with the emperor Charles IV goes back to Giosué Carducci, the first scholar to investigate, in the 1860s, the Trecento musical repertory. The supposed celebratory and adulatory context, however, was countered by Carducci himself, who expressed a rather ironical and sceptical attitude towards his own proposal: ‘the eagle that lost its feathers’.<sup>1</sup> Such a sarcastic view is discerned even more in Donato’s madrigal, continues Carducci, which likens the Emperor to ‘a merchant who rode to fair on his packhorse, and was chased away with booing’.<sup>2</sup> Despite this rather critical interpretation Carducci gave to the image of the eagle, his suggestion of Charles IV as protagonist of these madrigals still remains relevant for modern musicology.

The three-voice polytextual madrigal *Aquil’altera/ Creatura gentil/ Uccel di Dio*<sup>3</sup> by Jacopo da Bologna has long interested musicologists for its musical and literary components. According to Nino Pirrotta, the eagle symbolises the imperial dignity, suggesting a connection of this highly ambitious work with the coronation of Charles IV in Milan on 6 January 1355.<sup>4</sup> Although over the course of time other historical persons have been proposed for the role of the madrigal’s veiled protagonist, many scholars continue to see it as addressed to Charles IV, if not specifically on his coronation in Milan in 1355, at least on one of his two visits in Italy, in 1354–5 or in 1368–9.<sup>5</sup> Maria Caraci Vela argues

<sup>1</sup> ‘L’aquila imperiale era ormai un trist’uccello che avea perduto le penne maestre’; G. Carducci, *Musica e poesia nel mondo elegante del secolo XIV* (Bologna, 1943), ix, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> In support of his opinion, Carducci cited the Florentine chronicler Matteo Villani, active in the 1350s: ‘Come è avvenuto in quest’altro madrigale [*Sovran uccello*], composto in una delle calate di Carlo, di quell’imperatore che venne su un ronziino come mercante alla fiera (dice Matteo Villani) e fu rimandato a suono di fischi’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>3</sup> See the comparative diplomatic transcriptions of *Aquil’altera* in *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento: Anonyme Madrigale und Cacce sowie Kompositionen von Piero, Giovanni da Firenze und Jacopo da Bologna*, ed. O. Huck and S. Dieckmann, 2 vols., *Musica Mensurabilis*, 2 (Hildesheim, 2007), ii, pp. 157–9. For the latest critical editions of the madrigal see *ibid.*, i, pp. 58–62 and M. Caraci Vela, ‘Per una nuova lettura del madrigale *Aquila altera*’, *Philomusica on-line*, 13 (2014), pp. 1–58, at pp. 43–6.

<sup>4</sup> *The Music of Fourteenth-Century Italy*, ed. N. Pirrotta, *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae*, 8 (Rome, 1963), iv, p. ii.

<sup>5</sup> N. Pirrotta, ‘Marchettus de Padua and the Italian ars nova’, *Musica Disciplina*, 9 (1955), pp. 57–71, at p. 70. In fact, Charles IV was in Italy not two but four times. The first visit was at a young age in 1331, when he accompanied his father, King John of Luxemburg, in searching for an option to transfer their residence to northern Italy. The second time occurred in 1333 when the still very young Charles reached Lucca in order to aid, though unsuccessfully, the citizens in freeing themselves from Pisan domination. These events are described in Charles’s own autobiography, *Karoli IV Imperatoris Romanorum vita ab eo ipsa conscripta*, apparently written shortly after 1346, ed. B. Nagy and F. Schaer (Budapest and New York, 2001). Charles’s other two visits, relevant for the present study, were in

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

that this ambitious composition certainly seems to be associated with an especially important person, no less than an emperor.<sup>6</sup> The two-voice madrigal *Sovran uccello sei fra tutti gli altri* by Donato da Firenze, though less studied, is considered a celebratory piece as well, composed on the occasion of one of Charles IV's two Italian expeditions.<sup>7</sup>

There is, of course, a good reason for linking these madrigals to Charles IV through interpreting the eagle as a heraldic symbol of the Holy Roman Emperors. Here, however, another question emerges about the reliability of the interpretation of Trecento poetic images, above all those of animals and birds, as necessarily heraldic symbols. In this regard the dissertation by Sarah Carleton, 'Heraldry in the Trecento Madrigal', is an example. Its chief thesis that eighteen madrigals belong to the category of heraldic pieces represents exactly the problem of taking for granted that the poetic texts are related to heraldry.<sup>8</sup>

In some instances in the musical madrigals, the images certainly could have been planned by their authors as heraldic symbols. But when they were not or not only, what other sources of inspiration and other meanings they could have had? Obviously, deep-rooted tenets (such as this one), accumulated over the long time of musicological research on the Trecento, invite a more critical approach. 'In particular,' as Maria Caraci Vela has pointed out, 'a problem exists with regard to contextualisation: in order to be adequately dealt with, up-to-date interdisciplinary areas of competence are required.'<sup>9</sup> Such a contextualisation is essential for informed interpretations of musical compositions, especially when relating them to historical personages and events. Therefore, it is worthwhile undertaking the challenging

1354–5 and in 1368–9, now as a crowned king of the Romans (in 1346) and then as king of the Italians and an emperor (in 1355).

<sup>6</sup> M. Caraci Vela, 'Le intonazioni polifoniche de *La fiera testa che d'uman si ciba*: Problemi di contestualizzazione e di esegesi', in *Musica e poesia nel Trecento italiano: Verso una nuova edizione critica dell'ars nova* (Florence, 2015), pp. 93–141, at p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> K. von Fischer and G. G. D'Agostino, 'Donato da Cascia', in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd edn, ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrrell (London, 2001), vii, p. 459, and K. von Fischer, 'Le biografie', in *Il Codice Squarcialupi: Ms. Mediceo Palatino 87, Biblioteca Laurenziana di Firenze*, ed. F. A. Gallo (Florence, 1992), p. 136. See also D. Baumann, 'Donatus de Florentia', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn, ed. L. Finscher, *Personenteil*, v (2001), col. 1255. Giuseppe Corsi relates it to Charles IV's second visit in 1368–9 in *Poesie musicali del Trecento* (Bologna, 1970), p. xlvi.

<sup>8</sup> S. Carleton, 'Heraldry in the Trecento Madrigal' (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> M. Caraci Vela, 'Gli studi sulla musica italiana del Trecento nel secolo XXI: Qualche osservazione sui recenti orientamenti della ricerca', *Philomusica-online*, 10 (2011), pp. 61–95, at p. 61.

task of exploring the relevant historical contexts, Milanese for Jacopo's madrigal and Florentine for Donato's, with a view to placing both pieces. Assuming that they were related to Charles IV's Italian campaign, one might expect that these madrigals reflect the reaction to it by Italians, expressed, among other ways, in literature and in music.<sup>10</sup>

The Italian adventure of Emperor Charles IV came about as a result of the encounter of two, so to say, counter-desires. On Charles's part, it was vitally necessary to be crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in Rome by the pope, a coronation which would remain uncontested, unlike the coronation of the King of the Romans, of which he could have been quite easily deprived on the decision of the assembly of the German prince-electors. The ceremony of the coronation of Holy Roman Emperors consisted of three compulsory phases.<sup>11</sup> Charles IV had already been crowned as *Rex Romanorum* in 1346, with the first crown, silver, the *corona argentea*, in Germany (Bonn), as was the custom. In order to complete the procedure he required the two other coronations that needed to be made in Italy: (1) with the iron crown of Lombardy, *corona ferrea*, which according to the tradition was kept in Monza close to Milan, the ancient royal residence of the Lombard kings; (2) with the golden crown of the Holy Roman Emperors, *corona aurea*, which was preserved in Rome.<sup>12</sup>

On the part of the Italians, more specifically the inhabitants of Tuscany, the decision to appeal to Charles to come to Italy was caused by substantial changes in Italian domestic politics: the threat of the

<sup>10</sup> The studies on Charles's policy towards Italy have an important part in modern historiography. Many general studies on the history of this period or more specific research on Charles's reign contain separate chapters on Charles's Italian politics, for example F. Dvornik, *The Slavs in European History and Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1962), pp. 64–9, and different articles in F. Seibt (ed.), *Kaiser Karl IV. Staatsmann und Mäzen* (Munich, 1978). There are also a number of special studies dedicated to Charles's Italian companies, from E. Werunsky, *Der erste Römerzug Kaiser Karl IV. (1354–1355)* (Innsbruck, 1878) and G. Pirchan, *Italien und Kaiser Karl IV. in der Zeit seiner zweiten Romfahrt* (Prague, 1930), to the recent comprehensive work by E. Widder, *Itinerar und Politik: Studien zur Reiseherrschaft Karls IV. südlich der Alpen*, *Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters. Regesta Imperii*, 10 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> For example, Albericus de Rosate (1290–1360), a jurist from Bergamo who served at the Milanese court from the end of the 1320s, writes: 'Recipit enim Imperator Romanus triplicem coronam, scilicet, argenteam in Alemania, Ferream in Modoetia communitalis Mediolani. Aurea in diversis locis' (The Holy Roman Emperor receives three crowns, namely, the silver crown in Germany, the iron in Monza in the Milanese district, and the golden crown in various places); *Dictionarium iuris tam civilis quam canonici* (Venice, 1581), s.v. *Corona*. As many ancient and modern historians commented, the coronation with the golden crown mostly took place in Rome.

<sup>12</sup> See also P. Hilsch, 'Die Krönungen Karls IV', in Seibt (ed.), *Kaiser Karl IV. Staatsmann und Mäzen*, pp. 108–11, and W. Goetz, 'Italien', *ibid.*, pp. 212–16.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

increasing Visconti expansion towards the Tuscan territories at the beginning of the 1350s, and the gradually weakening support by the papacy of the Guelph communities in Tuscany, above all that of Florence. Pope Clement VI, after having lost Bologna in 1350 and not being able to continue military resistance, made a truce with Giovanni Visconti in 1352, leaving the Tuscan cities on their own. For this reason, in the same year some Tuscan communities, including the traditionally Guelph Florence, decided to seek aid from Charles, the king of Bohemia, as he is most often called in the Italian literature of this period.

The very idea of calling on Charles for help, however, had already been considered at the time. One year earlier, on 24 February 1351, Petrarch wrote to Charles IV his first letter (of fourteen), subsequently included in the *Familiars* X 1. Petrarch exhorted the king to come to Italy and to extend his authority there, appealing to the institution of the Holy Roman Empire, notwithstanding the fact that this institution had so often disappointed the expectations of the Italians for a better and more consolidated government, one which could have stopped the perpetual wars between the local rulers. Charles responded to Petrarch immediately in his letter *Liberata tui*, though it reached the great poet much later, explaining that the situation in Italy appeared to be somewhat different and much less idealised in comparison with Petrarch's description.<sup>13</sup> However, the new pope, Innocent VI, who succeeded Clement VI in 1352, changed the papacy's traditionally rival politics towards the Empire; seeking instead to reconcile the papacy with it, he promised Charles the imperial coronation in Rome. This was the impetus for the king of the Romans and Emperor-elect Charles IV to take the road and cross the Alps.

### THE MILANESE CONTEXT AND THE MADRIGAL *AQUIL'ALTERA*

Remembering the disastrous campaign of his grandfather, Henry VII, in Italy in 1310–13, which resulted in a long series of battles that culminated in his death near Siena in 1313, Charles took with him a small group of 300 cavalymen (compared to the 10,000 of his grandfather), in order not to exacerbate the already explosive situation.<sup>14</sup> In October of 1354, Charles

<sup>13</sup> F. Petrarca, *Lettere all'Imperatore: Carteggio con la Corte di Praga, 1351–1364*, ed. U. Dotti (Reggio Emilia, 2007), p. 7. For a more detailed picture of the conceptual discrepancy between Petrarch and Charles IV regarding the role of the Holy Roman Emperor see F. Seibt: *Karl IV.: Ein Kaiser in Europa, 1346–1378* (Munich, 1978), pp. 215–21.

<sup>14</sup> Book 4, ch. 27. M. Villani, *Cronica: Con la continuazione di Filippo Villani*, ed. G. Porta (Parma, 1995), i, pp. 511–12.

entered Italy and after some short stays in different places along his way (Udine, Padua, etc.), on 7 November he reached Mantua, where he remained blocked for almost two months until Christmas because of the very difficult negotiations about the right of way through Visconti territories and the procedure of coronation with the Iron Crown in Milan.<sup>15</sup>

While staying in Mantua and planning his further route towards Rome, Charles daily received numerous delegations from different parts of Italy. He rapidly learned that the Lombard League (la Lega di Lombardia, which included some northern cities opposed to Milan) was too weak and disorganised to oppose Visconti ambitions, and that the different Tuscan communities, while pleading for protection against the Visconti, were intriguing against each other. For their part, the Visconti, who since 1313 were the imperial vicars, gradually sought greater autonomy from the institution of the Holy Roman Empire, preferring to become independent rulers and sovereigns, so that Charles's supposed alliance with the people of Tuscany did not accord with their interests at all.<sup>16</sup> On 5 October 1354, a few days before Charles IV reached Italy, the Milanese governor, Archbishop Giovanni Visconti, had unexpectedly died. For a short period of less than one year the Milanese territory was ruled by a kind of 'triumvirate', consisted of three brothers, Giovanni's nephews: Matteo II, Galeazzo II and Bernabò.

