

Acting and Reading Drama: Notes on Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* in Print

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to investigate the complex link between theatre, as a practice involving a number of people, and the change in the use of dramatic texts occurred at the origins of the Italian printing industry, when dramatic texts were no longer only acted but also read as books. With the invention of printed books, theatre has been transformed from a performative action to a container of memory images fixed through the book illustration. On the one hand, the article investigates the printed tradition of *sacre rappresentazioni* ('sacred plays') in connection with the other religious literary texts published between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of sixteenth centuries, putting it in relation with the birth of devotional books widely used in Florence during the age of Savonarola. On the other hand, it deals with the problem of illustrations by reconstructing the relationship between faithful people and sacred images before their diffusion was multiplied by the printing industry, and by looking at the real meaning of the link between written texts and woodcuts, in order to understand how the *sacra rappresentazione*, being a dramatic genre, was conceived when it was transformed into an object for reading.

Keywords: *Devotional Illustrated Books, Florentine Printing Industry, Girolamo Savonarola, Sacra Rappresentazione, Sacred Images and Devotion*

1. *Introduction*

The illustrations in the printed editions of the *sacre rappresentazioni* ('sacred plays')¹ have attracted the interest of drama historians mostly in terms of their

¹ I use the term *sacra rappresentazione* to indicate the dramatic genre characterized by the use of: a hendecasyllabic eight-line stanza – a verse form derived from the tradition of oral vernacular poetry performed by skilled singers in Florentine public squares –, stage directions with captions which were often extremely detailed, and the presence of an *Annunzio* ('Intimation') and a *Licenza* ('Valediction') delivered by an angel (these duplicated the roles played by the prologue and the epilogue in classic plays) and, finally, by

reliability as iconographic sources of information about the staging of the texts. In the absence of coeval descriptions, the only – hazardous – evidence of this consists of the texts themselves. As with other dramatic genres of the time, the related manuscripts were not in the form of the scripts used for the performances, which could have provided concrete indications about how they were produced, but rather of anthologies destined for personal perusal, with only rare cases of individual texts.² With the invention of print this already accentuated literary character became crystallised, fixing the texts in a repeatable format that was always the same. This had two effects: on the one hand, it blocked the instability proper to the manuscript tradition; on the other, it contributed to aligning these texts with the religious pamphlets produced for the edification of a vast public of semi-cultured or just literate people, determining the qualification as a ‘popular’ genre that is still widely accepted by historians and intellectuals. In both cases, it is difficult to establish what in the stage directions³ belongs to the literary form and what to the spectacular dimension of the texts.

The same holds for the illustrations of the printed editions. Being related in type to the book format typical of the pamphlets destined for broad circulation, these do not always have characteristics that can reliably be assigned to the scenic conventions of the performances, especially in the absence of external evidence. This question was posed in considerable depth and detail by Cesare Molinari, who has examined a significant number of woodcuts of *sacre rappresentazioni*. Although in his study he did point out the actual connection of some of these images to the scarce information available on the textual apparatus of the texts, he also stressed that in the Florentine printing industry it was common practice to reutilise the wooden blocks for different books. It is therefore impossible to consider these illustrations as direct evidence of scenic practice; at most, they can indicate possible similarities in specific cases to be analysed in close correspondence with the plays (1961, 103-115).

While I am convinced of the utility of pursuing this line of research through a more meticulous comparison of texts, images and written

the selection of subjects variously taken from the *Old* and from the *New Testament*, or from hagiographic and devout literature. For a more detailed description of this dramatic genre see Ventrone 2016. The present essay is an updated version of Ventrone 2003. This essay has been translated by A.H. Cleary. Unless otherwise stated, all other passages taken from Italian originals, have been translated by the same.

² This statement is based on the repertory by Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, which records the largest existing collection of manuscript and printed *sacre rappresentazioni*, kept in the BNCF [Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze] and is, therefore, useful to introduce general and statistic considerations.

³ Captions indicate the characters (*dramatis personae*), their movements on the stage, the dramatic situations and sometimes the location of the actions.

documents, here I wish to propose a different approach, shifting the focus from the history of the scenic space to that of the *libro di teatro* ('theatre book'). The aim is to explore the change in the character of fruition of dramatic texts that emerged at the dawn of the Italian printing industry. This was due to the passage from the performance as an event involving a community (irrespective of size)⁴ to reading, and the metaphorical transformation from a theatre of performative action to a container of mental images fixed also through book illustrations.⁵

To do this it is necessary to retrace the printed tradition of the *sacre rappresentazioni* without isolating it from other literary forms published between the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, but setting it in relation to the emergence of the devotional book aimed at a wide public, to discern the similarities, differences and borrowings. It is also necessary to address the issue of the illustrations, both by reconstructing the relations which the faithful had with sacred images prior to benefiting from the multiplication enabled by the printing industry, and by considering the relation between text and woodcuts as a significant whole in itself. In other words, seeking to understand how the *sacra rappresentazione* was conceived, being a dramatic genre, when it was transformed into an object for reading.

2. Sacre rappresentazioni in Print

The publication of the *sacra rappresentazione* was a phenomenon that persisted at length, from the last two decades of the fifteenth century almost up to the nineteenth,⁶ albeit in increasingly deteriorated form in terms of both quality of publication and textual contents. By the end, it had assumed a decidedly popular character, alongside hagiographic legends and almanacs. From the repertory of religious books in the vernacular compiled by Anne Jacobson Schutte (1983),⁷ it was clearly an entirely local phenomenon, at least until the mid-sixteenth century. Editions of similar texts in other parts of Italy

⁴ For instance, the restricted audience of a youth confraternity or the crowd attending a performance in a public square. On the different contexts of staging *sacre rappresentazioni* see Ventrone 2016, *passim*.

⁵ Giulio Camillo Delminio's *Teatro della memoria*, for example, is one of the highest expressions of the fascinating story that for centuries has linked theatre to *ars memorativa* and, in the modern era, also to printing; see Bolzoni 1984 and 1995.

⁶ In the nineteenth century scholars and positivists began to direct their interest to the *sacra rappresentazione* and to republish the ancient versions, as in the case of the broader modern anthology of these texts: D'Ancona 1872; see also D'Ancona 1891.

⁷ This is the most extensive and complete inventory on vernacular religious book regarding the first century of printing activity in Italy, albeit with the limits of research carried out using library catalogues without direct viewing of the printed works.

are in fact rare and mostly later.⁸ The titles too are significant, illustrating the exception that confirms the rule: a few plays by Feo Belcari, a writer appreciated both for his devotional compositions in prose and verse and for his dramatic texts (Marti 1970 and Martelli 1996, 20-47);⁹ the *Passione del Gonfalone*, composed on the Florentine dramatic model in *ottava rima* by Giuliano Dati, Bernardo di Antonio and Mariano Particappa,¹⁰ and a few other sporadic cases, above all in neighbouring cities such as Bologna and Perugia.¹¹ It was only after the middle of the sixteenth century, when Siena became part of the Tuscan Duchy, that its equally prolific enterprises, even in terms of print runs, came to supplement the Florentine editorial initiatives.¹²

Even in Florence, where there was already a copious circulation of manuscript *sacre rappresentazioni*,¹³ their publication in book form was not immediately successful when the printing industry was set up in the city in 1471 (Ridolfi 1958, 13-28; Rhodes 1984).¹⁴ The printing press of San Jacopo a Ripoli¹⁵ is a significant illustration of this since, despite its specialisation in works of a devotional and hagiographic character destined to a broad and differentiated public, it did not print any text of *sacra rappresentazione*.¹⁶ Similarly, other of the oldest print shops, such as that of Nicolaus Lorenz, although they published a great deal of religious material did not include this dramatic genre (Jacobson Schutte 1983, 425).

⁸ On the *peculiarità geotipografica* ('geotypographic peculiarity') of the *sacra rappresentazione* see Quondam 1983, 610-611. Quondam's contribution is still fundamental for the history of printing in Italy, both for the amplitude of the panorama offered and for the wealth of suggested research perspectives.

⁹ For the ancient editions of Belcari's dramatic and non-dramatic works see Jacobson Schutte 1983, 66-69.

¹⁰ The popularity of this play stemmed from the famous performance held in Rome inside the Colosseum. See Jacobson Schutte 1983, 158-159. On the Colosseum *Passion play* see Cruciani 1983, 210-218, 470-473, 522-524, and Wisch and Newbigin 2013.

¹¹ In Bologna some *sacre rappresentazioni* were printed by Caligola Bazalieri around 1505; in Perugia by Cosimo from Verona called Bianchino del Leone in the first half of the sixteenth century: see Jacobson Schutte 1983, 385 and 404.

¹² Above all by Luca Bonetti and by the print shop 'Alla Loggia del Papa': see Cioni 1961, 343-345; Cioni 1969; Salvestro cartaio detto Il Fumoso 2016, 32-35.

¹³ See Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 3-31, and the list, extended to other Florentine and Italian libraries, contained in Newbigin 1983, liv-lv.

¹⁴ See also the useful, albeit synthetic, notes by Scapecchi 1985, 21-23.

¹⁵ It was opened in 1476, at the homonymous monastery, by the Dominican friars Domenico di Daniello from Pistoia and Pietro di Salvatore from Pisa, and remained one of the most flourishing until the end of activity in 1484: see Nesi 1903, who published the *Diario* ('Journal') of the printing press, an exceptional document for the history of fifteenth-century printing. See also the modern edition by Conway 1999.

¹⁶ As can be deduced from the *Diario* itself and from the 'Index of works' provided by Nesi 1903, 125-127.

The oldest incunabula of *sacre rappresentazioni* printed in series date to the early 1490s.¹⁷ Although they do not bear any typographical indications, they are now by consensus attributed by bibliologists to the print shop of Antonio Miscomini,¹⁸ who took the initiative of publishing thirteen texts. These were sold both loose and collected in two volumes, the first containing nine plays¹⁹ and the second four.²⁰ They were printed in the 4° format typical of popular literature, whether of a devout, romantic or legendary nature, because it was both manageable and relatively cheap (on the costs of producing incunabula see Pettas 1973). They were also elegant and readable in view of the use of the rounded and well-spaced Roman 112 R font and the arrangement of the text in a single column of 27 lines. There were no illustrations²¹ (figure 1).

The operation carried out by Miscomini was very interesting from several aspects. The idea of commencing the publication of the *sacre rappresentazioni* in the form of anthologies, following the model of the manuscripts in which they had hitherto been preserved,²² indicated the intention of creating a market bracket among those who liked to copy such texts for their own personal use or borrowed them from friends and acquaintances (figure 2). In addition, the possibility of breaking down the anthologies into individual units that could also be sold individually was a safeguard against the possibility of disappointing sales of the anthologies. The choice of the titles to be printed was also significant. They were all previously unpublished and no fifteenth-century manuscript copies of them are known. More specifically they included the entire known production of certain writers active in the Medici milieu and well-established in the city, such as Antonia and Bernardo Pulci.²³

¹⁷ Nerida Newbiggin (2016) has recently proposed anticipating the dating of these collections to 1483. This hypothesis, to be verified through further investigations, does not affect the contents of the present contribution which is focused on the later illustrated printed works.

¹⁸ Informations about Miscomini's activity can be found in Turelli 1985b, 36-37, n. 22, and in Avigliano 2011.

¹⁹ The texts are: *Santa Domitilla*, by Antonia Pulci; *Barlaam e Josafat*, by Bernardo Pulci; *Santa Guglielma*, by Antonia Pulci; *Ioseph figliuolo di Iacob*; *Santo Francesco*, by Antonia Pulci; and the anonymous *Reina Hester*; *Natività di Cristo*; *Sancto Antonio della Barba Romito*, *San Francesco come convertì tre ladroni*. Only two complete exemplars of this series exist. They are conserved in the BNCF, *Banco rari 187*, and *P.6.37.1-9*: see Cioni 1961, 23; Newbiggin 1988, 270-272; Newbiggin 2016, 340-341.

²⁰ The texts are: *Sant'Eustachio*, *Sant'Apollonia*, *Angelo Raffaele e Tobia*, *Stella*. Only two complete exemplars of this series exist. They are conserved in the BNCF, *Banco rari 186*, and *P.6.36.1-4*: Cioni 1961, 23-24; Newbiggin 1988, 272; Newbiggin 2016, 341-342.

²¹ For these and other typographical details see Newbiggin 2016, 343.

²² With the difference that in the manuscripts, the *sacre rappresentazioni* could be accompanied by works of different kinds such as *laudi*, prayers, *cantari* and others. Examples can be found in Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 3-31.

²³ On the consolidated relationship between Miscomini and some of the most loyal Medici writers such as, in addition to the Pulci, Angelo Poliziano, Cristoforo Landino, Marsilio Ficino, see Avigliano 2011.

No information is available about the potential purchasers of the anthologies, and investigation of the reading public for printed books in this early period continues to be extremely complex.²⁴ What does appear certain is that the publishing enterprise met with success, at least as far as the loose copies were concerned, since immediately afterwards – and definitely before 1495²⁵ – Miscomini reprinted seven of the texts already published together with four new ones. These were printed in a different form, in the smaller 86 R font and with a page layout in two columns of 42-44 lines, allowing a saving on paper and, as a result, possibly lower costs. But most importantly it made room for the true novelty: the introduction of illustrations.²⁶

Around the same time, Bartolomeo de' Libri,²⁷ apparently acting almost in tandem with his colleague, reprinted the five remaining dramas of Miscomini's two anthologies as well as another twenty-one, all unpublished and in this case drawn from the older plays that had already circulated widely in manuscript form. The typographic format was also very similar to that of Miscomini: Roman font 97 R in two columns of around 35 lines, complete with illustrations. Thus, between 1490 and 1495 just two printers had, between them, printed or reprinted no less than fifty *sacre rappresentazioni*. Although the numbers of the print runs are not known,²⁸ the total must have been in the region of several thousand exemplars.

This was just the beginning of the popularity of the printed versions of the religious plays in octaves. In fact the model established by Miscomini and de' Libri must have satisfied the tastes of the public, since it was consistently reproduced by other publishers in the following decades.

The *sacre rappresentazioni* continued to be published under the government of Soderini (1502-1512), although with less intensity than in the

²⁴ On this topic, see the historiographical overview, extended to the whole of Europe, collected by Chartier 1995: for the Italian situation, in particular the contribution by Braida 1995.

²⁵ This is the presumed date of Miscomini's death: see Avigliano 2011.

²⁶ The dimensions of the *sacre rappresentazioni* of the two unillustrated collections could, in fact, range between 20 and 26 folios, while those of the new format, in double column and illustrated, rarely exceeded 10. However, there is no evidence to establish to what extent the presence of the illustrations affected the cost of the booklets.

²⁷ He was chaplain in the Oratory of Orsanmichele and one of the most prolific Florentine printers of the fifteenth century. See: Poli 1949; Ridolfi 1958, 63-78; Cioni 1964; Bertoli 2001.

²⁸ As can be deduced from the aforementioned catalogues (in addition to the *Short-Title Catalogue* 1958), the incunabula and the sixteenth-century printed books currently conserved in Italian and foreign libraries amount to several hundred, many surviving in unique copies of a single edition (in the BNCf alone there are almost seven hundred). If one considers that nine-tenths of popular vernacular literature has probably disappeared, the print runs must have been in the region of a thousand for each play, which would be remarkable even in today's publishing industry: for this quantification see Rozzo 1993, 13, with bibliography.

previous years.²⁹ Instead, when the Medici returned to Florence and during the papacies of Leo X and Clement VII, there was a substantial revival in the printing of the genre. This was primarily due to Antonio Tubini and Andrea Ghirlandi, often on commission from Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto, who took over the press of de' Libri and, in addition to reprinting the fifteenth-century dramas, also published the new works of Castellano Castellani.³⁰ This new burst of popularity may have had something to do with the first inklings of the Reformation and the Lutheran and Protestant pamphlets which began to circulate clandestinely, camouflaged as booklets of popular devotion. If this is so, the plays in octaves could have been one of the methods used by the Florentine Church to counter the spread of the prohibited works which were very soon placed on the Index.³¹

While the above is only a hypothesis that needs to be checked through further research, it is instead a fact that the publication of *sacre rappresentazioni* never dropped significantly in the course of the sixteenth century. On the contrary, it enjoyed periods of considerable growth following the Council of Trent, especially after the Giunti print shop undertook a major editorial project, comparable only to the early activity of Miscomini and de' Libri. Giunti collected and reprinted all the texts known to date – with the addition of *commedie sacre* ('sacred comedies') and lauds – in three volumes published in 1555, 1560 and 1578, each introduced by a letter 'from the printer to the readers'.³² These anthologies are of the greatest interest, not only because of the publisher's insistence on the edifying purposes of the drama in octaves, but also because they proposed to bring together all the existing texts of sacred plays. The primary destination of these collections were the nuns' convents, both as a repertory for the performances that were frequently organised there and also to prevent them being lost at a time when other dramatic forms were taking over from the octave model:

²⁹ On the other hand, the numbers of both print runs and titles printed at the end of the previous century probably saturated the market for at least a few years and until new authors appeared to renew the repertoire.

