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'Christ and the Soul are like Pyramus and Thisbe'
An Ovidian Story in Fifteenth-Century Sermons

Abstract

The sophisticated ways in which several fifteenth-century preachers used Ovidian stories and their allegorical interpretations prove that late medieval sermons represent a promising but neglected area for classical reception studies. Preachers – whose names are today almost forgotten by scholars but whose sermons circulated at large in early printed books – considered Ovidian allegories as powerful instruments for instructing, entertaining, and moving their audiences. This article begins with a review of the literature on the presence of Ovid in sermons, and discusses the methodology to study the transformation of classical myths in preaching. Then, it focuses on four sermons that incorporated the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which appears in the sermon collections written by Conrad Grütsch, Johann Meder, and Jacobus de Lenda. The repeated use of this Ovidian myth allows us, therefore, to investigate how different preachers appropriated and re-elaborated this story, and the role that it played in diverse contexts. Finally, the analysis of these texts also sheds light on the use of the Ovidius moralizatus in fifteenth-century sermons.

Even worse, did not Ovid come onto this pulpit? 'Oh – you will say – the Ovidian Metamorphoses is indeed good!' And I firmly reply: 'Ovid the imaginative! Ovid the fool!' Tell me: Should one preach up here Ovid or the Christian life? […] You have received this gift, namely that you have heard the preaching of the Holy Scripture.[1]

When preaching in Florence in 1496, Savonarola complained bitterly about the use of Ovid in sermons, recalling that, in recent years, the audience had become accustomed to hearing 'Ovidio fabuloso', rather than Scripture, from the pulpits. Yet, in the fictional dialogue constructed by Savonarola, a listener rebutted that the Ovidian Metamorphoses was indeed a good instrument for preaching. This rhetorical pretext allowed Savonarola to reassert his radical exclusion of 'pagan' authors and to emphasize the need for the centrality of the Bible. Albeit indirectly, Savonarola's complaint attests to the success of Ovidian stories in fifteenth-century preaching. A few decades later, authors such as Erasmus and Luther – from very different points of view – also harshly mocked the allegorization of classical stories in sermons.[2] Similar complaints were not completely new among preachers.[3] Still, the different voices that criticized this practice at the dawn of the sixteenth century suggest that the custom of introducing the allegories of Ovidian myths was relatively widespread in fifteenth-century sermons and that several preachers had a very positive opinion about their utility. In spite of the fact that these elements bear witness to the popularity of Ovidian stories in sermons, their actual presence in fifteenth-century preaching, the way in which

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[1] 'Peggio ancora, non era egli venuto in su questo pergamo Ovidio? "Oh – tu dirai – Ovidio Methamorphoseos è pure buono". Io ti rispondo: Ovidio fabuloso, Ovidio pazzo, ché dirò pure così. Ditemi un poco, hassi egli a predicare quassù Ovidio, o la vita cristiana? […] Tu hai avuto adunque questo dono, ché tu hai udito predicare la Scrittura santa'; Girolamo Savonarola, Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea, ed. by Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols (Rome, 1961), II, p. 88. On the debates about the relationship between classical myths and Christian faith, see Bodo Guthmüller, 'Concezioni del mito antico intorno al 1500', in Bodo Guthmüller, Mito, poesia, arte. Saggi sulla tradizione ovidiana nel Rinascimento (Rome, 1997), pp. 37–64 (this quotation and the position of Savoranola are discussed at pp. 40–43) and Bodo Guthmüller, Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare: Forme e funzioni della trasposizione in volgare della poesia classica nel Rinascimento italiano (1981) (Fiesole, 2008), pp. 86–114.

[2] See Luc Brisson, How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology (Chicago, 2004), pp. 148–49 and Joseph Engels, 'Les commentaires d'Ovide au XVIᵉ siècle', Vivarium, 12.1 (1974), 3–13. For a rich overview, see Bodo Guthmüller, 'Concezioni del mito antico', pp. 37–64. While these allegories were very popular during the years 1490–1520, the progressive change of the intellectual climate is summarized by the ban on the Ovidius moralizatus in the 1559 Roman Index. According to some scholars, the reason for its condemnation was that this work did not match the new humanist critical standard; Kathryn L. McKinley, Reading the Ovidian Heroine: 'Metamorphoses' Commentaries 1100–1618 (Leiden, 2001), pp. 112–13.

[3] See Siegfried Wenzel, 'Ovid from the Pulpit', in Ovid in the Middle Ages, ed. by James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson and Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 160–76 (pp. 173–74).

sermons incorporated them, and their different functions have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. This perhaps suggests that the condemnation of this practice by the father of European humanism and that of the Reformation, who both looked at it as an adulterated form of preaching, had an influential impact on scholarship.

The chief intention of this essay is to contribute to a better understanding of the way Ovidian myths and their allegorical interpretations were appropriated by fifteenth-century preachers whose names are rarely mentioned by modern scholars, although their printed sermon collections played a significant role in shaping the religious culture of that period.[4] In order to do this, I analyse a group of sermons that exploit the story of Pyramus and Thisbe and its allegorical interpretation. I focus on this specific Ovidian story since its presence in several sermons allows us to investigate how different preachers appropriated and re-elaborated this tale and the role that it played in diverse contexts. Moreover, since one of the sources used by preachers was Pierre Bersuire's Ovidius moralizatus, this article also sheds light on the actual influence and function of this work in fifteenth-century sermon collections. Finally, this article aims to show how late-medieval sermons provide scholars with a promising and almost unexplored area for classical reception studies.[5]

In the following pages, I first present an overview of the literature on the use of Ovidian stories in sermons and the methodological framework that I adopt to study the reception and transformation of classical myths in preaching. Then, I briefly summarize the long-standing traditions of medieval allegories on Pyramus and Thisbe. Finally, by analysing four texts, I consider how fifteenth-century preachers presented this story in their sermons and the function that it played in their communicative strategy.

1. Ovid in Preaching and the Transformation of Myths

The possibilities and limits of using gentile authors in preaching were discussed since the earliest Artes praedicandi. For instance, the seminal Ars praedicandi of Alain de Lille (d. 1202) approved the use of 'dicta gentilium' in sermons on the basis of the example of the apostle Paul, who

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[4] On the importance of early printed sermon collections, see Anne T. Thayer, Penitence, Preaching and the Coming of the Reformation (Ashgate, 2002) and John M. Frymire, The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany (Leiden, 2010).

[5] I addressed this topic in Pietro Delcorno, 'Classical Reception in Medieval Preaching: Pyramus and Thisbe in Three Fifteenth-Century Sermons', in Framing Classical Reception Studies, ed. by Maarten De Pourcq, Nathalie de Haan and David Rijser (Leiden, forthcoming), which discusses some of the materials that I analyse here in more depth. I am very grateful to the organizers of and participants in the conference Framing Classical Reception Studies (Radboud University Nijmegen, 6–8 June 2013), since their scholarship – directly or indirectly – provided me with valuable suggestions to further develop my research.

introduced quotations of philosophers to reinforce his arguments.[6] In a few cases, Alain de Lille even adopted a sentence from Virgil's Aeneid or Ovid's Metamorphoses as the thema for a sermon. In an intriguing sermon, he presented an allegorical interpretation of Ovid's description of the palace of the Sun, explicitly approving the use of gentile poets also 'in the assembly of the faithful'.[7] It is possible to find a few other examples of the use of Ovidian myths in fourteenth-century preaching. In a 1306 sermon, in order to describe the pains of hell, the Dominican Giordano da Pisa (d. 1311) referred to – and allegorized – a few elements of Orpheus' journey to the underworld as it was presented in the Metamorphoses.[8] This was one of the very few references to Ovid – and to classical stories in general – in Giordano's sermons, as he probably followed the suggestions of those Artes praedicandi that recommended using gentile fabulae only rarely (rare) or very rarely (rarissime).[9] Mentions of Ovidian myths are instead abundant in the sermon collection of another Italian Dominican friar, Nicoluccio di Ascoli (d. 1345), who had a sort of fascination with antiquity. In his sermons, he allegorized several tales from the Metamorphoses: Deucalion and Pyrrha; Apollo and Daphne; Phaethon and Icarus; Jupiter and Europa; Perseus and Medusa.[10] Siegfried Wenzel has systematically searched for the use of Ovidian myths in the extant

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[6] Alain de Lille, Ars praedicandi, in Jean-Paul Migne, Patrologia Latina cursus completus (Paris, 1855), CCX, cols 111–98, here col. 114.

[7] 'Sunt enim aliqui qui susurant de verbis poeticis in conventu fidelium nunquam debere fieri mencionem […]; sed talibus invencionibus retroiectis ad ea que premisimus recuramus [There are some who murmur that one must never mention the words of the poets in a congregation of faithful […]; yet, having refused these false ideas, we shall now go back to what I have announced [i.e. the Regia Solis]]'; Alain de Lille, Sermo Regia Solis, quoted by Peter Dronke, 'Metamorphoses: Allegory in Early Medieval Commentarties on Ovid and Apuleius', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 72 (2009), 21–39 (p. 29). See also Franceso Siri, 'I classici e la sapienza antica nella predicazione di Alano di Lilla', in L'antichità classica nel pensiero medievale, ed. by Alessandro Palazzo (Porto and Turhout, 2011), pp. 149–70.

[8] Giordano focused his attention on the pains of Ixion, Tantalus and Tityus, without following the entire story of Orpheus. Yet, he stated that it would be possible to devote a whole sermon to this favola or parabola, as he had defined it: 'A sporre pur questa storia vorrebbe essere una predica pur per sé e buona'; Giordano da Pisa, Quaresimale Fiorentino 1305–1306, ed. by Carlo Delcorno (Florence, 1974), pp. 66–67. On this passage, see now also Nicolò Maldina, 'Predicare l'aldilà. Osservazioni sul Quaresimale di Giordano da Pisa (Firenze, 1305–1306)', Italianistica, 43.1 (2014), 11–29. Maldina rightly points out that the use of Ovid in the description of hell is rather uncommon, while preachers usually referred – among classical sources – to book six of Virgil's Aeneid. On the latter, see Jacques Berlioz, 'Virgile dans la littérature des exempla (XIIIe-XVe siècles)', in Lectures médiévales de Virgile, ed. by Jean-Yves Tilliette (Rome, 1985), pp. 65–120. Later examples on the use of Ovid in the description of hell can be found in the anonymous fifteenth-century sermon collection Peregrinus cum angelo, on which I am currently working. On Aquinas' peculiar reference to Orpheus as model of the perfect civic orator, see Enrico Artifoni, 'Orfeo concionatore. Un passo di Tommaso d'Aquino e l'eloquenza politica nelle città italiane nel secolo XIII', in La musica nel pensiero medievale, ed. by Letterio Mauro (Ravenna, 2001), pp. 137–49.

[9] See Carlo Delcorno, Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare (Florence, 1975), pp. 199–203.

[10] See the section significantly entitled 'Le Panthéon antique de Nicoluccio di Ascoli' in Xavier Masson, Une voix dominicaine dans la cité. Le comportement exemplaire du chrétien dans l'Italie du Trecento d'après le recueil de

corpus of sermons produced in late-medieval England. He has found only a very few sermons that go beyond a passing mention of Ovid, which often 'function as no more than attractive but one-dimensional springboards into the usual pool of allegories'.[11] As a result of this, it seems that the so-called fourteenth-century 'classicizing friars' such as Robert Holcot or John Ridewall did not have a significant impact on the actual pastoral use of Ovidian myths.[12] A more lasting legacy of these friars might be seen in the dissemination of the picturae, i.e. descriptions of images of ancient gods presented as allegorical personifications of virtues and vices.[13] This rhetorical device was widespread in fifteenth-century preaching, particularly in Germany.[14] While picturae have attracted considerable scholarly attention, the incorporation of Ovidian myths in fifteenth-century sermons is still largely a terra incognita and, in light of the sermons discussed in this essay, it is possible to argue that the panorama that Wenzel has drawn for England cannot be considered as immediately representative of other contexts.

While several studies on sermons have paid attention to – or at least have taken into consideration – the incorporation of 'pagan' fables within sermons, preaching is generally

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sermons de Nicoluccio di Ascoli (Rennes, 2009), pp. 171–82. Masson points out Nicoluccio's relationship with the contemporary works of Pierre Bersuire and John Ridewall. However, it still lacks an in-depth study of the passages listed by Masson.

[11] Siegfried Wenzel, 'The Classics in Late-Medieval Preaching', in Mediaeval Antiquity, ed. by Andries Welkenhuysen, Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (Leuven, 1995), pp. 127–43 (p. 130). A very peculiar occurrence of Ovidian myths is an early fifteenth-century sermon on the occasion of a woman entering a convent. In this sermon, the preacher engaged in a creative use of the description of the house of the Sun and of the story of Scylla, 'a rare bird in medieval sermon literature' (p. 138). This story was particularly useful in this sermon, since the future nun was called Allis, that is Silla spelt backward, and the preacher played repeatedly on her name (the sermon is now edited in Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation, ed. by Siegfried Wenzel [Washington, DC, 2008], pp. 283–97). Wenzel mentions also a few occurrences of Ovidian stories in the sermons of the bishop of Rochester, Thomas Brinton (d. 1389), among which are Atalanta, Alcmena and Hercules, and Narcissus. An extensive use of the story of Atalanta can be found also in an early fifteenth-century sermon, see A Macaronic Sermon Collection from Late Medieval England: Oxford, MS Bodley 649, ed. by Patrick J. Horner (Toronto, 2006), pp. 240–51. The editor refers to Holcot's commentary on the Book of Wisdom as possible source of the moralization of this myth (p. 241). For further details on the presence of Ovid's works (not only his Metamorphoses) in sermons circulating in late-medieval England, see Wenzel, Ovid from the Pulpit, where – alongside those already mentioned in the 1995 article – he refers also to several sermons that use the story of Argus and Mercury, and that of Phaethon and Icarus.

