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The Concept of *Imago Agens* in *Celestina*: Text and Image[1]

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Writing about *imagines agentes*, in English «active images», equals writing about mnemotechnics and, more precisely, about the classical *ars memoriae*.[2] This term, made extensively known in the sixties by Frances A. Yates' homonymous book, defines the recourse to mental places (*loci*) and images (*imagines*) to improve memory, basically using a mental reconstruction of a real or imagined place —for instance, a building or a landscape— to organise and store mental images of the contents to be remembered (Yates 2011: 15-16). Originally, what had to be remembered were the contents (*memoria rerum*) and the formulation (*memoria verborum*) of a speech —memory being one of the five parts of the rhetoric defined by Cicero.[3] In both cases, topics and words should be reduced to abstract or figurative mental images of what and how the speaker wanted to say. Not all mental images qualified for this task, only those with a durable effect on the observer, that is, those that adhered to memory because of their strangeness, their positive or negative emotional impact, and/or their exceptional nature (Yates 2011: 21-23). In the words of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Cicero 1954: lib. III, XXII, 37; emphasis is mine):

> Imagines igitur nos in eo genere constituere oportebit, quod genus in memoria diutissime potest haerere. Id ac-

1.– I wrote this article as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the University of Münster. Preliminary versions of the ideas contained in this article were presented at the 2013 and 2015 international congresses of the Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (AHLM) under the title of «Las *imagines agentes* de *Celestina*», respectively (I) and (II). The two presentations were published in Spanish in the corresponding proceedings —*cf.* Saguar (2015a) and Saguar (in press). I would like to thank the editors, Carlos Alvar and José Carlos Miranda, for authorising me to reuse and further develop my original ideas in this new article.

2.– On this topic, the classical studies by Paolo Rossi (1960; revised 1983), Frances A. Yates (1966), and Mary J. Carruthers (1992; revised 2008) are still valid.

3.– «Memoria est firma animi rerum ac verborum perceptio». [Memory is the firm mental grasp of matter and words] (Cicero, 1949, *De inventione* lib. I, VII). All translations from the Latin and the Spanish are mine, unless stated otherwise.

> cidet, si quam maxime notatas similitudines constituemus; si non multas nec vagas, sed aliquid *agentes imagines* ponemus; si egregiam pulcritudinem aut unicam turpitudinem eis adtribuemus; si aliquas exornabimus, ut si coronis aut veste purpurea, quo nobis notatior sit similitudo; aut si qua re deformabimus, ut si cruentam aut caeno oblitam aut rubrica delibutam inducamus, quo magis insignita sit forma, aut ridiculas res aliquas imaginibus adtribuamus: nam ea res quoque faciet, ut facilius meminisse valeamus. Nam, quas res <veras> facile meminerimus, easdem fictas et diligenter notatas meminisse non difficile est. Sed illud facere oportebit, ut identidem primos quosque locos imaginum renovandarum causa celeriter animo pervagemus.
>
> [We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in the memory. And we shall do so if we establish likenesses as striking as possible; if we set up *images* that are not many or vague, but *doing something*; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects to our images, for that, too, will ensure our remembering them more readily. The things we easily remember when they are real we likewise remember without difficulty when they are figments, if they have been carefully delineated. But this will be essential —again and again to run over rapidly in the mind all the original backgrounds in order to refresh the images].

During the Middle Ages, as a result of the loss of perspective on rhetoric and a diminished interest in persuasion, the link between discourse and memory faded away, and only the bonds between memory and the virtue of prudence remained.[4] Although this connection had been established by

4.– «Respondeo dicendum quod prudentia est circa contingentia operabilia, sicut dictum est. In his autem non potest homo dirigi per ea quae sunt simpliciter et ex necessitate vera, sed ex his quae ut in pluribus accidunt, oportet enim principia conclusionibus esse proportionata, et ex talibus talia concludere, ut dicitur in VI Ethic. Quid autem in pluribus sit verum oportet per experimentum considerare, unde et in II Ethic. philosophus dicit quod virtus intellectualis habet generationem et augmentum ex experimento et tempore. Experimentum autem est ex pluribus memoriis; ut patet in I *Metaphys*. *Unde consequens est quod ad prudentiam requiritur pluriu*m *memoriam habere. Unde convenienter memoria ponitur pars prudentiae*». (Aquinas 2010a: IIa-IIae, q. 49, a. 1, 1 co.; emphasis is mine). [I answer that Prudence regards contingent matters of

Cicero in his *De inventione*,[5] the ethical application of the principles of the *ars memoriae* is a Christian innovation that primarily results from radical changes in the nature of the things to be remembered. Speeches gave way to Christian doctrine and ethics, so that the *ars memoriae* became didactic and, consequently, lost its mnemotechnic value in favour of a moral function (Yates 2011: 61).[6] In this process, the concept of *imago agens* suffered the most important transformation, as «the imprinting on memory of images of virtues and vices, made vivid and striking in accordance with the classical rules, [was exclusively meant] as 'memorial notes' to aid us in reaching Heaven and avoiding Hell» (Yates 2011: 65).

Despite the evident dislike for metaphors in Scholasticism —since they were perceived as the opposite of abstract thinking and logic— Christian scholars admitted the moral potential of such images. They accepted images as a sensory point of entry into higher levels of the mind —the senses were the first source of any knowledge, after all— and as a lesser evil for reaching the less cultivated (Aquinas 2010b: III, d. 9, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2):

> Fuit autem triplex ratio institutionis imaginum in Ecclesia. Primo ad instructionem rudium, qui eis quasi quibusdam libris edocentur. Secundo ut incarnationis mysterium et sanctorum exempla magis in memoria essent, dum quotidie oculis repraesentantur. Tertio ad excitandum devotionis affectum qui ex visis efficacius incitatur quam ex auditis.
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> [There was a triple reason for instituting images in the church. First, for the instruction of simple people, who are taught by them as if by some books. Second, so that

action, as stated above. Now in such like matters a man can be directed, not by those things that are simply and necessarily true, but by those which occur in the majority of cases: because principles must be proportionate to their conclusions, and like must be concluded from like. But we need experience to discover what is true in the majority of cases: wherefore the Philosopher says that intellectual virtue is engendered and fostered by experience and time. Now experience is the result of many memories as stated in *Metaph*. I, *and therefore prudence requires the memory of many things. Hence memory is fittingly accounted a part of prudence*].

