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## *Sacer Horror*: The Construction and Experience of the Sublime in the Jesuit Festivities of the Early Seventeenth-Century Southern Netherlands

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## SACER HORROR: THE CONSTRUCTION AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SUB-LIME IN THE JESUIT FESTIVITIES OF THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS

Ralph Dekoninck, Annick Delfosse

The festivities organized in 1622 by the Society of Jesus in the Southern Netherlands filled the everyday space of the city to turn it into a place of special experience that can be approached through the lens of the sublime. Indeed, ornamentation, sounds, and lights shaping the ephemeral scenery and event were conceived to inspire in the mind of the spectators what the Jesuits called *sacer horror*, a Latin expression used to refer to all the physical sensations that the ancients felt in front of divinity—religious awe, that is, the organic sensation of respect mixed with fear and wonder felt in the presence of gods or cosmic forces. We would like to show how the intensification of synaesthetic effects, with their direct impact on the body by stunning the senses, was intended to unveil the majesty of God and raise the mind toward the divine. DOI: [10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.9](https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.9)

- 1 There is one thing that must be kept in mind when looking into the history of the sublime: a large part of this history or prehistory is intimately bound up with the history of religions. Before the sublime was theorized within the field of aesthetics in the eighteenth century, this concept, with its strong rhetorical overtones, and the experience to which it related in the early modern period, were still closely linked to the religious experience—even if increasingly unobtrusively the nearer one gets to the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> The interest in examining this transitional period lies precisely in being able to see in it this gradual change from the religious dimension to the aesthetic dimension.
- 2 The field we have chosen as an observatory for this change is that of ephemeral festivals in the Southern Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Indeed, it is interesting to approach the theme of this volume by means of a double decentering, examining the sublime not in the Protestant Dutch Republic but in the Catholic Low Countries and considering it in the religious sphere, a sphere that was also characterized by strong artistic overtones. The aim is to examine the sublime at the point where the aesthetic experience and the religious experience interact, in contrast with what might appear to be a very different, or even divergent, spiritual and artistic sensibility, the historical moment in question (that is, the first half of the seventeenth century) being characterized by a clear confessional break between the north and south of the Low Countries, although this break of course did not prevent considerable cultural exchange.

### The Religious Roots of the *Sacer Horror*

- 3 But let us first of all examine the soil in which the religious culture of the festival, with its specific modes of synaesthetic experience, was rooted. As is well known, the concept of the sublime, in the sense in which Longinus and the majority of his followers understood it, is derived from the verb *sublimare* (to raise up) and is the counterpart of the Greek *hupsos* (meaning high up in the air) and hence, in both the physical and the moral sense connotes “high,” “lofty,” “great.” But before the term was used to designate the grandiose spectacle of nature or the moral strength of man, before it referred to the superlative beauty that the science of sensibility—aesthetics—was to theorize in the eighteenth century (to the extent of establishing the sublime as the founding dimension for a theory of taste), the kind of experience to which the term *sublime* referred was that of contact with the sacred. If the sublime aims at grandeur, its ultimate vanishing point is God himself.
- 4 In his famous work *Das Heilige* (1917), the German historian of comparative religion Rudolf Otto included among the elements of the numinous the *mysterium tremendum*; that is, the mystery that makes one shiver.<sup>2</sup> As he immediately makes clear, it can only be understood through the “sentimental reaction” that it arouses. In this kind of experience, according to Otto, we touch on what is most intimate and most profound in all intense religious emotion. He even goes so far as to state that the religious experience is rooted in this feeling. While this feeling is not without analogy to that of fear, in reality it relates to something else, for which the term *awe* is closest in meaning, with the sense of “respect mixed with fear and admiration” regarding a reality that might be qualified as *uncanny* (strange, disturbing).
- 5 One cannot help but note that this mixture of fear and admiration characterizes also the experience of the sublime, this contradictory sensibility that Edmund Burke labeled *delightful horror* and described as “the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime.”<sup>3</sup> In the seventeenth century there was an expression that in part contained this idea: *sacer horror*. The word *horror* first conveyed, during antiquity, as much the idea of one’s hair standing on end as it did the shiver of horror and the trembling of fear. In Latin literature, the word also referred to all those symptoms, of pallor, trembling, cold sweats, inability to speak, that the ancients felt before the gods. Thus, when Livy mentioned the appearance of the divinized Romulus to a man named Proculus Julius, he described the latter as “filled with horror” (*perfusus horrore*) when he asked Romulus to be allowed to look on his face.<sup>4</sup> The religious meaning of the word *horror* spanned centuries but in the seventeenth century, following the example of Statius’s *Thebaid* and Claudian’s *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*,<sup>5</sup> the word was more closely coupled with the qualifying adjective *sacer* and described the astonishment and disorientation that strike the faithful when confronted by the divine mystery. To supply just the one example, the Jesuit poet Jakob Balde, whose profound influence on the neo-Latin poetry of the period is well known, used this expression in one of his poems, where he spoke of the Virgin in these terms: “sacred horror is there, and mysterious divinity is revealed”;<sup>6</sup> or in this other extract, once again about the Virgin: “As soon as I see, I am amazed; immediately, a fearful voluptuousness overwhelms me with a sacred horror.”<sup>7</sup> The link that unites *horror* and religious stupor also entered the French language,<sup>8</sup> where the word is, as in Latin, associated with the adjectives *holy* or *sacred*, an association that is abundantly present in Jesuit literature. In his *Triple couronne de la Mère de Dieu* (The Triple Crown of the Mother of God), François Poiré wrote: “These words filled them with a holy horror

