

The Distinctive Features of Religious Festivities in the Spanish Netherlands: the Douai Celebrations for the Canonization of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier¹

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In the course of the year 1621, at the urging of Philip III and thanks to the tenacity of the Spanish lobby in Rome, the Congregation of Rites decided to canonise Isidore the Labourer (Isidro Labrador), a humble farmer locally venerated in Madrid and only recently beatified (1619). The ceremony in St Peter's was fixed for March the 12th, 1622. However, in the meantime, other canonisation processes were coming to an end: at first, careful not to overshadow the ceremony for Isidore, Gregory XV delayed their execution, but during the fall of 1621, despite the reluctance of Spain, he finally decided to pronounce four other canonisations on the same day as Isidore's². His decision was confirmed in January 1622 by the Congregation of Rites, who saw in it an opportunity to avoid excessive costs. These four other saints were a Florentine, the Oratorian Philip Neri... and three other Spanish figures: the Carmelite, Teresa of Ávila; the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola and his right-hand man, Francis Xavier. Malicious spirits placed the following sarcasm in the mouth of Pasquino, one of the talking statues of Rome: *Oggi il Papa ha canonizzato quattro spagnoli e un santo* ('today, the Pope canonised four Spaniards and one saint'), highlighting the highly political dimension of these canonisations³.

Indeed the Habsburg dynasty had actively supported the canonisation of these four new Spanish saints. In the Low Countries, which especially interest us here, the Infanta Isabella was also involved in the campaign, mainly in the last phase of the procedure. She wrote to the Pope to obtain the canonisation of Teresa and Ignatius and was regularly kept informed of the

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² Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 5910, f.19v, Ludovisi to Guidi di Bagno, 23 October 1621.

³ On the pro-Spanish dimension of the 1622 canonisations, see Th. J. Dandeleet, *Spanish Rome (1500-1700)*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 180-187 ; M. Caffiero, "Istituzioni, forme e usi del sacro", in G. Ciucci (ed.), *Roma moderna*, Roma, Laterza, 2002, p. 143-148 ; M. Gotor, "La canonizzazione dei santi spagnoli nella Roma barocca", in C. J. Hernando Sánchez (ed.), *Roma y España. Un crisol de la cultura europea en la edad moderna (congreso internacional celebrado en la real academia de España en Roma, del 8 al 12 de mayo de 2007)*, Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2013, vol. 2, p. 621-639.

progress of the trial. In December 1621, the cardinal-nephew Ludovico Ludovisi announced to the nuncio in Brussels, Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno, that the Pope had decided to canonise all the Spanish saints together and encouraged the infanta to *rallegrarsi che la Patria sua fiorisce così di protezione celeste, come l'Imperio di Spagna di felicità* ('rejoicing that his homeland flourishes so with heavenly protection, as the Empire of Spain with happiness')⁴. A month later, the Pope confirmed his decision by sending a letter to the Infanta. She replied to thank him for his decision and welcomed 'God's kindness for Spain'⁵, especially 'in a time so full of storms and troubles, in a time when heretics are so pernicious': indeed, the Twelve Years' Truce ended in April 1621 and conflict resumed with the United Provinces, while von Mansfeld's troops ravaged the neighbouring Lower Palatinate... In this period of confusion and turmoil, the Archduchess was convinced that this quadruple Spanish canonisation – she did not mention Philip Neri in her letter – would work to 'the confusion of heretics and all the enemies of the Holy See'⁶.

This paper is devoted to the ceremonies in the Low Countries that celebrated these Spanish canonisations, and in particular the canonisations of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier. Indeed, to our knowledge, Isidore was not the subject of any celebration in the provinces while the few festivities organised for Teresa of Avila by the Discalced Carmelites have left very few sources. By contrast, the Jesuits organised many spectacular festivities in all the cities of the Flandro- and Gallo-Belgica provinces where the Order was settled. These festivities are well known as a result of the numerous accounts of them⁷. These festivities appear to be something new within a processional culture that had been well established in the Southern Netherlands since the 16th century.⁸ How was this celebration of sanctity invented or reinvented at this time? Where did it borrow its models from? There were, in fact, numerous potential sources of festive inspiration. Among these, one can identify Rome, where the process of canonisation underwent a clear intensification, notably served by the development of baroque ceremonial. Spain, once again master of the Low Countries, could also offer a reservoir of influences for the festivities organised in honour of saints promoted by the Monarchia Católica. Finally, and above all, the local festive culture, notably rich in a long tradition of spectacular Joyous Entries, offered many patterns likely to be re-appropriated. It is the influence of this last model that we want to examine here, by asking to what extent the celebration of 1622 found its inspiration in the

⁴ Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 5910, f.27r, Ludovisi to Guidi di Bagno, 24 December 1621.

