





# Infamous Stains

Unbridled Masculine Sexualities  
in Early Modernity

edited by

Fernanda Alfieri and Vincenzo Lagioia

viella

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## A Mark and a Bloodline: Cain, a Figure of Sodomy

### *Cain's unfolding story*

In 1554, an anonymous work appeared written by a former subject of Venice who had converted to Protestantism around 1549 (or perhaps even earlier) and had gone into exile north of the Alps to avoid an inquisitorial trial. The author was Pier Paolo Vergerio (1498-1565) and he would spend the remainder of his life in Switzerland and Germany, inundating Italy with pamphlets critical of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> Vergerio was educated in Padua where he was on speaking terms with Pietro Bembo. Later, he was appointed apostolic nuncio to the imperial court of Ferdinand and became the bishop of Capodistria. Because of his early ties to the “Spirituals” and to Marguerite d’Angoulême, Vergerio was denounced as a heretic in 1544 by the scholar Giovanni Della Casa, who as nuncio assisted with the inquisitorial activities of the Holy Office in Venice. However, Vergerio waited five more years before leaving the Italian Peninsula. From that moment on, he dedicated all his energy to translating and writing books of religious polemics destined for the Italian market. Some of these texts criticized the first lists of prohibited books, beginning with the one compiled by Della Casa in Venice in 1549. In 1554, he shifted his attention to the index commissioned in Milan by the city’s archbishop, Giovannangelo Arcimboldi.<sup>2</sup> In these pamphlets Vergerio produced copies of the catalogs he criticized. He was astutely aware that by calling attention to these prohibited texts, he might stoke the curiosity of heterodox readers (drawing them to the very books the church sought to suppress) and, at the same

1. For information about Vergerio, see Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Pier Paolo Vergerio: The Making of an Italian Reformer*, Geneva, Droz, 1977; Robert A. Pierce, *Pier Paolo Vergerio the Propagandist*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003; Silvano Cavazza, “Pier Paolo Vergerio”, in *Fratelli d'Italia*, ed. by Mario Biagioni, Matteo Duni, Lucia Felici, Turin, Claudiana, 2011, pp. 145-152; Federico Zuliani, “Prime indagini su Pier Paolo Vergerio poeta volgare: tra modelli letterari, polemica antiromana e chiese retiche”, *Annali dell'Istituto italiano per gli studi storici*, 28 (2014), pp. 393-428; Lucio Biasiori, “Vergerio, Pier Paolo, il Giovane”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-2020, vol. 98 (2020), pp. 757-762.

2. Arcimboldi’s catalog is reproduced in *Index des livres interdits*, ed. by Jesús Martínez De Bujanda, Sherbrooke-Montreal-Geneva, Centre d’études de la Renaissance-Médiaspaul-Droz, 1984-2002, vol. 3, *Index de Venise, 1549, Venise et Milan, 1554*, pp. 424-439.

time, alert those who produced or owned them. His ultimate goal was manifold: to challenge Catholic censorship, expose its inconsistencies, and paradoxically to even point out to inquisitors potential works that should be banned, especially those by renowned authors such as Dante, Boccaccio, or Petrarca. Indeed, enlisting revered writers whom Bembo had previously canonized as exemplars of Italian poetry and prose into the anti-Roman cause was a strategic move, for it insinuated that even Italy's most distinguished writers, who had once criticized the clergy and the "Babylonian" papal court, were precursors to the Reformation.<sup>3</sup> However, Vergerio also derided popular texts, which the church had not yet included in the Index, deeming them rife with blasphemies and superstitions.<sup>4</sup> Among these was an anonymous work which contained an especially peculiar passage:

Tell me, isn't it actually criticizing and condemning the Gospel as both false and heretical when you, on one side, rebuke and censure those authors who consistently affirm that it's the blood of Jesus Christ that saves individuals (past, present, and future) who truly believe in Him – a belief that we've always upheld and for which you now slanderously label us as heretics – and on the other side, permit a book [...] titled *Fioretti della Bibbia* to be printed and read by anyone. This book not only contains countless utterly false doctrines and wholly corrupt tales, taken verbatim from *Metamorphoses*, and presented as truths from the time of the Old and New Testament, [...] but it also makes the thoroughly dishonest claim that Cain was the first to perform that immoral act, now so rampant among you, with his own son – this at a time when you've forbidden legitimate marriages. And note that such a book was printed in Milan by Gio. Antonio Borgo.<sup>5</sup>

3. See Ugo Rozzo, "Pier Paolo Vergerio censore degli indici dei libri proibiti", in *Pier Paolo Vergerio il giovane. Un polemista attraverso l'Europa del Cinquecento*, ed. by Ugo Rozzo, Udine, Forum, 2000, pp. 143-177; María Luisa Cerrón Puga, "Nel labirinto di Babilonia: Vergerio artefice della censura di Petrarca", in *Inquisizioni*, special issue of *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, series 5, 1/2 (2009), pp. 387-424; Vincenzo Lavenia, "Telling Conversion Stories: Loreto as a World Sacred Space (16th-17th Centuries)", in *Compel People to Come In: Violence and Catholic Conversion in the non-European World*, ed. by Vincenzo Lavenia, Stefania Pastore, Sabina Pavone and Chiara Petrolini, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 145-159.

4. For information about Vergerio's anti-devotional debate cf. Giorgio Caravale, *L'orazione proibita. Censura ecclesiastica e letteratura devozionale nella prima età moderna*, Florence, Olschki, 2003, pp. 49-62.

5. [Pier Paolo Vergerio], *Catalogo dell'Arcimboldo, Arciuescouo di Melano, oue egli condanna, et diffama per heretici la magior parte de figliuoli de Dio, et membri di Christo, i quali ne loro scritti cercano la riformatione della Chiesa cristiana. Con una risposta fattagli in nome d'una parte di quei ualenti huomini*, [Tübingen], [Morhart], 1554, cc. G1r, G3r. The passage was mentioned by Edoardo Barbieri, "Fra tradizione e cambiamento: note sul libro spirituale del XVI secolo", in *Libri, biblioteche e cultura nell'Italia del Cinque e Seicento*, ed. by Edoardo Barbieri and Danilo Zardin, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2002, pp. 3-61: pp. 43-45. Gigliola Fragnito says it can already be found in Della Casa's *Catalogo de libri*, however that is not the case. Vergerio criticized other minor works which were also mocked in the 1554 text: *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e la Scrittura (1471-1605)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997, p. 312 note. Cf. Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Il catalogo de' libri (1549)*, ed. by Ugo Rozzo, Trieste, Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Venezia Giulia, 2010, where the editor recalls Vergerio's attacks against Della Casa's burlesque writings (subsequently censored), especially the verses wherein he had praised sodomy, *ibid.*, 159-165 (also for the bibliography).



