

Dans le jardin de son père: Tracing the Themes of Louisiana French Folk Music
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Past studies of Cajun music have focused primarily on its stylistic elements, as well as on historical and socio-cultural issues related to its evolution (Broven 1983; Savoy 1984; Ancelet 1984; Ancelet 1989). Except for Irene Whitfield Holmes' *Louisiana French Folk Songs* (1939), little attention has been given to the thematic and textual content of Louisiana French song lyrics that would enable comparisons between this music and its sister and cousin traditions in French North America (Québec, Ontario, the Acadian Maritimes, the Old Mines district of Missouri, the old Detroit region, the old Illinois country, and the Franco-American areas of the Northeast) and other parts of the French-speaking world (e.g. France, the West Indies, and the Indian Ocean). This is likely due to several reasons. First, as oral poetry, songs are perceived to be more textually stable than, for example, tales and legends, and thus more resistant to change. Second, the French language of the songs can be difficult for some of today's Cajun music fans to penetrate. Third, contemporary Cajun music is essentially dance music whose lyrics are secondary to the socializing interests of many participants and observers alike. Also, some scholars such as Catherine Blanchet have insisted that there was an essential difference between the older unaccompanied tradition of what has been called "home music" and the more recent public sounds of Cajun dance music, which is so deeply influenced by the creolization process that has occurred in French Louisiana. The percussive improvisational African influence especially sets Cajun music stylistically so far apart from its Acadian and Quebecois counterparts that comparisons have not been tempting.

Yet it would seem unlikely that Cajun musicians invented out of whole cloth all of the dance music lyrics they first began to record in 1928. Louisiana French unaccompanied ballad tradition was recorded extensively by the Lomaxes in 1934, six years after the first commercial recordings of Cajun and Creole dance music, and again as late as the 1960s by Harry Oster and Ralph Rinzler. I have recorded a considerable number of unaccompanied songs beginning in the 1970s. So a rich textual base was available to be drawn upon. In fact, a few less prominent Cajun recording artists, such as John Bertrand, Delma Lachney, Alcide "Blind Uncle" Gaspard, recorded instrument-accompanied versions of previously unaccompanied ballads between 1928 and 1938, the same period that also produced the now more familiar sounds of Cajun dance band music by such musicians as Joe and Cleoma Falcon, the Breaux Brothers, Dennis McGee and Angelas Lejeune. Lachney and Gaspard were from Avoyelles Parish, outside the sphere of influence of the Acadians or the accordion-driven dance bands that began to emerge at the turn of the 20th century, but Bertrand was from Opelousas, in the heart of Cajun country, and played the accordion himself in a Cajun dance band. What is clear from some of these less typical early commercial recordings is that the process of transforming ballads to popular music was indeed taking place in the context of Cajun music at the time. An exploration of other commercial recordings from the 1920s, '30s, '40s and even the '50s shows that this was apparently not an uncommon practice, even though the

substantial transformations increasingly obscured their ancestry in traditional sources. Based on a larger scale project comparing transcriptions of songs from the collections of Lomax, Oster, Brandon, Rinzler and Dubois, as well as my own, with those in collections from other parts of the French Americas and France, this paper considers a few comparative examples to explore the historicity and resiliency of the oral poetry of Cajun music from the more ancient unaccompanied ballad tradition to the songs of contemporary Cajun dance music.

France's first settlements in North America were in Nouvelle France in 1603 and Acadie in 1604. French settlers continued to come to the New World throughout the 17th and most of the 18th centuries. They did not suddenly forget their traditions and cultural heritage when they crossed the Atlantic. Just as they continued to celebrate the holidays and festivals that they had known in their native land, it is likely that they also continued to tell the stories and sing the songs that they had learned in their families and villages. Many of the traditional songs collected in Quebec and the Acadian Maritimes have also been collected in the provinces of France. Soon enough, however, the new, very different realities of the North American frontier began to transform certain elements of their lives, in some cases quicker than others. For example, those who settled Acadie and Nouvelle France rather quickly understood that they should adapt the kinds of structures they built to shelter them from the harsh winters. Those who eventually developed the Louisiana colony beginning in 1699 had to adapt to the heat and rain of the subtropical climate. Reference to these structural changes can be heard in versions of "Cadet Roussel" from France, Quebec and Louisiana. In the French version one hears that Cadet Roussel's "marvelous" house has "ni poutre, ni chevron." In a Louisiana version collected by Whitfield in 1939, it has "ni poteaux, ni chevrons," an obvious reference to the *poteau-en-terre* construction common in the colonial context. By comparing versions from France, various parts of French-speaking North America and Louisiana, we can hear how certain elements of the songs changed over time. Stylistic elements and melodies prove to be the least stable in most cases. But it is the changes in the lyrical content of the songs that have been under considered. It is interesting to consider how and why those elements changed.

