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Jesuit & Spectacle

Framing the Feast. The Meanings of Festive Devices in the Baroque Spectacle Culture of the Southern Netherlands¹

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A large number of studies devoted to the phenomenon of early-modern festivals have mainly focused on the political or religious programme they staged². Spectacular ceremonies primarily lend themselves to being understood as a fairly sophisticated form of politico-religious communication, the various levels of meaning of which must be decoded. In their rhetorical dimension, they offer themselves up as discourses performed through different artistic forms, accumulating their effects to better praise the glory of the sovereigns and the saints celebrated by means of these extraordinary events. It must also be borne in mind that this approach is a

¹ This paper is part of a project funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office and co-directed by Annick Delfosse, Maarten Delbeke, Koen Vermeir and myself. The project relates to the cultures of the Baroque spectacle between Italy and the Southern Netherlands. See Ralph DEKONINCK, Annick DELFOSSE, Maarten DELBEKE and Koen VERMEIR, "Mise en image du spectacle et spectacularisation de l'image à l'âge baroque", *Degrés*, 2013, p. 1-14.

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² Among the most recent literature on the subject, I can just mention a few references: J. R. MULRYNE, Helen WATANABE-O'KELLY, Margaret SHEWRING, Elizabeth GOLDRING and Sarah KNIGHT (ed.), *Europa Triumphans: Court And Civic Festivals In Early Modern Europe*, Farnham, 2004. Renato DIEZ, *Il trionfo della parola. Studio nelle relazioni di feste nella Roma barocca 1623-1667*, Rome, 1986. Maurizio FAGIOLO DELL'ARCO, *Corpus delle feste a Roma*. t. 1. *La festa barocca*. t. 2. *Bibliografia della festa barocca a Roma*, Rome, 1997. Sarah BONNEMAISON and Christine MACY (ed.), *Festival Architecture*, London, 2008. Bernard DOMPNIER (ed.), *Les cérémonies extraordinaires du catholicisme baroque*, Clermont-Ferrand, 2009. Peter GILLGREN and Mörten SNICKARE (ed.), *Performativity and Performance in Baroque Rome*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012. For the Southern Netherlands that I will explore here, see: W. KUYPER, *The Triumphant Entry of Renaissance Architecture into the Netherlands. The Joyeuse Entrée of Philip of Spain into Antwerp*

naturally privileged one, given that the vast majority of sources available are essentially textual in nature. These verbal accounts of the festivals bring attention to bear precisely on the ideological programme without overly dwelling on the details of the staging, except to mention the pomp that accompanies these occasions.

It is therefore very often in the light of these textual accounts that the few surviving engravings are studied nowadays. However, attention must be paid to the specific characteristics of these engravings, which are of course testimonies that partly distort the temporary architectural displays whose memory they preserve or, more precisely, which they have the function to commemorate. The simple fact that they accompany written accounts as their necessary complement testifies to the obvious importance of a discourse that is, by its very nature, essentially visual, or rather that we now comprehend as essentially visual, while the lived reality appeals largely to the other senses.

Research related to the study of these representations has, for the most part, sought only to decode the symbolic motifs that embellish the complex scenic devices and transmit the politico-religious messages. Little work has been devoted to the devices themselves that stage them. Here, it is possible to speak of the phenomenon of framing, the frame being essentially but not exclusively understood in the wider sense of what establishes the representation and invites interpretation. The general framing system gives sense to all the visual and textual units by combining and organizing them in order to communicate the iconological and ideological programme, which is nevertheless activated at the exact moment of the celebration itself, and in particular at the moment when the procession passes.