⁵ Bruxelles, Archives Générales du Royaume, Papiers de l'État et de l'Audience, 458, f.82

⁶ Idem.

⁷ We have gathered all these accounts in the following database <http://web.philo.ulg.ac.be/csb/base-de-donnees/>

⁸ See W. Kuyper, *The Triumphant Entry of Renaissance Architecture into the Netherlands. The Joyeuse Entrée of Philip of Spain into Antwerp in 1549. Renaissance and Manierism Architecture in the Low Countries from 1530 to 1630*, Alphen aan den Rijn, 1994. M. Thøfner, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonials in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, Zwolle, Waanders Publishers, 2007. S. Bussels, *Spectacle, Rhetoric and Power. The Triumphal Entry of Prince Philip of Spain into Antwerp*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2012. T. Cholcman, *Art on Paper: Ephemeral Art in the Low Countries. The Triumphal Entry of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella into Antwerp, 1599*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013. A. Knaap and M. Putnam (eds.), *Art, Music and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.

16th century Joyous Entries. Compared to this previous model, what kind of new and specific language was created to express the transcendence of an absentee, the saint, and through him the Divine? Did a more obvious relationship exist between wonder and the sacred?

Before answering these questions, we need to make some preliminary remarks in order to avoid a number of methodological traps. First of all, we must stress the fact that we are working on textual and, to a lesser extent, visual representations and not on the festive events themselves. Needless to say, those representations are recreations – most probably idealised – of the events that they are supposed to describe and to commemorate.⁹ Moreover, our observations are drawn from a rather limited sample of texts and images focusing on a relatively narrow time and space frame: the Spanish Netherlands of the beginning of the 17th century. This choice raises the question of the specificities of the festival culture in this region, which was dominated by the Spanish crown¹⁰ but which gave no place to Spain and the Habsburg dynasty in the celebrations: in the Low Countries, the festivities for the new saints were not a Spanish triumph but a Jesuit jubilation.¹¹ Consequently, working essentially on the Jesuit contribution to the religious festival culture, it is worth questioning the originality of this contribution, in particular by taking into consideration the way the Jesuits combined religious and humanist ideals. And within their contribution, we have to envisage the specific details of their celebrations of canonisation, and especially that of their founder.¹² Finally, it is rather obvious that the opposition ‘sacred versus profane’ doesn’t fit the reality of the festivities, where both dimensions are profoundly interwoven, the sacred in a way founding the political and the political interfering constantly with the religious. Anyway, it is fruitful to operate a heuristic distinction between these two main types of celebration in order to better understand the way

⁹ See B. Bolduc, *La fête imprimée. Spectacles et cérémonies politiques (1549-1662)*, Paris, Garnier, 2016. R. Dekoninck and A. Guiderdoni, “L’image entre texte programmatique et performance festive. Les relations de fêtes au XVII^e siècle”, in P. Giulinai and O. Leplatre (eds.), *Les détours de l’illustration (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, Genève, Droz, 2015, p. 161-177

¹⁰ For a wider approach to festival culture within the Spanish Empire, see the volumes published by V. Mínguez, P. González Tornel and I. Rodríguez Moya, *La fiesta barroca. El Reino de Valencia (1599-1802)*, 2010; *La fiesta barroca. Los virreinos americanos (1560-1808)*, 2012; *La fiesta barroca. Los reinos de Nápoles y Sicilia (1535-1713)*, 2014; *La fiesta barroca. La corte del Rey (1555-1808)*, forthcoming; *La fiesta barroca. Portugal hispánico y el imperio oceánico*, forthcoming.