This short work really existed. It was one of many that, following the advent of printing, played a role in circulating the stories of the Bible in the vernacular, embellishing the tales of both the Old and New Testament with apocryphal traditions and mere fabrications.<sup>6</sup> Yet, its first edition wasn't the one printed in Milan that Vergerio mentioned, which according to Barbieri began circulating in 1538.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as Fragnito has written,<sup>8</sup> a *Fioretto della Bibbia* (which in reality only considered the Old Testament) had been available in Venice as early as 1515,<sup>9</sup> and was republished there in 1519.<sup>10</sup> With a slightly different title, but with a story that extended to the Passion of Christ, this work was printed once again in Venice in 1517.<sup>11</sup> Another edition with a different variation on the title appeared in Venice in 1523.<sup>12</sup> In the years leading up to the passage written by Vergerio above, editions were also documented in Brescia in 1539,<sup>13</sup> and in Venice by the Zoppino press in 1540.<sup>14</sup> The list goes on, but one need only inspect an edition printed slightly

6. See Anne J. Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Books 1465-1550: A Finding List*, Geneva, Droz, 1983. Cf. Edoardo Barbieri, *Le Bibbie italiane del Quattrocento e del Cinquecento. Storia e bibliografia ragionata delle edizioni in lingua italiana dal 1471 al 1600*, 2 vols., Milan, Editrice Bibliografica, 1992.

7. *El Fiore de tutta la Bibia, hystoriato, et di nuouo in lingua toska corretto, con certe predicationi tutto tratto del Testamento Vecchio. Cominciando da la creatione del mondo fino a la natiuità de Christo, con alcuni miracoli che lui fece*, in Milano, per Io. Antonio da Borgo, [1538?]. Barbieri references Ennio Sandal, *L'arte della stampa a Milano nell'età di Carlo V. Notizie storiche e annali tipografici (1526-1556)*, Baden-Baden, Koerner, 1988, p. 74.

8. Fragnito, *La Bibbia al rogo*, p. 48 note.

9. *Fioretto della Bibbia hystoriato & di nouo in lingua toscha correcto. Con certe predicationi tutto tracto del Testamento uecchio cominciando alla creatione del mondo infino alla natiuità di messere Iesu Christo*, Venetia, per Iouanne de Thacuino, 1515. Edit16 does not list any copies kept in Italy and refers to Klaus Wagner, Manuel Carrera, *Catalogo dei libri a stampa in lingua italiana della Biblioteca Colombina di Siviglia*, Ferrara-Modena, Istituto di Studi Rinascimentali-Panini, 1991, p. 83.

10. According to Edit16, copies of this edition, printed by Rusconi, can be found in the Biblioteca Civica A. Mai di Bergamo and in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Milano (this copy is missing its title page).

11. *Fioretto de tutta la Bibia tracto dal Testamento Vecchio & Nuouo. Comenzando dalla creatione del mondo insino al [!] passione de Christo: hystoriato, & di nouo in lingua toska corretto*, in Venetia, per Zorzi di Rusconi milanese, ad instantia de Nicolò dicto Zopino & Vincentio, 1517. According to Edit16, a copy is housed in the Biblioteca Estense Universitaria di Modena.

12. *El fiore de tutta la Bibbia hystoriato et di nouo in lingua toska correcto. Con certe predicationi tutto tratto del Testamento Vecchio. Cominciando dalla creatione del mondo infino alla natiuità di Christo*, in Venetia, per Francesco Bindoni, 1523. According to Edit16, two copies exist, one in the Biblioteca Marciana and the other in the Museo Correr di Venezia.

13. *El fiore de tutta la Bibia hystoriato et di nuouo in lingua toska corretto. Con certe predicationi tutto tratto del Testamento Vecchio. Cominciando dalla creatione del mondo infino a la natiuità de Iesu Christo*, in Bressa, per Ludouico Britannico, 1539. According to l'Edit16, a copy is housed in the Biblioteca della Fondazione Ugo da Como di Lonato del Garda (BS).

14. According to the catalogs, no copies are known to exist in Italy. However, the short work can be found in the Beinecke Library at Yale, together with another Milanese edition edited by Meda in 1556.

earlier than the former bishop of Capodistria's critique to verify that the passage he denounced appeared in the section dedicated to the descendants of Cain:

He was a cruel man and the first to discover the art of sodomy, engaging in it with his own son. He did this to put an end to human procreation, saying that through such means, one couldn't produce offspring, thus leading to a decline in population. This sin proliferated so much that today the world is rife with it. And because of it, God has destroyed many cities. As a consequence of this excess, He sent the flood upon the earth.<sup>15</sup>

All the editions of the *Fiore* or *Fioretto* could be compared to see if this passage has always been present and to identify any differences. However, that would be a pointless exercise: if you were to simply open the first edition of this popular collection of stories, which was republished at various times between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, you would find the passage almost unchanged:

Cain was the first man who discovered the art of sodomy, engaging in it with his own son. He did this to put an end to human procreation, saying that through such means, one couldn't produce offspring, thus leading to a decline in population. This sin proliferated so much that today the world is rife with it. And because of it, God has destroyed many cities and sent the flood upon the earth.<sup>16</sup>

Now is not the time to trace the history of this text, which also circulated in manuscript form.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the question raised by this source is where does such

15. *El fiore de tutta la Bibia hystoriato et di nouo in lingua Tosca corretto. Con certe predicationi, tutto tratto del testamento uecchio. Cominciando dalla creatione del mondo insino alla natiuità di Iesu Christo*, in Vinegia, per Francesco di Alessandro Bindoni, & Mapheo Pasini, 1551, chap. 51. The following year, the work appeared with a slightly different title: *Fioretto di tutta la Bibia hystoriato, & di nouo in lingua toska corretto. Con certe predicationi, tutto tratto del Testamento Vecchio cominciando da la creatione del mondo insino alla natiuità di Iesu Christo*, in Venegia, per Giouanni Andrea Valuassore detto Guadagnino, 1552.