mixed with joy & astonishment, & made them continue on their way with a certain transport & rapture of the spirit.”<sup>9</sup> Such a meaning of the word *horreur* was also to make its entry into the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* in 1694: “Horror, means a certain seizure of fear or of respect, which takes hold at the sight of some place, of some objects. . . . When one enters this church, one is seized with a holy horror, with a religious horror.”<sup>10</sup>

- 6 What then are the means that allow one to attain such an experience?, For Longinus the sublime was related to a particular *techne*, and in the religious domain the extent to which the liturgy, especially in the early modern period, was deliberately conceived in order to achieve such effects has already been demonstrated. Composed of words and gestures, of sounds, of smells and visual stimuli of all kinds, the liturgy was part of a universe that gave a significant role to *aesthesis*, understood in its primary meaning of “sensible experience.” The *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, promulgated by the Council of Trent at its twenty-second session (September 1562), emphasized the inability of human nature to raise itself up to “the meditation of divine things” without “external helps” and recalled that, for this reason, the Church “has likewise employed ceremonies, such as mystic benedictions, lights, incense, vestments, and many other things of this kind, derived from an apostolical discipline and tradition, whereby both the majesty of so great a sacrifice might be recommended, and the minds of the faithful be excited, by those visible signs of religion and piety, to the contemplation of those most sublime things which are hidden in this sacrifice.”<sup>11</sup> The sensory liturgical universe is therefore conceived of as a way to drive the faithful to the contemplation of what is beyond them, of what is too elevated for them in fact to access alone. It is noteworthy that the religious meaning of the word *horror* resurfaces in various reactions to this use of liturgical ornament. For example, Montaigne writes in his *Essays*: “nor [is there] any soule so skittish and stubborne, that hath not a feeling of some reverence in considering the cloudy vastitie and gloomie canopies of our churches, the eye-pleasing diversitie of ornaments, and orderly order of our ceremonies, and hearing the devout and religious sound of our organs, the moderate, symphonically, and heavenly harmonie of our voices: even those that enter into them with an obstinate will and contemning minde have in their hearts a feeling of remorse, of chilnesse and horreur, that puts them into a certaine diffidence of their former opinions.”<sup>12</sup>
- 7 More specifically, however, the word *horror* was to find itself coupled, in the liturgical context, with the epithet *sacred* so as to evoke the transport or the exaltation of the believer faced with divine Majesty revealing itself to him or her at the time of the sacrifice of the Mass. In his *Actions publiques*, François Ogier spoke of the Holy Sacrament in these terms: “Sacrament, then, & mystery: emphatic, venerable & divine names, at the sound of which the soul of the believer is filled with a holy respect, with a sacred horror.”<sup>13</sup> The Capuchin priest Ambroise de Chaumont wrote in his *Consommation de l’Amour de Jésus-Christ au Saint-Sacrement de l’autel*: “It teaches us never to approach our altars without being filled with a holy horror: in a word, never to take communion or to receive in our hearts the divine Jesus without trembling in the light of our unworthiness: it is the first ecstasy which, as adults, makes us children.”<sup>14</sup> The “holy horror” thus partakes of a transformative process of the ecstatic kind that transports the person affected by it “outside himself,” a process characteristic—as we shall see—of the Baroque festival. Note also that Nicolas Boileau himself, in comments accompanying the republication of his translation of Longinus and in response to comments by André Dacier, also established a close connection between “being completely outside oneself [*phobeitai*]” and being “full of the holy horror of God which has

