

Florence as the New Jerusalem in Ugolino Verino's *Carlias*

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ABSTRACT

Ugolino Verino (1438–1516) wrote an impressive Latin epic poem on Charlemagne, the *Carlias*. In this paper, both internal and contextual arguments are put forth in support of the interpretation of Florence as the New Jerusalem in this poem, a hypothesis already made by the first (and only) modern editor of the work. First, the internal arguments come from an analysis of the passage in which the refoundation of Florence takes place and from the structure of the entire composition, a clearly eschatological narrative. Then, the similarities and debts with relevant previous and contemporary apocalyptic literature on the Second Charlemagne are pointed out.

KEYWORDS

Florence, Jerusalem, *Carlias*, Second Charlemagne, eschatology, apocalyptic literature

Ugolino Verino is not a widely read author. His name would probably be unknown to most classicists with only a dilettantish knowledge of Neo-Latin literature. However, he wrote an impressive epic poem, the *Carlias*, where the city of Florence plays a distinguished role at the very end. With this paper, I set myself a twofold goal: first, to show that Florence functions as a perfected city, a New Jerusalem, in the ascendant narrative of the work, and second, to make a case for the use of contemporary eschatological literature as an important source for the whole story revolving around Charlemagne's deeds, which would also favour the interpretation of Florence as the to-be-heavenly Jerusalem.

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A FEW WORDS ON THE *CARLIAS*

The *Carlias* was written by Ugolino Verino (1438–1516) during the last decades of the 15th century, before the establishment of Savonarola's regime after the exile of Piero de' Medici in 1494. To be more precise, the oldest complete manuscript transmitted to us – the Magliabecchianus II,II,94 – was finished on the 3rd of December 1480.¹ If the work is not very widely read nor even yet well known, it is probably because its first critical edition, by Nikolaus Thurn, a German scholar, did not appear until 1995. A few years later, in 2002, the same scholar published a long, thorough commentary that is quite helpful while reading this epos, despite its density.

In this poem, divided into XV books, the legendary, heroic deeds of Charlemagne are narrated. There are two major content groups separated by book VIII, the visit of Heaven, the peak of the work: in I–VII, one can read Charlemagne's deeds outside of Italy and in IX–XV, those on Italian soil. In the first group, we can further divide between I–IV, shaped after the *Aeneid*, in which Charlemagne recounts to a devoted listener his adventures during a Crusade through the Eastern Mediterranean to Jerusalem and Babylon, and V–VIII, shaped after Dante's *Comedy*, where a trip to Hell, Purgatory and, finally, Heaven is related. The second part of the work, more faithful to historical events, deals mostly with the campaign of the Franks against the Lombards and their king Desiderius. In XV, Florence, acknowledged as originally a seat of Sullan veterans, is re-established and Charlemagne crowned emperor in Rome.² The key passage to show how Florence operates in the *Carlias* shall be XV 156–221, where the aforementioned refoundation takes place.

An alleged refoundation of Florence through Charlemagne was, in fact, no new business at the end of the 15th century, since it appeared already in late medieval chronicles like Villani's,³ primarily interested in stating the Roman filiation of Florence, and was problematised by the greatest Florentine historical writer, Leonardo Bruni, who downplayed the role of Charlemagne, whom, as an emperor, he considered an enemy of liberty and the republican values so cherished by him and many others in the first half of the 15th century.⁴ Ugolino Verino, however, who does not write history, but composed a *figmentum poetarum*, prone, thus, to allegories, allows himself to establish through Charlemagne a far more daring filiation than Rome for the Medicean city: he presents, namely, Florence as the New Jerusalem. Charlemagne's intervention here is motivated by Verino's political preferences, clearly Francophile, in accordance to the old Guelph tradition to which some members of the oligarchy adhered.⁵

¹See THURN, N.: *Kommentar zur Carlias des Ugolino Verino*. Munich 2002, 20.