16. *Fiore novello estratto dalla Bibbia*, in Venetia, per maistro Alvise da Salemedico da Padova nepote de lo venerabile misere pre. Alexandro custode del domo, 1473, chap. 62. In the copy kept in the Biblioteca Trivulziana di Milano – which I'm using in this essay (Inc. B 72) – a hand with a pointing index finger is sketched in the margin of the quoted passage, drawn in ink by a reader trying to draw attention to the excerpt. With this title, the *Fiore* had at least fifteen editions before the end of the fifteenth century. However, it was also circulated under other titles: *Questo libro è chiamato fiore nouello molto deuoto da lezere cum certe predicatione tuto el testamento uegio comenzando da la creatione del mondo in fine ala natiuità de Christo*, Triuisi, per Maestro Michael Manzolo da Palma, 1479 (other editions: Treviso, 1481; Venice, Torti, 1482).

17. See Victor Masséna D'Essling, *Les livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et du commencement du XVI<sup>e</sup>*, 2 vols. in 5 tt., Florence-Paris, Olschki-Leclerc, 1908-1914, *passim*; Serena Spanò Martinelli, "La biblioteca del 'Corpus Domini' bolognese. L'inconsueto spaccato di una cultura monastica femminile", *La Bibliofilia*, 88 (1986), pp. 1-23: p. 20 (a manuscript titled *Fiore novello* belonged to the monastery and was attributed to Fra Giovanni Faelli); the special issue "La Bible italienne" ed. by Jacques Dalarun, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 105 (1993), pp. 825-886 (esp. the essay and catalog by Lino Leonardi); Saverio Bellomo, "'Fiori', 'fiorite' e 'fioretti': la compilazione storico-mitologica e la sua diffusione", *La parola del testo*, 4 (2000), pp. 217-231: p. 226; *Il fiore novello. Storia della tradizione ed edizione (Libri I-III)*, vol. 1, ed. by Marco Giola, Rome, Efestò, 2018 (a wealth of information, including details regarding the manuscript tradition of the previous Tuscan text of the *Fioretti della Bibbia*; see p. 173 for variations of the passage on sodomy).

a portrayal of the biblical figure of Cain as a sodomite come from. If you were to examine other works from the same period similar to the *Fiore*, which paraphrased the stories from Genesis, you would find that the depiction of Abel's murderer as the inventor of the "vice against nature" isn't as prevalent.<sup>18</sup> For instance, no such portrayal is found in a beautiful illustrated book containing biblical stories told in verse;<sup>19</sup> nor is it found in a popular Florentine *Representatione*, which had at least two printings with illustrations.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, after Rome issued the first Index of Prohibited Books at the end of 1558, inquisitors across the peninsula were engaged in suppressing the circulation of the Bible and summaries of Scripture in the vernacular, not to mention anonymous texts. This sentiment was echoed by Fra Damiano Rossi da Cento, commissioner of the Master of the Sacred Palace, in his communication to the inquisitor of Bologna, Fra Aurelio Odasio, in 1576. He stated that while they could tolerate the circulation of *Miracoli della Madonna*, the *Fioretti della Bibbia* should "be removed" according to the directive from Rome.<sup>21</sup> In 1596, with the issuance of the Sixto-Clementine Index, restrictions became even tighter. In the *Observatio circa quartam regulam*, bishops were ordered to revoke reading licenses for "summaries" and "compendiums" of Scripture written in the vernacular. The appendix even suggested expurgating works containing words from the Bible that were used profanely, or which misrepresented Catholic tradition and the interpretation of the Bible by the fathers and doctors of the Church.<sup>22</sup> Fragnito has chronicled the events that during the second half of the sixteenth century – and not without hesitation and internal disputes among the Pontifical Curia – progressively forbid the laity's access to Scripture in the vernacular. This included steps taken against the *Fiori* and *Fioretti*. For example, in the lead-up to 1596, the inquisitor of Vercelli, Cipriano Uberti, issued an edict that also banned "historical summaries of the Bible" on May 12, 1595. Additionally, a letter from Venice reached the Congregation of the Index on April 16, 1594, asking "whether depictions of biblical figures such

18. I was not able to consult the *Compendio della storia dell'Antico e Nuovo Testamento*, in Palermo, per Antonium de Mussis de Brixia, 1517; the *Opera noua contemplatiua per ogni fidel christiano laquale tratta de le figure del Testamento Vecchio: le quale figure sonno verificate nel Testamento Nuouo: con le sue expositione: et con el detto de li propheti sopra esse figure [...]. Nouamente stampata*, in Vinegia, opera di Giuoanniandrea Vauassore detto Vadagnino, [1540?] (a version of the *Biblia pauperum*); and Gaspare Greci, *Operetta noua di auree sententie & vtilissimi documenti, et più con alcuni fioretti delle croniche del mondo, con la declaratione di molte cose notabile del Testamento Vecchio & del Nuouo insino alli tempi presenti*, [Venezia], ad instantia di Leonardo detto lo Furlano da Ciuidal di Friuli, [1540 ca.].

19. Damian Maraffi, *Figure del Vecchio Testamento con versi toscani, nuouamente composti, illustrate*, in Lione, per Giovanni di Tournes, 1554 (the work was republished again in 1557).

20. *La representatione di Abel & di Caino, nuouamente uenuta in luce*, in Firenze, n.p., 1554 (republished in 1568). The short work mainly talks about Lamech's killing of Cain.

21. The letter, dated 25 April 1576, is quoted in Antonio Rotondò, "Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'Indice dei libri proibiti, 1572-1638", *Rinascimento*, n.s., 3 (1963), pp. 145-211, p. 157.

22. See *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 9, *Index de Rome, 1590, 1593, 1596*, pp. 348-350, 926-929.

as Abel, Jephthah, and Mary Magdalene were permissible”.<sup>23</sup> This context helps to explain why texts emerging after the Council of Trent and before the end of the sixteenth century, even while drawing inspiration from the fifteenth-century *Fioretti*, exhibited more restraint and were more reserved, at least as far as the story of Cain is concerned.

