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“Lascivious Poison?” Street-songs as a Source for Popular Expression: The Case of Jansenism, c. 1687–1737*

ABSTRACT

Famed for its austerity, Jansenism nonetheless prompted a slew of salacious street-songs throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If historians have increasingly examined early modern urban singing practices, underlining the social porosity and intergenerational hold of many street-songs, little research has been devoted to unpicking what songs offer to the study of religious history. The aims of this article are two-fold. First, it seeks to assess the value (and sketch out some limits) to street-songs as a source in recovering some of the more popular facets of religious controversies — here, the Jansenist movement. Second, and as a corollary of this, the article uses street-songs to emphasise the political sophistication to popular interest in Jansenism. It suggests that this antedated and ran alongside the convulsionary movement, which has been typically viewed as the apogee of popular engagement with Jansenism. This article first considers how the hold of specific literary themes and popular tunes over generations impacted discussions on the Jansenist debate, before turning to examine the suitability of songs in capturing devotional and theological content, and finally discussing the complexity of the popular political and ecclesiological ideas on the Jansenist movement that the street-songs conveyed. The article ultimately seeks to underline the value of street-songs as a source on urban popular religious expression.

Only a few months before his death in 1694, the prominent Jansenist Antoine Arnauld dismissed street-songs as “lascivious (...) poison” in a letter to Charles Perrault.¹ Jansenism’s reputation for austerity makes it an unusual bedfellow for the salacious world of the street-song.² This was a movement within the Catholic Church that originated in a mid-seventeenth century controversy which emphasised a return to Augustinian notions of grace. Though the text that sparked the controversy, the posthumously published *Augustinus* (1640), had been written by a Dutch bishop, Cornelius Jansen, Jansenism inflamed French theological circles. Condemned by successive popes and by the French monarchy,

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1. A. Arnauld, “Lettre de Monsieur Arnauld à Monsieur Perrault au sujet de la dixième satire de Monsieur Despréaux,” in N. Boileau-Despréaux, *Œuvres Complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade: 188*, ed. F. Escal (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 580.

2. “Ascetic, austere, and most otherworldly” according to D. Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unravelling of the Ancien Régime, 1750–1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 57.

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the polemic raised questions on papal and monarchical interference in French Church affairs. The Jansenists were also fierce opponents of the Jesuits, whom they saw as a morally lax and corruptive influence on the laity.

Arnauld's sentiments have been echoed in historiography.³ Historians have only recently started to rehabilitate the street-song, a genre that had been the preserve of literary scholars and musicologists. Una McIlvenna and Eva Guillourel both discussed the broad audiences of execution ballads across Europe and the persistence of tunes over generations.⁴ Laura Mason examined singing in popular revolutionary politics and Robert Darnton considered the eighteenth-century Parisian street-song as a form of news.⁵ Literary scholars, such as Nicholas Hammond and Annette Keilhauer, have emphasised the value of collected early modern street-songs in capturing popular voices.⁶

This article seeks to make a two-fold contribution. First, it underlines the value of street-songs as a source for historians of religious thought in accessing popular expressions on religious polemics. It centres on the Jansenist polemic, where historians of the movement, such as Robert Kreiser, Catherine Maire, and Monique Cottret, have all noted the presence of street-songs without examining these more closely.⁷ Second, and as a corollary of this exercise, the article provides further insight into the religious and political complexity of popular interest in Jansenism between the late 1680s and the late 1730s.

Street-songs, that is, verses and dialogues set to music, were performed and sold in print or manuscript form, amid the cries of hawkers and the voices of the crowd, on Parisian streets and bridges.⁸ The centre of song performance was the Pont-Neuf. Its position as a key artery for the city ensured a broad audience for each song. In many cases, songs were sung by professional street-singers, punctuated with musical instruments and now-lost gestures, as well as sung by the *colporteurs* who sold physical copies of songs.⁹ Crucially, street-songs were circulated orally by their audiences. Listeners took an active role in this circulation by becoming singers in turn, as new texts were made easier to memorise through being "contrafacted," that is, set to older tunes. As Hammond notes, listeners did not need to be literate to disseminate or elaborate upon songs. Rather, they simply had to be able to hold a tune.¹⁰ Accounts by contemporary diarists, such as Edmond Barbier, attest to this social porosity of the street-song, as texts circulated across the social ladder to the horror of many of their targets.¹¹ Through this social porousness, street-songs shine a light upon popular interest in debates in religious and political thought traditionally seen

3. Even Émile Raunié, in anthologising street-songs, gently underlined their poor taste, E. Raunié, *Chansonnier historique du XVIIIe siècle: recueil Clairambault-Maurepas, Volume I* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1879–1884), iv.

4. U. McIlvenna, "The Power of Music: The Significance of Contrafactum in Execution Ballads," *Past & Present* 229, no. 1 (2015), 47–89; E. Guillourel, *La complainte et la plaine: chansons, justice et culture dans la Bretagne, XVIe au XVIIIe siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 241–88.

5. L. Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1767–1799* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); R. Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 66–123.

6. N. Hammond, *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021); A. Keilhauer, *Das französische Chanson im späten Ancien Régime: Strukturen, Verbreitungswege und gesellschaftliche Praxis einer populären Literaturform* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1998).

7. B. R. Kreiser, *Miracles, Convulsions, and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 218; C. Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard: Miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1985), 19; M. Cottret, *Jansénismes et Lumières: pour un autre XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 1998), 296.

8. For more on this soundscape, V. Milliot, *Les "Cris de Paris", ou, Le peuple travesti: Les représentations des petits métiers parisiens, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995).

9. Hammond, 14; U. McIlvenna, "Chanteurs de rue, or Street Singers in Early Modern France," *Renaissance Studies*, 33, no. 1 (2019), 67.

10. Hammond, 27.

11. Barbier recounts the horror of a nobleman mocked in song even by "dung scrapers." E. J. F. Barbier, *Chronique de la régence et du règne de Louis XV (1718–1763) ou Journal de Barbier, Tome 1* (Paris: Simon Raçon et comp., 1858), 379–81.

in historiography as dominated by the views of intellectual and social elites. Here, “popularity” is taken along the lines established by Mason in her work on revolutionary street-songs, involving both a wide reach across society and elements in song viewed by social elites as the “expression of working people.”¹²

Jansenism emerges as a useful observatory through which to test the limits of the street-song as a source for urban popular expression on a debate often seen as rarefied. First, street-songs recycled tunes and literary tropes across generations. A long-standing polemic such as Jansenism, which marked France for over a century, can help tease out the particularities of the street-song in the popular memorialisation and discussion of religious controversies. Second, the reliance of street-songs on orality and memorisation for their circulation begs the question of whether only the more simplistic or less divisive material was circulated widely enough to find its way to collection and into the archive. The fragmentation of the Jansenist movement by the eighteenth-century can help establish this potential limitation to street-songs as sources.

Using Jansenism to assess the utility of the street-song as a source for popular facets of religious debates entails asking what street-songs contribute, in turn, to the study of Jansenism. Street-songs provide further insight into popular voices surrounding the controversy in urban spaces. The social appeal of Jansenism broadened through the promulgation of the 1713 bull *Unigenitus*.¹³ This condemned 101 propositions from the Jansenist Pasquier Quesnel’s 1692 *Réflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament*. Supported by Louis XIV, *Unigenitus* was viewed as the epitome of papal meddling in the French Church. The buzz around *Unigenitus*, reflected in an increase in songs on Jansenism that year, was only outdone by another Jansenist phenomenon — the convulsionary movement of the early 1730s. This saw hundreds of Parisians congregate at the tomb of Jansenist deacon François de Pâris (d. 1727) to witness a series of miracles (and “convulsions”) in one of the poorest faubourgs of the capital — Saint-Médard. Popular support for Jansenism following *Unigenitus*, and therefore pro-Jansenist songs, did not emerge *ex nihilo*. This can be situated in a steadily growing Jansenist sympathy across select Parisian parishes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, explored by Marie-José Michel and David Garrioch, and in Jansenist support by key bourgeois families, underlined by Nicolas Lyon-Caen.¹⁴

If the street-songs considered here cannot convey an overarching “popular Jansenism,” a focus on song nonetheless offers twin contributions to the study of popular awareness of the movement. Kreiser and Maire argue that the convulsionaries were the impetus for a more sophisticated politicisation of popular Jansenism, with Kreiser specifically noting that the convulsionaries appealed to what had been a “politically unsophisticated, inexperienced, and inarticulate people.”¹⁵ The songs examined here instead attest to a popular politicisation of Jansenism that antedated and ran alongside the convulsionary movement, and even, at times, antedating the *Unigenitus* bull. Second, the article shines further light on the political sophistication of popular engagement with Jansenism across two generations. It reaches back to the late 1680s and forwards to the 1730s, allowing for almost a decade of convulsionary activity after the 1727 death of François de Pâris, which had given rise to the convulsionaries.