[12] On these fourteenth-century authors, see Beryl Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century (Oxford, 1960). Smalley's seminal work is reconsidered in James G. Clark, 'The Friars and the Classics in Late Medieval England', in The Friars in Medieval Britain, ed. by Nicholas J. Rogers (Donington, 2010), pp. 142–51.

[13] The picturae occur already in sermons before 1320, and as such cannot be considered an invention of the 'classicizing-friars'; see Wenzel, 'The Classics in Late-Medieval Preaching', p. 130.

[14] On picturae in preaching, see Kimberley A. Rivers, Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages (Turnhout, 2010), in particular chapter 6 'The mnemonic exempla of the classicizing friars' (pp. 209–50) and, on the fifteenth century, chapter 8 'Johannes von Werden's Dormisecure and the circulation of picturae in Germany and Central Europe' (pp. 283–320).

overlooked as a source for studying the reception of classical texts. This is even true of those authors whose medieval reception has been the object of a solid tradition of scholarship, as is certainly the case with Ovid. [15] While studies on the allegorical interpretations of the Metamorphoses are numerous, scholars usually mention the possibility that these allegories were used by preachers, and yet references to sermons that actually incorporated Ovidian myths are scarce if not missing. The flourishing studies on the Ovide moralisé and the Ovidius moralizatus are a case in point. Several scholars have underlined that each book of the Ovide moralisé – an influential vernacular poem written in the early fourteenth century – forms a coherent text structured according to the rules of medieval sermons.[16] As Marylène Possamaï-Perez says, the Ovide moralisé was written probably by a Franciscan friar as a 'collection of materials for preachers' and its main aim was 'to help the mendicant friars to teach the Christian dogma and to show the path towards their salvation to the listeners'.[17] Yet, in these studies, the actual interest of preachers in the Ovide moralisé is not taken into consideration and concrete references to sermons incorporating its allegories are lacking. Also in the literature on the Ovidius moralizatus, written by the Benedictine Pierre Bersuire (d. 1362), one often finds the idea that this book served primarily to aid preachers in preparing their sermons.[18] Already Joseph Engels has noted that, within the work of Bersuire, the instructions given in the second person singular ('Vel allega fabulam [Or add a fable]'; 'Vel dic moraliter [Or explain it in a moral way]') seem 'to address the preacher who was in the process of composing his sermon', while the parts that are introduced with karissimi [beloved] are 'sections that were meant to be used as they were in sermons'.[19] Yet, Engels provides only a very

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[15] See Kathryn L. McKinley, 'The Medieval Commentary Tradition 1100–1500 on Metamorphoses 10', Viator, 27 (1996), 117–49; Lectures et usages d'Ovide (XIIIe – XVe siècles), ed. by Emmanuèle Baumgartner, Cahiers de recherches médiévales, 9 (2002) (available online: http://crm.revues.org/26 (accessed 4 June 2016)); Lectures d'Ovide publiées à la mémoire de Jean-Pierre Néraudau, ed. by Emmanuel Bury (Paris, 2003); Ovide métamorphosé: les lectures médiévaux d'Ovide, ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner, Laurence Mathey-Maille and Michelle Szkilnik (Paris, 2009).

[16] See Marylène Possamaï-Perez, L'Ovide moralisé: essai d'interprétation (Paris, 2006), pp. 789–868 (in part. pp. 803–07). She develops an idea expressed for book three by Marc-René Jung, 'Aspects de l'Ovide moralisé', in Ovidius redivivus. Von Ovid zu Dante, ed. by Michelangelo Picone and Bernhard Zimmermann (Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 149–72, who points out that the anonymous author of the Ovide moralisé is first of all a preacher, and for books eleven and twelve by Jean-Yves Tilliette, 'L'écriture et sa métaphore. Remarques sur l'Ovide moralisé', in Ensi firent li ancessor. Mélanges de philologie médiévale offerts à Marc-René Jung, ed by Luciano Rossi (Turin, 1996), pp. 543–58. See now also Nouvelles études sur l'Ovide moralisé, ed. by Marylène Possamaï-Perez (Paris, 2009).

[17] See Possamaï-Perez, L'Ovide moralisé, pp. 835–38.

[18] For an updated overview of the literature, see Jamie Claire Fumo, 'Commentary and Collaboration in the Medieval Allegorical Tradition', in A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid, ed. by John F. Miller and Carole E. Newlands (Chichester, 2014), pp. 114–28.

[19] Joseph Engels, 'L'edition critique de l'Ovidius moralizatus de Bersuire', Viatorum, 9 (1971), 19–24 (pp. 22–23).

general reference to the presence of Bersuire's work in preaching, mentioning the sermons of the Augustinian Jacques Legrand (d. 1415).[20] This trend is confirmed by the otherwise excellent work of Kathryn McKinley, Reading the Ovidian Heroine: *Metamorphoses'* Commentaries (1100–1618). It repeatedly labels texts such as the Ovide moralisé and the Ovidius moralizatus as 'a type of handbook for preachers'.[21] However, no concrete example of preachers using these texts is provided, even when McKinley analyses the appropriation and transformation of an Ovidian heroine such as Atalanta, whose story was indeed present in several late-medieval sermons.[22] It just says that the clerics 'could incorporate into sermons' these moral readings.[23] It is quite revealing that this lack of concrete references to actual sermons happens even in a book that shows a keen evaluation of the medieval clerical readings of Ovidian myths. In general, although the allegorical versions of the Ovidian myths are often presented as preaching aids, the question on whether and how they concretely worked within real sermons is seldom – if ever – addressed. A recent, important exception that crosses the boundary between classical reception studies and medieval sermon studies is the 2009 volume Ovid in the Middle Ages, where Wenzel devotes an insightful chapter to 'Ovid from the pulpit'.[24]

From a methodological point of view, the most promising approach to deal with Ovidian stories in sermons seems to be adopting the perspective elaborated by scholars working on the reception and transformation of the classics. When introducing Ovidian myths in their sermons, preachers showed great freedom in re-adapting them. These texts had to function as sermons before a liturgical congregation. What could appear to modern readers as a partisan distortion of an Ovidian story was part of a form of communication that mixed very different elements into one

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[20] Engels refers to Evencio Beltrán, 'Jacques Legrand († 1415) prédicateur', Analecta Augustiniana, 30 (1967), 148–209. This article mentions Legrand's use of Bersuire, and yet does not provide concrete examples.

[21] McKinley, Reading the Ovidian Heroine, p. XXVI. Moreover, Bersuire's Ovidius moralizatus is defined as 'a compendium for preachers wanting to cite classical exempla with strongly moral interpretation', p. 106.

[22] This myth is present in several English sermons as well as in Grütsch's Quadragesimale (see notes 11 and 47). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the use of this story in sermons was so common that the Dominican Jean Reynard de Die (d. c. 1512), speaking about temptations, could write in one of his sermons: 'Nota etiam de Athalanta, secundum Methamorphoseos, et de Hyppomene proiiciente tria poma, quibus mulier tandem capta est. Dic historiam ad longum [Note also – according to the Metamorphoses – the story of Atalanta and Hippomenes, who tossed three apples, by which Atalanta was eventually captured. Explain this story at length]'; Jean Reynardi, Sermones quadragesimales de peregrinatione generis humani (Lyon: Etienne Baland expensis Simon Vincent, 1515), fol. 18ʳ (it refers to the story of Atalanta also in another sermon; cf. fols 94ᵛ–95ʳ). Evidently, he was confident that his readers, i.e. the other preachers, were able both to recount and to interpret this Ovidian story. This sermon collection is quite rich of classical stories, among which several taken from the Metamorphoses, such as: Daedalus and the labyrinth (fol. 6ᵛ); Myrrha (fol. 41ʳ); Cadmus and the dragon's teeth (fol. 64ʳ); Argus and Mercury (fol. 67ᵛ); and Tantalus and Jupiter's banquet (fol. 117ᵛ).

[23] McKinley, Reading the Ovidian Heroine, p. 112.

[24] Wenzel, 'Ovid from the Pulpit', pp. 160–76.

single discourse in order to involve, instruct, and persuade the audience. Every element, even an Ovidian fabula, eventually had to serve the sermon's overarching purpose. Late-medieval preaching was indeed an omnivorous creature that was able to eat everything, to digest everything, and to use everything. In other words, the sermon was like a sponge that absorbed all elements that suited its goals from any literary genre.[25] Warning against the risk of overemphasizing their role, Wenzel points out that classical stories did not have a special status in preaching and indeed were just part of the 'wide rhetorical arsenal that was at the disposal of late-medieval preachers'.[26] Rather than considering this as a limit, the perspective advanced by classical reception studies recognizes positively the agency of medieval readers/writers and their appropriation of previous texts.[27] Instead of highlighting the increasing distance of the Ovidian myths as they appear in the sermons from the original version of Ovid, the focus shifts into the chain of reception that shaped these later versions of the Ovidian stories and their multiple functions in preaching, acknowledging that this approach 'becomes decisive when traditions intersect, […] when classical material interacts with non-classical material' – as they do in sermons.[28] Going beyond the concept of reception, scholars working within the project 'Transformationen der Antike' proposed in 2011 a set of criteria for a nuanced consideration of the multiple types of transformation of the classics.[29] They coined the term allelopoiesis to describe the reciprocal change ('reziproke Veränderung') that in different forms characterizes the actors and cultures involved in the process, which therefore produces structurally bidirectional results. This seems a promising methodology in evaluating the presence, meanings, and functions of classical myths in preaching, since it allows to underline the active agency of medieval authors and does not consider the transformations of the classics as a negligible (when not adulterated) by-product of the ancient sources, but as a mutually influential form of dialogue with them.

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[25] The image of the sponge is used by Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez, 'Dos décadas de estudios sobre predicación en la España medieval', Erebea, 1 (2011), 3–20 (p. 16).

[26] Wenzel, 'The Classics in Late-Medieval Preaching', p. 130.

[27] For an introduction, see Charles Martindale, 'Reception', in A Companion to the Classical Tradition, ed. by Craig W. Kallendorf (Oxford, 2007), pp. 297–311.

[28] Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, 'Introduction: Making Connections', in A Companion to Classical Receptions, ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Oxford, 2008), pp. 1–9 (p. 9).

[29] See Transformation. Ein Konzept zur Erforschung kulturellen Wandels, ed. by Hartmut Böhme and others (Paderborn, 2011). In particular, the collective article with the same title of the book (pp. 39–56) discusses, among others, the concepts of appropriation (Appropriation), assimilation (Assimilation), encapsulation (Einkapselung), hybridization (Hybridisierung), and interpretation (Umdeutung). I am grateful to Prof. Johannes Helmrath who called my attention to this article.

2. Medieval Interpretations of Pyramus and Thisbe

The fifteenth-century sermons that incorporate the story of Pyramus and Thisbe draw on a long-standing tradition of moral and allegorical interpretations of this tale.[30] This type of interpretation dates back to the twelfth century and can be divided, for the sake of clarity, into two main branches: 'Ovidius Ethicus' and 'Ovidius Theologicus'.[31]

The moral reading condemns the passion that leads the young couple to death. Developing this reading, many commentators played with the change of colour of the mulberries, which was interpreted as a mutatio moralis.[32] As John of Garland (d. c. 1272) wrote in his Integumenta, the transformation of the mulberries from white to black 'indicates that death is hidden in the sweetness of love'.[33] This interpretation was recurrent in commentaries and lasted well into the sixteenth century. [34] Moreover, the two lovers were often mentioned as a cautionary example of the foolishness and destructive power of love.[35] One would imagine that this reading was perfect for a sermon against deathly lustful passion. Still, as far as I know, there is no trace of this interpretation

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[30] I do not consider the re-elaborations of this story that do not offer an explicit moral or allegorical reading of it. On these texts, beside the general literature on the medieval reception of Pyramus and Thisbe, see Robert James Glendinning, 'Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom', Speculum, 61 (1986), 51–78, which analyses six medieval Latin poems on the Ovidian story, and also Massimiliano Gaggero, 'Il Piramus et Tisbé e la tradizione mediolatina di Ovidio: primi sondaggi', in Parole e temi del romanzo medievale, ed. by Anatole Pierre Fuksas (Rome, 2007), pp. 247–79. On the medieval reworking of this myth in the vernacular, see Christine Ferlampin-Acher, 'Piramus et Tisbé au Moyen Âge: le vert paradis des amours enfantines et la mort des amants', in Lectures d'Ovide, pp. 115–47; Francesco A. Ugolini, 'I cantari di Piramo e Tisbe', Studi romanzi, 24 (1934), 19–201; and Cristina Montagnani, ''Tutte siàn fatte comme fu Tisbina': storia di Piramo, di Tisbe e di una novella senza più autore', Medioevo letterario d'Italia, 4 (2007), 91–110.

[31] See Franz Schmitt von Mühlenfels, Pyramus und Thisbe. Rezeptionstypen eines Ovidischen Stoffes in Literatur, Kunst und Musik (Heidelberg, 1972), pp. 26–65.