Songs and stories that continue to resonate within a community are the ones that tend to survive. Details can change slightly while the core of the story remains essentially the same. For example, flora and fauna can change to reflect natural realities. In a traditional song about the birds' wedding, the marriage partners change according to what was familiar in the local setting from raven and crane in Quebec to quail and partridge in Louisiana; so do the animals that appear from the woods bearing offerings for the wedding reception. Other sorts of details can change as well, such as time. In various versions of "La veuve aux deux maris," a man departs to fight in a military campaign soon after his wedding. He promises his new bride to return soon, but ends up staying away much longer than expected. Upon his return he finds that his wife assumed him dead and is remarrying that very day. She remarks, "This morning I awoke a widow and now I find myself with two husbands." The time of the husband's absence can vary from ten to twelve years in some French versions to seven years in versions from Quebec to four years in Louisiana versions,

reflecting the Crusades, the French and Indian War and the Civil War or the World Wars respectively.

Versions of “La belle qui fait la morte” have been recorded throughout much of the French-speaking world. Typically, the song tells the story of a young girl who is kidnapped from her father’s garden by three young captains. In all versions, the youngest takes her by her white hand (a ballad commonplace and a symbol of purity and innocence) and puts her behind him on his gray steed (symbolic of a loss of innocence). In the French version, they take her to a Paris hotel where she is to spend the night with them. In the Louisiana version, she is to spend the night with only the youngest captain. There is more possibility in the Louisiana version that the kidnapping could have been motivated by love. Nevertheless, in all versions, she feigns death to save her honor. When the captains find her apparently dead, they ask themselves, “Where shall we bury her?” In all versions, they decide to take her back to her father’s garden where they found her. In the versions from Quebec and Louisiana, they will bury her in her father’s garden specifically under the three *fleurs de lys*. She later wakes to console her grieving father, explaining her ploy. What is interesting is the detail concerning the *fleurs de lys*. In another Louisiana French version, from Creole singer Alma Barthelemy, the maiden is initially found among the *laurier blanc* but taken back for burial under the *fleurs de lys*. While her father’s garden could be a flower garden, why the specific reference to *fleurs de lys* in the North American French versions, a detail that is missing from the French version? And why especially three *fleurs de lys*? Taking history into consideration, the three *fleurs de lys* were the symbol of the French royal flag, a detail that has disappeared in the contemporary version of the song as recorded in the French Republic. After the French Revolution guillotined Louis XVI, images and references to the reviled monarchy were erased, even abolished from popular culture. But the people who became the Cajuns and Québécois left France in the 17th century, long before the Revolution. And in French North American communities, the *fleurs de lys* have endured as a symbol, not of the monarchy, but of Frenchness. They are on the flags of Québec and Acadiana; they are in business and governmental signs. And they are preserved in this song.

Pursuing the clues further, if the young girl is to be buried under the three *fleurs de lys*, the French flag, then she is undoubtedly French. If those who kidnapped her can be reasonably considered her adversaries, then who are they? It is not unlikely that they would be thought of as English. Why then did the symbol survive? Because it resonated, because it conveyed an element that the singers and their audiences would have understood, if not overtly, at least subliminally. Consider the fact that there is not one song in the traditional Cajun repertoire that addresses the Acadian exile of 1755 directly. Yet many Cajun songs reflect the pain and suffering, the separation and alienation, the broken families and lonely wandering that were the result of the exile. There are no songs in traditional blues that address slavery directly, but much of the blues reflects its unhappy results.

