Editors' Preface

Current Trends in Jesuit Historiography

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Paul Grendler recently wrote:

When I look at all the new articles and books that the Jesuitica Project [of the Catholic University at Leuven] lists every week, I suspect that there is enough scholarship and interest in the history of the Society of Jesus and individual Jesuits to fill a new journal. I am particularly impressed with the amount of new scholarship appearing in English. There is a climate of interest and acceptance for scholarship on the Jesuits in the English-speaking world that did not exist thirty to fifty years ago. When I obtained my Ph.D. in 1964 studying the Jesuits, or the Catholic Church generally, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not the path to rising in the historical profession in the USA and Canada.

Likewise, John W. O'Malley, S.J. wrote in a front-page article of *America* entitled "Jesuit History: A New Hot Topic":

Historians are a cautious lot and do not use the word revolution lightly. But that is the right word to describe what has been happening in the study of the history of the Society of Jesus. The scene is so different now from what it was as recently as a dozen years ago that it is hardly recognizable. All at once the Jesuits have become a hot topic—indeed, one of the hottest—in the field of early modern history. [...] Now the most prestigious university presses—Princeton, Harvard, Stanford and Toronto, for example—also publish on Jesuit history, a venture almost unheard of before. [...] The Jesuits are in vogue.

Indeed, Jesuit history is a wonderful prism through which to look at many interdisciplinary aspects of modern global history, whether through explicitly comparative studies, or by the grouping of studies around a given topical, chronological, or geographic focus. One of the very best things about Jesuit history is that it intersects with so many other important

topics: from the Renaissance and Reformations to the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment(s), from colonialism and imperialism to slavery, anti-modernism, and twentieth-century totalitarianisms. Jesuit history is a window through which these and many other aspects of modern history can be observed, and it should not be ignored for ideological or other reasons. It also engages with a staggering array of disciplines: art history, theology, literary studies, the history of science, international law, military history, performing arts, archaeology, and many others.

Because scholarship on Jesuit history has recently become so abundant, the *Journal of Jesuit Studies* aims at helping scholars to find their bearings in this rapidly growing field of studies. This is why each issue of the journal will contain a substantial book review section (for more details please see the introduction to the book review section in this issue) and every fourth issue will include the most recent bibliography. Additionally, subscribers will be able to access online a more comprehensive bibliographical database. At the same time, the *JJS* targets those areas of scholarship on Jesuit history in its broader context that have lamentably been neglected. This mission of the *JJS* is enhanced by the foundation of the first monograph series of a major academic publisher specifically dedicated to the history of the Society of Jesus—Brill's Series of Jesuit Studies. Both are officially launched in 2014, the bicentennial of the Jesuits' world-wide restoration.

In order to fulfill our mission we begin with an issue dedicated to a review of recent historiography on the Jesuits. Our goal is to assess where Jesuit scholarship stands at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Obviously, this review cannot be fully comprehensive because of the overwhelming number of Jesuit-related publications which now amount to at least 800 titles a year. Yet, the following six essays explore recent scholarly trends in the history of the pre-suppression Society of Jesus across the fields of schooling, literature and theater, foreign missions, visual culture, science, and philosophy.

We learn from these essays that in spite of the numerous studies published in the two decades following the publication of O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (1993), there are still many lacunae to be filled. Paul Grendler, for example, points out that much has been written on the teaching of mathematics in the international web of Jesuit secondary schools and universities but too little on that of philosophy, and almost nothing on teaching catechesis, although some important works analyzing Jesuit printed catechisms have recently been published. Both Grendler and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia indicate that finances remain a neglected field in studying both schools and missions.