12. Mason, 9.

13. Catherine Maire traces this through clandestine print, C. Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la Nation: Le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 137–39.

14. M.-J. Michel, “Clergé et pastorale jansénistes à Paris (1669–1730),” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* (1954–) 26, no. 2 (1979), 177–97; D. Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690–1830* (London: Harvard University Press), 17–83; N. Lyon-Caen, *La boîte à Perrette: Le jansénisme parisien au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 2010), 173–192.

15. Kreiser, 395; Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard*, 222–23.

Working with collected street-songs poses methodological difficulties. This may explain the hesitancy of some historians of religious thought to use street-songs. The authorship of street-songs, their mode of performance, and the precise makeup of their audience are often uncertain. For the early eighteenth-century Parisian context, street-songs mostly survived in the archive through their collection by curious aristocratic and urban elites.¹⁶ Jansenism was a highly controversial movement, whose controversy is reflected in the high number of songs it generated. In some years, such as 1713 — the year of the *Unigenitus* bull's promulgation — songs referencing Jansenism can consistently make up over a third of a collection's material. This article centres on 689 such songs, varying significantly in attitude towards the movement, across 21 multi-volume collections.¹⁷ The following pages also draw from over 400 further songs on Jesuitism, which the Jansenists opposed. Although the names of authors have seldom survived, these are not always unknown. (A prominent author and subject of songs in the 1720s and 1730s was a Jesuit sympathiser called Nucllet, a cobbler from the parish of Saint-Sulpice.)¹⁸ Given the role of listeners in circulating and elaborating upon street-songs, the anonymity of the corpus here is perhaps apt.

Establishing the audience and reception of songs remains complex. Although collectors actively sought material “from the streets,” collections would have been subject to the whims of their collectors.¹⁹ The collected songs are largely untitled, though their tune — the names of which were also subject to change — is typically given.²⁰ Musicologists have underlined the varied origins of tunes found in popular milieux, from rural ballads to operatic airs, and discussed how these influenced the length of songs, making some more susceptible to being sold on streets.²¹ This article centres on songs set to these popular staples. Songs on Jansenism do allude to their audience, “la populace” or “le peuple de Paris.” (To the unpopular Jesuit confessor, Michel Le Tellier, a 1715 song set to the cheery tune of *lanturlu* declaimed “Tellier, ta disgrâce/ T’attire du mépris/ Que la populace/ A trop bien appris.”)²² Where marginalia in collections relay the location of performances, this is always on prominent bridges. Minimising the impact of individual collectors requires cross-referencing collections, focusing on songs appearing multiple times with slight variants, as opposed to texts that were identical across collections. Variations which did not affect the meter or meaning of a song, such as the substitution of a

16. C. Grasland and A. Keilhauer, “La rage de collection: Conditions, enjeux et significations de la formation des grands chansonniers satiriques et historiques à Paris au début du XVIII^e siècle (1710–1750),” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* (1954–) 47, no. 3 (2000), 458–86.

17. The song collections, all in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, include Ms-3118, and from the ‘Fonds Français’ (henceforth: F.Fr.) F.Fr.2208; F.Fr.9347–9349; F.Fr.9351–9352; F.Fr.10475–10479; F.Fr.12500; F.Fr.12616–12659; F.Fr.12673–12675; F.Fr.12676–12679; F.Fr.12686–12721; F.Fr.12796; F.Fr.13655–13659; F.Fr.15127–15134; F.Fr.15136; F.Fr.15137; F.Fr.15140–15142; F.Fr.15143–15155; F.Fr.15159; F.Fr.15243; F.Fr.22566–22569; F.Fr.23859.

18. F.Fr.15133, fols. 274–277 or F.Fr.12674, fols. 391–406.

19. Claude-Henry Feydeau de Marville, *lieutenant général de police*, sent the Count of Maurepas street-songs, see C. Feydeau de Marville, *Lettres de M. de Marville, lieutenant général de police au ministre Maurepas (1742–1747)*, ed. A. de Boislisle (Paris: H. Champion, 1896–1905).

20. Rather, these songs are titled “Chanson sur l’air de ...” (“Song to the tune of ...”). This lack of specificity may be due to how these were collected. Any titles (typically available for sung dialogues) will be indicated.

21. For a discussion of popular staples, see the musicologist P. Coirault, *Formation de nos chansons folkloriques* (Paris: Éditions Du Scarabée, 1953), 137; for a discussion on tunes that made their way to the streets, see H. Schneider, *Die Rezeption der Opern Lullys im Frankreich des Ancien Régime* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1982); or J. Romey “Songs That Run in the Streets: Popular Song at the Comédie-Italienne, the Comédie-Française, and the Théâtres de la Foire,” *Journal of Musicology*, 37 (2020), 415–58; for a discussion on the length of songs, C. Grasland, “Chansons et vie politique à Paris sous la Régence,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 37 (1990), 537–70.

22. “Tellier, your disgrace/ Brings contempt upon you/ Which the populace/ Has [only] learnt too well,” F.Fr.12695, fol. 725, with variants in F.Fr.12628, fols. 163–164, and a variant fol. F.Fr.12796, fol. 50–51. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

trissyllabic “punition” for “châtiment,” attest to a lapse in memory by a listener, and thus the greater circulation of a song, rather than deliberate alteration or scribal error.²³ Such variations imply that a song was received positively enough or found intriguing (if not shocking) enough to be circulated further, and eventually misheard or misremembered.

If the following pages do not claim to capture “popular opinion” as a whole on Jansenism through song, they underline the usefulness of street-songs as a source in uncovering some popular expressions on the movement. Songs relied on the memory of tunes, rhetoric and tropes associated with older scandals for their intelligibility to contemporaries. The article, thus, first underlines the insight that songs can offer on the persistence of certain themes and tropes in a controversy such as Jansenism across two generations. It then discusses the limited devotional content of songs supportive of Jansenism, using this to consider the difficulties in accessing more fragmented debates through street-songs. The final section nonetheless stresses the room for political complexity within these songs through their reliance on a memory of seemingly simplistic tropes and rhetoric.

“A Dark Cabal of Devils” — Recycling Tunes, Rhetoric and Anti-Jesuit Tropes

Street-songs can situate a polemic such as the Jansenist controversy within the broader landscape of eighteenth-century popular discussion. The polemic was situated in song first in relation to its audience, through references to the urban landscape in texts, such as prominent bridges, thoroughfares, and landmarks frequented by urban listeners. Second, the polemic was also situated in relation to the broader soundscape of contemporary and past scandal as new songs borrowed from older tunes and tropes. Jan Assmann’s conceptualisation of “communicative memory” is helpful in thinking with this material. This can be understood as a shared memory existing among a group, typically a generation, which holds a certain interpretative value for the everyday.²⁴ Songs thus summoned a “communicative” memory of scandal through their use of well-established tunes, rhetoric, and tropes. Such an appeal to memory added a level of complexity to each song that would have rewarded the more rooted urban masses, that is, those in Paris who had grown up listening to similar songs and could thus better appreciate long-standing musical and textual references. As such, songs must be read in conjunction with one another to be understood. Appeals to memories of previous songs also ensured the persistence of and reliance upon several themes which had already been established and discussed in songs in the mid-seventeenth century. In the case of Jansenism, most salient was an appeal to seventeenth-century anti-Jesuit rhetoric. As we shall see, however, the reliance of eighteenth-century street-songs on more facile anti-Jesuit rhetoric from the seventeenth century often meant that these songs failed to criticise the realities of contemporary French Jesuitism.

The texts of many street-songs convey a sense of proximity between their audience and the polemics that were referenced. Where Jansenism is concerned, a sense of ownership of the debate by audiences is expressed through the physical proximity between the setting of the action in songs and the urban listeners. Unlike many songs referencing aristocratic gossip, set in socially inaccessible areas such as private dinners or even balls, almost all

23. “Punition” and “châtiment” are both taken as “punishment.” Parodying the voice of the Jesuits, a 1731 song began with “La punition [alternatively, *Le châtement*] n’est que pour le vulgaire/ Et les petites gens” taken as “Punishment is only for the vulgar/ And little people,” before listing all manner of alleged Jesuit transgressions, F.Fr.12675, fols. 8–11 and F.Fr.15137, fols. 4–7.

