RIGHT BOOKS AND HERETICAL BOOKS. THE IMAGE OF THE HERETICS IN WESTERN EUROPEAN ICONOGRAPHY BETWEEN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY

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Abstract: *Since the 14th century, and above all between the 14th and 16th centuries, books are always represented to provoke a positive reaction in the viewer, since these objects are linked to the possibility of knowledge and are meant to rediscover the Greek and Roman past. However already the first half of the 16th century saw the beginnings of a crisis in the special relationship between intellectuals and their books. Books begin to be viewed with suspicion. This new attitude seems to be directly related to the effects that the technical revolution of the press was producing; During the 16th and 17th centuries, in fact, the press increasingly changes the methods of transmission of culture. The more books were printed and placed on the market, the more dangerous they were, because it became increasingly difficult to control their content. If up to a certain point the positive equation book = knowledge seems to be valid, in the period between the second half of the 16th and the 17th century the books are taking on a negative connotation, until they become an iconographic attribute to depict heresy, the otherness par excellence from the catholic point of view.*
Key words: *heretical books, iconography, Western Europe*

Introduction

Christianity *per se* is a religion based on a book or, better, on books, Τα βιβλία. The Christian faith finds in the word origin and reason: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. The Logos, which translate with «Word», pre-exists and is the Principle, God.[1] We read His words be-

[1] John (John 1:1) begins his Gospel going beyond the beginning of our time, to the divine eternity. Unlike Matthew and Luke who dwell above all on the circumstances of the human birth of the Son of God, John focuses his gaze on the mystery of his divine pre-existence. "In the beginning" means eternity. The expression echoes the creation account: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Gen 1,1). But in creation it was the beginning of time, whereas here, where the Word is spoken, it is eternity: In the beginning was the Word: Catechesis of November 26, 1997, 25.04.2024, <https://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01101998_p-11_it.html >.

cause they are written on the scrolls of papyrus, in ancient codes and then on printed texts. The books carrying the divine word are depicted in paintings and sculptures of Christian churches. They are utilized as an iconographic attribute of numerous saints, are found on the lectern of the Holy Virgin, who receives the Announcement from the Angel, and are held by the *Pantocrator*. However, books, often are used as iconographic elements to describe intellectuals, monarchs, abstract concepts. Books can be perceived as status symbols or precious diplomatic gifts, as they have been expensive items for centuries[2]. From the point of view of content, books are the objects that *par excellence* allow the transmission of memory, allow to create bridges between cultures and different eras, are the tools of the craft for teaching in every age. The many images that Christian artistic history has left us are therefore of great interest to understand the relationship that Christianity in the course of its history has had with books, sacred, profane, or heretical. The question is, what is the exact meaning of the representation of books in these works? Normally, in fact, we tend to link the presence of books in painting or sculpture simply to the occupation/profession of the character, so books are the seemingly obvious attribute of a renaissance image of Saint Jerome (fig. 1)[3]. Of course this is true, but I also believe that all these books are more than just an "attribute" linked to the activity of translating sacred texts of the saint in question, they are signs of a culture that attributes particular importance to books. This is the image of a scholar, peacefully working in his *studiolo*[4]. It can also be added that books between the XV and XVI centuries are always represented to provoke a positive reaction in the viewer, since these objects are linked to the possibility of knowledge and are means to rediscover the Greek and Roman past, the Sacred Scripture, and the writings of the Fathers of the Church[5]. The phenomenon described above is certainly linked to the invention of printing in the mid-15th century: between mid XV and mid XVI c. printed books are a powerful force of cultural change, both for Christian humanism and for the Protestant Reformation. However, the passion for books, as a matter of fact, was born at least one century before the invention of printing, leading to an exponential

2 From the material point of view the books have taken different formats over time, the decoration is sometimes very valuable, the illustrations can be real masterpieces of miniature or graphics, depending on the destination of these objects, the systems of writing have changed over the centuries, and they too can take extremely elegant forms. For the history of book see Barberi 1965; Febvre & Martin 2020, pp. VII–XLVIII; Barbier 2018, pp. 123–170.

3 Rice 1985.

4 For the iconography of the studiolo see Clough 1967, pp. 278–287; Cheles 1986; Cheles 1991; Fabiański, 1990, pp. 199–214; Raggio 1999, vol.1; Kirkbride 2008; Rozzo 1998.

5 Pagani 2020, pp. 145–180, 136.

increase in their presence in art, till the point to become omnipresent in paintings and sculptures with the most different meanings. The book can be praised as an instrument of Good and Knowledge, or it is a status symbol and can be literally taken to the grave (fig. 2). Each of these attitudes has a precise response in the iconography. The presence of a book, alone, or in association with other elements, in a portrait or in a funeral monument, tells not only the system of values of a character, his cursus *honorum*, but describes also a social, educational system[6]. The technical innovation of printing produced a greater availability of books at a progressively cheaper price and this revolution makes its effects feel only around the middle of the 16th century.[7] It is not causal, therefore, that in this period we find the signs of a crisis in the special relationship between intellectuals and their books. Books begin to be viewed with suspicion. A book can be subjected to trial, because suspected to cause social disorder, heresy, to sow mental confusion. This new attitude seems to me to be directly related to the effects that the technical revolution of the press was producing; it is during the XVI and XVII centuries, in fact, that the press increasingly changes the methods of transmission of culture. Books circulate in an enormously greater number than in the past, and in this *scenario* they become necessary companions, propaganda tools for both the Protestant Revolution and the Catholic Reformation. The more books were printed and placed on the market, the more dangerous they were, because it became increasingly difficult to control their contents.[8] The positive and direct equation book=knowledge, is not valid anymore. Between the second half of the XVI and the XVII c. books begin to take on a negative connotation, until becoming an attribute of heresy, evil and – if I may say so – of "otherness" from the catholic perspective. The aim of this work is to address the significant shift in the meaning given to the book in iconography.