¹¹ An exception can be made for the case of Dunkirk: the small Jesuit community needed to get financial and material support from Spanish garrisons stationed at Dunkirk to give some sparkle to the celebrations. The Jesuits inability to organize the triumph of their saints on their own radically changed the dynamics of festivities which took on Spanish features that other festivities didn’t have.

¹² See, amongst others, for Italy: B. Majorana, “Entre étonnement et dévotion. Les fêtes universelles pour les canonisations des saints (Italie, XVII^e siècle et début du XVIII^e siècle)”, in B. Dompnier (ed.), *Les cérémonies extraordinaires du catholicisme baroque*, Clermont-Ferrand, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2009, p. 424-42; for France: M. Cassan, “Les fêtes de la canonisation d’Ignace de Loyola et de François Xavier dans les provinces d’Aquitaine (1622)”, in *Les cérémonies extraordinaires*, p. 459-76; for Spain: T. de Antonio-Saenz, “Las canonizaciones de 1622 en Madrid: artistas y organización de los festejos”, *Anales de historia del arte*, 4 (1993-94), p. 701-09; C. Buezo, “Festejos y máscaras en honor de san Ignacio de Loyola en el siglo XVII”, *Boletín de la real academia de la historia*, 190 (1993), p. 315-23; for Brazil: C. de Castelnau-L’estoile, *Les ouvriers d’une Vigne stérile. Les jésuites et la conversion des Indiens au Brésil, 1580-1620*, Lisbon and Paris, Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2000.

they proceed and especially to wonder whether the celebration of the sacred calls on different means and generate different effects. This comparative approach seems even more appropriate as, from a historiographical point of view, each sphere appears to have been studied separately, the best proof being some inventories, like the one by the British Library on Renaissance Festival Books¹³ that excludes the religious festivities. Furthermore when these religious festivities are included in other databases or catalogues they are often marginalised, probably because they have generated fewer images than the political ones. And this is another characteristic of these accounts: there are rarely illustrated. This observation gives us the opportunity to recall that this type of religious event was less well funded by the municipal authorities – even if the social and economic elite might contribute to the financing of the event – a fact which complicates the comparison with the more prestigious and expensive political celebrations.

Now, after these methodological precautions, we may start from a general observation which will lead to a first hypothesis: if we take into consideration the very few engravings and their descriptions within the accounts of the Ignatius and Francis Xavier canonisations, we must notice that they clearly draw their inspiration from the classical architectural, ornamental and even iconographic vocabulary of the Joyous Entries. This inspiration is perfectly understandable, as the Southern Netherlands had to invent to a certain degree a new type of extraordinary ceremony, even if we should not neglect the importance of a long tradition of civic religious processions such as the *ommegang*. Nevertheless, we could say that in this field the contribution of the Jesuits was decisive.

We will comment on one exemplary case study to test this hypothesis: the narration of the spectacular ceremonies organised to celebrate the double canonisation of Ignatius and Francis Xavier in the university city of Douai, situated in the *Gallo-Belgica* province of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits had been established in the university town of Douai since 1568, when they were entrusted with running the College of Anchin, founded and endowed by the Benedictine abbey of the same name. There they gave free instruction in the humanities, philosophy and theology to several hundred students.¹⁴ When the Belgian province divided in two, the order took advantage of the opportunity to concentrate in Douai the theological training of Gallo-Belgian Jesuits destined for the priesthood and to open their theology courses to external students¹⁵. Since 1573 the Jesuits had also run the Scottish Seminary, where they

¹³ <http://www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/homepage.html>. Another example is the bibliography by Watanabe-O’Kelly and Anne Simon which even though it announces religious festivals in its title, very rarely mentions religious festivals of the type of canonisation celebrations. H. Watanabe-O’Kelly and A. Simon, *Festivals and Ceremonies: A Bibliography of Works Relating to Court, Civic, and Religious Festivals in Europe 1500-1800*, New York et Londres, Mansell Publishing, 2000.

¹⁴ M.-M. Compère et D. Julia, *Les collèges français (16^e-18^e siècles)*, vol. 2 (*Répertoire France du Nord et de l’Ouest*), Paris, INRP-CNRS, 1988, p. 261-268.

