

Statement of Intended Research: The Uses of Oral Culture in the Popular Memory of Jansenism and Jesuitism in Louis XIV's Paris

A few months before his death in 1694, in a letter to Charles Perrault, the Jansenist theologian and polemicist Antoine Arnauld criticised the spread of contrafacted “lascivious” songs from Boileau’s works throughout Paris.¹ Contrafactum, the substitution of one song’s text for another with little musical change, is characteristic of the early modern French street-song. It is a crucial feature of the material in the *chansonniers* in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.² These collections of oral or semi-oral miscellanies were often gathered by an aristocratic readership seeking an “anecdotal” history of France through satirical songs and verses from Parisian streets.³ Composed of anonymous, scandalous pieces, spreading news to a public of varying means and literacy, this material was set to famous theatre music or folk tunes. Such songs were performed and sometimes sold as manuscripts or in print to a broad public usually on the Pont Neuf, bowing to the pressures of an extremely diverse market, according to commentators such as Mme de Sévigné in the 1680s or Louis-Sébastien Mercier a century later.⁴ If court letters illustrate an aristocratic fascination with the power of oral culture to shape reputation among “la canaille”, police records highlight the monarchy’s unease surrounding the circulation of songs. Oral culture enabled the vulgarisation of rarefied debates under Louis XIV featuring Jansenism, episcopal Gallicanism and a slew of anti-Jesuit criticism. It ensured their commemoration in a collective memory, as each new controversy was played to an old polemic’s tune through contrafactum. Beyond offering ample material to explore a popular urban engagement with theology and politics, oral culture has implications when considering the popular remembrance of these debates.

As Robert Darnton, Annette Keilhauer and Nick Hammond have highlighted, the ephemerality of oral miscellanies situated them between rumour and printed news in the communication of information.⁵ The presence of variants in the material across collections attests to the ease with which audiences could misremember or alter texts. My undergraduate dissertation explores the repercussions of a popular interest in rarefied debates on our understanding of the Jansenist movement. I hoped to highlight how oral culture does not comply neatly with the First-Second Jansenist model accepted by French and Anglo-American historians such as Catherine Maire and Dale Van Kley.⁶ Instead, it illustrates a long-standing popular interest, framed by the vocabulary of the First Jansenism, in the movement during the forty-year break between the two “Jansenisms”. Oral culture does not conform to Maire’s claim that Jansenism’s vulgarisation, an essential feature of the second Jansenism, was almost exclusively the result of the Saint Magloire

¹ Boileau-Despréaux, Françoise, Antoine Adam, Nicolas Escal, and Escal, Françoise. *Œuvres Complètes*. Bibliothèque De La Pléiade ; 188. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

² My undergraduate dissertation, which also uses *chansonniers*, so far draws upon the following collections from the BnF: Fr.2208; Fr.12676-12679; MS – 3118; Fr.12500; Fr. 15159; Fr. Français 12616-12659 also known as the *Chansonnier Maurepas*; Fr. 10475-10479; Fr. 9352- 9353; Fr. 15136; Fr. 15140-15142; Fr. 25562; Fr. 19700; Fr. 14998; Fr. 22567; Fr. 9347-50; Fr. 9351; Fr. 22566-69; Fr. 12673 – 12675 ; Fr. 12686-12721 also known as the *Chansonnier Clairambault* ; Fr. 12796 ; Fr. 13655 – 13659 ; Ms-5131-2 and Fr. 25570.

³ The vast majority of the *chansonniers* referenced above style themselves as collections “[pour] servir l’histoire anecdotique” of France on the title page.

⁴ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, and Jean-Claude. Bonnet. *Tableau De Paris*. Paris: Mercure De France, 1994. Print. Librairie Du Bicentenaire De La Révolution Française, volume 1, p.55.

⁵ Robert Darnton. *Poetry and the Police : Communication Networks in Eighteenth-century Paris*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard UP, 2010. Print.; Annette Keilhauer. *Das Französische Chanson Im Späten Ancien Régime : Strukturen, Verbreitungswege Und Gesellschaftliche Praxis Einer Populären Literaturform*. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1998. Print. Musikwissenschaftliche Publikationen, Bd. 10.; Nicholas Hammond. *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris*. 2019. Print. Perspectives on Sensory History.

⁶ Catherine-Laurence Maire. *De La Cause De Dieu à La Cause De La Nation : Le Jansénisme Au XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris]: Gallimard, 1998. Print. Bibliothèque Des Histoires.; Van Kley, Dale. "The Rejuvenation and Rejection of Jansenism in History and Historiography: Recent Literature on Eighteenth-Century Jansenism in French." *French Historical Studies* 29.4 (2006): 649-684.

group's efforts.⁷ My dissertation research touches upon two aspects that I could not explore further but would like to pursue in an M.Phil. dissertation — how sung Jansenism could be subsumed under a trend of Jesuit demonization through Jansenism's popular commemoration and glorification, and the formation of urban collective memory through contrafacted oral culture. The M.Phil. research would centre on memory specifically, anchoring the remembrance of theological controversies through oral culture in the Parisian landscape, considering other practices of commemoration and performance. That texts were constantly set to pre-existing tunes to ease their circulation makes the analysis of the oral genre in relation to the history of memory particularly fruitful. The setting of songs, which criticised Louis XIV's Jesuit confessor Le Tellier, to the tune of "Jean de Vert" demonised the confessor while contextualising his actions in a long-line of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century boogeymen, ranging from Louis XIV's financial advisors to the original Johann von Werth of the Thirty Years War.⁸