More specifically, transposed to the scale of the city, all the spectacular framings have the goal of transforming pre-existing space into a symbolic site, full of meaning. They not only have the

in 1549. Renaissance and Manierism Architecture in the Low Countries from 1530 to 1630, Alphen aan den Rijn, 1994. Margit THØFNER, *A Common Art: Urban Ceremonials in Antwerp and Brussels during and after the Dutch Revolt*, Zwolle, Waanders Publishers, 2007. Stijn BUSSELS, *Spectacle, Rhetoric and Power. The Triumphal Entry of Prince Philip of Spain into Antwerp*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2012. Tamar 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. Antien KNAAP and Michael PUTNAM (ed.), *Art, Music and Spectacle in the Age of Rubens*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.

function of attracting the spectator's gaze, but even more of converting it into a hermeneutic and sensitive gaze. Furthermore, they invite a cross-fertilization of the familiar and the novel. "The familiar is deliberately made strange" writes William Alexander McClung. Or to put it in another way, they transform "the permanent by the ephemeral"³ to such an extent that the built environment, even the people who move in it, changes their status for the duration of the festivities. For it is not a matter of simply converting space by dressing it with various garments, but also of creating a particular time, a time-frame, so to speak. In fact, the function of these framings is also, by a subtle play of compression and dilation, to mark out a symbolic itinerary requiring the participants to pass through and stop at significant and sacred places.

In this respect the founding device, as it were, of this culture of the spectacle is the triumphal arch. Punctuating the route taken by the procession, the arch offers itself at one and the same time as a frame and a threshold, reordering time and space. As McClung says:

The importance of the arch lies in the fact that it is to be passed under, penetrated and so experienced not only at a distance, by the eye, but during a specific passage of time, by the body. To an extent not possible with a statue, for example, or with a picture, the encounter unites the participants with the object of celebration represented both on and by the arch. Arches of triumph cannot be usefully distinguished as permanent or occasional; their formal properties are the same and equate the ephemeral with the enduring, a point made by both the ceremony and the festival book⁴.

And this logic holds true for a large number of the forms of decoration and pageantry that transform and even transfigure the urban space for the duration of the festivities, in order to create and capture elusive time.

The hypothesis I would like to put forward here is that these framing devices are designed to intensify the strength of the message, at the risk of absorbing its meaning, as there is often an unstable equilibrium between the symbolic function and the

³ William Alexander MC CLUNG, "A Place for a Time: The Architecture of Festivals and Theatres", in *Architecture and its Image. Four Centuries of Architectural Representation*, Montreal, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1989, p. 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

ornamental function. One might even go so far as to say that the characteristic feature of these ephemeral decorations is to put into permanent motion, or even to blot out, the border between *ergon* and *parergon*, between the representation and its frame. The frame, which is supposed to fade into the background in favour of the display of the representation, sometimes steals the show, with the general impression of pomp winning out over the details of symbolic meaning.

It is this unstable equilibrium that I shall illustrate first on the basis of a corpus of illustrated texts commemorating some Joyous Entries in the Southern Netherlands, and then using examples taken from a corpus of textual accounts of canonization celebrations in the same regions. Confronting visual and textual representations makes it possible to question either the reticence of the texts concerning some aspects of the decorative apparatus accurately represented by the image, or, conversely, the reticence of the images concerning the events that are framed by this decorative apparatus and the effects they exert on the spectator and the events described at length in the texts. Even more important, when the image is adjacent to the text, we need to consider their complementarity, and thus think about the properties of the genre of the festival book – icono-textual documents that constitute another type of framing device making the temporary permanent. We also have to stress the fact that our reflections deal exclusively with the special status of these festival accounts and not with the “real” festive events to which we can only have access through the texts and images conveying them. It is not necessary to recall something that has already been thoroughly studied: the principal objective of those accounts is not to render with exactitude the concrete unfolding of the festivities but to give an ideal representation that often appears to be a kind of re-creation or even a creation, as sometimes the account precedes the events when they were conceived as a kind of programme for the festival. In both cases, however, the aim is to magnify the spectacle, to intensify its impact in order to better glorify its main protagonists and to deliver to posterity a kind of memorial for the greatness of the saint or the prince.