¹⁵ A. Poncelet, *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus dans les anciens Pays-Bas*, Bruxelles, 1927, vol. 2, p. 254 ; P. Delattre, *Les établissements des Jésuites en France depuis quatre siècles*, t. II, Enghin-Wetteren, 1963, col. 201-202.

took in a number of young exiled scholarship boys, destined to return on missions to their country of origin, which had become Protestant. These future priests took courses in philosophy and theology at the College of Anchin. Finally, in February 1622 the Benedictine abbey of Marchiennes entrusted the Jesuits with the teaching of philosophy in its college, where classes in the humanities were closed to the benefit of the College of Anchin. The Jesuits' success in the young university town was dazzling. And while this success led to tensions with the faculty of arts, with whose teaching the order was in direct competition, these tensions steadily faded away, moving from compromise to agreement.

When, at the beginning of spring 1622, they received a letter from Superior General Muzio Vitelleschi urging them – as with all Jesuits throughout the world – to celebrate the recent canonisation of their founder, Ignatius of Loyola, and of that hero of the missions, Francis Xavier, they fixed the date of the celebrations for mid-June. They thus designed in a few weeks a solemn spectacular apparatus, to which they put the finishing touches at the last minute¹⁶. This apparatus was concentrated in a limited area of the town since it embellished an itinerary that started from the Scottish Seminary and ended, a few streets away, at the church of the Jesuits. Nevertheless, this itinerary travelled through the 'academic' quarter of the town, then in a few streets, it passed in front of the faculty of arts (or 'Public College'), the Seminary of La Torre, as well as the Colleges of Anchin and of Marchiennes. To create this apparatus the Jesuits of Douai were able to count on the financial aid of an entire local network. Jan Bogart and Balthasar Bellère, printer-booksellers established in Louvain and in Antwerp, respectively, but who had also opened workshops in Douai to take advantage of the university market, financed a pyramid whose four faces were covered in emblems. The Douai printer Marc Wyon, for his part, undertook the creation of a Helicon inhabited by the Muses and overlooked by Pegasus: this painted structure hung from the top of a house where musicians played their instruments. Two great arches were paid for by students from Lille and Namur. The presidents of the Douai colleges together with private individuals organised celebratory gunfire. The Jesuits, for their part, undertook to design four long galleries that led to the doors of their church. These galleries were punctuated by 256 oil paintings showing the martyrs of the Company, or the illustrious fathers of the Order, or the life and acts of the new saints. In short, in only a few weeks, and thanks to the support of students of the colleges, university students, members of the faithful and those close to the Order, the Company succeeded in bringing to completion a triumphal theatre in which, on June 12, there took place a solemn procession inaugurating the eight-day feast in honour of the new saints.

¹⁶ *Narratio eorum quae Duaci pro celebranda Sanctorum Ignatii et Francisci canonizatione gesta sunt*, Douai, Veuve de Pierre Télu, 1622, p. 3. We would like to thank Grégory Ems and Laurent Grailet for their valuable help in the translation of the Latin texts.

The description of the festivities and of the ephemeral apparatus was set down on paper in the space of a few weeks, probably by Antoine de Balinghem,¹⁷ one of the most prolific authors of the Gallo-Belgian province. A manuscript in Latin was submitted to the preliminary censorship of the Bishop of Arras in the course of the month of July: authorisation to publish was granted at the end of the same month. Astonishingly, the Jesuits did not entrust it to one of the printers who had so generously financed the decoration of the festivities and with whom they often worked,¹⁸ but to the widow of Pierre Télu, who was a specialist in the large-format printing of theses submitted by theology students. Perhaps they wished to publish it quickly, in order to distribute widely this reconstruction on paper of the festivals of June. From the widow's press there emerged a small in-octavo volume of around sixty pages, accompanied by rather mediocre illustrations.¹⁹ Nevertheless, this account is particularly interesting because it is the only one to be illustrated for the Southern Low Countries.²⁰ This modest brochure, of which only a very few examples survive,²¹ had probably only a very small print run. It was perhaps destined, to begin with, for internal Company use: it must have been sent to some of the Order's correspondents with the aim of informing them of the Douai celebrations, as is suggested by the presence of the *ex libris* of the Jesuit College of Munich in the copy held in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. It must also have been circulated outside the Order, with a view to recreating the triumph from the beginning of summer 1622. We point out that in all probability the plates were sent to the Jesuit colleges separately from the text: their number and placement vary from one example to another.²² The quadruple gallery of portraits was, for its part, the subject of description in French by Pierre d'Outreman and appeared in the following year published by Balthazar Bellère.²³