²We base our outline on Thurn's abstract of the *Carlias* (THURN, N.: *Neulatein und Volkssprachen. Beispiele für die Rezeption neusprachlicher Literatur durch die lateinische Dichtung Europas im 15.–16. Jahrhundert*. Munich 2012, 65).

³See Giovanni Villani, *Nuova cronica* III 21 – IV 2 (cf. PORTA, G. [ed.]: *Giovanni Villani. Nuova cronica I*. Parma 1990).

⁴See Leonardo Bruni, *Historiae Florentini populi* I 68 (HANKINS, J. [ed.]: *Leonardo Bruni. History of the Florentine People I*. Cambridge, Mass. – London 2001).

⁵See MARGOLIS, O.: The Quattrocento Charlemagne: Franco-Florentine Relations and the Politics of an Icon. In PURKIS, W. J. – GABRIELE, M. (ed.): *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts*. Cambridge 2016, 217–230.



THE ESCHATOLOGICAL NARRATIVE FRAME OF THE *CARLIAS*

If one takes a close look at the verses of the refoundation of Florence (XV 156–221), one will not find perspicuous evidence that supports the interpretation of the restored Florence as the New Heavenly Jerusalem, the spiritually accomplished city that will descend from heaven before the end of times (Rev 3:12; 21:2):

Ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν. (NA28)

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (KJV)

Καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς. (NA 28)

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (KJV)

Probably the most apparent proof would be the dating of the events (in v. 188), for the *quarta dies Aprilis* is, according to a medieval tradition, the time in which Creation, Incarnation and Passion took place,⁶ and it was exactly at this crucial point – but on a different date, the 21st of March⁷ – when Heraclius (r. 610–641) resituated the Cross upon the Golgotha in 629, after having recovered it from the Persians or, better, the Sasanians.⁸ The immediate eschatological consequences following this event can be seen in a short passage excerpted from the Syriac version, the most important in the textual transmission, of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, written in the last part of the 7th century:⁹

And immediately when the Son of Perdition is revealed, then the king of the Greeks will go up and will stand on Golgotha and the Holy Cross will be set [laid] in that place in which it [the Cross] was set up when it carried the Christ. And the king of the Greeks will place his diadem on top of the Holy Cross, and will stretch out his two hands to heaven and the crown of kingship with it, because the Holy Cross on which Christ who was crucified for the salvation of all men who believe in him crucified [?] is a sign which will be seen prior to the coming of Our Lord...¹⁰

⁶See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 711.

⁷Ugolino Verino probably follows Dante, *Inf.* 1. 38 (“E il sol montava su con quelle stelle/ch’eran con lui, quando l’amor divino/mosse da prima quelle cose belle.”), where the events are dated on 21st March or 4th April, depending on the commentary (see THURN: Kommentar [n. 1] 711), so the dating is relatively irrelevant.

⁸See SHOEMAKER S. J.: “The Reign of God Has Come”: Eschatology and Empire in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. *Arabica* 61 (2014) 537–539.

⁹A Latin translation of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* even reached Charlemagne’s court and thus influenced following apocalyptic Latin literature (see REEVES, M.: *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: a Study of Joachimism*. Oxford 1969, 300).

¹⁰Tr. P. J. Alexander. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.



There is indeed a more significant connection between Verino's work and apocalyptic literature, and it is found not in particular passages, but in the content of the entire poem and its structure. Despite having an unmistakably Vergilian disposition of the events – with the first six books dealing with adventures outside of Italy, the eighth covering the ascent to heaven and the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem as a counterpart of the descent of Aeneas to the underworld and Anchises' prediction of the future glory of Rome,¹¹ and the last six dealing with wars in Italy and ending with the restoration of Florence and Charlemagne's proclamation as emperor –, it is quite clear that Florence is not the new Rome, as it was stressed by intellectuals such as Bruni. It is instead the New and to-be-Heavenly Jerusalem, since in book II the Worldly Jerusalem, home of vices and sins, is destroyed, like Troy in the *Aeneid*. The vision of the future glory in book VIII (513–902) is an anticipation of the Heavenly Jerusalem – and around 200 verses after this vision Saint Zenobius (4th–5th century), venerated as first bishop of Florence and city patron alongside Saint John the Baptist, foretells the restoration of the city and encourages Charlemagne to actively partake in the accomplishment of God's will (VIII 784–803) –, and it is none other than Florence to play the role of the (re)founded city at the very end of the *Carlias*.