24. This article borrows principally from the definitions of “cultural” memory and “communicative” memory in J. Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125–33 and, with an emphasis on orality, J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 41.

songs referencing Jansenism featured actors in socially accessible spaces. But for one exception, which briefly referenced the less socially accessible space of a café, songs on Jansenism were always told from the perspective of individuals standing on bridges, on the forecourt of churches, in the streets, watching prominent Jansenists and Jesuits within these spaces.²⁵ (One song from 1720 relays its protagonist getting splashed by the carriage of the regent Philippe II, Duke of Orléans, when standing at a crossroads near the Louvre: “Pres du Louvre j’estois un jour/ j’entendis dans un grand Carfour [...] C’estoit Monseigneur le Regent [...]/ Son Carosse m’eclaboussy.”)²⁶ Where songs featured Jesuits in conversation, this was never within the confines of the seminary, but in the streets or coming out of mass into the crowd. Nowhere is the proximity between the action of the songs and the urban listeners more visible than in sung dialogues featuring prominent Jesuits and, more rarely, Jansenists. A dialogue from 1712, for instance, describes the Jesuit Le Tellier, running to two other Jesuits, La Rue and La Ferté, to discuss Jansenism after mass: “Dimanche, au sortir de la Messe/ Le Grand Inquisiteur de la Maison Professe [Le Tellier]/ Voyant la Rue et la Ferté/ Courut vers eux [...]”²⁷ When he was not shown engaging in heated discussions upon leaving mass, Le Tellier, Louis XIV’s Jesuit confessor, was depicted as eavesdropping on Jansenist gossip on the Pont-Neuf. Songs even described the façade of the Samaritaine water-pump that was on the bridge. This depicted the Samaritan woman and Jesus Christ in an almost conversational pose. In these verses from 1712, the figures on the façade are portrayed as discussing the Jansenist doctrine of efficacious grace:

Le devout Père Le Tellier
 En Voyant la Samaritaine
 Assise au bord de la fontaine
 En colloque particulier
 Avec Jesus, nostre bon maistre.
 Pour savoir ce que ce peut être,
 Aprochont dit-il de plus pres
 Et scachons que ce peut estre
 Mais comme il parloient de la grace
 Sur nos cœurs quand il veut agissante, efficace (...).²⁸

The sense of physical proximity between the crowd and the controversy present in the songs was reinforced through the likelihood of such songs having also been performed on the Pont-Neuf at some point in their lifecycle.

25. The song referencing a café (Gradot) is from 1731, in F.Fr.12704, fols. 99–118, variants: F.Fr.12633, fols. 53–55, F.Fr.15146, fols. 117–23, F.Fr.10476, fols. 347–348; On the social accessibility of café Gradot, T. Rigogne, “Readers and Reading in Cafés, 1660–1800,” *French Historical Studies*, 41, no. 3 (2018), 484–5; for further discussion on social accessibility of cafés, portrayed both as a “distinct social space (...) filled with respectable folk” and one of sedition “not always distinguishable from (...) taverns,” see L. Rittner, W. Scott Haine, and J. H. Jackson, *The Thinking Space: The Café as a Cultural Institution in Paris, Italy, and Vienna* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 68–75.

26. “Near the Louvre, I was one day/I heard at a great crossroad (...)/ It was Monseigneur the Regent (...)/ His carriage splashed me,” in a 1721 song, “Pontneuf sur l’air de la Princesse Micomicon,” in F.Fr.12698, fols. 31–34.

27. “Sunday, coming out of mass/ The great inquisitor of the professed house [Le Tellier]/ Seeing La Rue and la Ferté/ Ran towards them (...)” in the 1712 “Dialogue entre les R. P.P. Le Tellier, de la Rue, et de la Ferté, Jésuites, sur le Jansénisme,” in F.Fr.12695, fols. 161A–161Dv; variant: F.Fr.12627, fols. 143–58.

28. “The devout Father Le Tellier/ When seeing the Samaritan woman/ Sitting on the edge of the fountain/In a particular colloquy/ With Jesus our good master./ Let’s get closer, said he/ And let’s know what this might be/ But since they were speaking of grace/ On our hearts when he [Christ] wants it acting efficaciously [as in ‘efficacious grace’]” F.Fr.12695, fol. 457, with a variant F.Fr.12627, fol. 217.

The songs must be understood as part of the networks of rumour and news discussed by Darnton with reference to the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁹ Street-songs followed with alacrity the rocky relationship of the Cardinal of Noailles (1651–1729, Archbishop of Paris from 1695) with Jansenism. His inconstancy was derided, and verses criticising him were plastered outside his “door” (likely that of the Palais de l’Archevêché de Paris on the Île de la Cité) for passers-by to read or have read to them.³⁰ Beyond simply charting the movement through its interaction with key figures, many songs also used the controversy to accentuate other political criticisms. A 1709 song to the *air des Rochellois*, the name of which was rooted in the 1628 siege of La Rochelle, noted Louis XIV’s banishment of the nuns of the Jansenist abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs (and the king’s fixation on banning the sale of printed cotton textiles) as evidence of his inability to face the true “ills” of the state:

Admiron la tranquillité,
D’un grand Roy dans l’adversité;
Si son cœur est exempt de crainte
De voir aller l’Estat si mal;
C’est qu’il est plein de toile peinte,
Et des Filles du Port-Royal.³¹

Such a song ought not necessarily to be viewed as evidence of sympathy towards the Jansenists or even the nuns of Port-Royal. Rather, awareness of the Jansenist controversy was widespread enough for the movement to have been discussed (or sung) in the same breath as broader political and economic grievances.

As Maurice Halbwachs noted, the very sound of a tune could evoke the words to which it had previously been set.³² The recycling of tunes over generations meant that specific themes could be tied to music. As a source, an individual song must therefore be read alongside contemporary and older street-songs set to similar tunes. Although there are over 50 different tunes used to touch upon the controversy within the corpus gathered, only 21 are used more than twice.³³ The names of some tunes, such as the *air des pendus*, with its origins in the melodies sung at public executions, immediately gave away the sombre tone that these conveyed.³⁴ Other tunes, such as the mocking *air des triolets*, had long-standing satirical associations. The *petite fronde*, thought to reach back at least to the mid-seventeenth century, had been used in songs claiming that Anne of Austria had sacrificed state interests for the sake of Mazarin, rumoured to be her lover.³⁵ Songs on Jansenism set to this tune often centre on themes of false virtue and betrayal to a wider duty or flock, whether the state or the parish. The tune collected additional associations with food and appetite when it touched upon the highly unpopular archbishop of Paris in the 1730s, Vintimille, mocked for his gluttony. These lines from a 1729 song, set to the tune,

29. R. Darnton, “An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *The American Historical Review*, 105, no. 1 (2000), 7–8.

30. See a 1728 placard offering a reward for the return of Noailles’s “spirit, honour, heart and religion” following his change in stance on *Unigenitus*, Fr.10475, 269; for some particularly sour sung epitaphs, F.Fr.12699, fol. 498 and F.Fr.12632, fol. 3.

31. “Let us admire the calm/ of a great King in adversity,/ His heart is empty of [or spared the] fear/ Of seeing the State be so unwell/ It is [because] it is full of painted textile/ And the girls of Port-Royal,” F.Fr. 12626, fol. 359.32. M. Halbwachs, “La mémoire collective chez les musiciens,” in M. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, ed. G. Namer (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), 33.

33. Distinguishing between tunes without the music (rarely in collections) can be difficult since the same tunes often circulated under different names.

34. For discussions on the *air des pendus* see Keilhauer, *Das französische Chanson*, 214; and U. McIlvenna, *Singing the News of Death: Execution Ballads in Europe, 1500–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 49–58.

