Abstract. This paper explores the socio-anthropological implications of print technology as it was employed by the Jesuits in the Sixteenth century. McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* with its often forgotten subtitle, *The Making of Typographic Man*, aptly describes the environment in which the Society of Jesus was established, and the cultural transformation that the pedagogy of the Jesuits made possible.

Father Matteo Ricci flourished in the same period in which the pillars of modern European culture lived. A glance at the dates indicating the lifespan of the cultural protagonists of the time reveals an astonishing coincidence. They all reached their maturity and were most active around the same time, in the early years of the seventeenth century: Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), Giovan Battista Marino (1569-1625), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Willian Shakespeare (1564-1616), Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), Lope de Vega Carpio (1562-1635), Louis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1626). A little earlier there is Miguel de Cervantes (1647-1616), and a little after Michelangelo Merisi, Caravaggio (1571-1610), both however, active, like the others, at the beginning of the Baroque century. A little earlier, with Cervantes, there are also the extraordinary personalities of Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), who certainly affected in a dramatic way the physiognomy of the early years of modernity.

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1 This article, in a slightly different version, has appeared in print (“Modernity of the First Jesuits”. Select Proceedings of the International Conference, Weapons of Mass Instruction: Secular and Religious Institutions Teaching the World. Ottawa: Legas, 2008, pp. 75-91) and it is here reproduced by permission of the publisher.

2 To call Thomas Nashe a pillar of modernity might sound a bit exaggerated, but not from our perspective. The journalist and polemic publicist nicknamed “the English Aretino” played an important role in the late 16th century understanding of print and of its cultural effects (cf. McLuhan. *The Classic Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Culture of his Time*). As for Aretino and his understanding and use of the print medium, see my “Aretino e Rabelais figure auroreali della modernità.”
What do they have in common, Matteo Ricci, Galileo, Shakespeare and their contemporaries? They all share, participate in, and produce the new typographic culture, a culture that begins to manifest itself in a manner that is increasingly more overt and less subliminal because its effects are under everybody’s eyes. Wherever the new medium of print goes, it creates the same cultural effects, which eventually will come to constitute the fundamental principles of the European culture. And this is the culture of modernity that consolidates itself and becomes aware of itself around the end of the sixteenth century. From then on it will remain substantially the same (with increasingly ampler participation) until the early nineteenth century when, with the telegraph, we see the insurgence of the electric media. Electric and electronic media, operating on the same principles, following the same laws, would transform our culture from its very foundation, turning it into something that only at the present time we are starting to get some glimpse of. We have called this new culture “postmodern,” which is just to say electric and electronic, as the “modern” was typographic and mechanical. Today, in our postmodern condition, we live in a planetary culture, without center or periphery, just as modern culture was euro centric.

However, one would say, if the printing press appears on the horizon around the year 1450, more than one hundred years before the period we are focusing on, how do we explain the gap? The shortest and most comprehensive answer to this legitimate question that I can think of is the following: the medium of print acquires consciousness of itself, and therefore it acquires consciousness of its power to transform culture and society only in the period of the modern intellectual personalities we mentioned. The period of self-consciousness of the medium is the period that corresponds to its maturity: a phase in the life of a medium that McLuhan calls “applied technology”. And, after all, the books

3 Specifically, laws of media, as described in Marshall and Eric McLuhan’s volume, Laws of Media: The New Science.

4 For the notion of “Postmodernity” embraced here, see Renato Barilli’s article, “Re-Thinking Modernity,” and mine, “The Postmodernity of Marshall McLuhan.”

5 “Applied technology” refers to the use of a new technology with an at least partial the consciousness of its effects. Obviously, in early print time there was no consciousness of the socio-cultural implications of the new medium. Some glimpses of understanding and exploitation of it I saw in the works of Pietro Aretino.
produced during the first fifty years of print are called *incunabula* (in the cradle), which are to say “newborn” or “infant,” and it is understandable that if the infancy lasted fifty years, to reach maturity from then the book would need at least double the number of years. Which brings us to the beginning to the seventeenth century.