5.– «Prudentia est rerum bonarum et malarum neutrarumque scientia. Partes eius: memoria, intellegentia, providentia. Memoria est per quam animus repetit illa quae fuerunt; intellegentia, per quam ea perspicit quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est» (Cicero 1949: lib. II, LIII). [Wisdom is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, and foresight. Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs].

6.– Yates (2011: 57-82) also notes the attribution of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* to Cicero as a main factor of change: interpreted as a complement or a second part to Cicero's *De inventione*, medieval scholars believed that the *Ad Herennium* provided the key to internalising the ethical views expressed in *De inventione* and, in particular, prudence. In any case, this relationship is not relevant for our argument.

> the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the saints remain more in our memory, as they are represented to the eyes daily. Third, to excite devotional feeling, which is stimulated more effectively by things seen than those heard].

However, to ensure that images were able to fulfil this triple function, the emotional factor of *imagines agentes* had to be fully reinterpreted. Because they were felt no longer as a mere mechanism to make things more memorable, to move the observer became a purpose in itself. In Susan M. Arvay's words, empathy «became in the later Middle Ages the preferred method of shaping someone into an ethically sound Christian» (Arvay 2008: 37). Basically, positive emotional involvement —empathy, sympathy, sorrow, admiration, etc.— led to imitation, as in the case of the lay devotion of the *meditatio humanitatis Christi*. Negative emotional involvement —estrangement, fear, antipathy, disgust, etc.— led in turn to rejection, as in the case of the contemplation of the condemned souls in Purgatory and Hell (see below). Therefore, *imagines agentes* magnified their emotional component and specialised in «beautiful or hideous human figures as corporeal similitudes of spiritual intentions of gaining Heaven or avoiding Hell» (Yates 2011: 79). The observer could or could not identify himself and sympathise with *imagines agentes* but, in any case, they developed an exemplarity that explains their didactic-moral interpretation and their success in Christian imagery (Yates 2011: 83-100).

This said about the general concept of *imago agens* in the late Middle Ages, we can move on to the presence of *imagines agentes* in *Celestina*. From the perspective of emotional participation, it is evident that its main characters do not leave readers indifferent, either raising sympathy or antipathy. Moreover, the main plot fulfils all the requirements to be a memorable story: there is sex, violence, and death, as well as all the associated intense feelings. However, much of the plot being static and the general picture too comprehensive to be effectively visualised, *Celestina* cannot be considered an *imago agens* as a whole, although some of its individual scenes can; in particular, the death scenes lend themselves especially well to this reading. Death is an excellent resource for creating *imagines agentes*. On the one hand, its biological consequences —decomposition— and some of its causes —illness, murder, execution, old age, etc.—have a strong visual impact. On the other, the cult of death of the late Middle Ages imbued it with a transcendental meaning: death was understood as a reminder of how brief and futile earthly life is. It appealed to the anxieties of late medieval people about the afterlife, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, and everything that is to be left behind (family, estate, reputation).[7] As a

7.– As an introduction to the topic of death in the late Middle Ages, the classical studies of Johan Huizinga (1919) and Philippe Ariès (1974) are still a good point of departure. A more modern and purely Castilian perspective can be found in Vivanco (2004).

result, they were macabre images, on account of their inherent hideousness. They instilled anguish and sadness within the viewers. The effect was enhanced by the prominent symbolic role death played in their social and historical context. Furthermore, the Christian interpretation of death, which included the practice of meditating upon it, triggered an uneasy state of mind that led to the resolution to amend one's ways.

In *Celestina* five characters die: Celestina, Sempronio, Pármeno, Calisto, and Melibea. Curiously enough, in the iconographical tradition of the work, the death scenes are the only ones that escape the static scheme of Johann Grüninger's illustrated editions of Terence —considered one of the sources for the illustration of the Burgos 1499 *Comedia*— and receive a more dynamic (=*agens*) treatment.[8] Even in the Burgos *Comedia*, in which the debt to the German *factotum* blocks is most evident, the woodcuts devoted respectively to the deaths of Calisto and Melibea move away from the predominant vertical scheme imposed by the shape of narrow printing blocks. These two woodcuts represent Calisto and Melibea in a horizontal design, in the act of falling, overlapping the width of two *factotum* blocks (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Fig. 1 Fall of Calisto in *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Burgos, Fadrique de Basilea, 1499 (but 1500-1502), act XIV, f. l2r. Image by Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (original at the Hispanic Society of America).

8.– Johann Grüninger's illustrated editions of Terence are studied by Griffin (2001). Our article being focused on the early reception of *Celestina*, we have only examined illustrated editions up to 1520: the Burgos *Comedia* (Fadrique de Basilea, Burgos, 1499, but 1500-1502), the Valencia 1514 edition of the *Tragicomedia* by Juan Joffre, and two of the editions with the fake 1502 colophon (Jacobo Cromberger, Sevilla, 1511 and 1518-1520). We have dismissed the Valencia 1518 edition for reusing the woodcuts of the Valencia 1514 edition, as well as the Sevilla 1502 (but 1513-1515 and Marcelo Silber, Roma, 1515-1516) editions for reproducing the woodcuts of the Sevilla 1502 (but 1511) edition. We have not been able to see either the Pedro Hagenbach (or successor), Toledo, 1502 (but 1510-1514) or the Antonio Blado, Salamanca (but Rome), 1502 (but 1520) editions but, according to Foulché-Delbosc (1930: 584), the latter uses the same woodcuts for the death scenes as Marcelo Silber, Roma, 1515-1516.