[32] On this concept, see Guthmüller, Mito, poesia, arte, pp. 25–27.

[33] 'Alba prius morus nigredine mora colorans / Signat quod dulci mors in amore latet'; quoted in Schmitt von Mühlenfels, Pyramus und Thisbe, p. 28. John of Garland developed an idea already present in the Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphoseos (1175) of Arnulf of Orléans.

[34] This reading is present in Giovanni del Virgilio's Allegoriae (1322–23) and it was further elaborated in Giovanni Bonsignori's vernacular version of the Metamorphoses (c. 1375). Bonsignori's work not only was printed several times from 1497 onwards but its interpretations were introduced also in Niccolò degli Agostini's vernacular version of Ovid (1522). On these texts, see Erminia Ardissino, 'Introduzione', in Giovanni Bonsignori, Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare, ed. by Erminia Ardissino (Bologna, 2001), pp. IX–XVI and Guthmüller, Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare.

[35] In the Bible de Malkaraume (c. 1270), the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is presented as an exemplum of a violent death caused by lust, similarly to that of the two lustful elders in the story of Susanna; see Maud Moussy, 'La moralisation du mythe: Pyrame et Thisbé dans la Bible de Jean Malkaraume', in Ovide métamorphosé, pp. 83–107. For other examples, see note 62.

in preaching.[36] This reminds us that the passage from clerical readings of myths to their actual presence in sermons should not be taken for granted and needs to be carefully investigated.

The allegorical reading interprets the love of Pyramus and Thisbe from a Christological perspective. Their tragic destiny is read mainly as an allegory of the perfect love between Christ and the soul. In this interpretation, the mutatio of the mulberries does not play any role. The focus is, instead, on Pyramus, who voluntarily offers himself to death as Christ did for human salvation. Here, the mulberry tree covered in blood acquires a central place as symbol of the Cross. This interpretation dates back to early fourteenth-century texts.[37] In a very short version, it recurs in a few manuscripts of the Gesta romanorum, one of the most popular late-medieval collections of exempla.[38] However, it is the reading provided by the Ovide moralisé – an anonymous poem written between 1291 and 1328 – that proved to be very influential.[39] Further developing this reading, Pierre Bersuire introduced an allegorical explanation of this Ovidian myth in the second version of his Ovidius moralizatus (c. 1350). [40] In this allegory, each detail of the Ovidian fabula was deciphered as a Christian symbol (see text 1). Pyramus and Thisbe are figures of Christ and the soul. They are similar and love each other because the human being 'ad imaginem Dei factus est [is created in the image of God]'. The wall separating them indicates the original sin, while the hole in

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[36] Beside the texts presented in this article, the only other mention of Pyramus and Thisbe in sermons that I am aware of is by an early fifteenth-century preacher who complains that some of the clergymen were not well-versed in the Bible and the Church Fathers but instead knew this and other myths very well; Three Middle English Sermons from the Worcester Chapter MS F.10, ed. by D.M. Grisdale (Leeds, 1939), p. 75.

[37] A detailed analysis of the interpretation of Pyramus and Thisbe in the Gesta romanorum, the Ovide moralisé, and the Ovidius moralizatus is found in Pietro Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe. L'allegoria della fabula ovidiana in una predica di Johann Meder (1494)', Schede Umanistiche, 23 (2009), 67–106 (pp. 78–84).

[38] See Gesta romanorum, ed. by Hermann Oesterley (Berlin, 1872; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), p. 633. Yet, Oesterley did not mention from which manuscript he took this exemplum, which does not appear in the oldest manuscripts. The most comprehensive study on this collection of exempla is Brigitte Weiske, Gesta romanorum (Tübingen, 1992).

[39] See Ovide moralisé. Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle, ed. by Cornelis De Boer, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1915–38; repr. Vaduz, 1984), II, pp. 18–39. On the complex textual tradition of this text, see Mattia Cavagna, Massimiliano Gaggero and Yan Greub, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'Ovide moralisé: Prolégomènes à une nouvelle édition', Romania, 132 (2014), 176–213. Beside the literature already mentioned, see also Jean-Yves Tilliette, 'Le Cantique des Cantiques relu par l'Ovide moralisé: interprétations allégoriques du conte de Pyrame et Thisbé', in Il Cantico dei Cantici nel Medioevo, ed. by Rossana E. Guglielmetti (Florence, 2008), pp. 553–64.

[40] There is not a critical edition of the Ovidius moralizatus, which Bersuire conceived as the fifteenth book of his encyclopaedic Reductorium morale. The printed editions are all based on the 1509 edition published by the humanist Josse Bade (Badius Ascensius), who largely reworked the text. For instance, in the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, he introduced several verses and expressions taken from Ovid; see Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter […] explanata (Paris: Badius Ascensius, 1509), fols 36ʳ–37ʳ (the text often circulated under the names of Robert Holcot or – as in this case – Thomas Waleys). For this reason, I use two manuscripts of the Ovidius moralizatus: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS D 66 inf (XIV century, Avignon); and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS lat. 15145 (1430, Paris). Beside the literature already mentioned, see also Rivers, Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice, pp. 254–62.

the wall through which they talk is the voice of the prophets. They arrange a tryst at the fountain under the mulberry tree, which symbolize baptism and the Cross respectively. However, the devil (the lioness) prevents the soul from approaching the fountain of grace, until the incarnation of Christ (the arrival of Pyramus), who offers himself on the Cross (the mulberry tree covered in his blood). As a result of this, the faithful soul (Thisbe) must experience a similar interior death through compassion, in order to be united with Christ in heavenly glory. Bersuire proposed also another shorter allegory, in which Thisbe is the figure of the Virgin Mary whose heart was pierced by an invisible sword when Christ died on the Cross. As we are going to see, both interpretations of the Ovidius moralizatus found their space in fifteenth-century sermons, proving the lasting influence of this work on late-medieval preachers' culture and appreciation of classical heritage.

3. Conrad Grütsch: A Fabula for the Passion Sunday

The first preacher that I consider is Conrad Grütsch or Gritsch (d. c. 1475), a Conventual Franciscan friar of the Upper Germany province.[41] He was a lecturer in theology, and wrote his Lenten sermon collection between 1440 and 1444. His Quadragesimale first circulated in manuscript format and subsequently found a striking dissemination in print under the name of his younger brother, Johann Grütsch (d. c. 1470), who was a secular cleric and doctor of canon law in Basel.[42] Grütsch's Quadragesimale can be considered a real bestseller, with twenty-four incunabula editions between 1472 and 1497, almost one per year, and increasing by at least another ten in the early sixteenth century.[43] It is reasonable to suppose that no less than 15,000 copies were put into circulation. The Quadragesimale was repeatedly printed in many German cities, had seven incunabula editions in Lyon – which probably served mainly the French market – and one in Venice.[44] Among the

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[41] See Bert Roest, Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction before the Council of Trent (Leiden, 2004), pp. 109–10.

[42] On the manuscripts of the Quadragesimale, its correct attribution, and the profile of the two brothers see André Murith, *Jean et Conrad Grütsch de Bâle: Contribution à l'histoire de la prédication franciscaine au XVme siècle* (Fribourg, 1940). The printed editions merge the two brothers by indicating as author 'frater Johannes Gritsch, ordinis fratrum minorum, doctor eximius'.

[43] For the list of the incunabula editions, see notes 66–68. Catalogues and database usually indicate the first edition as printed not after 1474 (for instance, see The Incunabula Short Title Catalogue [ISTC]). Yet, a copy has the rubricator's date 1472 on its opening page; Conrad Grütsch, Quadragesimale [Nuremberg: Johann Sensenschmidt and Andreas Frisner], 1A (Sermon for Ash Wednesday). This copy comes from the Cistercian monastery of Fürstenzell (close to Passau) and is now held in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ink G-390). It is accessible online via the webpage of this institution.

[44] The limited reception of Grütsch's Quadragesimale in Italy is not an isolated case. There was a sort of impermeability of the Italian market for model sermon collections from other parts of Europe, which rarely were re-printed in the Peninsula; see Thayer, Penitence, Preaching and the Coming of the Reformation, pp. 32–40.

fifteenth-century model sermon collections, Grütsch's *Quadragesimale* deserves a special mention not only for its widespread dissemination but also for the abundant richness of its text. Rather than ready-made sermons, this preacher assembled an encyclopaedic text that incorporated biblical references, theological and juridical *quaestiones*, lively examples, and allegorical images. One of the peculiar characteristics of this *Quadragesimale* is the remarkable presence of classical stories. They were also attentively registered in the printed index, as valuable items that should be easy to find for the preachers who used this sermon collection for preaching.[45] The entry *fabula* lists twenty-four fables and myths, from the Aesopian story of the cicada and the ant[46] to the Ovidian myth of Atalanta.[47]

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is listed among these *fabulae*.[48] Grütsch introduced it in a sermon for an important liturgical celebration, namely Passion Sunday. In order to recall that Christians have to be ready to follow Christ in the battle against his adversaries, 'on this day – as Grütsch wrote – the banner of the Passion of Christ [i.e. the Cross] is raised, the effusion of the blood of Christ is shown in the red colour of the liturgical dresses and the choir sings the hymn *Vexilla regis prodeunt* [The banners of the king issue forth]'.[49] Developing this military imagery, the last part of this sermon presents the four cardinal virtues according to the panoply *topos*.[50]

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[45] On indexes in sermon collections, see Letizia Pellegrini, 'Indici per predicare: le tavole nei manoscritti di sermoni fra XII e XV secolo', in *Fabula in tabula: una storia degli indici dal manoscritto al testo elettronico*, ed. by Claudio Leonardi, Marcello Morelli and Franceso Santi (Spoleto, 1995), pp. 135–43.

[46] The entry reads: 'Fabula de alaude et formice de labore et otio [Fable of the cicada and the ant, that is on work and sloth]'. In the moral reading of the story, summer is the earthly life, while winter represents the afterlife; see Grütsch, *Quadragesimale*, 8N (Feria sexta post Invocavit). On the use of fables in sermons, see Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, 'Les fables au service de la pastorale des Ordres mendiants (XIIIᵉ - XVᵉ siècles)', *Les fables avant La Fontaine*, ed. by Jeanne-Marie Boivin, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet and Laurence Harf-Lancner (Genève, 2011), pp. 153-80.

[47] The entry reads: 'Fabula Athalantis velociter currentis de dyabolo et anima [Fable of the fast runner Atalanta, that is on the devil and the soul]'. Grütsch introduced the moral reading of the myth (Atalanta is the soul, Hippomenes is the devil, the gold apples are the temptations) at the end of his Eastern sermon, see Grütsch, *Quadragesimale*, 46L. This sermon is unusually rich of *fabulae*, since before that of Atalanta, there are two other stories: Jupiter and Io, and Hercules and Achelous; see Grütsch, *Quadragesimale*, 45X and 46B. The story of Atalanta had two different readings, in which Hippomenes could be either the devil or Christ; see Wenzel, 'The Classics in Late-Medieval Preaching', p. 130.

[48] The entry reads: 'Fabula Pirami amoris et compassione [sic] Christi [Fable of Pyramus' love, that is on Christ's compassion]'.

[49] 'In signum huius hodie in sancta ecclesia vexillum passionis Christi erigitur, et effusio sanguinis eius in casulis rubeis monstratur, et chorus canit: Vexilla regis prodeunt'; Grütsch, *Quadragesimale*, 32A. Venantius Fortunatus's hymn *Vexilla regis* was sung in that liturgy.

[50] *Temperantia* is associated with the reins, *fortitudo* with the armour, *prudentia* with the helm, and *iustitia* with the sword. On panoply mnemonic schemes on virtues and vices, see Lina Bolzoni, *La rete delle immagini: predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena* (Turin, 2002), pp. 61–71.

Rather unpredictably, the section on prudence ends with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. How is it possible to connect a tragic suicide with prudence? Grütsch used a snake and a stone. The Gospel in fact reads 'Estote prudentes sicut serpentes [be as shrewd as snakes]' (Matthew 10. 16). Drawing on the medieval bestiaries and encyclopaedias, Grütsch singled out and allegorized the characteristics of the snake's prudence. For instance, he said that 'the snake blocks its ears before the snake charmer; in fact, it puts one ear on the stone and blocks the other with its own tail'.[51] This image was common in medieval descriptions of the snake and had been often used as a symbol of those who do not listen to the Scripture.[52] Grütsch chose a different and ingenious interpretation by saying that to combat worldly seductions one has to close his or her ears like the snake. This can be done by thinking of Christ, who is the true stone, and of death, which is the tail, the end of life.[53] The last characteristic of the prudent snake is that it renews itself when it sheds its skin by passing through holes in a stone. In the allegorical reading, 'the stone is Christ and its holes are his wounds'.[54] Therefore, believers should reject their sinful lives (like the snake its old skin) by passing through these holes, i.e. through the meditation on the Passion.[55] A quotation from the Song of Songs ('Veni columba mea in foraminibus petre [Come, o my dove, in the holes of the rock]'; Song of Songs 2. 14) facilitates a smooth transition from the holes in the stone to the theme of

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[51] 'Seconda prudentia [est] quod obturat aures suas ne audiat incantatorem. Nam unam aurem applicat ad petram et aliam cum cauda obturat'; Grütsch, Quadragesimale, 32P.