³⁰ Significant of this interest in the *sacra rappresentazione* is the fact that Ghirlandi had been a compositor for Miscomini before starting his own business (Pettas 1973, 70-72; Breccia Fratadocchi 1999). On the revival of *sacre rappresentazioni* after the Medici's return to Florence see Ventrone 2016, chapter V.

³¹ On the complex problem of the circulation of the Reformed literature in Italy before and after the Council of Trent and the religious publications promoted to oppose its diffusion, I refer only to the synthesis by Rozzo 1993, 40-45.

³² For the description of these extremely rare collections see Cioni 1961, 24-31. I have consulted the volumes conserved in the Library of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan which, although incomplete, conserve intact the introductions for the readers, fundamental to shed light on the purposes of these editions. The Giuntine collections were followed by at least two other anthologies between the '80s and '90s of the sixteenth century, perhaps due respectively to Giovanni Baleni and to Jacopo Chiti (Cioni 1961, 31-32).

Quanto sia necessario alla rational creatura conoscere la diritta & sicura via di questo nostro corto & dubbioso pellegrinaggio, per venire a quel desiderato fine dove tutti intendiamo, non è niuno, ch'io mi creda così poco amorevole di se stesso & della salute dell'anima sua, il quale chiaramente nol sappia. Et chi a ciò non pensa se non sempre, bene spesso almeno, non si può dire, né ch'egli tema Dio, né ch'egli ami sé medesimo. Nasce dunque questo lodevole pensiero in noi principalmente dalla assidua oratione, & dalla lettione delle cose sacre. Ma perché altri non può di continuo orare, né sempre attendere a leggere libri spirituali, ho più volte pensato fra me medesimo che non disconverrebbe punto alla santissima professione di tutte le Vergini dedicate al servizio di Dio, l'havere talhora alle mani qualche honesto libro da pigliare con esso consolatione di spirito. Però prima a honor di Dio, & poi a sodisfattion vostra, ho procurato di ridurre insieme buona parte di Rappresentationi & feste di Santi & Sante altre volte stampate, e alcune anchora non più poste in luce. Et servirà come io aviso, questa mia raunanza, perché desiderando le persone religiose in qualche tempo dell'ano [sic, for anno] pigliare un poco di ricreatione, habbin cagione di recitare & leggere alcuna di queste rappresentazioni poste sul presente libro, le quali, per esser tutte cose spirituali & vere, insegneranno loro buoni esempi. Onde elle s'ingegneranno di caminare per la via che fu guidato al cielo quel Santo o Santa che rappresenteranno. Così facendo, che a Dio piaccia, verran[n]o ancho a fuggire l'occasione di recitar comedie, le quali il più delle volte recano danno all'anima, e al corpo. Et si come al presente ho raccolto insieme il primo libro, spero fra poco tempo di raunarne dell'altre, & farne il secondo volume a laude & gloria di Dio. Il quale vi degnerete pregar per me, che ogn'ora m'inspiri a far cosa che sia di suo Santo servitio. (*Il primo libro di rappresentazioni et feste 1555, f.1a r-v*)³³

³³ 'I don't believe that there is anyone who cares so little for himself and for the health of his soul that does not clearly see how necessary it is for the rational creature to know the straight & safe path of this our short & doubtful pilgrimage, to arrive at that yearned-for end that we all aspire to. And anyone who does not think of it, if not always at least often, then it cannot be said that he fears God or that he cares for himself. And so this praiseworthy thought arises in us mostly through assiduous prayer & the reading of holy things. But since others cannot pray continuously, nor always attend to the reading of spiritual books, I have often thought to myself that it would not be at all inappropriate to the most holy profession of all the Virgins devoted to the service of God to have to hand now and then some honest book from which to draw consolation for the spirit. Therefore, firstly to honour God and secondly for your satisfaction I have sought to bring together most of the plays & feasts of Saints printed before, and some others not yet published. And as I see it, this collection of mine may serve because if the religious people at some times of the year may wish to make a little recreation, they may have reason to recite & read some of the plays to be found in this book, which, since they are all spiritual & true things, may teach them good examples. So that they will strive to follow the path by which the Saint in the play was guided to heaven. By doing this, which is pleasing to God, they will also be able to evade the occasion of acting comedies, which often are detrimental to the soul, and to the body. And as I have now gathered together the first book, I hope in a short time to bring together others & to make a second volume to the praise & glory of God. To whom I beg you to pray for me, that every hour I may be inspired to do things that are to his Holy service'. This is the text of the *Lettera dello stampatore ai lettori* ('Printer's letter to the readers') prefaced to the first volume of the collection. For performances in female convents see Weaver 2002a.

3. *The Savonarolian Model of Devotional Printed Books*

But let us return to the fifteenth century. Apart from the public appreciation of the *sacra rappresentazione*, which is also testified by the entity and the chronological concentration of the related editorial initiatives, what happened between Miscomini's first incunabula without illustrations and the second abundant production characterised by the presence of woodcuts? And what induced two of the most active and prolific printers in Florence to devote a considerable part of their activity to the production of this type of work?³⁴

After the period dominated by the Neoplatonic philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, in the last years of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Florentine culture underwent a swift change of direction. This was rendered urgent not only by the changing of the times, but also by the convergence between the discontent of the anti-Medicean factions in the city and the open hostility of Pope Innocent VIII towards the political line of mediation between the various Italian states pursued by Lorenzo. This opposition materialised in the condemnation of the Medici intellectual entourage's inclination towards the artistic – literary, philosophical and figurative – expressions of the classical world, branded as paganism (see Martelli 1978; 1980; 1998). To defend himself against this attack, in 1490 Lorenzo summoned the Ferrara Dominican Girolamo Savonarola back to Florence in the conviction that his preaching would give a new imprint to the image of Florentine culture. In effect, Savonarola did draw into his orbit many of the leading intellectuals and artists connected with the ruling family.³⁵

The first printed works by Savonarola, published between 1491 and 1492, were a series of ascetic pamphlets aimed at illustrating certain practices of devotion of an intimate and private character and conceived, like all the rest of his vernacular production, to be understood by both cultured people and the semi-literate and popular classes. The *Trattato dell'umiltà* ('On Humility'), the *Trattato dell'amore di Gesù* ('On the Love of Jesus'), and the *Trattato dell'orazione mentale* ('On Mental Prayer'), published by Miscomini and some immediately reprinted,³⁶ reveal in the typographic format and doctrinal content both the imprint and the catechetical purpose he wished to confer upon his writings as well as the importance he attributed to printing as a more powerful means of divulgation than the same words declaimed

³⁴ 209 printed works of various kinds, produced between 1483 and 1511, are actually attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri: Poli 1949, 14-27; see also Ridolfi 1958, 63-78.

³⁵ For the reconstruction of this period and these problems, in addition to Martelli's studies mentioned above, see the classic Ridolfi 1952, and Weinstein 1970.

³⁶ See records 7 (75-76), 8 (77-78), 9 (79-80), in Turelli 1985a. This is a fundamental contribution to the study of the relationship between Savonarola and the printing industry, to which I refer, unless otherwise indicated, for all information on the Friar's publications. All catalogue records are by Elisabetta Turelli.

from the pulpit. Clearly, the printed work could be read over and over again, facilitating meditation and the assimilation of the contents.

This conviction is clarified in a later letter, dating to 1497. This is significant because it shows that the polemic about the legitimacy of frequenting classical culture which had marked the final years of the Laurentian hegemony was still alive.³⁷ Even more important is the fact that it dates to the period when Savonarola had been prohibited from preaching by Alexander VI, so that he sought to exploit print as much as possible to spread his message of redemption:

Ma al tempo presente, essendosi dati li cristiani alli studii de' pagani molti che si chiamano savi oggidì ingannano le persone semplice et illetterate sotto specie di dottrina vana et inflata, non mostrando la verità del ben vivere cristiano; et però per occorrere a questo errore non solo io, ma molti etiam divoti omini così religiosi come secolari, hanno composti diversi *trattati vulgari per le persone inlitterate, circa la perfezione del ben vivere cristiano*, non scrivendo però altro che quello che è scritto nella Scrittura Sacra e nella dottrina della santa Chiesa e delli santi dottori. Avendo dunque noi scritto 'della semplicità della vita cristiana', 'della carità', 'della umiltà', 'della orazione', 'delli dieci comandamenti' e 'regule di perfezione alli religiosi', e molte altre cose appartenente alla perfezione della vita spirituale, non mi pare più necessario scrivere altre esortazione in vulgare, anzi superfluo, *essendo le predette opere poste in stampa e divulgate per tutto*, perché quelle sono sufficiente a chi vuole operare bene. ... Ma mettere in scritto e repetere quelle medesime cose è generare tedio e non fare frutto. *Altra cosa è il scrivere e altra è il predicare*; però che *quello che si predica non rimane nelle carte*, e comunemente li omini sono o di poca memoria o negligenti nello operare e però bisogna quel medesimo nelle prediche spesso rimemorare, sì per ricordarlo a chi lo avessi dimenticato, sì per insegnarlo a chi non fussi le altre volte stato presente, sì per riscaldare li negligenti, *perché la viva voce molto muove li auditori etiam quando l'omo dice le cose che sanno e che hanno udito altre volte, perché gran differenza è audire una cosa e leggerla*; e gran differenza è ancora in una medesima cosa audirla dire a uno modo e ad un altro. (Savonarola, 1984, 209-210; italics mine)³⁸

³⁷ In fact, renewing a diatribe that has already been repeatedly proposed in the history of Florentine culture: see Martelli 1988, 104-123, and, regarding Savonarola's position, Viti 1998.

³⁸ 'At present, however, since Christians have dedicated themselves to the study of the pagans, many who today are called wise deceive simple and unlettered persons under the guise of a doctrine that is vain and inflated and hides the truth of righteous Christian living. So, to remedy this error, not only I, but also many devout men, both in orders and lay, have composed *in the vernacular language various treatises for unlettered persons on the perfection of righteous Christian living*, writing nothing else but what is written in Sacred Scripture and in the doctrine of the holy Church and of the holy doctors. Since we have written 'On the simplicity of the Christian life', 'On Charity', 'On humility', 'On prayer', 'On the ten commandments', and 'Rules for the perfection of people in orders', and many other things pertaining to the perfection of spiritual life, it seems to me not necessary but

And, again in 1497, in the *Epistola a tutti gli eletti di Dio* ('Letter to All the Elect of God') published by Bartolomeo de' Libri, he repeated:

quello che al presente non si può fare in parole lo farò per epistola, & forse questo sarà tanto più utile quanto sarà più universale, potendo la epistola haversi da quelli che non possono udire le parole. (BNCF, Cust D 1, f. a1v; italics mine)³⁹

Savonarola had therefore grasped the educational potential offered by the new printing industry, and was a true pioneer in the intense and conscious use he made of it. His exploitation is indeed comparable only to that of Luther, who went so far as to consider printing the ultimate and greatest gift of God and founded the success of the Reformation on the circulation of his writings in print and on the direct approach to reading the Scriptures made possible by their translation into the vernacular and publication.⁴⁰

superfluous to compose other exhortations in the vernacular *since the aforementioned works have been printed and distributed everywhere*, and they are enough for someone who wants to live righteously. ... But to write down and repeat those same things is nothing more than to create tedium and not bear fruit. *Writing is one thing, preaching another*. Since what is preached does not remain on paper, and because people generally have short memories or are negligent in their works, then in preaching the same thing must be brought back into people's memory, be it to remind those who have forgotten it, or to teach it to those who were not present the previous times, or to rekindle the negligent, *for the spoken voice moves the audience greatly*, even when one says things they know and have heard other times, for there is a big difference *between hearing something and reading it*, and there is also a big difference between hearing something said in one way or another' (translation taken from Savonarola 2003, 55-56).

³⁹ 'I will do by letter what at present cannot be done verbally, and perhaps this will be so much the more useful as it is *the more universal, since a letter can be received by those who cannot hear the words*' (translation taken from Savonarola 2006, 290). The quotations of the texts of incunabula and *cinquecentine*, including those of the titles, incipit and colophon, are conducted with criteria of moderate modernization, consisting of: separation of single words, distinction of *u* from *v*, regularization of capitalization and punctuation according to current uses, introduction of diacritical signs, dissolution of abbreviations and summaries, failure to report end-of-line and end of page.

⁴⁰ On this subject, widely treated by historians, see: Rozzo 1993, 25 and *passim*; on the consequences of the direct reading of the Scriptures by the illiterate or semi-literate, see the classic Ginzburg 1976, particularly 69-70; on the diffusion of sacred and religious texts, see also Ginzburg 1972. Savonarola's unusual use of printing for propaganda purposes is, moreover, confirmed by the number of the print runs and by comparative statistics that reveal a surge in Florentine religious publications during the Friar's time. On this issue, see Rozzo 1993, 14-16; Quondam stresses that 'Savonarola's timeliness and speed – required by his wanting / having to be caught up in the meshes of a debate that ends up activating other scriptures and other books – testify to his deep persuasion of the possibilities offered by the new art of artificial writing, of the facility with which it reaches an audience much larger than that which crowds his sermons (which were, in fact, immediately printed); and that 'Savonarola seems to be the first to think of his own work (rooted in the discursive statutes of the practiced genres) in book form' (1983, 596-597). On this topic, see also Rhodes: 'It can

I also believe that Savonarola played a prominent role in the typographical layout of the popular Florentine illustrated books, and obviously of religious books in particular. This hypothesis is supported by several significant coincidences: 1. the fact that the *Tractati vulgari* ('Vernacular Treatises'), as well as being his first published works, were also among the very first books illustrated with woodcuts published in the city (Turelli 1985a, 75, 77); 2. that the images contained within them were specifically conceived to move the readers and to fix the significance of the written pages; 3. that the printers who published these texts, and those who later joined them,⁴¹ were the same who were responsible for producing most of the Florentine illustrated books between the fifteenth and sixteenth century, thus at the same time building up almost the entire woodcut corpus which was to be continually reutilised – even at the height of the sixteenth century – to illustrate other works, often very far removed from those in which they originally appeared;⁴² 4- finally, the confirmation of how consciously Savonarola conceived the images to be inserted in his texts, in a literal relationship with the contents that goes far beyond a merely ornamental or generically educational purpose.⁴³

The figures that accompany Savonarola's works reveal a marked artistic taste and an attention to the quality of the workmanship and the harmony of the page layout that reveal that he was very familiar with the latest figurative trends in Florence at the time and, as commissioner, was capable of choosing the solutions most suitable to the context to be illustrated. Not incidentally, most of these images were attributed to prominent artists, all closely linked to the convent of San Marco and the circle of Savonarola's followers (and, before that, to the milieu of the Medici). They included Domenico Ghirlandaio, Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Bernardo Cennini (Ciardi Dupré 1985) and a certain Alunno di Domenico, Ghirlandaio's pupil, identified by Berenson as the painter and engraver Bartolomeo di Giovanni (Berenson 1903 and Marcucci 1964).

be said that Girolamo Savonarola is the most prolific author of the entire fifteenth century in Italy, in terms not of the length of each work but of their frequency; and that works by him were published in Florence every fortnight between 1495 and 1498. He was the journalist of the incunabula' (1988, 13). In general, for the transformations in European mentality and culture introduced by the printing industry a useful reference is still Eisenstein 1979.

⁴¹ Bartolomeo de' Libri, Lorenzo Morgiani, alone or in collaboration with Giovanni Petri or with Giovanni di Magonza, Francesco Bonaccorsi, Antonio Tubini, alone or with Lorenzo d'Alopa and Andrea Ghirlandi, and the publisher Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia: on the latter see Casetti Brach 2014.