Father Matteo Ricci is then, together with his perhaps more famous contemporaries, a champion of modernity. In fact, they are all founding fathers in the history of modern culture. As I began to do some research for this paper, with Matteo Ricci in mind, after having already something on the great Jesuit missionary,\(^6\) I felt that perhaps I had to move back, chronologically, to the background, or general cultural context that allowed the prodigious intellectual figure of Matteo Ricci to flourish. So, I looked for some initial traces of Ricci’s modernity in the document with which the Jesuit order was established. In this way, once the modern-typographic dimension of Ricci’s teaching is directly linked to the intellectual environment created by the first Jesuits, we may get a more comprehensive understanding of his extraordinary contribution to the culture of the modern world.

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The first and most important term of reference for the modernity of the Jesuits can be found in Ignatius’ experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which he transforms into a manual of behaviour and a true founding document of the order. The *Exercises* constitute, practically, an instrument of systematic control and gradual perfecting of the state of the mind and body, thought and action. The typographic modernity here has to be recognized in the *systematic* and *gradual* progression of the operation. It is well known, in fact, if Marshall McLuhan has taught us something, that a fundamental tenet of the typographic revolution is a change of perception, from a comprehensive sense of reality to linear, and yet segmented, vision of it. The sense of sight, which is the primary sense

in the culture of print (as hearing was in manuscript culture), generates spontaneous
classifications and segmentations, specifying borders, and framing, defining, and
analyzing objects. It is the sight-oriented perception of reality that constitutes the spirit of
the specialization we find in any discipline at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of
the seventeenth centuries. It produced a great number of modern wonders: those of
Ludovico Castelvetro’s detailed categories extracted from Aristotle’s Poetics; those of
Niccolò Tartaglia and Girolamo Cardano, the mathematicians who made more progress
in math in ten years than all their predecessors in a thousand; the poetic meraviglie of
Torquato Tasso and Giovan Battista Marino that appear in the detailed thematic
organization of their immense collections of lyric poems, as opposed to the biographical,
as in Petrarca’s Canzoniere; the scientific marvels of Galileo’s astral explorations; and
those of the contemporary anatomists and physiologists, modern explorers of the human
body.

Anticipating all of them, in the cave of Manresa, between 1522 and 1523, Ignatius saw,
in a totally modern way, the mysteries of creation and faith. Here’s how, with the words
of Guido Sommavilla:

> The genuinely mystical visions and divine understandings were not late in coming
to Ignatius there, in Manresa. God […] made him see (not only understand) with
elementary illustrations, the mysteries: Trinity, Creation, Incarnation,
Redemption, Eucharist and so on. For example, Trinity through three
complementary colours or three different notes making a single chord. (30)\(^7\)

Just like the exercises and drills that are used in school in the learning of a particular
subject, the spiritual exercises of Ignatius constitute a practice (that I would call
psychoanalytical ante litteram) leading to knowledge and to the sharpening of our mental
and psychological instruments of perception. Instinctively, but with a straightforward
analytical method, Ignatius confirms the typographic principle of in-depth classification:
Once the perimeter of an object, or of an argument, is established, the exploration begins

\(^7\) Sommavilla writes in Italian. All translations from his volume are mine.
and the territory of analysis is further subdivided in smaller units… and so on, till one reaches the point at which the minimal, but central, essence of the object is recognized. We find the very modern obsession with classifications in Ignatius in the following candid confession of father Sommavilla:

But there are things in the *Exercises* that I could never digest, and towards which I still feel today a sense of rejection: the divisions, simply exasperating. One must, for instance, meditate with memory, then with the intellect, then with the will. And that is fine: it is truly the natural rhythm of an ideal activity of the human spirit. However, those continuous detachments and pulls and tears of spiritual operations naturally connected among them were, and are, for me simply agonizing. After a meditation […] on the three powers (interior of man) comes […] the meditation so called of “contemplation,” where one would look at the event of the life of Christ […]. Fine, but here, again, one encounters divisions and more divisions. And not, simply, divisions, but particular division in three points, or in three powers […]. Furthermore, in every point, after it was separated from others, one should, first, and only, *see* the persons [of the Trinity] and reflect upon them; and then only *feel* what they *say* and reflect upon them; and then see what they do and reflect again. Another type of meditation, that follows the one just recalled, is “the application of the senses,” where one needs to train himself, first to see, then to hear, then to taste, then to smell, then to touch, and all without confusion one with the other. […] The calligraphy of Saint Ignatius is all, or almost all, made up by detached alphabetical signs, without liaisons, and also the rules and constitutions of Ignatius are replenished with divisions. (31)

To isolate, to take apart, to analyze, to modify… and then to reassemble everything, all the modified units, in a new order… all this becomes a culture and a lifestyle.

Ignatius practiced regularly, till the end of his life, self-analysis (*examen conscientiae*), and every day he devoted particular analytical attention to a specific imperfection. And not only that… reliable witnesses who lived for a long
time with him in Rome assured that he stopped what he was doing to make a brief examination of his conscience every hour. (32)

And so, when we come to analyze the first, official and collective document of the Society prepared by Ignatius and his companions of Paris, the *Formula of the Institution* of 1539, we find that the fundamental principles of the *Exercises* are recognizable there, even if they do not present prescriptive, or normative recommendations. The remarkable absence of specific regulations is actually a dominant characteristic of this and of the following documents. Corporal penance, for instance, is not prescribed; there is no recommendation for fasting, and there are no rules relative to what a Jesuit should eat or not eat; not even a uniform or dress code is prescribed. The *Formula of the Institution* establishes, instead, what the Jesuits will be concerned with preaching, teaching (to young people and illiterates), hearing confessions, administering the sacraments, and do, in general, all that will lead to the greater glory of God.

Before we turn to examine some aspects of the document that will absorb the *Formula* (the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*), I would like to stop for a moment and reflect on two among the elements of the *Formula* that indicate an exceptional level of modernity. It is the absence of specific rules of behaviour and of a dress code, as well as the undefined purpose or mission of the Society indicated by the motto, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, that reveals the modern vision of reality: the external world, the world external to the order, is in fact the entire world for the Jesuits, and it shall be understood, preached to, and converted, without reductive filters or cultural barriers. The boldness of the missionary dream of the first Jesuits is ingrained in their own modern perception of the world. Another modern aspect of the *Formula* is related to their teaching vocation. “Youth and illiterates,” to whom the Jesuits’ teaching was directed, in those days meant the majority of the population. If we have to believe the letter of their declared intention, and I believe we should, we can see that their pedagogic dream was very ambitious indeed. The importance of the school for the Jesuits is established from the very

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8 My main text of reference for this article is John O’Malley’s *The First Jesuits*, and therefore I adopted his terminology. In the Italian site of the Jesuits (www.gesuiti.it) we find the expression “formule dell’istituto” to signify something different and less specific.
beginning. The pioneers of the Society met in a school. The ten of Montmartre were all students, in fact, in 1534. In their youthful and visionary enthusiasm they would always carry with them their “scholastic” identity. Their missionary work would become, primarily, the work of teachers. This is perfectly in tune with the new sense of culture created by the new medium of print: with the democratization of culture made possible by the low cost of the printed books, there was a widening gap to be filled between the producers and the users of books. Teachers were needed. And the Jesuits were, from the very beginning, instinctively, the new teachers who, in the democratically open new institute of the modern *collegium*, with absolute competence and passion, used the printed books as the main instrument of social emancipation and valorization of the individual personality of their pupils all over the world.\(^9\)