transported me.”<sup>15</sup>

- 8 As communitarian space-time but also as space-time characterized by institutional control of emotions, the liturgy is repetitive in nature. But there are other celebratory moments that constitute an extraordinary moment in time during which ephemeral artifices are employed in the service of the process of transformation and elevation through the unveiling and manifestation of the divine. This is especially the case with the festivals held by the Jesuits in the Southern Low Countries to celebrate the beatification or canonization of saints from their order, which served to prolong and reinterpret the Roman “center” on the “periphery” of the Catholic world.<sup>16</sup> These Jesuit celebrations appear to have been something quite new in the culture of these borderlands of Catholicity, where the festival had become an instrument of conversion. While it is quite clear that the festivities celebrating beatification and canonization borrowed many elements from the vocabulary and syntax of the Joyous Entries of rulers and other dignitaries, it is also true that their emphasis lay elsewhere— specifically their aim was to evoke the presence/absence of transcendence. It is on this religious ground that the clearest signs can be seen of the shift in attention from a symbolic message toward an emphasis on ineffable effects, on participants as witnesses to a supernatural and triumphant dimension. And this emphasis takes the form of an intensification of all aspects of the performance. In this respect we may speak of spectacle being displaced by the spectacular, a shift that allows us to see the effects and emotions aroused by the festival as a form of sublime experience.
- 9 Furthermore, on the occasion of the canonization in 1622 of their founder, Ignatius of Loyola, and of their missionary hero, Francis Xavier, the Jesuits of the Flandro-Belgian and Gallo-Belgian provinces actually used the expressions “pious horror” (*pius horror*) and “sacred horror” (*sacer horror*) to convey the result of the spectacular scenery they programmed. In employing the word *horror* in this way, it clearly seems that the Jesuits conceived of these events as an ephemeral experience of the divine. A number of written accounts<sup>17</sup> tell us not only about the means used to stimulate these emotions but also about their expected effects on spectators, for even more than supplying a record of a lived experience these accounts expressed the ideal horizon of expectations.<sup>18</sup> They constructed their audience’s reception by pouring it into a rhetorical mold filled with *topoi*. It is now worth considering the way a certain experience of the sublime expresses itself in these accounts through the frame of *sacer horror*.
- 10 Given what we have already established above, it seems useful to start with the Jesuit descriptions of liturgical ephemeral scenery erected in churches where they celebrated their new saints in 1622. Thus, the *Historia Domus* of Cambrai offers this statement:
- Never had our church appeared with more august brilliance: two kinds of chapels were erected on each side of the main altar, and each one had a throne of saints such height that it loomed over the first floor of the church. Candles shone on every conceivable part of a structure filled with tiers of seating; above, there were three triumphal arches and ingenious shadows filling the souls of those who were praying with a *holy horror* and a religious feeling.<sup>19</sup>
- 11 These few lines reveal the Tridentine conception of the ceremonies, designed as a means to help

the souls of those who pray to ascend toward God. Light—and more specifically lighting effects—plays an absolutely crucial role and contributes to generating “holy horror” understood in its religious sense. Let us note, however, that the expression *sacer horror* may also have been used by the Jesuits outside the liturgical context. The account of the festivities organized in Dunkirk at the end of July 1622 evokes a “theatre” figuring “the image of a triumphant Christ among a choir of angels”:

it was in the middle of the confessors that Saints Ignatius and Xavier took their place. This machine was square in shape, around twenty feet wide on the outside, covered all over by a red cloth (with the exception of the front part). Inside there was a circle. In fact, three ranks of angels were arranged in a circle, separated from each other by three rainbows of the same shape, sparkling with fifty brilliant stars. The most holy name of Jesus, with its golden rays, occupied the center (this machine was created at the expense of the Confraternity of Saint George.) Starting at this name, the rest of the machine unfolded in a very pleasant succession of circles. The width of the rainbows increased as the circles themselves increased and the angels (also numbering fifty) filled the gaps while spreading their wings in different ways, and the majesty of their faces overwhelmed the spirits of the spectators with a sacred shiver. Christ, our Lord, holding the Cross in his arms, occupied the main position in this machine.<sup>20</sup>

- 12 As we can see through this example, the quite sophisticated device was conceived to arouse an emotion that is similar to a shiver. This emotion is provoked by an impression of majesty ensuing from the size and quantity of the angels but also from their illusionistic rendering. A similar emotion is created by another “theatre” also supporting a crucifix:

Here there were two theaters before our house, one of which supported a very high cross of fifteen feet, elegantly placed between vine shoots and branches of trees and in whose shadow Aloysius [Gonzaga] and Stanislaus [Kostka] were kneeling. The statue of Christ on the cross was the height of a man. Toward eight o'clock, via the nails of the wounds, a red liquid counterfeiting blood spurted out with such force that in order to prevent it drenching the spectators passing in the middle of the avenue, it was necessary to hold it in. This event moved so much the spirit of some that with their handkerchiefs they gathered drops of the liquid that flowed and applied it to their eyes through the grace of religion.<sup>21</sup>

- 13 The fake blood spurted out violently and splattered the passersby; it was probably an error in setting up the machinery. Nevertheless, the staging produced a strong reaction: it moved spectators to such an extent that they dipped their handkerchiefs into the fake blood to rub their eyes with it. What interests us here is to underline that the Jesuit decorations in Dunkirk did not just display a message to the faithful but were intended to “move so much the spirit of some” that they prompted them to act. The processional apparatus was meant to instigate an emotional turmoil conducive to a state where a deep religious experience might become possible, even if nobody was fooled by the illusion.