¹⁷ The text is anonymous: la *Bibliographie douaisienne* (H. Duthilloeul, Douai, 1842, p. 112, n. 334) as well as *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* (C. Sommervogel, vol. 1, 1890, p. 837, n. 19) nevertheless attribute it to Antoine de Balinghem (1571-1630).

¹⁸ The catalogues cited in the previous footnote do however affirm the existence of an account in French printed by Balthazar Bellère: *Relation de la canonization de Saint Ignace de Loyola, Fondateur de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Douai, Bellère, 1622. This version, as far as it ever existed, is now not to be found.

¹⁹ *Narratio eorum quae Duaci pro celebranda Sanctorum Ignatii et Francisci canonizatione gesta sunt*, Douai, Veuve de Pierre Télu, 1622.

²⁰ In the Province of France, we can mention the account from Pont-à-Mousson: *Les Honneurs et applaudissements rendus par le Collège de la Compagnie de Jésus, Université et Bourgeoisie du Pont-à-Mousson en Lorraine l'an 1623, aux SS. Ignace de Loyola et François Xavier. À raison de leur canonization, faite par nostre S. P. le Pape Gregoire XV d'heureuse memoire, le 12 de mars 1622. Enrichie de plusieurs belles figures en taille douce*, Pont-à-Mousson, Sébastien Cramoisy, 1623.

²¹ In France: Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, D1622-18; Lille, Bibliothèque municipale, Réserve Fonds précieux, 40105; Paris, Centre Sèvres, C150/0041. Elsewhere: Rome, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, RM 0267; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, V.ss. 413.

²² In this respect the Roman example is the richest: it contains 11 plates, compared to 7 in the example now held at Centre Sèvres.

²³ Pierre d'Outreman, *Tableaux des personnages signalés de la Compagnie de Jésus exposés en la solennité de la Canonization de SS. Ignace & François-Xavier, célébrée par le Collège de la Compagnie de Jésus à Douai*, Balthazar Bellère, 1623.

Unsurprisingly, we once again find the main feature and even the defining *apparato* of any festivals: the triumphal arch which suits the triumph of a prince as well as it does the triumph of a new saint, although in this last case the *persona* is not physically present but symbolically represented by the standards carried in procession.

One of the triumphal arches described and reproduced in engravings is the arch commissioned by the Marian sodality (fig. 1). The account stresses its huge dimensions, visually rendered by the presence of characters not at the bottom, as is usual, but at the top, these characters actually being musicians and singers whose music and voices ‘delighted the ears and the souls of the people in procession’.²⁴ The architectural setting and its sober ornamentation follow the classical models quite faithfully, a rather narrow inspiration compared to the more fanciful inventions in the accounts of other festivities at the same time. The only detail that seems to be incoherently integrated is the painted portrait of Ignatius, giving the overall structure the appearance of a rood screen, which usually has at its top centre the figure of Christ or the Virgin.²⁵ Furthermore, we notice a quite exceptional feature which consists in displaying at the top, detached from the architecture, the images situated on the other and thus invisible side of the arch (*ornamenta frontis adversae*): images of Saint Francis Xavier (the counterpart of Saint Ignatius), Saint Cosmas and Saint Damianus, with medallions showing inhabitants of China, Japan, India and South Africa. This type of engraving appears therefore to be conceived at one and the same time both as a programme and as a *memento* of the festive *apparatus* in an attempt to render in images the full iconographic concept described by the accompanying text.