If one attempts a more in-depth reading of the passage of this refoundation (XV 156–221), perhaps one shall find more evidence supporting this identification: after the relevant date of the 4th of April (188), a Christian foundation ritual is rendered, by which Charlemagne asks the Twelve, the closest disciples of Christ, *qui prima superni/iecare in viva Christi fundamina petra,/ surgat ut aeternae pulchro novus alite murus* (“who set the first/foundations upon the living stone of Christ,/for the new wall to rise eternally with beautiful wing”) (205–207).¹² The importance of the number twelve has also been conveyed previously by *bis senos* and by *bis senus* in two earlier verses, at the beginning of Charlemagne's speech after Desiderius' defeat, where he summarises his deeds, guided by the hand of God, to free the world from the enemies of Christ and proclaims an eternal peace under his reign (127–155). Furthermore, the reader is told that Charlemagne was prescient of Florence's bright future; this – like the adjective *promissa* present in these lines – is of course a reference to the aforementioned Zenobius' prophecy in Heaven (VIII 784–803). Additionally, Thurn states that by alluding to the principal religious buildings of the city – the *battistero* (169–170), the Church of the Apostles (204–205) and the Duomo's cupola (214) – Ugolino Verino “emphasises the spiritual complex of the city and perhaps suggests [...] the identification of Florence as the new Jerusalem”.¹³ It is very suggestive that these buildings evoke the closest worldly relations to Christ – his Mother the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist and the apostles –, while he is the only one to not yet arrive.

Moreover, and remarkably enough, it is emphasised in *Carlias* II 17–23 that all the wars through the Eastern Mediterranean from the beginning of the poem are waged in order to free

¹¹The voyage to Hell, Purgatory and Heaven in books V–VIII is clearly indebted to Dante's *Comedy*, which began to be appreciated, alongside other writers in vulgar, among Latin authors during the 15th century (see THURN: Neulatein [n. 2] 49–65).

¹²Another possibility would be, in verse 207, to interpret *aeternae* as a genitive instead of as a misspelled adverb *aeterne*: “for the new wall of the eternal [stone] to rise with beautiful wing”. If this *aeternae* is referred to *petra*, then it is difficult not to associate Florence with the New Jerusalem, since the living stone of Christ is a traditional metaphor for the Church.

¹³See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 714.



those parts of the world ruled, since the Early Islamic Conquests of the 7th century, by Muslims, considered foes of Christianity:

*At referam causam et tanti primordia belli:
impia pestiferi Maumetti inuenta tyranni,
qui se demissum aethereis mentitus ab astris
dulcibus illecebris mortalia pectora cepit,
corruptum diris fedauit legibus orbem.
Hic Arabas Nilumque omnem Syriamque subegit,
huius et infecta est pene Africa tota ueneno.*

I will report the cause and the beginnings of such a great war:
the impious fabrications of Muhammad the tyrant,
who pretended to have descended from the aethereal stars.
By sweet allurements, he captivated the hearts of the mortals
and he polluted and corrupted the world with his ominous laws.
He subdued the Arabs, the entire Nile and Syria;
his venom infected almost all of Africa.

This shift in the identification of the enemies of Christianity from the Persians to the Muslims was of course no innovation of Ugolino Verino, but it can be traced right back to the same period which saw the birth of Islam.¹⁴ Similarly, it can be found in an array of apocalyptic texts throughout the Middle Ages, both in Greek and Latin and in vulgar languages as well, as we shall see below.