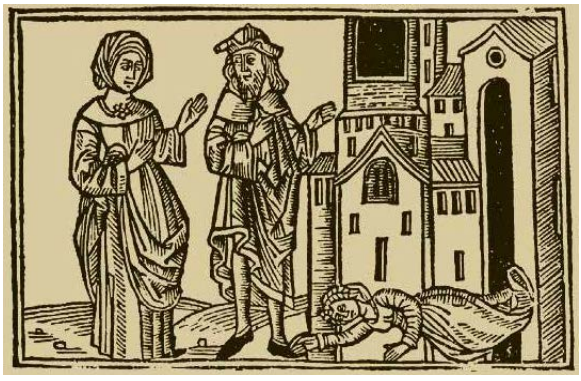

Fig. 2 Fall of Melibea in *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Burgos, Fadrique de Basilea, 1499 (but 1500-1502), act XIV, f. l8r. Image by Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (original at the Hispanic Society of America).

Provided that, according to Joseph T. Snow (1987), the illustrations of the *Comedia* are tightly connected to the text, one could think that this peculiar visual treatment is the result of trying to be faithful to the story. If this had been the case, later editions that systematically avoid the expensive page-wide woodcuts should not have felt the necessity to perpetuate this visual scheme. However, they kept carved page-wide woodblocks for both scenes in spite of the expense that they implied. Furthermore, these later editions went further than the xylographies in the Burgos *Comedia*: they redefined the composition completely by moving away from the shortcut of including cost-effective *factotum* blocks. This move is most noticeable in the case of Calisto's fall, for which a completely new scheme, based on the Passion of Christ (see below), was chosen. Instead of showing Calisto and Melibea hitting the ground, the new schemes focused respectively on the servants transporting Calisto's body and on Melibea jumping from the tower. The special treatment given to these two scenes is not justified by their dependence on the words that describe the events in the *Comedia*. One must conclude that both scenes had a particular status for printers of the *Tragicomedia,* who did not hesitate to have new woodcuts made. The new woodcuts were not only expensive, but also, given the specificity of the scenes they depicted, they could not be easily reused in other works.

There is not much to add to the work of Enrique Fernández-Rivera (2011) on the quick approach of the depiction of Calisto's fall to the iconography of the Descent and the Deposition. As he wrote, the Calisto of the *Comedia*, about to hit the ground like the characters that fell from the Wheel of Fortune, gives way, in later editions, to a Calisto already dead, with his head leaning on his shoulder and being held by the armpits and

the ankles by his servants. This posture is typically associated with the Descent and the Deposition and it is not to be exclusively attributed to textual faithfulness (see Figs. 3 and 4).[9]

Fig. 3 Dead Calisto carried away by his servants in *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Valencia, Juan Joffre, 1514, act XIX, f. H8r. Image by Banco de recursos ATENEX (original at the Biblioteca Nacional de España).

Fig. 4 *Deposition*, Follower of Rogier van der Weyden (*ca.* 1490). Image by the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Moreover, the ladder, despite being part of the plot in *Celestina*, is also an iconic —and instrumental— element of the Descent from the Cross that usually appears in the background, exactly as in *Celestina*. This coincidence reinforces the relationship between the illustration of the fall and death of Calisto and the iconography of the Passion.

9.– «*Toma tú, Sosia, desos pies*; llevemos el cuerpo de nuestro querido amo donde no padezca su honra detrimento, aunque sea muerto en este lugar» (324-325; emphasis added). [Sosia, lift his feet. Let's take our dear master's body to a place where his reputation will be safe, even though he died here] (185). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes are from the Spanish edition by Rojas & «antiguo autor» (2011), with the page number, and all emphasis is mine. The English quotes of *Celestina* are by page number from the translation of Peter Bush (2009). In a few cases, the translations are adapted or provided to match the literal sense of the original Spanish words.

The woodcuts illustrating the death of Melibea undergo a similar evolution. In the *Comedia*, Melibea is equally portrayed as a victim of the Wheel of Fortune on the verge of hitting the ground. However, attention shifts to her jumping off the tower in the *Tragicomedia*: Melibea appears in the middle of the upper half of the illustration, in the act of taking the fatal jump. In the Valencia 1514 edition, her parents stand at the foot of the tower, one at each side, looking at her (in the editions with the fake 1502 colophon, her father and her servant Lucrecia are the ones standing at the foot of the tower, which is a true representation of the words of the text). The male and female figures at the feet of the instrument of death recall the Crucifixion, with the Virgin and Saint John to the right and to the left of the Cross, and Christ above them, in the middle (see Figs. 5 and 6).

Fig. 5 Suicide of Melibea, *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Valencia, Juan Joffre, 1514, act XXI, f. I3r. Image by Banco de recursos ATENEX (original at the Biblioteca Nacional de España).

Fig. 6 *The Crucifixion*, Albrecht Dürer (1511). Image by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

This similarity is reinforced by how the female character at the foot of the tower —be it Alisa or Lucrecia— holds her hands as if in prayer, a gesture commonly assumed by the Virgin Mary in many depictions of the Crucifixion (Figs. 8 and 10). We can even speculate if the inclusion of Melibea´s mother, Alisa, in the woodcut of the Valencia 1514 edition is the result of the engraver having the model of the Crucifixion in mind. He would have felt urged to include the mother in the block, despite the text being absolutely clear about her not being present in the scene.[10] Something similar could be said about the presence of two extra characters, one female and one male, in the corresponding xylography of the 1523 Venetian edition by Juan Bautista Pedrezano: this would be an attempt to reproduce the presence of several characters at both sides of the Cross, frequently distributed by sex, in the cycle of the Passion of Christ (see Figs. 7 and 8).

Fig. 7 Suicide of Melibea in *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Sevilla (but Venice), Juan Bautista Pedrezano, 1523, act XXI, f. M3r. Image by the Austrian National Library.

10.– The text is clear regarding the absence of Alisa: «¿Qué es esto, Pleberio? ¿Por qué son tus fuertes alaridos? Sin seso estaba, adormida del pesar que hobe cuando oí decir que sentía dolor nuestra hija» (337). [What has happened, Pleberio, my lord? Why are you howling like that? I was distraught and fell asleep. I felt so upset when I heard our daughter was so ill] (193).

Fig. 8. *The Crucifixion*, Albrecht Dürer (ca. 1509-1510). Image by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Furthermore, Pleberio adopts a posture that recalls that of Saint John in the tradition of the Passion, either quietly holding his hands, as in the 1523 Sevilla (but Venice) and the Valencia 1514 editions (Fig. 5 & 7), or raising his arms, as in the editions with the fake 1502 colophon (Fig. 9), in a much more distressed gesture, related to mourning.

