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Silenzi e “miracoli” di una vita: per una lettura di Lives of the Saints di Nino Ricci

Abstract – Starting from the role that superstition plays in popular culture and religion, this article aims to offer a reading of Lives of the Saints through an analysis of the coexistence of the sacred and the profane in the main character’s life and trials. In this sense, the young protagonist of Nino Ricci’s debut novel, Vittorio, can be regarded as a secular version of Christian, the central figure of John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress who tries to escape from the City of Destruction and its evil in search of spiritual self-fulfillment in the Celestial City. From a religious point of view, a fundamental didactic function is performed by hagiography which becomes part of the child’s personal microcosm. Indeed, just like Christian who, while abandoning his corrupted city, carries the Bible in his hand, Vittorio holds a book on the lives of the saints. This book will represent a model for his formation and a life companion thanks to which he will learn that a sinner can always be converted. It is no coincidence that at the end of a life of great suffering, his mother, guilty of adultery – just like her namesake Saint Cristina –, will be saved by death while his son Vittorio will be ready to face a new life with a mature attitude as well as a deeply ingrained moral awareness.

Keywords: Lives of the Saints, Nino Ricci, The Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan, superstition, hagiography