The Jesuits will be teachers not only (as after their nineteenth century restoration) in the colleges and universities destined to educate the offspring of the bourgeoisie, but primarily, in the first two and a half centuries of the Society, in the remote territories of the missions scattered all over the world. From Japan to Brazil, from China to Canada, from Eastern India to central Africa, the Jesuits, dressed as the local people, acquired the local language and wrote and printed textbooks (in many cases in the language that was, before their arrival, an oral language, with the primary objective of teaching. It was a teaching that was most specifically directed at what they perceived to be a human emancipation, because their declared intent was to render the indigenous people “human first, and then Christian.” But, again, I am thinking of a common perception of the Jesuits in certain areas of the globe, in South America in particular, because in other regions, as in China, the educational impulse had, with Matteo Ricci, a different orientation.

Whatever could be said today about the appropriateness of “disturbing” natives around the world in their own culture, the fact remains that the teaching of the Jesuits was

\(^9\) For this second aspect, which could be the basis of a long discussion, suffice it to recall the long list of great personalities who came out of the Jesuit schools, a list that is several centuries long. In terms of individual consciousness, or consciousness of one’s own individual personality, separated from the social body, we could say that it is greatly strengthened by the use of the print medium, to the point that we could not speak of modern democracy – established on the free, individual, and informed participation – without the printing press.
accepted and appreciated by them. It is true that the Jesuits represent the force of modernity and modernity is Euro-centric, but when modernity extends itself around the world it gradually becomes something else in terms of its identity, and its Euro-centrism fades away (or we would still have colonies today).

Considering the intentions and the logic of the Jesuits one non-rhetorical question comes to mind in non-rhetorical form: what other institution, clerical or secular, was more in tune with the new culture of print, advocating the democratization of knowledge and with it the recognition and acceptance of equality among different classes of society and among different societies? Certainly, no other institution was more modern than the Society of Jesus, at least in the period that we are considering here. To be sure, we are referring to the period that spans from the foundation of the Society to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Claudio Acquaviva (1581-1615) was at the head of the order, however, I think we could comfortably extend this period to the year of the suppression of the Jesuits, by decree of pope Clement XIV, in 1773.

Acquaviva is credited with the final, definitive shape of the *ratio studiorum*. The fact that this took place more than fifty years after Ignatius death (1556) is very significant, since it proves that it was not the specific scholastic program of the Jesuits that made them great teachers. The *curriculum* came after; what came first was the spirit of their vocation, that is to say their modern ideal of equality dignity of all people in the world, and of course, the generosity as well, or the brotherly love that prompted them to become missionaries and share with them the most precious thing they had, their faith.

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Paul III sensed the greatness of Ignatius, and recognized the new religious order with the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* the 27th of September 1540. The document, based on the *Formula*, establishes that the fundamental commitments of the Jesuits will be
The propagation of faith [...] by means of public preaching and the service of the word of God, the spiritual exercises and the works of charity, and especially by means of the teaching of the Christian faith to children and to the uncouth, and the spiritual consolation of the faithful by hearing confessions. (www.gesuiti.it)

Ten years after, on the 21st of July 1550, in the middle of the Council of Trent, with the publication of the apostolic letter, *Exposcit debitum*, by pope Julius III, the orientation of the Society becomes more precise, and in a totally modern way. The new document is, in fact, an amplification of the previous one. Let’s observe the words added to the passage quoted above. The main purpose of the Society is now that

[...] *Of the defense* and of the propagation of faith, and *of the progress of the souls in life and in the Christian doctrine* [...] by means of public preaching, *conferences and any other exercise* of the word of God, the spiritual exercises, the teaching of the Christian truth to Children and the uncouth, and the spiritual consolation of the faithful by hearing confessions and by *administering the other sacraments*. (Ibid.)