As for the status *quaestionis*, little can be found specifically regarding the "representation of the book". Specific studies on the iconology of the book were conducted by Ugo Rozzo, regarding the editions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the representation of the *studiolo* in Italian xilography.[9] Novella Macola, on the other hand, took care of the representation of books in Italian

6 The tomb becomes a real biography of the deceased to be proposed as a social act to the public and posterity for men who are builders of their own lives, see Frommel 2010, pp. 87–93.

7 Eisenstein 1986.

8 Pagani 2023, pp. 187–188.

9 Rozzo 1998; 2016, pp. 142–143.

portraiture of the sixteenth century.[10] However, I believe that before dealing with the analysis of the presence of the book in a particular iconography, we must address a preliminary question, that is what the meaning of the book in medieval representations is and how this meaning changed with the opening of the Modern Age.

1. Value of books in medieval monuments

At the end of the Roman Era the mosaic of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia presents San Lorenzo (mid V c.) with the grille, the instrument of martyrdom, the cross carried like a banner on the right shoulder and the book of Scripture in the left hand, all instruments of Salvation. In the *armarium*, we see the four Gospels, well identified by the name of the Evangelists (fig. 3). As deacon of Rome, he had in fact the custody of the goods of the Church, including documents and books; the Gospels are the source of Salvation, and Lorenzo as figure of the Church, has the role to preserve this treasure, he is the guardian of the Truth that those books convey (fig. 3). Towards the end of the VI c., in the roman *Basilica di San Lorenzo* dating to the time of Pope Pelagius II (579–590), we find another image of the Saint as guardian of the Holy Book on which we read the text Ps 111: 9: *Dispersit dedit pauperibus* referring to the diaconal function of Lorenzo.[11] In both cases the central role of the Book in medieval images is already evident. The open Book identified with the Divine Word is commonly represented in the hands of Christ the Savior, starting from the apse of *Santa Pudenziana* in Rome (beginning of the V c.) and thus remains for centuries as the divine attribute par excellence. The *Pantocrator*, epiphany of the transcendent God in human form, is depicted blessing, while with the left hand holds an open or closed volume with the cover decorated with gems.[12] In the Archbishop's Chapel of Ravenna (late 5th – early 6th century) a mosaic depicts young Christ in military clothes with

10 Macola 2007.

11 Serra 2015, p. 52. Lorenzo is again represented in a panel of the catacomb of St. Senator in Albano Laziale: Christ, young and beardless, has on the left Paul and Smaragdus (a local saint), on the right Peter and Lawrence. The latter carries a long cross and holds the book of Scripture. Once again Lorenzo is not depicted in the moment of martyrdom, but as a member of the triumphant Church and as the guardian of the sacred texts. Dispersit dedit pauperibus is also referring to the episode of the distribution of goods to the poor narrated in the passio Polychromì (V–VII secolo) and by St. Ambrogio De Officiis, see Sant'Ambrogio 1977, pp. 148–151.

12 There are many examples of Pantocrator with the code from 6th to 12th c., see images 25.02.24, <https:///cattedraledicefalu.com/licone-cristo-mosaici-through-i-centuries/>; Iconography of the Pantocrator, see Grabar 1968, 43-44. Cassanelli & Guerriero 2004, 842–843; Schlatter 1992, 276–95; Spieser 1998, 63–73.

the imperial purple mantle trampling the lion and the snake, symbols of evil; Christ carries the cross symbol of victory on his shoulders and holds a book opened to let us read "*Ego sum via veritas vita*" (Jn 14, 6) with anti-Arian meaning (fig. 4), recalling *Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem* (Sal 90:13 Vulgata).[13]

The book in medieval images, however, can also take the role of *Instrumentum* regni. In the Vivien Bible, the emperor Charles the Bald is receiving the precious manuscript from the hands of Vivien, abbot of St. Martin of Tours (fig. 5);[14] this is a sacred object and as such wrapped in a cloth, iconography of Roman imperial derivation. The scene is probably the oldest representation of a similar event in the West: the divine hand that in the early Christian age descended on the image of Christ, becomes here the sign of the election of the sovereign as the representative of God, an expression of the Carolingian political ideal of relations between political and religious powers. The book that we find in this scene is the symbol of this conception of power: the emperor is the protector of the divine Word and the Church.[15]

The *Vivien Bible* also offers us an image of Saint Jerome caught in the act of teaching some matrons, while his disciples translate from the scrolls of the Bible and copy on the codes preserved in a wardrobe in the shape of a temple, objects of great value and the importance; Saint Jerome distributes codes to the monks who return to their churches with the volumes.[16] It is the image of the work of study, translation and copying of the text (fig. 6) with an evident analogy with the activity of the monks of San Martino di Tours.[17] This image therefore refers to the Carolingian cultural policy that sees in the reform of writing and the book an *instrumentum regni*. To summarize, the medieval book is a precious object, often illuminated, the cover decorated with precious stones, or carved ivories, the very image of the Divine Word, represented in the hands of the saints, metaphor of a political-religious conception of government.[18]

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13 De Giorgio 2017, pp. 343–349.

14 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Latin 1 |f. 423r. 25.02.24, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455903b/f853.item.zoom>; Dutton 1997.

15 Pacht 2004, pp. 71–72; Lafitte & Denoel 2007, p. 239, 103–105; Alibert 1989, 23–36.

16 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Latin 1 f. 3v, 22.04.24, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8455903b/f14.item.zoom>.

