

Pombaline propaganda in France: Translation, visualization, radicalization

Propaganda pombalina em França: Tradução, visualização, radicalização

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Abstract: The fact that Pombal is today one of the most important actors of enlightened absolutism is due above all to his comprehensive reform program, which included virtually all political fields of action of the 18th century. At least as important, however, is the fact that he accompanied his measures with extremely intensive public relations work: Pombal had understood how important it was to get public opinion in Europe on his side, because especially those reforms that threatened the traditional rights and positions of power of the Catholic Church were the subject of controversial debate in a Europe divided along confessional lines. France played an important role in the European battle of opinion: French intellectuals and publicists dominated international public opinion, and French was the language of the educated and enlightened. This paper will therefore examine how Pombal's propaganda functioned in France and what significance French translations and adaptations had for the European battle of opinion.

Keywords: Propaganda; Public opinion; Enlightenment; Translation.

Resumo: O facto de Pombal ser hoje um dos mais importantes atores do despotismo esclarecido deve-se sobretudo ao seu abrangente programa de reformas aberto a praticamente todos os campos de atuação política do século XVIII. Igualmente importante, também, é o facto de ter acompanhado as suas medidas com um trabalho de relações públicas extremamente intenso: Pombal compreendia a importância de ter a opinião pública europeia do seu lado porque precisamente aquelas reformas que ameaçavam os direitos e cargos tradicionais de poder da Igreja Católica foram objeto de um debate controverso numa Europa dividida por linhas confessionais. A França desempenhou um papel importante na batalha europeia de opinião: os intelectuais e publicitários franceses dominaram a opinião pública internacional e o francês era a língua falada pela população educada e ilustrada. Este artigo examinará, portanto, a propaganda de Pombal em França e o papel das traduções e adaptações na batalha de opinião pública.

Palavras-Chaves: Propaganda; Opinião pública; Iluminismo; Tradução.

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1. Introduction

The fact that Pombal is seen today as one of the most important actors of enlightened absolutism is due above all to his comprehensive reform program, which included virtually all political fields of action of the 18th century (cf. Maxwell, 1995). At least as important, however, is the fact that he accompanied his measures with extremely intensive public relations work: Pombal had understood how important it was to get public opinion in Europe on his side, because particularly those reforms that threatened the traditional institutions and prerogatives of the Catholic Church were the subject of controversial debate in a Europe divided not only along confessional lines, but also within the great Christian confessions, and especially within 18th-century Catholicism (Van Kley, 2006: 91-140). France played an important role in the European battle of opinions as well as in the division of Catholicism: because of the language alone, French intellectuals and journalists dominated the European public sphere. Moreover, as will be shown, French Jansenists were the most radical and possibly also the most bustling protagonists of European reform Catholicism (cf. Van Kley, 2018).

This paper will examine how Pombal's propaganda functioned in France and what significance French translations and adaptations

had for the European battle of opinions in the Age of Enlightenment. I will first outline the political-social and media conditions in France for the reception of the propaganda initiated by Pombal. These conditions determined how Pombal's texts were received, interpreted, translated, commented on, and further disseminated in Europe; for France had the important role of a relay station or better: a flow heater for large parts of the rest of Europe, and the Portuguese texts came out of this flow heater differently than they had gone in. Translations are always interpretations, and 18th-century translations almost never came without a comprehensive foreword framing the actual text and thereby placing it in the particular context of the mid-century crisis of French absolutism and of Roman Catholicism. My thesis is that Pombal's propaganda in France underwent a certain kind of radicalization that had a crucial impact on the process of Enlightenment. Furthermore, I will also argue that the visual media of this time, namely printed news images, played an essential role in the process of radicalization. To support this thesis, I will analyse some selected examples of images in detail and elaborate on their function within the news system of the time. Finally, I will show what kind of radicalization Pombal's propaganda underwent through the flow heater of mid-18th-century French visual media.