35. “Petite Fronde” taken as “Little Fronde” or “Little Revolt”; for its origins see the anonymous, *Pièces satiriques du règne et de la cour de Louis XIV, Tome I* (Paris: F. Buisson, 1793), 93.

describe him as a drunkard, led by his stomach: “Monstre que l’on voit toujours yvre/ [...] / Pourceau, dont le ventre est le roi/ [...] / Vintimille est un vrai bœuf gras/ et mérite bien qu’on l’assomme.”³⁶

Tunes, such as the *air du formulaire* had meaning that referenced the Jansenist–Jesuit polemic specifically. Its name was a direct nod to the formulary controversy, in which Pope Alexandre VII demanded in 1665 that the French clergy sign a formulary condemning Jansen’s *Augustinus*.³⁷ Packed with Jansenist support, these songs typically featured the refrain “Je suis janséniste, moi.” In response, some songs to the same tune parodied Jesuit voices by turning the refrain into a “Nous sommes Jésuites, nous,” after listing all manner of alleged Jesuit depravities. Much like the tune, which stretched back at least to the 1660s, these parodies first appeared in the 1660s before increasing in the 1730s. Only those familiar with the Jansenist connotations of the tune would have understood the irony of the parody from the first stanza. This appeal to memory through tune would have been reinforced through an enduring sense of place, as songs were performed in the same spaces.³⁸

The songs attest to the evolution of theoretically complex or loaded terms over generations into by-words for more simple concepts that could take root in the “communicative memory” of the movement. In doing so, they also attest to the persistence of anti-Jesuit sentiment as a core theme to the Jansenist movement — both in songs supporting Jansenism and in songs deriding it. For instance, references to Augustinian “efficacious grace” and the more Jesuitic “sufficient grace,” which originated in the Jansenism of the 1650s, persisted throughout the early 1700s. A 1717 epigram set to the lesser used tune *la rivière*, when it seemed that the Regency’s conciliatory approach would favour the Jansenists, thus claimed:

La Grace efficace a pris le dessus
Les enfans d’Ignace ne confesse plus:
Ils [les Jésuites] sont chus dans la Rivière laire lanla!³⁹

The listener was expected to grasp that the “grâce efficace” referred to Jansenism. Such songs suggest that the value of terms such as “efficacious grace” and “sufficient grace” lay in their metonymic role towards their association with Jansenism and Jesuitism respectively, rather than in the specific understanding of grace and salvation that they originally conveyed. Popular discourse on Jansenism thus seems to have adopted much of the language present in Blaise Pascal’s *Provinciales* (1656–57), which had viciously attacked the Jesuits in defence of the Jansenists.⁴⁰ This is especially where the vocabulary of casuistry, used by Pascal to describe the Jesuits as lax in their moral reasoning, is concerned. “Casuiste” became a by-word for Jesuitism in song — used in popular song less to discuss Jesuit moral reasoning practices and more to designate the Order as a whole.

If anti-Jesuitism remained crucial to songs supportive of Jansenism, much of this feeling was rooted in song material of the mid-seventeenth century, rather than contemporary

36. “Monster who we always see drunk/ [...] / Swine, whose stomach is king/ [...] / Vintimille is a real fat ox/ And indeed deserves to be knocked out,” F.Fr.12674, fol. 283–285; and, for a shorter variant, F.Fr. 15132, fol. 252–53.

37. W. Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic resistance to authority: from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 31.

38. Hammond, 18–29.

39. “Efficacious grace/ Has gained the upper hand./ The children of Ignatius [of Loyola, i.e. the Jesuits] no longer confess/ They have fallen in the river, laire lanla!” see F.Fr.12696, fol. 201, variants: shorter in F.Fr.12629, fol. 49, “enfants” substituted for “dindons” (“turkeys”) in F.Fr.12673, fol. 60.

40. For Pascal’s first mention of casuistry in the *Provinciales*, see his fourth letter, B. Pascal, “Quatrième Lettre,” in *Les Provinciales ou Lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites* (A Cologne: Chez Pierre de la Vallée, 1657), 2.

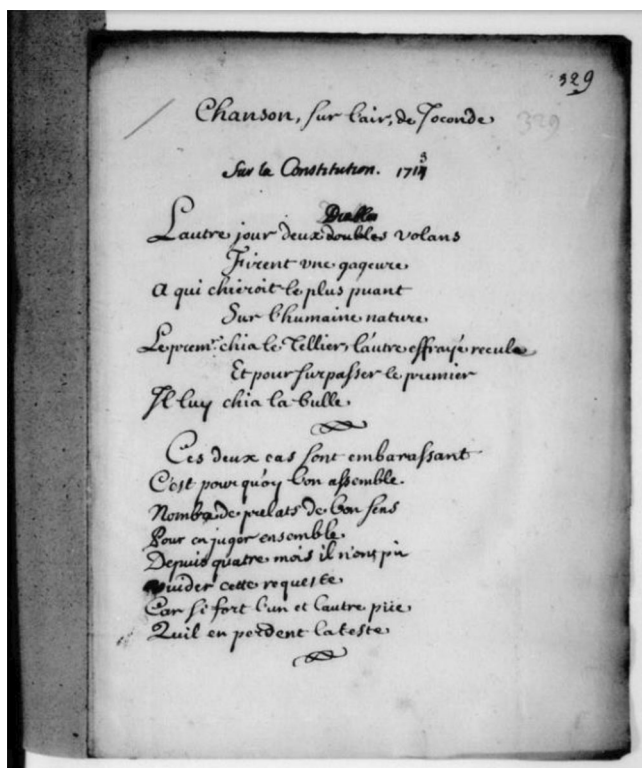


Figure 1 “Song on the Air de Joconde. On the Constitution [Unigenitus],” 1713. The first stanza refers to the Unigenitus bull and the Jesuit Le Tellier: “The other day, two [devils] flying/ Made a bet/ To [see] who would shit the foulest smelling/ On human nature/ The first shat Le Tellier, the other, frightened, took a step back/ And to surpass the first/ He shat out the [Unigenitus] Bull.” The second stanza notes the convocation of the French clergy following the Bull’s issue. Fonds.Français.12695, fol. 329, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Jesuitism. Contemporary French Jesuits were referenced only when these were actively embroiled in controversy and thus could be construed as a form of news. This involved royal confessors, such as Le Tellier, or pamphleteers, such as Dominique de Bouhours. That the Jesuits most referenced in song as paragons of Jesuitism were older figures discussed by Pascal is reflective of the heterogeneity of French Jesuit thought at the time.⁴¹ Since eighteenth-century French Jesuits were divided even on matters of papal authority across the Church, the pro-Jansenist songs referred to older Jesuit figures who had espoused less ambiguous theological and ecclesiological positions. Therefore, the most commonly used representatives of Jesuitism in the 1730s remained, for pro-Jansenist songs, the sixteenth-century founder of the Jesuit order, Loyola (d. 1556), and the seventeenth-century Jesuits discussed by Pascal in the 1650s — Molina (d. 1600), Lessius

41. On this heterogeneity, C. M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700–1762* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), 5–6; or J.-P. Gay, “Le ‘Cas Maimbourg’: La Possibilité d’un gallicanisme jésuite au XVIIe siècle,” *Revue Historique*, 316, no. 4 (2014), 783–831.

(d. 1623) and Escobar (d. 1669).⁴² A claim in a 1711 song that, according to Jesuits, “[t]u peux tuer quand tu voudras, pour une pomme seulement” conveyed an argument of Jesuit moral laxness straight from Pascal in the 1650s to a listening audience in the 1700s.⁴³ If the debt to Pascal and Lessius in those verses might not have been grasped by all listeners, all could share in the outrage at slaughtering a man “for [the sake of] an apple,” as Lessius was purported to have suggested. Similarly, the founder of the Jesuit Order — Ignatius of Loyola — was more heavily represented than any contemporary French Jesuit. Loyola’s name lent itself well to common satirical refrains, as seen through tunes such as the *joconde*, the *ramoneurs* or the *triolet*s. These often ended in the syllables “lan la la” or “la la la” — thus, a song would sing:

Le Pape a [la] Tiare en teste,
C’est Loyola qui lui preste,
C’est un autre Molina.
Ce n’est pas lui, c’est Loyola, lalala.⁴⁴

The songs also demonstrate the persistence of less theologically rigorous anti-Jesuit tropes and literary images, accessible to less theologically informed singers and audiences. Depictions of the Order as a malevolent, dark cabal of devils clung to the Jesuits.⁴⁵ (For an especially crude example of Jesuits such as Le Tellier as a diabolical product, see Fig. 1.) A 1694 song on the death of Arnauld depicted a devil in black, “sans collet, ni manchettes,” reaching to heaven to drag Arnauld to hell, before being rebuffed by Saint Peter.⁴⁶ Evonne Levy underlines that there was little to differentiate Jesuits from Oratorians — in France, an apostolic society founded by Pierre de Bérulle (d. 1629) — in appearance or even distinguish Jesuits from the “generic black cleric’s habit.”⁴⁷ However, a note in one of the collections with this song claims that the devil depicted was “clearly a Jesuit” from his dress. The image of the Jesuits as devils seems to have been so well established that any clerical dress on a devilish figure could be interpreted as Jesuitic. Songs also depicted Jesuits as wearing “tricorn” caps — a three-horned biretta — referring to Jesuits as the “révérends pères tricornes,” calling them metonymically “ce tricorn” in a handful of songs by the 1730s.⁴⁸ These images tied the banality of the urban Jesuit with preternatural malevolence in a manner that could be digested across the social strata. The songs would have nonetheless been mostly intelligible to those who could engage with this

42. On French Jesuits and papal authority, J.-P. Gay, “Voués à quel royaume? Les Jésuites entre vœux de religion et fidélité monarchique,” *Dix-Septième Siècle*, 227, no. 2 (2005), 285–314; J.-P. Gay, “Moral Theology, Culture of Counsel, and the Society of Jesus in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 4, no. 2 (2017), 230–49.