⁴² For a history and a classification of the different graphic styles of the Florentine woodcuts from their appearance to the early sixteenth century the work by Kristeller 1897 continues to be indispensable.

⁴³ On the printed editions of Savonarola's works, which he himself edited, see Turelli 1985b and Garfagnini 1999, who does not take the illustrations into account.

In terms of communicative intentions, I would indicatively classify the woodcuts in three genres: 1. images intended to move the reader and stimulate identification; 2. those of an exemplary character; 3. those of a narrative nature. It seems useful here to take a look at a few examples.

4. *Savonarolian Woodcuts and Their Function in Devotional Booklets*

Belonging to the first category are the Crucifixions, the Lamentations, the Ascents to Calvary and the portrayals of Christ in Pietà. The subject of Christ on the Cross, present in a remarkable variety of compositions in Savonarola's printed works (Turelli 1985a, *passim*), can effectively help the modern reader to grasp the tangible emotionally moving power that the Friar attributed to images. In fact, some of the works that contain this figure explain to the faithful the correct attitude to be adopted in front of it in order to derive the greatest moral benefit from it.

The *Operetta nuova* ('New Booklet'), dated around 1495 and printed by Lorenzo Morgiani and Giovanni Petri (Turelli 1985a, cat. 26, 131-133), contains two different Crucifixions, the repetition being intended to emphasise the substance of the booklet's message, namely that the love for Jesus is strengthened and amplified by the representation of his suffering. Referring to one of the woodcuts, Savonarola addresses the devout reader as follows:

Contemplatione circa Iesù già elevato in aria in su la croce: 'Ecco anima dilecta il tuo Iesù per tuo amore in croce crudelissimamente disteso. Ecco lo stendardo della salute nostra. Ecco il tuo creatore sopra quello alto legno conficto. Lieva gli occhi & guarda se mai al mondo si vidde tanta charità. Contempla se mai fu dimostrato tanto amore. ... Risguarda anima che *crudele spectaculo*, che *spietata stampa*, che forma da far diventare pietoso ogni cor duro'. (BNCF Cust C 16, s.n.t., f. 17r; italics mine)⁴⁴

In these words we can note the *pathos* with which the preacher speaks to the faithful, from the printed page in the same way as from the pulpit, to induce them to identify with Christ's suffering through the engaged contemplation of the woodcut. We can also discern the telling association between the '*crudele spectaculo*' ('cruel spectacle') and the '*spietata stampa*' ('pitiless print') which goes well beyond the metaphorical use of the terms since, as I see it, these are intended in their more tangibly literal sense: 'spectacle' as action

⁴⁴ 'Contemplation of Jesus already raised on high upon the cross: "Here, beloved soul, is your Jesus, most cruelly stretched out upon the cross for love of you. Here is the banner of our salvation. Here is your creator nailed to the tall tree. Raise your eyes and look to see if ever so much charity was seen in the world. Contemplate if ever so much love was shown. ... Look, soul, what *cruel spectacle*, what *pitiless print*, what form to make every hard heart grow pitiful" '.

performed and seen⁴⁵ and ‘print’ as book illustration. This also calls to mind the analogous use which Saint Bernardino from Siena made of the painted images in the course of his fiery Sienese sermons, using the city’s figurative heritage as a reservoir of sites of memory, as well as for leverage of collective and individual sentiment.⁴⁶

Following a long tradition – predominantly, but not exclusively Dominican – Savonarola therefore considered that the sacred images helped to strengthen devotion by acting on the imagination and emotional memory of the faithful. At the same time, he was aware of the way the public were accustomed to using images to stimulate their own religious sensitivity and facilitate the process of contrition.⁴⁷ This is why he believed it indispensable that there should be a crucifix to pray before in every home. In the *Copia d’una epistola ... a Madonna Magdalena Contessa della Mirandola la quale volea intrare in monasterio* (‘Copy of a Letter ... to Magdalen, Countess of Mirandola; Concerning her Design of Entering the Order of S. Clare’, dated c. 1490 and attributed to Bartolomeo de’ Libri), for example, he recommended that in the cell: ‘Voi habbate uno crucifixo, non d’oro né d’argento, né tutto gentile & pulito, ma *pietoso*, el quale vi *exciti la mente a devotione* & sia di poco prezzo’ (BNCF, Cust D. 8, f. 2v; italics mine).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ The tradition of the *sacre rappresentazioni* and of the Saint John pageants (‘edifizi’) justifies a reference to ‘spectacle’ in the strict sense: in fact Savonarola himself could have had the opportunity to see both, for example, in 1491, when Lorenzo de’ Medici’s *Rappresentazione di San Giovanni Evangelista* (Masi 1906, 16), and the classical triumphs of Paolo Emilio, commissioned by the Magnificent, were added to the religious pageants organised for the Feast of Saint John (De’ Rossi 1786, 270-271).

⁴⁶ On this argument see Bolzoni 2002, particularly 167-190.

⁴⁷ On the question of the reception of images, see the classic Baxandall 1972, in particular the chapter dedicated to ‘The period eye’, 29-108. To illustrate ‘the religious function of religious pictures’, Baxandall quotes a passage from Giovanni da Genova’s *Catholicon*, a thirteenth-century text that circulated widely, which justifies it as follows: ‘Item scire te volo quod triplex fuit ratio institutionis imaginum in ecclesia. *Prima* ad instructionem rudium, qui eis quasi quibusdam libris edoceri videntur. *Secunda* ut incarnationis mysterium et sanctorum exempla magis in memoria nostra essent dum quotidie oculis nostris representantur. *Tertia* ad excitandum devotionis affectum, qui ex visis efficacius excitatur quam ex auditis’ (‘Know that there were three reasons for the institution of images in churches. *First*, for the instruction of simple people, because they are instructed by them as if by books. *Second*, so that the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the Saints may be the more active in our memory through being presented daily to our eyes. *Third*, to excite feelings of devotion, these being aroused more effectively by things seen than by things heard’, 1972, 41). On the function of icons and the Christian cult of images see Belting 1990.

⁴⁸ ‘Thou must have thy crucifix, no part of it of gold or silver, nor finely wrought and finished, but rude and cheap, albeit of devout and godly spirit; that thou mayest be moved to compassion and devotion’ (translation by B.W. Randolph in Savonarola 1907,

The *Tractato ... in defensione & comendatione dell'oratione mentale composto ad instructione confirmatione et consolatione delle anime devote* ('Treatise ... in Defence and Commendation of Mental Prayer Composed for the Instruction, Confirmation and Consolation of Devout Souls') was printed around 1495 by Lorenzo Morgiani and Giovanni Petri, although probably written around three years earlier (Turelli 1985a, cat. 28, 137-138). The woodcut of the frontispiece shows a man and a woman in ordinary dress kneeling, contrite and absorbed in prayer, before a crucifix set on an altar. The purpose of this image was to portray 'the personal and everyday dimension of religious life'⁴⁹ and the attitude which Savonarola expected from the faithful (figure 3). Again, in the *Epistola a tutti gli eletti di Dio* ('Letter to All the Elect of God') addressed to the friars of San Marco of whom he was prior, the portrait on the frontispiece showing a worshipper absorbed in prayer before a crucifix set on the altar of a small chapel, reiterates the same concept, which in this case is also repeated in the text:

Et perché l'attenzione negli incipienti non può essere troppo lunga è buono a'lloro fare oratione breve & spesso, & quelle fare con grande attentione & devotione. *Perché il senso muove lo intellecto*, è buono che dinanzi all'occhio si ponghino qualche figura come è la imagine del crucifixo o della vergine Maria o di altri sancti. (BNCF, Cust D 1, f. 17r-v, italics mine)⁵⁰

5. *The Sacred Image and Its Emotional Efficacy*

The emotional efficacy of the sacred images which Savonarola repeatedly insisted on is also borne out almost a century earlier, in 1407, by a long passage in the *Memoirs* of the Florentine merchant Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli

19). In this passage the exhortation as to the poverty of the crucifix as an artistic artefact is also interesting, since the *Letter* was addressed to a noblewoman, a relative of Pico della Mirandola, who could certainly have chosen a valuable object for her devotions. In fact Savonarola insists on this aspect by recommending: 'El breviario sia di poco prezzo, di quelli di stampa, senza minii, senza fibbie di seta & senza carte dorate o altro ornamento, col signaculo non d'oro ma di cuoio o di semplice filo' (BNCF, Cust D. 8, f. 2r), 'Let thy breviary be of no value, but roughly typed; not fine with the gold or with no silken latches, no gilded tooling, lettering or other adornment; the title or the cross not of gold, but of leather or of yarn' (Savonarola 1907, 18). For the description of the incunabulum see Turelli 1985a, cat. 11, 85-86.

⁴⁹ The citation is taken from the essay by Verdon 1985, 8.

⁵⁰ 'And, seeing that, when in this matter we make a beginning, it is not possible for us to maintain attention for long, it is a good thing for us to pray briefly and frequently, and that with much attention and devotion. And *since the senses move the mind*, it is well for us to appeal to the eye by means of some figure, such as the Crucifix or the image of Mary or of some other saint' (Savonarola 1907, 81-82).

in which he commemorates the anniversary of the death of his eldest son Alberto.⁵¹ It is an account of the personal relationship of a worshipper with the sacred image and of the touching liveliness of emotion and engagement that the prayer acquired in its presence. This is evidence of exceptional rarity, although it certainly mirrored the common feeling of the faithful of the time.

Kneeling before a painting of the Crucifixion, Giovanni di Pagolo recites his prayer:

Con più fervore e amore disponendo l'anima e 'l corpo e tutti i miei sentimenti, dimenticando l'anima propria e ogni altro mio bene, *dinanzi alla figura del crocifisso Figliuolo di Dio*, alla quale esso [il figlio Alberto] molte volte la salute del corpo raccomandata nella sua infermità avea, a ginocchie ignude e 'n camicia, senza avere sopra alla testa alcuna cosa, colla correggia in collo, nel mio orazione così *verso di quello ragguardando*, incominciai prima a *immaginare e ragguardare* in me i miei peccati, ne' quai duramente *vedea* avere offeso il Figliuolo di Dio. E appresso, considerando con quanta dura, acerba e scura passione Iesù Cristo crocifisso, *la cui figura ragguardava*, avea dall'eternali pene ricomperato,⁵² non patia miei occhi Lui con durezza *ragguardare*, ma, credo per dono di pietà per Lui a me conceduta, *il cuore e tutti i miei sensi rimossi a somma tenerezza*, per li miei occhi il viso di lagrime si bagnava.

E così per ispazio di buon pezzo dimorando, e già alleggerato la debolezza dello 'ntelletto, ripreso buon conforto, con divoti salmi e orazioni al crocifisso Figliuolo di Dio a orare incominciai; e dopo più salmi e laude a sua riverenza detti con voce piatosamente ordinata, a Lui *pregare coll'occhio, col cuore e colla mente* m'addirizzai, nelle seguenti parole procedendo: 'O santissimo e sagratissimo Padre, Figliuolo e Spirito Santo, nella cui maestà, divinità e unità allumina e risprende il Paradiso santo e 'l mondo universo, concedi al tuo picciolo servo e fedele cristiano tanto della tua infinita grazia ch' 'i' possa dire a tua laude e riverenza quelle parole le quai meritino trapassare dinanzi al tuo cospetto, facendole per tua misericordia favorevoli alla benedetta anima, della quale prima dalla tua grazia ricevetti dono, e quella, come desidera, sia beatificata nel tuo cospetto'.

E dette ch' 'i' ebbi queste poche parole, mi senti' tutto confortare, e della misericordia di Dio presi quella fidanza che se Esso per voce angelica m'avesse annunziato queste propie parole: 'Fedele cristiano, io odo volentieri la tua orazione e di tutti quelli che in me hanno fede e speranza. E, come vedi, io volli essere crocifisso acciò che questo prezzo⁵³ fusse, nel cospetto del Padre, giusto per la salute di tutti'. (Morelli 1986, 303-305; italics mine)⁵⁴

⁵¹ On Giovanni Morelli and his *Memoirs* see Trexler 1980, 159-186, in particular, on the prayer for the death of his son Alberto, 174-185.

⁵² For the mercantile metaphors that, in Florence, marked the relationship of the faithful with God, see Martines 2001, 49-50, and also, in relation to the perception of the preachers' message, Zafarana 1968, 1024-1025; here, analysing a notebook of summaries of sermons compiled for personal use by a Florentine merchant in the second half of the fifteenth century, she noted in his attitude a sort of 'accounting of devotion'.

⁵³ Again a metaphor of mercantile nature.

⁵⁴ 'Disposing my soul and body and all my sentiments with more fervour and love, and forgetting about my own soul and all my business, dressed in my nightshirt, bare-

The portrayal of the Crucifixion therefore helps to predispose the soul of the worshipper to the correct meditative attitude for prayer, in a gradual progression which moves from the eye to the heart and then to the mind. This works by reawakening the awareness of the sacrifice made by Christ, through His own suffering, to redeem man's guilt, which is profoundly moving (*'il cuore e tutti i miei sensi rimossi a somma tenerezza'*), leading both to contrition and the plea for forgiveness and to the direct dialogue with Jesus. Rather, in the profound mystical sharing, the believer almost seems to hear Christ's answer, borne by an angel.

There is a striking insistence, in this and in the following passages, on verbs of vision, on 'gazing', 'looking', 'seeing', with reference both to the icon and to the sins of the worshipper, indicating a sort of project – a visual objectification of his actions – indicative of a deeply-rooted mentality which, in the case in question, may be mindful of other images such as that of the Last Judgement.⁵⁵

The *memoir* then continues with the actual prayer, in which Giovanni di Pagolo asks:

che in quest'ora e in questo punto l'anima del mio figliuolo Alberto, la quale in quest'ora fa un anno si partì dallo isventurato corpo, dove essa pe' suoi peccati

kneel and bare-headed, wearing a halter round my neck, I knelt down *before the figure of the crucified Son of God*, to which he [his son Alberto] had many times commended his bodily health during his illness, and *gazing towards this* during my prayer, I began first to *look into and see* my own sins, in which *I saw* I had grievously offended the Son of God. And then, thinking about how the harsh, bitter, dark passion of the crucified Jesus Christ, upon *whose figure I was gazing*, had *reacquired* us from eternal punishment, I could not bear that my eyes looked hard at him but, I believe through the gift of his pity, *my heart and all my senses were brought to the highest tenderness*, and my face was bathed in tears falling from my eyes. I remained thus for quite some time and when the weakness of my mind was alleviated and I felt comforted, I began to pray to the crucified Son of God with devout psalms and orations. And after many psalms and lauds in reverence to Him, delivered in a piously modulated voice, I set myself to *pray with the eye, the heart and the mind* in the following words: "O most holy and sacred Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose majesty, unity and divinity illuminates holy Paradise and the worldly universe, making them shine, concede to your humble servant and faithful Christian so much of your infinite grace that I may speak in your praise and reverence words worthy to be uttered in your presence, in your mercy making them favourable to the blessed soul [of my son], which earlier I received as a gift from your grace, and let it be beatified in your sight as it desires". And after I had said these few words I felt a great sense of comfort, and I became so trustful of God's mercy that it was as if He had said these very words to me through the voice of an angel: 'Faithful Christian, I listen willingly to your prayers and to all those who place their faith and trust in me. And, as you see, it was my will to be crucified so that, before God the Father, this *price* would be just to save all mankind'.

⁵⁵ On the reception of the Last Judgement paintings, particularly in relationship to the Camposanto of Pisa, see Bolzoni 2002, 3-46.

non fusse a tanta gloria pervenuta, che essa per tuo ispeziale dono, le comandi che si rappresenti nel cospetto della tua santissima maestà, acciò che essa sia contenta dell'ultimo fine da lei desiderato. E come che di tanto dono io pe' miei peccati non sia degno, Signore mio, te lo domando pello merito della tua santissima incarnazione', e *in questo punto dissi il Vangelo della Annunziata Vergine Maria*. 'Ancora ti priego, Signore mio, che di questo mi facci partefice pel merito e infinito dono della tua dolcissima e soavissima natività', *ancora dicendo il santo suo Vangelo*. (Morelli 1986, 305; italics mine)⁵⁶

For the merchant writer the painting of the Crucifixion acts as a species of guiding image for the prayer. By portraying the apex of Christ's earthly venture it leads to recollection of the different stages in his life through the recitation by memory of the respective Gospel passages, leading in a *crecendo* from the Annunciation and the Nativity up to 'tua santissima, gloriosissima e vettoriosa, come che dura e acerba, santa passione', con dicendo la passione di santo Giovanni Evangelista' (Morelli 1986, 305-306),⁵⁷ through to the Ascension, taking in the episodes of the forgiveness of Mary Magdalene and the resurrection of Lazarus, summoned as witnesses and as intermediaries of the divine mercy towards sinners. The icon is not, therefore, only an object destined to arouse devotion through emotion, but also an educational tool in that it aids the memory and guides it in the recitation of the Scriptures.