2. The politico-religious crisis of the French monarchy in the mid-18th century and the propaganda machinery of the *parti janséniste*

Among the unresolved problems of the French monarchy at the beginning of the 18th century was Jansenism. This Catholic devotional movement espoused a rigorist moral doctrine and invoked the Augustinian doctrine of grace and other theological traditions that brought it into opposition with Tridentine Catholicism. The conflict manifested itself chiefly in open controversies with the Jesuit Order, whose baroque devotional practices and moral teachings were considered particularly reprehensible to the Jansenists. In the late years of his reign, Louis XIV intensified the repression of this religious movement, which had been condemned by Rome as heretical, and forced its leading figures, Pierre Nicole and Antoine Arnauld, into exile. In 1709 he had the former religious centre of Jansenism, the monastery Port-Royal des Champs, evacuated and a year later completely demolished. At the same time, he urged the Pope to issue a final, unequivocal condemnation of Jansenist doctrine. On September 8, 1713, in the bull *Unigenitus*, Clement XI condemned 101 sentences from a popular doctrinal pamphlet by the Jansenist theologian Pasquier Quesnel as heretical. Since the incriminated sentences included quotations from the Church Fathers and other doctrines that had until then been considered orthodox, the opposition to the bull that now

began went far beyond Jansenist circles in the narrower sense. The struggle against the Bull *Unigenitus* united Jansenist theologians, Gallican and conciliarist bishops, and large segments of the lower clergy, especially in the diocese of Paris, with the Parisian magistrates and advocates intent on the political prerogatives of the French *parlements* and the containment of ecclesiastical jurisdiction; religious, legal, and political aspects mixed in France in the protest movement of the so-called «*appellants*» against the Bull *Unigenitus* in a way that ultimately led to the greatest constitutional crisis of the French monarchy before the Revolution around the middle of the century (cf. Van Kley, 1996; Maire, 1998).

Crucial to the clout of this combined opposition to the French-style absolute monarchy was the fact that the protagonists of the resistance very soon turned to the tribunal of the public. The «*parti janséniste*», as this political-religious opposition movement was called by contemporaries, organized its resistance not only at the parish level, through intensive preaching and pastoral activity, but above all through print media. Therefore, the *Unigenitus* crisis also saw the emergence of the first explicitly oppositional periodical in France: The *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* was an underground journal, officially forbidden but widely read not only in Paris where it was printed, but also in other parts of France and throughout Europe. It was a newspaper specialised in religious topics, and it had a clear Jansenist tendency –

which means that, apart from certain theological and political characteristics, it was fiercely anti-Jesuit. Despite continuous police investigations, the clandestine editors managed to publish the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* once a week from 1728 to 1803, and its estimated print run was 2000 copies in average, sometimes even rising up to the quite extraordinary number of 6000 – which was about the same number of copies as the very official *Gazette de France* usually produced.² In short, the French Jansenist *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* was one of the most important newspapers in Europe. In addition, there were thousands of Jansenist pamphlets and treatises, many of which were explicitly addressed to the ordinary faithful. Clandestine Jansenist book production from 1713 to the Revolution is estimated at about 3,400 individual titles, with one of the peaks occurring in the years 1755 to 1765 (Maire, 1998: 138) – the period that also saw the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal and the height of Pombal's international propaganda.

The enormous propaganda machinery that had been installed by the Jansenists around 1730, with secret printing presses and its own financing and distribution system, thus showed its efficiency above all in the great domestic

political crisis of the 1750's and 1760's, in which the clergy, the government and the parliaments fought bitter battles. These conflicts first ignited over the affair of the refusal of sacraments for Jansenists. In 1746, Archbishop Christophe de Beaumont of Paris had decreed that in his diocese the sacraments of death could be administered only if the dying person could produce confirmation that confession had been made to a priest who had accepted the Bull *Unigenitus*. This led to Jansenists being denied the last rites, which in turn led to public protest and unrest. At this point the *parlement* of Paris, as the highest secular court of the kingdom, intervened against the bishop: arguing that it was a matter of maintaining public order, the secular magistrates tried to force the archbishop to grant the sacraments to the Jansenists. During these years, the *parlements* aggressively argued, even against the king, that they had to protect the fundamental rights («*lois fondamentales*») of the kingdom against encroachments by both the Catholic Church and the absolutist monarch. Thus, the conflict over the refusal of sacraments was aimed at far more fundamental questions about the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction and about the constitutional function of *parlements* in the