For example, consider the work of Augustinian friar Bartolomeo Dionigi da Fano (1544-1613),<sup>24</sup> which was published after the establishment of the Congregation of the Index. In it, he recounts the murder of Abel, noting that Cain emigrated to the east to establish the city of Enoch, named after one of his sons. Cain never expressed remorse for his actions; on the contrary, “he also became the originator of many wicked deeds, teaching them to his descendants and instructing them in acts of lust, theft, and robbery”. Moreover, all members of his lineage “did whatever their hearts desired without fear of God, until they all disastrously perished in the flood”.<sup>25</sup> While the reference to acts driven by lust and unrestrained will can be interpreted as an allusion to the practice of sodomy, the text does not explicitly mention it. A work published during the development of the Index of Books in Rome, which was promulgated in 1596, is even less clear on the matter. In this work, Crisostomo Miliani doesn’t even refer to the lasciviousness of Cain and his progeny.<sup>26</sup> In the Iberian context, sodomy doesn’t even appear in a text that was translated into Italian at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup> One thing is for certain: the miller Domenico Scandella, known as Menocchio, who was condemned to the stake by order of the Roman Inquisition, continued to read

23. Gigliola Fragnito, *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2005, esp. pp. 93-95.

24. See Michele Tagliabracci, “Il contributo letterario di Bartolomeo Dionigi da Fano, volgarizzatore del Cinquecento”, *Nuovi Studi Fanesi*, 28 (2015-2016), pp. 67-102.

25. Bartolomeo Dionigi da Fano, *Compendio historico del Vecchio, e del Nuouo Testamento, cauato dalla sacra Bibbia. Nel quale si descriuono tutte le cose notabili, che successero nel popolo hebreo, dalla creatione del mondo, sino alla vltima destructione di Ierusalem. Con la vita di Giesu Christo, saluator del mondo, et con la disseminazione dell’euangelio, e della sua santa fede*, in Venetia, appresso Valerio Bonelli, 1586, chap. 4. There was another edition of the work the following year: *Compendio historico del Vecchio, e del Nuouo Testamento, cauato dalla sacra Bibbia [...]. Di nuouo ricorretto, et ristampato con gionta*, in Milano, per Francesco et gl’heredi di Simon Tini, 1587.

26. Chrisostomo Miliani, *Sommario historico raccolto dalla Sacra Bibbia, dal Flauio, da Egesippo, et da altri scrittori, e di belle, e varie figure ornato. Con la vita, passione, morte, e risurrectione di Christo nostro saluatore*, in Bergamo, appresso Comino Ventura, 1590. However, I quote from the second edition: *Sommario historico raccolto dalla Sacra Bibbia, dal Flauio, da Egesippo, da Beroso, da Filone, & da altri, di cose auuenute al popolo hebreo da che principiò il mondo per continuatione di quattro mila e trentanoue anni, termine dell’vltima destructione di Gierusalemme. Con la vita di Giesu Christo vnigenito figliuol di Dio, redentore, e signor nostro, tolta dal confronto di tutti quattro gli euangelisti*, in Bergamo, per Comin Ventura, 1593, p. 10.

27. Jerónimo de Sampedro, *Militia celeste del pie’ della rosa fragante, nella qual si trattano le vite, & prodezze de gl’ill.mi patriarchi, & principi del popolo Hebreo, con la esposizione delle autorità, et figure della Bibbia. Nuouamente tradotta dalla lingua spagnuola dal signor Alfonso de Vlloa*, in Venetia, appresso gli heredi di Marchiò Sessa, 1584, ff. 37-40 (the first edition in Italian is from 1556; the original title: *Libro de caballería celestial*).

the *Fiore* and interpret it quite freely, deeming it a credible source of authentic accounts.<sup>28</sup> This widely-read book, an interpolation of apocrypha, legends, and improbable genealogies, depicted Cain as the progenitor of the sodomites, as the first instructor of this vice “against nature”, and as the cursed man whose descendants founded the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, triggering the flood with which God punished the sins of his children. If we consider the biblical commentary of a Reformation-aligned theologian like Edmund Becke (1549), we find that such an interpretation connecting Cain to sodomy was not confined to Catholic literature alone during those years.<sup>29</sup> This raises the question: where did this scarcely documented genealogy, which circulated thanks to the *Fiore* text, originate? What were its sources? We are aware of a minority theological tradition, which persisted up to the modern era, suggesting that sodomy was the original sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.<sup>30</sup> But here, we encounter a separate line of inquiry, deserving of a more thorough exploration than what will be sketched out in the pages that follow.<sup>31</sup>

### *Traditions about a wicked bloodline*

We could begin our discussion with a complex work written by the Lutheran theologian Ludwig Rabus. In this text, which first appeared in German in Strasburg in 1557 and was later published in Latin in 1566, Rabus portrayed Abel as the protomartyr of the true Church. Rabus, known for his opposition to the most radical religious groups of his time, and perhaps in a war of words with his rivals, drew upon interpretations from both the rabbinical tradition and Church fathers concerning the story of Cain. He pointed out that Augustine, in Chapter 18 of his *De haeresi*, dedicated a passage to a sect known as the “Cainites”. In Augustine’s time, this group was accused of corrupting the doctrine of Christ by denying the resurrection, worshipping Judas, and venerating sodomites. Rabus further observed that this same sect had been previously mentioned by Irenaeus of Lyons in *Adversus haereses*. In this text, the Cainites (or Cainians) were equated

28. Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del '500*, Turin, Einaudi, 1976, *passim*.

29. It is mentioned in Vivienne Westbrook, *Long Travail and Great Paynes: A Politics of Reformation Revision*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2001, p. 53.

30. See the essay by Umberto Grassi in this volume. As far as I know, the historiography on the theological stigmatization of sodomy has not focused on the figure of Cain. Regarding the modern literary tradition, the following work is important: Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991. For more general information see John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011. The anthropologist Edmund R. Leach has written about homosexuality in the Cain myth. See Edmund R. Leach, *Genesis as Myth, and Other Essays*, London, Cape, 1969.

31. For another legend connected with Cain, see the excellent essay by Genoveffa Palumbo, “L’archetipo oscuro e dimenticato della sorella: Calmana, sorella di Caino”, *Quaderni Storici*, 87 (1994), pp. 669-700.

to “sodomites and Egyptians”, because they were given to “every combination of malice”.<sup>32</sup> A similar passage, we read, later appeared in Chapter 28 of *De haeresibus* by John of Damascus.<sup>33</sup>

Rabus wasn’t making anything up: in the *Libri duo de Cain et Abel*, it was Ambrose who proposed an interpretation of the incident between Cain and Abel as a foreshadowing of the relationship between the synagogue and the church, or more broadly, between Judaism (the errant elder brothers) and Christianity (the descendants of Abel or Seth, the son of Adam and Eve who had replaced him after his death). In this same work, Ambrose also contrasted what he saw as moral disorder, likened to effeminacy, with the mastery of one’s senses, which he equated to virility.<sup>34</sup> Before and after Ambrose’s writings, the Cainites were branded as one of the many Gnostic sects that mainstream Christianity sought to suppress during the first centuries of the Common Era.<sup>35</sup> However, in the letter attributed to Jude and included in the canon of the New Testament, there’s mention of the circulation of non-conforming and sterilizing behaviors, reminiscent of those attributed to Cain and the sodomites. Such behaviors threatened to fracture and taint the Judeo-Christian communities.