I shall leave the rest of the prayer to Christ crucified to move on to the point at which Morelli turns his gaze to another part of the painted panel, which triggers in him a different mechanism of identification. Here he is no longer only the sinner saved by Christ's sacrifice, although awareness of this condition persists; he is now also the father grieving the loss of his beloved son.

E quietato il cuore e la mia mente, si *volsono i miei occhi* sul lato destro del vero Crocifisso, dove, *riguardando*, a piè della croce vidi la pura e santa sua benedetta Madre. La quale considerai piena di sommo dolore e di somma tristizia; e considerando che' miei peccati l'erono cagione di tanta affrizione, non ardì la mia lingua a isciogliere alcuna parola né alcuna cosa manifestamente dire; ma considerando nella mente il dolore di quella pura Vergine, madre del puro e prezioso Figliuolo, e considerando i molti pericoli che dal dì della sua natività avea portati a utimamente innanzi a' suoi

⁵⁶ "If at this hour and at this point the soul of my son Alberto, which at this time one year ago departed from his unfortunate body, should not have arrived at glory on account of his sins, may you grant him a special gift and command that he should appear before your Most Holy Majesty, so that he may be granted the ultimate end he so desired. And since on account of my sins I am not worthy of such a gift, My Lord, I ask you for it by merit of your most holy incarnation", *and at this point I said the Gospel of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary*. "Again I beg you my Lord, that you may make me a participant by the merit and infinite gift of your most sweet and gentle birth", *again saying His holy Gospel*'.

⁵⁷ "Your most holy, glorious and victorious, although harsh and bitter, passion", *saying the passion of Saint John the Evangelist*'.

occhi morto e fragellato dai dissoluti peccatori, e Lui abbandonato dai suoi apostoli e sola con Giovanni trovandosi a tanto crudele giudizio e a tanti crudeli martori quanti in quelle preziose carni del suo diletto Figliuolo s'erano potuti adoperare, none avendo niuno conforto e sola col suo Figliuolo abbandonati, *m'occorse in questa considerazione tanto dolore e tanta pena, che i' credetti veramente che l'anima dal corpo si partisse*. E come istordito per ispazio d'un poco istato e ricordandomi del dolore che io avea portato del mio figliuolo, forte mi cominciai a vergognare e di poco meno che io non mi levai dall'orazione. Ma pure, come piacque a Dio, preso sicurtà, istetti fermo; e *ragguardando* lei ripiena di tanto dolore, cominciai a piangere e in tanta fisima venni, che per gran pezzo non poterono i miei occhi raffrenare ... E detto ch'i' ebbi l'orazione sopra scritta con quella divota riverenza che mi fu da Dio conceduta, levatomi in piè, presi con divozione la tavola e ne' propi luoghi basciandola, dove dolcemente il mio figliuolo avea nella sua infermità baciata dopo il molto raccomandarsi della sua sanità racquistare; e di poi, riposta nel luogo usato e ripostomi ginocchione, dissi il Credo e di poi il Vangelo di San Giovanni. (Morelli 1986, 307-309; italics mine)⁵⁸

Devotion therefore also passes through the physical relation with the painted image, which in this case is at the same time a channel of contact with both the deity and the dead son.

Morelli's words cast light on a particular aspect of mediaeval and Renaissance religious sensitivity, which sets the pain of contrition aroused by the will in opposition to that caused by human sensitivity. This is stated in the *Supplement* to Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica*, where we read: '[dolor] in *parte sensitiva*, qui causatur ex primo dolore vel ex necessitate naturae ... vel ex electione, secundum quod homo poenitens in se ipso hunc dolorem excitat, ut de peccatis doleat' (quoted in Verdon 1985, 8; italics

⁵⁸ 'When my heart and mind had calmed down, I *turned my eyes* to the right side of the true Cross where, *looking at* the foot of the Cross, I *saw* the pure and holy and blessed Mother, whom I *saw* was full of the greatest grief and the greatest sadness. And considering that my sins were the reason for such affliction, my tongue did not dare to utter a single word, nor to speak anything out loud. But considering in my mind the pain of that pure Virgin, mother of the pure and precious Son, and thinking of the many trials she had undergone since the day of his birth up to the day when he was brought before her eyes dead and flagellated by dissolute sinners, and Him abandoned by his apostles and she alone with John to witness so much cruel punishment and torture inflicted on the precious flesh of her beloved, having no comfort and being alone and abandoned with her son, *this consideration caused me such grief and such suffering that I truly believed my soul would leave my body*. And for a few moments I was as if stunned and, *remembering the suffering which I had felt for my son, I began to be greatly ashamed*, so much so that I almost had to stop praying. And yet, God willing, I was reassured and remained still; and *gazing* at her full of so much sorrow I began to weep, and I was so overcome that for a long time I was unable to hold back my tears ... And after I had said the prayer written above with that devout reverence granted to me by God, I stood up and with the utmost devotion took up the panel and kissed it in the same places where my son in his sickness had gently kissed it, after praying that his health might be restored. Then, having put it back in its usual place, I knelt down again and recited the *Credo* and then the *Gospel* of St John'.

mine).⁵⁹ This type of sensitivity was programmatically solicited by the widely-circulated devotional handbooks and also by the *sacre rappresentazioni*.

Therefore, by combining words and images, the printed religious book introduced an even more stringent circularity into this mechanism of identification and compassion, and even more importantly brought it within reach of a vastly larger public.

6. Narrative and Exemplary Woodcuts

A second series of woodcuts from Savonarola's works show scenes of an exemplary character. Particularly interesting, not only in terms of subject but also in the sophistication of their execution, are those illustrating the *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* ('Sermon on the art of dying well'), printed by Bartolomeo de' Libri after November 2, 1496.⁶⁰ On the frontispiece, against the background of a barren landscape, a skeletal Death, with unkempt hair, is shown carrying the scythe and a scroll with the motto 'EGO SUM' as he flies above several dead of different social extraction – a young man dressed as a commoner, one in royal costume, a pope and a religious man – illustrating the impartiality of death (figure 4). This woodcut, which follows the traditional iconography of *The Triumph of Death*, synthesises the profound meaning of the work and, given the position, announces its contents.

The other three illustrations are, instead, closely correlated to the text and described in detail by Savonarola himself, confirming that he was the direct commissioner. Speaking of the first he writes:

O mercatante se tu havessi havere una sententia la quale ti portassi in un puncto la perdita d'ogni tua cosa tu non haresti mai quiete né di né nocte, tu rivolteresti tucto il mondo per provvedere ad questo puncto. Et però, huomo, pensa alla morte, dove ne va l'anima che val più che tutto il mondo. Horsù io mi ricordo che io altra volta faccendoti simile predica ti dissi che volendoti tu preparare bene alla morte tu ti facessi dipingere tre carte. La prima fu che tu ti facessi dipingere in una carta il paradiso di sopra & lo inferno di sotto, & *tenessila in camera tua in loco che ti fussi spesso inanzi alli occhi*, ma non però *che tu ne facessi uno habito di vederla, & che poi*

⁵⁹ 'The other sorrow is in the *sensitive part*, and is caused by the former sorrow either from natural necessity ... or from choice, in so far as a penitent excites in himself this sorrow for his sins'.

⁶⁰ The sermon on dying well, delivered on November 2, 1496, is part of the cycle of twenty-nine sermons which that year the Friar dedicated to 'Ruth and Micheas' and that were recorded live by the Florentine notary Lorenzo Violi (Ridolfi 1952, I, 250-267). In the first sermon on Ezekiel, dated November 30, Savonarola states: 'Comincia a porre a stampa quello libro dell'arte del Ben Morire. Fa che ne abbi uno che vi sia di quelle figure', ('Begin to print that book on the art of Dying well. Make sure you have one in which there are those figures'); quoted in record 2 of the catalogue: Turelli 1985a, 53. I also refer to this record for the attributive hypotheses of the different woodcuts.

la non ti movessi nulla. Et dissiti che tu pensassi sempre & dicessi forte ‘hoggi morro’, & guardassi molto bene questa figura, & che la morte ti sta sempre incontro per levarti di questa vita quasi dicendoti ‘tu hai ad morire ad ogni modo & non puoi campare dalle mie mani: guarda dove tu vuoi andare: o quassù in paradiso o qua giù in inferno’. (Savonarola post 1496, f. 6r; italics mine)⁶¹

Responding perfectly to these words the figure, full page on the back of the page containing its description, shows Death as a skeleton with unkempt hair and with the scythe. With his right hand, surmounted by a legend ‘O QVA SV’ (‘either up above’), he points to Paradise, with God amidst his angels and the blessed souls, shown at the upper edge of the woodcut, while with his left – with another scroll bearing the words ‘O QVA GIV’ (‘or down below’) – he points to Hell, with Lucifer and his devils and the damned souls, set at the lower edge. Standing next to Death is a youth in modern dress, of the type of which there are many in the texts of *sacre rappresentazioni*,⁶² who is gazing at hell with a terrified and stricken gaze, faced as he is with the two possible outcomes of the good and bad actions of his life: namely ‘above or below’(figure 5).⁶³

⁶¹ The passage is on f. 6r, the woodcut is on f. 6v. *Sermon on the art of Dying well made by the Reverend Father Friar Hieronymo from Ferrara the day ii of November MCCCCLXXXVI, and collected by Ser Lorenzo Violi directly from the living voice of the aforementioned father while he was preaching*: ‘O merchant, if you had to receive a sentence which in one fell blow would bring about the loss of everything you own, you would have no peace day or night; you would turn the whole world upside down to make provision for this. And so, man, think about death, and whither goes your soul, which is worth more than all the world. Now, I recall that another time, when I was preaching to you on a similar topic, I told you that, if you wanted to be well prepared for death, you should have three illustrations depicted for you. The first was that you should have depicted an illustration [showing] Paradise above and Hell below and *keep it in your room in a place where it would often be before your eyes, but not that you should make a habit of looking at it, for then it would no longer move you*. And I told you that you should be always thinking about it and should say, “I may die today,” and look well on this image, for death is always before you, ready to remove you from this life, as if it were to say to you, “You have to die in any event, and you cannot escape from my hands; consider where you want to go: to Paradise above, or down to Hell” ’(Savonarola 2006, 39-40).

⁶² I recall only the *Rappresentazione del figliuol prodigo*, by Castellano Castellani, who was, moreover, a follower of Savonarola (the text is published in D’Ancona, 1872, I, 357-389); the ‘*frotola*’ *Anton, chi chiama?*, premised to the *Rappresentazione di Abramo e Agar*, attributed to Giovanbattista di Cristofano dell’Ottonaio (D’Ancona, 1872, I, 1-39), but the list could continue. On Castellani see Ponte 1969; Mutini 1978; Ventrone 2016, 279-298; on Ottonaio: Innamorati 1990.

⁶³ The description and the commentary on the woodcut are in record 2 of the catalogue: Turelli 1985a, 46-48, while the figure is n. 9, 57, erroneously inverted in the page numbering with another very similar on 46, from the reprint of the same work around 1500, attributed to Antonio Tubini: see Turelli 1985a, cat. 3, 55-59.

Savonarola's recommendations continue with the following illustration:

La secunda cartha che io ti dissi già altra volta è questa, che tucti [*sic*] facci dipingere uno huomo cominciato ad infirmarsi con la morte che sta allo uscio & picchia per entrare drento. Sappi che il diavolo è molto sollecito ad questo punto della morte, sì come è scripto 'insidiatur calcaneo eius' ... Il diavolo quando s'avede che tu vuoi pensare alla morte va excitando altri per levarti da questo pensiero: & mette in fantasia alla moglie tua & alli tuoi parenti così al medico che ti dichino che tu guarrai presto & che tu non ti dia pensiero & che tu non creda per questo havere ad morire. (ff. 12r-13-r)⁶⁴

In this case too, the correspondence of the image is literal. It shows the interior of a bedroom with a young man lying down in an attitude of suffering, although still dressed in his day clothes. Hanging on a wall in a visible position is a *tondo* showing the Madonna and Child, frequently found in the Florentine homes of the period;⁶⁵ three angels hovering in the air above watch over the sick man. The devil is at the bedside, presumably tempting him in the manner described by Savonarola, which I have drastically abbreviated here. On the other side of the room his wife is talking to a doctor who appears to be examining a recipient containing the urine of the patient (which was common practice in medicine at the time), while two devils close to them incite them to advise him badly. Death is waiting beyond the door (figure 6). Savonarola goes on to say:

L'ultima cartha che io ti dixi – continua il Frate – si è che tu ti facessi dipingere uno infermo nel lecto che era conducto al puncto extremo ad fare penitentia: de' quali se ne salva pochi ... Sicché per questa ragione essendosi l'huomo indugiato allo ultimo & essendo stato ingrato delle vocationi di Dio, merita che anche Idio in quel puncto ritragga la sua gratia ... 'L diavolo in quello puncto gli mette la desperatione inanzi, & monstragli ch'egli ha facti tanti peccati che non pare ragionevole che Dio voglia salvarlo ... Anima non ti lassare ridurre ad quel puncto, ma pure, se tu vi sarai ridocta, non ti disperare, piglia questi remedii. Prima ricorri al crucifixo. Guarda la sua bontà che è voluto essere crucifixo et morto per salvarti: habbi gran confidentia in lui che se tu ricorri allui col core contrito ch'el ti adiuterà se bene tu havessi facti

⁶⁴ *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire*, the woodcut is on f. 12r: 'The second illustration, which I have already told you about another time, is this: that you have depicted a man beginning to grow ill, with death standing at the door and knocking to gain entrance. You know that the devil is very attentive at the point of death, as indeed it is written: *Insidiatur calcaneo eius* ["He lies in ambush at His heel"; Gen. 3:15] ... The devil, when he sees that you are trying to think about death, incites others to distract you from this thought, and he puts it into the heads of your wife and your relatives, as well as your doctor, to tell you that you will recover soon, and that you should not give yourself up to thinking [about death], and that you should not suppose that you are going to die from this [disease]' (Savonarola 2006, 47-49).

⁶⁵ For example, Botticelli's tondi, that have greatly contributed to the popularity of this format of religious paintings: see Rubin and Wright, 1999, 328-329.

migliaia di peccati ... Tertio chiama un buono confessore & confessati molto bene con ogni diligentia & comunicati. Quarto fa che sempre quivi appresso ad te vi sia qualcuno che stia in oratione. (ff. 14r-v, e 16r)⁶⁶

The woodcut illustrating these words shows another bedroom. Here the sick man is older and is lying under the covers; around him are people praying, while at the bedside is a friar in Dominican habit hearing his confession. At the head of the bed devils are striving for his soul, while Death is seated at his feet. On the facing wall is a crucifix in a niche. The Madonna and Child, suspended in the air on a cloud, watch over and protect him (figure 7).

There is in these images a skilful narrative *crescendo* – we could almost say a structured ‘direction’ – with the relation between Death and the male protagonist as its guiding thread. The series is introduced by the *Triumph of Death* on the frontispiece as a reminder of all human destiny. This is followed by the presentation of Heaven and Hell as the final destinations of man’s earthly life. Here Death is addressing himself to a young man who is clearly wealthy judging by his clothes in the latest Florentine fashion, who still has his entire life ahead of him and can therefore decide whether to conduct himself with rectitude or set off along the road to perdition (‘above or below’). The young man falls ill and is tempted by the Devil not to take this opportunity to repent of his sins but rather to hope to return to health to continue his trafficking. And he is indeed cured, with the help of the doctor, while Death knocks at the door but remains outside waiting for the next call. In the last scene the man is now old; he is at the end of his life at the time of reckoning. Death is seated on the bed waiting for his soul, and here Savonarola indicates the path of potential salvation in the person of the confessor. This is not only an innovation in the iconography of the *ars moriendi*, but also a pivotal figure in the subsequent evolution of Christian education and in the relationship between Church and faithful, especially in the Tridentine sixteenth century.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Predica dell’Arte del Bene Morire*; the woodcut is on f. 14r: ‘The final illustration, which I have told you about, is that you have depicted a sick person in bed; he has arrived at the last moment to do penances, at which point few [penitents] are saved ... For this reason, the man who has delayed up to the end and has remained unreceptive to God’s invitation also merits to have God retract His grace at that moment ... Another [reason] is that at that moment the devil sets despair before him and shows him that he has committed so many sins that it seems utterly beyond reason that God would want to save him ... O soul, do not let yourself be reduced to that point, but still, if you are so reduced, do not despair, take hold of these remedies. First, have recourse to the Crucified; consider the goodness of Him Who wanted to be crucified and to die to save you. Have great confidence in Him, that, if you have recourse to Him with a contrite heart, He will help you, even if you have committed thousands of sins ... Third, summon a good confessor and make a full confession as carefully as possible, and receive Communion. Fourth, make sure that someone will always be there with you praying’ (Savonarola 2006, 50-53).