² Jeremy Popkin estimates the circulation of the *Gazette de Leyde* at the end of the 1740's at 1000 to 1500 copies, a large part of which was destined for the French market (see Popkin, 1991, I: 468-469). The *Gazette de France*, with reprints in the province, reached 6800 to 8800 copies in 1749 (Feyel, 1991, I: 443-449, here 446), the circulation of the *Courrier d'Avignon*, published in papal Avignon, fluctuated between 2800 and up to 8000 copies in 1758-1769 (Moulinas, 1991, I: 272-273). The circulation of the Jansenist *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* is estimated to be as high as 6000 copies (Sgard, 1991, II: 951-953).

French monarchy (Van Kley, 1996: 135-190). In this constitutional conflict, the *parlements* claimed a role as a bulwark against ecclesiastical and ministerial despotism and increasingly also as the mouthpiece of the nation, and they asserted this claim not only against the church and the episcopate but also, if necessary, against the king and the government – probably most spectacularly with the banning of the Jesuit Order from France in the years 1761 to 1764. The argumentation of the *parlements* against the Jesuit Order was based on the same legal principles as their judgments in the case of the refusals of sacraments, and they actually succeeded in enforcing the ban of the Society of Jesus in France against the government and the will of Louis XV.

In the process, the Jansenist parliamentary opposition made intensive use of the printing press and visual media. Parliamentary documents were mass-produced in the *parlement's* official printing house and were not subject to censorship. Thus, in 1755, the Paris *parlement* published a resolution condemning the clergy of St. Etienne du Mont for denying the sacraments.³ In such cases, the *parti janséniste* was able to exert considerable influence on the French public. In addition, they used their own underground media such as the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. For instance, the newspaper's

cover illustration for the year 1761 denounces in the upper right corner in a medallion how a dying Jansenist is denied the last rites (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – Frontispiece of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* (Bibliothèque de Port Royal, 1761, est. 289).

Remarkably, this cover also contains several allusions to the contemporaneous events in Portugal. Most obviously in the image of the Jesuit Gabriele Malagrida, who at this time was awaiting execution in a Lisbon dungeon as an alleged royal assassin and heretic. This, then, is an excellent example of how the French Jansenists embedded Pombal's propaganda into their own framing narratives.

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³ *Arrêt de la cour du parlement du 3 février 1755 [condemning the clergy of St-Etienne-du Mont in Paris for refusing to administer the sacraments]* (Paris: Simon, 1755).

Pombal's PR offensive started a few years before the Jesuit bans began in France. Nevertheless, as these examples show, his publications met with a public already highly politicized and polarized by the affair of the refusal of sacraments and with a perfectly organized journalistic machinery. The material from Portugal was eagerly seized upon, not only because it was against the Jesuits, but also because Gallican principles – long universally understood – were playing a role in the diplomatic conflict between Lisbon and Rome: at stake was nothing less than the question of papal supremacy in the Catholic world and the relationship between spiritual and temporal power.

3. French Visual Media in the Battle of Opinion on the Portuguese Jesuit Affair

Some examples may serve to underline in more detail how Pombal's propaganda was received in France.⁴ An illustrated broadsheet that was published anonymously in France, probably between 1759 and 1761, shows a number of figures arranged in a circle (fig. 2).⁵



Fig. 2 – Anonymous, *Religion des Jésuites parricide des rois et des peuples* (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1761, est. Qb1).