17 De Hamel 1997, pp. 45– 56.

18 The book denotes richness, Saint Francis of Assisi (13th c.) mistrusts this object precisely for its exorbitant cost 1246-1247, Tommaso da Celano, Vita seconda, part II chap. 32: «he taught to look for the will of the Lord In the books, not the material value; the edification not the beauty. In any case he wanted them to be few and always available to the friars that they needed it. A minister asked him permission to keep some luxurious and very expensive books. Yes he reply: "For your books I don't want to lose the book of the Gospel, which

2. Passion for books in the Humanistic culture end of 14th– early 16th

During the 14th century the books became increasingly present in the Western artistic imagination, they seem to take on an intrinsic value, to the point of bibliophile passion: as an example, I could cite here the attitude towards books of Petrarca[19] or the case of Richard of Bury, author of the *Philobiblon* (1344).[20] The presence of books becomes more and more consistent in the second half of the 14th century, coinciding with the revival of interest in antiquity. The code was no longer reserved only for the transmission of the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy, but already intended as the instrument to return to an age representing an ideal model for contemporary society. European universities were a driving force behind the production of codes. Therefore, even before the invention of movable type printing, there had been an increase in the production of texts, still copied manually, and at the same time an increase in readers.[21] It was a self-feeding circle, but it was still a small circle of things. Vergerio, reader of Logica in Bologna and Padua at the end of the 14th century, writes: «*Literary works, if they are useful for many other purposes, are above all necessary to preserve the memory of the ancient*». According to Vergerio both books and figurative monuments have the ability to pass on memory, but books have a more important role in this process of transmission, because «*a literary work not only preserves the words that have been said, but also reports the speeches and portrays the thoughts of men and, if it is spread in more than one copy, does not die easily*».[22]

I promised to observe. You do as you want, but I don't want my permission to become a trap».

19 Petrarca 1978, III, 18; Petrarch's letter is a true catalogue of what a humanist possesses or would like to possess. See also Macola 2007, pp. 4–12. Letter of Petrarca online, see 20.02.2024, <http://www.cassiciaco.it/navigazione/scriptorium/testi%20medioevo/petrarca/familiares/lettera_III_18.html>.

20 Bishop of Durham and tutor of the future Edward III of England, alongside his official duties, Richard cultivated a love for the collection of books that differed from Petrarch for the emphasis he placed on the materiality of the object, the binding, the parchment, the writing of the copyist, which must be cared for and healed. In his treatise Richard also addressed the thorny problem of the price of books, a subject that at the time had to be particularly felt, as books in general are still a very expensive product, despite the efforts of universities to copy texts, Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri 2020, p. 55; Carena & Ferrero & Macola 2006, pp. 235–244.

21 For the role of the European universities in the XIV c. see Petrucci, 2007, pp. 153–161 and pp. 191–192; De Hamel 1997, analyses the different types of books produced in the Middle Ages for cathedrals, monasteries, universities, princely courts and for private use; Braida, 32, 3-5. Pagani 2023, pp. 165–166.

22 Geri 2008, p. 154. On culture and ideology underlying the tombs of the Bolognese doctors

This still slow progress of production accelerated with the invention of printing: the book production centers in Europe strongly increased, and with them more and more books were printed. Until the early 16th century, printed texts were mostly the same works already in use in the Middle Ages, such as Bibles, legal and philosophical texts for universities, ancient pagan authors and Fathers of the Church; new literary and religious works now enter the market;[23] with the progressive decrease in prices, the number of readers was increasing. Still the economic circle that feeds itself: large public, greater demand, many production centers, lower prices, larger public, new needs and so on. Books are represented now as expression of a new cultural atmosphere: we find books everywhere, in the *studiolo* (fig. 1), piled up in tombs (fig. 2), scattered on the floor, placed in disarray on the shelves (fig. 7).[24] Books are an instrument to connect the present time to the classical antiquity. The *Boy reading* Cicero by Foppa (fig. 8) represents a boy seated in a solemn architectural structure, a terrace opened towards a loggia and a garden in the background, the atmosphere is calm; the inscription suggests the author of the book. The boy himself could be the young Cicero, but his clothing reveals modern inspiration and the desire to establish a comparison between past and present.[25] This image recalls a well-known sentence by Cicero «*si hortum in bibliotheca habes, deerit nihil*».[26] This recovery of the ancient world is completed when Perin del Vaga depicts a tale reported by Plutarch and Strabo (*Stanza della Segnatura*, 1541): Alexander the Great discovered a casket in Darius' treasures and put his beloved copy of the Iliad in it.[27] A second monochrome reinforce the concept with the representation of

see Grandi 1980: the jurists active in the school of Bologna represent themselves in their function and in their social role; Barbier 2018, pp. 80–82. On circulation of jurists, legal manuscripts and artistic, cultural, and legal practices in Europe 13th-15th c. see Bilotta (ed.) 2021, Vol. 3. Barbier 2018, p. 82. 13, 85.

23 Braida 2000, p, 50.

24 The central part (Annunciation) is in the church of the Magdalene of Aix; the wings are in the Musée Royaux des Beaux Arts of Brussels (Jeremiah), in the Boymans van Beuningen of Rotterdam (Isaiah) and in the Louvre (upper part of the wing with Isaiah). See also Still Life with Books in a Niche, Barthélémy d'Eyck, 1442 – 1445 24/04/2024 http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.9060; Heck 2023, 53, 110-119, 155, 182.

25 Also identified with "Augustus' grandson reading Cicero" on the base of Vita Ciceronis by Plutarch, see Jones & Kilpatrick 2007, p. 371, 376. 24.03.2024, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30222153>, see 24.03.2024, <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=65472>.

26 Cavarzere 2007, IX, ep. 4, to Varro. English version Williams 1927, vol 2, 94 24.04.2024, <https://archive.org/details/letterstohisfrie02ciceuoft/page/194/mode/2up> .