⁶⁷ On this complex topic I refer to the impressive work by Prosperi 1996, and to Rusconi 2002.

In this series of illustrations, therefore, the functioning of the image as an *exemplum*, here too conceived to induce identification, depends on the substantiality of the situation drawing on the experience of illness which readers were bound to be familiar with, either directly or through a relative or friend. As I see it, however, the realism of the portrayal of the room, the people and the objects surrounding the sickbed play a primary role in making this effective, since precisely because they belong to the familiar everyday world they are more easily lodged in the memory along with the catechetical message. The bedrooms shown in the woodcuts portray with documentary precision the style of furnishing of the patrician residences (see the remarks by Turelli 1985a, 53). The bed is covered in precious quilts and has a bench all around it, the walls are hung with curtains and the clothes chests are elaborately decorated. There are elegantly tasteful accessories and sacred icons for personal devotion,⁶⁸ the use of which was illustrated in Morelli's moving *memoir*. The clothes of the figures too reflect the same affluent social status.

The wealthy reader was sure to recognise and identify with these illustrations, fully grasping the fleeting nature of earthly goods, the beauty of which contrasts with the frightful images of death and devils. The reader of more humble condition could see in them the social levelling brought about at the time of passing to the other life, when all men return to being equal before God. This is a remarkable iconographic innovation because, as Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè points out, 'prior to this the deaths of saints, emperors and noble knights had been portrayed, but never that of the ordinary man in his fine bedchamber, surrounded by his little familiar world' (1985, 17).

7. *Mirroring Images and the Success of the Savonarolian Model*

The same mechanism of portraying real-life situations in realistically recognisable surroundings seen in the *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* series is also found in other of Savonarola's woodcuts, such as those showing the faithful praying in church or attending mass or a sermon. Here too there is striking detail in the descriptions of the costumes and hairstyles and the architectural settings which are always of a distinctly Florentine style. An emblematic example is that of *Tractato del sacramento & de' mysterii della messa* ('On the Sacrament and Mysteries of the Mass').⁶⁹ The single large

⁶⁸ See the description of Florentine house furnishings in the classic Schiaparelli 1983 and, especially for the aristocratic residences, Rubin and Wright 1999, the chapter dedicated to 'The beautiful chamber', 312-345; Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis 2006, the chapters dedicated to 'The Florentine *casa*', by Brenda Prayer, 34-49; and to 'Art in the *casa*', by Peta Motture and Luke Syson, 268-283.

⁶⁹ Incunabulum of uncertain dating attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri (BNCF, Cust C 20); see Turelli 1985a, cat. 13, 91-93.

illustration, placed on the frontispiece, shows the moment of consecration of the Host during a mass celebrated in a Brunelleschi-style church. Here the figures of the faithful are remarkable for their lively characterisation: on the left a young man with his hair in the tapered style known as *all'angiolesca* ('angel-style') and a cloak with the typical hood held on the right shoulder by the scarf-like *becchetto* (a band), two nuns with their heads covered and a man in a cloak holding his beret in his hand. On the right a young altar boy is kneeling, holding the skirt of the priest's chasuble with one hand and a candle in the other (figure 8). This woodcut, conceived specially for the work it illustrates and attributed to Bartolomeo di Giovanni, is intended to facilitate the reader's reflection of himself in the images in the same way as those described above.

This distinctly realistic portrayal is also found in illustrations composed to make up a narrative series corresponding to the contents of the book. For instance in the *Compendio di rivelatione* ('Compendium of revelations'), printed *ad instantia* ('at the instance') of the publisher Piero Pacini da Pescia on 23 April 1496 and decorated with six woodcuts,⁷⁰ some of a narrative and realistic character. Underneath the title on the frontispiece is a full-page portrait of Savonarola, who is depicted with all the details of a chronicle of the time preaching from the pulpit in the Florentine cathedral, directing his tirade at the faithful with an admonitory index finger pointing at them. Among the public in the central aisle, with men and women separated by curtains as was the custom, a variety of dresses and hairstyles in vogue at the end of the fifteenth century are illustrated with great documentary fidelity (figure 9). This illustration brings back to the eyes and minds of the readers the memory of Savonarola's sermons, which at the time had been banned by Pope Alexander VI.⁷¹ It introduces the argument of the treatise, in which the friar imagines himself going to the Virgin Mary with an embassy of the Florentine people, begging Her to intercede with the Eternal Father and convince Him to respond to their requests:

Dunque la nocte della octava, preparandomi io per andare a torre la risposta delle promissioni, considerai che mi bisognava havere decente compagnia et congrui vestimenti, & pensando quale dovesse essere la mia compagnia mi si ripresentorono dinanzi agli occhi molte donne ... Et però io esclusi la Philosophia & la Rhetorica & tutte le altre sapientie humane chome insufficiente a questa nostra ambasceria, & elessi la Semplicità della fede & della sapientia & eloquentia delle sacre Scripture ...

⁷⁰ *Compendio di rivelatione dello inutile servo di Iesù Christo frate Hieronimo da Ferrara dell'ordine de' frati predicatori*, Impresso in Firenze ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia nel anno M.cccc lxxxvi. Adi xxiii D'aprile (BNCF, Sav. 146): see Turelli 1985a, cat. 4, 61-68.

⁷¹ Despite repeated and unsuccessful requests by the city government to revoke the prohibition: see Ridolfi 1952, I, 223-228.

Accompagnato adunque dalla Semplicità condussi ancora la Fede, la Oratione & la Patientia, & mettemoci in cammino per andare alla porta del paradiso, havendo Madonna Semplicità in mano un bellissimo dono & pretioso coperto da presentare alla Maestà del Nostro Signore ... Essendo adunque noi in camino, eccho venire el Tentatore della humana natura in forma d'uno heremita vecchio barbuto, et acchostomisi. (Savonarola 1496, ff. 11r-12r)⁷²

This entire scene is perfectly illustrated in a woodcut in which Savonarola, accompanied by the four allegorical figures described above – with Simplicity bearing in her hands the gift for the Virgin covered with a superfine decorated cloth – meets the Demon. Although he is disguised as a Dominican friar, the devil is recognisable by his horns, his tail and talons instead of feet (figure 10).⁷³ Having overcome this obstacle:

pacificamente seguendo il camino nostro arrivamo alla porta del paradiso el quale era cinto intorno intorno di uno muro altissimo di pietre pretiose, & pareva che circondasse tutto l'universo mondo. Sopra del quale, intorno intorno, erano Angeli che lo guardavano & cantavano dolcissimamente. (f. 28v)⁷⁴

The corresponding figure, occupying the centre of the page bearing this passage, shows a city representing the heavenly Jerusalem, while being equated with Florence by the presence of the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore. From the walls, a group of angels in devout poses are watching the arrival of Savonarola and the four women (figure 11). The last woodcut of the series shows the group of visitors who have just crossed the threshold of Paradise, with Saint Joseph who has taken Savonarola by the hand to guide him to the accomplishment

⁷² 'On the night before the octave's last day, as I was about to set out to receive the hoped-for response, I thought that I ought to have fit companions and the correct garb. While I was thinking about the kind and number of companions I should choose, many women presented themselves ... Therefore I rejected philosophy and rhetoric and the other human sciences as unfit for this legation, and I chose simplicity of faith, of wisdom and of the elegance of the sacred scriptures ... Having taken Simplicity as a companion, and accompanied also by Faith, Prayer and Patience, we directed our journey to the threshold of paradise. Lady Simplicity bore a very beautiful and precious covered gift to offer the Supreme Majesty ... When we had just begun our journey, the cunning Tempter of the human race, pretending to be an aged and bearded hermit, met me and drew near' (Savonarola 1979, 211-212).

⁷³ *Compendio di rivelatione*, f. 11v. The same illustration is repeated on f. 17r, around the middle of the dialogue between Savonarola and the devil.

⁷⁴ The woodcut is on the same folio. 'We peacefully pursued the journey we had undertaken and came to the gates of heaven, which were surrounded by a very high wall of precious stones and seemed to encircle the whole universe. On the top of it angel guardians sat round about, sweetly singing' (Savonarola 1979, 241).

of his mission: 'Allhora el sancto vecchio Joseph con lieto volto ci prese per la mano et introducendoci dentro dalla porta, & quella serrando, disse ...' (f. 32v; figure 12).⁷⁵

These images are of great interest in the history of the illustration of the Florentine book; it is important to remember that they represent the very first trials, and that almost every new edition constitutes the experimentation of a new module.⁷⁶ Their significance lies in the fact that, by dictating in his words the contents of the illustrations, and sometimes even their position on the page, Savonarola introduced into his texts a principle of illustrative consistency that was to mark the incunabula and the early sixteenth-century production, despite the practice of using the same woodblocks in works on different subjects. This contributed to creating a very important precedent for the imagery of the book that the reader began to construct.

Savonarola's innovations paved the way for the major editions of an enlightened entrepreneur such as Piero Pacini from Pescia who, in 1495, published the *Epistole & Evangelii* ('Epistles & Gospels'),⁷⁷ and in 1500 Luigi Pulci's *Morgante*, both enriched by around one hundred and fifty images,⁷⁸ and who not incidentally also sponsored some of Savonarola's publications.⁷⁹ Obviously, the definition of these prototypes was influenced by the precedent of the illuminated manuscripts, the Books of Hours and the first attempts at printing with copperplate engravings, as in the 1481 edition of the *Divine*

⁷⁵ The woodcut is on the front of the same folio at the bottom. 'Then that most holy old man Joseph joyfully grasped my right hand and brought us in when the gates had been shut. He said...' (Savonarola 1979, 246).

⁷⁶ Among the first woodcuts to appear in Florence there are, not coincidentally, two Savonarolian illustrations, both attributed to the same hand, close to the manner of Filippino Lippi: they are the large image of the *Tractato dell'humilità*, printed by Miscomini on June 30, 1492, and the Crucifixion of the *Trattato dell'amore di Gesù*, again Miscomini, on June 26, 1492. See Turelli 1985a, records 7 and 8, 75-76 and 77-78.

⁷⁷ Colophon: *Impresso nella inclyta città di Firenze per Ser Lorenzo de' Morgiani & Giovanni di Magontia ad instantia di Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia* ('Printed in the glorious city of Florence by Ser Lorenzo de' Morgiani & Giovanni of Magontia at the instance of Ser Piero Pacini from Pescia'); see Kristeller 1897, n. 135b, 44-45. On Piero Pacini from Pescia see also Ridolfi 1958, 23-25; Casetti Brach 2014.

⁷⁸ Colophon: *Finito il libro chiamato Morgante maggiore composto per Luigi Pulci. Impresso in Firenze nel anno M.CCCC. Adì XXII di Gennaio ad petitione & instantia di Ser Piero Pacini da Pescia* ('Finished the book called Morgante maggiore composed by Luigi Pulci. Printed in Florence in the year M.CCCC. on XXII of January at the request and instance of Ser Piero Pacini from Pescia'); see Kristeller 1897, n. 347a, 135-136. These are only two of the most significant examples of Pacini's editions which, on the one hand, also comprised woodcuts from previous incunabula and, on the other hand, served, in turn, as an authentic repertory for the printed works of the entire sixteenth century.

⁷⁹ The *Compendio di rivelatione*, dated 1496 (Turelli 1985a, cat. 4, 61); the treatise *Della semplicità della vita christiana* (Turelli 1985a, cat. 22, 119); the *Libro della vita viduale* (Turelli 1985a, cat. 23, 121), printed by Morgiani in 1496.

Comedy.⁸⁰ However, these were elite productions restricted to a narrow circle of readers, whereas it was only with the introduction of the woodcut that the illustrated book was able to reach the greater public.

Therefore, by programmatically using printing for the circulation of his writings and collaborating personally with the most important Florentine publishers and printers, Savonarola made a decisive contribution to the establishment of typographic models of great communicative efficiency, which were rapidly adopted by the other popular literary genres too. This is easily confirmed by glancing through the catalogues, such as the frequently-mentioned ones by Kristeller or Sander which, despite the variety of compositions and subjects, clearly reveal the substantial homogeneity in the conception of both sacred and profane illustrations. Within them, however, the Savonarola woodcuts are remarkable for their chronological precocity and for his documented involvement in their design, suggesting that – in view of their enormous market success – the formula he used was also extended to other products destined to a broad public.

8. *The Booklets of sacre rappresentazioni as a 'Theatre of Memory'*

The editorial success of the *sacra rappresentazione* has to be projected onto this background of perceptive and visual conventions, mentalities and practices of everyday devotion, although it should be stressed that it actually began when the play as performance was still a strongly-rooted component of Florentine entertainment, as it continued to be – albeit with less regularity – almost up to the end of the sixteenth century. The influence of Savonarola's incunabula on the typographical layout of the genre must have been decisive: it cannot be accidental that the first editions of his works can be placed between the first collections produced by Miscomini around 1490, without illustrations, and the copious illustrated plays produced by Miscomini and de' Libri in the years immediately following, and that all Savonarola's works had woodcuts, some of them made on the presses of these same printers. Nor can it be ruled out that Fra' Girolamo himself may have encouraged the publication of the *sacre rappresentazioni*, considering that from their origins they were rooted in the Dominican milieu and culture of the convent of San Marco,⁸¹ and

⁸⁰ On Dante's *Commedia*, printed *in folio* in Florence by Nicolaus Laurentii Alemannus with copper engravings by Baccio Baldini taken from Botticelli's drawings, see Sander 1942, 2311, and Rhodes 1984, cat. 6, 30-31. Not to limit the references only to book illustrations, see also the narration of stories through images used to decorate the wedding chests and the backrests of Florentine home furnishings, for which I refer to the classic repertory by Schubring 1915.

⁸¹ For the role of Antonino Pierozzi, prior of San Marco from 1436 and then archbishop of Florence from 1446 to 1459, in the creation and promotion of the *sacra rappresentazione* as an educational tool, see Ventrone 2012, 549-567.

that they were also circulated by printers belonging to the clergy, foremost among them de' Libri himself (Turelli 1985b, 31 and 33).

The dramas in octaves were definitely considered by both printers and readers as one of the many declensions of the religious book which since its appearance had been acquiring an increasingly important role in the training of ecclesiastics and the faithful (Rozzo 1993, 30). However, this did not prevent the translation of the theatrical text into an illustrated booklet making it much more attractive, possibly also corresponding to a considerably greater educational efficacy. This was because, in the minds of those who had attended the plays as spectators, they combined the vividness of the printed images with the evocative memory of the performance with its sounds, the easily memorised cadence of the rhymes and its colours. Compared to the ordinary devotional book, this brought about a change in the informative and didactic quality, combining the pedagogic force of the theatre with the power of circulation in print.

In the booklets of *sacre rappresentazioni* the relation between text and image created a sort of 'theatre of memory' that condensed the forms of previous religious education, mostly oriented towards the collective reception of sermons, public painting, confraternal gatherings or sacred performances, into an instrument for individual use that nevertheless conserved the sedimentation of the communal experiences. I believe that this is one of the reasons for the editorial success of the *sacre rappresentazioni*, in terms both of production and reception.