Three of them can easily be identified as Jesuits – if only because of the textual elements attached.⁶ The heading reads «religion of the Jesuits parricides of kings and peoples». The figures in this image can be identified, clockwise from top center, as Gabriele Malagrida, a Lombardian Jesuit active in Portugal, the Marquis and Marchioness of Távora, members

⁴ The following is covered in more detail in Vogel, 2023.

⁵ A slightly different, colored version entitled *Au Dieu protecteur des roys et des peuples* is kept in the Qb1 collection in the *estampes* section of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. An uncolored version of this latter image is kept in the same section, coll. Hennin, n. 8, 892.

⁶ On the iconography of the Jesuits that had developed as early as the sixteenth century in popular prints in the context of confessional polemics, see Niemetz (2008).

of an ancient Portuguese noble family, the Jesuit Jean de Matos, the Duke of Aveiro, another high-ranking Portuguese aristocrat, a third Jesuit named Jean Alexandre, finally on the top left two men named Joseph Policarpio and Antonio Alvarez.

All of these individuals were notorious at the time, having been identified as the masterminds behind an assassination attempt on Portugal's King Joseph I in September 1758. For several weeks, starting in January 1759, news from Lisbon occupied the first pages of the most important periodicals throughout Europe, and even specialized pamphlet magazines emerged. The horror at the attempted regicide was unanimous, the interest in the process was enormous, and the reporting on the execution was as detailed as one was used to in such cases (Vogel, 2006: 50-75). The French public was also particularly sensitive to the Távora affair because only about two years earlier, in January 1757, there had been a failed assassination attempt on the French king Louis XV. The perpetrator, a servant named Robert François Damiens (1715-57), was executed in a particularly gruesome manner by a poorly executed dismemberment in Paris in March 1757. The Damiens affair also received widespread media coverage, and

even then there was public speculation about accomplices and instigators. In particular, the rumor that Damiens had been commissioned by the Jesuits enjoyed great popularity, but was always denied by official sources. In any case, the almost immediate publication of the court records by the government only a few weeks after the execution invalidated rather than strengthened these rumors (Rétat, 1979: 41-49; cf. Van Kley, 1984).

In Portugal, however, things went quite differently. The Portuguese government followed the French example in publishing the verdict against the noble conspirators, but the case was far from closed for that matter. Unlike in France, the Portuguese verdict stated in no ambiguous terms that besides the noble culprits some prominent members of the Jesuit Order were involved in the conspiracy against the king's life as well.⁷ In particular, Father Gabriele Malagrida was mentioned several times by name. The judgment was immediately translated and spread throughout Europe, much to the displeasure of the Jesuits and the papacy.⁸

In this specific media context, figure 2 was conceived as an almost verbatim visual translation of the judgment published by the Por-

⁷ On the motives of the Portuguese government to act against the Jesuits and in particular the anti-Jesuitism of Pombal, see Colombo & Guasti, 2015: 117-138.

⁸ Countless versions of this text in Portuguese, French, Italian, German and English circulated in Europe at this time. Excerpts also appeared in all major newspapers, see Vogel, 2006: 59-63, and for some bibliographical notes, 361-52. In the following, all citations are

tuguese government in January 1759. The textual elements of the image are, for the most part, verbatim excerpts from the official judgment, assigning each figure its specific role in the conspiracy against the king, as stated in the judgment. For example, the verdict names the Duke of Aveiro as the main perpetrator of the conspiracy, since he planned the regicide in order to make himself king, while the Marquis and Marquess of Távora provided money and horses to carry out the deed; both assertions appear in the speech bubbles of the corresponding figures in the picture. The Jesuits, in turn, are said to have not only provided spiritual assistance to the conspirators, but also declared the murder of the king to be less than a venial sin – a statement visualized here in the figure of Malagrida, who speaks these very words: «You will not even be guilty of a venial sin if you kill the king», as he gives communion to the two murderers on his right.⁹ The text added to the lower edge of the picture clarifies the actual context of events in which this picture was created and to which it refers; it names the Jesuits as the main instigators of the conspiracy («*Chefs de la Conspiration*») and evokes the audience's expectation that the imprisoned Jesuits will also be sentenced imminently («Ces Peres a la teste de plusieurs autes [sic] de leurs So-

cieté ont été mis dans les fers ou il attendent leur jugement»).