Towards Christmas, Charles IV finally made an agreement with the Visconti brothers. Historical studies, both ancient and modern, inform us that the coronation took place in the Milanese church of St Ambrose on 6 January 1355. However, the Florentine chronicler Matteo Villani tells us a different story about the somewhat exceptional circumstances and the different place of the coronation, not in Milan, but in Monza (Latin *Modoetia*), a smaller town not far from Milan, in the cathedral of which the Iron Crown of Lombardy has been kept up to the present.<sup>17</sup> Villani's version of the coronation of

<sup>15</sup> A detailed itinerary and political survey of Charles IV's trip of 1354–5 is given in Widder, *Itinerar und Politik*, ch. 5: 'Der Krönungzug 1354/55', esp. pp. 174–87 on the Mantuan and Milanese episodes.

<sup>16</sup> See J. Black, *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan: Plenitude of Power under the Visconti and the Sforza 1329–1535* (Oxford, 2009), p. 38; C. Storti Storchi, 'Francesco Petrarca: Politica e diritto in età viscontea', in *Petrarca e la Lombardia*, Atti del convegno di studi, Milano, 22–23 maggio 2003 (Rome, 2005), pp. 77–120, at pp. 86–9, and E. Abramov-van Rijk, 'Luchino Visconti, Jacopo da Bologna and Petrarch: Courting a Patron', *Studi Musicali*, ns 3 (2012), pp. 7–62, at 21–22.

<sup>17</sup> Monza was, alternately with Pavia, the traditional place of the coronations of the kings of Italy. Angelo Bellani, a canon of the cathedral in Monza, cites the beginning of the papal breve of 1354, in which Pope Innocent VI confirms the rights of Monza cathedral to host the coronations: 'Sed quoniam Coronae Ferrae traditionem et impositionem hujusmodi, alibi quam in dicta Ecclesia s. Johannis, etc.'; A. Bellani, *La corona ferrea del regno d'Italia*

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

Charles IV in Monza has evoked great amazement among ancient and modern historians.<sup>18</sup> For example, Ellen Widder wonders how this discrepancy could have come about, given that Villani was a well-informed and responsible author.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the reason, the style and quality of his work do not allow us to ignore this source, so that a closer examination of Villani's writings is necessary.

### Matteo Villani's *Cronica* and the Diary of Johannes Porta de Annoniaco

Matteo Villani (1283–1363) was a younger brother of the famous Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani (c. 1280–1348), the author of the *Nuova cronaca*, a large opus that encompasses the history of Florence, often touching on other parts of Italy and even beyond it, from ancient times to the year of the plague of 1348. On Giovanni's death, Matteo continued his work. Unlike other chronicles, with their accounts of centuries-old history, Matteo's narration consists of nine books that describe the events within twelve years only, during his lifetime between the years 1348 and 1360. Villani died in 1363, eight years after Charles's coronation, when working on book 9 and having reached May of 1360.<sup>20</sup> Thus, books 4 and 5, concerning the years 1354–5, must have been written even earlier, with a smaller gap of time. His version of the coronation, described in book 4, chapter 39, is given in full in Appendix I below.

Interest in the minutest details, into which the author constantly goes, is the main characteristic of Matteo Villani's work.<sup>21</sup> Compare,

*considerata come (1) monumento d'arte, (2) monumento storico, (3) monumento sacro* (Milan, 1819), p. 109. In all probability this letter appears to be a preparatory step towards the coronation of Charles IV. See also L. A. Muratori, *De Corona ferrea, qua Romanorum Imperatores in Insubribus coronari solent commentarius* (Milan, 1719), pp. 78–79, and V. Maspero, *La corona ferrea: La storia del più antico e celebre simbolo del potere in Europa* (Monza, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> The famous Italian historian Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750), regarding the place of Charles IV's coronation, mentions a papal breve that reflected an intention to perform it in Monza: 'Volevasi veramente far questa funzione in Monza, ciò apparendo da un Breve di papa Innocenzo VI rapportato dal Rinaldi; ma dovette vincerla l'arcivescovo e il popolo di Milano, che la vollero in Santo Ambrosio, secondo l'antico rito'; *Annali d'Italia ed altre opere varie di Lodovico Antonio Muratori*, iii (Milan, 1838), p. 632). Ellen Widder too mentions this breve: 'im Schreiben Papst Innozenz' ist davon unter Hinweis auf den Dom San Giovanni als Krönungskirche die Rede' (*Itinerar und Politik*, p. 177).

<sup>19</sup> Widder, *Itinerar und Politik*, p. 178.

<sup>20</sup> On Matteo's death, his son Filippo extended the Chronicle up to the year 1364, based on the materials collected by Matteo, completing thereby the two last books, 10 and 11.

<sup>21</sup> Louis Green compares the writing styles of both brothers Villani, concluding that Matteo, unlike his brother, was conscious that the essence of history as a literary form resides in

for example, the full account of Charles IV's visit to Italy from October of 1354 to June of 1355 in the contemporary *Cronaca Sanese* by Donato di Neri (d. 1371/2), which takes about five pages, whereas in Villani's it occupies the entire book 4 and the first half of book 5, while the preparatory phases of this visit are described in a number of chapters in books 2 and 3.<sup>22</sup>

Matteo Villani's detailed accounts are more literary and resemble the Florentine prose we know, for example, from the stories of the *Trecentonovelle* by Franco Sacchetti.<sup>23</sup> He was recounting contemporary history, knowing well that many of his readers were themselves observers of those happenings. Moreover, these witnesses served as the main source of his information, as he noted in the preamble to his chronicle:

mi mossi a cominciare, per essemplio di me uomo di leggiara scienza, apparecchiare a' savi materia di concedere del lor tempo alcuna parte, per lasciare agli altri memoria delle cose, ch'appariranno di ciò degne a loro temporali . . .<sup>24</sup>

being a man of scant knowledge, I began to collect the information from those who knew, in order to transmit a certain part of their times, to leave to others a certain memory of the things that were considered worthy by their contemporaries . . .

execution rather than in substance; *Chronicle into History, an Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-century Chronicles* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 53. Paula Clarke notes that Matteo was intellectually more sophisticated than his elder brother and had greater literary pretensions; 'The Villani Chronicles', in S. Dale, A. Williams Lewin and D. Osheim (eds.), *Chronicling History: Chroniclers and Historians in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (University Park, Pa., 2007), pp. 113–43, at p. 124.)

<sup>22</sup> The description of the Milanese coronation occupies no more than a couple of lines in Donato di Neri's *Cronaca Sanese*. 'E poi el dì de la Pasqua di Befania s'incoronò de la corona del ferro in Santo Ambruoio con grande onore, e così nell'entrata li fu fatto grande onore' (And then on the day of the Epiphany he was crowned with the Iron Crown in St Ambrose with great honour, as also when he entered the city he was accorded great honour); 'Cronaca Sanese di Donato di Neri e di suo figlio Neri', in *Rerum italicarum scriptores: Raccolta degli storici italiani dal Cinquecento al Millecinquecento*, 15/6 (Città di Castello, 1900), p. 576. And in the *Croniche* (c. 1400) by Giovanni Sercambi: 'L'imperatore . . . entrò in Milano, senza armi, e con alquanti compagni. E il giorno della Epiphania l'Imperadore fu coronato in Sant'Ambroglio con la Corona di Ferro' (The Emperor . . . entered Milan with a few unarmed companions. On the day of the Epiphany the Emperor was crowned in St Ambrose with the Iron Crown); from Book 1, ch. 137 of *Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi lucchese: Dal volgare in italiano*, ed. G. Tori, 2 vols. (Lucca, 2015), i, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed insight into Matteo Villani's style, see the introduction by Giuseppe Porta to the modern edition of the *Cronica* (i, pp. ix–xvii). As Clarke observes, Matteo was undoubtedly influenced by the literary world of Florence in his days ('The Villani Chronicles', p. 124).

<sup>24</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, i, pp. 3–4.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

How deeply Villani was interested in details, basing himself chiefly on the reports of the eyewitnesses, we learn, for example, from the portrayal of the Emperor he delineated in book 4, chapter 74, *Della statura e continenza dello mperadore*. The words with which he begins the description of the appearance of Charles IV and his manners make it clear that Villani obtained this information from someone who was present at the royal audience: 'Secondo che noi comprendemo da coloro, che conversavano intorno a lo mperadore' (According to what we have learned from those who had conversations around the Emperor).<sup>25</sup> The topic of this chapter is a description of such an audience.

Importantly, in chapter 38, Villani speaks about the preliminary agreement between Charles IV and the Visconti, made during his stay in Mantua, that the coronation should take place in Monza.<sup>26</sup> The idea to go to Monza without entering the city of Milan came from the Visconti themselves, since they were afraid of the presence of foreign military forces, above all those of the League of Lombardy, in their territory. For that reason, they obtained the king's promise to go there as a private person with a small escort, and completely entrusted to their jurisdiction and surveillance.<sup>27</sup>

Another document of the epoch is of great help in clarifying this intricate situation. It is the *Liber de coronatione Karoli IV imperatoris*, a kind of diary written by Johannes Porta de Annoniaco (d. 1361), a secretary of the cardinal of Ostia and Velletri Pietro de Columbario, who was appointed by Pope Innocent VI to crown the Emperor in Rome. Porta gives a detail report about the journey of the cardinal from Avignon to Rome, which started at the beginning of February 1355. Although the cardinal and his retinue were absent from the Milanese coronation of Charles IV, the brief information about it and about some other relevant moments is reported by Porta, who cites verbatim the Emperor's letters he sent to Pietro de Columbario from Mantua and Milan.<sup>28</sup>

It appears from Charles's letter written in Mantua on 12 December that the negotiations with 'the noble brothers Visconti of Milan,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 580.

<sup>26</sup> This is evidently the very same agreement about Monza mentioned in a brief of Pope Innocent VI as reported by Muratori and Bellani.

<sup>27</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, i, p. 529.

<sup>28</sup> J. Porta de Annoniaco: *Liber de coronatione Karoli IV imperatoris*, ed. R. Salomon, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* (Hannover and Leipzig, 1913). Porta also describes in detail their sojourn in Rome, the procedure of the coronation and the return of Cardinal Pietro de Columbario, after having separated from the emperor, to Avignon via Milan.

Matteo, Bernabò and Galeazzo, faithful subjects of Us and the Holy Empire' about the right of way through their territories and the coronation with the Iron Crown were difficult and not yet completed. The main problem was the armed escort, which Charles needed to reduce substantially in order not to burden the local people, who in turn would have impeded the royal progression, as he writes ('quin eo amplius eosdem gravari contingeret, quo magis transitus noster sive progressus regius impediretur').<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that Charles, precisely in these days in Mantua, asked Petrarch to come there. Petrarch responded with great enthusiasm to the Emperor's request and arrived in Mantua on 15 December, after a four-day journey from Milan, which is described in detail in the letter to his Lelio (*Fam.* 19, 3).<sup>30</sup> In all probability, the great poet, also known as a brilliant diplomat and successful negotiator, was called in to help. If so, he succeeded in this task in less than ten days, since on 27 December he was already back in Milan, perhaps in order to announce the outcome of the negotiations, while the Emperor finally could make his way towards the city. Strangely, Petrarch did not provide any information on Charles's coronation in Milan, considering the importance of this event in his own eyes and in the eyes of his benefactors, the Visconti. He certainly must have been present there. However, Petrarch did mention the Iron Crown in his letter to, or rather invective against, Charles IV, referring to his quick escape from Italy in June of 1355 after the coronation with the Golden Crown of the Holy Roman Emperors in Rome: 'Istud ferreum, illud aureum dyadema' (This crown iron, the other golden), *Fam.* 19. 12.

As Matteo Villani recounts, Charles IV left Mantua after Christmas and entered the Visconti domain with fewer than 300 cavalymen, many of them weaponless, accompanied by a large convoy of armed Visconti men, headed by Galeazzo Visconti. In every city or castle where they stopped, the gates were closed and well guarded. When Charles arrived at the Abbey of Chiaravalle, between Lodi and Milan, he was greeted there by Bernabò Visconti. After a decent dinner in the Abbey, Bernabò invited him to visit Milan, in view of the fact that the king had no armed men of the League in his retinue. The invitation, thus, was unplanned and spontaneous. According to Villani, the king was forced ('li costrinsono') to accept this proposal, and when he

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> One of the members of the retinue of Cardinal Pietro de Columbario was Angelo Tossetti, or Lelio, one of Petrarch's best friends. According to Porta, he was very active in the preparation of Charles's coronation in Rome.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

entered Milan he ‘almost could not have seen anything other than armed men on horseback and servants’. The military parades the Visconti displayed in his presence were accompanied with the very loud music of numerous military bands: ‘The sounds of the numerous large and small trumpets, makers, bagpipes and drums were so deafening that one could hardly have heard the loudest thunderclaps.’ The Visconti strove to impress upon the Emperor their wealth and power, ‘to the great suspicion and dread of the Emperor-elect, who seeing himself, with great anxiety, surrounded with a solicitous guard, now wished to be elsewhere and with lesser honour’. Thus they confirmed an astrological prognosis of Ugo of Città di Castello, a Dominican friar and astrologist, that the imperial Eagle would yield to the Viscontean Serpent.<sup>31</sup> Some days later, on 6 January, continues Villani, the Emperor-elect was brought to Monza for the solemn ceremony of coronation and was crowned there with the Iron Crown of Lombardy as King of the Italians. When he was back in Milan, constantly under surveillance by the armed guards of the Milanese rulers, he hastened his departure in order to free himself of their guard: ‘The king accelerated his course, not like an emperor but like a merchant who is in hurry to get to market, until he left their domain, thereby freeing himself from their convoy.’