The eschatological role of the last worldly (Roman) emperor should be traced back to the 4th century and, more precisely, to some writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, particularly to his *De laudibus Constantini*, his praise of Constantine the Great for his thirty years of rulership. In this work, he assessed the duties and attributions of the emperor as an immediate predecessor of the Reign of God.¹⁵ This focus on the role of empire as an eschatological catalyser is a remarkable characteristic of Byzantine apocalyptic literature, and stems from a reinterpretation of the prophecies of Daniel 2 about the succession of reigns, and on establishing the periodisation of world's ages.¹⁶ Heraclius restoring the Cross and inaugurating the last age is only one of the multiple examples that could be adduced.

Nevertheless, if we return to *Carlias* II 17–23 and the story around the reposition of the Cross, its link to Jerusalem ought to be stressed now that we have already seen the significance of the Holy City in Verino's *Carlias* as a whole. However, is there any closer relationship between Charlemagne and Jerusalem in previous literature? Luckily, the answer is affirmative, since there is a bulk of Joachimite literature in which someone from the house of Charlemagne is called to conquer Jerusalem and bring upon the end of times.¹⁷ Joachimite literature was the product of

¹⁴See OLSTER, D.: "Byzantine Apocalypses". In COLLINS, J. J. ET AL. (eds): *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism II* (2000) 60–66, s.v.

¹⁵For the characteristics of the emperor according to Eusebius, see MARAVAL, P. (ed.): *Eusèbe de Césarée. La théologie politique de l'Empire chrétien*. Paris 2001, 36–67.

¹⁶See OLSTER (n. 14) 51.

¹⁷See REEVES (n. 9) 320.



the followers of Joachim of Fiore (or Gioacchino da Fiore, in Italian), a 12th century theologian and hermit whose eschatological teachings on the three ages of the world and the imminent coming of the third and last age of the Spirit were enthusiastically acclaimed by numerous members of the Franciscan family. During the following two centuries (13th–14th), they composed a significant amount of apocalyptic literature with vast political implications, for they predicted the end of creation to be brought upon by one or another political ruler, who could be depicted either as an agent of God's will or as the Antichrist. The most impressive parallel, which proves the success of the narrative pattern, can be found in the ms. Reg. Lat. 580, f. 52r:¹⁸

His factis [Karolus filius Karoli ex natione illustrissimi Lilii] sanctus sanctorum uocabitur, ueniens ad sanctam Ierusalem et accedens ad montem Oliueti, orans ad Patrem deponensque coronam de capite.

Thereafter [Charles, son of Charles, from the nation of the most distinguished Lily,] will be called saint of saints. He will come to the holy Jerusalem and, after reaching the top of Mount Olivet, he will pray to the Father and set down the crown from his head.

Thus, in the 14th century there was a shift from German emphasis to French agency in apocalyptic literature and the figure of the Second Charlemagne began to grow in importance. The first Joachimite work with a French flavour, so to speak, is the *Liber de flore* (from the beginning of the 14th century), where a king from the line of Pepin reunites the Greek Church to Rome, is appointed king of Sicily, conquers Jerusalem and lives as a Franciscan until his passing away.¹⁹

Moreover, these texts in which the German emperor is frequently acting as the Antichrist, were used in the context of long-lasting political conflict between the Holy See and German emperors – particularly during the Western Schism (1378–1417). At that time, they were therefore also relevant in Northern Italian cities, who always supported one of the two contending parties, the Guelphs, supporters of the Pope, or the philo-Germanic Ghibellines. In the *Vade mecum in tribulatione*, the most well-known work of a 14th century Occitan Franciscan, Joan de Ròcatalhada (or Iohannes de Rupescissa, in Latin), the French King is even crowned Roman Emperor, consciously against the imperial lineage tradition.²⁰ And in an illustration of the manuscript Reg. Lat. 580, from the Vatican Library, finished in 1387 and containing a collection of prophetic texts, we can see the Second Charlemagne being crowned by the Pope Reparator with a crown of thorns à la Jesus, as stated in Ròcatalhada's text.²¹

Another important author of Joachimite literature was the obscure Telesphorus of Cosenza (14th century): in his *Libellus*, f. 20v, the Second Charlemagne is also bound to the recovery of the Holy Land in a last Crusade, stressing the anti-Muslim character of these narratives, that has been already identified in the *Carlias*:

Qui imperator cum pastore angelico qui ipsum coronabit reformabit ecclesiam in statu paupertatis [...] Et ipse imperator cum pastore ecclesie faciet septimum et ultimum passagium pro terra sancta quam recuperabunt.