So what happened when the Portuguese text was translated into a French image? This visual document was clearly meant to stake out a position in the ongoing news coverage. Moreover, it is also a major example of the iconography of conspiracism emerging in early modern Europe (Caumanns & Önnersfors, 2020: 401-414). The circular arrangement of the individuals not only visualizes the conspiracy as a whole but also assigns specific tasks and responsibilities to each of the conspirators. The close intermedial link with the central official document, the verdict, functions as a subtle strategy of authentication. In fact, both elements reinforce each other. What the verdict argues awkwardly over many pages is made clear here «at a glance» and thus achieves an almost irresistible visual plausibility. At the same time, the close adherence to the official text lends the image a credibility and plausibility that it would otherwise have had difficulty claiming as an anonymous pamphlet.

As this example shows, the process of visualization in itself already leads to a certain radicalization of the message included in the original Portuguese text. This is particularly evident in the intermediality of news images

taken from the French version published in *Recueil de toutes les pieces et nouvelles...* (1760, I: 228-265), and are quoted as *Jugement*.

⁹ The French version of the verdict reads: «En même tems les mêmes Religieux décidoient que le Parricide qui tueroit a Majesté ne seroit pas même coupable d'un péché véniel», *Jugement*, 232-233.

from the 18th century: these images virtually never came without text. Their inherent intermediality thus linked these images to the broader background of ongoing news coverage and related public debate. At the same time, competing narratives that circulated among the public via different media constituted the reception horizon of each image. In this sense, beyond their inherent intermediality, visual media also possess a potential narrativity that lies in their ability to adapt to and connect with recipients' cognitive frame narratives (Wolf, 2003: 182). Those transmedial and culturally acquired cognitive frame narratives are not only shaped by current news reporting but by all sorts of cultural knowledge. In 1759 France, such cultural knowledge would include the Damiens affair as well as the affair of the refusal of sacraments and a whole tradition of anti-Jesuit imagery dating back to the 16th-century.

Christian iconography in general and allegory in particular were important forms of early modern cultural knowledge. They represent another means of enriching images with narrative meaning and activating their potential narrativity. In connection with conspiratorial patterns, allegories in particular can become highly potent features because their task is precisely to visualize what is normally invisible. The three Jesuits in figure 1 all come with specific attributes in addition to their speech bubbles and other text elements. Below, on the left, Jean Alexandre holds up a dagger,

while on the right his fellow Jesuit Jean de Matos raises a chalice containing a snake with the words «Poison for all the kings of the earth and their subjects». At the same time, together with the Duke of Aveiro, he tramples religion, symbolized by a cross lying on the ground. On top of it all, Malagrida not only abuses the Sacrament of Communion, but has lit a fire right next to the portrait of the Portuguese King. The objects depicted here all tell stories, in the condensed form of an allegory, about the motives and the plans of the people to whom they are assigned. By virtue of their highly symbolical attributes, Malagrida, Matos and Alexandre were not merely represented as three individuals, but as typical representatives of their Order, i.e., as archetypes of the nefarious Jesuit. Within baroque pictorial culture, it did not take much to turn an individual Jesuit into an allegory of the Society of Jesus, and the Society of Jesus into an allegory of evil. Some visual tropes, in this case, a dagger, a poisonous chalice and a fire, were sufficient to evoke a whole tradition of anti-Jesuit imagery lingering on the horizon (cf. Pavone, 2019: 833-854; Fabre & Maire, 2010).