[52] Augustine and Isidore already used this image and interpretation; see Nicolò Maldina, 'La serpe in corpo. Per il bestiario di Giordano da Pisa', Erebea, 1 (2011), 137–56 (p. 145).

[53] 'Sic nos facere debemus contra corruptores […]. Quando ergo tales incantant superiorem partem racionis, unam aurem Christo, qui est petra, coniungiamus, 1 Cor 10. Et inferiorem obturemus cogitatione finis et mortis nostre, que est cauda corporis et vite nostre, ne illi qui blande nobis voluptates suggerunt protrahant ad consensum [Against the corrupters, we must do in this way […]. When they try to enchant us, we have to connect one of our ears to Christ, who is the stone, according to 1 Corinthians 10. And we have to obstruct the other ear by thinking of our final death, which is the tail of our body and life, so that those who flatteringly suggest pleasures to us could not gain our consent]'; Grütsch, Quadragesimale, 32P. On this less diffuse tradition of a positive reading of the snake blocking its ears, see The Latin and German Etymachia: Textual History, Edition, Commentary, ed. by Nigel Harris (Tübingen, 1994), pp. 302–06.

[54] 'Petra est Christus cuius foramina sunt ipsius plurima vulnera'; Grütsch, Quadragesimale, 32P.

[55] 'Cum ergo veterem pellem, id est nostram conversacionem corruptam et abominabilem, deponere volemus, devota contemplacione et recordacione passionis Christi per illa foramina transeamus. Exo. XXXIII: Ponam te in foramine petre et protegam te dextera mea. Et Cant. II: Veni columba mea in foraminibus petre etc. O quam dulciter et amicabiliter Christus animam devotam ad sue passionis recordacionem invitat [Therefore, when we want to reject our old skins – that is, our sinful and abominable lives − we shall pass through those holes by the devout contemplation and memory of the Passion of Christ. Exodus 33: I will put you in a hole in the rock and protect you with my right hand. And Song of Songs 2: Come, o my dove, in the holes of the rock etc. Oh! How sweatly and amicably Christ invites the devout soul to recall his Passion]'; Grütsch, Quadragesimale, 32P.

Christ who invites the beloved soul to contemplate his Passion.[56] At this point, the preacher introduced the two Ovidian lovers in order to depict the ideal relationship between Christ and the soul: 'Est enim de Christo et de anima compassionata sicut de Piramo et Tysbe, de quibus narrat Ovidius, liber IIII Methamorphoseos [Christ and the soul are like Pyramus and Thisbe, as Ovid narrates in the fourth book of Metamorphoses]' (see text 2).[57] Grütsch referred to Ovid here. However, both the narrative and the interpretation of the Franciscan preacher follow closely another source, namely the version given by the Ovidius moralizatus. This is absolutely evident when looking at the allegorical interpretation of the myth, which is copied word-by-word from Bersuire, removing only the Marian allegory.[58] Thus, Grütsch's reception of Ovid was actually the appropriation of the previous reception by Bersuire, who had in turn borrowed largely from the Ovide moralisé.

Table 1 – Bersuire and Grütsch (English translation in the footnotes)

Bersuire, Ovidius moralizatus, Paris, BNF, MS lat. 15145, fol. 74ʳᵛ	Grütsch, Quadragesimale [Nuremberg, not after 1472], 32R
Ista historia potest allegari de passione et incarnatione Christi. Piramus enim est Dei filius, Tisbe vero anima humana, qui se a principio mirabiliter dilexerunt, et per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Verum quia dato quod essent vicini, id est quasi consimilis nature, pro eo quod ad imaginem Dei factus est homo, quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat.	Quid Piramus est nisi Dei filius? Tyspe [sic!] vero anima devota, qui se a principio mirabiliter dilexerunt, per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Dato tamen quod ad ymaginem Dei factus esset homo, quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat.

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[56] The connection between this sentence of the Song of the Songs and the wounds of Christ was widespread in medieval exegesis; see for instance Hugh of Saint-Cher: 'In foraminibus petre: id est, in fide vulnerum pedum et manuum Christi [In the cracks of the rock: this is, in the faith of the wounds of Christ's feet and hands]'; Biblia cum postilla domini Hugonis Cardinalis, 6 vols (Basel: Johann Amerbach, 1504), III, fol. 105ᵛ. In the same way, the Glossa reads: 'In foraminibus: In vulneribus Christi ecclesia sedet et nidificat, cum in passione domini spem sue salutis ponit, et per hoc ab insidiis accipitris, id est dyaboli, se tutandam confidit [In the cracks: the Church stays and nests in the wounds of Christ, when she puts the hope of her salvation in the Lord's Passion. Thanks to this, the Church trusts to be protected from the dangers of the hawk, i.e. the devil]'; Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps, Adolph Rusch of Strassburg, 1480/1481, ed. by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson, 4 vols (Turnhout, 1992), III, fol. b6ᵛ.

[57] On the connection between the Song of Songs and the allegories of the Ovidian story see Tilliette, 'Le Cantique des Cantiques', pp. 553–64.

[58] In the table, I compare only the allegorical interpretations of Bersuire and Grütsch. However, also Grütsch's narrative follows closely that of Bersuire.

Ipsi tamen, sibi per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, condixerunt per beatam incarnationem in simul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire.	Ipsi tamen sibi, per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, dixerunt per beatam incarnacionem insimul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire.
Sic igitur factum est quod ista puella, anima, propter leenam, id est propter diabolum, ad fontem gratie adire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui Pirami, id est Dei filii, sub silencio expectavit. Agei 2°: Si moram fecerit exspecta eum quia veniens veniet et non tardabit. Iste igitur iuxta cumdictum finaliter venit et sub arbore, id est sub cruce, amore Tisbe, id est anime, se morti exposuit ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit.	Sic ergo factum est quod illa puella, anima, propter leenam, dyabolum, ad fontem gratie ire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui, Dei filii, sub silentio expectavit. Aggei 2: Si moram fecerit expecta eum quia venit et non tardabit. Iste igitur iuxta cumdictum venit finaliter et sub arbore crucis amore Tyspe, id est anime, se morti exposuit ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit.
Tisbe, id est filio fidelis anima, se debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio transfigere et eandem penam mentaliter sustinere, ut sic in una urna, id est una celi gloria, possit perpetuo simul esse.[59]	Anima ergo fidelis instar Tyspe debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio se transfigere et iuxta sponsum inseparabiliter permanere.[60]

[59] 'This story can be referred to the Passion and incarnation of Christ. Indeed, Pyramus is the Son of God and Thisbe the human soul. From the beginning they loved each other admirably, and for charity and love they decided to join themselves together. Although they were neighbours − this is to say almost similar in their nature, since the human being is created in the image of God − a wall – that is, Adam's sin − obstructed their union and separated them. Yet, by speaking to each other very often through the prophets, they both agreed on meeting together through the holy incarnation and joining each other under a mulberry tree – that is, under the Cross – at the fountain of the baptismal grace. Therefore, it occurred that this girl – the soul – due to a lioness – that is, due to the devil – could not come to the fountain of grace, but waited in silence for the arrival of her friend Pyramus, that is to say the Son of God. Haggai 2: If he makes any delay, wait for him; for he shall come, and he shall not tarry. Therefore, as agreed, he finally came and under the tree – that is, under the Cross – for love of Thisbe – that is, the soul – he offered himself to death so that he covered the tree of the Cross in his own blood and darkened its colour. Thisbe – that is, the soul faithful to the son – must pierce herself with the same sword of the Passion through compassion and mentally bear the same pain, so that she could be forever together with him in the same urn – that is, in the same celestial glory'.

[60] 'Who is Pyramus if not Christ? Thisbe indeed is the pious soul. From the beginning they loved each other admirably, and for charity and love they decided to join themselves together. Although the human being is created in the image of God, a wall – that is, Adam's sin − obstructed their union and separated them. Yet, by speaking to each other very often through the prophets, they agreed on meeting together through the holy incarnation and joining each other under a mulberry tree – that is, under the Cross – at the fountain of the baptismal grace. Therefore, it occurred that that girl – the soul – due to a lioness – the devil – could not come to the fountain of grace, but waited in silence for the arrival of her friend, the Son of God. Haggai 2: If he makes any delay, wait for him; for he shall come, and he shall not tarry. Therefore, as agreed, he finally came and under the tree of the Cross for love of Thisbe – that is, the soul – he offered himself to death so that he covered in his own blood the tree of the Cross and darkened its colour. Therefore, the faithful soul must, like Thisbe, pierce herself with the same sword of the Passion through compassion and remain beside her groom inseparably'.

As we have seen, in the interpretation of Bersuire used by Grütsch, Pyramus is Christ and Thisbe the human soul. Each detail of the story receives an allegorical reading, using the same reasoning until the death of Pyramus under the mulberry tree, which symbolizes the Cross that Christ 'covered in his own blood [proprio sanguine cruentavit]'. For what concerns Thisbe, her suicide represents the voluntary death of the soul to remain beside Christ inseparably. This spiritual unity with Christ and his Passion through compassion can be seen – from Grütsch's point of view – as the supreme form of prudence and, therefore, justifies the mention of this myth at this point of the sermon. In this way, each detail of the Ovidian myth finds its Christian meaning, with the same mechanism used for the snake. From the rather utilitarian perspective of late-medieval preaching, the 'naturalistic' description of a snake and the love story of Pyramus and Thisbe did not radically differ. Preachers looking at Grütsch's collection when preparing their sermons had both of them at their disposal to introduce their listeners to a meditation on the Passion and to the importance of prudence.

One can say that Grütsch limited his work to selecting, excerpting, and copying the page of Bersuire, without making significant additions. However, the relevance of the presence of this allegory in a sermon should not be underestimated for several reasons. First, this is not just a passing reference to a classical myth without further development, as in many other sermons. The Franciscan preacher presented the story at length and in full detail. He did so not simply as a cultured reference to reinforce his ethos, but as an element of the sermon that was meant to affect the emotions of the audience, and to inspire the listeners to meditate intensely on the Passion. Second, as we have seen, the recurrence of the Ovidius moralizatus in preaching is often assumed in the academic literature, yet this has never been properly validated. In this passage of Grütsch, it is possible to see how Bersuire's reading was actually adapted to a sermon.[61] Third, Bersuire's interpretation is encapsulated within a text that sheds new light on it. The idea of presenting Pyramus and Thisbe as an example of prudence was highly innovative and even audacious, particularly considering the opposite moral reading that portrayed them as an example of the ruinous consequences of lust.[62] Finally, the value of this sermon collection also lies in its impressive dissemination. Generations of preachers used it to prepare their sermons. In a key liturgical feast

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[61] The reception of the Ovidius moralizatus in Grütsch and the way he used these fabulae in sermons would require further investigation, since the Franciscan preacher largely relied on Bersuire at least for two other stories: Jupiter and Io, and Atalanta and Hippomenes (see note 47).

[62] In the German area, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was used as a negative example in didactic texts such as Dirc Potter's Der Minnen Loep (1411–12) and Sebastian Brant's Das Narrenschiff (1494); see Schmitt von Mühlenfels, Pyramus und Thisbe, p. 44.

such as Passion Sunday or while they were browsing through the index in search of ideas for sermons, this text suggested them to present their own congregations with this allegorical reading of the Ovidian tale. Mediated and controlled by the clergy, this version of the myth was not restricted to the literate elite. It represented instead one of the possible entry points to classical heritage for illiterate people who were among the listeners of sermons. Grütsch's Quadragesimale spread this interpretation of the Ovidian myth well before the Ovidius moralizatus was available as a printed book (1509) and even before the publication of the Bible des poètes (1484), which made accessible Bersuire's allegories in the French vernacular.[63]

However, did preachers really mention Pyramus and Thisbe when they preached to their congregations? In other words, in the mare magnum of Grütsch's sermon collection, was this part actually used by preachers? The relationship between written model sermons and their performance remains elusive, since it is difficult to trace out what was really said to a concrete audience.[64] Nevertheless, one can find clear evidence of the interest of other preachers in Grütsch's section on Pyramus and Thisbe. For instance, on the page of a 1486 copy of the Quadragesimale, one of its users – probably a preacher – wrote 'Fabula de Priamo et Cyspe', following the mistake of this printed edition, which constantly misspelt the names of the two Ovidian lovers.[65] Within the twelve pages of the sermon, this is the only item of marginalia. For this reader, it was the most interesting point of the sermon, something that he wanted to be able to find quickly when browsing through the book. This is just one small detail that hints at the interest of preachers for this part of the sermon. In the next two paragraphs, I analyse two other sources that clearly show how Grütsch's use of this Ovidian fabula attracted the attention of his colleagues. First, some printed editions of the Quadragesimale of Grütsch have an expanded and more sophisticated allegorical reading of Pyramus and Thisbe. Second, another Franciscan preacher, Johann Meder, imitated Grütsch and reworked this myth in his own Lenten sermon collection.

4. The Allegory Reworked: Two Versions of Grütsch's Quadragesimale

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[63] The Bible des poètes is a French adaptation of the Ovidius moralizatus and the Ovidè moralisé. It was printed for the first time in 1484 and received its famous title in the 1493 edition published by Antoine Vérard; see on this Jean-Claude Moisan and Sabrina Vervacke, 'Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide et le monde de l'imprimé: la Bible des Poëtes, Bruges, Colard Mansion, 1484', in *Lectures d'Ovide*, pp. 217–37.