Villani describes the general atmosphere surrounding Charles IV’s visit in Milan as full of tension and distrust, indeed ill-befitting the supposed festive and solemn nature of a coronation. This description, it seems, turns out to be quite gloomy not only because of Villani’s own literary style, indeed more pessimistic than that of his brother Giovanni, possibly also because it transmitted the personal impressions of Villani’s oral sources.

The above-mentioned letters of Charles IV, cited by Johannes Porta, also reflect the tense atmosphere of this episode. The emperor constantly begged Cardinal Pietro de Columbario to hasten his arrival in Italy, since it was dangerous to wait too long.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Villani intends the Dominican friar and astrologist Ugo from Città di Castello, mentioned in the *Storia della letteratura italiana* by G. Tiraboschi (Florence, 1807), v, p. 214, who apparently studied in Paris, but in 1337 was back in Florence.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Scribimus igitur domino nostro summo pontifici et sanctitatem ipsius attenta supplicatione precamur, quod dominos cardinales pro solemnitate nostre coronationis decretos in curia ad itineris assumptionem expediat et gressus eorum constituat maturari’ (We are therefore writing to our lord the Supreme Pontiff and praying His Holiness with attentive supplication that he dispatch the lord cardinals appointed in the Curia to undertake the journey and command that their steps be hastened); and ‘De speciali confidentia, quam ad paternitatem vestram habeo, rogo vos, ut acceleretis adventum vestrum, quia periculum est in mora!’ (On the especial confidence I have to

Although Charles IV, in his letter written in Milan on 9 January, is too laconic to describe his coronation, which, in his own words, took place in Milan in St Ambrose's church, he adds a new detail to the entire picture:

Qualiter intenderemus die Circumcisionis dominice in ecclesia sancti Ambrosii Mediolani corona ferrea insigniri, qua inter tripharias imperii sacri coronas Romanorum reges, predecessores nostri, in secunda sui coronatione sunt soliti coronari, tamen ex certis causis coronatio huiusmodi fuit usque in diem Epiphanie necessario prorogata, qua quidem die in predicta ecclesia a venerabili Roberto electo Mediolanensi assistentibus nobis venerabilibus Nicolao patriarcha Aquilegensi, fratre nostro, necnon episcopis, principibus, proceribus ac baronibus in multitudine innumerosa consecrati fuimus et inuncti ac eadem corona ferrea Deo auspice solempniter insigniti.<sup>33</sup>

We intended, on the day of the Lord's Circumcision, to be honoured with the Iron Crown in St Ambrose's church in Milan, with which out of the three crowns of the Holy Empire Our predecessors the kings of the Romans were wont to be crowned at their second coronation, yet for certain reasons such coronation was necessarily postponed to the day of Epiphany, on which day in the aforesaid church We were, by the venerable Robert, archbishop-elect of Milan, in the presence of venerable men, Nicholas patriarch of Aquileia, Our brother, and bishops, princes, lords, and barons in a countless multitude, consecrated and anointed and under God's auspices solemnly honoured with the same Iron Crown.

Charles mentions the triple coronation of the Holy Roman Emperors and speaks about the Iron Crown of Lombardy as the second one. We learn from his own words that he should already have been present in Milan on 1 January, the day he was assured to be crowned,<sup>34</sup> however, 'for certain reasons' (*ex certis causis*) the coronation was postponed to 6 January, the day his grandfather Henry VII was crowned.<sup>35</sup> Bearing in mind the original intention to perform the coronation in Monza, where the crown was kept, and that the decision

Your Paternity, I beg you to hasten your arrival, since the delay is dangerous). Porta, *Liber de coronatione Karoli IV imperatoris*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> The exact day of Charles IV's arrival in Milan is not clarified in other documents, but some indirect sources suggest that he had reached the borders of the Visconti domain on 31 December, and was already present in Milan on 4 January. The station in the Abbey of Chiaravalle must have been between these dates. See also Werunsky, *Der erste Römerzug Kaiser Karl IV*, pp. 28–9, and the chronological table in Widder, *Itinerar und Politik*, pp. 406–7.

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, Muratori dedicates several pages in his *De Corona ferrea*, pp. 59–64 to the question whether the coronation of Henry VII, Charles's grandfather, with the Iron Crown of Lombardy in 1313 took place in Milan or in Monza. There were more authors who supported the Monza version.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

to enter Milan was made, according to Villani, at the last moment (in the Abbey of Chiaravalle, between Lodi and Milan), this delay could well have been forced by the necessity to settle certain formalities and to bring the crown from Monza to Milan. It is quite probable that within these five days Charles participated in the trip to Monza in order to borrow the crown from the St John church and to visit this holy place, as he later did in Rome and everywhere on his way, according to the report of Johannes Porta and several other sources.<sup>36</sup> This could well have been the reason that Villani was actually informed, by his oral sources, about the voyage of Charles to Monza. The ceremony of coronation itself was then performed in Milan, of which Villani apparently remained unaware.

Following Villani, Charles escaped from the Visconti domain as quickly as he could, 'like a merchant who is in hurry to get to market'. This is the context from which the quotation used by Carducci was extracted, but he interpreted it as follows: like a merchant, the Emperor came only with the intention to collect money and to leave thereafter. This opinion appears in many historical studies, and is used to illustrate Charles IV as a man avid for the money received for the privileges and promises he generously ladled out.<sup>37</sup> Later, in June 1355, when Charles left Italy quite soon after the coronation in Rome with a great amount of money he had collected, this view turned out to be true. It was not by chance that Villani used this association in his chronicle; but in the given context the comparison of the king with a merchant served Villani mainly to render the king's fear and anxiety, caused by the Visconti's frustrating hospitality, from which he wanted to escape as soon as possible, even to the detriment of his imperial dignity. With the same speed Charles returned to 'Allamagna' (Germany), avoiding the large cities of the League, where he was no longer

<sup>36</sup> Many scholars note Charles's extremely zealous interest in relics and holy places, from Emil Werunsky (*Der erste Römerzug Kaiser Karl IV.*, p. 28) to Zdeňka Hledíková ('Charles IV's Italian Travels: An Inspiration for the Mosaic?', in F. Piqué and D. Stulik (eds.), *Conservation of the Last Judgment Mosaic, St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague* (Los Angeles, 2004), pp. 11–19, at p. 13).

<sup>37</sup> Max Siedel and Romano Silva tell us about Giovanni Sercambi's ambivalent attitude to Charles IV in his *Cronica*, in which the emperor, on the one hand, is glorified for his gift of freedom to the city of Lucca, but on the other hand condemned for his cupidity, since for that freedom the citizens of Lucca were forced to pay more than 300,000 gold florins (*Potere delle immagini, immagini del potere, Lucca città imperiale: Iconografia politica* (Venice, 2007), p. 26). Not only Visconti's account, but the official letters from Charles's chancellor's office render an idea regarding the character and the amount of these privileges. See *Acta Karoli IV. imperatoris inedita. Ein Beitrag zu den Urkunden Kaiser Karls IV.* (Aus italienischen archiven gesammelt), ed. F. Zimmermann (Innsbruck, 1891).

welcome, and of course the Visconti territories, where he was hardly allowed to enter, as for example in Soncino.<sup>38</sup>

### **Aquil'altera for Charles IV?**

Maria Caraci Vela has rightly pointed out that it is difficult to see the commission of the madrigal *Aquil'altera* as an initiative urged by the Visconti, since such a solemn commemoration of an imperial function ill befits the Visconti's behaviour towards the Emperor.<sup>39</sup> How little enthusiasm they had regarding the Emperor's presence on their territory and his coronation in Milan we can infer from the very fact that they made him wait in Mantua for almost two months, until they had found a satisfactory solution. Furthermore, it would have contradicted the Visconti's own monarchical aspirations. Hence, in the light of Villani's account, the compatibility of Jacopo's *Aquil'altera* with the ambience of Charles IV's Milanese journey, somewhat doubtful beforehand, now seems even less believable. It comes as no surprise that modern musicologists began to look for different occasions or even for different persons for the role of its protagonist.<sup>40</sup>

In a later work, Nino Pirrotta, though continuing to relate this madrigal to the first visit of Charles IV in 1355, now linked it to the coronation in Rome, not that in Milan.<sup>41</sup> Caraci Vela suggested that

<sup>38</sup> Book 5, ch. 54 in Villani, *Cronica*, i, p. 678.

<sup>39</sup> Caraci Vela, 'Per una nuova lettura del madrigale *Aquila altera*', p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Geneviève Thibault assumed that the protagonist of Jacopo's madrigal was the young Giangaleazzo Visconti and the supposed event was his wedding with Isabella Valois in 1360; 'Emblèmes et devises des Visconti dans les oeuvres musicales du Trecento', *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento*, III (Certaldo, 1970), pp. 131–60. Although her idea was rejected by Nino Pirrotta as unconvincing ('Rhapsodic Elements in North-Italian Polyphony', *Musica Disciplina*, 37 (1983), pp. 83–99), it was accepted and developed by Pedro Memelsdorff ('La "tibia" di Apollo, i modelli di Jacopo e l'eloquenza landiniana', in A. Delfino (ed.), *Col dolce suon che da te piove: Studi su Francesco Landini e la musica del suo tempo. In memoria di Nino Pirrotta* (Florence, 1999), pp. 241–57) and by Oliver Huck ('Music for Luchino, Bernabò and Gian Galeazzo Visconti', in S. Dieckmann et al. (eds.), *Kontinuität und Transformation in der italienischen Vokalmusik zwischen Due- und Quattrocento*, *Musica Mensurabilis*, 3 (Hildesheim, 2007), pp. 247–58). The ambivalence concerning this madrigal still remains current, as in Kurt von Fischer and Gianluca D'Agostino, 'Jacopo da Bologna', in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn, xii, pp. 737–40, at p. 738). However, this suggestion has many weak points, which I have considered elsewhere (E. Abramov-van Rijk: 'The Madrigal *Aquil'altera* by Jacopo da Bologna and Intertextual Relationships in the Musical Repertory of the Italian Trecento', *Early Music History*, 28 (2009), pp. 1–37).

<sup>41</sup> Pirrotta, 'Rhapsodic Elements in North-Italian Polyphony', p. 85.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

this madrigal could have been written for Charles's Italian sojourn of 1368–9.<sup>42</sup>

There are at least two difficult points with a change of place and/or time in reference to the madrigal *Aquil'altera*. The first makes it necessary to remove Jacopo da Bologna from the Milanese milieu and place him elsewhere. Blake Wilson suggested that he might be identified with a certain Jacopo da Bologna documented as a singer in the records of the Laudesi company of Orsanmichele in Florence in 1373.<sup>43</sup> But was there only one Jacopo from Bologna who could sing? There is no indication that the virtuoso composer Jacopo ever stayed in Florence. Moreover, it hardly seems likely that Filippo Villani, in his book about famous Florentines, who does talk about the great Bolognese maestro Jacopo (in relation to Giovanni da Firenze), would have not mentioned his presence in Florence, if he were there.<sup>44</sup> Actually, we know nothing of Jacopo's whereabouts after the 1350s, the years he passed, in all probability, in Milan, nor whether he was alive in the 1360s and later.

The second point concerns the purely Italian genre of the madrigal and the Italian language chosen to celebrate, as it were, a person without a solid Italian educational background, such as the emperor Charles IV. It is all the more strange for a musician like Jacopo, who before then had already proven himself able to compose celebratory Latin motets with devices and acronyms incorporated in their texts: *Lux purpurata/Diligite justitiam* and *Laudibus dignis* (transmitted anonymously), both for Luchino Visconti (died in

<sup>42</sup> Caraci Vela, 'Per una nuova lettura del madrigale *Aquila altera*', p. 11. It should be recalled that on the second visit, in 1369, Charles wanted, among other tasks (such as freeing Lucca, finally, from the domination of Pisa and the coronation of his fourth wife Elisabeth of Pomerania), to restore the Holy See in Rome, for which reason he met Urban V. The Emperor once again succeeded in collecting a large amount of money in exchange for privileges, but he failed in his unfeasible mission to restore the Holy See to Rome. This time he did not enter Milan. On the detailed itinerary see Pirchan, *Italien und Kaiser Karl IV.*; Widder, *Itinerar und Politik*, pp. 125–265; and the summary in Hledíková, 'Charles IV's Italian Travels', pp. 14–15. Although Giovanni Sercambi's *Croniche* has an illustration of Charles entering Milan, this information is not as trustworthy. On the illustrations see more below. Caraci Vela also proposed an alternative interpretation: the madrigal might have had no addressee and be nothing other than pure art and an abstract reflection on an idea of monarchy that Jacopo could have expressed at some time; Caraci Vela, 'Per una nuova lettura del madrigale *Aquila altera*', p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> B. Wilson, 'Madrigal, Lauda, and Local Style in Trecento Florence', *Journal of Musicology*, 15 (1997), pp. 137–77, at p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> 'Johannes da Cascia, cum Mastini Della Scala tiranni veronensis atria questus gratia frequentaret et cum magistro Jacopo bononiensi artis musice peritissimo de artis excellentia contenderet . . .' (Johannes de Cascia, when he frequented the court of the Veronese tyrant Mastino della Scala and competed in artistic skill with the Bolognese master Jacopo, a most expert musician . . .); F. Villani, *De origine civitatis Florentie et de eiusdem famosis civibus*, ed. G. Tanturli (Padua, 1997), p. 408.