There is also a dramatic difference between traditional French and Louisiana versions of “La fille de géolier.” In the French version, the prisoner seems to have instigated the relationship. He actively courts the jailer’s daughter in the opening lines. In the Louisiana versions, she is consistently described as having a crush on

him without mentioning his participation. In the French version, the maiden steals the keys from under her father's pillow and releases her lover, though he does not leave as she suggests. In the Louisiana versions, she steals them in one and finds them left carelessly out in another, but her lover refuses to leave for fear of implicating her. In the French version, the lovers seem surprised by the executioner when they see him arrive behind them. The story ends happily, with the judge so moved by the plight of the lovers that he has them dressed and married, wanting to hear no more of them. In the Louisiana versions, the lovers seem to have expected the executioner who calls the prisoner out to be hanged. The ending is tragic; the prisoner looks back once on the gallows to see his lover fallen dead behind him, and asks that she be covered with his cloak so that he might not see her this way just before his own death. This preference for what could be described as a blusier story line in the Louisiana context is paralleled by a similar penchant for blusier melodies there. This could be due to a preservation of a medieval appreciation for the gallows lament and/or the influence of the actual blues from Afro Creole tradition.

1. French version of "La fille du geôlier"
2. Edius Naquin version

In 1929, John Bertrand, a Cajun musician and singer from Opelousas, Louisiana, recorded a waltz-time version of "La fille du geôlier" for Paramount Records. The story line follows the basic Louisiana version described above, with a tragic ending and blusy style. Bertrand sang and played the accordion, his son Anthony played fiddle and Alcide "Blind Uncle" Gaspard played guitar.

3. John Bertrand version

Gaspard, from Avoyelles Parish, also performed with Delma Lachney, also from Avoyelles. The two had made several records together and alone. Gaspard and Lachney had French Canadian origins, while Bertrand was of Acadian descent. What all three had in common was a repertoire of old ballads that they turned into accompanied songs for commercial records (cf. also Gaspard's "Sur le bord de l'eau," "Natchitoches," and "Mercredi soir passé," Lachney's "Le bébé et le gambleur" and Bertrand's "Les hirondelles," "Le soldat fatigué," "Le pont de Nantes," and "La délaissée"). It would be difficult to measure the popularity of their songs at the time. They are certainly less well-known and thus less influential than the songs of the Falcons, the Breauxs, McGee and Courville and other more "mainstream" Cajun musicians, but it could be that the transition process from ballads to dance music is simply more evident in their recordings. These lyrics still reflect the longer, more complex story lines of ballad tradition, whereas the style in Cajun dance lyrics quickly evolves during the 20th century to produce powerful but brief, impressionistic lyrics that might have a chance to break through and be noticed during the courtship rituals of the social dance context.

The traditional element of Cajun music would have acted as a conservative influence. Things change, but in ways that make sense and that feel culturally appropriate. As many have pointed out, Cajun music is the result of a remarkable process of cultural evolution. But it is not unlikely that lyrical material in active memory contributed to the development of dance music lyrics. It seems clear that texts evolved to reflect changing contexts. There are more than a few examples that seem to indicate that texts continued to evolve to adapt to changing formats and

styles as well, sometimes so much that it is difficult to recognize them. One of Shirley Bergeron's signature waltzes, "La valse de la belle" was recorded during the years just after WWII as Cajun music was making a comeback from Americanization and the string band craze of the 1930s and early '40s. The lyrics represent what had by then become classic Cajun dance music style, with strong images in short, impressionistic verses. A man asks a young girl for her hand in marriage. She rebuffs him, but gently, explaining that she is too young to consider marriage. The traditional French ballad, "J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mer," is based on the very same premise. And is expressed in remarkably similar words, including the recurring reference to the girl as "la belle."