Transformed into a book, the *sacra rappresentazione* also contributed to the introduction of another important novelty, since it applied the conventions of the individual relationship with the sacred images, hitherto largely confined to the illuminated Books of Hours or the domestic icons, to a vastly broader means of circulation, within reach even of the poorer classes to which it offered a collection of devotional images at a low price.⁸²

In terms of catechetical education, this innovation had vast repercussions, partly due to the habits of the time. One of the common practices, which persisted throughout the sixteenth century, was that of group readings aloud for an audience of different levels of literacy, which enabled even the more ignorant to approach the culture of the written word, albeit passively (on this topic see the studies by Chartier 1990 and 1992, 983-985). Before the advent of so-called 'popular' printing, the manuscript remained with its owner, or at most could be lent to family or friends. This meant that the recollection of stories heard was entrusted to the mnemonic capacities of the listeners,

⁸² In Rome, around 1515, the cost of several editions of *sacre rappresentazioni*, fluctuating between two and four *quattrini* in relation to the length of the work, is indicated in the catalog of books owned by Fernando Colón, a precious document for the history of book circulation at the beginning of the sixteenth century: see Huntington 1905.

with the additional stimulus of sermons or the '*biblia pauperum*' frescoed in the churches or in other public places. With the spread of printing, instead, anyone could buy the illustrated books produced for a large public, including those who could not read or wanted to learn, since the illustrations provided a useful aid for recalling the words heard at the group reading and reliving them in the dimension of private devotion within one's own four walls.

Therefore, the printed religious book – and in Florence a considerable market percentage was represented by the *sacre rappresentazioni* (Quondam 1983, 610-611) – expanded the possibility of spreading Christian education well beyond the scope of previous means of communication. In addition, it also extended to less affluent brackets of the population a cultural practice hitherto largely the prerogative of the rich or wealthy who could afford to buy painted icons or illuminated books and keep them in their homes. Previously only they had been constantly exhorted to such behaviour by theologians and preachers.

9. *Typographic Characteristics of the sacre rappresentazioni*

As we have seen, the transformation of the typographical model, and the consequent expansion of the destined audience, which Miscomini and de' Libri brought about through the introduction of woodcuts into the books of *sacre rappresentazioni* appears clearly when the exemplars belonging to the two anthologies without illustrations are compared with the single works published in the years immediately following. The first prints clearly derived from the prototype of the humanistic manuscripts and their oldest printed counterparts. They featured generous spacing between both the letters and the lines and the fine, round characters conforming to the humanist script of Bracciolini inspiration;⁸³ the text was arranged in a single column in the centre of the page, leaving wide margins that were suitable for filling with notes and glosses (figure 1).

The illustrated books had smaller characters and narrower spacing and a much larger printed area arranged in two columns and almost filling the entire page, as well as illustrations. They were therefore quite distinct from the model of the erudite book, rather conforming to (or even helping to define) the prototype of the booklet for broad circulation in which the illustration assumed almost as much importance as the written text. The need to indoctrinate the 'simple', illiterate folk, by both stimulating their devotion and assisting their recall through instruments more incisive than words, was still very strongly felt in these last years of the fifteenth century, as explained with great lucidity by the Franciscan Fra' Michele da Carcano in a sermon printed in 1492:

⁸³ See the classic Ullman 1960. For a long-term view, see Petrucci 1988, 1222-1275 on the situation of writing and book production between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

'Imagines Virginis et sanctorum introducte fuerunt triplici de causa. Primo propter ruditatem simplicium, ut qui non possunt scripturas legere in picturis possint sacramenta nostre salutis et fidei cernere. ... Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis prostat pictura cernentibus: quia *in ipsa ignorantes vident quod sequi debeant: in ipsa legunt qui litteras nesciunt*. Unde et precipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est'. Verba hec scribit Gregorius Sireno episcopo marsiliensi. Secundo sunt imagines introducte propter *tarditatem affectivam*: ut homines qui non excitantur ad devotionem, cum aliqua audiunt de sanctorum memoria, saltem moveantur *dum ea in picturis quasi presentia cernunt. Plus enim excitatur affectus noster per ea que videt, quam per ea que audit*. Tertio introducte sunt propter *memorie labilitatem*: ... Et ideo quia *multi que audiunt tenere non possunt, sed cum imagines vident recordantur*: ideo introducte sunt. (Baxandall 1972, 41)⁸⁴

The illustrated religious book for broad circulation also catered to this need, grasping the importance of the new means of communication and opportunely exploiting it. However, the *sacra rappresentazione* further enhanced this function since it was a theatrical rather than literary genre. The awareness of this difference between the *sacre rappresentazioni* and devotional works in general, although they shared the 4^o typographical format, is revealed by the symbol used to distinguish them from the start. To allow purchasers to immediately recognise these booklets, from their very first illustrated works Miscomini and de' Libri significantly placed on the frontispiece the image of the angel (figure 13): the character who declaimed the *Annunzio* ('Intimation') and the *Licenza* ('Valediction'), which persisted throughout the editorial success of the genre.⁸⁵

The distinction emerges very clearly from the comparison – as just one of many examples – between the first page of the *Rappresentazione di San Francesco* ('The Play of Saint Francis') by Antonia Tanini, Bernardo Pulci's

⁸⁴ This is his English translation: '“Images of the Virgin and the Saints were introduced for three reasons. First, on account of the ignorance of simple people, so that those who are not able to read the scriptures can yet learn by seeing the sacraments of our salvation and faith in pictures ... What a book is to those who can read, a picture is to the ignorant people who look at it. Because in a picture even the unlearned may see what example they should follow; in a picture they who know no letters may yet read”. St. Gregory the Great wrote these words to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles. Second, images were introduced on account of our emotional sluggishness [*sic for sluggishness*]; so that men who are not aroused to devotion when they hear about the histories of the Saints may at least be moved *when they see them, as if actually present, in pictures. For our feelings are aroused by things seen more than by things heard*. Third, they were introduced on account of our *unreliable memories*. Images were introduced because many people cannot retain in their memories what they hear, but they do remember if they see images'.

⁸⁵ Miscomini's first non-illustrated books did not have any sign to distinguish the *sacre rappresentazioni* from the other published genres.

wife and sister-in-law of the more famous Luigi,⁸⁶ and that of the *Fioretti di San Francesco* ('The little flowers of Saint Francis').⁸⁷ In the former the only woodcut, placed under the emblem of the announcing angel, encapsulates the story of the saint from Assisi through the symbolically most significant moment of his mystic union with Christ: when the stigmata are conveyed to him by the Crucifix (figure 14).⁸⁸ The latter shows exactly the same illustration but without the addition of the angel (figure 15). Here too it is useful to analyse some examples.

10. *Examples of Illustrated Booklets of sacre rappresentazioni*

The *Rappresentazione di Barlaam e Iosafat* by Bernardo Pulci⁸⁹ contains seven images illustrating the most significant episodes in the legend attributed to Saint John of Damascus through the filter of Iacopo da Varagine's *Legenda aurea* ('Golden Legend').⁹⁰ The story is summarised in an octave of the prologue:

Racconta San Giovanni Damasceno
 una santa, divota e degna storia
 di Barlaam e di Jòsafat, pieno
 di virtù, chiara e degna di memoria,
 che, lasciato ogni stato vil terreno,
 si levò in alto alla superna gloria,
 cui la strada del ciel a molti aperse,
 e finalmente il suo padre converse.
 (D'Ancona 1872, II, 163)⁹¹

⁸⁶ On Antonia Pulci, and on her *sacre rappresentazioni*, see: Cardini 1984; Ulysse 1994; Cook 1996, 3-38; Weaver 2002a, 97-104 and 2002b; Stallini 2005; Newbiggin 2016.

⁸⁷ Florentine incunabulum s.l.e.a.: Kristeller 1897, n. 155a, 54.

⁸⁸ A. Pulci, *San Francesco*, s.n.t. (but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1495, where the text is authorless). I have consulted the booklet conserved in the BNCF, Banco Rari 189.m, on which see Cioni 1961, 143, n. 2, and Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 108, n. 295. The text, probably taken from this edition, has been published in modern times in Toschi 1926-1927, II, 657-695 (the author refers generically to 'an incunabulum conserved at the National Library of Florence', 696).

⁸⁹ *La rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat* ('The devout representation of Barlaam and Iosafat', Firenze, Miscomini, c. 1495), BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e, on which see Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 106, n. 288. The text, taken from this edition, has been published by D'Ancona 1872, II, 163-186; on the oriental derivation of this story, see also 141-162. On Bernardo Pulci, and his works, see Ulysse 1994; Weaver 2002a, 97-98; Cicali 2006.

⁹⁰ I am using the edition of the successful fifteenth-century vernacular translation by Niccolò Manerbi published in Iacopo da Varagine 1993, 628-649.

⁹¹ 'Saint John Damascene tells a holy, devout and worthy tale of Barlaam and Josephat, a man of great virtue and integrity and deserving to be remembered, who, leaving all lowly earthly things behind, rose to the supreme glory above, opening the path to heaven to many people and even converting his own father in the end'.

The frontispiece, with the angel above, shows the scene of the birth of prince Josaphat with which the drama opens (figure 16): in a typical interior of a Florentine bedchamber, such as we have already seen in Savonarola's book of the *Arte del Bene Morire* ('On the art of dying well'; figs. 6 and 7), the nurse shows the newborn baby to the king, accompanied by the servant sent to summon him, while the mother lies on the bed and a maidservant at the side of her bed is warming the bands to swaddle the baby.⁹² The second illustration is divided into two parts: on the left, four astrologers predict the future of the prince to the king, identified by the crown and sceptre, announcing that he 'porrà la cristiana legge in cima, /la qual perseguito hai con ogni ingegno' (D'Ancona 1872, II, 165);⁹³ on the right, a camel is lying on the ground.⁹⁴ In the first part of the third illustration, in a room in the palace where Josaphat's father has locked him up to prevent him coming into contact with the Christian religion, Barlaam is preaching to Josaphat and converts him, while the second part shows hares running in the countryside (figure 17).⁹⁵ In the fourth a phoenix is shown rising from its ashes on the left, while on the right, in an area surrounded by battlemented walls, the king seated on a throne is listening to the dispute between Josaphat and the sages summoned to make him rescind his faith (figure 18).⁹⁶ The fifth illustration, which again was evidently not engraved for this play, but is consonant with the action it illustrates, shows a friar (alluding to the protagonist) baptising two men on the shores of a lake in front of a crowd of people. One of these is the king, identified by the crown lying on the ground, who has converted after hearing his son preach.⁹⁷ The sixth illustration is set in a throne room, a classic example of Brunelleschi's architecture. Josaphat, who has become king, abdicates in favour of the baron Barachia who is kneeling in front of him, handing him a mantle and a necklace as a sign of distinction (figure 19).⁹⁸ The last woodcut, again not original, shows an angel holding a friar

⁹² The image is also found in Boccaccio's *Novella di Gualtieri e Griselda*, s.l.e.a.: see Kristeller 1897, n. 215a, 83-84.

⁹³ 'He will raise to the heights that Christianity which you have done your utmost to persecute'.

⁹⁴ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a1v. The woodcut is taken from the *Fior di virtù* ('Flower of virtue'), Firenze, printed by ser Francesco Bonacorsi and Antonio Venetiano, 1498, of which there must however have been a previous edition now lost: see Kristeller 1897, n. 150a, 52, and XXII.

⁹⁵ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a3r. This woodcut too is found in the *Fior di virtù* mentioned above, but it could also derive from Miscomini's book printed on July 17, 1494, containing the *Lucidario* by Honorius Augustodunensis: Sander 1942, 529.

⁹⁶ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a5r. This image too is found in the *Fior di virtù*.

⁹⁷ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a7r. I am not able to indicate for which text this woodcut was originally designed.

⁹⁸ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a7v.

by the hand, leading him out of the sickroom, and recalls the illness and death of Barlaam, whom Josaphat managed to find in the desert and is now assisting at the time of his passing. The right-hand part shows a barrel with bees flying over it (figure 20).⁹⁹ This series of images coherently illustrates the subject of the play, even in the exemplars taken from other texts, and breaks up the monotony of the densely written page, always placed in precise correspondence with the respective dramatic event.

The anonymous *Rappresentazione di Sant'Agata* presents the story of the Sicilian saint, patron of nursing mothers and women with diseases of the breast:

Fu questa Agata sì con Dio congiunta,
che volle ogni fragello aspro patire
da Quintiano, in fin che fu defunta,
prima ch'alla sua voglia aconsentire;
& quando alfine in cielo ella fu assumpta
portò palma & corona con disire.
(BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. a1v)¹⁰⁰

There are five illustrations in this incunabulum, printed for Piero Pacini da Pescia and bearing one of his printer's marks at the end.¹⁰¹ On the frontispiece, underneath the usual symbol of the angel, a woodcut indicates that this play is part of the hagiographic strand dealing with the martyrdom of saints.¹⁰² The scene is set within a Renaissance-style room. It shows Agatha, bound to a pillar like the Christ of the Flagellation, being tortured by two villains who tear off her breasts with red-hot pincers, watched by the king sitting on his throne and a dignitary (figure 21). In the second illustration the saint is captured by a group of armed knights and taken before Quintianus, sitting

⁹⁹ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 189.e, f. a8r. This woodcut, too, is found in the *Fior di virtù* mentioned above.

¹⁰⁰ 'This Agatha was so close to God, that she preferred to suffer every bitter pain from Quintianus, and even death, rather than accepting to be possessed by him. And when, in the end, she was taken to heaven, she brought with her the palm of the martyrs and the crown with desire'. *La Rappresentazione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre* ('The Play of Saint Agatha, virgin and martyr'), s.l.e.a., but I think the edition was printed by Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496. See Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, 37, n. 88, where it is dated 1490, probably due to an oversight. A facsimile of this incunabulum was published by Toschi 1969. The source of the story is, as always, Iacopo da Varagine 1993, 204-210.

¹⁰¹ It is a crowned dolphin with the initials S and P on its sides and the inscription PESCIA below.

¹⁰² The story of the persecuted maiden enjoyed enduring popularity and crossed different levels of literary narration. It is also a significant element in the oral folk tradition sedimented in fairy tales (which can be clearly seen simply by scrolling through the titles of Calvino 1956). On this argument see Veselovskij and De Sade 1977.

on his throne, with her hands bound and in a ‘humile & molto costumata’ (‘humble and very modest’) attitude (figure 22) (BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. a2v).¹⁰³ In the third image, on the orders of the sovereign, the girl is ‘dalla terra sospesa / & con verghe & baston’ (‘raised above the ground/ and with rods and sticks’) (f. b1r) is beaten by two executioners, while a shaft of beams from heaven announces the palm of martyrdom (figure 23). The iconography combines that normally found in the images of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, where the saint is raised above the ground, with that of the Flagellation of Christ, with the torso leaning forward.¹⁰⁴ The scene of the cutting off of the breasts is illustrated by the same woodcut as that of the frontispiece. The last image comprises two separate narrations, with only the upper half corresponding to the text. It shows Agatha kneeling on a little cloud surrounded by rays being carried to heaven by two angels. The lower part instead shows a decapitated maiden, which in fact corresponds to the execution of Saint Apollonia, whereas Agatha died in prison praying to the Lord (figure 25).¹⁰⁵

In this case, too, the illustrations visualise the hagiographic content in order to move the reader and to facilitate recollection. The crudity of the images of torture, like those dealing with the Passion of Christ, was due to the need to incite the ‘*tarditatem affectivam*’ (‘emotional sluggishness’) of those whose devotion was not ignited by the admonitions of the sermons, who were instead struck by the force of the figurative images, as expressed by Michele da Carcano: ‘ut homines qui non excitantur ad devotionem, cum aliqua audiunt de sanctorum memoria, saltem moveantur dum ea in picturis quasi presentia cernunt’ (Baxandall 1972, 41).¹⁰⁶ Even Savonarola

¹⁰³ With both the image and the citation in the text.

¹⁰⁴ As regards the scene of Saint Sebastian’s martyrdom see, for example, Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo’s painting, dated 1474 and commissioned by the Florentine merchant Antonio Pucci for the altar of the family chapel in the SS. Annunziata church (London, National Gallery, NG 292; see the catalogue record by Alison Wright in Rubin and Wright 1999, 226–229). An example of Christ’s Flagellation is a woodcut from Savonarola’s *Tractato dell’Humilità* (Florence, Miscomini, around 1493), where the position of the bust of Christ is very similar to that of Agatha (figure 24; Turelli 1985a, cat. 10, figure 26, 83).

¹⁰⁵ BNCF, *Banco Rari* 179.8, f. b4r.

