

Claudia Cieri Via
“Una baruffa bellissima”. The Massacre of Innocents: an ancient tragedy in modern times

"A beautiful struggle" is a Giorgio Vasari's definition of the splendid fresco of the *Massacre of the Innocents* by Ghirlandaio in the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It had greatly impressed Aby Warburg in the years of his elaboration of the concept of *Pathosformel* all'antica. "A reason for horror finds its particular eulogy: the infant who bleeds from a wound in the neck still sucks from the mother's chest fleeing milk and blood together", wrote the German scholar in his essay of 1914, "The entry of the ideal style antiquarians in early Renaissance painting". The massacre of the Innocents, one of the most dramatic events in the history of humanity has its roots in the ancient drama of Medea. It has survived in the images and poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries - from Raphael to Poussin and Giovan Battista Marino - and get to the reflections of Walter Benjamin on the "*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*", up to the tragic historical actuality of the modern age, that allows us to reflect on the role of images between denunciation and spectacle, between ethics and aesthetics between *ethos* and *pathos*.