I emphasized the differences between the two texts, of 1540 and 1550. We observe, first of all, how the term *defense* (in front of “propagation of faith”) is connected to the “militant” role of the Jesuits in the Council of Trent. The military dimension of the Society of Jesus (called *Compañía* in Spanish, *Compagnia* in Italian with a pretty clear military connotation) which has at his command a “General” gives us the opportunity of making another media oriented observation. The modernity of print, in fact, requires specific roles in any modern organization. This is an aspect of the ever present need for specialization. Every position in a modern organization must be defined by linear efficiency, as in an assembly line (another powerful tool and symbol of modernity). The Jesuits have a mission to accomplish, the evangelization of the world, and therefore have a series of specific tasks to perform. The term “progress” is then, perhaps, the densest and rich with symbolic meanings. “Progress” is an all-modern term that indicates a systematic, linear advancement, in stages, leading to the attainment of the ideal, ultimate
goal, which, even without bringing metaphysics, could be imagined as the triumph of men over nature and the master technique for reaching individual perfection (in theology as in preaching the gospel and teaching in all fields of human knowledge) corresponding to *La scala di salire con la mente a Dio* [*The Ladder to Ascend with the Mind to God*] written by Saint Roberto Bellarmino, S.J.\(^{10}\) The steps of progress in Bellarmino may come from the Jacob’s ladder, but they are also to be associated with the innumerable experiences and desires of systematic betterment in the life of a Jesuit. “Progress” is a term that is often found in colonial literature, as in the literature of immigration, and the title of an historical American newspaper, *Il progresso italo-americano* (established in 1880) clearly indicates that. I would also note that the term is inscribed in the flag of Brazil, together with an *ordem* [*order*], which, we understand, is often threatened by the movement created by progressive energy.

There is no need for a particular comment to the following addition to the 1550 document: over and above the “pubbliche predicazioni” [*public preaching*], the Jesuits will be concerned with “conference” [*conferences, consultations*], a clear reference to the Council of Trent, and will make use of “ogni altro esercizio della parola di Dio” [*any other exercise of the word of God*]. Which would these ‘exercises’ be (over and above the institutionalized ‘spiritual’ ones)? What kind of exercises, written, distributed, practiced, and spread all over the world? Undoubtedly they are the exercises ‘of the word’ (exercises of the word of God) corresponding to printed publications, letters, writings, translations, treatises, communications of all kinds, and naturally the teaching, the step by step activity that leads to a new and more modern form of evangelization extended to the entire world.

Another modern element in the double document we are considering — we may indeed speak of a single document for the two papal bulls — pertains to the strictly hierarchical organization of the Society, bound together by a faithfully blind obedience to the

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\(^{10}\) The complete title is *Scala di salire con la mente a Dio per mezo[sic] delle cose create* [*The Ladder to Ascend with the Mind to God by means of things created*]. The author’s letter of dedication (to Cardinal Aldobrandini) as well as the note of the translator (from the original Latin) clarify that the work was written in 1615. Bellarmino is the Jesuit that interrogated Galileo. As Giuseppe Mazzotta has indicated, in their respective epistemologies it is possible to discern the kernel of a modern and productive discourse.
superiors, to the General, and to the pope. The hierarchical structure is definitely an organizational trait of modernity, with its divisions and subdivisions of the roles and jobs, and with its ladders of faith and power.

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Following the list of O’Malley’s fundamental texts of the first Jesuits, as we have done up to this point, we are left with the Constitutions, the Autobiography of Ignatius, and his Letters. Rather than proceed with textual analyses of selected passages, we can comment on the remaining documents appending our considerations on the modernity of the Jesuits to the factual descriptions of Father O’Malley.

The Constitutions were completed only in 1547, seven years after Paul III’s bull, Regimini militantis Ecclesiae. It is a rather long period that appears to indicate a certain lack of attention for administrative matters related to the organization of the Society. However, from a different point of view, we could perhaps see a different picture: an extraordinary desire to create something new, to embark on new enterprises, to explore possibilities without self-imposed regulations. The Constitutions, in any case, constitute the logical consequence of the Formula of 1539, and of the papal bull of the year after.