The spectacular images

Let us start with the nature and functions of the engravings commemorating or memorializing more than simply recording the

festive decorations, their aim indeed being to fix in the memory what is by nature ephemeral, producing the illusion of time stopped in its tracks. It must be emphasized that different point of views have been adopted in the illustrations of the festival books: the temporary architecture is either displayed within the pre-existing urban context and in close connection with the events that took place during the festivities, or it is isolated and treated as an independent structure. "All sense of context is then deliberately avoided, and the objects float in a dreamlike space".

The first option is quite rare. In Southern Netherlands festival books, it is often used in the introduction, as a bird's-eye view, or in the conclusion, as a panoramic view in order to set the frame – the frame of the town itself and its inhabitants who are the principal protagonists together with the prince they welcome (Fig. 1). Here, it is more the events than their architectural frames that are the centre of attention.

The second option is far more common and widespread: it exhibits the monuments detached from their spatial and temporal context, and transforms the book into an itinerary, and the process of reading it into a kind of journey through these fragmented pieces (Fig. 2). Represented against a neutral background, they show as the only mark of their ephemeral dimension some flags and torches, or sometimes firework machines. This is clearly such a recurrent device that becomes a distinctive feature of the culture of spectacle, be it profane or sacred. More specifically, we can say that smoke as a token of fire and light is probably the more explicit reference and obvious sign of the liveliness of celebration (Fig. 3). Almost every designer and engraver devotes a visually marginal but thematically central place to this single means of evoking the crucial status of light as the most paradigmatic expression of any kind of celebration, which is essentially perceived and experienced as *son et lumière*⁶. And this is the biggest challenge for the engraver: to render in black and white what cannot be frozen into a fixed and bi-dimensional image, i.e. a four-dimensional experience. Animation was indeed peculiar to these living decorations, mixing fixed and mobile images to such an extent that the boundaries between the natural and the artificial, two dimensions confused in the engravings, became

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶ See Kevin SALATINO, *Incendiary Art. The Representation of Fireworks in Early Modern Europe*, Los Angeles, 1997.

blurred. Paradoxically, in a way these engravings petrify and eternalize what is essentially a performative and thus temporary art of illusion, an art that often uses flat, painted wooden figures or stucco sculptures against canvas or tapestry backdrops.

Here, we can speak of a real montage of images, a montage for each occasional monument but also for the sequence formed by the different architectural structures punctuating the processional route. Furthermore, it is evident that this illusionistic montage is characterized by great freedom of invention due to the plastic and technical means used, permitting – indeed encouraging – improbable and fanciful structures, even if this unbridled fantasy is more clearly marked at the extremities of festive pageants, with the main section often respecting more traditional conventions (one of the best examples being the strapwork motifs designed by Pieter Coecke van Aelst for the 1550 entry into Antwerp of Philip II [Fig. 4]). Once more, it is at the margins that the most inventive decorations flourish, therefore forming a kind of frame for the architecture itself and expressing by its opulence the very nature of celebration. Indeed, the principal function of the frame is to celebrate. This is what I have called the intensifying function of the ornamental frame, which occupies a central place in the rhetoric of the time.

The place of the spectator within this theatrical set and his intellectual and sensory experience of these framing devices must still be questioned. It is striking to note that even if the temporary architecture is mainly represented as being isolated, it is frequently accompanied by a few spectators. This is the only contextual element preserved that invites the actual reader-spectator to identify with this ideal counterpart. But what these engravings cannot tell us is the very nature of this visual experience. Is the spectator deciphering the various multilayered messages conveyed by the devices, the texts in the festival books arguing that the meaning takes precedence over the form? Or is he experiencing a kind of contemplation, struck by the magnificence of the architecture? As McClung rightly commented, “The subtlety and sophistication of festival presentations exceeded the understanding of many contemporary recorders of the events; the complex union of classical scholarship and ceremonial design must have left most ordinary people wholly in the dark⁷”.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

The textual sources are rather more explicit than the visual on this question of effects, as they insist not only on the symbolic meaning of the iconographic programme, but also on the general impressions produced by the multimedia and synaesthetic events. Here, the effectiveness of the beauty and monumentality take precedence over the meaning. The attention is therefore mainly drawn to the ornamental paraphernalia rather than to the symbolic or allegorical elements. The *parergon* more than the *ergon* attracts the viewer, and this is probably even more explicitly present in religious than in political ceremonies, as we are then dealing with the sacred.