These and other visual tropes were used as incriminating attributes of Jesuits in many if not all images that were produced in the context of the Pombaline propaganda. In 1759, several popular engravings visualized the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal, ordered by the king on the first anniversary of the assassination attempt on September 3, 1759. One

leaflet illustrates extracts from the royal edict with an emblematic motif, showing a female allegory of the Society of Jesus brandishing a knife and setting the globe of the earth and a royal crown on fire (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 – Anonymous [Nicolas Godonnesche], *Les Jesuites chasses des etats de Portugal* (Bibliothèque de Port Royal, est. 561).

Aside from the inherent intermediality of the sheet, which is again very evident in this ex-

ample and again refers to an official text, other visual tropes of anti-Jesuitism are introduced here. While the poisonous chalice is missing, the snake representing the poison is still in the image, this time slithering over a small stack of books. Most contemporary observers understood this as an allusion to the *Erros impios e sediciosos* (1759)¹⁰, one of the centerpieces of Pombaline propaganda, which contains a compilation of the allegedly seditious and heretical teachings of the Jesuits. To those observers, it literally went without saying that the snake on the pile of books represented these poisonous Jesuit doctrines denounced by Pombal's propaganda. Another popular theme of the Pombaline anti-Jesuit propaganda, the riches of the Order, was symbolized here by an open pouch with gold coins spilling onto the floor. Another element is not immediately apparent to today's observers, but was obvious to contemporaries: this picture belonged to a whole series of similar depictions circulated by the parti janséniste in the course of the affair of the denials of the sacraments in France (cf. Vogel, 2009). Thus, the French Jansenists incorporated Pombal's propaganda into their own frame narrative.

A number of images that appeared after 1759 combined these and other visual tropes of anti-Jesuitism with pictorial strategies that betrayed not only Gallican and/or Jansenists ideas, but a genuinely conspiracist worldview.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive bibliography of contemporary translations, see Vogel, 2006: 345-346.

Put very simply, such a worldview can be described as a secularized answer to the theodicy problem. Providing a hyper-rational explanation of the existence of evil in this world, a conspiracist worldview implies, among other things, that the evil conspirators hide behind masks and act in secret, while the calling of the conspiracy theorist is to uncover their secret machinations and ultimately save the world (cf. Barkun, 2013: 3-4; Butter & Knight, 2020: 2). A corresponding visual strategy is to show the very act of unmasking the evil, as can be seen in an anonymous illustration to a violent anti-Jesuit pamphlet published in French in 1762 (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – Anonymous cover illustration (BPR, est. 732).

An avenging angel, armed with lightning and fire, has just torn the mask off a Jesuit's face. But the point here is not just to show that the Jesuits are masters of disguise. The painting in its entirety is an allegory, and by decoding it, the viewer participates in the act of unmasking and revealing the true character of the Society of Jesus. Alluding to the Book of Revelation, the Jesuit takes the place of the Whore of Babylon riding the seven-headed apocalyptic beast. Under the Jesuit's cloak, in the shadows behind his back, appears a fury wielding a dagger and a torch, which we already know will be used to kill the powerful and set the whole world on fire. Some of the monster's heads pounce on a pile of books that, according to the inscriptions, contain divine and secular law, natural law and scientific laws («droit scientifique»). In front of it are the papal tiara and a royal crown as symbols of spiritual and secular power, which are also threatened by the beast. At the left edge of the painting, two figures, a Chinese and a Native American, symbolize the missionary work of the Jesuits in Asia and the Americas, while at the bottom right a schoolboy represents the educational work of the Jesuits in their colleges. All three figures turn away from the monster in horror, as if seeing it in its true form for the first time. The angel and the lightning bolts that attack the Jesuit from above are sent from heaven, but the place in the clearing among the clouds where in traditional Christian iconography a glorious Christ would have

been seen in judgment is now occupied by the allegory of justice, illuminated by the sun that surrounds it like a halo. An entirely earthly justice, guided by the Enlightenment, thus appears here as judge and savior of humanity, in a blatant secularization of the Christian eschatological concept of the Last Judgment.