- 14 In terms of the means employed, a number of registers were combined. Illusion was a recurring one, to such an extent that it seems to characterize one of the central dimensions of the festival, which was conceived and experienced as a subtle play on the borderline between the artificial and the natural, between the ephemeral and the enduring, between the animated and the inert. Many tricks of stagecraft and scenery were designed in order to make art pass for reality and also to transform the surrounding reality into a work of art. The rocks and artificial flowers that decorated the architecture imitated nature to the extent that they were seen as such,<sup>22</sup> while the sculptures seemed to live and breathe and were created with such art that “only with difficulty could even the inquisitive observers who were there distinguish them from the living.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, alongside the use of artificial materials imitating nature to perfection, accounts also mention real plants (rosemary, palm trees, laurel, ivy, palm leaves, etc.) that merged with the artificial decoration. The emotion that was supposed to be produced by these illusionistic effects was surprise followed by astonishment.
- 15 In addition, the life that animated the festive apparatus constituted one of the main cogs in the workings of the spectacular, as can be seen by the fashion for tableaux vivants but also, as we have seen, by the importance of fire and light, which literally brought images to life. The spectacular is defined by the irruption of the extraordinary into ordinary time and space. In the case of the religious festival, this impression was reinforced by the fact that it was a question of celebrating an absent “power.” It was light and sound effects attempting to evoke/invoke the presence/appearance of the sacred by inducing astonishment and daze. Also contributing were changes of scale that magnified this presence and literally expressed grandeur.
- 16 *Copia* (abundance) and *varietas* (variety), two central elements of Jesuit rhetoric, also animate accounts since these two dimensions had a leading role in the creation of the festive apparatus. Abundance (*copia*) functioned to give the impression of a universe visually saturated with the richest, or at least the most resplendent, materials, whose symbolic value is that of the splendor that befits great personages. And in order to do this, much is made of both the quantity and the quality of the materials, the texts taking pains to enumerate the constituent parts of the festive apparatus as well as their opulence. Thus, there is an emphasis on the cost of the ornamentation, the weight of the metals, the dimensions or precise number of the elements composing the scenery. Very special attention is paid to the description of the materials, their richness, their colors, their diversity, and their brilliance. There are innumerable mentions of sumptuous textiles such as brocade, silk, batiste, embroidery, gold and silver facing, jewels and precious stones, pearls, garnet, ebony, objects and statues of saints in solid silver, gilded and silvered furniture . . . so many materials that “glisten,” “gleam,” sparkle,” “scintillate,” “glitter,” “shine,” “shine forth in their splendor.” Through these descriptions we can grasp the extent of the sensual pleasure produced by the diversity of materials, the luxury, the shining and tinkling that reach and move a large number of people. Furthermore, accounts of these festivals do not fail to mention the effect produced by this display of glittering riches, which “arrested,” “attracted,” or “dazzled the eyes” of the spectators with their “astonished and admiring gaze.” And the texts often admit their inability to give an account of so much richness: “an elegance and an opulence so great that no pen can equal it in writing, since no eye in seeing it has been able to comprehend so great a majesty.”<sup>24</sup> Or “I cannot deny that there is much that escaped the gaze of those who were watching carefully, however curious they were.”<sup>25</sup> The impossibility of describing the scene reflects the emphasis placed on

what cannot be reduced to language, which is usually used, in these types of accounts, to present and decipher the symbolic discourse or the iconographic programme of the festival, expressed through all kinds of allegories, emblems, and symbols.