1349).<sup>45</sup> In her analysis of the verbal structure of the madrigal *Aquil'altera*, Caraci Vela demonstrated the strong dependence of its vocabulary on Dante's *Comedy*, with which the madrigal shares several expressions and allusions.<sup>46</sup> It seems indeed unlikely that the addressee of such a refined poetic work, deeply rooted within the Italian literary experience, where Dante's *Comedy* served as a foundation and a model, could have been a foreigner unacquainted with the great Italian epic.<sup>47</sup>

The multifaceted world of images and ideas, as it appears in the texts of Jacopo's compositions, certainly reflects Jacopo's ample education and deep knowledge of contemporary literature and also his own literary talent. The eagle, besides the traditional view of it as a heraldic symbol of political sovereignty (also nicely harmonising with the Visconti's own aspirations), actually had various meanings in medieval literature. Jacopo's madrigal uncontestedly praises the mental supremacy of the eagle, which is able to distinguish between

<sup>45</sup> See more in Abramov-van Rijk, 'Luchino Visconti, Jacopo da Bologna and Petrarch', pp. 17–22.

<sup>46</sup> Caraci Vela, 'Per una nuova lettura del madrigale *Aquila altera*', pp. 24–33.

<sup>47</sup> In Charles's autobiography, with regard to his youth (written not later than 1346) Charles claims that he knows how 'to speak, write, and read not only Czech, but French, Italian, German and Latin' ('Ex divina autem gracia non solum Boemicum, sed Gallicum, Lombardicum, Teutonicum et Latinum ita loqui, scribere et legere scivimus' (*Karoli IV Imperatoris Romanorum vita ab eo ipsa conscripta*, ch. 8, p. 68)). On the other hand, concerning Charles's knowledge of the Italian language, Villani depicts a curious episode during an audience of the secret Florentine deputation in Prague in 1352: 'In questo avvenne che ragionando colli ambasciatori, l'uno di Fiorentini per corrotto parlare, tenendosi più savio che gli altri perché aveva maggiore stato in Comune, riprendendo lo eletto imperatore disse: "Voi filate molto sottile." L'imperadore che sapeva la lingua latina conobbe la indiscreta parola, e turbato temperò sé medesimo, parendoli che la reale maestà ricevesse ingiuria dalla indiscreta e vile parola, ma d'allora innanzi volle poco udire quel savio ambasciatore' (It happened that during the conversation with the ambassadors, one of the Florentines, who thought too much of himself because of his high position in the community, while reprimanding the emperor-elect with corrupt words, said: 'You are too shrewd (lit. you make too thin a thread).') The Emperor, who knew Latin, recognised the tactless word but restrained himself, thinking that this indiscrete and gauche word could damage his royal majesty, but from then on he rarely wished to hear this clever ambassador) (Book 3, ch. 30. Villani, *Cronica*, i, p. 363.) Evidently, this story was told to Villani by one of the members of this delegation, as in many other similar instances. We learn from it that Charles, a person with a high level of self-control, was able to recognise some Italian words thanks to the Latin he knew. Although in the documents of this period, the word 'latino' can also refer to the Italian language, in the present context it appears that for Villani's informer Charles's command of the Italian language was not obvious, since members of the Florentine deputation were able to exchange their opinions quite freely in the king's presence. Besides, it is quite probable that Tuscan pronunciation could have impeded Charles's understanding, all the more so because in his biography he calls the Italian language 'Lombardian': during his father's campaign in Italy at the beginning of the 1330s, he stayed mostly in Lombardy.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

true and false, perfection and poor imitation, etc. Exactly in this quality the eagle appears in the bestiary that comprises part of the long poem *Acerba* by the early Trecento Florentine poet, philosopher, physician and alchemist Cecco d'Ascoli (who ended his life at the stake in 1327, burnt together with his books), symbolising the human intellect, without which one cannot reach the Divine Wisdom.<sup>48</sup> Of course, it is impossible to ascertain whether Jacopo founded his idea of the eagle as a symbol of intellectual power specifically on this poem, though it was very popular, judging by the large number of contemporary manuscript copies of it. However, in another source, chronologically and geographically much closer to Jacopo, a similar allegory uncontestedly surfaces. Surprisingly, it relates in some way to Charles IV's milieu.

The Chancellor of Charles IV Jan ze Sředy (Johannes Neumarkt, 1310–80), the earliest Czech humanist and one of Petrarch's friends and correspondents, also took part in Charles's retinue on his voyage in Italy in 1354–5. Petrarch met him personally in Mantua in December 1354, then in Milan and in 1356 in Prague. They exchanged a number of letters, giving evidence of their sincere mutual esteem. One of Petrarch's letters to Jan ze Sředy (*Extravagantes* 29, misc. 12) was written in Milan on 25 March 1355, between the Milanese and Roman coronations. Charles stayed with his court in Pisa from 18 January to 22 March, and later in Siena. Petrarch wrote:

[21] Tu, procul ab Elicone genitus  
atque educatus in terra multum  
diversis studiis dedita, ubi scilicet ista  
nedum non magnopere expetuntur,  
sed vulgo etiam contemnuntur,  
densam errorum vulgarium ac  
circumfusam nebulam perrupisti teque  
*in apertam veri speculam alis ingenii et  
studiorum plumis auxiliariibus exexisti.*  
Mediolani VIII Kal. Aprilis.<sup>49</sup>

[21] You, being born very far from  
Helicon and educated in a country  
devoted to many different studies, where  
they are not only unpopular, but even  
are scorned by the crowd, you  
succeeded in breaking the dense mist of  
the errors of the common people, and  
*on the wings of your talent and feathers of  
your studies you have risen to the open summit  
of the truth.*  
Milan, 25 March

Although there is no mention of the eagle in this excerpt, the image of its talent (in this context, expressed in the sharp intellect and the ability to learn notwithstanding the surrounding unfavourable conditions) that floats on its wings (*alis ingenii*) towards the open summit of

<sup>48</sup> See more in the introduction to the modern edition of Cecco d'Ascoli: *L'Acerba [Acerba etas]*, ed. M. Albertazzi (Trent, 2002), p. iii; and also in Abramov-van Rijk, 'The Madrigal *Aquil'altera* by Jacopo da Bologna', pp. 12–13.

<sup>49</sup> Petrarca, *Lettere disperse: Varie e miscellaneae*, ed. A. Pancheri (Parma, 1994), p. 242.

the truth (*apertam veri speculam*) is similar to that one of Jacopo's *Aquila*: 'salire in alto' (to climb high) to 'la vetta dell'alta mente' (the summit of the lofty mind), where the 'vera essenza' (true essence, or truth) is revealed.<sup>50</sup> This metaphor goes back to the medieval notion of *arx mentis* – fortress or citadel of mind – known already in the Carolingian epoch.<sup>51</sup> But in Ascoli, Petrarch and Jacopo, we see a fusion of the medieval *arx mentis* with the idea of the flying thought, to which the allegory of the eagle fits well.

Elsewhere I suggested that Giovanni Visconti, archbishop of Milan and its governor from 1349 to his death in October 1354, was the possible addressee of and source of inspiration for Jacopo's *Aquil'altera*.<sup>52</sup> The allegorical connection of the image of the eagle with Archbishop Giovanni, besides the points discussed above, certainly relevant to him, is due to one more factor as well. This connection would remain incomplete without the consideration of Jacopo's motet *Lux purpurata*, which contains the acrostic of Luchino Visconti in the *triplum*, while Giovanni is named in the *motetus* as *presul*, bishop. Here an extremely sophisticated hint at the eagle is given in the phrase *Diligite iustitiam, qui iudicatis terram* (in the motet is last word 'terram' was replaced with the word 'macchinam'). The quotation stems from the Proverbs of Solomon, but Dante in his *Comedy* describes it in his vision, in which the last 'm' of the word 'terram' is transformed into an eagle (*Par.* 18, vv. 89–108). In the motet *Lux purpurata*, Jacopo obviously alludes to this episode, familiar to any educated Italian of that period, thus connecting the hidden image of the imperial eagle with the brothers Visconti and with their wise government. Furthermore, the fact that the Visconti, namely the father and three of the five brothers, bore the names of the four evangelists (father Matteo and brothers Marco, Luchino and Giovanni), could well have associated the eagle, as the symbol of the evangelist John, with Giovanni Visconti through the obvious onomastic lineage.

The idea of reading the image of the eagle in *Aquil'altera* specifically as the symbol of the evangelist John was recently supported by Andrew Hicks, who suggested its closest affinity in Jacopo's madrigal (and in other quotations cited above) with the *Homilies on the Prologue*

<sup>50</sup> See the text in Appendix 2.

<sup>51</sup> R. Crespo, 'Il *casser de la mente* cavalcantiano e l'*arx mentis* della tradizione mediolatina', *Quaderni di Semantica*, 1 (1980), pp. 135–41. See also E. Abramov-van Rijk, 'Mysterious Amphion: A Trecento Musician, his Admirers and Critics', *Studi Musicali*, NS 5 (2014), pp. 241–72, at p. 263.

<sup>52</sup> Abramov-van Rijk, 'Luchino Visconti, Jacopo da Bologna and Petrarch', pp. 22–9.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

of the *Gospel of John*, written by John Scotus Eriugena in the ninth century:<sup>53</sup>

Vox spiritualis aquilae auditum pulsat ecclesiae. Exterior sensus transeuntem accipiat sonitum, interior animus manentem penetret intellectum. Vox altiuoli uolatilis, non aera corporeum uel aethera uel totius sensibilis mundi ambitum superuolantis, sed omnem theoriam, ultra omnia quae sunt et quae non sunt, citiuolis intimae theologiae pennis (clarissimae superaeque contemplationis obtutibus) transcendentis. . . . Superuolat itaque beatus theologus Johannes non solum quae intelligi ac dici possunt, uerum etiam in ea quae superant omnem intellectum et significationem superuehitur, extraque omnia ineffabili mentis uolatu in archana unius omnium principii exaltatur . . . (I, 1)  
Ecce aquilam de sublimissimo uertice montis theologiae leni uolatu descendentem in profundissimam uallem historiae, de caelo in terram spiritualis mundi pennas altissimae contemplationis relaxantem . . . (XIV, 1–5)<sup>54</sup>

The voice of the spiritual eagle strikes in the hearing of the church. May our outer sense grasp its transient sounds, may our inner spirit penetrate its enduring meaning. This is the voice of the bird in flight – not of the bird who soars above the material air or over the aether, orbiting the entire sensible world – but the voice of that spiritual bird who, on swiftest wings of innermost theology and intuitions of most brilliant and high contemplation, transcends all vision and flies beyond all things that are and are not. . . . The blessed theologian John therefore flies beyond not only what may be thought and spoken, but also beyond all mind and meaning. Exalted by the ineffable flight of his spirit beyond all things, he enters into the very arcanum of the one principle of all . . .

Behold the eagle, relaxing his wings of sublimest contemplation, descend in gentle flight from the highest peaks of the mountain of theology into the deepest valley of history, from the heaven of the spiritual world to the earth.

The most refined theological mysticism of this opus cannot distract us from the spectacular image of the high-flying eagle as an allegory of ‘an indescribable flight of mind into the secrets of the one origin of all things’. Since Eriugena’s *Homilies* were well known in medieval Italy, judging by the high number of surviving manuscripts of Italian origin dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>55</sup> one can assume that Eriugena’s conception of the eagle could well have served

<sup>53</sup> During the discussions at the conference in Novacella, 27–30 June 2017. I am deeply grateful to Andrew Hicks.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugena Homilia super ‘In principio erat uerbum’ et Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis*, ed. É. A. Jeuneau and A. J. Hicks (Brepols, 2008), pp. 3–4 and 26. The English translation is by Christopher Bamford (*The Voice of the Eagle: Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John. John Scotus Eriugena* (Hudson, NY, 1990), pp. 21 and 45.)

<sup>55</sup> See the list of the manuscripts containing Homilies by Eriugena in *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugena Homilia*, pp. xvi–xlxi.

as a source of inspiration for all the authors cited above: Ascoli, Petrarch and Jacopo.<sup>56</sup>

However, in these authors, especially in the latter two, the theological focus is much less pertinent. In the mid-fourteenth century, the new tendencies of burgeoning humanism were becoming discernible, and for Jacopo da Bologna they should have been even more palpable in the immediate vicinity of the greatest poet of the time and the first humanist, Petrarch. Although we almost have no secure chronology of Jacopo's activity, his presence at the Milanese court of the Visconti in the years of our interest, 1354–5, that is, together with Petrarch, is quite certain.<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to imagine that Jacopo could have remained insensitive to Petrarch's influence. Indeed, the above-cited excerpt from Petrarch's letter to Jan ze Sředy is nothing else than a panegyric to humanist studies (pointing to Helicon). Similarly, Jacopo's madrigal *Aquil'altera* now appears to be a eulogy of the human mind as well. Giovanni Visconti, called by Petrarch *Italicorum maximus* for his lofty intellect, comprehensive knowledge and wide interests,<sup>58</sup> could well have been the source of inspiration for Jacopo, all the more so in that his name so fortunately alludes to the evangelist John's eagle. From this viewpoint, this madrigal can be seen as one of the first articulations of the conception of humanism expressed through music.

### **The Music at the Ceremonies of the Coronation in Rome and in Milan**

But what of the music that would have accompanied the coronation of Charles IV? Villani gives some idea about the musical entourage of Charles's Milanese sojourn. He informs us about the abundance of various military bands that accompanied military processions and parades. They consisted of big and small trumpets, makers, bagpipes and drums, whose sound was very loud and flamboyant ('gran tumulto di stomenti' – 'great noise of musical instruments'), much stronger than the most powerful thunder.