¹⁰⁶ ‘So that men who are not aroused to devotion when they hear about the histories of the Saints may at least be moved when they see them, as if actually present, in pictures. For our feelings are aroused by things seen more than by things heard’ (Baxandall 1972, p. 41). I cannot therefore agree with Newbiggin, who – in view of the wealth of details about the tortures inflicted on the protagonist saints and duly illustrated in the woodcuts – considers the hagiographic *sacre rappresentazioni* a kind of ‘porno-violent hagiography . . . , the fifteenth-century equivalent of porno-violent *fumetti* and *fotoromanzi*’ (1988, 292), no longer tied to some form of performance. This opinion, although certainly emphasized and immediately tempered by the statement that in any case the primary aim of these printed editions continued to be pious, seems to me a simplification of a very complex phenomenon, appraised in the light of modern categories of thought very distant from the fifteenth-century mentality. This

saw the pitiless images of Christ's Passion as a means of inciting the faithful to compassion and repentance.¹⁰⁷

11. *The Pedagogical Function of Realism in the Woodcuts of sacre rappresentazioni*

As already noted regarding certain of the Savonarola illustrations, the woodcuts of the *sacre rappresentazioni* also tend to insist on the fact that the internal and external architecture of the settings, the daily habits and the clothes are all recognisably Florentine. This is evident in some of the images of the two texts described above and in many others. In the *Rappresentazione del figliuol prodigo* ('The play of the prodigal son') by Antonia Pulci, we can, for example, see an old man talking to a younger one, who is standing with his arms crossed (evidently the father and son of the Gospel story) in a typically Florentine room with a chequered floor and the window opening onto a landscape. The older man is wearing a long indoor gown and on his head a low beret of the type worn by merchants and wealthy men; the younger one is dressed in a short skirt reaching to above the knee, with open sleeves hanging from the shoulders, soled hose and a toque over hair styled in the *angiolesca* fashion, all again typical of the dress of the scions of affluent families (Figure 26).¹⁰⁸ Instead, in the anonymous *Rappresentazione del miracolo del corpo di Christo* ('The play of the miracle of Christ's body'), inside a shop we can see several Jews, recognisable by the circular sign stitched onto their clothes, who take in pawn a dress from a woman, in exchange for a consecrated host, and then profane it by roasting it on a brazier (Figure 27).¹⁰⁹ Finally, in the *Rappresentazione di San Tommaso apostolo* ('The play of Saint Thomas Apostle') by Castellano Castellani, we see the image of a bedchamber where doctors are examining a sick man, with his wife and a maidservant in attendance, while one of them checks the chamber pot (Figure 28). This scene was often included in the *sacre rappresentazioni*, both for its educational value and for the possible comic effect. The realistic efficacy of this domestic image was also exploited in Savonarola's *Predica dell'Arte del Bene Morire* (Figure 6).¹¹⁰

phenomenon, in fact, involves the interweaving of religious sensibility, cultural formation and the invention of the typographic market in the Renaissance.

¹⁰⁷ 'Look, soul, what *cruel spectacle, what pitiless print*, what form to make every hard heart grow pitiful.' Savonarola wrote, as we have seen before, in the *Operetta nuova* (BNCF, Cust C 16, s.n.t., c. 17r).

¹⁰⁸ I consulted the exemplar, without date and typographical indications, conserved at the BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.III.13 (Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 412, 149).

¹⁰⁹ The incunabulum, without typographic details, is attributed to Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496: see Tura 2001, n. 99, 102 (Triv. Inc. C 269).

¹¹⁰ Col.: *Stampata in Firenze appresso alla Badia. MDLXI. Ad istantia di Paghol Bigio* (BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.V.22: see Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 487, p. 173). On the educational function of the comic inserts, known as *inframessa*, of the *sacre rappresentazioni*,

The conformity of the images to Florentine places and costumes was definitely linked to the current Florentine figuration that rendered Scripture or hagiography topical by setting them in the Florence of the time and by giving the sacred characters the appearance of the commissioners and the famous figures of their entourage and dressing them in the current fashion. This trend was begun by Masolino and Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel and was then cultivated by the painters of wedding chests and birth plates all through the fifteenth century. At the end of the century it became a specialisation of the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, as testified by the frescoes in the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinita, or in the Tornabuoni chapel in Santa Maria Novella, with the portraits of the members of the Medici establishment and their ladies, or those of the oratory of the Buonomini di San Martino showing the brothers intent on their works of mercy (Figure 29).

In addition to reasons of an aesthetic and propagandist nature, this approach also adhered to a specific educational principle that used realism to help fix the contents of Scripture and devotional texts in the mind so as to facilitate mental prayer.¹¹¹ A handbook for the exercise of this meditative practice, composed in 1454 and circulated in print between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, casts light on the catechetical foundation of this realism. Starting with the classical rules of the mediaeval *ars memorativa* ('art of memory'), which acted primarily through the association of the arguments to be remembered with known places,¹¹² the *Zardino de oration fructuoso* ('Garden of Fruitful Prayer')¹¹³ advised the worshipper absorbed in prayer to aid his recall and visualisation of the sacred stories by calling to mind his everyday life and the places he frequented and then associating the faces of the sacred protagonists with those of his friends and acquaintances.¹¹⁴ In this

and in particular those involving doctors, see Ventrone 2016, 187-189. In general, for an illustration of the characters of the *inframessa* see D'Ancona 1891, I, 563-644; Ventrone 1982 and 1984.

¹¹¹ Plastic works, such as the *compianti sul Cristo morto* ('lamentations over the dead Christ') or the *sacri monti* ('sacred mountains') must have had a similar function, although this is not the place to introduce such ulterior and ramified subjects for reflection.

¹¹² As illustrated, for example, by a precious document in which the *canterino* ('street singer') Michele Del Giogante wrote down the mnemonic system explained to him by his friend Niccolò Cieco. This system was based precisely on the association between the things to be remembered and the places and objects of one's own home; see Tocco and Bacci 1898.

¹¹³ For the attribution to Giovanni da Osimo see Stanislao da Campagnola 1971. On the editions up to 1550 see Jacobson Schutte 1993, 302-303, which records, between 1494 and 1543, five Venetian editions and a sixth attributed to the Venetian Filippo Pincio or to the Florentine Miscomini himself. On this text, and on its relations with late fifteenth-century devotion, see: Baxandall 1972, 57-58; Ginzburg 1972, 631-633; Arasse 2007, 82-84; Bolzoni 2002, 194-195.

¹¹⁴ I have consulted what, to date, appears to be the *editio princeps*: BNCF, Guicc. 3.5.16. The colophon records: 'Impressa questa benedeta opera contemplativa e utilissima a ziaschadun

case too, as for Morelli, the scriptural episode in question was the Passion, namely one of the central references for individual devotion.

La quale historia aciò che tu meglio la possi *imprimere nela mente*, e che più facilmente ogni acto de essa ti si reduca alla memoria, ti serà utile e bisogno che ti *fermi nela mente lochi e persone*. Come una citade, la quale sia la citade de Hierusalem, pigliando una citade la quale ti sia bene praticata. Nela qual citade tu trovi li lochi principali neli quali forono exercitati tutti li acti dela passione: come è uno palacio nel quale sia el cenaculo dove Cristo fece la cena con li discipuli. Anchora la casa de Anna e la casa de Cayfas dove sia il loco dove fu menato la nocte Miser Iesu. E la stantia dove fu menato dinanti da Cayfas, e lui deriso e beffato. Anche il pretorio de Pilato dove li parlava con li iudei: et in esso la stantia dove fu legato Misser Iesu ala colonna. Anche el loco del monte de Calvario, dove esso fu posto in croce, e altri simili lochi, li quali ti fabbrichi nela mente. E per questa *memoria locale* ti siano più facilmente *presentate* tutte quelle cose che furono nela passione. Anchora è di bisogno che ti formi nela mente alcune persone, le quale tu habbi pratiche e note, le quale te ti ripresentino quelle persone che principalmente intervennero de essa passione: come è la persona de Misser Iesu, della nostra Madonna, Sancto Pietro, Sancto Ioanne Evangelista, Sancta Maria Magdalena, Anna, Cayfas, Pilato, Iuda, e altri simili, li quali tutti *formarai nela mente*. Cossi adunque havendo formate tutte queste cose nela mente, sì che quivi sia posta tutta la fantasia, e entrarai nel cubiculo tuo e sola e solitaria, disciacciando ogni altro pensiero exteriore, incomincerai a pensare il principio de essa passione. Incominciando come esso Misser Iesu venne in Ierusalem sopra l'asino. E morosamente tu trascorrendo ogni acto pensarai faciando dimora sopra ogni acto e passo, e se tu sentirai alcuna divotione in alcuno passo ivi ti ferma: non passare più oltra fino che dura quella dolcezia e divotione. (BNCF, Guicc. 3.5.16, f. X2v, italics mine)¹¹⁵

fidel christiano che secondo Dio vuol reger la vita sua in allegrezza de spiritu, compiacere a Christo Salvatore et acquistar da lui salute. M.cccc.lxxxxiiij? ('Printed, this blessed contemplative work, most useful to every Christian believer who wants to lead his life in joyfulness of spirit according to the will of God, to be pleasing to Christ the Saviour and gain from him salvation'). This edition is attributed to Bernardino Benali of Venice; see IGI, n. 6862.

¹¹⁵ 'The better to impress the story of the Passion on your mind, and to memorise each action of it more easily, it is helpful and necessary to fix the places and people in your mind: a city, for example, which will be the city of Jerusalem – taking for this purpose a city that is well known to you. In this city find the principal places in which all the episodes of the Passion would have taken place – for instance, a palace with the supper-room where Christ had the Last Supper with the Disciples, and the house of Anne, and that of Caiaphas, with the place where Jesus was taken in the night, and the room where He was brought before Caiaphas and mocked and beaten. Also the residence of Pilate where he spoke with the Jews, and in it the room where Jesus was bound to the Column. Also the site of Mount Calvary, where He was put on the Cross; and other like places that you have to build in your mind. And by this *local memory* all the things which were in Passion will be easier *presented* to you. And then too you must shape in your mind some people, people well-known to you, to represent for you the people involved in the Passion – the person of Jesus Himself, of the Virgin, Saint Peter, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Mary Magdalen, Anne, Caiaphas, Pilate Judas and the others, every one of whom *you will fashion in your mind*. When you have done all this, putting all your imagination into it, then go into your chamber. Alone and solitary, excluding every external thought from your mind, start

This passage is important because it illustrates certain mental mechanisms of fifteenth-century devotion to be discerned, for example, in paintings such as the *Passione di Cristo* ('Passion of Christ', Figure 30) or the *Sette gioie di Maria* ('Seven Joys of Mary') by Hans Memling, which must have had an analogous purpose. Although the evocative spatial and diegetic composition of these has often led historians to identify the influence of the northern mystery plays,¹¹⁶ in my opinion these works were not intended to communicate a mirroring between performance and painting, but rather used partially analogous expressive means, connected with the *ars memorativa*, to induce *pietas* and foster the contrition of the faithful. They were, in other words 'images of memory'.

The passage from the manual is also useful for casting light on the relation between the devotional book and that of the *libro di teatro* ('theatre book'). It explains how the capacity of the theatrical medium for amplifying the catechetical message does not depend only on the link with the *hic et nunc* of the performance and the immediacy of the *azione in presenza* ('live action') in line with a generic historiographical commonplace, but on something more concrete and more rooted in the religious culture of the time. The sacred actions were set in three-dimensionally constructed sites designed to resemble buildings and possibly city views known to the public,¹¹⁷ and the parts to be played were assigned to figures known in the city. These could have been the youths of the confraternities or the members of the companies of *laudesi* who organised the various festivals that were customary in Florence, or again the Medici dressed as the Magi (for all these feasts see Ventrone 2016). In all this, what the theatre did was to associate known faces and places with the events of the sacred story, facilitating its memorisation by virtue of both the prestige and social visibility connected with participation in the spectacles and, obviously, the engagement generated by the performance in both actors and audience.

12. Conclusions

In the passage from performance to book the theatrical dimension of the *sacre rappresentazioni* added the function of performance to those of memory and identification already inherent in the illustrations. This generated a sort of

thinking of the beginning of the Passion, starting with how Jesus entered Jerusalem on the ass. Moving slowly from episode to episode, meditate on each one, dwelling on each single stage and step of the story. And if at any point you feel a sensation of piety, stop: do not pass on as long as that sweet and devout sentiment lasts'.

¹¹⁶ The Turin painting of the Passion has been associated with the plan of the mansions attributed to the XVI-XVII sec. *Passion of Villingen*, by Mazzoni 2017, 182, Figure 92, while the Marian painting now in Munich has been proposed as an example of simultaneous stage by Konigson 1975, 279.

¹¹⁷ This can be deduced from the captions and woodcuts of the *sacre rappresentazioni*. This scenic solution was the most natural and economic, compared to the invention of completely imaginary sites. However, I intend to return at another time to the modalities of staging *sacre rappresentazioni*, which calls for broader specific research.

circularity, through which the realism of the theatrical performance and its iconographic models were impressed on the imagination and on the ways of seeing the representation of places, objects and people, which in turn affected the illustrations of other printed works of devout character.

If we address from this perspective the question we started with, namely of the reliability of the woodcuts for knowledge of the staging of the texts, it seems more logical to ask ourselves why so many images evoking 'theatrical' suggestions are present in books of devotion that have nothing to do with dramatic performances, rather than whether and why some woodcuts reflect or evoke certain scenic enactments. In other words, what is surprising is not the 'theatricality' of the illustrations present in the printed versions of the dramas in octaves, but the considerable number of figures of this kind that appear in books unconnected with performance. This observation suggests that the conventions of religious stagecraft were so deeply impressed on the figurative mentality of the time that the sacred stories were regarded through the eyes of drama. This can be seen not only in book illustrations, but also in the more important production of paintings, such as those derived from the visual imagination created by Brunelleschi's paradises.

Again, a few examples can help to clarify the issue. One of the woodcuts most frequently referred to as a visualisation of one of the few stage sets for which descriptions and information exist is that illustrated on the frontispiece of the *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*. Here, a *mandorla* (an almond-shaped machine) with rays carrying the archangel Gabriel, accompanied by an angel at each side with their feet resting on clouds, descends from a cupola-shaped sky to the Virgin Mary (Figure 31).¹¹⁸ In this case, the relation with the mechanism invented by Filippo Brunelleschi for the feast organised almost annually in the Florentine church of San Felice in Piazza is indubitable. In fact there is a clear correspondence between the known information about this and other Florentine raising and lowering mechanisms and the technical details shown in the image, such as the thick rope holding up the device, the shape of the sky formed of concentric circles and that of the cotton wool clouds shaped so as to cover the pedestals supporting the angels.¹¹⁹

It is scarcely surprising to find a similar mechanism in the *Rappresentazione di Sant'Agata*, used to enact her assumption after martyrdom (Figure 25). But it is significant that one also appears in the *editio princeps* of the *Laudi* of Jacopone da Todi, published by Francesco Bonaccorsi on 28 September 1490,¹²⁰ where there is a woodcut showing the Franciscan poet kneeling before a vision of the Virgin, who appears seated in a *mandorla* with rays surrounded by angels, underneath which are

¹¹⁸ This woodcut is reprinted in many editions of the *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*. The one reproduced here is the BNCF, Pal. E.6 7.53.16, s.l.a., printed by Maestro Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto (Testaverde and Evangelista 1988, n. 512, 186).

¹¹⁹ For the tradition of Florentine raising mechanisms see Ventrone 2016, 56-85, with previous bibliography, in particular 76-79 on the relationship of the *Annunciation* woodcut with the scenic apparatus of the play. The known sources on these and other similar performances are published by Newbigin 1996.

¹²⁰ Kristeller 1897, n. 220, 86.

the usual clouds used to conceal the small supporting platform (Figure 32). Another appears in the anonymous *Life of Saint Bernardine*,¹²¹ which shows the Sieneese saint in glory with exactly the same iconography (Figure 33), confirming how much stagecraft had influenced the figurative imagination of the late fifteenth century, especially as regards the representation of heaven and the epiphanies of the saints.

There are many other examples, but I feel that these few are sufficient to reassess the terms of the question. Instead of persisting with the, by now outdated, issue of whether the borrowings were 'from art to theatre' or 'from theatre to art', attempting to establish a primacy between the two,¹²² it seems more illuminating to reflect more generally on the perceptive conventions of the Renaissance. Namely, on the function of the icons, the ways in which the devotional books were used and the role of the religious performance in the catechetical education of the citizens and the construction of the popular imagination.