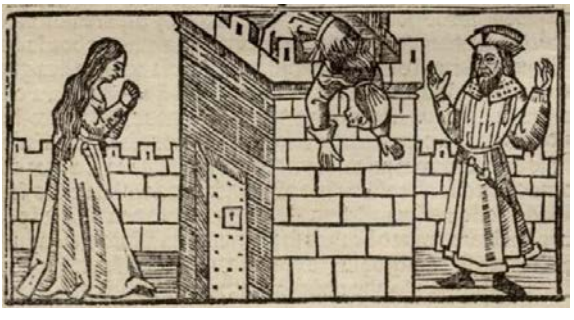

Fig. 9 Suicide of Melibea in *Libro de Calixto y Melibea y de la puta vieja Celestina*, Sevilla, Jacobo Cromberger, 1502 (but 1518-1520), act xx, f. h6r. Image by Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Fig. 10 *The Crucifixion*, Albrecht Dürer (1508). Image by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Finally, although this point is not so evident, Melibea holding her arms open while she falls echoes Christ on the Cross, and Lucrecia's long hair in the woodcuts of the editions with the fake 1502 colophon can be related to the presence of Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion, who is generally portrayed with long, loose hair —notice that this is the only woodcut in which Lucrecia is portrayed with this hairstyle.[11]

From the above explanations it is evident that the pictorial representations of Calisto's death and of Melibea's suicide rely on the iconography of the Passion. Although it could be argued that this influence is merely the result of engravers being accustomed to executing religious imagery, this does not diminish the significance of the Passion for the first readers of *Celestina*. The Passion was at the basis of the *meditatio humanitatis Christi*, which shaped lay devotion in the late Middle Ages.[12] Depictions of the Crucifixion, the Descent, and the Deposition were intended to support meditation, that is, to serve as a point of departure for the devouts to immerse themselves in the different scenes of the Passion, as if they were witnessing it, which was the main objective of the *meditatio humanitatis Christi*.[13] The visual engagement ensured the

11.– The correspondence between character and *factotum* block in the editions with the fake 1502 colophon is quite irregular but, with regard to Lucrecia, it is possible to ascribe her a female figure with her hair covered, the female character with her hair loose being used for the prostitutes and, occasionally, for Melibea.

12.– *Cf.* Fernández Conde (2011), but similar statements can be found in almost any work on religiosity in the fifteenth century and on some writings, such as Passion poetry or sacred hyperbole.

13.– «Tu autem si ex fructum sumere cupis, ita presentem te exhibeas his que per Dominum Iesum dicta et facta narrantur ac si tuis auribus audires, et oculis ea videres, toto mentis

emotional involvement necessary to instil admiration and love for Jesus in the practitioner, which necessarily led to imitation.[14] The shocking visual composition of the images acted as an *imago agens*, making the scene memorable and easy to evoke in the eyes of the imagination if a painting, engraving, or sculpture was not at hand. This technique helped the practitioner in his or her daily life to remember the ethical teachings and Christian *auctoritates* traditionally associated with each scene.[15] Lay readers who had developed this habit of looking at representations of the Passion with a meditative attitude could not but approach the woodcuts of the deaths of Calisto and Melibea, which so many reminiscences have of this tradition, with a similar attitude.[16]

Since engravers and readers shared this tradition, the evolution of the xylographies from religiously-neutral depictions of Calisto and Melibea hitting the ground to Passion-like compositions is more than mere professional inertia on the part of the engravers. They noticed the special

affectu diligenter, delectabiliter et morose, omnibus aliis curis et sollicitudinibus tunc omissis» (Pseudo-Buenaventura 1499: f. b2r). [But if you want to capture the lesson, imagine the things that are narrated to have been said and done by our Lord Jesus Christ as if you were listening with your own ear and seeing with your own eyes, attentively, joyfully and slowly, with all the power of your mind, leaving aside all daily worries].

14.– «Dico primo quod iugis meditatio vite domini iesu roborat et stabilit mentem contra vana et caduca, […] Secundo fortificat contra tribulationes et adversa, […] Tertio dico quod docet circa gerenda, ut nec hostes nec vitia irruere vel fallere possint, hoc ideo, quia perfectio virtutum repetitur ibidem. […] Qui ergo eum sequitur, errare non potest, neque falli, *ad cuius vertutes imitandas et adipiscendas, ex frequenti meditatione cor accenditur et animatur*. Deinde illuminatur virtute, ita quod virtutem induit, et a veris falsa discernit» (Pseudo-Buenaventura 1499: f. a8v-b1r; emphasis is mine). [I say that, first, assiduous meditation on the life of Christ strengthens and stabilizes the mind against everything vain and temporary […] Second, it fortifies against tribulations and adversities […] Third, it teaches us on how to do things, so that you will not run into enemies or vices because the perfection of virtues is achieved […] Who follows him cannot go wrong nor make mistakes, *and he who imitates his virtues and reaches them has his heart vivified and elated thanks to the frequent meditation*. It is illuminated by virtue to adopt virtuous behaviour and discerns the true from the false].

15.– «Eliges ergo in his meditandis aliquam horam quietam, postea infra diem poteris discere *moralitatem et auctoritates, et eas studiose memorie commendare*. Quod omnino te facere convenit, quia pulcherrime sunt, et quae te quasi in tota vita spirituali valeant informare. […] Et sic per singulas hebdomadas facias, vt ipsas meditationes tibi reddas familiares. Quod quanto magis facies, *tanto facilius tibi occurrent*, atque iocundius» (Pseudo-Buenaventura 1499: f. ?2v-?3r; emphasis is mine). [You should choose a quiet time of the day to meditate. Then, after a day, you will be able to learn about morality and authorities, and commend them to your memory carefully. This is most convenient for you to do because this is very beautiful and has the power to give shape to your entire spiritual life […]You should continue like this some weeks so that the meditations become familiar to you. *The more you do it, the easier they will come to you*, and the happier you will be].