<sup>56</sup> The Dantean reminiscences traceable in Jacopo's text, as Caraci Vela has proved, could well have been part of Jacopo's lexicon in composing his own text, bearing in mind that the *Comedy* was now an indispensable component of education.

<sup>57</sup> On the chronology and of the relationship of Jacopo da Bologna and Petrarch see more in Abramov-van Rijk, 'Luchino Visconti, Jacopo da Bologna and Petrarch: Courting a Patron'.

<sup>58</sup> In the letter to Giovanni Zanobi da Strada (*Epistole extravagantes*, var. 7). Cfr. U. Dotti, *Petrarca a Milano: Documenti milanesi 1353–1354* (Milan, 1972), p. 132.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

An analogous portrayal of the musical accompaniment of the Roman ceremony as a deafening and intolerable acoustical experience is given by Johannes Porta:

ubi tantus est civium plausus, tanta simul exterorum letitia, tantus insuper sonus omnium generis musicae concrepans, quod nec fulguris conscindentis ecclesiam < fragor > audiretur, nedum quod invicem minime se loquentes audirent.<sup>59</sup>

where there is so much applause by the citizens, and at the same time such great joy amongst the foreigners, and in addition so great a sounding altogether of music of all kinds, that not even the noise of lightning rending the church apart would have been heard, much less could people hear each other speak at all.

Astonishingly, both Villani and Porta mention the simultaneous playing of different kinds of music, apparently by several ensembles of different musical instruments, nearly at the limits of cacophony, comparable in both cases with a thunderstorm.<sup>60</sup>

Villani's and Porta's vivid reports are supported by illustrations in another contemporary source, the *Croniche* by Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424) from Lucca,<sup>61</sup> a richly illuminated manuscript (574 miniatures, two illuminated initials and 94 blazons and heraldic insignia<sup>62</sup>) of about 1400, kept in the Archivio di Stato in Lucca (MS 107). The paternity of this manuscript still remains under investigation:<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Porta, *Liber coronationi Karoli IV*, p. 86.

<sup>60</sup> There are two other mentions of the wind instruments in Porta. The first one describes the arrival of Charles IV in Siena: 'Et quidam equi sui manibus continentes habenas, vestimentorum fimbrias alii, pugno claudentes stapedas alii cum illis et tibias brachio perstringentes . . .' (And some holding his horse's reins, others the edges of his clothes, others with them enclosing the stirrups in their fists and squeezing the pipes with their arms); *ibid.*, p. 73. It is not completely clear what instrument Porta might have intended for the word 'tibia' (pipes), since for the signal trumpet he used the common word 'tuba': 'Quibus iam apparentibus tubas clangere iubet et signa moveri . . .' (When they were present he ordered the trumpets to sound and the standards to be moved (i.e. he ordered an advance)); *ibid.*, 82. They could well have been the trumpets firmly held in the hands during the procession, if not the bagpipes, pressed by arm.

<sup>61</sup> Giovanni Sercambi has left a precious description of the contemporary practice of singing from the written musical repertory of the Trecento. In his *Novelliere* he mentions several incipits of madrigals and ballatas, transmitted with music in the most important Trecento manuscripts. See more in H. M. Brown, 'Fantasia on a Theme by Boccaccio', *Early Music*, 5 (1977), pp. 324–39, and C. Elias: 'Sercambi's Novelliere and Croniche as Evidence for Musical Entertainment in the Fourteenth Century', in G. Allaire (ed.), *The Italian Novella* (New York and London, 2003), pp. 81–104.

<sup>62</sup> M. L. Cristiani Testi, 'Testo e immagine, realtà e simbolo, modello e copia, nelle illustrazioni delle Croniche di Giovanni Sercambi', in *Quaderni de 'La ricerca scientifica'*, 106 (1980), pp. 273–88, at p. 277.

<sup>63</sup> A brief survey of the arguments pro and contra is given by Giorgio Tori, in *Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi lucchese*, i, pp. 26–30. The first modern editor of this manuscript, Salvatore Bongi, cites the following inscription from the inventory of the library of Paolo

some scholars do not believe it is Sercambi's autograph, while the others, including its recent editor Giorgio Tori, assume the high probability that it was not only copied but even illustrated by the author himself.<sup>64</sup> Of course, the conditional character of these illustrations must be taken into account, but the pictures undoubtedly reflect a definite conception the illustrator had regarding the events, circumstances and personages.<sup>65</sup> Sercambi was a child of about 7 years old when Charles visited Lucca in 1355, but he was an adult witness of his second visit in 1368–9, being then at the age of 20 or 21, when he ostensibly started to work on his *Croniche*.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, some details in his miniatures dedicated to Charles IV deserve more scrupulous attention.

Sercambi depicts several kinds of wind instrument ensembles, the predecessors of the later *alta cappella*, used in various ceremonies: the conferring the title of duke on the Milanese ruler Giangaleazzo Visconti in 1395 (Figure 1a); the truce in Paris between Richard II of England and Charles VI of France in 1396 (Figures 1b and 1c). The following loud instruments are clearly recognisable here: (1) the straight trumpets with banners, namely the signalling instruments, which produce natural scales and in a certain sense could replace the percussion; (2) the shawms of different sizes, like the bass shawm, or perhaps a bombard or *piffaro*, clearly visible with its fontanelle in fig. 1b; (3) the bagpipes as an instrument used in ceremonial music (recall Villani's *cornamuse* in the military ensembles).<sup>67</sup>

Two pictures illustrate the two coronations of Charles IV, in Milan and in Rome, both accompanied with musical instruments as well. The scene of the Roman ceremony of coronation (Figure 2) presents, on

Guinigi, the governor of Lucca, of about 1434: 'Liber Chronicarum lucane civitatis, factus per Iohannem Sercambi, in membranis, cum tabulellis corio rubeo foderatis et clausura, et clavis ottonis'; *Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi lucchese pubblicate sui manoscritti originali* (Lucca, 1892), p. xxix. Marco Paoli too considers this manuscript to be in the hand of Sercambi himself ('I codici', in *Giovanni Sercambi e il suo tempo: Catalogo della mostra* (Lucca, 1991), pp. 191–241, at 209.

<sup>64</sup> Cristiani Testi believes that the layout of the illustrations within the written text suggests their simultaneous execution, though considers that the illustrations were made by a professional illustrator ('Testo e immagine, realtà e simbolo', pp. 277 and 280).

<sup>65</sup> Cristiani Testi notes that some of the details are very realistic, as, for example, details of Lucca, Rome and Florence, whereas other cities, like Pisa and Bologna, are represented quite emblematically, perhaps in the absence of the author's own visual experience. *Ibid.*, pp. 283–4.

<sup>66</sup> See M. Swennen Ruthenburg, 'Telling Lies, Telling Lives: Giovanni Sercambi between Cronaca and Novella', in Allaire (ed.), *The Italian Novella*, pp. 69–80, at p. 70.

<sup>67</sup> On instrumental ensembles for ceremonial music in Trecento Italy see more in T. McGee, *The Ceremonial Musicians of Late Medieval Florence* (Bloomington, Ind., 2009). Especially relevant are the sections on shawms of different kinds and bagpipes on pp. 58–64.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV



Figure 1 Wind instrument ensembles illustrated in Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche*, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, MS 107, fols. (a) 143<sup>r</sup>, (b) and (c) 147<sup>r</sup> (details).

Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; further reproduction prohibited

the right side, the Emperor and Pope Innocent VI's proxy, the cardinal of Ostia, Pietro de Columbario (in the red mantle and the papal tiara), with a group of cardinals in their typical hats, the large red galeros. On the left side, the public watch from a balcony. The group in the middle includes (a) musicians blowing two straight trumpets with the imperial banners and two shawms, one of which is larger than the other; (b) standard-bearers and guards; (c) members of Charles's retinue. As for the latter, the two figures wearing long cloaks with open sleeves, apparently tabards, and round hoods with scarfs under the chin, appear also in the scene of the Milanese coronation.

The Milanese coronation (Figure 3) was performed by the Milanese archbishop Roberto Visconti, who is portrayed with the episcopal mitre in the middle of the scene. On both sides of the Emperor and the archbishop are Charles's same courtiers and probably one of the brothers Visconti to the right of Charles. On the right is the same musical ensemble, consisting of two straight trumpets with banners with the imperial eagle and two shawms. On the left side, on the balcony full of the spectators, is another pair of straight trumpets with banners with the Visconti viper. Possibly, the abundance of Visconti flags was intended to render an idea of Visconti predominance. In this, Sercambi's illustration nicely accords with Villani's description of the atmosphere of the Milanese sojourn of Charles IV and with the prophecy: 'His imperial soul completely succumbed to the will of the Milanese tyrants, and the Eagle surrendered to the Serpent.'



Figure 2 The Roman coronation of Emperor Charles IV in Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche*, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, MS 107, fol. 53<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; further reproduction prohibited

In the Milanese ceremony there is one figure who lends the entire scene an even more courtly secular character: the sitting man curled up in the right bottom corner (Figure 4).<sup>68</sup> Almost certainly he can be identified with a jester, the only category of courtiers who could remain sitting on the floor in the king's presence, especially during a ceremony of strict etiquette, such as a coronation. There was such a buffoon in Milan, related to Charles IV: the Florentine Dolcibene de' Tori was crowned by the Emperor as king of buffoons. In his essay about Dolcibene (1928), the prominent historian of Italian literature Ezio Levi recorded some other earlier instances of the coronation of buffoons by kings, presenting Dolcibene's case as the last one in line with this tradition.<sup>69</sup>

The most likely occasion for Dolcibene's coronation by Charles IV would have been in Milan, between 6 and 10 January 1355, after Charles's own coronation. This suggestion accords with the

<sup>68</sup> The black and white engraving is extracted from the abovementioned edition by Salvatore Bongi in 1892. In 1886 the Istituto Storico Italiano commissioned Prof. Angelo Ardinghi to prepare exact xylographic copies of all the pictures from this manuscript, retaining their slightest details (*Le croniche di Giovanni Sercambi*, p. xlii; the illustration is at p. 101). Some contours are better visible than in the original in its present condition.

<sup>69</sup> E. Levi, 'Ultimo Re dei Giullari', *Studi Medievali*, 6 (1928), pp. 173–80, at pp. 173–4.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV



Figure 3 The Milanese coronation of Emperor Charles IV in Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche*, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, MS 107, fol. 52<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; further reproduction prohibited

information from Matteo Villani's account: when Charles returned to Milan after the ceremony in Monza (where Villani supposed the coronation took place), he created some people knights:

e tornato a Milano sotto continova guardia, fattivi certi cavalieri, egli, sollicitava la sua partita per tornare in libertà.<sup>70</sup>

Returning to Milan under the constant guard, after creating some people knights, he entreated his departure to return to liberty.

This ceremony of creating knights thus included a carnival element as well, namely, the coronation of a buffoon by an emperor. This story became widely known, as many literary sources and even administrative documents testify,<sup>71</sup> therefore it is not surprising that in his *Croniche* Giovanni Sercambi added the figure of a buffoon, considering it as relevant within the context of the Milanese coronation of Charles IV.

<sup>70</sup> Book 4, ch. 39 (Villani, *Cronica*, i, p. 532.)

<sup>71</sup> Dolcibene's intriguing story lies outside the main path of our present discourse and will be discussed elsewhere.



Figure 4 Detail of the Milanese coronation of Charles IV in the engraving by Angelo Ardinghi after Sercambi (fol. 52<sup>r</sup>), 1886

Having done this, Charles IV proceeded farther on towards Tuscany.

THE FLORENTINE CONTEXT AND THE MADRIGAL *SOVRAN UCCELLO*

According to Matteo Villani, Charles IV arrived in Pisa on 17 January 1355, earlier than he had planned.<sup>72</sup> There he remained for a while, waiting for the arrival of the cardinal Pietro de Columbario, who started his slow journey towards Italy on 9 February, reaching Pisa only on 12 March.<sup>73</sup>

In Tuscan territory, the Emperor-elect's journey was even more complicated than in Lombardy, owing to the irreconcilable controversies between the different Tuscan city-states and the rivalries of numerous clans and parties within the cities, even those where the Ghibelline sympathies were predominant, as in Pisa. Charles's two main concerns during the negotiations with the different Tuscan communities were a secure journey towards Rome and the gathering of a sufficient amount of money to support his venture and his retinue.<sup>74</sup> The latter was substantially enlarged because of the arrival of

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 533.

<sup>73</sup> Porta, *Liber de coronatione Karoli IV imperatoris*, pp. 51 and 60.

<sup>74</sup> The summary of the main events of Charles's politics in Tuscany is given in Widder, *Itinerar und Politik*, pp. 192–214.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV



Figure 5 The Empress Anna von Schweidnitz arriving in Lucca in Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche*, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, MS 107, fol. 53<sup>r</sup>. Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; further reproduction prohibited

Charles IV's consort, Anne von Schweidnitz, who joined him in Pisa on 8 February, as Giovanni Sercambi informs us, with more than 4,000 armed horsemen of her party.<sup>75</sup> One of the illustrations in Sercambi's chronicles depicts the cavalcade of the imperial cortege of Anna von Schweidnitz arriving in Lucca, on her way to Pisa (Figure 5). Interestingly, a musical ensemble similar to that which appears in the scene of the coronation in Milan heads the procession entering the city gate.