[64] See 'Dal pulpito alla navata. La predicazione medievale nella sua recezione da parte degli ascoltatori (secc. XIII-XV)', Medioevo e Rinascimento, n.s. 3 (1989).

[65] Conrad Grütsch, Quadragesimale ([Strasbourg: Printer of the 1483 'Vitas Patrum'], 1486), 32Q, held by the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt, Inc. III 190. The fact that the person who wrote the note did not correct the misspelt names shows that he either was not very familiar with the original story or did not care too much about it.

Looking for traces of the actual uses of this section of the sermon, I checked this passage in as many copies of Grütsch's sermon collection as possible, since the presence of marginalia is usually a good sign of the interest of preachers for a specific portion of a sermon. Very soon I realized that, in several printed editions, the allegorical reading of Pyramus and Thisbe had been reworked and expanded. This allowed me to discover that there are – at least – two printed versions of the Quadragesimale. On the basis of the passage on Pyramus and Thisbe, I checked twenty-one out of twenty-four incunabula editions.[66] The first version of the Ovidian myth is present in thirteen editions.[67] They are the earliest ones, while this version does not appear anymore after a Nuremberg edition published in 1488. The revised version appears for the first time in a 1484 edition printed in Strasbourg. Then, it is to be found in (at least) another seven incunabula editions published in Lyon, Strasbourg, and Venice.[68] In a few years, the new version replaced the previous one, although the front page of these editions did not advertise a revised or ameliorated version of the Quadragesimale, as early printed books often announced in their titles.[69] The differences between the two editions, the dynamic of their circulation, and the network of their printers would require a specific study. Here, I focus my attention only on the two versions of the allegorical interpretation of the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Table 2 – Two versions of Grütsch's allegory (English translation in the footnotes)

Grütsch, Quadragesimale [Nuremberg: not after 1472], 32R	Grütsch, Quadragesimale, [Strasbourg], 1484, 32R
Quid Piramus est nisi dei filius? Tyspe (sic!) vero	Quid Priamus [sic!] nisi dei filius? Cyspe [sic!] vero

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[66] Here and in the following notes, data on fifteenth-century editions are derived from The Incunabula Short Title Catalogue of the British Library (ISTC): http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/ (accessed 22 May 2016). I did not have the possibility to check three editions: [Lyon: Nicolaus Philippi and Marcus Reinhart], 1487; Lyon: Johannes Trechsel, 23 October 1489; and [Lyon]: Jean Bachelier and Pierre Bartelot, 31 July 1497.

[67] The editions are: [Nuremberg: Johann Sensenschmidt and Andreas Frisner, not after 1472]; [Ulm]: Johann Zainer, 1475; [Ulm]: Johann Zainer, 1476; [Augsburg]: Johann Wiener, 1477; [Strasbourg: Georg Reyser?, not after 1477]; [Reutlingen: Michael Greyff, not after 1478]; [Reutlingen: Michael Greyff, c. 1479]; [Nuremberg]: Anton Koberger, 1479; [Nuremberg]: Anton Koberger, 1481; [Cologne]: Heinrich Quentell, 11 July 1481; Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1483; [Lyon: Nicolaus Philippi?, c. 1484–86]; [Nuremberg]: Georg Stuchs, 1488.

[68] The editions are: [Strasbourg: Printer of the 1483 'Vitas Patrum'], 5 February 1484; [Strasbourg: Printer of the 1483 'Vitas Patrum'], 1486; [Lyon: Johannes Fabri], 1489; [Strasbourg: Georg Husner], 1490; Lyon: Johannes Trechsel, 1492; Lyon: Johannes Trechsel, 1495; Venice: Lazarus de Suardis de Saviliano, 1495; [Strasbourg: Georg Husner?], 31 December 1495. The trend is confirmed by the three sixteenth-century editions that I consulted: Strasbourg: Georg Husner, 1505; Lyon: Claude Dovost, 1506; Paris: Jean Petit, 1512. As a confirmation to what noted on the passage on Pyramus and Thisbe, the closing prayer of the last sermon (Grütsch, Quadragesimale, 48O) shows an identical trend: the 1484 edition of Strasbourg has a longer version, which then is found in all the editions mentioned in this note.

[69] The 1484 edition reproduces exactly the front page of the 1479 edition of Anton Koberger.

anima devota, qui se a principio mirabiliter dilexerunt, per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Dato tamen quod ad ymaginem Dei factus esset homo, quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat.	anima devota, qui se a principio mirabiliter dilexerunt, et per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Dato tamen quod **essent vicini et consimiles natura pro eo quod ad imaginem Dei anima est facta**, quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat.
Ipsi tamen sibi, per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, dixerunt per beatam incarnacionem insimul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire.	Ipsi tamen sibi, per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, condixerunt per beatam incarnationem insimul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire.
Sic ergo factum est quod illa puella, anima, propter leenam, dyabolum, ad fontem gratie ire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui, Dei filii, sub silentio expectavit.	Sic ergo factum est quod illa puella, anima, propter leenam, **id est iniquitatem dyaboli qui humane nature peplum maculavit**, ad fontem gratie pervenire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui, Dei filii, sub silentio expectavit.
Aggei 2: Si moram fecerit expecta eum quia venit et non tardabit. Iste igitur iuxta cumdictum venit finaliter et sub arbore crucis amore Tyspe, id est anime, se morti exposuit. Ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit.	**Abacuc** 2: Si moram fecerit expecta eum quia **veniens** veniet et non tardabit. Iste igitur iuxta condictum venit finaliter et **reperiens humanam naturam peccatis maculatam in** arbore crucis **pro anima sua amica, proprio gladio, id est voluntate, seipsum vulneravit et occidit. Isaie 53: Oblatus est quia ipse voluit**. Ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem **ipsius fructus crucis qui est Christus discoloravit. Isaie ubi supra: Non est species ei neque decor.**
Anima ergo fidelis instar Tyspe debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio se transfigere et iuxta sponsum inseparabiliter permanere.[70]	Anima ergo fidelis que instar Cispe **videt sponsum suum amore eius sic vulneratum et occisum** debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio se **cordialiter** transfigere et **moriendo mundo** iuxta sponsum inseparabiliter permanere.[71]

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[70] For the English translation of this text, see note 60.

[71] 'Who is Pyramus if not Christ? Thisbe indeed is the pious soul. From the beginning they loved each other admirably, and for charity and love they decided to join themselves together. Although **they were close and similar in their nature, as the soul is created in the image of God**, a wall – that is Adam's sin − obstructed their union and separated them. Yet, by speaking to each other very often through the prophets, they agreed about meeting together through the holy incarnation and joining each other under a mulberry tree – that is, under the Cross – at the fountain of the baptismal grace. Therefore, it occurred that the girl – the soul – due to a lioness – **that is to say the iniquity of the devil who stained the cloak of human nature** – could not come to the fountain of grace, but waited in silence for the arrival of her friend, the Son of God. **Habakkuk 2**: If he makes any delay, wait for him; for he shall come, and he shall

As we have seen, the oldest version (c. 1472) derives word-by-word from Bersuire. In comparison, the expanded version (1484) includes seven interesting additions. First, this version is theologically more accurate when it discusses Pyramus and Thisbe as symbol of the similarity between God and the human being. Instead of 'ad imaginem Dei factus est homo [the human being is created in the image of God]' (1472), it reads 'vicini et consimiles natura pro eo quod ad imaginem Dei anima facta est [they were close and similar in their nature, since the soul is created in the image of God]' (1484). Second, the anonymous reviser stressed twice the sinful condition of human nature and connected this theme with a specific detail of the story. In fact, the lion that stains the cloak of Thisbe (peplum) with blood becomes the symbol of 'the iniquity of the devil that stained human nature' ('id est iniquitatem dyaboli qui humane nature peplum maculavit'). Third, this version explicitly connected the death of Pyramus/Christ with the sinful condition of humanity. This death is not a suicide but he offered himself to death since 'he found human nature stained by sins' ('reperiens humanam naturam peccatis maculatam').[72] In this way, the central theme of the voluntary sacrifice of Christ is introduced by the sentence 'proprio gladio, id est voluntate, seipsum vulneravit et occidit [with his own sword – that is voluntarily – he pierced and killed himself]', which gives also a clear allegorical meaning to another concrete detail of the fabula, namely the sword of Pyramus. This highlights a fundamental transformation in the story. The protagonist's death is not the result of a dreadful mistake, as for Pyramus in Ovid's story. Instead, Christ voluntarily sacrifices himself to save 'the soul of his beloved' ('pro anima sua amica'). Fourth, to emphasize this point, the anonymous theologian introduced two biblical quotations taken from the description of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53: 'He was offered because it was his own will' and 'There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness'. Considering the expected readership of this text, to quote one of the most famous prophecies of the Passion of Christ was probably meant to activate a rich theological imagery that preachers could develop further. The biblical culture of this theologian is confirmed also by the correction of a mistake. In this version, the quotation 'Si moram fecerit [If

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not tarry. Therefore, as agreed, he finally came and, **finding human nature stained by sins, he pierced and killed himself on** the tree of the Cross **for the soul of his friend, with his own sword – that is, voluntarily**. **Isaiah 53: He was offered because it was his own will.** So that he covered the tree of the Cross in his own blood and **changed the colour of the fruit of the Cross that is Christ**. **Isaiah 53: There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness.** Therefore, the faithful soul, like Thisbe, **seeing her groom wounded and killed in this way for his love**, she must pierce herself **cordially** with the same sword of the Passion through compassion and, **dying to the world**, remain beside her groom inseparably'.

[72] This theme echoes a passage of the Gospel, in which the choice of Jesus to offer his life is misunderstood by his adversaries as the decision to kill himself (John 8. 22).

he makes any delay…]' is rightly attributed to Habakkuk instead of Haggai. Apparently, a simple proof-reader was not able to do this correction, since that mistake was repeated in all the previous twelve editions of the Quadragesimale. Fifth, also the interpretation of the metamorphosis is more accurate and functional to underline a theological element. The original text of Grütsch (i.e. Bersuire) points out the change of colour of the mulberry tree due to Pyramus' blood and refers this to the Cross, which is coloured by the blood of Christ ('arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit [he covered in his own blood the tree of the Cross and darkened its colour]'). The new version reintroduces the detail of the fruits of the mulberry, which were a key element of the Ovidian myth. While the tree represents the Cross, which becomes red for the blood of Christ, the fruits that change colour symbolize Christ himself, who is defined as the fruit of the Cross ('et colorem ipsius fructus crucis qui est Christus discoloravit [and he changed the colour of the fruit of the Cross that is Christ]'). This detail is connected with the aforementioned quotation of Isaiah 53 and – as we know – the image of Christ covered in blood was a powerful element in contemporary visual culture. [73] Sixth, the new version increases the use of the terminology of the spiritual love: sua amica; sponsum suum; amore eius ['his beloved'; 'her groom'; 'for his love']. Thus, it emphasizes the relationship of love between Christ and the soul. Finally, the expanded version clarifies that the symbolic death of the soul consists in a penitential life of renouncement to the world ('moriendo mundo [dying to the world]').

These elements clearly exhibit the theological culture that supported such sophisticated rewriting of this section. [74] Who was responsible for it remains unknown. However, since this version first appeared in an edition printed in Strasbourg, one can hypothesize that the author was a cleric of that city. What is relevant for the present study is that he considered the interpretation of Pyramus and Thisbe as a particularly valuable part of the sermon of Grütsch and he further enriched it, presumably with the purpose of using it in preaching. In this way, his anonymous voice joined

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[73] See Caroline Walker Bynum, Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany (Philadelphia, 2007).

[74] A few details suggest that this theologian could directly know the Ovidius moralizatus and the Gesta romanorum. In fact, at the end of the account of the myth, before the sentence 'et sic cum amico propriam vitam terminavit [and in this way she ended her own life with her beloved]', the phrase 'et in eundem gladium se coniecit ['and she joined herself with Pyramus through the same sword]' is introduced. This was not in the previous edition of the Quadragesimale, while it can be found in the manuscripts of the Ovidius moralizatus. Moreover, one of the manuscripts of Bersuire that I have consulted already depicts Thisbe as symbol of the anima [soul] instead of the homo [man] (see note 102). Finally, the description of Christ 'who finds human nature stained by sins' ['reperiens humanam naturam peccatis maculatam'] may be a reelaboration of the Gesta romanorum, which reads: 'Iste iuvenis est dei filius qui videns genus humanum sanguinolentum et maculatum a leone, id est diabolo [This young man is the Son of God, who sees humanity bleeding and stained by the lion, which is the devil]'; Gesta romanorum, p. 633.

the dialogic reception of the Ovidian myth and represented another layer in a complex stratification, overlapping with those of Bersuire and Grütsch.

5. A Parabola of Johann Meder and a Twelfth-Century Capital

The third preacher that I consider is the Observant Franciscan Johann Meder (d. 1518), who was a Franciscan Observant friar of the Upper Germany province, where he spent his life as preacher, lecturer, and confessor. The 1495 edition of his Quadragesimale novum states that it was first preached in Basel in 1494, allowing us to know exactly the original audience and cultural setting of these sermons.[75] This peculiar cycle is entirely based on a creative retelling of the parable of the prodigal son. In sermon after sermon, the preacher presented the itinerary of the prodigal son in a semi-dramatic form, with dialogues between the different characters of the story, among which Meder introduced as key character the guardian angel of the prodigal son. Within this fictional framework, Meder ended each sermon with a parabola, which indeed is an allegorical vision.[76] In order to explain something, his guardian angel provides the prodigal son with a vision. The son describes what he has seen but cannot understand, and the angel discloses the meaning of the vision by deciphering its symbolism.