The writing of the Constitutions is attributed to the shrewdness of Juan Alfonso de Polanco, the secretary of Ignatius and of two of his successors, Diego Laínez and Francisco Borgia. The most relevant aspect of the Constitutions, in our modern-typographic perspective, is the persistent idea of the uniqueness of the Society, which is expressed, in the ideal Jesuit, in a continuous advancement, both spiritual and intellectual, on the road to perfection. This is why the Constitutions prescribe different norms for the different stages of the “ascent.” How can we escape the reference to Bellarmino’s ladder here?
As far as the Autobiography is concerned, leaving aside the philological problems inherent to the text,\textsuperscript{11} we can again observe the presence of a ground-to-heaven vertical line of tension. It is a line that starts in Pamplona, place of the famous battle of 1521 where the thirty year old soldier Ignatius, then Iñigo, fought and was wounded. One segment after the other, the line grows longer upwards, through events of a physical as well as spiritual nature. Again, we have here the one-step-at-a-time procedure that would be clearly established with the Exercises. It is exactly this model of transformation and development that constitutes the Jesuit’s own “modo de proceder” or “noster modus procedendi” [our way of proceeding].

The last document to be considered here is, in fact, a series of seven thousand documents. That is the number of Ignatius’ letters. For our purpose, we might limit ourselves to a single observation: with such a variety of actions, programs, and explorations, the attitude of Ignatius in the daily writing (or dictating) of his letters (to the humblest of his Jesuit brothers as to the most powerful political personalities of the time) is the attitude of a modern man that exercises instinctively the virtue of discretion, consisting in the recognition of the uniqueness of each situation. As in the particulare of Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), a gigantic cultural figure of the early modern period, every situation considered by Ignatius demanded specific attention and every problem a specific solution. Before Ignatius’ death Jesuit missionaries are already scattered all over the world encountering all sort of different problems and asking for enlightenment from their leader in Rome. The Jesuit missionaries dress, speak, write in different ways, they learn new languages and adapt to previously unknown cultures and lifestyles, with the common commitment to bring Christianity in every corner of the Earth, for the good of all people. Their open attitude, emanating from their founder and leader, is very modern, especially in consideration of their contemporary reality that included bloody territorial disputes and slavery. The discretion of Ignatius and of the Jesuits constitutes an

\textsuperscript{11} the philological problems with the Autobiography are related to the fact that Ignatius dictated the text in Spanish to his Portuguese assistant (da Câmara), who in turn dictated the third and last part of the document to an Italian scribe.
expression of human liberty from doctrinal and intellectual anxieties that emanates from the deeply felt recognition of the equal human dignity in every human being.\textsuperscript{12}

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At this point I find it useful to offer a couple of examples of Jesuit’s modernity recalling two extraordinary Jesuits operating in opposite parts of the globe at approximately the same time, José Anchieta in Brazil, and Matteo Ricci in China. Three years before the death of Ignatius, and one after the birth of Matteo Ricci, a young Jesuit from the Canary Islands, José Anchieta reached the coast of Brazil. Father Manoel de Nobrega, another Jesuit, had already arrived there a few years before. Anchieta, who was twenty years old and not ordained priest yet, with Nobrega and others established, on the day of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, of the year 1534, with a \textit{collegium} that is still standing today, the city that would become one of the greatest metropolis of the world. Just like Matteo Ricci who learned the difficult local language and wrote several books in Chinese, José Anchieta learned the \textit{Tupí-Guarani}, and in this language wrote a book of catechism for children and several other publications. He also compiled the first \textit{Tupí-Guarani} dictionary for the benefit of the missionaries that would follow him and of all those who wanted to communicate with the natives. The \textit{collegium} he established in São Paulo was open to all, aspiring Jesuits, children of the Portuguese authorities, administrators or workers, mestis and all others of any social condition. This school was