The textual spectacularization

To investigate this other kind of celebration, I shall make use of the accounts of the festivities organized by the Jesuits in the Belgian provinces (the *Flandro-* and the *Gallo-Belgica*) for the canonization of Ignatius of Loyola and of Francis Xavier in 1622⁸. This type of ceremony seems to be something new within the festival culture that had already been well established and profoundly anchored in the Southern Netherlands since the 16th century. The first question we therefore have to address is how this celebration of holiness was invented or reinvented at that time. Where did it borrow its models from? And, in particular, to what extent did it find its inspiration in the 16th century Joyous Entries? Compared to this previous model, what kind of new and characteristic language was created to express the transcendence of an absentee, the saint, and through him the

⁸ Annick DELFOSSE, 'From Rome to the Southern Netherlands: Spectacular sceneries to celebrate the canonization of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier', in J. DE SILVA (ed.), *The Sacralization of Space and Behaviour in the Early Modern World*, Farnham, Ashgate, forthcoming. See, amongst others, for Italy: Bernadette MAJORANA, 'Entre étonnement et dévotion. Les fêtes universelles pour les canonisations des saints (Italie, XVII^e siècle et début du XVIII^e siècle)', in Bernard DOMPNIER (éd.), *Les cérémonies extraordinaires du catholicisme baroque*, Clermont-Ferrand, Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2009, p. 424-442; for France: Michel 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. 459-476; for Spain: Trinidad DE ANTONIO-SAENZ, 'Las canonizaciones de 1622 en Madrid: artistas y organización de los festejos', *Anales de historia del arte*, 4, 1993-1994, p. 701-709; Catalina 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. 315-323; for Brazil: Charlotte 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.

Divine? Did a more obvious relationship exist between the sacred and the wondrous? Although it is manifestly apparent that the canonization ceremonies borrowed many elements from the festive vocabulary and syntax of the Joyous Entries, they nevertheless shifted the focus elsewhere. Indeed, we would argue that, far more than in the political festivities, attention is drawn here less to the symbolic messages conveyed by the *apparati* than to the inexpressible effects produced by all the *parerga*.

One characteristic of these types of accounts is that they are not illustrated, which affects the nature of the texts compared to the illustrated festival books, where the image dispenses with the need for the text to comment in detail on the richness of the architectural devices and all the ornamentation⁹. Without this visual support, the textual account has to provide long descriptions in order to stimulate the imagination of the reader, who has to conjure up his own mental image of the festivities. Taking into account this aim, however, the result is rather disappointing and even deceptive, as it is quite difficult to form a precise representation of what happened and, even more so, of the way it happened and what it looked like. So these texts deserve close reading in order to understand how they function and to what purpose. In particular, the *topoi* that structure these texts need to be taken into consideration.

First, we can mention the idea of novelty, which is not only topical, but certainly also refers to a certain awareness of a new type of religious festivities: “those who saw several triumphal processions of this kind in this city maintain that they have never