4. "J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mer"

5. "La valse de la belle" Shirley Bergeron and the Veteran Playboys

The Bergeron family was from the Pointe Noire area, a deeply traditional Acadian cultural stronghold. Could it be that these musicians recorded a song that had long been in their family tradition and evolved into this now appropriate stylistic form? The Lejeune clan, also from the Pointe Noire area, produced a number of excellent singers and musicians, including Angelas, Steven, Rodney, Vinesse and Iry Lejeune. Iry, who led the revival of traditional Cajun music after WWII, recorded "Jeunes filles de la campagne," a musical warning against the misery of married life. The issues raised in the song are once again remarkably similar to those raised in the traditional French *chansons des mal mariées*, of which there are hundreds such as "Filles qui êtes à marier."

6. "Filles qui êtes à marier"

7. "Jeunes filles de la campagne" Iry Lejeune

Both versions address a direct warning to the young girls of the land about the difficulties of marriage. In the French version, the warning is from an experienced woman; in the Louisiana version, it is paradoxically from an abusive man. This likely has more to do with the fact that women rarely had access to the bandstand in Cajun society than with genuine contrition. The dance music lyrics were probably transformed from an older ballad source more typically sung in the voice of a woman. It makes sense that such culturally important notions survived, even when exact lyrics did not. The connotation is preserved despite changes in the denotation.

Similarly Canray Fontenot's "Les barres de la prison" is reminiscent of ancient French gallows laments, such as "La complainte de Mandrin." Canray attributes an obscure 1929 recording by Douglas Bellard as the source for his own composition recorded in the 1960s. Since then, Dewey Balfa, Steve Riley and several other Cajun musicians have adopted and adapted Fontenot's song, shortening it and tightening the verses even further so that it will fit the impressionistic style of Cajun music dance lyrics. In the French folksong, Mandrin, the *enfant perdu*, describes several thefts as examples of what led to his arrest and condemnation, including stealing a thousand *écus* from a priest, along with his robes and cloaks which he then sold. He is then captured, tried, convicted and condemned to be hanged in the public square. From the gallows, as he looks upon France, he sees his former companions, and tells one of them to break the news to his mother that he will not be returning to her. In an alternative ending, he laments that he would not be in this godforsaken place had he listened to the advice his mother and father. The narrator in Canray Fontenot's

“Les barres de la prison” bids farewell to his mother, father, brothers and sisters in the opening lines, explaining that he is condemned not only to die but also to burn in the fires of hell. Like Mandrin, he knows he deserves his fate. In the remarkably compact second verse, he suggests in a few lines without specifics the trouble that got him to this point. The rest of the song has a mournful mother weeping the fate of her wayward son, who informs her that it is too late for tears, that she should instead pray for the salvation of his soul. In 1934, The Lomaxes recorded Edier Segura’s remarkably similar “Viens t’assir sur la croix de ma tombe.” In the opening lines, the narrator laments that his situation is so hopeless that the priest will not confess him. Convinced that he has lost his soul for eternity, he is especially concerned with the image of the gallows and his subsequent burial. From the gallows, he notes the presence, not of his comrades, but of a brunette in the crowd, and one gets the clear impression that she has something to do with his troubles. The description of doom also includes obvious religious allusions. The singer is called to the gallows on Friday; he laments that he is going to be placed on a mountain, apparently for his lover; and he calls for her to come and sit on the cross of his tomb three days after his death.

The process of turning earlier unaccompanied songs into dance music is still going on today. Michael Doucet and Beausoleil have transformed several ballads from archival collections into contemporary Cajun music, including Lanese Vincent and Sidney Richard’s “Madame Gallien” (Lomax collection) which became “Pierrot Grouillet et Mademoiselle Josette.”

8. “Madame Gallien” Lanese Vincent and Sidney Richard

9. “Pierrot Grouillet et Mademoiselle Josette” Beausoleil

Zachary Richard had gold records in Quebec and France with funky versions of Césaire Vincent’s “Travailler, c’est trop dur” and Bee Deshotels’ “L’arbre est dans ses feuilles.” Robert Jardell recently won an award for best original song from the Cajun French Music Association with his revival of Edius Naquin’s “Ou t’étais mercredi passé?” Apparently no one remembered that Blind Uncle Gaspard had already recorded a version of it (“Mercredi au soir”) in 1929.