\textsuperscript{12} To discuss the position of the Jesuits with respect to slavery is not simple. Their position, in fact, presents some disquieting ambiguity. Notwithstanding some early innovative thinking in matters of natural rights — and I am thinking at the absolutely stunning discourse \textit{De indiis} by Francisco de Vitoria where every human being on earth has to be recognised as equal in dignity and human rights — the first Jesuits must have considered African people inferior to Europeans as well as to the indigenous people o South America. The first concern of the Jesuits in all missions around the world was educational, the purpose being the emancipation of primitive people to an acceptable level of humanity before they could become Christian. The acceptable level of humanity, however, was apparently never reached by African natives. Sommavilla tells us, in fact, that “Brazilian Jesuits kept numerous slaves in their Bahia houses and in thei plantations of Piauí” (5). The discussion is complicated, as I said, since “it is obvious that the Jesuits have defended the freedom of the indios but not of the African slaves” (Sommavilla, \textit{ibid.}) It’s worth recalling at this point that the Catholic Church requested that slavery be abolished only in 1814, at the Congress of Vienna. Naturally, the situation in some parts of the world was quite different. In China, for instance, in the early seventeenth century, it was the opposite of Brasil. In China all foreigners were considered different, inferior, and were not welcome, a fact that makes Matteo Ricci’s entry there a much more difficult undertaking that is generally considered to be.
indeed, in 1554, the avant-garde of the European typographic modernity in the American continent.

The road to evangelization, as recalled above, passed through education and the schoolbooks: one task at a time, one class at a time, and one step at a time. Anchieta is also to be credited with sending the first Jesuits to Paraguay, in 1583, the very same year in which Matteo Ricci was able to set foot on mainland China. The first Jesuit expedition to Paraguay preceded by a few years the establishment of the permanent missions, or “reductions” as they were called, that would constitute, for over one hundred and fifty years, the “communist republic” of the Guaranis.13 The first reduction, in a place that today belongs to the state of Paraná in Brazil, along the banks of the Paranapanema river, was Nuestra Señora de Loreto, established in 1610 by two Italian Jesuits, Simone Maceta, Neapolitan, and Giuseppe Cataldino, from Fabriano.

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One of the Chinese wonders most appreciated by the Missionary of Macerata was certainly the freedom and ease with which books could be printed and published in the empire. In other parts of the world Jesuit missionaries found an oral culture and no written tradition; in these circumstances they had to learn the indigenous language and decide how to write it on the page before the actual teaching (with books) could begin. In China, instead, when Matteo Ricci arrived, printing had been known and used for over eight hundred years, and there was, of course, a long historical tradition of refined writers, rhetorically skilled scholars and educated public. Matteo Ricci had a lot to learn: not just the difficult language, but also the ancient literature and the current pedagogical practice, before he could actually start to teach, write and publish in Chinese. The meeting of two cultures become, for Matteo Ricci, a personal challenge which, remaining in the tradition of Ignatius, involved memory, intelligence, and will. Counting on the universal recognition of intelligence, and on the appreciation of the dignity of culture, he

13 See Clovis Lugon’s *La repubblica guaranica dei Gesuiti (1610-1768)*. The original title of this important volume includes the term “communist”: *La République communiste chrétienne des Guaranis.*
offered a series of demonstrations of what is good and beautiful in the Western culture, hoping that the Christian message, which is the central part of it, would be well received. Print appeared to him as the most obvious and efficient tool to penetrate the mind and the conscience of the Chinese people. However, notwithstanding the intrinsic power of the medium, and the modern competence with which Ricci used it, the desired effect of a mass communication and of a mass conversion did not happen. The book, in itself, could not generate the desired effects simply because the mass context, or general environment of the medium, was missing. Books were produced and used only for the intellectual minority, that is the powerful class of the administrators, or mandarins. To approach them, Matteo Ricci studied their books, learned about their lifestyle, even dressed like them, and sought the dialogue at every opportunity. And it was the series of encounters with intelligent and powerful administrators that, more than the sole publication of books, opened to him the gates of the Forbidden City. In 1601 he obtained the trust of the emperor Wanli, and from then on, for nine years, till the day of his death he was able to operate freely from the political and cultural centre of the immense Middle Kingdom. He worked as a teacher of modern science and as a Christian missionary. The reason why he was not as successful as a missionary as he was as a teacher of science, has to do more with the limited modernity of the Roman curia than with his apostolate.