⁹ Here are the sources (RA = Rijksarchief; ARSI: Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu): Courtrai: *Relatio canonizationis BB. PP. Ignatii ac Francisci Xaverii Cortraci celebratae* (Antwerp, RA, FB 1701); Dunkerque: *Relatio celebratis in festo SS. PP. NN. Ignatii et Xaverii a Residentia Dunckercana* (Rome, ARSI, FB60, f. 45-48); Louvain: *Commentarius rerum gestarum a Soc[ie]tate Iesu Lovanii ad Apotheosim SS. Ignatii et Xaverii* (Rome, ARSI, FB 52, f. 17-22). The *Litterae annuae* and annual supplements of the *Historiae Domus* for 1622 are kept in Rome: ARSI, FB 50II, 52 and 56; ARSI, Gallo-Belgica (hereafter GB) 32-34, 40; and Antwerp RA, FB 3. Antwerp: Michel de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola Societatis Iesu Fundatori et S. Francisco Xaverio Indiarum Apostolo per Gregorium XV inter Divos relatis habitus a Patribus Domus Professae et Collegii Soc[ie]tatis] Iesu Antverpiae 24 Iulii 1622*, Antwerp, Plantin printing house, 1622; Brussels: *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae ab Aula et Urbe celebratus*, Brussels, Jean Pepermann, [1622]; Douai: *Narratio eorum quae Duaci pro celebranda Sanctorum Ignatii et Francisci canonizatione gesta sunt*, Douai, Pierre Telu, 1622.

seen the like¹⁰". Or "it was done with such pomp that Antwerp doesn't remember having seen anything similar or bigger for many years¹¹". Even strangers, such as Genoese and Neapolitan special guests, claimed that they "had never seen anything more beautiful throughout all Italy and the world¹²".

It can readily be inferred from these passages that these descriptions are in no way neutral. The authors are moved by a rhetoric of marvel and wonder, endeavouring to give an impression of the splendour and magnificence simply to allow the reader to relive or re-enact the event, or – even better – the feeling evoked by the event. The difference between the manuscript accounts written for the Society of Jesus in Rome and the printed accounts intended for a wider public has to be taken into account. While the former somewhat temper the importance of the pomp in order to meet the need for moderation, the latter render a full account of the ostentation and admiration, even astonishment of the spectators. Nevertheless, they share the same tone of celebration, highlighting the zeal and fervour of the Jesuits but also the desire for emulation that, through contagion, overcomes all the citizens. Each individual contributes in his own way and according to his means to the general success of the festival, from a simple light in front of his house to more sophisticated ornamental displays: "Certainly, the houses could be regarded as spectacles, through which we could see Antwerp's wealth¹³". Or "It is remarkable to see how great the expectations of the people were and what a considerable effort they made: some erected theatres, some marked public signposts with the images of our saints, others searched everywhere for decorations to adorn public places¹⁴". This kind of emulation also extends to the

¹⁰ ARSI, FB50 II, 80 (Antwerp), f. 496^r: *Qui huius generis triumphos in hac urbe plurimos viderunt, negant umquam similem exitisse.*

¹¹ ARSI, FB50 II, 80 (Antwerp), f. 496^r: *Quod ea celebritate factum ut nullis retro annis neq(ue) maiorem imo nec similem se vidisse meminerit Antverpia.*

¹² ARSI, FB50 II, 80 (Antwerp), f. 497^r: *Hic pompae nostrae finem faciam si unum addidero templum nostrum marmoreum seipso adeo pulchrum ut multi proceres in quibus Marchio Spinola Genuensis et Dux de Monteleon Neapolitanus fidenter affirmarint, se tota Italia, mundi oculo, nullum vidisse pulchrius.*

¹³ Michel de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola Societatis Iesu Fundatori et S. Francisco Xaverio...*, p. 27: *Certe domus singulae spectacula credi poterant, in quibus divitias tum vere Antverpiae videre licitum.*