The Lord saved the people of Israel and delivered them from Egypt, but then he killed those who did not believe in him [...]. Remember Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighboring cities. Their inhabitants also behaved wickedly. They led immoral lives and indulged in vices against nature [in the Vulgate: *simili modo exformicatae et abeuntes post carnem alteram*]. Now they endure the punishment of eternal fire and serve as an example to us. Well, even those wicked men who have infiltrated your ranks behave in the same manner. Driven by their own delusions, they defile their bodies, disregard the Lord’s authority, and blaspheme against the glorious celestial beings [...]. Woe to them! They have taken Cain’s path [...]. They are like clouds carried along by the wind but bringing no rain. They are like fruitless trees at the end of the season, doubly dead and uprooted (5-12).

32. The passage in Rabus is not accurately quoted. See Ir., *Adv. haer.* 1,31,1: “Alii autem rursus Cain a superiore Principalitate dicunt, et Esau et Core et Sodomitas et omnes tales cognatos suos confitentur: et propter hoc a Factore impugnatos, neminem ex eis malum accepisse. Sophia enim illud quod proprium ex ea erat abripiebat ex eis ad semetipsam. Et haec Iudam proditorem diligenter cognovisse dicunt, et solum prae ceteris cognoscentem veritatem, perfecisse proditiōis mysterium: per quem et terrena et caelestia omnia dissoluta dicunt. Et confit(n)ctionem adferunt huiusmodi, Iudae Euangelium illud uocantes” (“And others again declare (that) Cain (was) from the superior Principle, and they confess that Esau and Korah and the Sodomites and all such people are their cognates: and for this reason attacked by the Creator, none of them has suffered harm. For Sophia snatched away that which belonged to her out of them to herself. And Judas, the betrayer, they say, had got a thorough knowledge of these things; and he alone, knowing the truth above all the others, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal. Through him all things, both earthly and heavenly, have been dissolved, as they say. And they adduce a composed work to this effect, which they call ‘the Gospel of Judas’”).

33. Rabus, *Historiae de S. Abele, Ecclesiae Militantis in veteri Testamento Protomartyre*, Argenterati, Emmel, 1568, pp. 75-77.

34. Ambrosius, *De Cain et Abel*, II, 1,4.

35. See David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2010, p. 38 (also for the interpretation of the passage by Irenaeus). But cf. Manlio Simonetti, *Testi gnostici in lingua greca e latina*, Milan, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla-Mondadori, 1993 (regarding Cain pp. 91-120).



The stories of Cain's progeny, which were already in circulation during the time of Christ, were filled with events not mentioned in the concise fourth chapter of Genesis (which talks about the firstborn son Enoch and the city named after him, founded by his father, Cain). For example, Philo of Alexandria, to whom the *Liber antiquitatum Biblicarum* – published in the sixteenth century after the writing of the *Fiore* – would be attributed,<sup>36</sup> wrote in *De posteritate Caini* that the offspring of history's first murderer suffered from impiety, wickedness, absence of wisdom, and a propensity for disorder and licentiousness, including desires that were *against nature*.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Lamech, the grandson who, according to legend, brought about Cain's death, had two partners as stated in Genesis. One was his legitimate wife and the other, rendered barren, was merely for satisfying his own pleasures. Lamech, therefore, was essentially a polygamist.

In the Jewish tradition, it is written that Cain may have been born, possibly even before the Fall from Eden, through a union between Eve and Satan (the angel Samma'el), who had taken the form of a serpent. Moreover, it is believed that Eve foresaw in a dream that Abel, her younger son born from Adam, would be killed by Cain. Midrashic literature also offers various explanations for this first case of murder and fratricide. One of these explanations suggests that the motive was not envy of the sacrificial gifts offered by the shepherd Abel, which God seemed to favor over those from Cain the farmer. Instead the act had been motivated by erotic jealousy. It posits that each brother had a twin sister, destined to mate with the other brother. However, Abel's sister supposedly preferred Abel over Cain, triggering Cain's wrath. There were also many interpretations regarding the mark that God placed upon Cain to prevent others from punishing him, despite the fact that his repentance for spilling Abel's blood was insincere (Cain was depicted as being furious, epileptic, and leprous). Forced to live like a fugitive, cultivating barren fields and establishing and populating cities, his sin would have severe consequences for his entire

36. See Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's 'Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum': With Latin Text and English Translation*, 2 vols., Leiden, Brill, 1996. In this work, Cain is likened to another cursed son, Ham, and the founding of Sodom and Gomorrah is connected with his character.

37. Philo Alexandrinus, *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Paulus Wendland, post Ruslan Khazarzar, vol. 2, Berlin, Reimer, 1897 (repr. Berlin, De Gruyter, 1962), *De posteritate Caini*, pp. 1-41, XV,52: "ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν πᾶσα πόλις ἐξ οἰκοδομημάτων καὶ οἰκητόρων καὶ νόμων συνέστηκε, τὰ μὲν οἰκοδομήματά ἐστιν αὐτῷ λόγοι οἱ ἀποδεικνύντες, οἷς καθάπερ ἀπὸ τείχους πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἐναντίων ἀπομάχεται προσβολὰς πιθανὰς εὐρέσεις κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας μυθοπλαστών, οἰκήτορες δὲ οἱ ἀσεβείας, ἀθεότητος, φιλαυτίας, μεγαλυνχίας, ψευδοῦς δόξης ἐταῖροι δοκησίσοφοι, τὸ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν σοφὸν οὐκ εἰδότες, ἄγνοιαν καὶ ἀπαιδευσίαν καὶ ἀμαθίαν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀδελφὰς καὶ συγγενεῖς κῆρας συγκεκροτηκότες, νόμοι δὲ ἄνομοιαι, ἀδικίαι, τὸ ἄνισον, τὸ ἀκόλαστον, θρασύτης, ἀπόνοια, αὐθάδεια, ἡδονῶν ἀμετρίαι, τῶν παρὰ φύσιν ἄλεκτοι ἐπιθυμίαι". The italics is mine. Cf. Hindy Najman, *Cain and Abel as Character Traits: A Study in the Allegorical Typology of Philo of Alexandria*, in *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. by Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 107-118 (however, the entire volume, which does not discuss sodomy, is indispensable).

