Figures and Figurability I

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Figura in the early-modern period
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The early-modern period is strikingly marked by numerous publications in which the relation between image and text has a central function in delivering a figurative meaning. From the beginning of the 16th century, these varied combinations of text and image were called figures. The use of such a word referred to three elements, all of which present at the same time in this notion: the material image (the plastic figure), the trope (the rhetorical figure), and the biblical figures of the traditional patristic exegesis. For three centuries, this generic figure took various forms in the sacred and profane fields: in the symbolic and emblematic literature, in the spiritual literature and in the performing arts. The research project, which is in progress, consists of building up the concept of figure as a “theoretical object” in order to understand how it functioned at the same time in the visual and intellectual dimension, both as a category of imagination and knowledge. My paper will consist of presenting the first part of this long-term research, which is a philological inquiry into the semantic field of figura in the early-modern period.

Bibliotheca Imaginis Figuratae: the foundation of the imago figurata
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This paper will present the constitution of a digital library exclusively devoted to the Imago Figurata theory.
It is well known that, from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th, the Company of Jesus played a central part in the institution of these relationships, writing and publishing treatises as well as teaching rhetoric and emblems in their colleges across the Old and the New World. Because their artistic and scientific production is at the core of scholar research, and because, in the same time, this production is not easily available to the researchers, especially outside Europe, it appeared necessary to give to the scientific community an easy access through the Bibliotheca Imaginis Figuratae.
Based at the Maurits Sabbe Bibliotheek in Leuven (Faculty of Theology, Belgium), one of the greatest collections of jesisica in Europe, this digital library gathers the most important treatises of the “imago figurata” field or works that include a reflection about the connections between words and images, written by members of the Company, published in the Netherland, in Germany, and in France, between 1594 and 1696.
**Vaenius meets Hermes!**

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In 1621, Otho Vaenius proposes to examine the relation between predestination and free will in the light of Physics and Theology, exploiting this relation in terms of «signs» and «figures» and offering an alchemical reading. By so doing, he evinces his startling originality in his perception of the interaction of Science and Religion and in his method. In “*Physicae et theologicae conclusiones*”, his discourse is brimming with alchemical metaphors and symbols, so that his understanding of texts and images is a complex one. Through a semiotic study of the figure of alchemy both in text and illustrations, I will demonstrate the interpretative modalities of the hermetic “*chiaroscuro*” valued by Hermes and Vaenius.

**Figures and Figurability II - The Jesuit Teaching and Spirituality as Configuratio**

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**The Jesuit as Artifex Evangelicus**

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Published in 1640 and designed mainly for preachers, the *Artifex Evangelicus* of Sandaeus proposes a *sylva* of metaphors drawn from the field of arts and craft and applied to the field of religion. Defined as a craftsman of the Gospel, the main task of the Jesuit is to encourage imitation of and conformation to a model, Christ. Exhibited in 1640 at the occasion of the centenary of the Society of Jesus, these *emblemata nuda* will be approached in this paper as very interesting testimonies of the Jesuit ideal of education and spirituality.

**The Jesuit Bildung in the affíxiones of the Brussels College (1630-1685)**

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At the Brussels Jesuit College, all through the seventeenth century (1630-1685), the students of the Poetry and Rhetoric’s classes were invited annually to conceive emblems that were then exhibited, and that the Brussels Royal Library has fortunately conserved. Paying attention to this collection of emblems, I would like to focus on how was spread in it the idea of the formation (conception and composition) and to examine in which context it was used.

**The Child as a Living Work of Art in the Jesuit Genethliac Productions of the 17th Century**

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During the seventeenth century, the Jesuits produced several literary or material celebrations for the birth of children in the great catholic families of the time. One of the recurrent symbolic images of those “genethliac” productions is that of the child as a work of art,
conceived by God, the Nature and his parents... and brought later on to perfection by his educators. As Art in this time was mostly a matter of imitation, the child is often conceived as the “living picture” of his parents; more deeply, he is also a man made at the image of God. That special work of art can be described in the process of its shaping, but also in its representational qualities and in its own exemplary power. This paper shall try to clarify the roots of this pattern (especially in the ancient classical literature) and the stakes of its massive use by the Jesuits in the context of the catholic Counter-Reformation and of its promotion of figurative arts.

Sanctity and Perfection: the Jesuit Universe

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Gender and Sanctity. Female Perfection and Jesuit Identity
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Between the end of XVI century and the beginning of XVII, personalities engaged in definition of the “Institutum” funded by Ignatius of Loyola committed themselves in the definition of models of sanctity, which could support the growing Order identity. As confessors, hagiographers and canonisations’ promoters, they faced with female sanctity. It is the case of Virgilio Cepari with Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi, and also of Achille Gagliardi with Isabella Berinzaga and many others.

Which relationship does exist between these two fields of action and reflection? Did the ongoing reflection on Jesuit Identity influence the activity of caretakers and promoters of feminine sanctity? May we speak about mutual influences? And, in case, which are these influences?

