

II. Literature

The Roman Catholic order called the Society of Jesus (confirmed in 1540, suppressed in 1773 and restored in 1814) is committed to education, higher learning, and the arts as important aspects of its world-wide activities. Its members have produced a considerable amount of literature (overview: McNaspy et al.), much of which involves biblical reception. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the order, used the Bible in the tradition of the *devotio moderna*, developing from it a partly

new mode of meditating on biblical scenes (especially from the Gospels: “Mysteries in the Life of Christ”) that he laid down in his *Spiritual Exercises* (Guevara; Barreiro Luaña). This method recommends concrete sensual imagination of the biblical scenes (“application of the senses”) and personal involvement in the scenes imagined. Since the *Spiritual Exercises* have been an essential component in the Jesuits’ training, this experience has influenced their reception of the Bible in literature, theater, and the arts.

1. Neo-Latin Poetry. Following humanist ideals, training in (morally purified) classical literature became the core of the Jesuit school system as laid out in the official curriculum approved in 1599 (*ratio studiorum*: Lukács; overview of the reading programme: Garrod). Studying, among others, Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, it emphasized the imitation and composition of literature in Latin, in which some Jesuits came to excel. The art of classical poetry was to be employed to convey Christian faith and morality, as frequently expressed by the metaphors of the *mulier captiva* (based on Deut 21: 10–14) or the *spoliatio Aegyptiorum* (Machielsen: 770–71).

Outstanding Jesuit Neo-Latin poets include: in Germany Jakob Bidermann (1578–1639, especially known as a playwright) and Jacob Balde (1604–1668; Burkard / Kühlmann); in Belgium Sidroon De Hossche (Hosschius; 1596–1653), Jakob Van De Walle (Wallius; 1599–1690), Willem Van Der Beke (Becanus; 1608–1683); and in Poland Matthias Casimir Sarbiewski (1596–1640) (for additional authors and examples see Thill; Mertz et al.).

Neo-Latin poetry flourished even in the missions overseas. Much of this literature is hardly known (for helpful introductions see Haskell’s contributions; Knight/Tilg and Isewijn/Sacré: *passim*). The Society took pride in the literary production of its members, as a major anthology shows (the *Parnassus Societatis Iesu*, Frankfurt 1654; more than 1,400 pages; Haskell: 778). Interesting examples of biblical reception include Bidermann’s *Heroides Christianae*, which presents women from the OT, for example in letters from Eve to Abel and to all humanity, but also a description of the persecuted church that draws on Rev 12–13 (Eickmeyer: 430–31).

2. Literature in the Vernacular. Many of the above-mentioned Neo-Latin authors composed poetry in the vernacular as well. Antonio Vieira (1608–1697) is considered a prime author in the Portuguese language; some of his works, such as his *Clavis prophetarum*, interpret biblical eschatology (Valdez: 223–321). In Germany, Friedrich Spee (1591–1635) became famous for his hymns and his *Trutznachtigall*, which employs love symbolism from the Song of Songs (Eicheldinger: 247–68). Jesuit missionaries strove to study the languages and eventually the literature of the peoples they en-

countered overseas. In the effort to inculturate the Christian faith, linguistic and literary works were composed. Outstanding examples are the *Khristapurāna* by the Englishman Thomas Stephens (1549–1619), a summary of biblical themes in 10,641 strophes in the Marathi language (introduction in Stephens: lxii–lxxxviii). Similarly, Costanzo Beschi (1680–1747) composed a major biblical poem, the *Thembavani*, that is considered a classic in Tamil literature. José de Anchieta (1534–1597) composed religious poetry in the Amazonian Tupi language.

Since the order’s restoration (1814), Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) has become its most widely appreciated poet. Hopkins was raised in an Anglican family; he converted to Catholicism during his studies at Oxford (1866) and joined the Society of Jesus in 1868. His poetry involves complex biblical allusions (examples and bibliography: Cotter; Dubois; see also “Hopkins, Gerard Manley”). A contemporary biblical scholar and poet is the Belgian Jesuit Jean-Pierre Sonnet.

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III. Drama

• General • China

A. General

The Jesuit school system employed theater as a primary means of education during its first period (until the order's suppression in 1773). Thus, Jesuit theater is strongly related to the history of the Society's schools (on the latter, see O'Malley: 200–42). The order opened its first college in Messina in 1548. One of the earliest plays staged at a Jesuit school was *Jephthah Sacrificing His Daughter* by the then fifteen-year-old Jesuit student José de Acosta at Medina del Campo in 1555 (O'Malley: 223). By the time of Ignatius' death (1556), the Jesuits operated some thirty-five colleges. By 1749 the number had grown to 700 schools across Europe and another 100 in other parts of the world, creating "the first free education system" (Grendler: 7–8).