In the sermon of Passion Sunday, the parabola is based on the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which is the only Ovidian myth introduced in this sermon collection. Meder largely derived the interpretation of the myth from the Ovidius moralizatus, and it is highly plausible that he took the idea to use this story from Grütsch's Quadragesimale.[77] As we have seen, Grütsch had presented

[75] [Johann Meder], Quadragesimale novum [...] de filio prodigo et de angeli ipsius ammonitione salubri (Basel: Michael Furter, 1495). The first two editions (the second is Basel: Michael Furter, 1497) indicate only 'editum ac predicatum a quodam fratre minore de observantia in inclita civitate Basiliense [edited and preached by a certain Observant Franciscan friar in the famous city of Basel]'. The name of Meder appears only in the following two editions: Basel: Michael Furter, 1510; and Paris: Jean Petit, 1511. On this preacher, his sermon collection, and its editions see Pietro Delcorno, 'Un sermonario illustrato nella Basilea del Narrenschiff. Il Quadragesimale novum de filio prodigo (1495) di Johann Meder', Franciscan Studies, 68 (2010), 215–58 and 69 (2011), 403–75. On the contemporary vibrant religious and spiritual context of Basel, see Berndt Hamm, 'Der Oberrhein als geistige Region von 1450 bis 1520', in Basel als Zentrum des geistigen Austauschs in der frühen Reformationszeit, ed. by Christine Christ-von Wendel, Sven Grosse and Berndt Hamm (Tübingen, 2014), pp. 3–50.

[76] The terms visio, parabola, and similitudo are interchangeble in Meder's sermons, as this passage highlights: 'Angelus ducit eum ad parabolam dicens: Vide. Et vidit. Et rursum angelus: Quid – inquit – vidisti? Filius: Vidi, et ecce […]. Hanc vidi visionem. Dic, angele, quid signet ipsa? Angelus: Congruam tue interrogationi similitudinem vidisti… [The angel introduced the prodigal son to the parable by saing: Look! And he looked. Again the angel asked: What have you seen? The son: I looked, and there […]. I saw this vision. Tell me, o angel, what does it mean? The angel: You have seen a simile consistent with your own request…]'; Meder, Quadragesimale, fol. a8rv.

[77] More details on this sermon in Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe', pp. 67–106, in which however I did not identify Grütsch as Meder's closest antecedent.

this myth on the same liturgical day and his sermon collection had a wide dissemination in the south of Germany, where Meder spent his entire life as a preacher. Yet, if the idea was probably derived from Grütsch, Meder wrote an entirely new text introducing significant novelties in the presentation of the Ovidian story, its interpretation, and – more importantly – its function in the general economy of his sermon collection.

This sermon represents the decisive turning point in Meder's collection. In the first part of the Lenten period, the prodigal son engages in a dialogue with his guardian angel, who guides him in a penitential journey to go back home. There, the father welcomes his son, provides him with new clothes, and, unexpectedly, hands him over to Christ, who replaces the guardian angel as his master. The father in fact says that from that moment onwards he wants his son 'to meditate with great devotion on Christ's precious Passion'.[78] By entering as a character within the narrative framework of Meder's Quadragesimale, Christ himself exposes and explains his own Passion to the prodigal son. This greatly intensifies the pathos of the homiletic discourse. At the end of their first dialogue, Christ recommends to the prodigal son 'that you love me with all your heart and participate in my Passion'. However, the prodigal son asks how he can feel such intense compassion.[79] Answering this request, Christ introduces him to the vision of the day – the parabola – that indeed is a peculiar version of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (see text 3). Drawing on a rich tradition of Christological readings of this myth, the sermon depicts the two lovers and their tragic destiny as a figura of the perfect love between Christ and the soul.

Retelling this famous story, Meder omitted the names Pyramus and Thisbe and any historical reference to Babylon or Semiramis. From his point of view, this story should not be an historical account – as it was considered to be in the Middle Ages[80] – but rather a parable presented by Christ. The intense love of Pyramus and Thisbe is depicted as a story able to inflame the audience to an equally passionate love of Christ. The love of Thisbe, who is ready to sacrifice herself with her beloved, represents the ideal behaviour for engaging in meditation on the Passion,

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[78] 'Et ideo ut id melius possis facere et occasionem maiorem habeas te occupandi circa passionem filii mei, te volo ab ipso fore commendatum, ut hac septimana et sequenti cum omni devotione secum sis occupatus et ut in sua preciosa passione mediteris'; Meder, Quadragesimale, fol. r1ᵛ.

[79] 'Christus: […] Igitur tu hec cogitans vide ut me toto corde diligas et passionibus meis communices. Filius: O amantissime Iesu, tibi inexhaustas refero gratiarumacciones, et rogo ut me (quomodo id possim peragere) informatum me velis [Christ: […]. Therefore, by meditating this, you shall love me with all your heart and communicate to my passions. Son: O my beloved Jesus, I thank you incessantly, and I request you to inform me on how I can achieve what you said]'; Meder, Quadragesimale, fol. r2ʳ.

[80] 'Iste est quartus liber Ovidii ubi ponitur hystoria Pirami et Tisbe qua magis videtur esse certa narracio quam fabule composicio [This is Ovid's fourth book, where it reads the history of Pyramus and Thisbe. This appears to be more a true story than an invented fable]'; Pierre Bersuire, Ovidius moralizatus, Paris, BNF, MS lat. 15145, fol. 73ᵛ.

as Christ says to the prodigal son: 'When a devout soul will have conceived in her mind the love I had [sacrificing myself], she also must be inflamed in my love and be ready to suffer gladly any kind of pain for me, even death. This kind of soul becomes deserving of communicating with my Passion. Therefore, do the same and conceive in your mind what I suffered for you' (see text 3).

Meder intervened not only in the allegorical explanation but also in different points of the storyline. For instance, the medieval tradition stressed the *paritas* between the two lovers.[81] Going against this tradition, Meder presented the two protagonists in very different conditions: one was the unique son of a king, the other a beautiful poor girl who was the prisoner of a nasty prince. Hence, the story was already oriented towards its allegorical reading, in which the girl was the soul prisoner of the devil. Moreover, this text avoids completely the theme of the mulberries changing their colour, which was still important in Bersuire and Grütsch. Rather, Meder enhanced the pathetic tone of the story by focusing on the hearts of the two lovers: the protagonist pierced his heart with the sword and then the girl 'extracting the sword from his heart pierced her heart with the same sword', since they were moved by 'an overwhelming love and compassion', as Meder repeated for both. However, the most striking novelty is the description of the death of 'Pyramus'. The connection between the mulberry tree and the Cross of Christ was normally reserved for the allegorical explanation (as in Grütsch), while Meder changed the story itself to give more space to this interpretation. In fact, his version reads: 'for the excess of love and compassion, hanging himself on a tree, he pierced his heart with his own sword'. This death 'by hanging himself on a tree' ('se […] in arbore suspendens') does not have parallels in the medieval tradition of the Ovidian myth.[82] There is only one exception: an image that, significantly, appeared in Basel cathedral. A twelfth-century capital of the cathedral visualizes the Ovidian tale (fig. 1–4) and shows Pyramus, who pierces himself while hanging on a tree (fig. 3). This sculpture represents the oldest Christological interpretation of this myth, predating all the texts that are known.[83]

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[81] On the topos of the *paritas* between the two protagonists, see Gaggero, 'Il Piramus et Tisbé', p. 260.

[82] See Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe', pp. 87–88. The text echoes some famous passages of the New Testaments: 'et occiderunt [Iesum] suspendentes in ligno [They killed him by hanging him on a Cross]' (Acts 10. 39; cf. also Acts 5. 30).

[83] On medieval images of Pyramus and Thisbe and on this capital and its interpretation, see P. Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe', pp. 87–93. The only other recurrence of Pyramus and Thisbe in the iconographic program of a church are the bronze doors of St Peter in Rome made by Filarete (1433–45), which depict several Ovidian myths on their margins. Filarete's project was probably indebted to the *Ovidius moralizatus*; see Jürgen Blänsdorf, 'Petrus Berchorius und das Bildprogramm der Bronzetüren von St. Peter in Rom', in *Die Rezeption der Metamorphosen des Ovid in der Neuzeit: der antike Mythos in Text und Bild*, ed. by Hermann Walter and Hans-Jüngen Horn (Berlin, 1995), pp. 12–35.

Meder was undoubtedly familiar with this image, which was located (and still is) in a perfectly visible part of Basel cathedral. His sentence 'se […] in arborem suspendens, proprio gladio cor proprium penetravit [hanging himself on a tree, he pierced his heart with his own sword]' can be seen as a graphic description of this very image, something like the proper caption for this sculpture. This capital, therefore, has to be considered as one of the sources of Meder's reading of the Ovidian myth. By describing in that peculiar way the death of the male protagonist, the preacher probably evoked what he and his listeners could see in the cathedral of their city.[84] Therefore, Meder was not only making use of a famous love story, but also silently referring to the image of this capital, which was known by many people of his audience and represented a previous visual reception and allegorical interpretation of the Ovidian myth. Moreover, since the names of the protagonists were not mentioned, there was probably a sort of double-coding, meaning that the sermon addressed two different audiences in different ways and at different levels. Those listeners who recognized – probably at different points of the account – Meder's reference to the Ovidian myth could appreciate – depending also on their cultural level – his sophisticated interplay with a specific image and with a previous tradition of allegorical interpretation.[85] Those who did not understand his reference to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe probably just appreciated the spiritual message of the tale. Moreover, it is possible that some of them found later on the occasion to be enlightened on this surprising part of the sermon, which evidently was not one of the usual parables of the Gospel. While the capital in Basel cathedral influenced Meder's reception of the Ovidian story by suggesting to him the striking detail of Pyramus' death on a tree, he skilfully connected the content of his sermon with a sculpture of the cathedral. This would have been constantly accessible and visible for his listeners, thus transforming it into a support for their memory, as an imago agens. After his sermon, the people seeing the capital in the cathedral might have been prompted to think of the words of the preacher, thus prolonging their effect.[86]

Concerning the allegorical interpretation, Meder followed mainly Grütsch, who in turn had copied Bersuire: the two lovers as Christ and the soul; the fissure in the wall as the voice of the

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[84] On explicit references to and uses of images in preaching, see Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, 'The Preacher as Goldsmith: The Italian Preachers' Use of the Visual Arts', in Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages, ed. by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 2002), pp. 127–53 and Bolzoni, La rete delle immagini.

[85] The fact that a person such as Sebastian Brant was involved in the edition of Meder's sermons suggests that this preacher reached also an audience of learned people and humanists; on the relationship between Meder and Brant, see Delcorno, 'Un sermonario illustrato', pp. 425–47.

[86] On this mechanism of preaching, see Bolzoni, La rete delle immagini, p. XXV. Of course, the reference to this capital was recognisable only for the audience in Basel and those who read this sermon collection in that city, not for later users of this book.

prophets; the fountain as the baptism; the lion as the devil, and so on. A few details suggest that Meder probably knew the reworked version of Grütsch, particularly since he also underlined the voluntary death of Christ: 'meipsum voluntarie cruci exponens, dirissimam mortem (ad quam non obbligabar), libenter sustinui [by offering myself on the Cross voluntarily, I bore willingly the cruellest death, to which I was not obligated]'.[87] However, there is a significant innovation in Meder's use of this myth, namely the authority of its interpretation. In Meder's fictional construction, Christ interprets this story and identifies with 'Pyramus', saying to the prodigal son: 'I am the son of the king […], I loved the human soul […], I came […], I offered myself on the Cross'. Thus, the allegory of the Ovidian story receives the highest possible validation and is elevated to the towering level of the evangelical parables. In the sermon, the tale is introduced by saying that Jesus 'always used to speak to the crowd in parables', referring to the key text of Matthew 13.

Finally, while in the sermon of Grütsch the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was an optional element that could be easily omitted, this time it played a pivotal role in the sermon and in the entire collection.[88] During the first part of Lent, the listeners were invited to identify with the prodigal son, whose story of sin and penitence has its solution in the encounter with the merciful father. In the meeting with his father, the son receives new clothes – which symbolize his new identity – and is entrusted to Christ. Here begins the second part of the Quadragesimale. It deals with the affective contemplation of Christ's love and Passion, in accordance with the guidelines of the contemporary 'theology of piety' ('Frömmigkeitstheologie'), which proposed a Christocentric devotion based on 'internalisation and intensification' of the emotional life of the soul.[89] As a decisive turning point between the two parts of the Quadragesimale, the Ovidian parabola strategically defines the new identity of the two protagonists – Christ and the prodigal son – who occupy the fictional stage for the remainder of the sermons. The prodigal son sheds the habit of the penitent and is invited to

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[87] Other elements of similarity are: in both texts the girl is described as maculatam; the expression 'in arbore crucis […] voluntate seipsum vulneravit [on the tree of the Cross […] voluntarily he pierced himself]' (Quadragesimale 1484) might have suggested to Meder the expression 'se in arbore suspendens [by hanging himself on a tree]'; and the exhortation to the soul that must pierce herself cordialiter ['cordially'] (Quadragesimale 1484) might have encouraged Meder to introduce the image of the girl piercing her heart, although this was a widespread topos.