- 17 It is first of all an over-loading, or even a modification, of the senses that the devices employed are intended to bring about: the scenery consumed in astonishing firework displays, the fake blood springing from the wounds of an enormous crucified Christ, the deafening dialogues of trumpets and bombards, etc., all make the spectacle an intense sensorial adventure that calls out to hearing but even more to sight. The stage machinery and scenery offered themselves to the astonished gaze of the spectators who, overwhelmed by the profusion of materials, of colors, of lights, were soon no longer capable of knowing where to look. What is at issue in the festival is the constant postponement of satiety for a public “replete with the sight of these riches.”<sup>26</sup> And so the means employed were always being renewed in order to surprise spectators who were at risk of becoming tired of or overcome by effects that were too repetitive: “By its very variety, this pomp provokes more pleasure, less satiety, which could easily overwhelm tired people.”<sup>27</sup> The delight of the eyes and of the mind supposedly arising from this “variety of things” and “splendid decorations”<sup>28</sup> “of such beauty that we never tire of seeing them”<sup>29</sup> exemplifies the *aviditas spectandi*, an avidity of seeing, of gazing at the spectacle.<sup>30</sup>
- 18 Sight and hearing were never left in peace because to enchant the eyes and ears was also to move spirits and souls. The scenery, stage machinery, firework displays—in short, all the splendid apparatus that invaded the town—had to “strike down the souls of the participants.”<sup>31</sup> The believer-spectator, thrown into the very center of the spectacular, was at one and the same time ablaze with it and annihilated by it, finding himself so to speak “outside himself.” The search for the means that would put the spectator in this state is therefore at the heart of the spectacular process: by inviting the audience to sink into a universe saturated with colors, materials, shapes, and sounds, the organizers aimed to overwhelm spectators, to push them beyond their sensorial boundaries in order to stun them, strike them dumb, to plunge them into a state of bewilderment. Once “outside himself” the spectator loses his status of distant observer and is totally involved at the core of the project, in which the spectator becomes one of the actors.
- 19 And indeed these extraordinary festivals were an integral part of a global pastoral project that aimed to consolidate the existence of a devout society in the Catholic Low Countries: it was not enough to *show*, it was necessary to *convert*. This is the reason why these festivities cannot be considered without thinking about emotion. Confronted by such scenery and staging, it was the overall impression that prevailed, not the perception of details. We may speak of a cumulative effect whose goal was the intensification of emotion, with the spectator ending up submerged, carried away by so many splendors, to the extent of experiencing a state of stupor. This also worked through the multiplication and interaction of media, creating a truly synaesthetic and immersive effect. Indeed, accounts describe scenery that seems to blur the boundaries between the arts, as it does between artifice and nature, life and reality—so many manifestations of a desire to make images alive, to plunge the spectator into a multisensorial experience that is first of all a visual one, but that is also an experience composed of touch, smell, and sound. The effect produced by the realism of the scenery and the incessant movement between media is one of “astonishment” and of “fear,” which, as soon as the illusion vanishes, is transformed into “admiration.” Thus, as



the 1622 account of Dunkirk tells us, the statues of Ignatius and of Francis Xavier “were so well done that at a distance many thought them to be alive, to such an extent that some expressed their fear. . . . When, coming closer, they understood that there was no danger, terror was transformed into admiration.”<sup>32</sup>

- 20 In arousing emotion, the religious celebration established itself above all as a space-time of immersion aimed at persuasion, conversion, or, at the very least, participation in a more or less active way. For this reason, the spectacle cannot be studied only for what it *says*, inasmuch as its main concern lies in what it *produces*. Since the subtlety of the symbolic messages communicated by a mass of emblems, mottoes, and allegories escaped most people, it appears quite clearly that what mattered was not the encrypted program of the spectacle but the *experience* produced by these moments of time saturated in special effects. Plunged into the center of a universe of exuberant and proliferating forms, the spectator was above all struck by the magnificence of the spectacle offered. Textual sources of the time partially understood these effects when they emphasized the impressions produced by these events and their scenery, thereby testifying to the fact that the effectiveness of beauty and monumentality prevailed.
- 21 A last excerpt from the printed account of the festivities organized by the Jesuits in Antwerp can illustrate how the spectacle with all its sound and light effects generated a mixed sentiment of fear and admiration:

Large numbers of fireworks were then launched along endless cables, crossing the square from one side to another, until some sparks finally fell on the Castle—so said the inscription—of Envy, completely made out of canon gunpowder. At this very moment, fire leapt forth, first of all from the summit of the castle’s tympanum, now as fine as rain, then round like hail, now compact like snow, then forked like lightning; immediately after, a rumbling was heard, filling everything, a rumbling like that made by thunder. Then from the columns on which the tympanum and the roof rested great arrows were seen to shoot out and, on contact with the air, spread out here and there innumerable flames—one would have said plumes or even serpents, which are the sign of an envious spirit. And when all these [displays] had for a lengthy moment fascinated an astonished audience, suddenly canon shots—almost like the canons of war!—were made from the base of the columns, plunging spectators into unexpected terror which made them retreat.<sup>33</sup>

- 22 As is made clear by this quotation, the fireworks and their deafening noises created not only wonder but also provoked a feeling of dread, employed in the service of properly religious ends. This is also what is related in the description of the castle of heresy built in Douai, a description that quite exceptionally is accompanied by an engraving (fig. 1). The exploding effects are visually rendered with a great variety of graphic means, conceived to evoke the different types of fireworks (*virgulae, rochetæ, crepitaculis*). This type of picture, though of poor artistic quality, participated in the reproduction of a sublime effect. But we should not forget that such playful ephemeral artifice, which occurred in nearly every festival of this time, assumed, in the context of the religious festivities, a clearly iconographic dimension. The spectacular is plainly meaningful as it figures, through fire, in the fight between good and evil. The wonderful becomes here a clear expression



Fig. 1 *Arcus triumphalis Namurencensium*, engraving in *Narratio eorum quae Duaci pro celebranda Sanctorum Ignatii et Francisci canonizatione gesta sunt* (Douai: Pierre Telu, 1622). Paris, Centre Sèvres.

of the supernatural. Hence this religious comprehension of *horror*, which is not only a frightening feeling petrifying the beholder, but a real experience of the sacred. If the first step in this experience of the religious sublime is to crush the believer by impressing him (a step corresponding to the preparation for meditation in Jesuit spirituality), it should then elevate his mind to the contemplation of the sacred, the sentiment of fear being replaced by the uplifted sentiment of exaltation. Ultimately, the intended aim was not only to convince the spectator but also to convert him—the conversion being here understood as a way to transform him inwardly—by shaking him quite violently with intense synaesthetic effects.