¹⁸See REEVES (n. 9) 303–305 for a more detailed account of Joachim's views.

¹⁹See REEVES (n. 9) 320–321.

²⁰See REEVES (n. 9) 321–324.

²¹See REEVES (n. 9) 328.



This Emperor, along with the angelical Shepherd who had crowned him, will reform the Church into a state of poverty [...] And this same Emperor, accompanied by the Shepherd of the Church, will carry out a seventh and last expedition for the Holy Land, which they will recover.

Telesphorus is especially important, because he enjoyed an extensive readership from the 15th through to the 17th century, as attested by the numerous manuscripts scattered through Italy, France, Germany and Austria.²² Furthermore, the *Diario fiorentino*, which primarily records events from 1450 to 1516, gives us hints of eschatological expectation in 15th century Florence linked with the French kings.²³

Finally, to return to the *Carlias*, it is obvious that Ugolino Verino depends on this apocalyptic tradition. The fact that he dedicates his poem to Charles VIII of France, a few years before his *Calata* and his invasion of Northern Italy,²⁴ reveals whom he thought would be the Second Charlemagne. The dedication also shows his very Francophile political positions, while retaining Florence's interests as a priority.²⁵ Not for nothing does Ugolino Verino allow Saint Zenobius to admonish (during the aforementioned prophecy of Florence's restoration revealed to Charlemagne): *Francorum ante omnes Florentia nomen amabit* (VIII 802). Moreover, let us not forget that Savonarola also thought of the French king as an eschatological catalyser.²⁶

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES FOR CHARLEMAGNE'S CRUSADE?

“Dass Verino damit ein neues Jerusalem meinte, kann dabei nur spekuliert werden”,²⁷ so began Thurn²⁸ his discussion of the possible interpretation of Florence as the New Jerusalem in the *magnum opus* of the Renaissance Italian poet. He straightaway labelled this possibility a *hypothesis*.

While I intend to bring forth new material to examination, it seems also worthwhile to reassess Thurn's question and proposed evidence, which might provide a clearer reading of this epos. This will also help identify learned Latin humanistic literature with contemporary more popular genres and topics, such as apocalypticism and eschatological expectation, an approach not very common among scholars until recent decades.²⁹

There are, of course, other texts which might account for the use of Charlemagne in his work. The most significant examples are those belonging to the *romanzi cavallereschi*, the Italian

²²See REEVES (n. 9) 327.

²³See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 706 and REEVES (n. 9) 324.

²⁴“Planning invasion, Charles VIII had constructed an elaborate justification for his desire to make good the Angevin claims: if he could realize his Italian aims – especially the conquest of Naples, which kingdom came with the title ‘king of Jerusalem’ – a Crusade would follow” (see MARGOLIS [n. 5] 227).

²⁵Not in vain he altered the order of events found in his friend Acciaiuoli's *Vita Caroli*, where the author situated the refoundation of the Florence only *after* his imperial proclamation in Rome, and let a Medici command Charlemagne's Italian Allies (*Carlias* IX 272–278): the Florentine regime predates Charlemagne's empire (see MARGOLIS [n. 5] 223).

²⁶See WEINSTEIN, D.: Savonarola, Florence, and the Millenarian Tradition. *Church History* 27.4 (1958) 291.

²⁷See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 706.

²⁸See THURN, N. (ed.): *Ugolino Verino, Carlias*. Munich 1995 and THURN: Kommentar (n. 1), respectively.