[88] It is valid here what Wenzel says for another sermon based on an Ovidian story: 'The preacher appropriates a classical story […] because its totality connects with what has been said and at the same time moves the development of his discourse forward'; Wenzel, 'Ovid from the Pulpit', p. 173.

[89] See Berndt Hamm, The Reformation of Faith in the Context of Late Medieval Theology and Piety, ed. by Robert J. Bast (Leiden, 2004), p. 90 and Berndt Hamm, 'Was ist Frömmigkeitstheologie? Überlegungen zum 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert' (1999), in Berndt Hamm, Religiosität im späten Mittelalter: Spannungspole, Neuaufbrüche, Normierungen, ed. by Reinhold Friedrich and Wolfgang Simon (Tübingen, 2011), pp. 116–53.

identify with the beloved soul. As Christ says to the prodigal son – and therefore to the listeners – the love ready to sacrifice itself, which characterizes 'Thisbe' in the story, becomes the necessary attitude to meditate upon and participate in his Passion. From this moment onwards the identity of the prodigal son is gradually defined by his association with the characters of Mary Magdalen and of the bride of the Song of Songs.[90] Without expanding further on this aspect, one has to note that the construction of the identity of the sponsa Christi begins in this sermon, when Christ exhorts the prodigal son – and so each and everyone in the audience – to become like 'Thisbe'.

6. Mary as Thisbe: The Good Friday Sermon of Jacobus de Lenda

The last preacher considered here is Jacobus de Lenda (or Jacques de Lens), a Franciscan friar, magister in theology active (probably) in Paris, where his Lenten sermons were published in 1500.[91] In this collection, the story of Pyramus is again found in a strategic position, namely at the beginning of the Good Friday sermon.[92] This was the most important sermon of the year. Prominent preachers were asked to lead their congregations in a poignant commemoration of the Passion of Christ with sermons that could last up to five hours.[93] Jacobus de Lenda placed Pyramus and Thisbe at the threshold of such a demanding performance, as a moving story to introduce his audience to the contemplation of the Passion.

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[90] See Delcorno, 'La parabola di Piramo e Tisbe', pp. 93–101. On the feminisation of late medieval affective meditations on the Passion, which provided readers with performative intimate scripts to produce, feel, and perform compassion, see Sarah McNamer, Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion (Philadelphia, 2010).

[91] Jacobus de Lenda, Sermones quadragesimales (Paris: Félix Baligault, 1499/1500). The same editor published also his Sermones totius adventus, possibly in the same year. Nothing is known about this preacher apart from what is written on the front pages of his sermon collections, which present him as a master (magister) of theology and canon law and as a very lively preacher (vivacissimus predicator). His convent of provenience might have been that of Lens, near Arras; see Benjamin De Troeyer, Bio-bibliographia Franciscana Neerlandica ante saeculum XVI: Pars biographica (Nieuwkoop, 1974), pp. 168–69.

[92] In his sermons, Jacobus included a few stories of the Metamorphoses, such as Phaeton as an example of wrath (fols 45ᵛ–46ʳ) and a peculiar version of the myth of Proserpina for the sermon of Easter, introduced by saying: 'Ovidius dicit in primo metamorphoseos [Ovid says in the first book of Metamorphoses]' (fol. 72ᵛ). In this case – like for Pyramus and Thisbe – the original story is heavily transformed to facilitate its allegorical reading, to the point that Achill arrives to save Proserpina, as the figure of Christ who saved the soul after the failure of two other men, Abraham and Moses. In this way, the story is transformed to correspond with the image of Christ who liberates the patriarchs from hell. It probably derives from Grütsch, who presented at length and allegorized the story of Proserpina, Theseus, Pirithous and Hercules presenting it as 'fabula Ovidii [an Ovid's fable]'; see Grütsch, Sermones quadragesimales, 39X. Also in this case, Grütsch introduced the Ovidian myth in an important liturgical occasion, namely Palm Sunday, and largely derived his interpretation from Bersuire.

[93] See an overview, with the consolidated bibliography, in Holly Johnson, The Grammar of Good Friday. Macaronic Sermons of Late Medieval England (Turnhout, 2012).

The sermon begins with a theological discussion of the four Aristotelian causes of the Passion to draw attention to its necessity and the free will of Christ.[94] The forth cause would have been the causa formalis; yet, instead of analysing it, Jacobus closes the introduction by presenting the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which serves as an overture to the body of the sermon. As the preacher stated, the remainder of the sermon is dedicated to the formal cause, since it provides the audience with a step-by-step description of the Passion subdivided in seven parts on the basis of the hours of the daily liturgy.[95] In this way, the allegorical presentation of the Ovidian tale serves as a transition from the preliminary theological quaestiones to a meditation on the events of the Passion.

Jacobus de Lenda identified his source in Ovid ('legitur in tertio libro methamorphoseos [the third book of Metamorphoses reads]'), yet he radically reshaped the story to match his own goals. He started by saying: 'Once upon a time there was a king who had a son and this king lived in a great castle. Close to the castle there was the house of a poor man, who had a very beautiful daughter. The son of the king often gazed at her from his window and she looked very nice to him' (see text 4). The description of the two protagonists as a son of a king and a beautiful poor girl and the omission of their names resemble the version of Meder, which might have been one of the sources used by Jacobus de Lenda.[96] Yet, as becomes immediately clear, this version is rather different since it develops a Marian interpretation of the Ovidian tale. In fact, the prince makes his marriage proposal to this sort of Cinderella. Their dialogue is technically a parody of the Annunciation, as the last line spoken by the girl makes clear. She says: 'Domine mi, ancilla vestra sum [My lord, I am your servant]', echoing the 'Ecce ancilla domini [Behold the servant of the Lord]' of the Gospel. Hence, the Ovidian story completely yields to the purposes of the preacher. He probably developed here an element of Bersuire, who had proposed – as a second reading – to identify Thisbe with the Virgin Mary on the basis of the Gospel prophecy: 'tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius [a sword will pierce through your own soul]' (Luke 2. 35). However, the connection of the Ovidian story with the scene of the Annunciation was an absolute novelty. After

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[94] Jacobus de Lenda, Sermones quadragesimales, fols 63ᵛ–64ᵛ. The four causes are the final, the efficient, the material, and the formal cause.

[95] 'Pro declaratione cause formalis passionis Iesu Cristi in qua terminatur presens sermo qui dividetur in septem partes secundum quod dicimus septem horas canonicas, et multi qui non sunt presbiteri dicunt horas de cruce recolentes passionem Christi […]. Primo incipiemus in cena. Secundo in orto. Tertio in domo iudicum. Quarto in monte calvarie… [As explanation of the formal cause of the Passion of Jesus Christ, which concludes this sermon, the latter will be subdivided into seven parts, according to the seven canonical hours that we use to pray, while many who are not priests recite the hours of the Cross remembering the Passion of Christ […]. First, we will begin with the last supper. Second, the garden. Third, the house of the judges. Forth, the Calvary]'; Jacobus de Lenda, Sermones quadragesimales, fol. 64ᵛ.

[96] Jacobus de Lenda shared with Meder's text a few other details: the lion (leo) instead of a lioness (leena); the fact that at its arrival the girl abandons (reliquere) her veil; the girl piercing her heart.

this rather creative beginning, the remainder of Jacobus' version of the story matches more closely the usual description of the tragic destiny of the two lovers: the appointment at the fountain, the arrival of the lion, the escape of the girl and so on, until their dramatic death by means of the same sword. Noteworthy is the absence of any mention of the mulberry tree, which was usually a key element in the allegorical interpretation.

The details of the story were perfectly disposed towards an accurate allegorical reading: the king as God the Father, the castle as heaven, the poor house as the world, the poor man as humanity and so forth. However, this time an articulated explanation of the tale is missing, since Jacobus de Lenda only specified its general meaning: 'This symbolizes (figurat) the mystery of the Passion of Jesus Christ, in which two died, namely Christ and the Virgin Mary'. Identifying 'Thisbe' with the Virgin Mary, he preferred instead to stir up the audience's compassion for the mother of God by echoing the Gospel of Luke ('O qualis dolor! O qualis tristitia, ipsius animam pertransivit gladius [Oh what pain! Oh what sorrow, a sword pierced through her soul]') and to exhort his listeners to look at the Cross and pray with the solemn words of the hymn of Good Friday: O crux, ave, spes unica [Oh hail the Cross, our only hope]. The section on the four causes of the Passion serves as a sort of prothema of the sermon and it ends with this exhortation to turn towards the Cross and to pray with the words of the hymn Vexilla regis. Instead of interpreting the mulberry tree as the symbol of the Cross, the Cross used in the liturgy becomes the focus of the sermon.

Reading Jacobus' version of Pyramus and Thisbe, one might ask what remains of Ovid's story in this sermon. The process of hybridization between the classical myth and the biblical story is complete. The freedom of expression of the preacher (as in the previous cases) was ruled by his concrete aims. His text had to serve as sermon, within a liturgical celebration, in the emotionally intense context of Good Friday. What could appear a distortion of the Ovidian myth was part of a form of communication that was able to mix in one single narrative those stories that could vividly involve the audience: the Passion of Christ, the sorrows of the Virgin, and the tragic destiny of the two Ovidian lovers.

Conclusion

The sermons analysed in this paper demonstrate how fifteenth-century preachers interacted with and contributed to a multifaceted tradition of allegorical readings of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The analysis of these sermons highlights a complex chain of reception that involved written texts and images. The preachers appropriated previous interpretations – such as the Ovidius moralizatus

but also a sculpture in Basel cathedral – using different strategies of intervention. Grütsch encapsulated the version of Bersuire – in which Pyramus symbolized Christ and Thisbe the soul – in a context that shed new light on this interpretation, connecting the suicide of the two lovers with the virtue of prudence. The anonymous cleric of Strasbourg who revised the sermon of Grütsch refined its Christological interpretation, adding new theological elements. Meder instead followed the general idea of Grütsch by introducing this myth in a sermon for Passion Sunday. However, he freely reworked both the Ovidian story and its reading: the fabula becomes a parabola, which Christ himself presents. Finally, Jacobus de Lenda transformed the story into a Marian allegory of the Annunciation and the Passion. He probably took partial inspiration from Bersuire, and yet from another passage of his Ovidius moralizatus. Moreover, the rhetorical function of the Ovidian tale in the sermons varied. Grütsch used it in the last part of a sermon, dealing with the cardinal virtues. Meder introduced it as a vision at the end of a sermon and, even more, as a decisive turning point of his Quadragesimale novum. Jacobus de Lenda put this fabula at the end of the prothema of his Good Friday sermon, as an element of transition towards the meditation of the Passion. What these preachers had in common was that they introduced this Ovidian story in an important liturgical feast (Passion Sunday or Good Friday) and they all connected it with the Passion of Christ, while none of them adopted a moral reading of this fabula.

The analysis of these sermons points out that a proper evaluation of Ovidian stories in preaching should not be limited to underlining their presence, as this isolates them from their contexts. Each occurrence asks to be studied by considering the structure of the sermon, its liturgical setting, its strategy of communication, and its intended audience. In this way, it is possible to appreciate how a classical myth was concretely used by investigating its transformation, its recombination with other materials, and its structural or decorative function.

Finally, the fifteenth-century printed sermon collections here considered highlight that, in the same age of humanism, preaching was an influential medium for the dissemination of classical stories to a large audience. On the one hand, sermons – together with vernacular texts and plays[97] –

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[97] With the printed editions of works such as the Bible des poètes (1484) and the works of Giovanni Bonsignori (1497) and, later on, Niccolò degli Agostini (1522) the allegories of the Ovidian myths circulated at large also in the vernacular (see notes 34 and 63). Moreover, in the early sixteenth-century, plays on Pyramus and Thisbe could include an allegorical reading of the story. This is the case of two Dutch plays: the anonymous Een spel van sinnen van de Historie van Piramus en Thisbe (Haarlem, c. 1518) and the Pyramus ende Thisbe (Antwerp, c. 1520) attributed to Matthijs de Castelein; see on this, Peter Happé, 'Pyramus and Thisbe: Rhetoricians and Shakespeare', in Urban Theatre in the Low Countries, 1400–1625, ed. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 149–68. The two texts are edited in For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays. Volume 2: Three Classical Plays, ed. by Elsa Streitman and Peter Happé (Tempe, 2013).

provided an entry point to antiquity for illiterate people, presenting them with allegorical interpretations and variations of the classical myths. On the other hand, the presence of Ovidian tales in sermons is a testimony of the education and cultural interests of those preachers who used them and, also, of part of their listeners, who were able to recognize these classical stories, enjoying the references to authors such as Ovid in sermons. Preachers such as Savonarola or humanists such as Erasmus argued for a rigid separation between the Bible and the classics and for the exclusion of Ovidian myths from the pulpits. Nevertheless, the sermons here considered prove the level of sophistication of a concomitant and concurrent attitude towards allegories of classical stories. Posed with the question of Savonarola – should one preach Ovid or the Christian life – preachers such as Grütsch, Meder and Jacobus de Lenda would have answered: both, or rather, the Christian life using the Ovidian myths. They and other preachers – whose names are today almost forgotten but whose works circulated at large in those decades – considered in fact these allegories as powerful instruments to instruct, entertain, and move the audience.