lineage, which Genesis briefly discusses.<sup>38</sup> Cain's progeny were likened to giants. It was said that the Cainites, giants, and dwarves resided in the land of Arqa, that this lineage was predisposed to all kinds of malevolence, and just like Cain, was unable to restrain their compulsion for theft and lasciviousness, to the detriment of their neighbors. Cain's grandson Lamech, being blind, would one day fatally strike him (as well as his own son, who was accompanying him on a hunt), thus deserving the terrible punishment of God, who had decreed Cain not punishable by death. The genealogical tradition concerning the children and grandchildren of Lamech, mentioned in Genesis, was even more complex: Jabal was said to be an idolater; Tubalcain was credited with inventing weapons of war; and Jubal, the musician, reportedly beguiled the descendants of Seth with sweet music, urging them toward the most unrestrained sexual desires, and producing offspring of great strength and beauty but of a corrupt nature.<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that in his *Antiquities*, an important text also for the Christian tradition, Flavius Josephus doesn't mention Cain's sodomy at all but emphasizes his sexual impulses and those of his progeny.<sup>40</sup> Regarding the mystical tradition,

38. For the connection between sodomy and sterility, as documented in the Christian Middle Ages, See Giacomo Todeschini, "Soddoma e Caorsa": natura e sterilità del peccato alla fine del medioevo cristiano", in *Le trasgressioni della carne. Il desiderio omosessuale nel mondo islamico e cristiano, secc. XII-XX*, ed. by Umberto Grassi and Giuseppe Marcocci, Rome, Viella, 2015, pp. 53-80.

39. For late-ancient and medieval sources, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legend of the Jews*, transl. by Henrietta Szold, vol. 1, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968, pp. 105-142. References to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (also known as *Targum Yerushalmi*), *Genesis Rabbah*, *Mishnah*, and *Sanhedrin* are important. Cf. Johanna Erzberger, *Abel und Israel. Die Rezeption von Gen 4,1-16 in Rabbinischen Midraschim*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2011.

40. I, 60-66: "Cain settled with his wife in a place called Naida, and [...] they also had children there. However, the punishment did not bring him wisdom; rather, the proliferation of evil amplified every desire in his body, even though it brought shame upon his companions [...]. He was the first to establish boundaries, build a city, encircle it with walls, and compel his family to unite in one place. He named this city Enoch after his firstborn son, Enoch [...]. Enoch fathered Jared, who in turn fathered Maruel. Maruel begot Methuselah, the father of Lamech, who had seventy-seven children with his two wives, Sella and Ada. Jubel, one of the children [...], surpassed all in strength, demonstrated valor and excellence in the art of war, and from this he drew as much satisfaction as one does from the pleasures of the body. He was the first to invent metalworking [...]. Adam was still alive when Cain's lineage descended into wickedness [...]". This is the full text in Greek: "Πολλὴν δ' ἐπελθὼν γῆν ἰδρύεται μετὰ τῆς γυναικὸς Κάϊς Ναΐδα τόπον οὕτω καλούμενον καὶ αὐτόθι ποιεῖται τὴν κατοίκησιν, ἐνθ' αὐτῷ καὶ παῖδες ἐγένοντο: οὐκ ἐπὶ νοουθεσίᾳ δὲ τὴν κόλασιν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλ' ἐπ' αὐξήσει τῆς κακίας, ἡδονὴν μὲν πᾶσαν ἐκπορίζων αὐτοῦ τῷ σώματι, κἂν μεθ' ὕβρεως τῶν συνόντων δέῃ ταύτην ἔχειν: αὐξὼν δὲ τὸν οἶκον πληθεὶ χρημάτων ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ βίας πρὸς ἡδονὴν καὶ ληστείαν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας παρακαλῶν διδάσκαλος αὐτοῖς ὑπῆρχε πονηρῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων, καὶ τὴν ἀπραγμοσύνην, ἣ πρότερον συνέζων οἱ ἄνθρωποι, μέτρων ἐπινοοῖα καὶ σταθμῶν μετεστήσατο ἀκέραιον αὐτοῖς ὄντα τὸν βίον ἐκ τῆς τούτων ἀμαθίας καὶ μεγαλόψυχον εἰς πανουργίαν περιπαγών, ὅρους τε γῆς πρῶτος ἔθετο καὶ πόλιν ἐδείματο καὶ τείχεσιν ὠχύρωσεν εἰς ταὐτὸν συνελθεῖν τοὺς οἰκείους καταναγκάσας. καὶ τὴν πόλιν δὲ ταύτην ἀπὸ Ἀνώχου τοῦ πρεσβυτάτου παιδὸς Ἀνώχων ἐκάλεσεν. Ἀνώχου δὲ Ἰαράδης υἱὸς ἦν, ἐκ δὲ τούτου Μαρουῆλος, οὗ γίνεται παῖς Μαθουσάλας, τοῦ δὲ Λάμεχος, ὃ παῖδες ὑπῆρξαν ἑπτὰ καὶ ἐβδομήκοντα ἐκ δύο γυναικῶν



whose ideas converged in the *Zohar* (written in the Iberian Peninsula), a recent study has highlighted the influence of gnosis and the use of various sources in the text, which described Cain as a child of Satan.<sup>41</sup>

Given the reference to the Iberian Peninsula, it's important to note that the circulation of legends about Cain the sodomite in the late Middle Ages might have also been influenced by Islamic tradition, which was steeped in Rabbinic and proto-Christian writings and which, in turn, may have influenced Jewish and Christian interpretations of Genesis during the same period (I omit here stories concerning Abel's burial).<sup>42</sup> While not explicitly named in the Quran (5:27-32), Hābil and Qābīl, according to various Muslim interpreters (ranging from al-Tabari in the ninth to tenth centuries, to al-Tha'labi in the eleventh century, to Ibn Kathir in the fourteenth century), were destined to marry the twin sister of the other. However, Qābīl (Cain) reportedly responded very negatively to the order to concede his beautiful twin sister, Aqlīmā (Iqlima), to Hābil (Abel). Jealousy, compounded by desire and the disappointment of a sacrifice not pleasing to God, supposedly drove him to fury and murder. According to al-Sadiq (eighth century), who is also significant within the Shiite tradition as he was identified as the sixth imam, Qābīl was actually destined to marry not one of his sisters, but a *jinni*, an ethereal, shapeshifting, and morally ambiguous figure that would assume the form of a woman; Hābil, on the other hand, was to marry a *houri*, a beautiful feminine figure. The purpose of such a story, it has been written, was to avoid mentioning the practice of incest as the root of all