¹⁴ Michel de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola Societatis Iesu Fundatori et S. Francisco Xaverio...*, p. 7: *Mirum quanta interim populi expectatio, quanta contentio, cum hi theatra erigere (quorum suo loco ornatus dabitur), illi vexilla publica Sanctorum*

pious rivalry between cities, as for example between Antwerp and Brussels: “Rivalry is also the arena of pictorial art, so to speak, as the famous Apellean brushes of Antwerp and Brussels compete to win the palm¹⁵”. This “harmonious competition” or “pious emulation” ultimately gives the impression of something unpredictable, a kind of bizarre montage where what counts is the *copia* and *varietas* producing the impression of marvel and preventing any kind of tedium: “By its very variety, this pomp provokes more pleasure, less satiety, which could easily overwhelm tired people¹⁶”. The delight of the eyes and of the mind supposedly experienced from this “variety of things” and “splendid decorations¹⁷” “of such beauty that we never tire of seeing them¹⁸”, exemplifies the *aviditas spectandi*, an avidity of seeing, of gazing at the spectacle¹⁹.

We are encountering here another *topos* peculiar to these accounts, the inability of written words to evoke splendour: “the elegance and opulence were so great that no pen could do them justice, just as no eye can capture such great majesty²⁰”. Or “I cannot deny that there is much that escaped the gaze of those who were watching carefully, however curious they were²¹”. The impossibility of describing reflects the emphasis placed on what cannot be reduced to language, a language usually used, in these types of

nostrorum triumphalibus vasa praeparare, alii denique ad ornandas plateas ornamenta conquirere.

- ¹⁵ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 14-15: *Certamen id est et velut arena artis pictoriae: ubi qui celebres sunt Antverpiae Bruxellaeve Apellaei penicilli, pro palma reportanda depugnarunt.*
- ¹⁶ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 45: [...] *tum etiam ut varietate hac condita pompa voluptatis plus haberet, satietatis minus, quae facile in tanto numero ferculorum poterat apud defessum populum obrepere.*
- ¹⁷ ARSI, FB50 II, 80 (Antwerp), f. 496: *illustriora trophaea [...] quae licet ob rerum varietatem, splendidum ornatum et apparatus, oculos animosque intuentium raperent.*
- ¹⁸ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 27: [...] *ea amoenitate, ut videndo satiari non possent [...].*
- ¹⁹ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 31: *Et vos in gymnasio plaudite, actum est. Non actum: nam per omnes hebdomadae feriatae dies undae spectatorum magno vomitorio ad aream scholarum effusae sunt spectandi aviditate ideoque per dies singulos non semel, quia semper scena cum beluatis personis poscebatur, spectari debuit et spectata reponi.*
- ²⁰ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 10: [...] *tanta vel elegantia vel opulentia exornarunt, ut nullus scribendo calamus par esse possit, quando nullus videndo oculus capere tantam maiestatem potuit.*
- ²¹ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 17-18: *Negare non possum quin omnia solícite lustrantibus quantumvis curiosos oculos multa effugiant.*

accounts, to present and decipher the symbolic discourse or the iconographic programme of the festival, expressed through all kinds of allegories, emblems and symbols. Although the argument of instruction sometimes seems to be to make the festivities not only monuments of magnificence but also documents for the instruction of the common mind²², the main objective is to give an impression of the abundance, profusion and opulence, the main effect of which is to dazzle the spectators. This confers on these descriptions a seemingly chaotic or elusive character, the reader's imagination struggling to evoke an image of something comparable. This is why light and sound occupied a central place. Fire, also conceived as symbolic of Ignatius igniting mankind with faith ("I have come to set the earth on fire²³"), is probably the principal agent of the metamorphosis of the ordinary into the extraordinary. Every image literally comes alive through this animating fire and light. Everything glows, representing the irradiating holiness and enflaming piety that increase the collective fervour, or the consuming vices that provoke the horror of the spectators²⁴.

It is now worth focusing on this principle of animation as one of the main factors contributing to the efficacy of the spectacular. Beyond fire, the effect of animation is obtained by a constant blurring of or playing with the boundaries between fiction and reality, artifice and nature, but also between the different media, the intermediality contributing to the general effect. For instance, paintings are framed by real plants, or fake plants accompany real bodies:

²² As in this passage commenting that 'the common mind, which understands primarily through the sense of sight, was instructed on the life of our saints through the use of spectacle' (*Accesserunt theatra numero 12 pictis arcubus et peristromatis adornata, non solum publicae magnificentiae argumenta, verum etiam spectanti populo documenta. In iis enim estruendis consilium exstitit, ut rudiorum animi, qui oculorum potissimum sensu capiuntur, eiusmodi spectaculis aptius de Vitis SS. Nostrorum instruerentur*).