- 23 In conclusion, we might note that there was in the Jesuits' minds a close alliance between religion and the spectacular, as we can read in the account of Douai festivities: "Religion is well and truly a fair and a feast."<sup>34</sup> In conceiving the divinely created world as a spectacle full of images worthy of imitation in paint and other media, the Jesuits also transformed the feast into a religious experience, attained in particular by a subtle play on the threshold between the artificial and the real, the natural and the supernatural. Following the Longinian account of the rhetorical status of the figure, we might say that "a figure is most effectual when it appears in disguise."<sup>35</sup> This principle of "art without art" defines all the illusionary means that are intended not only to amaze but also to daze in order to "positively master" the spectator. "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 art."<sup>36</sup> As Longinus argues, "to allay this distrust which attaches to the use of figures we must call in the powerful aid of sublimity and passion."<sup>37</sup> All the visually saturated figures and effects obtained through a mix of artifice and nature participate in this process of sublimation in this world of deceitful wonder.

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Fig. 1 *Arcus triumphalis Namurencensium*, engraving in *Narratio eorum quae Duaci pro celebranda Sanctorum Ignatii et Francisci canonizatione gesta sunt* (Douai: Pierre Telu, 1622). Paris, Centre Sèvres.

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<sup>1</sup> On this issue, see Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels, Maarten Delbeke, and Jürgen Pieters, eds., *Translations of the Sublime: The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus' Peri Hupsous in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre*, *Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture* 24 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and Beautiful: And Other Pre-Revolutionary Writings* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, 1.16.16.

<sup>5</sup> Statius, *Thebaid*, 5.505. Claudius Claudianus, *Panegyricus dictus Honorio Augusto sextum consuli* (*Carmina maiora*, 28), v. 33.

<sup>6</sup> "Nam sacer horror inest, et numen arcanum patet." Jakob Balde, *Liber Epodon*, ed. U. Winter, *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* 1246 (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2002), 17–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3406/igram.1997.2901>

<sup>7</sup> "Ut vidi, ut stupui; ut me metuenda voluptas Horrore sacro perculit." Jakob Balde, *Carmina Lyrica*, ed. P. Benno Müller (Munich, 1844), 442.

<sup>8</sup> J.-D. Beaudin, "Un cas de latinisation interne du lexique français à la Renaissance: 'horreur'

et ‘horrible’ dans les tragédies de Robert Garnier,” *L’Information Grammaticale* 75 (1997): 33–35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3406/igram.1997.2901>

<sup>9</sup> “Ces paroles les remplirent d’une sainte horreur mêlée de joie & d’étonnement, & leur firent poursuivre leur chemin avec un certain transport & ravissement d’esprit.” François Poiré, *Triple couronne de la Mère de Dieu* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1630), 493.

<sup>10</sup> “Horreur, signifie encore un certain saisissement de crainte ou de respect, qui prend à la vue de quelques lieux, de quelques objets. . . . Quand on entre dans cette Eglise, on est saisi d’une sainte horreur, d’une horreur religieuse.” *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (Paris: chez la Veuve de Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), 695.

<sup>11</sup> “Cumque natura hominum ea sit, ut non facile queat sine adminiculis exterioribus ad rerum divinarum meditationem sustolli, propterea pia mater Ecclesia ritus quosdam, ut scilicet quaedam submissa voce, alia vero elatiore in missa pronuntiarentur, instituit; caeremonias item adhibuit, ut mysticas benedictiones, lumina, thymiamata, vestes aliaque id genus multa ex apostolica disciplina et traditione, quo et majestas tanti sacrificii commendaretur, et mentes fidelium per haec visibilia religionis ac pietatis signa ad rerum altissimarum, quae in hoc sacrificio latent, contemplatione excitarentur.” Council of Trent, session 22, *Doctrina de Sacrificio Missae*, chap. V (*De missae caeremoniis et ritibus*), in *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (London, 1848).

<sup>12</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, trans. J. Florio (London: Gibbings, 1603). “[Il n’y a] ame si revesche qui ne se sente touchée de quelque reverence à considerer cette vastité sombre de nos Eglises, la diversité d’ornemens et ordre de nos ceremonies, et ouyr le son devotieux de nos orgues, et la harmonie si posée et religieuse de nos voix. Ceux mesme qui y entrent avec mespris, sentent quelque frisson dans le cœur, et quelque horreur, qui les met en deffiance de leur opinion.” M. Eyquem de Montaigne, *Les Essais* [1595] (Verdun: P. Villey and L. Saulnier, 1595), 593.