27 For this image see 24.04.2024, <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/it/collezioni/musei/stanze-di- raffaello/tour-virtuale.html> . In 1545–1547 Perino returned to the same subject of Alexander in the Sala Paolina of Castel Sant'Angelo, representing

Augustus refusing to destroy the manuscript of the Aeneid, ordered by Virgil himself on his deathbed. Alexander and Augustus are proposed as models for all those who love letters, poetry and books.[28]

Entering the 16th c. books are also used as an element to define the personality in a portrait. Rapahael portrayed *Tommaso Inghirami*, prefect of the Vatican Library and curator of the Pope's personal library (fig. 9.): books and large build of *Fedra*[29] become symbols of his intellectual activity, while strabismus indicates a mobile and vital mind. Here the humanist identifies himself with the books he reads and writes. Erasmus of Rotterdam writes that books can be considered a mirror of the reader, a sort of intellectual and spiritual portrait.[30]

In parallel with the development of the book market, the readership is changing profoundly: reading is becoming increasingly independent of any form of control, the books seem to provide direct access to knowledge; Raphael's Stanza *della Segnatura* embodies all the aspects of this new culture: books can now overcome space and time and create an intimate connection with the greatness of the classical past, such as to lead to identification. Entering the Stanza *della Segnatura* (1508–1511), painted for pope Julius II, we find an indirect celebration of book production: here books do not appear directly, they are represented by their authors in the different fields of philosophy, theology, poetry, and legal literature.[31] The same patron, while still cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, had commissioned the *Tomb of Sixtus IV* (1471–1484) to Pollaiolo (Sacristy of Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican), a real manifesto of the late XV c. passion

Alexander the Great in the act of placing Homer's Iliad in a chest, thus alluding to the personal tastes of Alexander III Farnese, as a new Alexander, who commissioned the work, see 24.04.2024, <http://castelsantangelo.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/182/perin-del-vaga-alessandro-fariporre-in-uno-scrigno-le-opere- di-omero>. At the beginning of the 17th century, Pietro da Cortona made explicit reference to the same episode in the frescoes of Palazzo Pitti, providing the Grand Duke of Tuscany with the model of the perfect ruler: in the Sala di Apollo we find Augustus, intent upon listening to the reading of the Aeneid, or Alexander the Great receiving the poems of Homer, see 24.04.2024, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/apollo-room>.

28 Plutarco 2018, liber 26, 133: He took the edition of Aristotle, who they call "the Iliad of the box", he always kept it with him: he kept it with the dagger under the pillow; Aelius Donatus, Vita Vergiliana, 15: «iusserat haec rapidis aboleri carmina flammis Vergilius, Phrygium quae cecinere ducem. Tucca vetat Variusque simul; tu, maxime, Caesar, non sinis et Latiae consulis historiae. Infelix gemino cecidit prope Pergamon igni, et paene est alio Troia cremata rogo». See also Castiglione 2010, I, chapter XXIII, pp. 76–77.

29 Nickname of Tommaso Inghirami, see Battistini 1996, pp. 541–545.

30 Erasmo da Rotterdam 1965, pp. 287–288. Di una tale identificazione tra scrittore e ciò che scrive parla già Petrarca, see Bozoni 2012, pp. 23–24

31 24.04.2024, <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/it/collezioni/musei/stanze-di-raffaello/tour-virtuale.html>; Frommel 2022, 141-176

for books: here we see Allegories and *Liberal Arts* intent on reading, studying, writing clearly visible texts in a *compendium* of the Sistine Christian Humanism that promoted editions of pagan and christian classics together with natural sciences, establishing a bridge between ancient wisdom and the Fathers of the Church.[32]

3. 16th century: a radical change

The long journey of books inaugurated by the medieval universities and the humanists is completed by the modern press. At the end of the 16th century the result is undoubtedly decentralization of production and again the impossibility of controlling this revolution. Such an increase in availability of books has as a corollary the dizzying increase of literary, religious and jurisprudence patrimonies available to readers: «for the first time the complexity of the existing material becomes evident, as for example in the jurisprudence...» writes Luhmann,[33] but it applies to all fields of knowledge. From the point of view of the Church, such an availability of different opinions implies, for example, that heresies also spread faster. This is the moment when the iconography of the book undergoes its first great change, and the books now seem to indicate a feeling of anxiety or melancholia.[34] The first signs of this phenomenon were already present around 1525, as seen in some portraits. *Lorenzo Lenzi*, by Agnolo Bronzino[35] is holding a book: a young man belonging to that cultural and political *élite* described by Castiglione, a "cultured portrait" characteristic of Bronzino; however, Lorenzo has a restless expression, he turns to us with wide eyes, a perfect image of the introversion and individualism that Ong[36] talks about in relation to the relationship with the page of the printed book. Lenzi reads for himself, mentally, he literally shows us the words, we see the sixteenth-century characters. The book is now the main medium, what is written is not just a note that helps verbal communication, the information remains printed on the page. In the Medieval system, knowledge and the written pages were linked to oral communication: writing functioned as an aid to memory; memory allowed to

32 On Sistine Christian Humanism: Benzi & Crescentini 2000; on Sixtus IV tomb see Ettlinger 1953, pp. 239–274.

33 Luhmann 1993, pp. 96–98.

34 Bolzoni 2019, pp. 219–229; Pagani 2023, pp. 186–187.

35 Around 1527, Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco, Milano, 22.3.2024, https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere- arte/schede/B0020-00326/. Future bishop of Fermo reading a book in which we read Petrarch's sonnet XCVI, and on the left sheet the sonnet by Benedetto Varchi that the author himself had dedicated to him, see Cecchi 1996, n. 138, 372, Pagani 2023, pp. 183–184.