43. “You can kill when you want, for an apple alone,” see F.Fr.12627, fol. 7; Pascal’s fourteenth letter tackles killing “pour une pomme,” “for the sake of an apple,” B. Pascal, “Quatorzième Lettre,” in *Les Provinciales ou Lettres écrites par Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis et aux RR. PP. Jésuites* (A Cologne: Chez Pierre de la Vallée, 1657), 5; On Jesuit laxism, J.-P. Gay, “Le jésuite improbable: remarques sur la mise en place du mythe du Jésuite corrupteur de la morale en France à l’époque moderne” in *Les anti-jésuites: Discours, figures et lieux de l’antijésuitisme à l’époque moderne*, ed. P.-A. Fabre and C. Maire (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 305–27.

44. “The pope has [the pontifical] tiara in mind/ It’s Loyola who lends it to him, / It’s another Molina/ It isn’t him, it’s Loyola la la la,” see F.Fr.12627, fol. 236 or F.Fr.12695, fol. 321.

45. F.Fr.12627, fols. 373–83 and F.Fr.12627, fols. 391–92; also: F.Fr.12704, fols. 119–200, and F.Fr.12633, fols. 113–116.

46. “with no collar nor cuffs,” F.Fr. 12623, fol. 128.

47. E. Levy, “Jesuit Identity, Identifiable Jesuits? Jesuit Dress in Theory and in Image,” in *Le monde est une peinture: Jesuitische Identität und die Rolle der Bilder*, ed. Elisabeth Oy-Marra, Volker R. Remmert (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), 140. Levy’s comment on the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri can be applied to the (French) Oratory of Jesus by using her argument alongside the images in the *Histoire des ordres religieux de l’un & de l’autre sexe* (Amsterdam: chez Adrien Schoonebeek, 1695), xiv–xvi — I am grateful to Timothy Twining for bringing the *Histoire des ordres religieux* to my attention.

48. See F.Fr.12632, fol. 281, variants: F.Fr.12702, fol. 267, F.Fr.15133, fol. 80, F.Fr.15145, fols. 291–92; or F.Fr.23859, fols. 28–29.

“communicative memory” of anti-Jesuitism. This would have been accessible to those who regularly used the bridges and thoroughfares of Paris where similar street-songs had been performed over decades. As a source about a religious polemic, songs must be read in conversation with other street-songs that used the same music or language and, where Jansenism is concerned, they underline the currency of mid-seventeenth-century anti-Jesuitism into the eighteenth century. It remains to be seen whether street-songs attested to a concern with the devotional facets of Jansenism.

Accounting for Devotional Gaps in the Song Corpus

These references to long-standing anti-Jesuit tropes did not necessarily constitute an engagement with theological developments in the movement, nor should they be taken as evidence of a strong devotional interest in Jansenism by those who composed, sang, and circulated this largely satirical material. Throughout its span, the movement played host to various theological factions and fractures. These can help test how apt street-songs are as a source at capturing fringe opinions within a fragmented debate. Where Jansenism itself is concerned, the extant song material points at least to an interest in the movement which sat outside of its devotional confines. Kreiser has pointed to the convulsionaries — those who witnessed or took part in the miracles and “convulsions” at the tomb of the Jansenist François de Paris (d. 1727) — as the apogee of popular participation in the movement for the politically “unsophisticated” masses.⁴⁹ However, the street-songs highlight a popular engagement with Jansenism that ran both alongside the convulsionary movement and prior to it.

References to theological debates in song give an initial impression that street-songs can serve as a source for how singers and listeners engaged with theological questions at the heart of Jansenism. However, many of the songs that referenced such debates simply advanced older, perhaps more facile anti-Jesuit arguments. The most common way in which theological controversies surfaced in street-songs was within sung dialogues. These appear throughout the satirical material in the collections and often resembled an interrogation. Their question-answer formats ensured that one interlocutor could guide the conversation, anticipating the thoughts of the audience. Even so, dialogues were more mocking than catechistic. They would often be held between prominent figures (usually Jesuits), ignorant peasant characters (never the urban listener), or between confessors and penitents. One theological polemic that was widely discussed in the early 1690s centred on whether there was a distinction between theological sin, ruled by divine law, and philosophical sin, ruled by natural law. The songs on this controversy built on a vicious pamphlet attack by prominent Jansenist Antoine Arnauld in 1689.⁵⁰ Arnauld had belatedly responded to a 1686 thesis from a Jesuit college in Dijon, which posited that theological sin and philosophical sin could be separated. If one took the thesis’s argument to an extreme — as Jansenists such as Arnauld did when condemning it in print — should an individual be merely unaware of (or indeed, as songs exaggerated, “forget”) the existence of God whilst committing a crime in violation of divine law, they would not have truly sinned.

49. Kreiser, 169–70, and 395.

50. A. Arnauld, “Nouvelle hérésie dans la morale, touchant le péché philosophique, dénoncée au pape, aux évêques et aux magistrats,” in *Oeuvres de messire Antoine Arnauld, docteur de la maison et société de Sorbonne, Tome 3* (Paris: Sigismond d’Arnay et compagnie, 1780), 4.

The thesis was (unsurprisingly) widely condemned by the Jesuit Order, yet Arnauld's vitriolic responses resurrected the debate in the late 1680s and prompted a slew of songs ridiculing the Jesuits.⁵¹ One 1690 dialogue — likely widely circulated through its multiple collected variants, including some print versions of uncertain origin — parodied the thesis's view by featuring a penitent confessing patricide to his Jesuit confessor. Unsubtle in its humour, it was thus set to the tune of a well-known hymn, *Or nous dites Marie*. In the dialogue, a Jesuit confessor dismisses a penitent's crime as inconsequential because "Dieu ne s'offense/ Que quand on pense à lui."⁵² In some variants, the Jesuit even provided a neat, if highly reductive, summary of the debate:

Péché Philosophique
Est contre la raison
Péché Théologique
Est d'une autre façon
Le dernier n'est offense
Et Dieu n'en est fasché
Qu'à cause qu'on y pense
Quand on fait le Péché.⁵³

Though such references to Jansenist and Jesuit theology remain detailed, songs never truly attempted to refute the Jesuit perspective, unlike in Arnauld's pamphlets. Instead, the debate on sin — like most other theological allusions in song — merely used the dialogue form to parody the Jesuit-confessor archetype and advocate for a simple, well-worn point about Jesuit moral sophistry.

However, the song corpus lacks discussions on some devotional issues typically seen as core to the Jansenist movement. If the absence of detailed discussion of these themes in song could denote a lack of interest in such issues from singers and audiences, it can also be accounted for as a feature of song as a source. That is, songs carrying themes which lacked simplicity or broad enough consensus — themes such as the easy anti-Jesuit tropes — were less likely to circulate widely enough to eventually be collected and reach the archive. Two key thematic absences in the song corpus underline the dominance of songs that embraced simplistic themes and appealed to a broad consensus. The first is that of "figurism," seen as critical to post-*Unigenitus* Jansenism by Maire.⁵⁴ Figurism was a scriptural hermeneutic method and a source of contention among theological elites within Jansenism. It responded to a growing "historical consciousness" within the Church by using Biblical analysis and criticism to explain both present and future events. Much of figurist thought centred on drawing links between persecution found across the Bible (but especially within the Old Testament) and more recent persecution faced by Jansenists. It tied, notably, Biblical persecution to that of the nuns at the Jansenist abbey of Port-Royal and to that of the *appelants*, that is, those who called for an ecclesiastical council to settle matters against the *Unigenitus* bull. When songs did relate instances of Jansenist persecution, this was only when persecution formed part of a recent event — such as news of the banishment of the nuns of Port-Royal.⁵⁵ The only reverence towards persecuted Jansenists is found in some quasi-hagiographic songs following the deaths of Arnauld (d. 1694) and Quesnel (d. 1719).⁵⁶ The lack of figurism in song cannot be used to point to a lack of

51. The Jesuit polemicist Bouhours held Arnauld responsible for reinvigorating the debate, D. Bouhours, *Sentiments des Jésuites touchant le péché philosophique* (Paris: Chez la Veuve de Sébastien Mabru-Cramoisy, 1690).

52. "God is only offended/ When one thinks of him," F.Fr.12621, fol. 451, variant: F.Fr.22567, fol. 251.

53. "Philosophical sin/ Is against reason/ Theological sin/ Is of another manner/ The latter is only [an] offence/ And God is only angry/ Because one thinks of Him/ When one is sinning," F.Fr.12621, fol. 447–455.

54. Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation*, 163.

55. F.Fr.12626, fol. 359.

popular awareness or interest in figurist themes. Figurist print, such as the *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* journal, certainly found its way into poorer faubourgs of Paris.⁵⁷ Instead, the absence of figurism suggests that it was too divisive or too complex to circulate widely enough for its collection.

The second, more striking, absence in the song corpus is that of the convulsionary movement. This further attests to a prevalence of themes in song that offered neat dividing lines between various camps — sympathetic to the Jansenists or sympathetic to the Jesuits. (Naturally, a third, yet separate, camp where songs mentioned Jansenism incidentally as part of current affairs without supporting or deriding it also existed.) It is within the outpouring of popular interest in the convulsionary movement that Kreiser locates a complex engagement with Jansenism by the masses.⁵⁸ Responses to the convulsionaries were diverse, with a growing fragmentation throughout the 1730s of Jansenist opinion as to the veracity of the miracles at François de Pâris's tomb, underlined by observations by the police at the cemetery. These police reports noted the mockeries of many gathered at Saint-Médard.⁵⁹ There were undoubtedly songs which viewed the convulsions in a miraculous light. However, those with the widest circulation that spoke sympathetically of the convulsionaries did not do so by claiming that the miracles at Saint-Médard were real. Instead, the songs simply noted that the commotion at Saint-Médard had drawn attention to the Jansenist cause and thus *Unigenitus*.⁶⁰ Here, the legitimacy of the miracles seemed of little importance. An emphasis was placed on the strength in numbers found in the convulsionary movement which could precipitate the bull's condemnation — a cause which any Jansenist sympathiser could support. Even so, the relatively low number of extant songs touching upon the convulsions is likely testament to the difficulties that songs tackling divisive topics had in finding large audiences within an increasingly fractured group.

Instead of centring on the convulsionary movement, the songs from the 1730s are dominated by the Cadière–Girard trial. This was an infamous witch trial that involved the abuse by a Jesuit priest, Jean-Baptiste Girard, of one of his parishioners, Marie-Catherine Cadière. As Mita Choudhury has underlined, the trial became a “national obsession,” prompting a slew of songs, verses, pamphlets, and engravings.⁶¹ Crucially, unlike the contentious convulsionary movement, the trial offered clear dividing lines between Jansenist-sympathiser and Jesuit-sympathiser by returning to tropes drawn up in the seventeenth century — highlighting the centrality of longstanding anti-Jesuitism in songs supportive of Jansenism. Accused of rape and “spiritual incest,” Girard responded by accusing Cadière of defamation. Both parties risked execution. The songs about the trial often used rhetoric and tunes explicitly tied to the Jansenist polemic, such as the *air du formulaire*. Though Cadière was first sentenced to death in September 1731 to the relief of the Jesuits, she was acquitted a month later, providing ample material for a highly reactive medium such as song.⁶² Street-songs immediately presented Girard as representative of the Jesuit

57. See a letter from 28th July 1731 among police papers on Saint-Médard, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms-10196, fol. 90; Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard*, 50–55.

58. Discussed with regards to the struggles that Vintimille faced with the convulsionaries, Kreiser, 181–242.

59. See a police report from 18th August 1731, noting that many came to the tomb to mock the faithful, some wondering if these miracles exhibited a social preference in their effectiveness, see Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms-10196, fol. 141.

60. See especially F.Fr.12632, fol. 449 or F.Fr.12701, fol. 421, in which the “cendres” “ashes” of Pâris are described as the “fléau de la bulle” “scourge of the bull.”

61. M. Choudhury, *The Wanton Jesuit and the Wayward Saint: A Tale of Sex, Religion, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2015), 128.

62. For further discussion on the publicity of the trial, J. T. Kuznicki, “Sorcery and Publicity: The Cadière–Girard Scandal of 1730–1731,” *French History*, 21, no. 3 (2007), 289–312; M. Choudhury, “‘Carnal Quietism’: Embodying Anti-Jesuit Polemics in the Catherine Cadière Affair, 1731,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39, no. 2 (2006), 173–86; or even S. Lamotte, “Le P. Girard et la cadière dans la tourmente des pièces satiriques,” *Dix-huitième siècle*, 39, no. 1 (2007), 431–53.

confessor, in a similar vein to the 1690s dialogues on sin featuring Jesuit confessors, as this 1731 song suggests:

Allons, gay, enfans de Loyola:
Divertissez vous par cy et par là:
Séduisez les filles à confesse;
Et faites leur tout ce qu'il vous plaira,
Débauchez femmes, garçons, maîtresse.⁶³

Girard's downfall, mocked in song, conformed to traditional accusations of Jesuit sexual depravity and moral laxness. Encompassing crude comments on sodomy, these anti-Jesuit references in songs in the 1730s found their antecedents at the latest in the late 1680s and early 1700s.⁶⁴ In an atmosphere which ought to have been dominated by the convulsionary movement (according to the historiography of popular Jansenism), the Cadière–Girard trial offered much more than what Choudhury has referred to as “another opportunity to express anger (...) at the Jesuits.”⁶⁵ Rather, unlike the more contentious convulsionaries, the trial offered a far less controversial camp within which Jansenist sympathisers could unite. This unifying factor to the trial (in direct contrast to the convulsionaries) was alluded to in this 1731 song to the tune of the *petite fronde*:

Si Saint Paris a ses malades
A fait faire quelques gambades,
Le beau miracle que cela
Chantons plutot Sainte Cadière.⁶⁶

The Cadière–Girard case demonstrates, therefore, the importance of clear, well-established dividing lines to the Jansenist controversy for it to circulate widely in an oral manner. Here, if extant street-songs do not emerge as the best medium for capturing the fragmentation of a debate — since the more widely circulated songs were likely the least divisive — the extant song material is nonetheless useful. Where the study of Jansenism is concerned, it highlights the persistence of pre-*Unigenitus* anti-Jesuit tropes well into the 1730s and a popular interest in Jansenism beyond the confines of the convulsionary movement.

Politicising Jansenism — the Anti-Jesuit Trope as a Linchpin for More Complex Discussion

The limitations of song in capturing fragmented debates does not mean that what emerges from the source base is simplistic. If anything, the reliance of street-songs supportive of Jansenism on digestible anti-Jesuit tropes meant that these could disseminate more complex arguments. This, in turn, ought to broaden our understanding of the popular politicisation of Jansenism. Kreiser has highlighted the clear link between a political interest in Jansenism and a devotional interest in the movement.⁶⁷ The song material confirms this aspect to Kreiser's work. However, Kreiser has also emphasised the convulsionary movement as a key avenue for political participation, underlining the lack of political

63. “Come on, children of Loyola./ Divert yourselves here and there/ Seduce girls at confession/ And do to them all that you please/ Debauch, women, boys, mistresses,” F.Fr.12702, fol. 301, F.Fr.12632, fol. 299.

64. A 1734 song with accusations of sodomy, F.Fr. 12702, fols. 449–451, variants: F.Fr.12633, fols. 225–227, F.Fr.12675, fols. 99–102, parallels accusations from 1685, F.Fr.12640, fol. 361.

65. Choudhury, *The Wanton Jesuit and the Wayward Saint*, 133.

66. “If Saint Pâris has made his sick people/ Make some leaps [jumps]/ What a beautiful miracle this is/ Let's sing instead Saint Cadière!” see a song with numerous variants, including in the following, F.Fr.12675, fol.45, F.Fr.15133, fol. 58, F.Fr.15137, fol. 45; F.Fr.15136, fol. 263, F.Fr.15243, fol. 129; F.Fr.15145, fol. 348, F.Fr.12702, fol. 303, F.Fr.12704, fol. 210 and F.Fr.12632, fol. 300.

67. Kreiser, 181–82.

sophistication of the masses prior to this.⁶⁸ Street-songs instead provide evidence of complex popular political concerns antedating and running alongside the convulsionary movement. The intelligibility of these complex political arguments rested on the aforementioned anti-Jesuit tropes.