<sup>13</sup> “Sacrement donc & mystere; noms emphatiques, venerables, & divins, au son desquels l’ame du fidele se remplit d’un saint respect, d’une horreur sacrée.” François Ogier, *Actions publiques* (Paris: Pierre le Petit, 1665), 194.

<sup>14</sup> “[Elle nous apprend] de n’approcher jamais de nos autels sans être remplis d’une sainte horreur: en un mot de ne jamais faire la communion & de recevoir jamais dans nos cœurs le divin Jésus qu’avec un tremblement en vue de notre indignité: c’est la première *extase* qui, de grands, nous fait petits.” Ambroise de Chaumont, *Consommation de l’Amour de Jésus-Christ au Saint-Sacrement de l’autel* (Rouen: François Vaultier le jeune, 1676), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Longin, *Traité du Sublime*, in *Oeuvres diverses*, trans. Nicolas Boileau Despréaux (Paris, Denys Thierry, 1701), 111.

<sup>16</sup> Annick Delfosse, “From Rome to the Southern Netherlands: Spectacular Sceneries to Celebrate the Canonization of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier,” in *The Sacralization of Space and Behaviour in the Early Modern World*, ed. J. de Silva (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, 141-159). See, among others, for Italy: Bernadette Majorana, “Entre étonnement et dévotion: Les fêtes universelles pour les canonisations des saints (Italie, XVIIe siècle et début du XVIIIe siècle),” in *Les cérémonies extraordinaires du catholicisme baroque*, ed. Bernard Dompnier (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2009), 424–42; 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*, 459–76; for Spain: Trinidad de Antonio-Saenz, “Las canonizaciones de 1622 en Madrid: artistas y organización de los festejos,” *Anales de historia del arte* 4 (1993–94): 701–9; 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): 315–23; 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).

<sup>17</sup> 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 celebritatis in festo SS. PP. NN. Ignatii et Xaverii a Residentia Duncker-cana* (Rome, ARSI, FB 60, fols. 45–48); Louvain: *Commentarius rerum gestarum a Soc[ieta]te Iesu Lovanii ad Apotheosim SS. Ignatii et Xaverii* (Rome, ARSI, FB 52, fols. 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[ietatis] Iesu Antverpiae 24 Iulii 1622* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1622); Brussels: *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaverii 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).

<sup>18</sup> “While those records we think of as ‘historical’ do not share the same status as drama or fiction, they may come closer to them than is always admitted. No record (and the term ‘record’ itself occludes the problematic here) is neutral or objective or allows unmediated access to real events. Every written record is produced from a subject position that determines the selection, omission and distortion of what took place. The retention or exclusion of particular record, moreover, also usually indicates a bias; the archive is not a neutral space.” Janette Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance, 1400–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>19</sup> “Nunquam augustiori specie co(n)specta aedes nostra, erectis circa principem ara(m) utrimq(ue) duobus veluti sacellis, suo cuiq(ue) Sanctoru(m) throno ea altitudine, quae templi tabulato minaret. Colucebant longe lateq(ue) per multam graduu(m) substructionem cerei; sup(er)ne vero tres arcus triumphales, artificiosis tenebris sanctum horrorem praecantium animis religionemq(ue) co(n)ciliantibus.” *Prosecutio annalium Collegii Cameracensis, 1617–1624*, fol. 114r (Rome, ARSI, GB 34).

<sup>20</sup> “Inter confessores locum obtinuerunt S(ancti) Ignatius et Xaverius. Haec machina formam quadratam habuit exterius ad viginti pedes porrectam, rubeo panno undiq(ue) (excepta anteriori parte) vestitam. Pars interior rotunda erat. Tres enim habebat angelorum ordines in orbem dispositos, quos tres eiusdem figurae i[r]rides stellis quinquaginta micantibus corruscantes a se mutuo separabant. Centrum tenebat S(anctissimum) Iesu nomen (impensis confraternitatis S(ancti) Georgii haec machina constructa est) aureis radiis instructum, a quo in circumferentiam reliqua machina gratissimo ordine extendebatur. Excrescentibus circulis excrescebat i[r]ridum latitudo et angelorum forma (hi vero etiam quinquaginta numero) alarum suarum expansione spatium intermedium pulchra varietate replebant vultusq(ue) maiestate spectantium animos sacro horrore percellabant. Principem in hac machina locum habuit Christus Dominus, crucem ulnis sustentans, cum enim sedem in illius medio loco sublimes collocatam haberet, sic undiq(ue) fulgentibus cingebatur radiis, ut in sole tabernaculum suum posuisse videretur.” *Relatio celebritatis*, fol. 47r (Rome, ARSI, FB 60).