αὐτῷ φύντες Σελλᾶς καὶ Ἄδας. τούτων Ἰώβηλος μὲν ἐξ Ἀδας γεγωνὸς σκηνὰς ἐπήξατο καὶ προβατεῖαν ἡγάπησεν, Ἰουβᾶλος δέ, ὁμομήτριος δ' ἦν αὐτῷ, μουσικὴν ἤσκησε καὶ ψαλτήρια καὶ κιθάρας ἐπενόησεν, Ἰουβήλος δὲ τῶν ἐκ τῆς ἐτέρας γεγονότων ἰσχύι πάντας ὑπερβαλὼν τὰ πολεμικὰ διαπρεπῶς μετέτληεν ἐκ τούτων καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἡδονὴν τοῦ σώματος ἐκπορίζων, χαλκείαν τε πρῶτος ἐπενόησεν. πατήρ δὲ θυγατρὸς γενόμενος ὁ Λάμεχος Νοεμᾶς ὄνομα, ἐπεὶ τὰ θεῖα σαφῶς ἐξεπιστάμενος ἑώρα δίκην αὐτὸν ὑφέζοντα τῆς Κάιος ἀδελφοκτονίας μείζονα, τοῦτο ταῖς ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖξιν ἐποίησε φανερόν. ἔτι δὲ ζῶντος Ἀδάμου Κάιος τοὺς ἐγγόνους πονηροτάτους συνέβη γενέσθαι κατὰ διαδοχὴν καὶ μίμησιν ἄλλον ἄλλου χεῖρονα τελευτώντα: πρὸς τε γὰρ πολέμους εἶχον ἀκρατῶς καὶ πρὸς ληστεῖαν ὠρμήκεσαν, ἄλλος δ' εἴ τις ὀκνηρὸς ἦν πρὸς τὸ φονεῦειν, ἄλλην ἀπόνοιαν ἦν θράσους ὑβρίζων καὶ πλεονεκτῶν”.

41. Cf. Oded Yisraeli, “Cain as the Scion of Satan: The Evolution of a Gnostic Myth in the ‘Zohar’”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 109 (2016), pp. 56-74.

42. For information discussed in this section of the essay, see David Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes dans le Coran et dans les Vies des Prophètes*, Paris, Geuthner, 1933, pp. 16-18; Norman A. Stillman, “The Story of Cain and Abel in the Qur’an and the Muslim Commentators: Some Observations”, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 19 (1974), pp. 231-239; Waltraud Bork-Qaysieh, *Die Geschichte von Kain und Abel (Hābil wa-Qābīl) in der sunnitisch-islamischen Überlieferung*, Berlin, Schwartz, 1993; Ida Zilio-Grandi, “La figure de Cain dans le Coran”, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 216 (1999), pp. 31-85; Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur’ān and Muslim Literature*, London-New York, Routledge, 2002, pp. 20-21; Robert C. Gregg, *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 37-40, 72-74, 86-98; Amanullah De Soudy, *The Crisis of Islamic Masculinities*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 104-105; John Kaltner, Younus Y. Mirza, *The Bible and the Qur’an: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition*, London, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017, pp. 23-26.

genealogies leading to the Prophet; however, the tale of the *jinni* also carried the implication that Cain's sexual acts possessed a preternatural, if not unnatural, and more "fluid" quality compared to those of Abel.

Leaving Islam aside, tracing the circulation of the "apocrypha" of the Old Testament in the Christian era would be a challenging endeavor here. Let it suffice to say that from the first centuries, Christians could read, in various versions,<sup>43</sup> a text like the *Life of Adam and Eve* or the *Revelation of Moses*, which supplemented the Genesis narrative by focusing on the genealogies of the inhabitants of the earth and on the lasciviousness of Cain's descendants.<sup>44</sup> Many myths belonging to this tradition ultimately inspired the *Fioretto* of the fifteenth century. But a pivotal moment was their earlier use in a series of legends and historical encyclopedias that now merit attention.

### *Christian stories*

One of the sources for the popular anthology discussed at the beginning of this essay is the *Historia scholastica*, written by the theologian Petrus Comestor (Pierre Le Mangeur) before 1173, and circulated in manuscript form until its first printed edition, perhaps in 1473.<sup>45</sup> Comestor's text, which was still widely acclaimed in the early modern period, could not overlook the story of Cain. It reconstructed the events of humanity from creation onward, drawing inspiration from Flavius Josephus to recount the accursed fate of the first murderer. Nonetheless, the section devoted to Cain is notably brief. A man addicted to thievery, he – according to Comestor – distorted the simplicity of the world, becoming the inventor of urban life ("simplicitatem vitae hominum ad inventionem et inaequalitatem permutavit"). The author shows greater interest in the figure of the grandson who apparently killed Cain, namely Lamech ("pessimus"), drew the hatred of women upon himself and, being a bigamist, dedicated himself to a life of pleasures

43. See one of many versions that exist: *The Book of Adam and Eve, also Called The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan, a Book of the Early Eastern Church, Translated from the Ethiopic, with Notes*, ed. by S.C. Malan, London-Edinburgh, Williams and Norgate, 1882, chap. XX, where every kind of abomination is mentioned. For a more complete picture: Marinus de Jonge, Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature*, Sheffield, Academic Press, 1997; *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. by Gary Anderson, Michael Stone, Johannes Tromp, Leiden, Brill, 2000 (in particular, the essay by Tromp on Cain and Abel); Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

44. The Latin text can be found in Wilhelm Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae*, München, Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophische-philologische Klasse, 1878, pp. 185-250. Cf. "The Life of Adam and Eve", in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, Doubleday, 1985, pp. 249-295; "Apocalisse di Mosè e Vita di Adamo ed Eva", in *Apocrifi del Vecchio Testamento*, ed. by Paolo Sacchi, Turin, Utet, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 447-471 (and the introduction to the text by Liliana Rosso Ubigli, pp. 381-416).