The majority of the scholarship on early modern French oral culture is dominated by French and German literary scholars and musicologists.⁹ Nonetheless, Darnton has devoted a degree of attention to the subject as an extension of a popular engagement with print in the mid-eighteenth century,¹⁰ whereas Laura Mason has considered song through the context of popular culture in reconstructing French Revolutionary voices.¹¹ A study of songs under Louis XIV, as shown by Hammond, can only further our understanding of oral culture in this period.¹² Beyond France, investigations into the collaboration of orality and print, as well as an acknowledgement of their impact on memory, has been undertaken by Adam Fox, Daniel Woolf and Bob Bushaway in particular.¹³ These works, often centring on rural Britain, call for similar studies of the interactions of urban collective memory and orality, where the constants of poetic form and tune, crucial in building memory, are accompanied by persistent textual changes through the speed of the urban news cycle. The study of religious debate and collective memory — without a focus on orality — has benefited in recent years from the work of Judith Pollmann and, specifically on Jansenism, Catherine Maire, who operates within the framework of Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory* to focus on the Saint Magloire group's commemoration of Port-Royal.¹⁴ An investigation of Jansenist commemoration and Jesuit demonization through popular song would unite orality, popular collective memory and religious debate, expanding upon Bushaway, Pollmann and Maire's work.

⁷ Maire. *De La Cause De Dieu à La Cause De La Nation*, p.46.

⁸ See Fr.9352, p.240 for a song from 1709 on Le Tellier set to this tune and Fr.12621,p.407 for a song set to the same tune from 1690 on Louis Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain, Louis XIV's *Controleur Général des Finances* as a point of comparison.

⁹ Some French examples include: Patrice Coirault. *Notre Chanson Folklorique : (Etude D'information Générale)*. 1941. Print.; Conrad Laforte. *Poétiques De La Chanson Traditionnelle Française : Ou, Classification De La Chanson Folklorique Française*. Québec: Presses De L'Université Laval, 1976. Print. Archives De Folklore ; 17.; Jean Quéniart. *Le Chant, Acteur De L'histoire : Actes Du Colloque Tenu à Rennes Du 9 Au 11 Septembre 1998*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires De Rennes, 1999. Print. Collection "Histoire" (Rennes, France). ; George Durosoir., and Centre De Musique Baroque De Versailles. *Poésie, Musique Et Société : L'air De Cour En France Au XVIIe Siècle*. Sprimont: Mardaga, 2006. Print. Collection Musique, Musicologie.; German examples include Annette Keilhauer. *Das Französische Chanson Im Späten Ancien Régime* and Herbert Schneider. *Die Rezeption Der Opern Lullys Im Frankreich Des Ancien Régime*. Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1982. Print. Mainzer Studien Zur Musikwissenschaft 16.

¹⁰ Darnton. *Poetry and the Police*.

¹¹ Laura Mason. *Singing the French Revolution : Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799*. 2018.

¹² Hammond. *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris*.

¹³ Adam Fox. *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700*. Oxford Studies in Social History. Oxford: Clarendon, 2000.; Daniel Woolf and Adam Fox *The Spoken Word : Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850*. Politics, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.; Bob Bushaway, "'Things said or sung a thousand times': customary society and oral culture in rural England, 1700-1900" in *The Spoken Word : Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850*.. Politics, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007

¹⁴ Judith Pollmann *Memory in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2017; Catherine Maire 'Port Royal' in Pierre Nora, Lawrence D. Kritzman and Arthur Goldhammer, *Lieux De Mémoire. English. European Perspectives*. New York [N.Y.]: Columbia University Press, 1996.

The sources for this investigation would consist principally of the Bibliothèque Nationale's *chansonniers* as well as police records attesting to the clandestine nature of songs from the Archives de la Bastille.¹⁵ Other documents, such as contemporary letters and Jansenist collections featuring songs could also be examined. By cross-referencing a variety of sources and collections, I hope to mitigate the *chansonnier* collectors' selection biases. Building on Christian Jouhaud's work on the Mazarinades,¹⁶ I similarly do not intend to suggest that this corpus represents "public opinion" or even "popular expression" as a whole in Louis XIV's Paris. Rather, much like Jouhaud's work, I hope to recover some popular expressions, in this case popular constructions of a memory of rarefied debates as they were unfolding. I would go beyond my undergraduate studies by using these debates, considering not just Jansenism but also Jesuitism, to study urban collective memory specifically. I hope to highlight the importance of oral culture both in our understanding of popular perceptions of religious polemic and its contribution in the construction of an understudied urban collective memory.

¹⁵ These are scattered throughout the Bibliothèque Nationale – in particular the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal – as well as the Archives Nationales and the Archives de la préfecture de police.

¹⁶ Christian Jouhaud. *Mazarinades : La Fronde Des Mots*. Collection Historique. Paris: Aubier, 1985.