The songs that people preserve and sing across the centuries can contain interesting and important information concerning both the historical origins and the cultural evolution of the society. In the case of the French-language folksongs of Louisiana, the many stylistic and contextual studies of Cajun music have shown us how it functions as a remarkably effective social barometer. Considering songs and performers not directly in the mainstream of the tradition can shed new light on the process of cultural evolution. The few textual studies explored here show that there is more to be learned about the origins and development of Cajun music and what it tells us about the Cajuns and their culture. Generic studies of historical and geographical distribution for their own sake may be outdated, but certain elements of the method used in focused studies can contribute in an important way to our understanding of people and culture. It has been made clear that context can inform us in important ways, but so can texts. Their meanings and how they can be affected by time and place are still at the heart of what folklore does so well. While this may seem obvious to some, it may have been forgotten by others.

Traditional French versions of what is typically called “Isabeau” in North American French communities (Quebec, the Acadian Maritimes, the Old Illinois country and Louisiana) do not name the main character. In most versions, the maiden is walking along in her garden along the banks of a river when she meets thirty sailors on a barge. The youngest is singing a song that the maiden declares she would like to learn. He invites her onto the barge to learn it; the scene in all versions has clear sexual undertones. Once on the barge, she begins to weep. There the versions diverge. In France, she laments the loss of her “*avantage*,” having compromised her honor by joining thirty sailors on a barge. When the young sailor offers to give her honor back, she regretfully responds that it is not something that one can recover like borrowed money. In the North American versions, there are instead implications of magic and a role reversal that ends in tragedy. The maiden laments a ring (*anneau d’or*) that she has dropped into the water while embarking. The young singer offers to retrieve it, but on his first dive, he finds nothing, on his second, the ring flies away, and on his third, he drowns. In the French version, the maiden must accept the shame that she anticipates will come as a consequence of her indiscretion. In the Louisiana version, the sailor pays with his life for inadvertently becoming involved with a temptress.

In a version from Quebec, “Le galant” (*Les charbonniers de l’enfer: Chansons a capella*), the same fate befalls a young sailor who discovers a young maiden weeping; there is no song to learn. He asks why she weeps and she tells him that she has lost her ring. When he asks what she will give him in return for retrieving her ring, she offers him a kiss or two if he would like. He drowns on his third dive, after the ring inexplicably “rings” (*sonner*).

La belle et le capitaine (Julien Hoffpauir, New Iberia; AFS 32a1; 1934)

Le plus jeune des trois,
L'a pris par sa main blanche.

The youngest of the three
Took her by the hand.

"Montez, montez, la belle,
Dessus mon cheval gris.
Au logis chez mon père,
Je vous emmènerai."

"Mount up, mount up, fair maiden,
Upon my grey horse.
Straight to my father's house
Shall I take you."

Quand la belle-z-entend,
Elle s'est mis-t-à pleurer.
"Soupez, soupez, la belle,
Prenez, oui-z-appétit.
Auprès du capitaine
Vous passerez la nuit."

Upon hearing this,
The fair maiden began to weep.
"Eat, eat, fair maiden,
With hearty appetite.
Next to the captain
Will you spend the night."

Quand la belle-z-entend,
La belle est tombée morte.

Upon hearing this,
The fair maiden fell dead.

"Sonnez, sonnez les cloches,
Tambours, violons, marchez.
Ma mignonnette est morte.
J'en ai le cœur dolent.

"Toll, toll the bells,
Sound the drums and violins.
My little girl is dead,
My heart is filled with grief."

"Et où l'enterreront-ils?"
"Dedans le jardin de son père
Sous les trois feuilles de lys.
Nous prions Dieu, cher frère,
Qu'elle aille en paradis."

"And where will they bury her?"
"In her father's garden
Beneath the three lilies.
We pray to God, dear brother,
That she will enter heaven."

Au bout de trois jours,
La belle frappe à la porte.
door.

After three days
The fair maiden knocked at the

"Ouvrez, ouvrez la porte,
Cher père et bien aimé.
J'ai fait la morte trois jours
Pour sauver mon honneur."