16.– Certain reading conditions might also have intensified these moral expectations, private silent reading being tightly associated with meditation (*cf.* Sänger 1989). Collective, aloud reading could also have contributed to increasing the moral expectations of the audience if we are to imagine that, in the church, priests would have shown and explained religious images to their congregation. However, this possibility needs further exploration.

dynamic status of both woodcuts in the *Comedia* and correctly interpreted them as *imagines agentes* that, besides portraying the action accurately, supported the moral intention of the text. The images were appalling enough to move the reader to appreciate the exemplary punishment of Calisto and Melibea. However, the engravers felt that the scenes, as they were, did not move the viewers enough to reflection. Therefore they decided to increase their impact by linking them to the Passion, probably taking a hint from the echoes of the Passion in the last two acts of *Celestina* (Saguar 2015b: 80-103). The result was that the woodcuts of Calisto's and Melibea's deaths received a distinctively dynamic treatment. They were depicted as particularly shocking scenes, specifically by emphasizing their connection with the medieval *imago agens* par excellence, Christ's Passion.

A similar process can be posited for the depictions of Celestina's death and of Pármeno's and Sempronio's deaths. These deaths are not portrayed in the Burgos *Comedia,* which, on account of the greater focus on the love story in the first version of *Celestina*, only illustrates the act in which these deaths are narrated with an image of Calisto lying in bed while Tristán and Sosia talk outside (Fig. 11).[17] Such a colourless event is not deemed significant enough to be illustrated in the *Tragicomedia*. More focused on the low-life characters, the illustrators of the *Tragicomedia* replace it with a new page-wide xylography of the execution of Pármeno and Sempronio. Furthermore, they introduce another page-wide woodcut portraying the murder of Celestina at the end of act XII, which, as a result, is exceptionally illustrated with two different woodcuts.[18]

17.– Unlike in the xylographies corresponding to the deaths of Calisto and Melibea, the deviation from the vertical scheme of the *factotum* blocks on the right half of this woodcut, representing Calisto in bed, can be interpreted as a concession to the text. It may also be intended to highlight the importance of this act as a point of no return in Calisto's insanity. Moreover, as described in Fernández-Rivera (2012), this woodcut is clearly inspired by the xylography representing Leriano in bed in the first illustrated edition of *Cárcel de amor* (Pablo Hurus, Zaragoza, 1493); thus, this anomaly could be interpreted as a manifestation of intertextuality with this important book.

18.– Act XIX of the *Tragicomedia* also has two xylographies: the woodcut representing Calisto's fall, which also appeared in act XIV of the *Comedia*, and a woodcut of Calisto climbing the wall of Melibea's garden, which is the same that illustrates act XIV in the *Tragicomedia* and which reappears in act XIX on account of the extra night of Calisto with Melibea.

Fig. 11 *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea, Burgos,* Fadrique de Basilea, 1499 (but 1500-1502), act XIII f. k8r. Image by Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (original at the Hispanic Society of America).

Despite minor differences, the woodcuts depicting the deaths of Sempronio and Pármeno in the different illustrated editions share the same scheme: under the attentive eyes of a curious audience, one of them has already been executed. His head is presented as either attached to the body (Valencia 1514, Fig. 12), or in the hands of the assistant to the executioner (editions with the fake 1502 colophon, Fig. 14). Meanwhile, the executioner, either holding his sword up in the air (editions with the fake 1502 colophon, Fig. 13) or against the neck of his victim (Valencia 1514, Fig. 12), is about to behead his second victim.

Fig. 12 *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Valencia, Juan Joffre, 1514, act XIII, f. G3r. Image by Banco de recursos ATENEX (original at the Biblioteca Nacional de España).

Fig. 13 *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Sevilla, Jacobo Cromberger, 1502 (but 1511), act XIII, f. Q1r. Image by Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (original at the Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno de la República Argentina).

Fig. 14 *Libro de Calixto y Melibea y de la puta vieja Celestina*, Sevilla, Jacobo Cromberger, 1502 (but 1518-1520), act XIII, f. f7v. Image by Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Moreover, in the editions with the fake 1502 colophon (Fig. 14), we can see an extra character making a gesture of negation to the inquisitive finger of the assistant to the executioner. The figure can be identified with Sosia being too horrified to look (in particular in the 1502, but 1511, edition, Fig. 13), or denying that he knows Pármeno and Sempronio.[19]

The xylographies of the murder of Celestina by Pármeno and Sempronio equally show a constant pattern in several early editions (Figs. 15 and 16). Half the image depicts one of the two stabbing Celestina while the other holds his sword up in the air. In the second half, one of them is jumping through a window while the body of the other lies lifeless after having hit the ground. A group of armed people is observing their failed escape. Only the Valencia 1514 edition (Fig. 15) introduces

19.– Fernández-Rivera (2011) suggests that it is an artistic license of the engraver, who is following the iconography of Saint Peters´ denial of Christ.

a major change: Elicia is not included, despite her being described at the murder scene in the text.[20] This omission seems to be an artistic license by the engraver, who is most interested in showing the window in the background. Three protruding wood or stone blocks under the window are an important detail that connects the interior window with the same window depicted in the other half of the scene, from which Sempronio and Pármeno jump, that also has three black blocks below.

Fig. 15 *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, Valencia, Juan Joffre, 1514, act XII, f. G2v. Image by Banco de recursos ATENEX (original at the Biblioteca Nacional de España).

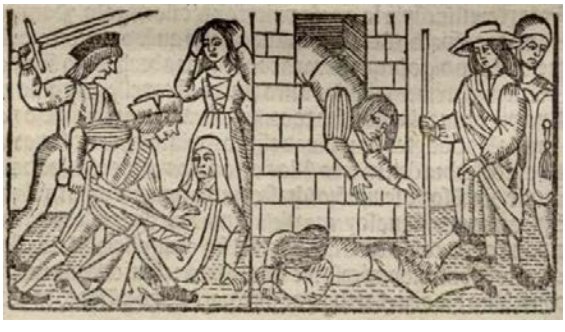

Fig. 16 *Libro de Calixto y Melibea y de la puta vieja Celestina*, Sevilla, Jacobo Cromberger, 1502 (but 1518-1520), act XII, f. f6v. Image by Biblioteca Nacional de España.