Matteo Villani too notes how large the Empress's cortege was:

the Empress took the road with one thousand noble armed horsemen and many barons in her retinue, in order to reach Pisa, and likewise many clerics and great lords of various provinces of Germany came too, every one accompanied by a large cortege, to come to Italy and to be present at the Emperor's coronation in Rome.<sup>76</sup>

As in Lombardy, the Tuscans were suspicious of the armed imperial troops, and the Guelf Florence did not look favourably on Charles's voyage in Italy. Therefore it is not surprising that the preliminary contacts of the Florentine Commune with the Imperial chancellery were held in secrecy from their very beginning in the winter of 1351–2,

<sup>75</sup> Sercambi, *Le croniche*, i, p. 116. She accompanied him to Rome, and was crowned there as Empress of the Holy Roman Empire.

<sup>76</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, i, p. 555.

according to Villani.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, the Empress's wish to visit Florence was not honoured by the rectors of the Commune, who did not trust their own citizens, especially the common people (*popolo minuto*). Their fear was not only that they would hurt the Empress, but they might revolt against the rectors themselves.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, since Pisa was not capacious enough to lodge all these crowds, many of the guests were accommodated in different places, even in Florence, though well guarded:

e molti vennono per la nostra città,  
albergandone DC e DCC per notte, ove  
con cortese e buona guardia  
onorevolmente furono veduti e  
albergati.<sup>79</sup>

Many of them came to our city, which  
hosted from six to seven hundred  
people per night, where they, with a  
good and courteous guard, were  
honourably welcomed and  
accommodated.

Franco Sacchetti's sonnet *Firenze bella, confortar ti dêi* [XII] provides evidence that the Florentines were not happy with this situation. In Sacchetti's autograph codex Ashburnham 574 (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence) it is placed at the very beginning (number 12).<sup>80</sup> Franca Brambilla Ageno dates it to the year 1355, when Sacchetti was a young poet in his early 20s. The sonnet appeals to the beautiful city of Florence, which has citizens of every sort, in age (old, adult, young, infants) and ethnicity (Turks, Jews, Greeks, French, judging by their appearance and clothes), and also is accustomed to host various mercenaries, soldiers and horsemen from everywhere. But if Florence wants to respect itself, it must make an effort and chase away the crowds of the Emperor: 'Però mettiti in via / a constatar compagna e 'mperadore, / e questi manda fuor, se vuogli onore.'<sup>81</sup>

In these last lines of the sonnet Ageno sees an allusion to Charles's first visit to Italy in 1355, but the *compagna* she relates to another event that happened one year earlier.<sup>82</sup> Yet, by associating this sonnet with the information given by Villani, it would appear that Sacchetti was more specific, addressing his sonnet to this concrete event, namely to the accommodation of part of the enormous imperial retinue in

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 555–6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556.

<sup>80</sup> Regarding Sacchetti's arrangement of his verses in the autograph codex Ashburnham 574 there is a consensus that it is 'grosso modo . . . cronologico', according to F. Brambilla Ageno, 'Per una nuova edizione delle rime del Sacchetti', *Studi di Filologia Italiana*, 11 (1953), pp. 257–320, at p. 257.

<sup>81</sup> F. Sacchetti, *Il libro delle Rime*, ed. F. Brambilla Ageno (Florence, 1990), pp. 16–17.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

Florence, all the more since Matteo Villani too uses the word *compagnia* several times specifically to indicate the cortege of the Empress.

At this point we encounter an interesting and important aspect of Charles IV's Italian adventure: the immediate reaction of the Italians to it. Differing from the chronicles, reflecting more restrained and more pondered reports of past events, the poetic production was more emotional and more spontaneous. It is difficult to say how many such compositions there were at the time, but a certain number of them have survived to our days. What follows below is a short survey of some poems inspired by Charles's Italian campaign.

### Hopes and Disappointments

The arrival of Charles IV in Italy was eagerly awaited by many Italians, as expressed in a number of Petrarch's letters to the Emperor, mentioned earlier.<sup>83</sup> Two poetic compositions illustrate these expectations. The poem *O sacro imperio santo* by Antonio Beccari da Ferrara (1315–c. 1371/4), a renowned poet who served at various courts in Italy, constantly travelling between them, is a *ballata grande*.<sup>84</sup> It consists of ten strophes with a *ripresa* of four lines, two *piedi* of two lines each, and a *volta* of four lines, which combines hendecasyllables and *settenari* (seven-syllable lines) with the rhyme scheme aBbA CdCd dEeA. Judging by its content, the ballata was written before Charles IV's coronation in Rome or even before he had entered Italy. The poem is an allegorical appeal in the name of Italy, represented as a lonely widow, to the institution of the Holy Roman Empire and to her promised consort, Emperor Charles, who will protect her from any disaster and restore her honour and glory. This is the recurring motif of the *ripresa*: 'O sacrosanct Holy Empire, o just Charles, my dear defender, with your long-standing virtue turn your ears to my devout complaint!' (vv. 1–4: 'O sacro imperio santo, / o giusto Carlo, o mio bel protettore, / col to antico valore / porgi le orecchie al mio devoto pianto'). After the description of various calamities that were constantly befalling her for a long time, Italy says that all, either Guelph or Ghibelline, desire to see her protector (v. 47: 'e 'l guelfo e 'l ghibellin veder te brama'); Rome, the Duchy (Lombardy), Tuscany, Romagna, Ancona, Treviso and Friuli will be happy to host the Emperor. The simple citizens who suffer from the local tyrants will feast the Emperor's coming, as a just

<sup>83</sup> See more in *Petrarca: Lettere all'Imperatore*.

<sup>84</sup> *Le Rime di Maestro Antonio da Ferrara (Antonio Beccari)*, ed. L. Bellucci, *Rimatori inediti* o rari, 2 (Bologna, 1972), pp. 214–18.

and impartial lord (vv. 61–2 and 66: ‘I popol sottoposti a tirannia / chiaman el tuo venire . . . che se’ giusto signor e naturale’). Italy swears that only the Emperor’s presence in sweet Florence will make those<sup>85</sup> weep who now live in song (vv. 74–6: ‘Perch’io te giuro che sola tua presenza / ne la dolze Fiorenza / tal farà pianger che mò vive in canto’). Thus, the Emperor must hasten his way towards her. Antonio’s hopes for Charles were indeed too optimistic, reflecting a certain desperateness in the general situation of Italian political and social life, which could only have been resolved by a miracle, like the appearance of a *deus ex machina*.

Another eulogy of Charles IV is the so-called *Canzone di Roma* (*Quella virtù che il terzo cielo infonde*). Ezio Levi formerly attributed this poem, based on its elevated poetic quality and its popularity at the time (judging by the number of the manuscripts containing it, twenty-nine), to Bindo di Cione del Frate, a citizen of Siena.<sup>86</sup> Levi persuasively demonstrated that the poem was written after Charles’s coronation in Rome on 5 April 1355, but apparently before the Emperor had left Italy in June. This poem describes a night vision, in which a noble but poor woman appears before the author as an allegory of Rome deploring her miserable condition: there is nobody to defend her, neither her Charles, who left after having had her in his possession (vv. 127–8: ‘Or come arò da mio Carlo soccorso, / che m’ha lasciata avendomi in balia?’).<sup>87</sup> The woman-Rome pleads with the author to convince ‘quell Buemmo’, if not to come back, at least to appoint a worthy king in Rome.

In the same vein as Bindo di Cione, another Tuscan poet, Buonaccorso da Montemagno il Vecchio (*c.* 1313/16 to before 1390), expressed his almost forlorn hope of Charles’s return in Italy in his sonnet addressed to the Emperor:

Inclita Maestà felice e santa,  
ch’è di tua gloria e di tua gran virtute?  
O disiata sol nostra salute,  
o sacro Carlo, che sì bella pianta,  
fama del tuo bel nome eternal, lassi?

Illustrious Majesty, happy and sacred,  
what happened to your glory and your great virtue?  
O our only desired salvation,

<sup>85</sup> It hints at the Black Guelphs, the most impetuous antagonists of the Empire.

<sup>86</sup> E. Levi, ‘Il vero autore della canzone di Roma (B. di Cione del Frate da Siena)’, in *Rendiconti del Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere*, ser. 2, 41 (1908), pp. 471–90. See also Corsi, *Rimatori del Trecento*, pp. 211–23, and E. Pasquini, *Fra Due e Quattrocento: Cronotipi letterari in Italia* (Milan, 2013), pp. 203–4.

<sup>87</sup> Corsi, *Rimatori del Trecento*, p. 221.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

o sacred Charles, why do you leave such a beautiful flower [Italy], which constitutes the glory of your eternal beautiful name?<sup>88</sup>

Apparently, this sonnet too was written after the Emperor had left Italy in June 1355.

The Emperor's departure irritated not only his open antagonists, who were not lacking in Italy, but even his most ardent supporters. An excellent example of such a 'change of mind' is the sonnet by the poet mentioned earlier, Antonio da Ferrara, 'S'a leççer Dante mai caso m'accaggia', in fact a sonnet of correspondence with Menghino Mezzani (c. 1290s to 1376), a notary of Ravenna and a person very knowledgeable in poetry.<sup>89</sup> Antonio, a former enthusiast of the imperial government of Italy, now addressed the Emperor with the most harsh and offensive words. Interestingly, the sonnet contains a quotation of three verses from Dante's *Comedy* (*Purg.* VI, 97, 98 and 100), where 'Alberto Tedesco', namely the Holy Roman Emperor from 1298 to 1308 Albert I of Austria, is recorded:

S'a lezzer Dante mai caso  
m'accaggia  
dov'egli scrive ne' suoi bei sermoni:  
'O Alberto Todesco, ch'abandoni  
costei ch'è fatta indomita e  
selvaggia,  
giusto giudizio da le stelle caggia!',  
senz'altro dire conven ch'io  
scasoni  
questo Alberto Todesco e ch'io  
rasoni  
d'un altro novo e 'l primo for ne  
traggia.  
La carta raschierò per iscambiarlo  
e metterve l'ingrato, avaro e vile  
imperatur re de Buemme Carlo,  
infamador del suo sangue zentile,  
ché tutto 'l mondo volea  
seguitarlo  
ed e' d'i servi è fatto el più servile,  
e ha tradito ogn'om che 'n lui  
sperava,  
facendo per dinari Italia schiava.<sup>90</sup>

If once it will happen to me to read Dante,  
Where he writes in his beautiful verses  
'O Albert the German, you who left  
That one, which became abeyant and wild  
(Italy),  
Let true justice fall on your head from  
Heaven!'  
It will be certainly be proper to say that I  
should exonerate  
This German Albert and should think  
About someone else, pulling the former  
one out.  
I will scrape the paper in order to replace  
him  
And to insert here the ungrateful, mean  
and cowardly  
Emperor, the King of Bohemia Charles,  
A slanderer of his noble ancestry:  
The entire world wanted to follow him,  
But he became the lowest of the servants,  
And he betrayed everyone who hoped in  
him,  
Making [our] Italy a slave for money!

<sup>88</sup> *Le Rime dei due Buonaccorso da Montemagno*, ed. R. Spongano, *Rimatori inediti o rari*, I (Bologna, 1970), p. 84.

<sup>89</sup> Menghino apparently was a companion of Dante in his last years in Ravenna. See S. Bellomo, 'Menghino Mezzani', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 74, online at [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/menghino-mezzani\\_](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/menghino-mezzani_) (Dizionario-Biografico (acc. 5 May 2017)).

<sup>90</sup> *Le Rime di Maestro Antonio da Ferrara*, pp. 218–19.

Menghino responds to him with the sonnet ‘Non basta lingua umana ch’è più saggia’ in the same rhymes,<sup>91</sup> as was the custom, praising Antonio’s clever language and argumentation with which he described the shameful behaviour of Charles IV, although human language cannot do that better than Antonio’s (‘Non basta lingua umana ch’è più saggia, / con quanto può la tua, o Mastro Toni, / se del nuovo Re Carlo il ver mi suoni, a sì notarlo che vergogna n’aggia’). Moreover, the higher the expectations aroused by an elevated person, the greater the insult he caused. Menghino likewise quotes from Dante’s *Comedy* (*Inf.* I, 101–5), saying that he too wanted to see in Charles the saviour of miserable Italy (‘volsi nominarlo / qual Veltro a dar salute a Italia umile’), who is not interested either in lands or in money (‘che terra o peltro non dovea cibarlo’).<sup>92</sup> But he turned out as ungrateful and cowardly as a shepherd who abandoned his flock. The last two verses of this sonnet repeat the end of Antonio’s sonnet: ‘And he betrayed everyone who hoped in him, / Making [our] Italy a slave for money!’

Of the surviving poems the most vehement invective against Charles IV is the canzone by the renowned Trecento poet Fazio degli Uberti (1301–67, born in Pisa, but active in Milan and Verona) ‘Di quel possi tu ber che beve Crasso’, in which Italy speaks to the Emperor in an extremely irate tone: ‘Know that I am Italy who speaks to you, ignominious Carl of Luxemburg’ (vv. 16–17: ‘Sappi ch’i’ son Italia che ti parlo, / Di Lusimburgo ignominioso Carlo’). She wishes on Charles the cruellest tortures and the most horrible death for his betrayal of her hope for a better life (vv. 9–10: ‘E se non bastan queste / Tante bestemmie e tanta ria ventura!’). Instead of taking care of Italy, Charles took all the money he collected there back to his Bohemia (vv. 32–3: ‘di quello fai le spese / C’hai tolto qui e ne porti in Boemme’). In the last strophe of the canzone, the poet appeals to Jupiter, asking him why he did not take away from Charles IV’s hands, and from the hands of all the other avid German compatriots, his sacred symbol of the eagle, now decisively mocked by them (vv. 69, 77–80: ‘Tu dunque,

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220–1.