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The position of Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit, in the global culture of his time is perhaps even more clearly understood, at this point, if we establish a parallel between him and one of the “champions of modernity” mentioned at the beginning of the article. I choose to speak of Matteo Ricci and Shakespeare. McLuhan devotes the first three chapters of his

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14 With relative freedom, that is, since the direct communication with the emperor was impossible and the court eunuchs working as intermediaries regarded him with suspicion.

15 The position of Ricci, with respect to accepting confucianism as a culture (and not as a religion) that could coexist with Christianity would eventually become the position of the Catholic Church with Vatican II, when the so called “question of the rites” was solved in the manner that Ricci suggested three hundred and fifty years earlier.
major work, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, to Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The Canadian critic of mass media recognizes the modern, typographic dimension of this work in the image of the “map of the kingdom,” which is the map that Lear calls for at the beginning of the play, to show the partitions he want to make to his dominion. The map, McLuhan recalls, together with the Mercator projection, constitutes a novelty in the sixteenth century. Lear is the new man, the informed user of the new “technology” of map making. The fact that the “modern” division of the Kingdom becomes the cause of the tragedy, indicating the necessity or inevitability of use of the new technology is what gives an epochal dimension to the play, McLuhan maintains. “Lear,” he says, is “the great fragmenter, with his inspired idea of setting up a constitutional monarchy by means of delegating authority. His plan for himself is that he become a specialist” (*Gutenberg Galaxy* 15). And, naturally, any specialism would be fertile ground in the progressive imagination and ambition of the modern, “typographic man;” and so, Goneril and Regan follow the paternal example: “Goneril and Regan leap into the act of filial devotion with specialist and competitive intensity” (*Gutenberg Galaxy* 12).

With the dividing, fragmenting, and segmenting aspects of modern specialism, McLuhan combines another fundamental aspect of the culture of print: the prevailing of the sense of sight over all the other senses in the perception of reality. This imbalance of the sensorium in favour of sight, corresponding to the general anthropological transformation declared in the subtitle of McLuhan’s book (…*The Making of Typographic Man*), generates a technical perspective orientation, a way of *seeing* things which is more analytical or scientific (in the modern sense), and I would say “Cartesian” if it wasn’t that the Mercator projection of 1569, the *Mappamondo* of Matteo Ricci of 1584, and Shakespeare’s *Ling Lear* (written in 1604-1605, first printed in 1608) all came before the modern, graphic, or typographic, concept of René Descartes (1599-1650). The Mercator projection, which consists in the representation of a geographical location in a network of meridians and parallels is an innovation that is promptly learned and used by Matteo Ricci as an instrument of the most technical, functional, rational, demonstrative, and convincing modernity. And therefore his extraordinary *Mappamondo*, map of the world,
principal tool of his scientific “preaching” from the beginning to the end of his Chinese apostolate, a work that anticipates Shakespeare’s innovative map of King Lear by twenty years, could well be regarded as the most powerful instrument and symbol of the Gutenberg modernity.

WORKS CITED


De Vitoria, Francisco. See Hernández Martin, Ramón


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16 The first *Mappamondo*, measuring several square meters, was completed in 1584. The other editions appeared in 1600, 1603, and 1608.


Roberto Bellarmino. *Scala di salire con la mente a Dio per mezo* [sic] *delle cose create.*

Volgarizzamento del Sig. Abbate Angelo della Ciaia, nipote dell’Autore. Roma: Per Bartolomeo Zannetti, 1616.