We can find in other engravings a number of similar conventions used to reveal what cannot be seen on these rather schematic images. A system of captions beneath the figured architecture refers to letters that designate the main images or inscriptions invisible on the engraving, a system particularly well developed in the Jesuit illustrated literature of the time.²⁶ But, strangely enough, these captions do not describe the content of these images and inscriptions (a content supplied by the accompanying text), but only their nature (*inscriptio, imagines antiquae, symbola...*). Another way of proceeding is to reproduce certain details of the pageantry on a separate page, with what we might call a close-up effect (fig. 2): for example, on the same engraving, the column seen on the top of the arch is enlarged on the next page with the different emblems detached and blown up. This visual device reveals the different pieces of the hermeneutic montage.

Nevertheless, it appears that illustration faces an impossible challenge when it is to represent the visually saturated interior of the Jesuit church, though this constitutes the core of the

²⁴ *In supremo arcus tabulato instrumentorum musicorum vocumque conceptus, spectantis & continuo fluxu euntis ac redeuntis populi aures, animumque mulcebat*, p. 15.

²⁵ We can refer here to the rood screen of Tournai’s cathedral, clearly inspired in turn by classical models, and especially triumphal arches. But we may note in contrast that other *apparati* used for political festivities closely resemble the layout of, for example, certain altarpieces.

²⁶ See the prototypic book by Jerome Nadal, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia quae in sacrosancto missae sacrificio toto anno leguntur...*, Antwerp, Martinus Nutius, 1594.

ceremony, and is certainly the most original site of a symbolic and ornamental investment characteristic of the religious festival. As the account makes clear, ‘wherever the spectator looks, he always found some entertainment for his eyes’ to the point of being stunned or dazed. It is towards the church of the celebrating and celebrated order that the entire feast is oriented. Many accounts emphasise this impression of continuity between the interior and the exterior to the extent that they describe the streets as a continuous succession of altars. But this type of overall decoration escapes any attempt to be fixed in images, images that can only ‘capture’ the ephemeral monuments isolated from their spatial environment. The only attempt to figure this setting is the fold-out plate showing the galleries where a large series of portraits, emblems and inscriptions were exhibited (fig. 3).

This is what we can say about the different visual devices conceived to organize and convey the iconographic programme. Now, as far as this programme is concerned, it is worth noticing the mix of Christian and mythological figures. For example, the arch commissioned by the Namur benefactors shows, in addition to the portraits of Francis Xavier and Ignatius of Loyola, Hercules killing the Hydra, symbol of Heresy, and Hercules leading Cerberus, symbol of Idolatry, to the underworld, the pagan god thus embodying the victories of the two saints. Even if this mythological presence is here discreet, it indubitably constitutes a distinct feature of the Jesuit contribution to festival culture. Indeed, the Jesuits try to acculturate the classical tradition and aesthetics in order to reorientate them towards religious ends. Regarding this conversion, let us note, for example, the two different ways of showing the classical figure of Nikè, the goddess who personifies victory. Present on the spandrels of every arch, she is shown either as a nymph or an angel (fig. 4).

When the mythical figures are not simply converted into Christian figures, they are allegorized, as is clearly the case with Hercules in the previous example. This is also the case of another theatrical setting situated at the top of a house (fig. 5): it shows the nine muses singing or playing music and Pegasus, at whose feet springs a fountain. The Christian interpretation is given by an inscription which says that this sacred Helicon must be dedicated to Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier. We are dealing here with the typical instrumentalization of mythology cultivated within the colleges of the Society of Jesus, a classical culture which informs any spectacle organised by the Jesuits, to the extent of attracting the criticism of, for example, the Jansenists, who saw in these ‘pagan inventions’ a danger of desecrating religion.²⁷ Be that as it may, the Jesuits clearly assimilated or integrated vocabulary and syntax of the

²⁷ See for example R. Baustert, *La Querelle janséniste extra muros ou la polémique autour de la Procession des Jésuites de Luxembourg, 20 mai 1685*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag, 2006. R. Dekoninck and C. Heering, “La Société du spectacle. Jésuites et jansénistes face aux arts éphémères et spectaculaires”, *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 50 (2014-3), p. 515-530.

civic festivities of the 16th century, giving them a more vertical orientation, that is to say, a spiritual or sacred direction.