The woodcuts representing the murder of Celestina and the execution of Pármeno and Sempronio have in common that they depict the violent climax of their respective actions. The moments of choice are the most pathetic actions —stabbing, falling, and beheading— which are por-

20.– «¡Mete, por Dios, el espada! ¡Tenle, Pármeno, tenle! ¡No la mate este desvariado!» (260). [For God's sake, put your sword away! Grab him, Pármeno, grab him! Don't let that madman kill her!] (144).

trayed in detail. By virtue of their violence, they qualify as true *imagines agentes*. However, the depiction of violence is not what interests us the most, but the pointing finger of the character with a hat and a rod, probably the sheriff. To start with, this is not a gesture present in any of the woodcuts portraying armed men in Johann Grüninger's illustrated edition of Terence. Although the group of soldiers in the xylography at the beginning of scene XVI in Grüninger's *Eunuchus* resembles the armed men in *Celestina*, the free hand of the figure identified as Dorax (see Fig.17) seems to be saluting, not pointing. Exactly the same can be said about the *factotum* block (Fig. 18) representing a man, identified as Phormio, with a halberd and a hat that resembles the one worn by the sheriff in *Celestina.* Despite the striking similarities, Phormio's free hand is clearly not pointing. The conclusion is that, since Grüninger's figures do not include the pointing finger, adding it must have had a special significance for the engravers, beyond that of mere artistic license.

Fig. 17 *Terentius cum Directorio, Glosa interlineali, Comentariis*, Strasbourg, Johann Grüninger, 1496, f. i3v. Image by Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon.

Fig. 18 *Terentius cum Directorio, Glosa interlineali, Comentariis*, Strasbourg, Johann Grüninger, 1496, f. q4r. Image by Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon.

The representations of Hell and Purgatory also present pointing fingers in visually violent contexts similar to the deaths of Celestina and of the servants (see Fig. 19). There, the pointing finger acts as an invitation —or an exhortation— to contemplate the suffering of the souls of the condemned and the penitents. The call to attention of the pointing finger enhances the efficiency of the *imagines agentes* in raising fear in the hearts of the believers. This convention of religious imagery provides a pictorial scheme in which a static character, situated at the margin of the scene, points with his or her finger to an active image —*imago agens*— that portrays punishment as a negative example. In our opinion, these religious images are the point of reference for the engravers in designing the woodcuts illustrating the deaths of Celestina, Sempronio, and Pármeno. This impression is reinforced by how all the characters are staring at the death scenes, which contributes to focusing the readers' attention on the tragic fate of the characters. Contemporary readers would automatically interpret the above-mentioned pointing as an invitation to meditate, that is, to become emotionally engaged in the scene. In addition, the connection with the religious imagery of Purgatory and Hell would contribute to defining the deaths of the servants and the go-between as punishment for their sins, thus reinforcing the didactic and moral message of *Celestina*.

Fig. 19 *Visio Sancti Pauli*, CCCC Ms 20, Parker Library, f. 66r. Image by University of Stanford (original at Corpus Christi College).

Until now we have only talked about illustrated editions of *Celestina*. However, because *imagines agentes* belong to the realm of memory and mind in general, they do not need a pictorial support to exist. A closer look at the text of *Celestina* shows that the descriptions of the deaths of Celestina, Sempronio, Pármeno, Calisto, and Melibea qualify also as *imagines agentes* because they are filled with violence and macabre details that make them memorable. For example, when describing the death of Calisto, Tristán focuses very much on the physical and the spiritual consequences:

> Llégate presto, Sosia, que el triste de nuestro amo es caído del escala, y no habla ni se bulle. […] *¡Oh mi señor y mi bien muerto, oh mi señor despeñado! ¡Oh triste muerte sin confesión! Coge, Sosia, esos sesos de esos cantos; júntalos con la cabeza del desdichado amo nuestro.* […] *su cabeza está en tres partes. Sin confisión pereció*. (323-324)
>
> [Quick, Sosia, our hapless master's fallen off the ladder. And he's not talking or moving. […] *Master, master. Dead as a door-nail! A miserable way to die and no confession! Sosia, pick up those brains from off the cobbles*]. (184-185)

Which Melibea describes, in turn, in a slightly more idealised way, but without avoiding the disgusting physical outcomes of the fall:

> Y como esta pasada noche viniese según era acostumbrado, a la vuelta de su venida, como de la fortuna mudable estoviese dispuesto y ordenado según su desordenada costumbre, como las paredes eran altas, la noche escura, la escala delgada, los sirvientes que traía no diestros en aquél género de servicio, y él bajaba presuroso a ver un ruido que con sus criados sonaba en la calle, con el gran ímpetu que llevaba no vido bien los pasos, puso el pie en vacío y cayó, *y de la triste caída sus más escondidos sesos quedaron repartidos por las piedras y paredes*. Cortaron las hadas sus hilos, *cortáronle sin confesión su vida*, cortaron mi esperanza, cortaron mi gloria, cortaron mi compañía. (333)
>
> [He came last night as usual. After he'd arrived, as Lady Luck is fickle and did things in her usual disorderly way, as the walls were high, the night dark, the ladder rickety, the servants he brought not skilled in this kind of manoeuvre, he rushed back over to see why there was so much din in the street. He was in such a hurry that he was careless, missed a step, *and fell down so hard that his innermost brains were splattered over the cobbles and walls. The Fates thus cut the cord, cut off a life without final rites,* cut down my hopes, cut my bliss and friend to death]. (191)

Furthermore, the deaths of Pármeno and Sempronio receive a similar treatment, with a first account focused on the physical circumstances in the *Comedia:*

> ¡Oh señor, que si los vieras, quebraras el corazón de dolor! *El uno llevaba todos los sesos de la cabeza de fuera sin ningún sentido, el otro quebrados entramos brazos y la cara magullada, todos llenos de sangre,* que saltaron de unas ventanas muy

> altas por huir del alguacil, y así cuasi muertos les cortaron las cabezas, que creo que ya no sintieron nada. (266)
>
> [Master, if you'd seen them, it would have broken your heart. *One was completely unconscious with his brains hanging out and the other had two broken arms and a wrecked, blood-splattered face,* because they both jumped down from very high windows to escape the constable. They were practically dead when they cut off their heads. I don't think they felt very much]. (148)