36 Ong 2014.

expose the themes in the oral discourse in which the complexity of reality was brought back within a single scheme, relying on the criterion of *auctoritas*, a knowledge that cannot be changed and cannot be overcome. The reader now questions different books, with different theories and tend to free himself from tradition and *auctoritas*. The communication system is no longer directed by a "centre", the books follow the market and the readers, and these in turn follow the books with their different opinions. The reader can sometimes "suffer" the consequences, conflicting feelings can be generated in him, such as melancholy, which seems to emerge in the thoughtful attitude of certain characters portrayed with their volumes. The *Portrait of a man* by Parmigianino (1524 ca.) can be viewed as a paradigm of this feeling, the man raises his gaze from the book and in his troubled gaze we see the crisis of the relationship with the book which had characterized Humanism and the early Renaissance (fig. 10).[37] Same attitude is also that of *Angelo Cesi* in his tomb in Santa Maria della Pace in mid 16th c. (fig. 11).[38]

Dürer's *Saint Jerome* (fig. 12) constitutes an innovative solution in the specific iconography and forms of pictorial representation of the patron saint of Christian humanists. Compared to the traditional representation of Jerome as a humanist in his study, surrounded by the attributes of his erudition, we see a powerful, concentrated, and synthetic image of a wise old man who melancholically meditates on death and contingency of the human condition, whose gaze challenges us and involves us in this exercise of wisdom. The reading is suspended, the gesture of the left hand indicates the skull as the mirror and destination of all worldly vanities, the crucifix, in a recessed plane, focuses the message on a spiritual and transcendent destiny. The realism of the figure and of the few objects defines a "mental space". For Panofsky, the head resting on the hand is an expression of brooding thought, fatigue or pain, it is the attribute of Melancholia and *Acedia*; the book can be considered the origin of a state of perplexity and anxiety, an image of modern condition of restlessness and malaise, man sinks into the contemplation of the insurmountable limits of his own knowledge.[39] Close to Dürer's humanistic prototype is the *Meditorelia* by the German engraver Hans Sebald Beham (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig).[40] As in many images of this type, a hand of this melancholy supports

37 Macola 2006, n. 15 e 108: On the book reads the motto "in aet.ultra" for "in aeternum et ultra".

38 Pagani 2020, pp. 165–166; Pagani 2023, p. 187.

39 Panofsky 2018, Durer's melancholy is the image of self-knowledge and an expression of Faust feeling ("not being able to know"). In Dürer, therefore, melancholy no longer corresponds to temperament as in the previous iconographic tradition but indicates a state of mind: the theoretical condition. Warburg 1980, 309-390; Barale 2009

40 Hans Sebald Beham (1500-1550), see 26.04.2024, <https://library.rijksmuseum.nl/cgi-

his head in a meditative and disconsolate attitude. The arm rests the elbow on a closed volume, this is the source of melancholy according to a verse from the biblical Ecclesiastes (I 18): «*Where there is much wisdom there is great trouble, and he who increases in knowledge increases his suffering*». Books now are indicating the vanity of human science producing melancholy. This idea of human fragility is reinforced by the presence of a skull in association with books in many representations of *Vanitas*. The Allegory with Fame and History[41] (1586) by Hendrick Goltzius (fig. 13) shows books of history together with a skull and the epigram by Franco Estius recalling the vulnerability of the human nature: *Homo bulla est – Vita quasi fumus, bullula quasi flos que perit*.[42] The motive of the soap bubble derive from Varro and Lucan, is transmitted by Erasmus' *Adagia* and reached great diffusion in the second half of the 17th century, together with other motifs that reflect on mortality-vanitas.[43] Books, a skull, a watch, and a glass are the main subject of the still-life or *Vanitas*, by Pieter Claesz (1630, The Mauritshuis, Aja).[44] Antonio de Pereda y Salgado in *The dream of the nobleman* (1650 ca., Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid) depicts a knight sleeping while an angel shows him a series of objects and figures of a profane nature representing the ephemeral, transitory and perishable nature of pleasures, riches, honors and glory. Among the object we see a skull, as an allusion to death; pleasures associated with literature and knowledge are represented through books.[45] The iconography of *vanitas* also spreads through other typologies, variations of the theme represented as allegories, portraits, and paintings of saints in meditation, especially Saint Jerome and Mary Magdalene, already known in the Renaissance. Books and skulls are quite common in the representation of Saint Jerome in the 17th c. (Caravaggio,

bin/koha/opac- detail.pl?biblionumber=62633> and <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.31204>.

41 26.03.2024, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.31204>.

42 Human nature is like a bubble soap; Life ends like a bubble of soap and like a flower.

43 Ost, 2022 78–82.

44 24.03.2024, <https://www.mauritshuis.nl/it/scopri-la-collezione/collezione/943-vanitas-still-life/>.

45 There are two other vanitas by Pereda: one in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, dated 1635; and one in the Uffizi Gallery, (1660–1670). It is also related to the two Postrimerías painted in 1672 by Valdés Leal, today in the Hospital de la Caridad in Seville, which were commissioned by Miguel de Maraña J (In ictu oculi e Finis Gloriae Mundi). He had published a year before Discurso de la verdad, (Discourse on Truth), where he collected his reflections on the uselessness of worldly glories in the face of the certainty of death, a recurring issue in Spanish baroque society. See 24.03.2024, <https://www.academiacolecciones.com/pinturas/inventario.php?id=0639>; Miguel Mañara, Mazzocchi 2012; Enrique Valdivieso González (1988) "Juan de Valdés Leal".

Saint Jerome, 1606, Galleria Borghese, Roma[46]; Lionello Spada, *Saint Jerome*, 1610, Galleria Nazionale Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini; Roma and *St. Jerome* 1615, San Domenico Bologna[47]).

4. Right books and heretical books

From the political and religious point of view, a great availability of different opinions on the market and the possibility of reading in solitude imply that political ideas and heresies are also spreading more quickly. On one side the historical-hagiographic investigation makes the book a valuable ally of the Catholic Reformation; it is also true that the mechanism of dissemination of ideas and opinions changed by the spread of the press, makes the book the object characterizing the Protestant Revolution. The reformers, in fact, are the first to notice the propaganda power of the press, especially of books in national languages, made of a few pages and low cost, equipped with xylographies (prayer books, sermons and Bibles); it is also true that Luther and Zwingli, or monarchs like Henry VIII, are the first to consider the individual reading of books potentially dangerous.[48]

From the Catholic point of view the reformers are the opponents of the Faith and they must be clearly identified with the specific tools of Catholic propaganda, because their books are dangerous. We cannot any longer apply the initial renaissance equation of books = knowledge, or at least the terms must be changed. It is important to show the consequence of the theological errors contained in the books of the reformers and, at the same time, to teach the right path, the true Faith. This can be done with other books, the catholic ones, but also with the use of images that become weapons against heresy. The Council of Trent (1546–1563) dictated the guidelines for religious iconography, the correct way of representing holiness and Faith, so that after the Council we can speak of a real strategy of images.[49] On this basis in the following decades numerous treatises were published, dedicated to the figurative arts with sacred subject, to architecture and liturgical furnishings, revealing the concern of the ecclesiastical hierarchy for artistic activity and the consequent desire to bring it within the parameters established and codified by a higher religious authority. If, therefore, books are assuming an ambivalent character as instruments at the service of the Catholic Church, but also of Protestants, it all now depends on

46 01.05.2024, <https://www.collezionegalleriaborghese.it/en/opere/saint-jerome>.