²⁹See LEFTLEY, S.: The millennium in Renaissance Italy: a persecuted belief? *Renaissance Studies* 13.2 (1999) 117–129.



epic poems about legendary and fantastic deeds of different characters that were (previously) anonymously composed and organised in cycles with more or less internal coherence (*chansons de gestes*). Charlemagne's or Alexander's cycle are probably the best well-known of them, for one can find in them some narrative patterns and even characters of Verino's *Carlias*.³⁰ One might therefore argue that these texts suffice to explain Charlemagne's role in this poem, but such a supposition would pose several problems.

Firstly, one should take into account that chivalric romances dealing with Charlemagne and apocalyptic literature appealing to an eschatological Second Charlemagne are most plausibly not two independent phenomena, but were closely related to each other, for, suffice to say, no one would expect a Second Charlemagne if the *first* Charlemagne were not a prominent figure in cultural imagination.

Secondly, the numerous contemporary Italian *romanzi cavallereschi* do not provide completely satisfactory parallels to two quite prominent aspects of the *Carlias*: the notorious Christian emphasis and the Crusade. One option would be to suppose that Ugolino Verino took inspiration for them in more ancient *chansons de gestes*,³¹ but, as Thurn points out,³² it is difficult to prove since even if the manuscripts were in Florentine libraries, why should Verino have preferred ancient French versions to Italian contemporary compositions? Furthermore, we do not know anything about Verino's ability to understand French. Another option would be to attribute the Crusade motif to Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, a proven source for the *Carlias*, or to the *Geist der Zeit*, the spirit of Verino's times demanding a Crusade to revenge Constantinople, fallen in Turkish hands in 1453, and requiring the French king to command the expedition.³³

It is easy to agree with Thurn on this, as the idea of a Crusade was cherished by many a contemporary of Verino. Nevertheless, based on the textual evidences brought forth in this paper,³⁴ which can account for the Crusade motif and the ideological background of the work much better than a medieval history like Vincent de Beauvais', there is no need to ascribe this motif just to the *general* atmosphere, but one may easily relate it to contemporary Francophile Joachimite apocalyptic literature, so in vogue back then. The motif of the Crusade and Charlemagne's intervention is, therefore, fully explained if understood in an eschatological narrative frame, in which it is difficult not to interpret the refounded Florence as the New and to-be-Heavenly Jerusalem.

³⁰See THURN: Neulatein (n. 2) 67–68.

³¹This hypothesis is attributable to C. Ratkowitsch (see THURN: Neulatein [n. 2] 69: "Ihre [i.e. C. Ratkowitschs] These ist es, dass Verino die jüngeren *Romanzi* (aus dem 15. Jh.) in ihrem Handlungsgehalt aufgriff, die besonders christliche, kreuzfahrerische Intention seines Epos aber aus den französischen, älteren *Chansons* gewonnen habe").

³²See THURN: Neulatein (n. 2) 70.

³³See THURN: Neulatein (n. 2) 68. In the *Speculum historiale*, the coronation of Charlemagne appears in the framework of the conflicts of imperial legitimacy between the West and Constantinople (XIV 57, XXV 3). There are few references to the efforts Charlemagne undertook to grant a comfortable life to Christians living in regions ruled by Muslims, but they lack the emphasised hostility against Muhammad's followers and the expectation of the imminent reestablishment of Christian rule (XXV 2. 4).

³⁴See, for example, the passage of Telesphorus' *Libellus* quoted *supra* in p. 6.