²³ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 45: *Operae pretium facturum me arbitror si sententiarum sacrarum Igneum Ignatium Sancti Spiritus igne ambientium synopsis ipsissimis verbis appendam. S(anctus) Ignatius, sacrificantis habitu, in aere sublimis, dissilientibus toto corpore solaribus flammis, ardentissima oculorum acie, in flammivomum Iesu nomen cordis scintillas eiaculatus, capitali sententia redimitus, praeferebat in vertice isthaec verba: 'Ignem veni, mittere in terram'.*

²⁴ *Haec vi ignis sui, quem pulvis tormentarius alebat, vertebatur continuo spargebatque in gyrum flammam densissimas, quas vicina pyramis, Hypocrisi victae dedicata, ut excepit, subito conflagrauit non sine ingeni strepitu ac horrore adstantium.*

there, with great grandeur, two paintings, portraying the saintly Fathers dressed in the sacred habit, designed by Rubens, the Apelle of our time were suspended for the spectator. These paintings, with graceful, artful and elaborated borders, were framed by fringes of grass, golden leaves and brilliant flowers²⁵.

It is difficult to infer from this citation whether fake or real plants are involved. We encounter here the insistent presence of the *topos* of illusion and deception. Many expressions comparable to this one can be found: "It seemed to be the work of nature and not of art²⁶". This world of deceitful wonder especially took the form of animated statues and *tableaux vivants*, thus a world of moving and speaking images, of living simulacra, moved by the principle of imitation. "Those who believed that the images were alive could not see this spectacle without pain. Those who knew that they were merely statues seemed incapable of being satiated by this great miracle of art²⁷".

If the "as if" principle governs all these accounts, we should ask ourselves if this is not actually a literary play transfiguring reality, which would have probably appeared more disappointing, the verisimilitude revealing itself as dissimilitude, or even fake. In any case, the main function of the real ornaments and their literary recreations is to intensify the message coinciding here with the 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 insistent advice to respect moderation, even if this advice was not really respected:

²⁵ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 43-44: [Deinde ubi ad valvas maiores latiuscula sese muri area inter pilas porrigit,] ibi plena maiestate sanctorum Patrum habitu sacro amictorum duas tabulas ab Apelle nostrae aetatis Rubenio delineatas spectatori appenderunt. Has tabulas non specioso minus quam artificioso laboriosoque ambitu, circumcurrentabant limbi herbarum, bractearum ac versicolorum florum, textura ita admirabiles.

²⁶ *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae...*, p. 28: a natura, non ab arte factam dices

²⁷ *Qui viva putabant, non sine dolore spectaculum videre poterant; qui statuam scirent, tanto artis miraculo satiati non posse videbantur.*

From then on, we started to prepare the principal event for which, religiously and in order to show the modesty of the Company, the primary advice was that we rejoice more by piety than by splendour, more for the public good than from a private inclination, in order not to offend the mortals, those who are aware that we are the first of this Province to have let shine a torch for others, either by religious modesty or by popular joy²⁸.

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²⁸ *Inde ad praecipuum concinnandum actum totis animis abiturus est: in quo religiose ac pro Soc(ieta)tis modestia exhibendo id consilii cumprimis fuit, ut magis pietati quam splendori, magis publico bono quam privatae inclinationi studeremus, ne – quod fieri haud raro solet – inde mortales laederentur, unde solari ac foveri debuerant, rati subinde nos in hac provincia primos etsi qui aliis facem praeluceremus aut religiosae modestiae aut saecularis iactantiae.*