47 01.05.2024, https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/0800026793.

48 Chartier 2018, pp. 47–51.

49 Prodi 2026, pp. 73–84, 76.

who is the person who holds/ reads/ writes a book. Censorship has become part of European history. All governments applied some form of censorship.[50] One of the tools used to fight the Protestants was historical research aimed at the knowledge and recovery of Early Christianity: the *Annales ecclesiatici* by Cesare Baronio was written with apologetic and polemical intentions against the Protestant.[51] In the frontispiece of three editions of the Annales (1588, 1603 and 1649) we find the recovery of an early Christian iconography in which the snake is used to represent evil and heresy,[52] like in the mosaic in Ravenna (fig. 4 and 14).[53] In the *Annales* frontispiece the snake is associated with the books of the heretics, the same association we find in the description of *Heresia* by Cesare Ripa (1603).[54] With the opening of the 17th century, it becomes therefore necessary to distinguish with specific iconographies which are the legitimate books, bearers of truth and which are not. The *Saint Jerome* by Bartolomeo Cavarozzi (1617) represents the saint concentrated in his writing, a closed book and a skull recall the *vanitas* of human knowledge, but the angels participate in the work of the saint, and we also see an open book sanctified by a crucifix (fig. 15). These books do not raise concerns of censorship, this because we have all the visual guarantees that these are legitimate books. At this point we could build a real gallery of images of Counter-reformation saints represented to guarantee the orthodoxy of the books depicted in 17th c. painting and sculpture: San Carlo Borromeo (saint 1610) and San Filippo Neri and Saint Ignatius of Loyola (canonized in 1622).[55] I will focus on the founder

50 Braida 2000, pp. 107–109. Caravale 2022, p. 33. 90 Barbier 2018, pp. 220–221; Infelise 2013, pp. 3–28.

51 Written with clearly apologetic and polemical intentions against the Protestant-inspired work of the Centuriators of Magdeburg. History of the Churchuntil the 12th century, see Bassan 1992, 24.03.2024, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cesare-baronio_(Enciclopedia-dell'-Arte-Medievale)/>. Gerard-Powell 1985, pp. 473–487.

52 Pagani 2023, pp. 189–190.

53 «The way, the truth and the life».

54 «An exhausted old woman of frightening appearance will throw smoked flame into her mouth, her hair will be messily scattered and bristling, her chest will be exposed, like almost the whole rest of her body, her breasts will be dry and very drooping, she will hold a closed book in her left hand, from which snakes appear to come out and with the right hand show signs of scattering various fates», see Ripa 2002, p. 175.

55 As an example: Giovan Francesco Guerrieri, painting with San Filippo Neri e San Carlo Borromeo, 1613, Santa Maria in Vallicella, Roma, Arcangel 1995, n. 97, 334 cat. 537-538: one of the first representations of the two protagonists of the Counter-Reformation presented together, the reading a religious text. On the table objects with historical and symbolic maning: the book in the foreground bears the date 1576, the year of the plague of Milan in which the action of St. Carlo was very important; this painting is therefore a meditation in the light of the tragic event. The association of the two saints with the plague

of the Society of Jesus, because of the connection of the order to books, study, and knowledge, a context that widely used books.[56] Saint *Ignatius of Loyola* by Seghers[57] and another image of the same saint attributed to Rubens (fig. 16),[58] both paintings using a language fully adapted to the Counter-Reformation issue, which stressed the heroic, emotional and ascetic aspects of the saint life.[59] Seghers shows the Saint after the decision marking his life, now his only weapon seems to be the book, a consequence of the vision in the background.[60] In the painting of Pasadena, Ignatius is wearing a brocaded chasuble and gazing in ecstasy to the heaven, his right hand in a gesture of admonition; his left hand holds a copy of the "Constitutions of the Society of Jesus", with the motto «A*d maiorem Dei gloriam*». Ignatius is seen from below to enhance the icon-effect of a Christian hero; the book is good because is clearly presenting the Jesuit program to defend and enhance the catholic faith.[61]

In 1685 Giovan Battista Gaulli painted in the vault of the left transept of Il Gesù, The Cahapel dedicated to the founder of the company of Jesus: in the *Apotheosis of Saint Ignatius* the angel in the foreground, right under the saint, bears an open book with the same motto.

In the same church, however, we see an iconography that aims to emphasize the danger connected to books, if there are in the wrong hands; in the nave-vault of Il Gesù, Gaulli, painted *Il Trionfo del Nome di Gesù* (1674–1679) with the representation of the *Heretics with their book falling from Heaven*, as if they fell right into the real space of the church thanks to the painter's illusionistic virtuosity (fig. 17).[62] This a very powerful image of the risk we run if books are not within the limits of the correct doctrine. In the same church *The Altar of*

is recurrent in the Congregation of Saint Filippo Neri: in the same church in the chapel of San Carlo Borromeo we find the picture of Giovanni Bonatti San Calo among the plague victims and above a medallion with the two saints in prayer.