An Identity Workshop: Saintliness and Exemplary Figures within the Society of Jesus (1540-1773)
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The Reformed Catholic Church sharply invested in the field of “sanctity”. Particularly, Rome set itself up as a sanctifying super-authority. This new intense centralisation of sanctity caused more or less controlled adaptations but, also, resistances. In this regard, the stance of the Society of Jesus has to catch the attention. Indeed, if the Order sustained the pontifical position by various initiatives, it also built for itself its own inner and non-canonical pantheon, the keeper of its memory and of its own values. This paper will concern the circumstances of the apparition of this pantheon, its functions and the identity components at stakes in it.

A Geography of the Jesuit Perfection: concerning two Inquiries promoted by General Claudio Acquaviva
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The aim of this paper is to understand the changes produced in the spirituality of the Society of Jesus during the government of General Claudio Acquaviva, between the end of XVI
century and the beginning of XVII century. The purpose is to show different attitudes inside
the provinces of this religious order toward this issue through the analysis of two famous
inquiries promoted by General Acquaviva: the one entitled *De detrimentis Societatis Jesu*
(1606), the other entitled *Pro soliditate atque uniformitate doctrinæ per universam Societatem*
(1611). Following in Michel de Certeau's footsteps and his pioneering research on Jesuit
spirituality in the French province, we intend to demonstrate the connection between the
geography and history of every “provincia” and their peculiar approaches to spirituality by
also analysing some exemplary case studies of the Jesuits' road to perfection.

**Music, Image and Meditation in Early Modern Europe**

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**La musique comme représentation du divin**  
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Miroir de l’équilibre de l’univers et de l’harmonie de la création, la musique, jusque dans ses
réalisations les plus concrètes, est un reflet de la gloire de Dieu, dont le fidèle peut
s’imprégnner, intellectuellement et sensiblement, pour élever son âme vers le Très Haut. Les
œuvres de Mersenne sont particulièrement riches d’analogies entre les mystères chrétiens et
leur image sensible en musique à tel point que les objectifs du père minime en écrivant ses
œuvres semblent davantage apologétiques que musicaux ou esthétiques.

« Je sens une céleste flamme Qui me fait chanter nuit, & jour ». *Le chant de cantiques
dans l’apostolat jésuite*  
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En des temps bouleversés, la littérature du cantique est venue répondre aux besoins spirituels
des fidèles en devenant une forme d’expression esthétique pour raviver et réaffirmer leur foi.
La Compagnie de Jésus, protagoniste actif de la Contre-réforme, a recouru au cantique
spirituel en convoquant ses vertus pédagogiques et sa faculté à favoriser l’acte dévotionnel et
l’édification de l’âme. Prenant appui sur une variété d’exemples issus des Pays-Bas, cette
communication veut comprendre les enjeux de l’acte du chant comme amorce d’un processus
méditatif et discerner le retentissement d’un tel acte en l’homme.
Musique et confraternités nationale à Rome aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles
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L’activité dévotionnelle des confraternités nationales en plein essor dans la Rome post-tridentine fait apparaître une population mouvante, celle des musiciens.
Au départ de l’exemple des confraternités germaniques et de leur intégration à la vie musicale romaine, il s’agira de montrer comment l’association de la musique aux manifestations cultuelles peut faire émerger des lieux de brassages particuliers, au-delà des identités nationales et des rapports d’allégeance initiaux. Forme expressive de religiosité s’il en est, l’activité musicale devient la clé de lecture d’une dévotion vivante mais aussi de réseaux et d’échanges qui sous-tendent les exigences cérémonielles.

Music, Image, and Meditation in Early Modern Europe II

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In cantu et in mente : La musique face aux exercices spirituels
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Cette contribution entend proposer une réflexion sur l’usage de la musique dans les exercices spirituels, notamment dans la congrégation italienne de l’Oratoire. En opposant les grandes liturgies sociales à la pratique individuelle de la méditation, l’historiographie a accentué la distinction entre une sociabilité collective et une ascèse individuelle, entre le sonore et le silencieux. En plaçant cette dialectique sur le terrain de l’engagement corporel et de l’usage de la mémoire dans la méditation, on mettra en évidence certaines formes de complémentarité, dont les différents usages de la “laude” chantée constituent l’un des moteurs.

Monteverdi and the Beyond: Between Heaven and Hell
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The Eighth Book of Madrigals by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), published in Venice in 1638, is many-sided and less secular than it seems at first sight. Among other peculiarities, this book contains three large compositions that are not madrigals as such, but small theatrical works in rappresentativo genere. Two are more or less religious related. First, the famous Combattimento ends with Clorinda’s vision of heaven and has its origin, through the Gerusalemme liberata by Tasso, in a biblical episode (the fight between Jacob and the angel, Gen. 32:23–33). The second is the Ballo delle Ingrate, an infernal scene that was said to terrify the public of the Viennese court. The plot is taken from a few stanzas of Ariosto’s Orlando furioso but shares some aspects with the opera Orfeo (1607). Both pieces illustrate a vision of the beyond: heaven and hell, resurrection and damnation. We can link these themes with the main title of the entire collection: Madrigali guerrieri, ed amorosi, songs of war and love. Through an analysis of the intertextuality between the two poetic texts, I aim to show how Monteverdi’s last secular collection is to be regarded as a real Canzoniere based also on a religious meaning, like that of Petrarch’s.