CONCLUSIONS

Finally, one might summarise the reasons why Florence should be interpreted as the New Jerusalem, a hypothesis already proposed by Thurn, the modern editor and commentator of the *Carlias*, as follows: i) there are several aspects of the passage about the refoundation of the Medicean city (*Carlias*, XV 156–221) that seem to relate Florence to the New Jerusalem, namely the chosen day for the refoundation of Florence (*Quarta dies Aprilis*); the importance of the number twelve (*bis senos*), that of the closest disciples of Christ; the references to Zenobius' prophecies in Heaven right after the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem; the underlining of Florence's most representative religious architecture and the oration to the disciples of Christ, eventually asking for a new wall for the eternal stone.³⁵ ii) There are general features of the work that draw an eschatological narrative frame: the *Aeneid*-like structure underlying Charlemagne's deeds, the figure of the Last Emperor and (the Second) Charlemagne – let us not forget the dedication to Charles VIII of France! –; the anti-Muslim claims and the Eastern Mediterranean adventures to the Holy Land and Babylon, so pervasive in previous and contemporary eschatological narratives. iii) Furthermore, this eschatological expectation fits in the Florence of the second half of the 15th century, for there are other evidences for this identification: Domenico di Michelino's panel painting inside the Duomo, *La Commedia illumina Firenze*,³⁶ the *Tempietto del Santo Sepolcro* in the Rucellai Chapel, finished by Leon Battista Alberti in 1467 *ad instar Iherosolimitani sepulchri*, as its inscription states,³⁷ and, later on, the very preaching of Girolamo Savonarola, recorded by the *Diario fiorentino* (p. 173): “aspettavo Firenze una nuova Gierusalemme dove avessi a uscire le leggi e lo splendore e l'esempio della buona vita, e vedere la novazione della Chiesa, la conversione degli infideli e la consolazione de' buoni”.³⁸ And one ought not to forget that some years after the publication of the *Carlias*, Ugolino Verino enthusiastically and devotedly partook in Savonarola's improvement of the city while expecting the fulfilment of times. iv) Since the militant Christian character of the work and the motif of the Crusade can only be fully accounted for by means of contemporary apocalyptic literature on the Second Charlemagne, the reader is forced to adopt the eschatological narrative frame and to conceive the refounded Florence as the New and to-be-Heavenly Jerusalem.

Even if this identification is considered fitting, a cautious reading of book XV in its entirety shows that, as holy as Florence might be, there is no discursive opposition between Rome and the Tuscan city, but rather different roles in the same story. At Rome, Charlemagne receives sanction of the Pope and legitimacy of his imperial power through an input of *Romanness* (XV 221–324); at Florence, after the defeat of Charlemagne's last enemy (XV 1–155),³⁹ the Jerusalem

³⁵See *supra* p. 4 and, particularly, n. 12.

³⁶See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 706.

³⁷See DE KLERCK, B.: Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy. The Holy Sepulchre on the Sacro Monte of Varallo. In GOUDEAU, J. ET AL.: *The Imagined and Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture*. Boston–Leiden 2014, 228–229.

³⁸See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 76 and also WEINSTEIN (n. 26) 298–299.

³⁹The Lombards, the last enemies of Charlemagne, get their beards shaved in an obvious reference to the etymology of Lombardy as *longa barba* (see THURN: Kommentar [n. 1] 705). It might also be interpreted, as Dr. C. H. Pieper kindly suggested to me, as a cleansing gesture prior to their being admitted in Charlemagne's *pax aeterna*, according to the metaphor for the appropriation of heathen authors established by Origen and quite popular among the Church Fathers and the Middle Ages, with biblical origins (see DE LUBAC, H.: *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture I*(1). Paris 1959, 290–304).



destroyed in book II is redeemed, and the beginnings of the eternal peace brought by Charlemagne's divinely inspired rulership is set in motion.

There is a final caveat that should be made explicit, even if it is probably already apparent: the *Carlias* is a very refined Latin epic poem, full of allegories⁴⁰ – mostly in books V–VIII, due to the influence of Dante's master piece – and addressed to a learned audience. Ugolino Verino's work should therefore not be regarded as an urgent call to radically transform overnight Florence into the Heavenly Jerusalem: after all, he is *not* writing apocalyptic literature – and that is, with no doubt whatsoever, what makes his poem so interesting.

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⁴⁰See THURN: Kommentar (n. 1) 28–42.