4. Conclusion: From event conspiracy to super conspiracy

These three examples taken from French visual media that were produced in reaction to Pombal's propaganda show that by 1762 at the latest, the French public debate that had initially been fuelled by Pombal's propaganda already went far beyond the Portuguese case concerning the Jesuits. The Távora affair was merely an *event conspiracy* in the sense of Michael Barkun's extremely useful typology of conspiracy theories; the theory – or the narrative – put forward by the Portuguese government was, at least initially, only «held to be responsible for a limited, discrete event or set of events», namely the assassination attempt on the Portuguese king (Barkun, 2013: 6). Looking at the intermediality, and namely the visual dimension of the news reporting about the Távora affair can reveal the mechanisms at work when imagination takes over and lays the groundwork for the propagation of broader conspiracy theories of the systemic or even the superconspiracy type. Systemic conspiracies as defined by Barkun, denounce how «a single, evil organization implements a

plan to infiltrate and subvert existing institutions» (Barkun, 2013: 6). This is certainly true about the anti-Jesuit narrative propagated by Pombal. However the last example goes far beyond this. It can be understood as the visual translation of what Barkun has defined as a super-conspiracy, which is an all-encompassing construct joining multiple systemic and event conspiracies in complex ways in order to provide a global explanation of the «non-appearance of utopia» in History (Cubitt, 1989: 16). In this image, all references to clearly identifiable actors or specific events in Portugal or elsewhere have disappeared. And yet the image wants to communicate an urgent fact about the then current state of the world.

The analysis of 18th-century anti-Jesuit conspiratorial imagery suggests that the visual news culture in the 18th-century clearly had a particular affinity with conspiratorial reasoning. The allegorical language of Baroque engravings all but compelled the viewer to decode a hidden meaning behind the surface appearances. In the midst of a densely woven network of media reports, these images were able to develop a particularly explosive power because their high degree of intermediality provided them with an overwhelming narrative potential. The latter example is particularly noteworthy because it is a visual translation of an anti-Jesuit superconspiracy propagated by the Order's most radical enemies. Numerous images produced in the aftermath

of the Portuguese expulsion and leading up to the papal suppression of the Jesuits functioned this way.¹¹ The almost random combination of different visual tropes and allegories together with their inherent intermediality unfolded a strong narrative potential and thereby created a sort of visual evidence for a conspiracy theory that otherwise needed hundreds of pages to build up its argument. The allegorical pictorial language of these news-reporting images was, in a way, a specifically baroque form of non-linear «hypertextuality» that went well beyond the linear patterns of causality attributed to early modern verbal/textual print culture (Aupers *et al.*, 2020: 389).

This great explosive power could have simply fizzled out, though, if the anti-Jesuit conspiratorial narratives fueled by the images had not themselves had a particular strength, namely their credibility based on authority. If the French reception of the Pombaline propaganda went far beyond of what Pombal could have orchestrated all by himself, the topics discussed in the French and then also European war of pamphlets equally slipped out of his control. The whole purpose of Pombal's campaign was to get the official Portuguese view of the Jesuit affair accepted throughout Europe in order to justify the expulsion of the fathers and to strengthen his position in the

diplomatic conflict with Rome. But the journalists, writers, translators and artists engaged in the pamphlet war followed their own agendas. So, when Pombal conferred royal dignity upon traditional anti-Jesuit stereotypes, he simultaneously allowed for the Portuguese king to be appealed to as a witness to polemical issues, such as the affair of French Jansenism, he had no interest of being associated with at all.

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¹¹ The rich anti-Jesuit graphic production was even marketed by an enterprising Dutch publisher in a scrapbook at the time: *Recueil de figures historiques, symboliques, & tragiques...* (Amsterdam: Ray Libraire, 1762). For an extensive, if certainly not complete, list of anti-Jesuit engravings from the time of the suppression, see Vogel, 2006: 340-344.

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