<sup>92</sup> Menghino uses a Dantean metaphor of a hunting dog, *veltro*, who would chase away the wolf of cupidity (‘Infin che’l veltro / verrà, che la farà morir con doglia. / Questi non ciberà terra né peltro, / ma sapienza, amore e virtute, / e sua nazione sarà tra feltro e feltro’ (*Inf.* I, ll. 101–5)). Dante apparently intended here Emperor Henry VII, Charles’s grandfather. Some scholars assume that the name *veltro* was used to render the German expression ‘Welt-Herr’, that is the secular ruler as against the cupidinous papal government; Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. D. Mattaglia (Milan, 1975), i, p. 28.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

Giove, perché 'l santo uccello . . . / Da questo Carlo quarto / Imperador non toglì e dalle mani / Degli altri lurchi moderni Germani, / Che d'aquila un allocco n'hanno fatto?' – lit. 'the modern Germans who have made an owl out of the eagle'). Fazio's curses for a terrible death recall many ancient heroes who ended their life miserably. For example, the opening line of the canzone, 'From this [gold] may you drink like Crassus drank', hints at the story of Marcus Licinius Crassus, a Roman general and the wealthiest man in Ancient Rome, who was killed in a battle against the Parthian Empire in 53 BC. His head was brought to the Parthian king Orodes II, who commanded that molten gold be poured into his mouth.<sup>93</sup>

This verse, 'Di quel possi tu ber che beve Crasso', was quoted by Sacchetti in his later poem 'Canzone distesa che Franco Sacchetti fece quando papa Urbano V e Carlo di Lucimburgo passarono di concordia in Toscana, faccendo guerra a Firenze, anno MCCCLXVIII' (Long canzone made by Franco Sacchetti, when Pope Urban V and Charles of Luxemburg passed together through Tuscany, making war against Florence, in 1368), written during Charles IV's last visit to Italy in 1368–9. Tiredness, deep disappointment and lack of any enthusiasm run throughout this long poem. The traditional comparison of Charles IV with his homonym Charles the Great is not in his favour: 'Your name should make you think many times about the great Charlemagne, but you do not care to procure for yourself the title [the Great] that he had' (vv. 127–30: 'Il nome tuo dovria molte fiare, / farti pensar qual fu il buon Carlo Magno: / tu non te ne dàì lagno / d'averè il sopranoime il qual ebbe egli'). Sacchetti records other two venerable Charleses and asks why in the fourth Charles only avidness is recognisable (vv. 136 and 138: 'O quarto da costor, / . . . Perché avarizia in te si mostra e serba?'). The poet continues that Charles's behaviour makes the people to curse him on any occasion, and he hears that they constantly repeat: 'From this [gold] may you drink like Crassus drank' (vv. 149–50: 'e tua maniera / maladir sento, e dire ad ogni passo: / – Di quel possi tu ber che beve Crasso!'). This quotation shows that Fazio degli Uberti's canzone was well known and remained current even after the poet's death in 1367.

In this short survey a large geographic area of reactions to Charles's visit is seen. The range of emotions, however, remains more or less the same in all poets: from enthusiastic hopes to deep disappointment and frustration.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Poesia italiana: Il Trecento*, ed. P. Cudini (Lampi di stampa, 1999), 62–6.

### The Best of the Florentine Scepticisms in Donato's *Sovran Uccello*

In Florence, as we have already seen in Villani's chronicle and in Sacchetti's poems, the attitude to Charles IV fluctuated from rather sceptical to openly negative from the very beginning of his Italian campaign. A strange judicial case of Matteo Villani is very telling in this regard. As Gene Brucker notes, at the beginning of 1362 Matteo 'was accused as a suspected Ghibelline and thereby became ineligible to hold public office', according to the Communal provision of 1347, which 'prohibited any Ghibelline from holding communal office'.<sup>94</sup> Matteo decided to defend himself and brought a number of witnesses who succeeded in proving his innocence, attesting him to be a true Guef. However, Matteo's rival, Simone da Castiglionchio, insisted in his persecution and the next year, in April 1363 (some months before his death), Matteo Villani was definitely proclaimed as a Ghibelline with all the attendant consequences.

Brucker wonders 'how can these persistent attempts to tar Matteo Villani with the brush of Ghibellinism be explained', since Matteo did not occupy any significant position in the Florentine Commune. The only explanation for this hostility, in Brucker's opinion, 'lies apparently in the one achievement to which he owed his reputation: his chronicle'.<sup>95</sup> He was indeed very critical towards the rectors and other important functionaries of the Commune and their activity, failing to be honest: 'he [Matteo] regarded them as vulgar parvenus, who, intent upon their personal advantage, were totally lacking in the ability and civic spirit necessary to govern a republic'.<sup>96</sup> In all probability, this was the true reason for the persecution, but Matteo's writings could well have given a good excuse to the Commune to charge him with the crime of Ghibellinism: it was enough to express some empathy for the Emperor and to be polite in criticisms against him. Given this background, it would be difficult to imagine a truly positive and apologetic attitude towards the Holy Roman Emperor that could have intentionally been demonstrated by a Florentine.

If the Florentine composer Donato da Firenze indeed had in mind Charles IV while composing his madrigal *Sovran uccello sei fra tutti gli altri*, he has demonstrated this specific Florentine scepticism to the Emperor or rather to the very institution of the Holy Roman Empire.

We know little about Donato, only that he was a Benedictine monk in Florence. It is to be regretted that 'very little information can be gleaned from the texts of Donato's works, which are almost all

<sup>94</sup> G. A. Brucker, 'The Ghibelline Trial of Matteo Villani (1362)', *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, 13 (1960), pp. 48–55, at p. 49.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

madrigals'.<sup>97</sup> Almost a half of Donato's surviving musical settings (eight of eighteen) are written to the texts of other poets: Franco Sacchetti, Niccolò Soldanieri, Antonio degli Alberti and Arrigo Belondi. All these attributions, however, are transmitted in literary sources only. Two madrigals by Sacchetti set to music by Donato fall in the period between 1358 and 1363. Their music has not survived, while the poetic texts with the inscription 'magister Donatus presbiter de Cascia sonum dedit' are transmitted in Sacchetti's autograph codex Ashburnham 574 (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence). Scholars have extended Donato's activity as a composer up to 1378 by linking his madrigal *Dal cielo scese* with the wedding of Samaritana da Polenta and Antonio della Scala in this year.<sup>98</sup>

The two-voice madrigal *Sovran uccello* appears in three musical manuscripts – Codex Squarcialupi (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Palatino 87, fols. 75<sup>v</sup>–76), Panciaticiano 26 (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, fols. 82<sup>v</sup>–83) and San Lorenzo 2211 (Florence, Archivio Capitolare, fols. 53<sup>v</sup>–54). Interestingly, its text does not appear in any of the purely literary manuscripts known, recently investigated by Lauren Jennings.<sup>99</sup> It does not necessarily mean that this text could have not been written by some Florentine poet including those Donato preferred, but it makes it more probable that the words were Donato's own. Although there is no mention of Charles IV by name, the allusion to the Emperor is obvious:

Sovran'uccello se' fra tutti gli altri, o imperadrice, quando voli a' cieli ché tutti gli altr'uccel son tuo fedeli. E quando veggion te co l'ale aperte, non è uccel che non abbi paura, veggendo te over la tua figura. Sti'a vedere e pensi pur chi sa E vederem che quest'uccel farà. <sup>100</sup>	You are the supreme bird among all other [birds] O empress, <sup>101</sup> when you are flying up to the skies, For this all other birds are your subjects (followers). When they see you with the open wings, There is no bird who does not fear you, Seeing you [personally] or your image. But those who know, let them stand to see and think: We will see what this bird will do.
---	---

<sup>97</sup> Von Fischer and D'Agostino, 'Donato da Cascia', p. 459.

<sup>98</sup> See more in E. Abramov-van Rijk, 'The Raven and the Falcon: Literary Space in a Trecento Musical Aviary', in *Musik – Raum – Bild – Akkord: Festschrift für Dorothea Baumann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Baldassarre (Bern, 2011), pp. 59–74.

<sup>99</sup> See L. M. Jennings, *Senza vestimenta: The Literary Tradition of Trecento Song* (Farnham, Surrey, 2014).

<sup>100</sup> Corsi, *Poesie musicali del Trecento*, p. 121.

<sup>101</sup> The Italian word *aquila* for *eagle*, though unnamed but intended here, is feminine.



Figure 6 The imperial eagle in Giovanni Sercambi, *Le croniche*, fol. 53<sup>r</sup> (detail of Figure 5). Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; further reproduction prohibited

The second strophe refers unmistakably to the Emperor's blazon ('la tua figura' – 'your image'): an eagle with imperial crown and open wings, just as painted in Giovanni Sercambi's chronicle (Figure 6; detail of Figure 5).

The sceptical tone of this madrigal is very noticeable: of course, this eagle makes an impression on everyone with its magnificence and splendour, but we, the knowledgeable ones, will stand aside and see what it is actually able to do. As linked to Charles IV, this text could well have been written before it became clear that the Emperor had no intention to remain in Italy after his Roman coronation. Indeed, judging by the words of the ritornello, the evil had not yet happened and some kind of hope was still tangible: let's see. The poems examined earlier show that after Charles's departure the only feelings that inspired the Italian poets to express their thoughts about the Emperor and the Holy Roman Empire were rage and indignation.

Evidently, the author of the text, be he Donato himself or someone else from his close circle, expresses his personal visual experience of the Emperor's coat of arms – the eagle with open wings. Knowing that neither Emperor, nor Empress, nor any imperial emissary had ever entered the city officially (the latter only in complete secrecy by night, according to Matteo Villani), we may assume that the only possibility of such an intensive exposure to the imperial symbol of eagle might have happened during the lodging of a part of the Empress's retinue in

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

Florence in March 1355, as reported in Matteo Villani's chronicle. It is possible thus to assume that the madrigal *Sovran uccello* is one more reminiscence, together with Sacchetti's sonnet 'Firenze bella', of this event, but it is exceptional, since it was set to music.

Donato's music for this madrigal is typical of Trecento composers of the so-called second generation. It traditionally has a more elaborated upper voice and a slower tenor; long melismas fall on the first and the penultimate syllables of the line. As noted by Kurt von Fischer, it 'is indebted stylistically to Jacopo da Bologna, notably in the transitional phrases between lines of madrigal verse, these being usually untexted and monophonic (though some are two-voiced and more modern in style), and in sporadic points of imitation'.<sup>102</sup> These characteristics hold true for the madrigal *Sovran uccello*, where the two-voice transitional passages in imitation and hocket technique occur three times (bb. 29–34, 59–62 of the tercets and 91 of the ritornello) (see Example 1).

Elsewhere I have noted a particular characteristic of Donato's compositional style, which appears in nine of his fourteen madrigals, namely the change from binary to ternary metre not at the seam of the madrigal's sections (from the tercet to the ritornello), but at the beginning of the third line of the tercet or at the beginning of the penultimate-syllable melisma of the third line, and the ternary metre continues in the ritornello.<sup>103</sup> The madrigal *Sovran uccello* is one of these nine madrigals.

Unlike many other madrigals by Donato, like *Ifu' già bianc'ucciel* and *Un bel girfalco*, with longer or shorter sections of non-simultaneous pronunciation of the poetic text in both voices, the text of the madrigal *Sovran uccello* has complete synchronisation. The imitations, not being linked with the words, are purely musical. The most interesting and quite perceptible aurally is the descending motif *a-(g)-g-f-f-e-d*, first appearing in bars 31–4 in the tenor of the transitional phrase between the first and the second line, then repeated in the upper voice on the words of the second line, 'O, imperadrice' (bb. 43–5) and after that immediately in the tenor on the words 'Quando vol'a cieli' (bb. 47–9). The musical texture abounds with hockets in the melismatic sections and in the transitional motifs.

The vertical arrangement of the voices also testifies in favour of the early dating of this composition. Using the criterion of the correlation of the number of parallel perfect intervals of the same species in a

<sup>102</sup> Von Fischer and D'Agostino, 'Donato da Cascia', p. 459.

<sup>103</sup> Abramov-van Rijk, 'The Raven and the Falcon', p. 71.

Elena Abramov-van Rijk

5  
So - - - - -

10  
So - - - - -  
vran' uc - cel - lo se' fra tut - ti

15  
vran' uc - cel - lo se' fra tut - ti

20  
gli al - - - - -

25  
gli al - - - - -

30  
-tri, O

35  
-tri, O

40  
O im - pe - ra -

45  
dri - ce, quan - do vo - li a' cie

50  
dri - ce, quan - do vo - li a' cie

55  
li, Ché - - - - -

60  
li, Ché - - - - -

Example 1 Donato da Firenze, *Sovran uccello sei*. After *Italian Secular Music, 2: Vincenzo da Rimini, Rosso de Chollegiana, Donato da Firenze, Gherardello da Firenze, Lorenzo da Firenze*, ed. W. T. Marrocco ( Monaco, 1971), pp. 66–8



composition with its chronology, first proposed by Dorothea Baumann<sup>104</sup> and recently developed by Maria Caraci Vela,<sup>105</sup> a high number of such intervals, ten in total (eight consecutive fifths in bb. 10–11, 25–6, 39–41, 54–5, 69, 73, 95–6 and two consecutive octaves in bb. 51–2 and 68) suggests that this madrigal was written not later than the early 1360s. Thus, the proposed date of composition between March and June of 1355 agrees well with this stylistic peculiarity.

The close examination of the madrigals *Aquil'altera* and *Sovran uccello* in the larger historical and cultural background brings us to the following conclusions.