Where the political ramifications of the debate are concerned, the song corpus features heavy-handed references to Gallicanism throughout the period surveyed. Here, Gallicanism is taken as outlined by Albert W. Hamscher, as the “set of institutional arrangements and theoretical principles designed to protect the French Church from papal interference.”⁶⁹ Naturally, these views were prominent in the wake of the *Unigenitus* controversy which exemplified papal interference. The nature of this Gallicanism remains vague. Most songs limit themselves to a stringent opposition to ultramontaniam — broadened to any perceived foreign influence in French devotional affairs. There is little explicit pronouncement on the role of the laity within the Church. This absence is unexpected given the importance of many laymen within parish Church affairs, such as wardens, as underlined by Garrioch, in maintaining support for the Jansenist movement throughout the late seventeenth century and the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ Richerism, which stressed the importance both of the laity and of parish priests to Church governance, is also notably absent. This is despite Richerism’s centrality to mid-seventeenth century Jansenism according to Richard M. Golden and, through the work of Jansenist Pasquier Quesnel, to eighteenth-century Jansenism according to Edmond Préclin.⁷¹ Yet Quesnel’s Richerism, influential among theologians, hardly appears in the song corpus. Once more, the material that survived the streets for collection seems to have failed to capture the fragmentation of the Jansenist debate. Where there is a certain benevolence towards the parish priests of Paris in the corpus, this is not specific to any local priests and consists only of occasional references to “curés” more broadly. A 1727 dialogue between peasants, for instance, set to the tune of the *joconde*, had the peasant “Lucas” ask “Pierrot” why priests were being exiled from Paris, when they were “tant chéris, tant révés.”⁷² If such rhetoric could be construed as sympathetic to Richerism, the position of parish priests as a first point of Jansenist contact for the laity in many (but not all, as Garrioch notes) cases likely prompted their charitable treatment in song.⁷³

The songs are not, therefore, granular sources on how different strands of Gallicanism can be contextualised within the socially varied audiences of the street. Parlementaire Gallicanism, which underlined the role of magistrates within the French Church and undoubtedly played a part in the controversy surrounding *Unigenitus*, is also absent beyond a shaky goodwill towards the parlement in a few songs. However, since the strong alliance between the parlement and the Jansenist movement, described by both Maire and Dale Van Kley, is at its earliest situated in the late 1740s, this absence is not striking.⁷⁴ Turning to royal Gallicanism, the king’s staunch support of *Unigenitus* did little to ingratiate him within songs sympathetic to Jansenism.⁷⁵ Episcopal Gallicanism was also treated with

68. Kreiser, 395.

69. A. W. Hamscher, “The Parlement of Paris and the Social Interpretation of Early French Jansenism,” *The Catholic Historical Review*, 63, no. 3 (1977), 397.

70. Garrioch, 42–53.

71. R. M. Golden, *The Godly Rebellion: Parisian curés and the Religious Fronde, 1652–1662* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 152; E. Préclin, *Les Jansénistes du XVIII^e siècle et la constitution civile du clergé: le développement du Richérisme, sa propagation dans le bas clergé, 1713–1791* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929), 27.

72. “So loved/ So revered,” See F.Fr.12704, fols. 125–27.

73. Garrioch, 20–1.

74. Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation*, 396–97.

75. The 1717 song “La Constitution Unigenitus” tackles explicitly Louis XIV’s support of *Unigenitus*, see F.Fr.12629, fols. 31–37; F.Fr.12696, fols. 225–231.

ambivalence in song. This is understandable given the difficulty of securing a consensus on *Unigenitus* by the French episcopate throughout this period. Even so — the episcopate was seldom condemned as a whole and there seemed to be, at times, hints of the importance that a unified body of French prelates could have held in defending the French Church. Some songs rebuked the Pope for using *Unigenitus* to divide French prelates — claiming these on behalf of singers by calling them “*nos prélats*”. The Pope often made a comical appearance as a character in such songs, responding tauntingly to accusations and singing the blame of Jesuit influence for his actions.⁷⁶ If there are, therefore, traces of different “Gallicanisms,” none of these come through strongly in the song corpus.

The Jesuits once more provided a unifying factor in defining the vague Gallicanism which appears in song. The presence of old, seemingly uncomplicated Jesuit tropes within the corpus means that more complex questions were raised about the interference of foreign entities in French affairs. A street-song from 1713, which could almost be read as parlementaire Gallicanism if not for its prematurity, similarly underlined the role of the Jesuits in exerting a “foreign” influence. Set to the somewhat chirpy tune of *turelurette* the song sang:

Il est pris le Parlement,
 Mon Dieu la triste aventure!
 Dans les filets de Clément
 Turelure
 Tellier en fait la capture Robin turelure lure.⁷⁷

The image of the parlement caught in Pope Clement XI’s net, as though he were fishing, is striking. Yet the aggressor in the song is not the Pope, but Le Tellier, Louis XIV’s Jesuit confessor. It is he who “captured” the parlement and thus interfered in French affairs. This street-song can be read alongside others depicting the Jesuits as foreign entities. Jesuits were often characterised as “[des] mandarins,” given their controversial missionary practices in China, or as “[des] dindons” (‘turkeys’), a bird which they had introduced to France from America and whose name “dinde” (“of India”) quite baldly made a claim to foreignness.⁷⁸

Crucially, depicting the Jesuits as alien aggressors meant that the songs could obliquely tackle the implications of the Jansenist debate where questions of religious and civic obedience were concerned. The song material thus becomes far more complex as a source and attests to a popular political sophistication prior to the convulsionary movement and, on occasion, prior to *Unigenitus*. These songs could thus begin to engage with issues such as papal fallibility. Such themes emerge in the few songs on the much earlier anti-Jansenist *Vineam Domini* constitution of 1705, as well as in anti-Jesuit songs that mocked Jesuit support for papal infallibility.⁷⁹ (Where the latter is concerned, the papacy had loudly condemned over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries an array of Jesuit missionary practices in China, prompting what became known as the Chinese Rites

76. See F.Fr.12695, fols. 553–554, variants: F.Fr.12704, fol. 55, F.Fr.12627, fols. 351–353, F.Fr.12500, fol. 40, and F.Fr.12796, fol. 45.

77. “It is taken, the Parlement/ My God what a sad affair!/ In the nets of Clement/ Turelure/ Le Tellier captures it/ Robin turelure lure,” see F.Fr.15136, fol. 202.

78. For a song on Jesuits “turkeys” see, for instance, F.Fr.12629, fol. 9, variants: F.Fr.12696, fol. 20, F.Fr.9350, fol. 125; for an explanation on the use of “des dindons” for Jesuits, see A. Dumas, *Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1873), 508; on the more general animalisation of the Jesuits, see P. Wachenheim, “De la physiognomie à la tératologie: les jésuites portraiturets ou les visages de l’antijésuitisme” in *Les antijésuites*, 13–52.

79. In their missionary efforts in China, the Jesuits had, since the sixteenth century, attempted to accommodate those Chinese ritual practices which they felt were compatible with Roman Catholicism. These actions were condemned first by the Dominicans and Franciscans, and then by the papacy. See a song on the controversy, F.Fr. 12644, fol. 127.

controversy.) Once more, dialogues provided an avenue for more sustained discussion. The “Parisian,” in a 1713 dialogue between a “Parisian” and “a Roman,” questions:

Mais si le chef de mere Sainte Eglise,
Est tombé dans l’erreur,
Ne doit on pas lui montrer sa méprise
Et sauver son honneur?⁸⁰

This specific dialogue featured numerous variants, so can be assumed to have widely circulated. All variants of this song considered the question of duty in the face of papal fallibility. The Parisian, advocating the Gallican perspective, is explicitly sympathetic to the Jansenist cause, borrowing from seventeenth-century anti-Jesuit vocabulary and even ending his speech on the refrain of the famous *air du formulaire*, “Je suis janséniste, moi,/ Je suis janséniste.”

Although the Pope’s fallibility was questioned via his association with the Jesuits, so was that of the king. Louis XIV famously had Jesuit confessors throughout his reign. Here, understanding the enduring trope of the Jesuit as a duplicitous confessor is crucial, as this trope allowed disobedience to the monarch to emerge as a point of consideration in sung discourse. The majority of the material which directly referenced a monarch during this period was that which touched upon the rule of Louis XIV, with Louis XV being both a minor for much of the period examined and serving as a less aggressive opponent to Jansenism than his great-grandfather. Louis XIV’s string of prominent Jesuit confessors reinforced the view in song that he was completely under Jesuit influence.⁸¹ There were two approaches to the monarch in the song material sympathetic to Jansenism. The first was to depict him as an active persecutor of the Jansenists. Despite Louis XIV’s staunch opposition to the movement, this is a minority position in the song corpus. Even then, he was seldom depicted as acting alone. The second approach, far more common in the corpus, echoed songs on papal fallibility by depicting the king as a victim of Jesuit malice. When Louis XIV died in 1715, a placard that surfaced on the day that his heart was transported to the Jesuits read:

Que le cœur d’un grand Roy pieux, mais mal instruit,
Soit si mal placé cette nuit
Cela ne doit pas nous surprendre;
Helas! Il falloit bien le rendre
Aux imposteurs qui l’ont seduit.⁸²

Depicted as misinformed, “seduced” by “serpentine” Jesuits, if Louis XIV took an active role in Jansenist persecution, it was only because he was being misled.⁸³

Read alongside other songs, the language of usurpation and tyranny that pervades much of the anti-Jesuit material means that street-songs can be read for their oblique discussions on civic obedience. The presence of the language of usurpation in songs which referenced Jesuit influence implied that the Jesuits were usurping royal power (and thus that there was an authority proper to the king that could be usurped, which might be construed as

80. “But if the head of the Holy mother Church, / Has fallen into error, / Do we not have to show him his misunderstanding/ And save his honour?” see F.Fr.12627, fol. 373–83.