1. A Broad Cultural Phenomenon (1555–1773). Each school would stage at least one major theatrical production every year, so the total number of performances amounted to tens of thousands (Valentin's *Répertoire* lists, for the German-speaking countries alone, evidence of 7,650 performances). The students of a Jesuit school could make up five to ten percent of the total population of a town (Tilg: 184), which means that public performances reached large sections of the population. Jesuit theater thus constituted – together with the school theater practice of other orders – a broad cultural phenomenon in Catholic areas of Europe over two centuries. Drama was also employed as a catechetical tool by missionaries such as José de Anchieta in the Amazonas region (Fernández).

2. Court Theater and Festival Plays. With the help of aristocratic sponsors, such as the ducal House of Wittelsbach in Munich, Jesuit theater could rise above the limitations of school theater. On the occasion of the consecration of St Michael's Church in Munich on July 11, 1597, the performance of *Triumphus Divi Michaelis Archangeli Bavarici* (drawing on Rev 12) took eight hours and involved more than 900 performers (Rädle 2013: 226). In Vienna, Nikolas Avancini (1612–1686) created pompous theater (*ludus caesareus*) under the protection of that lover of the arts, Emperor Leopold I (r. 1658–1705). Cologne was a comparable center of festival plays.

3. Pedagogical Purpose. Despite some preoccupation with the moral dangers of theater, Jesuits firmly believed – as Martin Luther did (Washof: 42–43), but in contrast to the Calvinists (Kohler: 1–6) – in the pedagogical value of theater: it provided training in language, style, public proclamation, and courtly manners; offered moral examples; and could lead both actors and audience towards *vera pietas* (Rädle 2013: 217–20). Jesuits happily related how a performance could move the audience to

tears and sighing, and lead to conversion (Meyer: 222). For the sake of training in classical language and style, most dramas were written in Latin. For greater comprehensibility and entertainment for the (less erudite) audience, elements in the vernacular could be inserted (Pérez González) or provided on program leaflets. Performances frequently employed highly developed staging techniques, music, and dance and were thus conceived as multi-media events (for an example of opera see Kennedy). An *Elias* in Prague (1610), for example, involved fireworks, a carriage driving towards heaven, and the parting of the waters of the Jordan (McNapsy: 3709). Since the restoration of the order (1814), theater has been re-activated in Jesuit schools, but to a lesser extent.

4. State of Research. Only a small percentage of the dramas staged by Jesuits have survived in manuscripts or in printed form. The main evidence that has come down to us is program leaflets produced for audiences. The only regions for which larger collections of material exist are the German-speaking lands (Valentin 1983–1984; Szarota 1979–1983) and Hungary (Staud). Although much research still needs to be done, helpful introductions are available (esp. Rädle 2013; Pohle: 19–38; McNapsy; McCabe; bibliographies in Griffin; Valentin 1984: 1137–1242; Isewijn/Sacré: 139–164; Neo-Latin drama in general: Bloemendal 2014; Jesuit comedy: Tilg 2015: 95–97).

5. Biblical Reception. The main areas from which Jesuits drew the themes for their plays were classical literature, history, the lives of saints, and the Bible. A great number of plays interpret biblical stories and motifs, but other subjects were typologically related to biblical figures and themes as well (Rädle 1989: 247–250; Spanily). The didactic purpose of the plays made young biblical characters with potential for offering moral and spiritual instruction especially attractive, such as Joseph (Wimmer 1982), Isaac (Gen 22; Reckling: 90–95), Tobias (Wick), Jephthah's daughter (Sypherd: 241; Stroh), Daniel, Susanna (Casey), and the prodigal son (Rädle 2013: 204–208). Aristocratic or royal sponsors frequently inspired playwrights to choose figures such as David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, or Cyrus as examples (Bloemendal; Meyer 2003, 2008; on Ahab and Jezebel Griffin 1976: xi–xviii; for the thematic bibliography see Valentin 1984: 1211–1225; Wimmer 1983: 655–65; for analysis esp. Szarota 1979; Rädle 1989).

While Jesuit biblical drama is in effective continuity with the Protestant biblical drama that was thriving during the Reformation period, the Jesuits set new standards especially in its technical elaboration (Washof: 465). Jesuits could – drawing on Prov 8:30–31 and traditional authors such as Augustine – even conceive of the world as divine theater (Rädle 1981: 137). Thus a program leaflet from

Augsburg (1721) informs us that when the Joseph drama was staged “more than 3,400 years ago,” God was very pleased.

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