To which these insights are added in the *Tragicomedia*:

> Ya sin sentido iban, pero el uno, con harta dificultad, como me sentió que con lloro le miraba, hincó los ojos en mí, alzando las manos al cielo, cuasi dando gracias a Dios, y como preguntando si me sentía de su morir; y en señal de triste despedida abajó su cabeza con lágrimas en los ojos, dando bien a entender que no me había de ver más hasta el día del gran Juicio. (266)
>
> [They were already senseless, but one of them stared at me when he heard me crying and raised his hands to the heavens, almost giving thanks to God. It was as if he wondered if I was sorry he was dying. He bowed his head in sad farewell, with tears in his eyes, as if to say he'd see me next on Judgement Day]. (147)

And the murder of the go-between, first very briefly described by Sosia in the *Comedia*: «Ella mesma es; *de más de treinta estocadas la vi llagada*, tendida en su casa, llorándola una su criada» (267). [It was her. *They slashed her more than thirty times*. I saw the hacked body in her house, wept over by her maid] (148). It is hyperbolically described by Elicia in the *Tragicomedia*, who emphasises the extreme cruelty and the malice with which the murderers proceeded:

> *Mil cuchilladas* le vi dar a mis ojos, en mi regazo me la mataron. […] Estovieron gran rato en palabras; al fin, viéndola tan codiciosa perseverando en su negar, echaron manos a sus espadas y diéronle *mil cuchilladas.* (288-289)
>
> [I saw her stabbed time and again with these very eyes. They killed her as she lay in my lap […] They argued for ages. Finally, seeing she was so greedy and refused to budge, they took out their swords and stuck them into her a thousand times]. (161)

Finally, Pleberio spares neither the bloody details of his daughter's death:

> Y porque el incogitado dolor te dé más pena todo junto sin pensarle, por que más presto vayas al sepulcro, porque no llore yo solo la pérdida dolorida de entramos, ves allí a la que tú pariste y yo engendré *hecha pedazos* […] *¡Oh mi hija despedazada!* (337-338 and 346-347)
>
> [Unexpected pain hurts more because you have no time to think and go more quickly to the grave. So I don't weep our mutual loss alone, look at the broken bits of the girl you bore and I fathered […] My daughter broken asunder!]. (193 and 198)

Nor of the deaths of the other characters:

> La falsa alcahueta Celestina murió *a manos de los más fieles compañeros* que ella para tu [=Amor] servicio emponzoñado jamás halló; ellos murieron *degollados*, Calisto *despeñado*, mi triste hija quiso tomar la misma muerte por seguirle. (344)
>
> [That lying bawd Celestina died *at the hands of her most loyal companions*, who performed her venomous services. They *lost their heads*. Calisto broke *his neck*. My sad daughter chose a similar fate]. (197)

It is evident that, even without the visual support of illustrated editions, readers were provided with textual descriptions to mentally recreate the deaths of Celestina, Pármeno, Sempronio, Calisto, and Melibea as if they had been present. Moved by the macabre details, they were likely to experiment some kind of emotional, morality-laden reaction towards the victims. *Celestina* is exploiting the same resources as affective meditation, such as the *meditatio humanitatis Christi,* as well as any other form of lay devotion based on visual and emotional immersion in a scene. If the emotional engagement is positive, the observers develop imitative will. If it is negative, they internalise ethical and doctrinal teachings. Specifically, cruelty in *Celestina* aims at the contrary effect of the *meditatio humanitatis Christi*. Christ's sufferings work as an *imago agens* that appeals to the empathy of the observer because his sufferings are the result of the sins of mankind, not of his own. *Celestina,* on the other hand, offers the reader characters who deserve their cruel fate and towards whom it is very difficult to feel sympathy. Social distance —servants, prostitutes, and go-betweens being not the intended readers— and negative depiction distances these characters from the reader.[21] Consequently, their

21.– For the ridiculousness in the characterisation of Calisto and Melibea, see in particular Martin (1972) and Lacarra (1989). Costa Fontes (1991) also approaches the characterisation of Celestina from the perspective of parody, although she portrays herself ridiculously enough during the banquet, in act IX. As far as is known to us, nobody has addressed the characteri-

pain neither inspires pity nor an imitative will, unlike the suffering of Christ. On the contrary, it raises moral rejection. As in the often quoted words of the *Philosophia antigua poetica* , «las [muertes] de la comedia, si alguna ay, son de gusto y pasatiempo, porque en ellas mueren personas que sobran en el mundo, como es una vieja zigañadora, un rufián o una alcahueta» (López Pinciano 1953: vol. III, p. 24). [Deaths in comedies, if they happen, are entertaining and enjoyable because those who die are people who are not needed in this world, such as an old woman who is a crawler, a pimp, or a bawd].

Where this is not enough to confirm the moral purpose of the death scenes, readers of *Celestina* are supplied with summary explanations of their causes that highlight their ethical interpretation. The similarity between these descriptions and the engravings of the death scenes contributes to clarifying their moral purpose, ensuring that the relative freedom of interpretation given to the readers and their sympathies does not interfere with the right interpretation. For example, just a few lines after having described Pármeno's and Sempronio's deaths, Sosia reminds the reader of the crime for which they have been sentenced: «Señor, la causa de su muerte publicaba el cruel verdugo a voces, diciendo: 'Manda la justicia mueran *los violentos matadores*'» (267). [Master, *the cruel executioner* bellowed out the reason for their deaths: Justice demands that violent killers die] (147); and how avarice has led Celestina to death: «Señor, aquella su criada, dando voces llorando su muerte, la publicaba a cuantos la querían oír, diciendo que *porque no quiso partir con ellos una cadena de oro* que tú le diste» (268). [Master, her servant was sobbing over her dead mistress and shouting out loud and clear for all to hear, *that it was because she'd refused to share a gold chain you had given her*] (148). The role of avarice is more explicit in Elicia's description of the murder: «Estovieron gran rato en palabras; al fin, viéndola *tan codiciosa* perseverando en su negar, echaron manos a sus espadas y diéronle mil cuchilladas» (289). [They argued for ages. Finally, seeing she was *so greedy* and refused to budge, they took out their swords and stuck them into her a thousand times] (161). Moreover, Pleberio explains the cause of Melibea's suicide: «Porque mi Melibea mató a sí misma de su voluntad a mis ojos *con la gran fatiga de amor que le aquejaba*» (342). [But my Melibea killed herself, and she chose to do just that, right in front of my eyes, *because she was so distressed by love*] (196). And, finally, Melibea expounds the causalities that have led Calisto to death:

> *Era tanta su pena de amor* y tan poco el lugar para hablarme, que descubrió su pasión a una astuta y sagaz mujer

sation of the servants from this point of view; however, Sempronio being duped by Elicia in the first act does not contribute to making him a respectable character, nor does Pármeno's foolishness and attraction towards Areúsa.