Regarding Jacopo da Bologna's madrigal, one may now see how an author can form a concept using allegory in manifold ways. Certainly, the eagle, with its association with heraldry, evokes first of all an idea of imperial power and imperial coats of arms. Thus, Charles IV has been chosen as a 'default option'. However, investigation of the wider historico-cultural context of his Milanese coronation in 1355 has substantially reduced the plausibility of his candidature for the role of protagonist of the madrigal *Aquil'altera*, especially when viewed in the light of the Visconti attitude to him.

On the other hand, some features related to the Visconti family, namely the fact that the father and three sons had the names of all four evangelists, and the intellectual prominence of the Milanese governor Archbishop Giovanni Visconti (during 1349–54), suggests a new option, namely to interpret the image of the eagle as a symbol of the evangelist John. Cecco d'Ascoli's and Petrarch's readings of the eagle's flight as a symbol of the power of intellect and knowledge actually go back to *Homilies on the Prologue of the Gospel of John* by Eriugena. The textual and conceptual affinity of Jacopo's *Aquil'altera* with some passages from Eriugena's *Homilies* is evident, so that the candidature of Giovanni Visconti as the addressee of this madrigal appears now as the most likely.

Donato's *Sovran uccello*, in turn, perfectly accords with the atmosphere of the Florentine intolerance of the Empire and its representatives. It is indeed a purely political madrigal undoubtedly associated with Charles IV's expedition in Italy in 1355, but, unlike many other Trecento compositions, it is not laudatory but it appears to be a kind of a political pamphlet.

Jerusalem

<sup>104</sup> D. Baumann, *Die dreistimmige polifonische italienische Lied-Satztechnik im Trecento* (Baden-Baden, 1979).

<sup>105</sup> Caraci Vela, 'Le intonazioni de *La fiera testa che d'uman si ciba*', p. 101.

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

### APPENDIX 1

#### Matteo Villani's Description of how the Emperor Went to Monza for the Iron Crown

*Cronica, Book 4, chapter 39, 'Come lo 'mperadore andò a Moncia per la corona del ferro'*<sup>1</sup>

Lo eletto imperadore avendo fatta la sua concordia co' signori di Milano, più della pace de' Lombardi non si travagliò, ma di presente fatta la festa della Natività di Cristo a Mantova, si mise a cammino verso Milano con meno di 300 cavalieri, i più senza arme, e i signori di Milano ordinarono che per tutto loro distretto allo eletto e alla sua compagnia fosse apparecchiato per loro e per li loro cavalli ogni cosa da vivere senza torre alcuno danaio: e giugnendo a Lodi, messer Galeasso li venne incontro con 1500 cavalieri armati, e giunto a lui, li fece riverenzia, e acompagnollo fino dentro alla città di Lodi, e ivi il collocò onoratamente nelle case de' signori, facendo nondimeno serrare le porti della città e guardarla di e notte colla gente armata. E albergato in Lodi una notte, la mattina appresso mosso il Re de' Romani, messer Galeasso colla sua gente armata l'accompagnò, avendo ordinata la desinea alla grande badia di Chiaravalle: e appressandosi a Chiaravalle, messer Bernabò con molti cavalieri armati li si fece incontro, e fattagli la reverenzia, li presentò, da parte de' fratelli e sua, destrieri e cavalli e palafreni covertati di velluto, e di scarlatto e di drappi di seta, guerniti di ricchi paramenti di selle e di freni: e fattoli alla badia nobile desinare, messer Bernabò li richiese da parte di suoi fratelli e da sua che li dovesse piacere d'entrare nella città di Milano; lo eletto rispose che per niuno modo intendea venire contro a quello che promesso avea loro; messer Bernabò li disse che questo li fu domandato,

After having made an agreement with the lords of Milan, the Emperor-elect was no longer concerned about the League of Lombardy. But immediately after the feast of Christmas he celebrated in Mantua he took the road towards Milan with nearly three hundred cavalymen, mostly unarmed. The lords of Milan ordered that throughout their entire domain there should be prepared for the Emperor-elect, his retinue and for their horses the provision of all they needed for living free of charge. When they reached Lodi, messer Galeazzo went towards them with 1,500 armed knights and having reached him, they paid their respects, and they accompanied him into the city of Lodi. He was honourably accommodated in the lords' mansions, nevertheless locking the city gates and guarding it day and night with armed men. Having spent a night in Lodi, the next morning the King of the Romans continued his journey, accompanied by messer Galeazzo with his armed men, having ordered a dinner in the great Abbey of Chiaravalle. When they were not far from Chiaravalle, messer Bernabò with many cavalymen came to meet them, and after having respectfully greeted the king, messer Bernabò, on behalf of his brothers and himself, presented him with horses, including steeds and palfreys, covered with velvet, scarlet cloth, and silk fabrics, furnished with rich trappings of saddles and bridles. And having given him a noble dinner in the abbey, Messer Bernabò asked the king on behalf of his brothers and

<sup>1</sup> Villani, *Cronica*, pp. 529–33.

pensando che la gente della lega il dovesse accompagnare: ma per la sua persona non era fatto: e tanto il costrinsono, ed elli e messer Galeasso, liberandolo per loro e per messer Maffiuolo dalla promessa, che con loro n'andò in Milano; e entrato nella città fu ricevuto con maggiore tumulto che festa, non potendo quasi vedere altro che cavalieri e masnadieri armati; e' suoni delle trombe e trombette, e nacchere, e cornamuse, e tamburi erano tanti, che non si sarebbe potuto udire grandi tuoni, e come fu in Milano, così furono le porte serrate, e così richiuso il condussono a' palazzi della loro abitazione e assegnateli sale e camere fornite nobilissimamente di letta e di ricchi apparecchiamenti, messer Maffiuolo e li altri fratelli da capo andarono a farli la reverenzia, dicendoli con belle parole come tutto ciò che possiedono riconoscevano avere dal santo imperio; e al suo servizio intendieno di tenerlo. E 'l dì appresso feciono fare mostra generale di tutta la gente d'arme ch'avieno accolta in Milano a cavallo e a piè, e a ciò feciono armare quanti cittadini ebbono che montare potessono a cavallo, tutti sforzati di coverte e d'altri paramenti, e d'avistate sopravveste, e feciono lo 'mperadore stare alle finestre sopra la piazza a vedere; e passando con gran tumulto di stomenti, feciono intendere allo eletto ch'erano 6000 cavalieri e 10000 pedoni di soldo: passata la mostra dissonno: 'Signore nostro, questi cavalieri e masnadieri e le nostre persone sono al vostro servizio e a' vostri comandamenti'; dicendo ch'oltre a questi avieno fornite tutte le loro città, terre e castella di cavalieri e di masnadieri per la guardia di quelle. E così magnificarono la gran potenza del loro stato nella imperiale presenza, tenendo il dì e la notte le porte serrate e la gente armata per la città, non senza sospetto e temenza dello eletto

himself if he would do them the favour of entering the city of Milan. The Emperor-elect responded that in no way did he intend to go against what he had promised them [not to enter Milan]. Messer Bernabò replied that they had made this request because they thought that the king would be accompanied by the people of the League of Lombardy, but it was not done for the king himself, so that he [Messer Bernabò] and Messer Galeazzo on their own behalf and on behalf of Messer Matteo released the king from the promise and forced him to go with them to Milan. When the king entered the city, he was received with a greater tumult than festivity, since he could hardly see anything else than horsemen and armed retainers. The sounds of long and short trumpets, nakers, bagpipes and drums were so deafening that one could hardly have heard the loudest thunderclaps. As soon as they were inside, the city gates were locked. The guests were accompanied to their residence, where halls and rooms were prepared for them, being nobly furnished with beds and rich arrangements. Messer Matteo and the other brothers came to pay him their respects, courteously saying that all they possessed they acknowledged came from the Holy Empire, and they intended to hold it at his service. The next day they organised a general display of all the kinds of military forces, both cavalry and infantry, they had at their disposal in Milan, and for that purpose, they ordered all their citizens who were able to mount a horse, all covered with blankets and other trappings and conspicuous capes. They made the Emperor stand at the windows above the square to see it. And after the troops passed by with a great noise of musical instruments, the brothers made the Emperor-elect understand that there were six thousand

## The Italian Experience of Emperor Charles IV

imperadore, il quale vedendosi in tanta noia di sollicita guardia, fu ora che 'nanzi vorrebbe essere stato altrove con minore onore, e in tutto fu in servaggio l'animo imperiale alla volontà di tiranni, e l'Aquila sottoposta alla Vipera, verificandosi la pronosticazione detta per provisione di strologia, nelli anni Domini MCCCCLI, per messer frate Ugo vescovo di [blank] grande astrologo al suo tempo, il quale predisse il cadimento del prefetto da Vico, e la sugezzione futura dell'Aquila imperiale in questi versi:

Aquila flava ruet post parum vipera  
fortis,  
Menia subintrat Lombardi prima  
sophiae.  
Anno quadrato minori decimo nono.  
Aquila subcumbet pro stupri crimine  
foedo  
Nigra revolabit sublimes cardine  
Romam.

Ma elli come savio comportò con chiara e allegra faccia la sua cortese prigione; e con molta liberalità vinse quello ch'acquistare non avrebbe potuto per forza, e dopo alquanti dì, come a' signori tiranni piacque, il condussono colla loro gente armata a Moncia e ivi il dì della santa Epifania, a dì VI del mese di gennaio del detto anno, fu coronato della santa corona del ferro, con quella solennità e festa che' signori Visconti di Milano li vollono fare; e tornato a Milano sotto continova guardia, fattivi certi cavalieri, egli sollicitando la sua partita per tornare in libertà, fu accompagnato di terra in terra dalle masnade de' signori armate, facendo serrare la città e castella dove entrava, e il dì e la notte tenerle in continova guardia; ed elli avacciando il suo cammino, non come imperadore, ma come mercatante

cavalrymen and ten thousand infantrymen (mercenaries). After the parade they said: 'Our lord, all these horsemen and retainers, and [other] our people are at your service and command.' They also mentioned that in addition to these, they had furnished all their towns and castles with armed men and retainers to protect them. Thus, they exalted their great power in front of the Emperor-elect, keeping the gates locked night and day and armed men throughout the city, to the great suspicion and dread of the Emperor-elect, who finding himself very annoyed with the solicitous guard, now wished even more to be elsewhere and with lesser honour. His imperial courage was completely subject to the will of the Milanese tyrants, and the Eagle subordinated to the Viper, thereby verifying the astrological prediction of the year 1351 by the friar Ugo, bishop of [blank], a great astrologer at his time, who predicted the defeat of Prefect of Vico, and the future subjection of the imperial Eagle in the following verses:

The golden eagle will fall after a little, while the mighty viper enters the walls; in the lesser nineteenth square year. The eagle will succumb for the foul crime of *stuprum* [any form of sexual offence]; it will fly back black on the highest hinge (of the world) to Rome.<sup>2</sup>

But he wisely accepted his refined prison with clear and cheerful mien, and with great generosity he won the [desired] thing, which he could not have gained by force. Some days later, as it pleased the tyrants, they conducted him with their armed men to Monza and there, on the day of the holy Epiphany, on 6th of January in

<sup>2</sup> Translation of the Latin verses by Leofranc Holford-Strevens.

## Elena Abramov-van Rijk

ch'andasse in fretta alla fiera, si fece  
conducere fuori del distretto de'  
tiranni; e ivi rimase libero della loro  
guardia, con 400 compagni, i più a  
ronzini senza arme, si dirizzò alla città  
di Pisa, per esservi prima che non avea  
loro promessi, e così li venne fatto.

that year, he was crowned with the holy  
Iron crown, with the solemnity and  
celebration that the lords of Milan  
wished to do for him. And having  
returned to Milan under constant  
guard, after creating certain cavaliers  
knights, having sought his departure to  
return to liberty, he was escorted from  
territory to territory by the armed  
retainers of the [Milanese] lords,  
locking the gates in every city and castle  
he reached and keeping him day and  
night under continuous surveillance.  
And he, hastening his course, not like  
an Emperor but like a merchant who is  
in a hurry to get to the market, had  
himself conducted out of the domain  
of the tyrants, and there remained free  
of their guard, with four hundred  
companions, most on nags and  
unarmed, he headed for Pisa to be  
there even earlier he had promised to  
them, and so it happened.

### APPENDIX 2

#### *Jacopo da Bologna, Aquil'altera/Creatura gentil/Uccel di Dio*

Aquila altera ferma in su la vetta  
de l'alta mente l'ochio valoroso,  
dove tuo vita prende suo riposo,  
là è 'l parer e là l'esser beato.

Creatura gentil, animal degno,  
salire in alto e rimirare 'l sole  
singularmente tuo natura vole.  
Là è l'immagine e [là] la perfezione.

Uccel di Dio, insegna di giustizia,  
tu hai principalmente cara gloria.  
perché ne le grand'opre è tua  
vittoria.  
Là vidi l'ombra e là la vera essenza.<sup>3</sup>

Proud eagle, fix your valorous eye  
on the loftiest point of your noble mind,  
where your life takes its repose.  
There it [only] seems to be [blessed]  
and here it is [true] bliss.

Noble creature, worthy animal,  
to climb high and to look at the sun  
is the only thing your nature desires.  
There is [only] the likeness and here the  
perfection.

Bird of God, symbol of justice,  
you desire glory above all,  
because your victory lies [only] in great  
deeds.  
There you see [only] the imitation, and  
here the true essence.

<sup>3</sup> Corsi, *Poesie musicali del Trecento*, p. 29.