The massive effort of evangelisation and of opposition to heresies made by the Church, in particular with the establishment of the mendicant orders, brought about a radical revision of the mediaeval systems of communication, and the use that could be made of them to reach the various brackets of the population. Indeed, both the cultivated and wealthy classes and the semi-literate and ignorant folk were, for different reasons, potential targets for the circulation of unorthodox ideas and beliefs. As known, one of the key moments of this process was related to the manner of preaching, leading to the progressive abandonment of Latin in favour of the vernacular and to the choice of *exempla* and arguments that were increasingly closer to the problems of daily life. Giordano da Rivalto and Bernardino da Siena were pioneers and masters of this approach (on this process see Delcorno 1974, 1975 and 1989).

Particular attention was also devoted to the attempt to bring the story of Jesus, as recounted in the synoptic and apocryphal Gospels, closer to the sensibility of ordinary people by introducing a humanisation of sentiments and events that pivoted largely on the Marian cult. Prototypes of this process can be found in the *Meditationes vitae Christi* – attributed at the time to Saint Bonaventura, but now assigned to the Franciscan Giovanni de' Cauli from San Gimignano – and in other devotional and hagiographic texts which gained impetus primarily from the mendicant orders.¹²³ This tendency was also channelled through the powerful expressive form of the lauds that flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Baldelli 1987). The figurative arts, with their capacity to evoke and aid memorisation of the sacred events and the practices of prayer, played a central role in this process which, as we have seen, was theorised by theologians and preachers.

¹²¹ *Vita di San Bernardino*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Lorenzo Morgiani (and Johann Petri?), after 28 VIII 1496], see: Tura 2001, n. 112, 103 [Triv. Inc. E 16].

¹²² I refer, of course, without going into the matter here, to the classic works by Mâle 1908, in particular 3-74; Kernodle 1944; Zorzi 1979, 421-463; in addition to the more recent Mamone 2003, in particular 27-67.

¹²³ For a general overview of these transformations, mindful of the problems of communication and transversal cultural exchange, see Ginzburg 1972, in particular 610-636.

Theatre was retrieved for catechetical purposes largely by the Dominicans, and constituted the moment of synthesis of this vast parenetic operation, uniting the power of the word, the image and the *azione in presenza*, bringing concretely into play what was being elaborated in the treatises on the practice of mental prayer so that it could interact with the complexity of the social implications of theatre. For all these reasons the *sacra rappresentazione* became a crucial element of the religious imagination, a filter for a more realistic visualisation of the sacred stories and a point of encounter between the physical eye and the eye of the mind. It was also able to impress its technical peculiarities on the figurative arts and, with the advent of printing, on the new product of wide circulation represented by the devotional book.

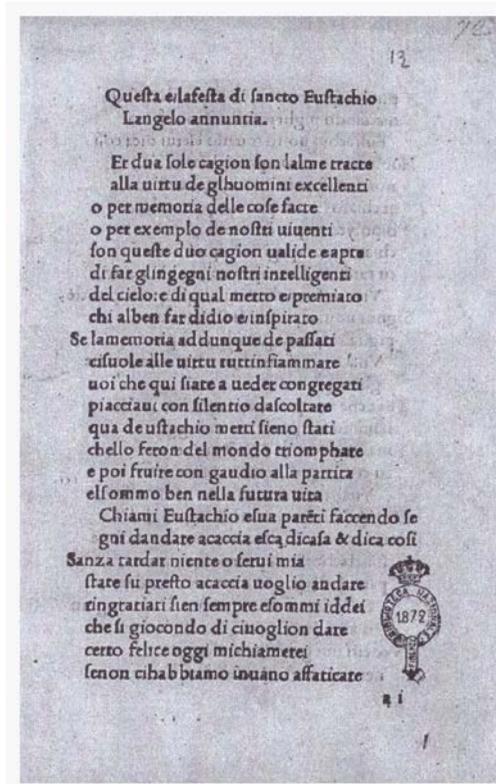


Figure 1 – *Rappresentazione di Sant'Eustachio*, [s.n.t., but Florence, Miscomini, before 1492], f. a1r (BNCF, P.6.36). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Further reproduction or duplication by any means of the images reproduced here by permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence is not permitted.

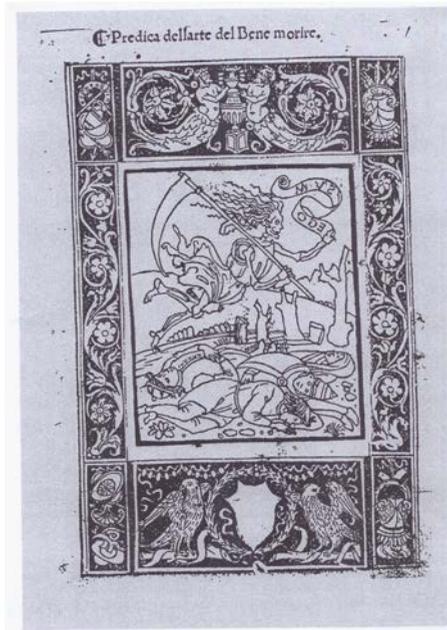


Figure 4 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 1r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 5 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 6v (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 6 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 12r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 7 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Predica dell'arte del Bene morire*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, after november 2, 1496), f. 14r (BNCF, Cust. E 6). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 8 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato del sacramento & de' mysterii della messa*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, XV sec. ex.], f. 1r (BNCF, Cust. C 20). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

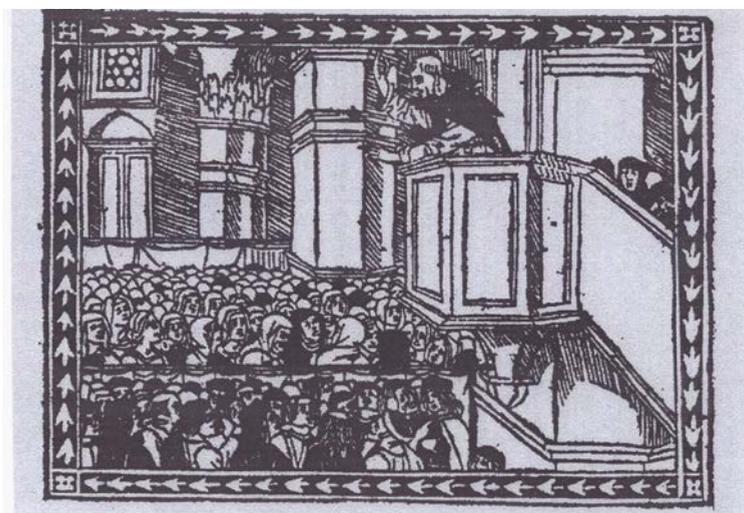


Figure 9 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 1r (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 10 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 11v (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*

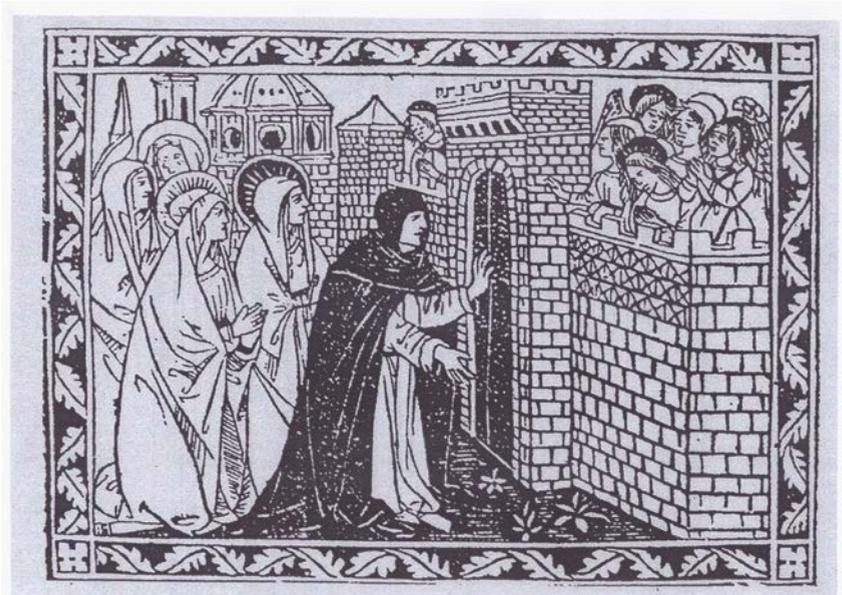


Figure 11 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 28v (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 12 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelatione*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, Firenze 23 aprile 1496, f. 32r (BNCF, Sav. 146). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 13 – *Angelo annunziante*, from Bernardo Pulci, *Rappresentazione di Barlaam et Iosafat*, [Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

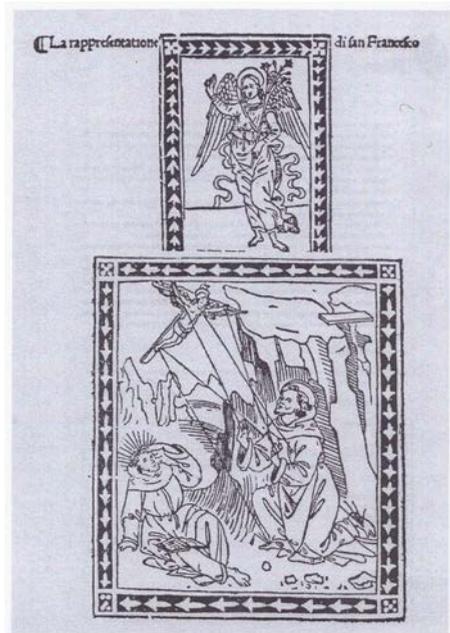


Figure 14 – Antonia Pulci, *La rappresentazione di San Francesco*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.m). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 15 – *La tauola de Fioretti di sancto Francesco*, s.n.t. (from Kristeller 1897, n. 155a, 54, cut 27). Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu3192402955574/page/n8>>

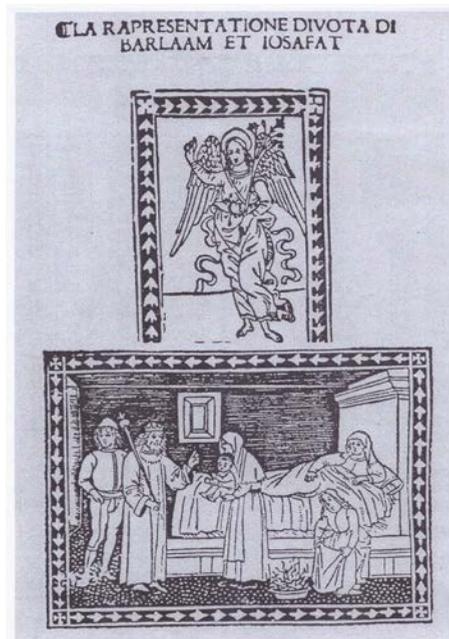


Figure 16 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rapresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* / *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 17 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rapresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a3r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali* / *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 18 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a5r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 19 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentazione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a7v (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 20 – Bernardo Pulci, *La Rappresentatione divota di Barlaam et Iosafat*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Miscomini, around 1495], f. a8r (BNCF, Banco Rari 189.e). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*

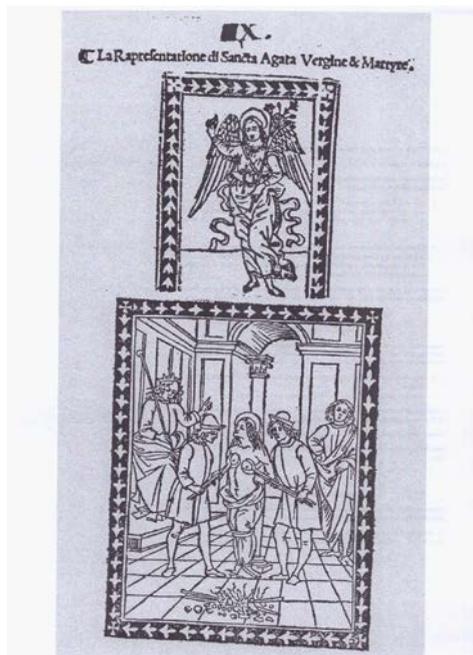


Figure 21 – *La Rappresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. a1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 22 – *La Rapresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. a2v (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 23 – *La Rapresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. b1r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 24 – Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato divoto & utile della Humilità*, s.n.t. [ma Firenze, Miscomini, 1493 ca.], f. 3r (BNCF, Cust. C 5). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 25 – *La Rapresentatione di Sancta Agata Vergine & Martyre*, ad instantia di ser Piero Pacini da Pescia, s.l.a. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496?], f. b4r (BNCF, Banco Rari 179.8). By permission of *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali | Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze*



Figure 26 – Antonia Pulci, *Rappresentazione del Figliuol prodigo*, s.n.t., f. a2r (BNCf, Pal. E.6.5. 1.III. 13). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze

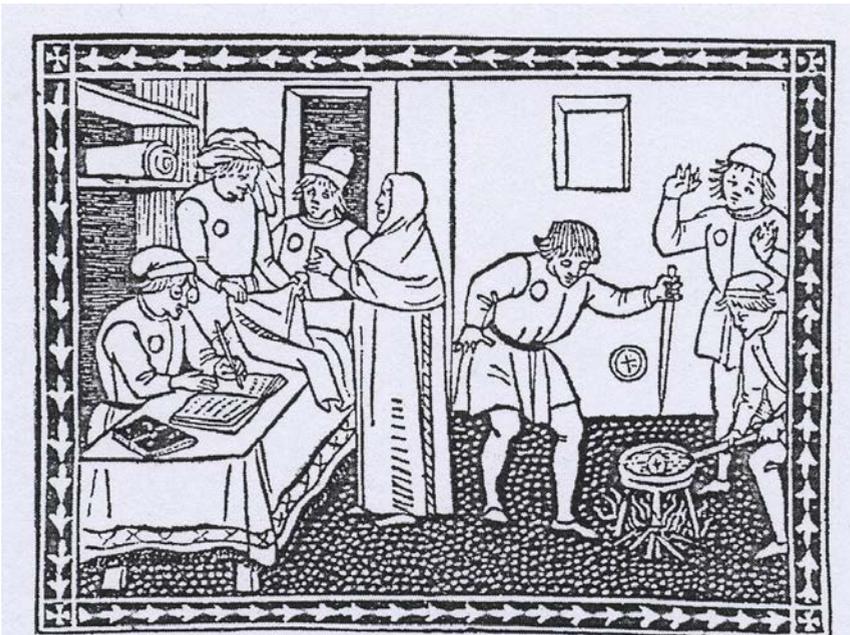


Figure 27 – *Rappresentazione del miracolo del corpo di Christo*, s.n.t. [but Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri, around 1496], f. a1r, (from Kristeller 1897, n. 180a, 65, cut 48). Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu3192402955574/page/n8>>



Figure 28 – Castellano Castellani, *Rappresentazione di San Tommaso apostolo*, Firenze, alla Badia, 1561, f. b4r (BNCF, Pal. E.6.5.1.V.22). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze



Figure 29 – Domenico Ghirlandaio e aiuti, *Opere di misericordia: Visitare gli infermi*, Firenze, Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino, CC-BY-3.0, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/63/Collaboratore_del_ghirlandaio_%28forse_francesco_d%27antonio%29%2C_curare_gli_infermi%2C_1478-81%2C_01.jpg>



Figure 30 – Hans Memling, *Passione di Cristo*, Torino, Galleria Sabauda, Public Domain, <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passione_di_Torino#/media/File:Hans_Memling_Passione.jpg>



Figure 31 – *Rappresentazione dell'Annunciazione*, fece stampare Maestro Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto, s.l.a. [but Firenze around 1495], f. a1r (BNCF, Pal. E.6 753.16). By permission of Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali / Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Firenze



Figure 32 – Jacopone da Todì, *Laudi*, Firenze, Francesco Bonaccorsi, 28 September 1490, (from Kristeller 1897, n. 220, 86, cut 9), Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029555574/page/n8>>



Figure 33 – *Vita di San Bernardino*, s.n.t. [ma Firenze, Lorenzo Morgiani (e Johann Petri?)], post 28 VIII 1496], (from Kristeller 1897, n. 54a, 19, cut 10), Cornell University Library, Public Domain, <<https://archive.org/details/cu31924029555574/page/n8>>

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