Finally, to this combination of Antique and Christian references, we still have to add another and essential dimension of the religious festival that is an even better expression of this reorientation: the *son et lumière*, which is probably the most distinctive dimension of any celebration at the time. In one of the most fascinating plates of the Douai account we see a rather strange combination of classical architecture, actually a portico on top of which has been mounted a castle of heresy full of gunpowder. The explosion effects are rendered with a great variety of graphic means, designed to evoke the different types of fireworks (*virgulae, rochetae, crepitaculis...*). This playful ephemeral artifice, occurring in nearly every festival of this time, assumes a clearly iconographic dimension in the context of religious festivities.²⁸ The spectacular is here plainly meaningful as it figures the fight between good and evil. The wonderful becomes here a clear expression of the supernatural. Within the formula of the antique triumph with its classical idiom – the triumph of the two saints is explicitly compared in the text to the triumph of the Roman emperors –, we thus see that the message has changed slightly and above all that the expected effects on the beholder have been transformed or, better, converted. What the images couldn't render are precisely the impressions experienced by the participants in these festivities. Only the written accounts express the way these participants were supposed to react to the spectacular suggestions of the holy presence. More than the stimulation of the senses per se, the abundance of sensory stimuli characteristic of the processional apparatus was meant to instigate an emotional turmoil conducive to a state where a deep religious experience might become possible. It is also this process that confers meaning on the saturation, the *copia*, that can be identified as a major feature in inciting transformative emotions. Abundance should give the impression of a universe that is visually saturated by the richest or indeed most pleasing materials. Quantity is of equal importance to quality, and the accounts often have recourse to elaborate enumerations of the precious components of the festive apparatus. What such enumerations aim at is not a grasp of detail but rather a sense of a modulated totality, where moments of homogeneous opulence alternate with eruptions of spectacularity. As such, the festivals participate in an aesthetic of *varietas*, the measured variety intended to harness man's innate craving for novelty and new experiences as a means of conveying a coherent argument or idea. The seemingly closed yet endlessly variegated universe of the festival, marked by dense moments of spectacularity, such as altars, automata, or processions, stimulates the beholder's craving for instruction, wonder and marvel, to transform this craving into a sustained change of heart. Indeed, the main function of the ornaments and their literary recreations is to intensify the message coinciding here with the

²⁸ See C. Heering, "Fumée et éclat dans l'espace public : les feux d'artifice de la culture du spectacle baroque dans les anciens Pays-Bas", in A. Carlier (ed.), *Fumées célestes ou funestes. Du 12^e au 18^e siècle*, Namur, Société archéologique de Namur, 2017, p. 79-101.

glorification of holiness. And we must conclude by saying that the sumptuous gratuitousness always refers ultimately to the value of piety. All emotions must be converted into pious motions; all pleasure must serve religious edification; admiration must lead to veneration. We are dealing here with the central issue of *decorum*, the close alliance of dignity and ornament *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, a hot issue due to the emphatic advice to respect moderation, even if this advice was not really respected.

Finally, we might say that there is a close alliance between religion and the spectacular, as a last quotation expresses it eloquently in comparing religion to a feast, the divinely created world being transformed into a spectacle full of painted images worthy of imitation. This quotation is an excerpt from the dedication to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, a dedication which opens the printed description of the galleries already mentioned: ‘Religion is manifestly a fair and a feast, in which can be seen all kinds of paintings, works of the Grand Master, who has displayed them there, so as to nourish and to ravish the eyes of the world, and to make those of the same craft want to take some of them for masters and models, so that from their example they might draw a thousand beautiful features of the virtues in their souls and make themselves similar to their Fathers and predecessors.’²⁹

²⁹ “C’est une foire & feste franche que la Religion, en laquelle se voient toutes sortes de pieces de peintures, ouvrages du Grand Maistre, qui les y a estallées, afin de paistre & ravir les yeux du monde, & donner envie à ceux qui sont de mesme mestier d’en prendre quelques uns pour patrons & modeles, à l’exemple desquils ils puissant tirer mille beau traits de vertus en leurs ames & se rendre semblables à leur Peres & devanciers.” Pierre d’Outreman, *Tableaux des personages*, dedication.