56 Zanardi 1998, pp. 3–4; Bianchi, 2021, pp. 21–27. Vacalebre 2016; Comerford 2023; Ditchfield 2002, pp. 277–290

57 For the image see 01.05.2024, < https://catalogo.museivaticani.va/index.php/Detail/objects/MV.40790.0.0>.

58 24.03.2024, < https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/M.1975.03.P>.

59 The two paintings with St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier now in the Vatican Pinacoteca were not therefore executed in Rome, the features follow the model type that was spread by prints, see Goldsmith 1991, 194 note 27.

60 As pointed out by Goldsmith, before 1630 the Jesuit iconography had given greater prominence to images of martyrdom; after 1622 with the canonization of Ignatius and Francis Xavier the two Jesuit saints (and later Francesco Borgia and Luigi Gonzaga and Stanislao Kostka) will play a leading role, see Goldsmith 1991, pp. 16–21; Balis 1994, pp. 177–198, for the various attributions to Rubens or Van Dick see 181, 193 note 20 e 21.

61 Sauerlander 2014, 82; Pierguidi 2017, 219, note 17.

62 Bailey 2003, pp. 123–168, 157.

Saint Ignatius in the Chapel dedicated to the saint[63] for its monumentality and complexity,[64] provide a sort of guide about how to use books. The order has made education and research a real pillar if its activity, so books certainly had a very important value.[65] Indeed, many books are represented in the chapel: in the painted altarpiece, in the group of statues, on the balustrade. I focus on group by Pierre Legros the Younger *Religion triumphant over Heresy* (fig. 18): the true Religion is represented following Ripa, the heretics defeated by Religion are again represented with their books, here adding a snake, traditional emblem of evil; the concept is reinforced by the representation of a zelous cherub tearing the pages of a book, since it is a heretic book (the names of the heretics Luther, Calvin, Zwingly, were erased by a restoration in the '90s but still visible in the photo published by Pecchiai in 1952[66]), while the saint in the altarpiece is the only bearer of the approved and therefore orthodox book. A perfect representation of the Jesuit mission for the re-Christianization of Europe. The second group decorating the chapel is *Faith conquering Idolatry* by Jean-Baptiste Theodon (fig. 19)[67]: Faith crushes with her foot the head of a dragon which holds a book on whose rib are written the names of the false oriental deities Cames – Fotoques – Amida et Xaca, latinized version of the Portuguese translation of

63 At the end of 1694 the General General Tirso González announced a competition chaired by Carlo Fontana, then won by Father Andrea Pozzo SJ. The work began in August 1695 and was completed in 1699 (The chapel includes a majestic aedicule, two groups of statues, bas-reliefs on the pedestals of the aedicule and on the walls adjacent to it, an elaborate balustrade with eight candelabra. This complexity and the use of precious materials (alabaster, lapis lazuli and other semi- precious stones, silver and gilded bronze) required the participation of a large group of highly specialized artists and artisans cohordinated by Pozzo and by brother Carlo Mauro Bonacina, who left a detailed account of the work (Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rom. 140, cc. 3r-41v; cc. 46r-66r). An unusual solution was devised for the central area of the aedicule: a painted altarpiece that, by means of a device of winches, could be lowered making appear a niche containing a monumental silver statue of the saint, made by Pierre Le Gros the Younger (original lost, now a copy of early 19th c.), Levy 2004, pp. 84–106; Bösel & Salviucci Insolera 2010. Gargano 1996, pp. 156–167, 156 note 3.

64 Trisciuzzi 2015, pp. 171–179.

65 Since 1599 the Jesuits have a well-structured study program; education organized in a rigorous way, based on the idea of inculturation (adaptation): humanistic culture for the apostolate among educated classes and propagation of the Catholic Faith. Large libraries with books on every subject taught by its members as well as information on matters related to the global spread of the Jesuits: atlases, botanical manuals reflecting the flora of the Americas, reports from the missions, reports of the congregations. They also held prohibited books (in dedicated sections of the library, so as not to fall into the wrong hands) and other texts considered to be in error, for example books from China, brought home by returning missionaries. See Vacalebre 2016.

66 Pecchiai 1952, tav XXV, same in Levy 2004, 175-176 figg. 70 and 71.

67 Engass 1976, pp. 124–148.

the names of Japanese and Chinese gods.[68] Dragon and book, another warning against books conveying ideas of other religious culture. As a result of the missionary activity of the Jesuit, the king of Congo is rising after his conversion to the true Faith.

In 1728 Giuseppe Rusconi sculpted the official image of *St. Ignatius* (fig. 20) in the series of Founders of religious orders decorating the nave of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome: hence the iconography of the founder is officialized.[69] This image returns, once again in the Jesuit context, in the wooden *Pulpit of St. Charles Borromeo in Antwerp* (1718–1728) by Jan Pieter van Baurscheit the Elder, but is not limited to the Jesuit context, we find it in fact also in the *Saint Augustine defeating Heresy, with Charity and Faith*, by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro (1761), in San Domenico alla Zecca, Napoli (fig. 21).[70] The saint bearing his "right book", while the Evil is characterized by the book in association with the snake to indicate heresy, the "otherness" from the catholic point of view.

More generally, the association between books and snake as a representation of the dangerousness of books seems to be typical of European modernity which fears that it cannot control the revolution triggered by the press. We live today with same fears regarding the introduction of a new technology, the Artificial Intelligence.[71] This is again an epochal revolution, but unlike the press, it seems to take away from the reader the personal space of research and reflection, bringing the knowledge under the control of an *Auctoritas* now artificial. This article aims to present my research, still in progress, although in advanced state, for a monograph dedicated to the representation of books in Western art.

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68 Angelini 2005, tav. 59, names still visible; same in Levy 2004, pp. 175–176.

69 Giometti 2017: in 1728 Camillo began to work on models for the statue of St. Ignatius for the series of the Holy Founders of the Basilica of St. Peter, however his death on December 9, 1728, interrupted the work that was completed by his most faithful pupil, Giuseppe Rusconi. On Camillo Rusconi working in Saint Peter's Basilica see also Martin 2019.