Appendix

Text 1 – Bersuire

Pierre Bersuire, *Ovidius moralizatus*, Paris, BNF, MS lat. 15145, fol. 74[rv][98]

Ista historia potest allegari[99] de passione et incarnatione Christi. Piramus enim est Dei filius, Tisbe vero anima humana, qui se a principio mirabiliter[100] dilexerunt, et per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Verum quia dato quod essent vicini, id est quasi[101] consimilis nature, pro eo quod ad imaginem Dei factus est homo,[102] quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat. Ipsi tamen, sibi per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, condixerunt per beatam incarnationem in simul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire. Sic igitur factum est quod ista puella, anima, propter leenam, id est propter diabolum, ad fontem gratie adire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui Pirami, id est Dei filii,[103] sub silencio expectavit. Agei II°: Si moram fecerit exspecta eum quia veniens veniet et non tardabit.[104] Iste igitur iuxta cumdictum finaliter venit et sub arbore, id est sub cruce,[105] amore Tisbe, id est anime, se morti exposuit ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit.[106] Tisbe, id est filio[107] fidelis anima, se debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio transfigere et eandem penam mentaliter sustinere, ut sic in una urna, id est una celi gloria, possit perpetuo simul esse.[108]

Vel dic quod ista puella est beata Virgo, ad quam Dei filius per incarnacionem venit et sub crucis arbore se mori voluit, qua in passione eius per conpassione[109] eodem gladio se transfodit, unde Luc II°: et tuam ipsius animam perforabit gladius.[110]

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[98] I consulted also Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS D 66 inf, fol. 40[r]. The differences between the two manuscripts are minimal. I indicate the most relevant in the footnotes, indicating with the letter A the Ambrosiana's manuscript. I follow the Parisian manuscript, since it seems closer to the source used by Grütsch (see notes 102, 105, and 106).

[99] allegari] applicari A.

[100] mirabiliter] om. A.

[101] quasi] om. A.

[102] homo] anima A.

[103] Dei filii] Christi Dei filii A.

[104] Habakkuk 2. 3.

[105] sub cruce] sub cruce vel in cruce A.

[106] sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit] sanguine et colore eius denigravit A.

[107] filio] om. A.

[108] simul esse] simul cum eo esse A.

[109] in passione eius per compassionem] in passione per compassionem eius A.

[110] Luke 2. 35.

Text 2 – Conrad Grütsch

Johann [Conrad!] Grütsch, Quadragesimale [Nuremberg: not after 1472], 32QR

O quam dulciter et amicabiliter Christus animam devotam ad sue passionis recordacionem invitat. Est enim de Christo et anima conpassionata sicut de Piramo et Tyspe [sic!], de quibus narrat Ovidius liber IIII methamorphoseos.[111] Fuit enim Piramus iuvenis pulcerrimus. Tyspe iuvencula pulcerrima, qui in civitate babilonica in vicinis et coniunctis domibus habitabant, dilexerunt ergo se mirabiliter et per rimam et fixuram parietis sibi invicem colloquentes conceptus suos exprimebant, ut invicem possent coniungi, dixerunt inter se quod de paternis domibus nocte exirent, et extra civitatem ad silvam sub quadam arbore moro convenirent, et iuxta fontem qui erat ibi amoris suorum negocium adimplerent. Puella enim succensa amore primo venit ad fontem sed cum vidisset leenam sitibundam ad fontem venientem et timore eius fugeret et lateret, peplum eius sibi cecidit, quam inventam leena ore sanguinolento cruentavit et recessit. Postea venit Piramus ad fontem sub moro et peplum Tyspe cruentatum inveniens estimavit eam devoratam a feris, et sic occasione amoris sui mortuam et consumptam. Condolens igitur et plangens gladio proprio se interfecit et latera sua per ensem proprium transverberavit, ita quod sanguinis morientis exiliens fructus mori qui primitus erant albi in nigredinem transmutavit. Et sic ex tunc morus fructus nigros et rubeos deportavit. Tandem vero Tyspe excusso timore leene que iam recesserat ad fontem veniens, fructus arboris in nigros mutatos admirans et Piramum transfossum proprio gladio reperiens et hoc amore sui factum fuisse comperiens, ense eius proprio se etiam interfecit et sic cum amico propriam vitam terminavit.

Quid Piramus est nisi Dei filius? Tyspe vero anima devota, qui se a principio mirabiliter dilexerunt, per caritatem et amorem coniungi invicem decreverunt. Dato tamen quod ad ymaginem Dei factus esset homo, quidam tamen paries, id est peccatum Ade, coniunctionem impediebat, et ipsos ab invicem distinguebat. Ipsi tamen sibi, per prophetas sepissime colloquentes, dixerunt per beatam incarnacionem insimul convenire et sub moro arbore, id est sub cruce, ad fontem baptismi et gratie invicem consentire. Sic ergo factum est quod illa puella, anima, propter leenam, dyabolum, ad fontem gratie ire non potuit, sed adventum amici sui, Dei filii, sub silentio expectavit. Aggei 2: Si moram fecerit expecta eum quia venit et non tardabit.[112] Iste igitur iuxta cumdictum venit finaliter et sub arbore crucis amore Tyspe, id est anime, se morti exposuit. Ita quod arborem ipsam crucis proprio sanguine cruentavit et colorem ipsius denigravit. Anima ergo fidelis instar Tyspe debet per compassionem eodem passionis gladio se transfigere et iuxta sponsum inseparabiliter permanere.

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[111] Ovid, Metamorphoseos, IV. 55–166.

[112] Habakkuk 2. 3.

Text 3 – Johann Meder

[Johann Meder], *Quadragesimale novum* (Basel: Michael Furter, 1495), fol. r2^{rv}

Filius: 'O amantissime Iesu, tibi inexhaustas refero gratiarum actiones, et rogo ut me (quomodo id possim peragere) informatum me velis'.

Iesus eum ducit ad parabolam, cui semper consuetum fuit ad turbam loqui in parabolis ut dicit Mattheus XIII,[113] dicens: 'Vide'. Et vidit huiuscemodi parabolam.

'Vidi – inquit – civitatem magnam valde, in qua due domus sibi coniuncte site erant. In una morabatur rex inclitus habens unicum filium sibi in omnibus equalem. In alia morabatur quidam turpis princeps sub ipso habens quasi captam puellam, que corpore quidem formosa erat, sed vestibus ipsa plebeia. Attamen filius regis multum diligebat eam cupiens ei matrimonialiter copulari. Erant autem bene utrique custoditi, nec poterant in invicem convenire, sed solum hoc habebant quod per fissuram parietis colloqui obscure valebant. Factum autem est post multum tempus pacti sunt mutuo quatenus, relictis paternis domibus, circa fontem quendam sub quadam moro situm convenirent, ut mutuam dilectionem perfectius ac iocundius sibi invicem ostenderent. Et ecce, die statuto puella prevenit iuvenem, properans quamtotius ad fontem. Cui appropinquanti leo occurrit caloribus estuans intensissimis ac sitibundus. Quo viso aufugit e fonte puella, relictis ibidem cum pepulo vestibus quibus induta erat albis. Sed cum sitibundus leo os posuisset in aquam, cruor haut modicus de ore eius exiens pepulum cum vestibus cruore suo labefactavit. Quid plura? Venit interim (iam de loco recedente leone) iuvenis et vidit puelle vestes cruore bestiali maculatas et, ex hoc ipsam suspicans ob sui occasionem morte tam turpi interisse, se pre nimio amore et compassione in arborem suspendens, proprio gladio cor proprium penetravit, seipsum morti ob puelle amorem ultro exponens. Quo facto revertitur puella, relicto leonis timore, ad priorem locum, et vidit que circa iuvenem contingerunt, ac per hoc coniciens ob ipsius amorem hec facta, gladium de corde iuvenis eximens proprium cor suum pre nimia compassione et amore cum eodem gladio penetravit. Hanc vidi parabolam. O amantissime Iesu, dic cuius sit interpretationis'.

Iesus: 'Hec civitas est totum universum, domus regis celum, filius regis ego sum, domus turpis mundus est, dyabolus princeps, qui puellam, id est humanam animam, captivam tenebat, quam et ego dilexi, cupiens per humanam naturam mihi eam copulari, quod fieri non poterat multo tempore quousque plenitudo ipsius veniret. Sed per fissuram, id est prophetias, obscure sibi loquebar promittens meum adventum. Sed, veniente tempore, veni et ego ad aquam ut ei virtutem regenerandi tribuerem. Sed ante hec vidi puellam a leone dyabolo laceratam et maculatam. Cui pre nimio amore, quo eam diligebam, meipsum voluntarie cruci

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[113] Matthew 13. 34.

exponens, dirissimam mortem (ad quam non obligabar) libenter sustinui, videns quia propter me hanc suam miseriam sustineret eo quod primus homo voluit rapere in paradiso quod meum erat, id est scientiam Dei patris. Hunc igitur amorem meum cum anima devota mente conceperit, debet et ipsa in meo amore inardescere, et propter me omnia mala libenter sustinere, etiam mortem. Et talis anima est que se reddit dignam communicando meis passionibus. Tu ergo fac similiter et mente tua concipe que propter te sustinui'.

Text 4 – Jacobus de Lenda

Jacobus de Lenda, Sermones quadragesimales (Paris: Félix Baligault, 1499/1500), fol. 64^{rv}

Quarta causa est formalis. Unde legitur in tertio libro methamorphoseos[114] quod erat quidam rex qui habebat unum filium et ille rex habebat unum magnum castrum, domus autem cuiusdam pauperis erat sibi contigua. Ille pauper habebat unam pulcherrimam filiam. Filius autem illius regis sepe intuebatur eam de fenestra sua et erat filio valde grata et dicit semel quod si pater suus vellet quod eam duxeret in uxorem, ipse esset contentus eam duxere in uxorem. Ipse vero descendit de castro et salutavit eam et dicit ei: 'Veni ad me'. 'O – dicit filia – non auderem ire, domine!'. Dicit ei filius: 'Ne dubites quia nolo tibi facere quicquid quid sit in dedecus tuum nec meum'. Tunc dicit filia: 'Domine mi, ancilla vestra sum et ero, si vobis placuerit, toto tempore vite mee'. Filius regis videns humilitatem huius puelle incitatus est amore eius et dicit ei: 'Vade ad talem fontem et ibi loquemur adinvicem'. Ipsa vero accepit potum suum cum capitergio suo et ivit ad fontem et cum fuit iuxta fontem vidit teterrimum leonem et relicto poto fugit et reliquit capitergium. Et veniens filius regis ad fontem, reperit capitergium et potum, credidit quod leo devorasset eam et cum spada sua seipsum interfecit. Filia autem surrexit de loco in quo erat absconsa propter leonem et veniens ad fontem reperit filium regis mortuum et pre nimio dolore amici sui cepit eandem spadam et transfodit per medium cordis sui et mortua est.

Istud figurat misterium passionis domini Iesu Cristi ubi duo mortui sunt, scilicet Cristus et virgo Maria. O qualis dolor! O qualis tristicia, ipsius animam pertransivit gladius.[115] Sed video nunc totam curiam celestem desolatam, ideo ad illam non oportet accedere, nec ad deum patrem propter mortem filii sui, nec ad Mariam sicut consuetum est propter eius desolationem. Ideo, ad illam que hodie suscepit Cristum redemptorem convertemus nos eanque devote salutabimus salutatione qua salutatur ab ecclesia dicentes: O crux, ave, spes unica etc.[116]

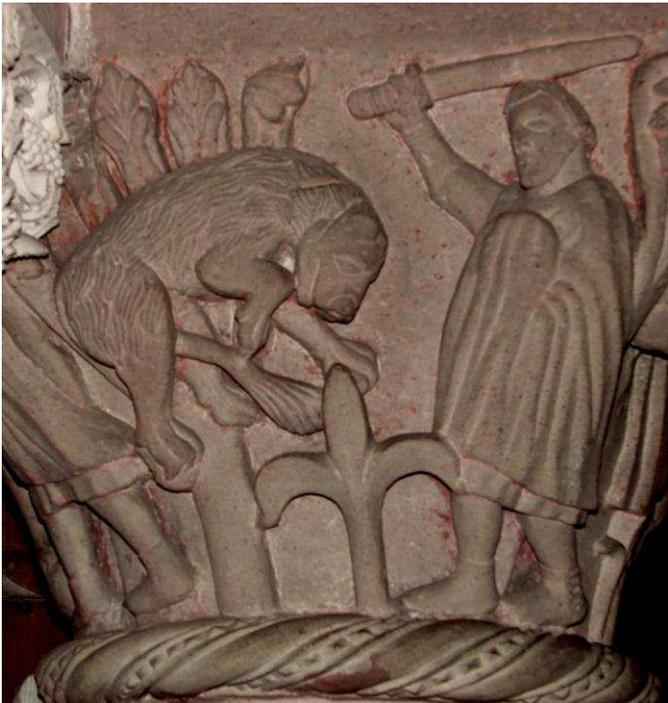[114] Ovid, Metamorphoseos, IV. 55–166.
[115] Luke 2. 35.
[116] Venantius Fortunatus, Vexilla regis, 7. 1.

Images

Cathedral of Basel – Twelfth-century capital

1. Thisbe hides from a lion, which shreds her veil

2. Pyramus fights the lion and recovers Thisbe's veil

3. Pyramus pierces himself while hanging on a tree and holding the veil; the desperation of Thisbe

4. Thisbe kills herself with Pyramus' sword