45. See *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes, maître du XIIe siècle*, ed. by Gilbert Dahan, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013; Mark J. Clark, *The Making of the 'Historia scholastica', 1150-1200*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2016.

against nature (“primum bigamiam introduxit et sic adulterium contra legem naturae, et Dei decreto, commisit”).<sup>46</sup> The passage does not mention sodomy, and what’s more, Lamech was not the son but a descendant of Cain. However, the phrase “against nature”, often associated with non-standard and non-procreative sex, appears in *Comestor* as it did in *Philo*. Virtually contemporaneous with the *Historia scholastica*, the *Pantheon* by Goffredo da Viterbo (chaplain of Frederick Barbarossa) was a highly successful universal history that circulated in three different versions. In it, Cain is more directly connected to the generation of the biblical giants and the universal flood. A builder of cities where inhabitants were free to do whatever they pleased (“ad scelus athleta, nulla nocenda vetat”), Abel’s brother was said to have paved the way for all manner of vice, especially incest among brothers and sisters of the same family and sexual intercourse between males (“vir inire virum”, “mas cum mare”).<sup>47</sup>

Was this the textual tradition that inspired the passage in the *Fioretto* about Cain as the father of the sodomites? It cannot be said with certainty, but a manuscript preserved in Milan attests that the sinister image of Abel’s killer as the inventor of sodomy circulated during the Middle Ages. The manuscript states that Cain was cursed by God, that his appearance became grotesque, that he became melancholic and irritable, and that he introduced discord and competition among men. Additionally, the author adds:

he was dissolute in committing every kind of sin, and was the initiator and inventor of the sin of sodomy. He did this to put an end to human birth and lineage [...]. And know that this accursed sin of sodomy grew so much [among] both males and females [...], that God raised fearsome beasts and giants on the Earth to destroy the sinners, leading to many acts of vengeance [up to the time of the] flood.<sup>48</sup>

The manuscript dates back to the end of the fourteenth century, after the crisis of the Black Death. However, a more systematic study not limited to the Italian

46. *Historia Scholastica*, chap. 27-28 (PL 198, coll. 1077-1079).

47. I am quoting from a sixteenth-century edition: Gottofridus Viterbiensis, *Pantheon, sive Universitatis libri qui Chronici appellantur XX, omnes omnium saeculorum et gentium, tam sacras quam prophanas historias complectentes*, Basileae, ex officina Iacobi Parci, 1559, *pars II*, coll. 90-92. However, see *ibid.*, “Opera”, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 22, ed. Georg Waltz, Hannover, Hahn, 1878, pp. 1-338. On the history of the text: Friederike Boockmann, *Studien zum Pantheon des Gottfried von Viterbo*, München, Dissertationsdruck, 1992. The connections between the practice of sodomy by Cain’s descendants, the generation of giants, and the flood seem to be alluded to in the fourteenth-century English poem *Cleanness* (unknown in Italy), like the popular text *Mactacio Abel* – one of the 32 *Towneley Plays* potentially performed in Wakefield for the Corpus Christi feast. In *Mactacio Abel*, Cain addresses Abel insinuating that he has sexual relations with his flock. For these sources and the section discussing sodomy and the giants in *Cleanness*, see Oliver F. Emerson, “Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle England”, in *PMLA*, 21 (1906), pp. 831-929, p. 901.

48. Biblioteca Trivulziana di Milano, cod. 95, *Lignaggi, ovver generationi i quali sono disciesi di Adam et di Eva*, cc. 5v-6r (I have slightly modernized the text). A description of the manuscript (26 cc.) already mentioned by Barbieri, in Giulio Porro, *Catalogo dei codici manoscritti della Trivulziana*, Turin, Bocca, 1884, p. 224; Caterina Santoro, *I codici medioevali della Biblioteca Trivulziana*, Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, 1965, p. 16.

Peninsula might one day reveal whether numerous medieval manuscripts containing stories from *Genesis*, versions of the *Fioretti* that predate the printed editions, or genealogies of Adam, Eve, and Cain, articulate the myth of Cain as the originator of sodomy in similar terms. It may also uncover whether its proliferation in the fifteenth century was facilitated by the preaching of the Observant Friars (like Bernardino da Siena), who were obsessed with the sin of sodomy and the divine punishment that the “vice against nature” would invoke upon Christians. This research should also extend to medieval commentaries dedicated to passages from *Genesis*, which, post-Reformation, became increasingly numerous in both Catholic and Protestant circles. Not to mention that from the sixteenth century onward, Christian colonial genealogies would identify non-European populations as the descendants of Cain (and also of Ham, the son cursed by Noah after the flood), destined to be enslaved for the sins of their mythical forebear and for the vices – sodomy not being the least among them – which were condemned by Europeans.<sup>49</sup>

### *In conclusion*

There would be numerous iconographic, and above all literary representations of the story of Cain. He was a figure who inspired authors such as Hieronymus Ziegler (*Abel Justus*, 1559), Félix Lope de Vega (*La creación del mundo y primer culpa del hombre*, 1624), Pietro Metastasio (*La morte di Abele*, 1732), and Lord Byron (*Cain*, 1821), not to mention more contemporary authors like José Saramago (*Caim*, 2009). However, it may be particularly important to recall that in 1960, a troubled writer by the name of Alexander Trocchi, in his novel *Cain's Book* (criticized during the time of its publication for being obscene), utilized the biblical clash between Abel and his fratricidal brother to recount the story of a gay, drug-addicted young man. In essence, Cain's damnation, destiny, and stigma, as well as his dual role as the inventor of the urban world and, perhaps, of the sin of sodomy, continue to captivate people's attention, so much so that, a few years ago, a progressive and gay pastor named Chris Glaser came to interpret the passages of *Genesis* in a very unique way. In Glaser's interpretation, Abel was heterosexual and Cain was gay. Both decided to present an offering to God, perhaps to express gratitude for the gift of sexuality. God favored Abel's offering but not that of his brother, resulting in Cain killing Abel. Exiled to “the land of Nod”, which means “wandering”, Cain and his descendants established the first gay urban ghetto, filled with bars and shops. Later, Eve would birth another heterosexual son, Seth, to replace Abel.<sup>50</sup>

49. I refer to a book that is still unequaled: Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il nuovo mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500-1700)*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1977. Regarding the poor in Europe, it's enough to mention a classic study like the one by Bronisław Geremek, *Les fils de Cain. L'image des pauvres et des vagabonds dans la littérature européenne du XVIe au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, Flammarion, 1991.

50. Chris Glaser, *Coming Out as Sacrament*, Westminster, John Knox Press, 1998.