70 Russo 2020.

71 Benanti 2018, part I, Lavoro; 2022, part I.

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APPENDIX

Fig. 1. St. Jerome in his study, Antonello da Messina, 1475 ca., National Gallery, London.

Fig. 2. Tomb of Filippo Della Valle (+1494), Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rom.

Fig. 3. Mosaic of Saint Lawrence, mid V c., Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna.

Fig. 4. Archbishop's Chapel, Ravenna, late 5th – early 6th century.

Fig. 5. Charles the Bald receiving the Vivien Bible, First Bible of Charles the Bald, IX c., Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, MS lat. 1.

Fig. 6. SSaint Jerome, First Bible of Charles the Bald, IX c., Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, MS lat. .

Fig. 7. Jeremiah, Master of the Annunciation of Aix-en-Provence, 1443-45, right panel of Triptich of the Annunciation, Musée Royaux des Beaux Arts di Bruxelles.

Fig. 8. Vincenzo Foppa, A boy reading Cicero, from the Banco Mediceo di Milano, 1464, Wallace Collection, London

Fig. 9. Portrait of Tommaso Inghirami, around 1510 (Fedra Inghirami), Raffaello, Galleria Palatina Palazzo Pitti, Firenze

Fig. 10. Portrait of a man with a book, Parmigianino, around 1524, York Art Gallery, York

Fig. 11. Tomb of Angelo Cesi, mid-XVI, Santa Maria della Pace, Roma

Fig. 12. Saint Jerome, Albrecht Dürer, 1521, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisboa

Fig. 13. The Allegory of Fame and History, Hendrick Goltzius, 1586, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

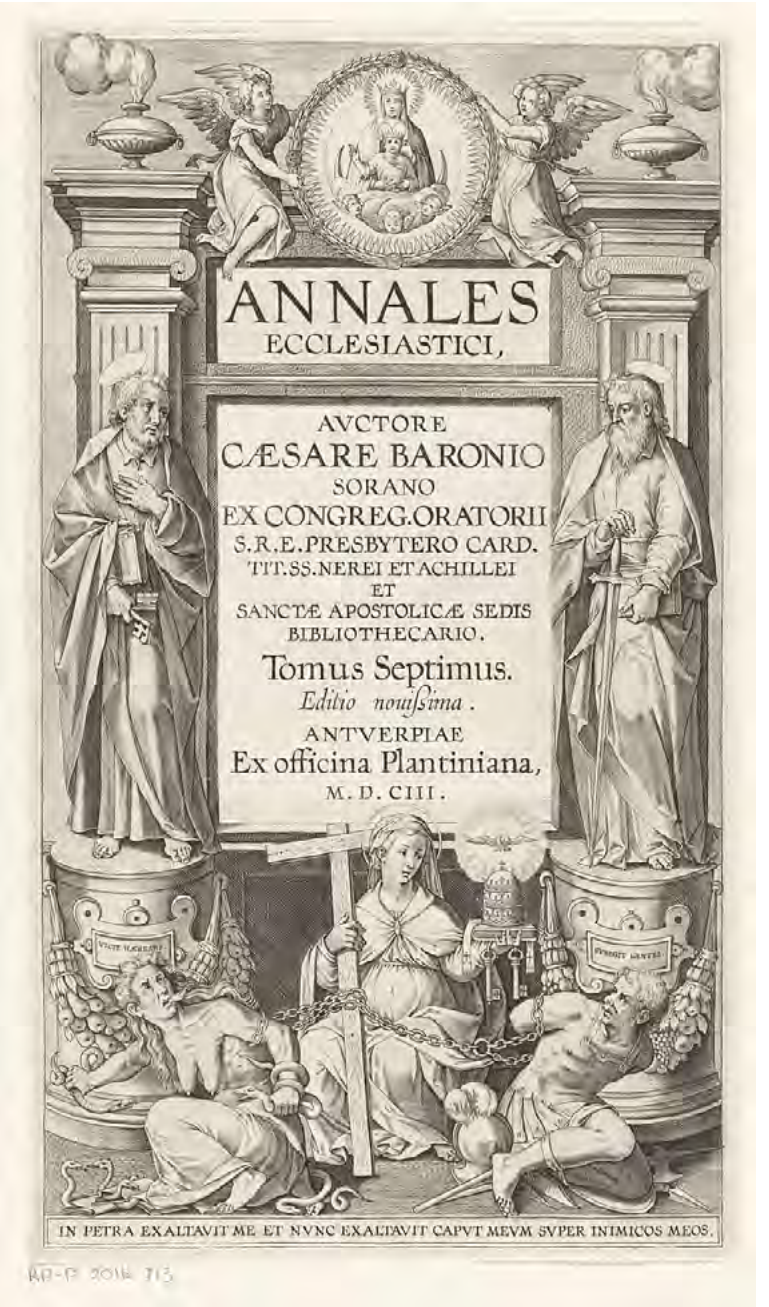

Fig. 14. Annales ecclesiastici, Cesare Baronio title page, 1603.

Fig. 15. Saint Jerome, Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, 1617, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Firenze

Fig. 16. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Peter Paul Rubens, 1620–1622, Norton Foundation, Pasadena

Fig. 17. Triumph of the Name of Jesus (detail), Giovan Battista Gaulli, 1674–1679, Roma.

Fig. 18. Triumph of the Name of Jesus (detail), Giovan Battista Gaulli, 1674–1679, Roma.

Fig. 19. Faith defeating Idolatry, Jean-Baptiste Theodon, 1695–1699, Chapel of Saint Ignatius, Il Gesù, Roma.

Fig. 20. Saint Ignatius, Giuseppe Rusconi, 1728, Basilica di San Pietro, Città del Vaticano.

Fig. 21. Saint Augustine defeating Heresy, with Charity and Faith, Domenico Antonio Vaccaro (1761), San Domenico alla Zecca, Napoli.