<sup>21</sup> “Hic accedebant theatra duo ante domum n(ost)ram, quorum unum defixam habebat praealtam crucem pedum quindecim inter palmites et arborum ramos concinne dispositam sub cuius umbra flecterent Aloysius et Stanislaus. Chr(ist)i in cruce dependentis statua iustam hominis

magnitudinem explebat, ad octo horas per vulnerum clavos rubens liquor sanguine(m) mentiens tanta prorupit vi, ut ne spectatores per mediam plateam transeuntes irrigaret reprimi debuerit, tantum illa res nonnullorum movit animos, ut guttas defluentis liquoris sudario exciperint oculis-q(ue) religionis gratia applicarint.” *Relatio celebritatis*, fol. 47r (Rome, ARSI, FB 60).

<sup>22</sup> “[about the artificial rock] one might say a work of nature and not of art (*natura, non ab arte factam dicesz*)” (*Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 28. “[about the flowers] fashioned with truly great artifice to rival nature et gardens (*flores magno sane artificio ad naturae hortorumque invidiam elaboratos*)” *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> “two statues of our saints, on either side of the main altar, sculpted in busts with such art that they seemed in some way to live and breathe (*Maxime tamen ambae sanctorum nostrorum statuae umbilico tenus tam affabre sculptae, ut vivere quodammodo ac spirare viderentur*).” *Relatio celebritatis*, fol. 45r (Rome, ARSI, FB 60). About the images and sculptures in the theatre: “But their imitation of the vivacity of bodies and their ease in turning to all sides were such that they lacked for almost nothing but speech. Even more, (which astonishes me), even those inquisitive observers who were mingling everywhere had difficulty in distinguishing them from the living (*Sed ita vivorum corporum aemulae et in omnem partem versatiles, ut praeter linguae motum vix alium requireres. Imo [quod mirere] vix a vivis hominibus qui passim intermixti erant, etiam a curiosis inspectoribus discerni poterant*).” *Historia domus Professae Societatis Ieus Antverpiae*, fol. 496v (Rome, ARSI, FB 50 II)

<sup>24</sup> “tanta vel elegancia vel opulencia exornarunt, ut nullus scribendo calamus par esse possit, quando nullus videndo oculus capere tantam maiestatem potuit.” *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> “Negare non possum quin omnia solícite lustrantibus quantumvis curiosos oculos multa effugiant.” *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 17–18.

<sup>26</sup> *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> “tum etiam ut varietate hac condita pompa voluptatis plus haberet, satietatis minus, quae facile in tanto numero ferculorum poterat apud defessum populum obrepere.” de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> “Illustriora trophaea . . . quae licet ob rerum varietatem, splendidum ornatum et apparatus, oculos animosque intuentium raperent.” *Litterae annuae* for Antwerp, fol. 496<sup>r</sup> (ARSI, FB 50 II, 80).

<sup>29</sup> “ea amoenitate, ut videndo satiari non possent.” *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> “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.” *Sanctorum Ignati et Xaveri in Divos relatorum triumphus Bruxellae*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> “Oculos animosque intuentium raperent.” *Historia domus Professae Societatis Ieus Antverpiae* (Rome, ARSI, FB 50 II).

<sup>32</sup> “ut eminus a multis vivere crederentur, ita ut nonnulli nobis metuerent quod loco adeo praecipiti videremur consistere cumq(ue) propius accedentes omne periculum abesse intelligerent, formido in admirationem conversa est.” *Relatio celebritatis*, fol. 47r (Rome, ARSI, FB 60).

<sup>33</sup> “Deinde ignes plurimi per funes longissimos emissi, ab una in alteram areae partem errabant, donec tandem in Castrum, ut titulus ferebat, Invidiae, totum pulvere confectum tormentario,

favillae nonnullae inciderent. Ibi tum primum e tympano supremo propugnaculi exiliere ignes, modo instar pluviae tenues, modo instar grandis teretes, modo instar nivis densi, modo instar fulminis trifulci; subinde solum auditum murmur, quale efficit tonitru. Inde e columnis, quibus cum tecto tympanum incumbibat, visae evolare sagittae maiores, quae aerem nactae, plurimas hinc inde dispersere flammam. Spiras putasses, aut serpentes, invidi animi indices. Quae omnia ubi diu populum attonitum detinuerant, subsecuta sunt e columnarum basibus tormenta, quasi bellica, spectatoresque inopinato metu deterruerunt.”de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola*, 23.  
<sup>34</sup> *Tableaux des personnages signalés de la Compagnie de Jésus exposés en la solennité de la canonization des SS. PP. Ignace et François Xavier par un Père de la mesme Compagnie* (Douai, 1623), dedication, fol. a 2r.

<sup>35</sup> *On the Sublime* 17, 41.

<sup>36</sup> “Qui viva putabant, non sine dolore spectaculum videre poterant; qui statuas scirent, tanto artis miraculo satiati non posse videbantur.”de Ghryze, *Honor S. Ignatio de Loiola*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> *On the Sublime* 17, 41.

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