> que llamaban Celestina. La cual, de su parte venida a mí, sacó mi secreto amor de mi pecho; descobrí a ella lo que a mi querida madre encobría; tovo manera como ganó mi querer; ordenó cómo su deseo y el mío hobiesen efecto. […] Quebrantó con escalas las paredes de tu huerto, quebrantó mi propósito, perdí mi virginidad. Del cual deleitoso yerro de amor gozamos cuasi un mes. Y como esta pasada noche viniese según era acostumbrado, a la vuelta de su venida, como de la fortuna mudable estoviese dispuesto y ordenado según su desordenada costumbre, como las paredes eran altas, la noche escura, la escala delgada, los sirvientes que traía no diestros en aquél género de servicio, y él bajaba presuroso a ver un ruido que con sus criados sonaba en la calle, con el gran ímpetu que llevaba no vido bien los pasos, puso el pie en vacío y cayó, y de la triste caída sus más escondidos sesos quedaron repartidos por las piedras y paredes. (333)
>
> [He suffered so much from his love and had so little opportunity to talk to me that he decided to reveal the source of his grief to a wily old woman called Celestina. For her part, she came to see me and dug my secret love out from my heart. I told her what I'd hid from my dear mother. She found ways to win my trust and organised the reconciliation of his wishes and mine. […] He scaled your garden walls with a ladder and defeated my resistance. I lost my virginity. We enjoyed the delectable sins of love for almost a month. He came last night as usual. After he'd arrived, as Lady Luck is fickle and did things in her usual disorderly way, as the walls were high, the night dark, the ladder rickety, the servants he brought not skilled in this kind of manoeuvre, he rushed back over to see why there was so much din in the street. He was in such a hurry that he was careless, missed a step, and fell down so hard that his innermost brains were splattered over the cobbles and walls]. (191)

In conclusion, the concept of *imago agens,* as it was understood in the late Middle Ages, defines the text, the iconography, and the interpretation of *Celestina*. It defines the text because it determines how death scenes are described. It defines the iconography because the tradition of the *imago agens* is what makes engravers portray religious imagery and religious patterns. And finally, the *imago agens* defines the interpretation because late medieval *imagines agentes* cannot exist without moral implications and a didactic function. *Celestina* makes extensive use of the concept of

imago agens as it was reinterpreted in the late Middle Ages: a shocking scene that serves as support for a moral and/or a doctrinal teaching by appealing either to positive feelings, such as sympathy, pity, admiration, or to negative emotions, such as disgust, fear, alienation. Deaths in *Celestina* are conceived so as to immerse the reader in the scenes and to instil in him an intense emotional reaction by means of detailed visual violence. The reader cannot avoid making moral judgements about what led characters to such a cruel fate. Furthermore, these judgements are conditioned by a negative characterisation of the deceased that should prevent readers from empathising with their cruel destiny. As a result, we totally agree with Rebeca Sanmartín's (2005: 119) views that the dead bodies in *Celestina* become symbolic spaces where murder, love insanity, and procurement are punished. To her ideas we add the *imago agens*. Being at the basis of religious imagery and the lay devotion of affective meditation, the adoption of the *imago agens* explains the similarities between the depictions of the Passion and the woodcuts illustrating the deaths of Calisto and Melibea. Also, the *imago agens* explains the similarity between the representations of the punishments in Hell and the xylographies of the deaths of Celestina, Pármeno, and Sempronio. Far from including these religious references by professional habit, engravers perceived and understood the *imago agens* nature of death scenes in *Celestina.* Consequently, they depicted the deaths of Calisto and Melibea with a dynamic composition in the 1499 *Comedia*; later, in the illustrated *Tragicomedia*, they included religious references to emphasise it. Noticing the similarity between the gory description of the lovers' deaths and that of the low-life characters, the engravers also treated the latter as *imagines agentes*, and, accordingly, designed new xylographies. As a result, they provided readers with four woodcuts that, unlike the others, were neither limited to decorating nor to illustrating the text, but were designed to inspire meditation, and thus, to actively contribute to the moral interpretation of *Celestina*.

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo se exploran los vínculos potenciales entre *Celestina* y la reinterpretación tardomedieval del concepto clásico de la *imago agens*. Por un lado, examina los grabados correspondientes a las muertes de los personajes principales y los compara con algunos ejemplos de imaginería religiosa de la época que admiten ser interpretados desde este punto de vista. Por otro, pone en relación las macabras descripciones verbales de estas mismas muertes con la función ejemplar y moralizante que las *imagines agentes* desarrollaron durante la Baja Edad Media. Por último, analiza la importancia de la violencia, tanto en la descripción textual como en la representación visual de estas muertes, para concluir que tuvo que desempeñar una función didáctico–moral.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *imagines agentes*, didactismo, imaginería.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the potential links between *Celestina* and the late medieval reinterpretation of the classical mnemotechnic concept of *imago agens*. On the one hand, it analyses the woodcuts corresponding to the deaths of the main characters and compares them with some examples of late medieval religious imagery that exemplify the technique of the *imago agens*. On the other, it connects the macabre descriptions of these deaths to the exemplary moral function that *imagines agentes* developed during the late Middle Ages. Finally, after examining the importance of violence in such textual and visual depictions of death, it concludes that it must have had been intended with a moralising function in mind.

KEY WORDS: *imagines agentes*, didacticism, imagery.