81. On confessors, J. Bergin, “The royal confessor and his rivals in seventeenth-century France,” *French History* 21, no. 2 (2007) 187–204; N. Reinhardt, *Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-century Spain and France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 334–5.

82. “That the heart of a great pious king, but poorly instructed/ has been so poorly placed this night/ that should not surprise us/ Alas! It was indeed necessary to return it/ To the impostors who seduced it,” F.Fr.10475, fol. 132, 1715.

83. F.Fr.12701, fols. 403–07 or F.Fr.12632, fols. 253–57.

the remnants of a royal Gallicanism). In some extreme cases, references to usurpation even veered into veiled accusations of regicide.⁸⁴ A handful of songs reference in the same breath the Jesuits and the assassination in 1610 of Henri IV, whose very statue was on the Pont-Neuf and is mentioned as a landmark in a few songs.⁸⁵ This played into a century-old rumour that the Jesuits were responsible for Henri IV's assassination.⁸⁶ Crucially, by placing the blame for anti-Jansenist actions on the Jesuits and not on a misled monarch, the street-songs avoided a direct confrontation with the king where his actions appeared anti-Jansenist or more broadly anti-Gallican. Within many such songs lay also a language of Jesuit tyranny, which lasted well beyond the reign of Louis XIV. Where a 1715 song described the Jesuits as “de bien cruels tyrans,” a 1731 song, set to the *air du formulaire*, adopted a Jesuit perspective to claim:

Nous exerçons un pouvoir tyrannique,
Tel est comme il nous plaît,
A notre nom que tout l'État frémissé.⁸⁷

By employing this language of tyranny and usurpation, the monarchy could be portrayed as a long-standing victim of Jesuit deceit, with Louis XIV and Louis XV — on the few occasions where he was mentioned directly — having merely been wronged as opposed to being the wrongdoer. In doing so, the songs as sources underline popular understandings of the ramifications of a religious dispute such as Jansenism. These relate a discussion on how a semblance of loyalty to the monarch could be maintained, all the while flirting with a righteous — if not necessary — resistance to the king by supporting the Jansenist cause and criticising royal actions by attacking the Jesuits through what may have seemed like a series of well-worn anti-Jesuit tropes. If these street-songs cannot offer evidence of a richly articulated resistance theory disseminated orally, they are nonetheless testament to the debate's wider implications for civic behaviour and disobedience. As a source, songs may not capture the fragmentation of a debate, but they do capture the longevity of certain themes within a socially broad arena. It is by looking at these persistent themes — conveyed through rhetoric and tune — that it is possible to uncover a more complex discussion at play in the popular religious and political thought of these songs.

Conclusion

Street-songs can supplement our understanding of religious and political debates with a popular facet to them and, more specifically, how these played out among a broader social audience. As Darnton has underlined, the richest depositories of street-songs for much of the eighteenth century remain song collections, which offer information on the circulation of material that cannot always be derived from the policing of songs (especially prior to the personal government of Louis XV).⁸⁸ By paying attention to slight variations between songs, by considering marginalia, and by borrowing from the work of musicologists on popular tunes, it is possible to glean insights about the circulation of a street-song. Where Jansenism is concerned, the texts of many street-songs allude to a socially broad audience

84. F.Fr.12704, fols. 100–17 or F.Fr.12674, fols. 455–518.

85. On rumours of the assassination of Henri IV as a Jesuit plot, see M. Cottret, *Tuer le tyran? Le tyrannicide dans l'Europe Moderne* (Paris: Fayard, 2009), 163–79.

86. D. Roussel, “Several fanatics who talked only of killing kings’: conspirators and regicides before the parlement de Paris in the wake of the assassination of Henri IV, 1610,” *French History* 30, no. 4 (2016), 459–76; F.Fr.12704, fols. 100–17 or F.Fr.12674, fols. 455–518.

87. For the 1715 song see F.Fr.12695, fol. 690, F.Fr.12628, fols. 123–25; ‘We exert a tyrannical power/ Such is how it pleases us/ At our name let the whole state tremble’, for the 1731 song see F.Fr.12675, fols. 8–11 or F.Fr.15137, fols. 4–7.

88. Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 102–05.

and their proximity to the controversy; the action is always in a publicly accessible space, often reflecting where street-songs were performed and circulated. These listeners-turned-singers would not have sprung *ex nihilo*. Rather, they were likely to be either lay adherents and opponents to Jansenism at the turn of the eighteenth century as outlined by Lyon-Caen (where bourgeois networks of support are concerned) and by Garrioch (at the parish level in poorer faubourgs).

These street-songs need to be read in conjunction with other texts set to the same tunes and using similar rhetoric to be best appreciated. This reflects how they would have been understood by contemporaries who frequented the urban areas in which songs were performed and who recognised, therefore, the tunes and tropes that songs recycled. From this cross-reading, several dominant themes emerge over generations. In the case of Jansenism, this was — as might be expected — a certain anti-Jesuitism. However, this anti-Jesuitism was somewhat static. Frozen in the mid-seventeenth century, it centred on the figure of the morally lax confessor, which hearkened back to the attacks of Pascal at the start of the Jansenist controversy, and seldom refuted contemporary eighteenth-century French Jesuit thought. There was, therefore, a certain chronological stickiness to song, as street-songs prolonged (if not preserved) specific points of contention in a polemic through their reliance on tunes and tropes. The trope of the immoral Jesuit — whose views in pro-Jansenist songs were often out of step with those of contemporary French Jesuits, could therefore persist. This trope could thus act as an unambiguous dividing line across a socially broad audience, over multiple generations between Jansenist supporters and detractors.

The dominance of facile tropes such as that of the Jesuit confessor means that collected street-songs do not emerge as an appropriate source through which to access the points of fragmentation within a debate. The songs that were most prone to survival in the archive to the modern day were likely those most widely circulated, determined by the fact that they have the most variants across the collections. Their wide circulation, however, was likely enabled by the consensus around what was being conveyed (if not by the novelty factor to some of the songs). This would explain the low number of street-songs on the convulsionary movement — divisive among Jansenists across the social strata — relative to the high number of songs on *Unigenitus* or the sensationalistic Cadière–Girard witch trial. The latter in particular offered neat dividing lines, with Cadière standing in for the priggish and hypocritical Jansenists for the movement's opponents, and Girard taking the place of the morally lax Jesuit confessor for the Jansenists. Through the dominance of such themes and tropes in texts, street-songs can help delineate further the dividing lines of a religious and political debate where some of its more popular facets are concerned.

The simplification of one or two core aspects to a debate, as the memory of past scandal was referenced through specific terms, meant that relatively short songs could advance more complex arguments. As seen in the material that tackled some of the political ramifications of Jansenism, references to the Jesuits need to be read with the knowledge of associations and bywords built up over several years of singing on the controversy. The connection of the Jesuits to “foreignness” and to the long-standing image of a duplicitous confessor meant that Jesuit tropes allowed songs to advance more complex political ideas — with some songs going so far as to enable criticism of the monarch through the figure of the Jesuit. These street-songs highlight even further a popular interest in the political ramifications of Jansenism that antedated the convulsionary movement.

If street-singing merits study as an early modern practice in its own right, street-songs also deserve further attention as a source for uncovering some popular expressions within religious debates. These need to be read in conjunction with one another to be fully thematically appreciated and, as with any other source, contextualised through other contemporary material. The information drawn from them must be treated cautiously. Even

though many songs did have a certain materiality to them — sold on broadsheets in print or manuscript form — their ultimate reliance on oral circulation and memorisation, as attested by their variants, means that they are unlikely to be a source that captured fringe opinions on a controversy. As a source on religious polemics, songs offer a window into arguments and attitudes which circulated among a largely anonymous and socially broad audience, providing an insight into debates in which groups of mixed literacy would have been able to participate. Where street-songs have been alluded to in historiographical discussions of religious controversies, such as in Kreiser's work on Jansenism, this has mostly been to illustrate an argument crafted from other sources. Given the granularity of the contemporary discussions on religious polemics that can be found in street-songs through close reading, these sources deserve, however, to be taken out of the realm of anecdote and into the realm of standard practice.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.