Additionally, there are also some chronological gaps. Not only is it clear that an overwhelming majority of studies have been dedicated to the

pre-suppression Society but a significant number of these have dealt with the early Jesuits (before 1565), where O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* ends. Many studies reveal a fascination with the *Ratio Studiorum* (1599) but—as in the case of the Jesuit *Constitutions* (1558)—many approaches developed by the Society of Jesus *after* the promulgation of these important documents are not reflected. Moreover, the practice sometimes contradicted the norm, as in the case of employing Aquinas in teaching philosophy. Hence the need to investigate both the Jesuit practice and Jesuit normative documents. The Jesuit *Litterae Annuae*, *Lettres édificantes*, and *Neue Welt-Botte* are highly significant and have been studied carefully by scholars but missionaries were not the only actors of the Jesuit missions. We still need to learn much more about how Jesuit missionaries and their message were received by indigenous peoples of all continents, Africa included. This requires familiarity with historical sources in local languages (non-Western European tongues included) and an ability to grasp the global character of the Jesuit missionary enterprise. The same holds true for the study of Jesuit visual culture. As Evonne Levy aptly puts it, “while archival research is most likely to be framed by regional perspectives, what is desperately needed are scholars who are both willing to work synchronically to reconstruct the Jesuit [visual] culture in distinct moments and who are able to cross as many borders as did the Jesuits,” including the disciplinary border-crossings between art history, theology, aesthetics, and spirituality.

“Disciplined inter-disciplinarity” is not an easy goal to achieve in the study of the Society, because Jesuit attitudes in the arts, theology, philosophy, and even spirituality were far from monolithic. There was no uniform Jesuit style in architecture, painting, literature or preaching, nor there was one Jesuit school of theology or philosophy. The spirituality of Balthasar Álvarez, to take just one example, did not meet with the approval of Superior General Mercurian but was probably closer to how Ignatius himself understood the role of contemplation. Moreover, Jesuit visual and other cultures were subject to constant change, as the broader society's culture shifted its sensitivities, as Stephen Schloesser has eloquently shown for Jesuit philosophy in its relation to other fields of Jesuit activities, particularly scientific investigation. The latter field has blossomed in recent years and yet, as Sheila Rabin points out, even the studies of famous figures such as Clavius, Kircher, and Ricci have not been exhausted.

Both the *Journal of Jesuit Studies* and Brill's book series of Jesuit Studies wish to rise to many of the challenges presented by the current state of scholarship. In the near future we are going to publish important books that will fill some of the historiographical gaps mentioned in the essays that follow. We inaugurate the book series with a collection of essays on Jesuit history, *Saints or Devils*

Incarnate, by the “dean” of our field John W. O’Malley. It will be followed by other volumes on the history of Jesuit historiography, the history of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, on the Jesuits and the earliest European art in Japan, on the restoration of the Jesuits in Colombia and the American mid-West, on the finances of the Jesuit mission to China, on the generalate of Acquaviva, on twentieth-century Jesuit philosophers, and so forth. We would also like to take on Yasmin’s Haskell proposal of an online annotated *Parnassus Societatis Jesu* for the twenty-first century. Additionally, other Brill series will publish books dedicated to Jesuit history, among them “*The Tragic Couple.*” *Encounters between Jews and Jesuits*; *The Jesuit Survival and Restoration*; and *Brill’s Companion to Ignatius of Loyola*.

A number of our colleagues are currently engaged in preparing special thematic issues of the *JJS*—on foreign missions, early modern English missions, gender, women, military ministry, Islam, early modern Polish Jesuit culture, libraries, counseling, slavery, early modern science, angelology, exegesis and Hebraism, etc. The *JJS* is also sponsoring a number of international conferences, including that on Jesuit survival and restoration at Boston College in June 2014 (see the program at the end of this issue) and a five-leg conference on the encounters between Protestants and Jesuits in Africa (Nairobi), Iberoamerica (City of Mexico), Asia (Macau), North America (Boston), and Europe (Innsbruck), which will precede the 500th anniversary of the beginning of Luther’s Reformation.

We hope that our peer-reviewed quarterly will become a valuable and authoritative *vademecum* for scholars who embark on the fascinating journey of studying modernity through the prism of Jesuit history.

The 1607 Köln edition of Antonio Possevino's *Bibliotheca selecta*. Courtesy of John J. Burns Library at Boston College.