"Open, open the door,
Dearest and beloved father.
I feigned death three days
To save my honor."

La belle qui fait la morte (recueilli de Madame Gabrielle Davout en Basse-Normandie par François Redhon; *Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 206*)

Dessous les rosiers blancs,
La belle se promène,
Blanche comme la neige,
Belle comme le jour;
Trois jeunes capitaines
S'en vont lui faire l'amour.

Under the white rose bushes,
The maiden strolls,
As white as the snow,
As beautiful as the day;
Three young captains
Go out to court her.

Le plus jeune des trois
La prit pas sa main blanche:
"Montez, montez, la belle,
Dessus mon cheval gris!
A Paris je vous mène,
Dans une hôtellerie."

The youngest of the three
Took her by her white hand
Mount up, mount up, fair maiden,
Upon my grey steed!
To Paris I will take you
To an inn.

Quand la belle fut monté
Dans la plus haute chambre,
L'hôtesse lui demande:
"Dites-moi, sans mentir,
Etes-vous ici par force
Ou bien pour vos plaisirs?"

Once the maiden had gone up
To the highest room,
The hostess asks her:
"Tell me, without lying,
Are you here by force
Or for your own pleasure?"

La belle lui répond
Comme une fille sage:
"J'y suis ici par force,
Non pas pour mes plaisirs!
Au jardin de mon père
Trois cavaliers m'ont pris!"

The maiden answers
As a well-raised girl:
"I am here by force,
Not for my own pleasure!
In my father's garden
Three captains took me!"

Finissant le discours,
Le capitaine arrive:
"Soupez, soupez la belle,
Avec bon appétit!
Avec trois capitaines,
Vous passerez la nuit."

As she is finishing,
The captain arrives
Take supper, take supper, maiden,
With hearty appetite!
With three captains
Shall you pass the night."

Au milieu du souper,
La belle tomba morte.
"Sonnez, sonnez les cloches,
Sonnez bien doucement!
Car voilà ma mie morte;
J'en ai le coeur dolent.

During her supper,
The maiden fell dead.
"Ring, ring the bells,
Ring them softly!
Here is my love dead;
And my heart is broken for it.

Où l'enterrons-nous,
Cette aimable princesse?
-- Au jardin de son pere,
Là où nous l'avons pris.
Nous prierons Dieu pour elle,
Qu'elle aille en paradis."

Son père se promenait
Tout le long de sa fosse:
"Ouvrez, ouvrez ma tombe,
Mon père, sans plus tarder!
Trois jours j'ai fait la morte,
Pour mon honneur garder."

Where will we bury her,
This lovely princess?
-- In her father's garden,
From whence we took her.
We will pray to God in her behalf
That she will go to heaven."

Her father was strolling
Along her grave site:
"Open, open my tomb,
My father, without delay!
For three days, I feigned death,
To save my honor."

La belle et le capitaine (recueilli d'Alma Barthélémy par Harry Oster; HO 47)

Dessous le laurier blanc, la belle, elle se promène
Blanche comme la neige, jolie comme le jour.
Trois capitaines venaient la faire la cour.

Dessus ce propos-là, la belle, elle se promène.
Dessus ce propos-là, la belle, elle se promène

Montez, montez, la belle, dessus ce cheval gris.
Et moi, par derrière à croupe, nous verrons le pays.

Quand ils furent arrivés au château de l'hôtesse,
Quand ils furent arrivés au château de l'hôtesse,

Mangez, mangez, la belle. Passez vos doux plaisirs.
Avec un capitaine, vous passerez la vie.

Finissant ce propos, la belle, elle tomba morte.
Finissant ce propos, la belle, elle tomba morte.

Tapez, tapez, tambours, trompettes ainsi que violons.
Si ma mie-z-elle est morte, j'aurai le coeur violent.

Où est-ce qu'on l'enterrera, mon aimable civile?
Où est-ce qu'on l'enterrera, mon aimable civile?

Dans le jardin de son père, dessous les trois feuilles de lys.
Que Dieu priera pour elle qu'elle aille au paradis.

Bonjour, bonjour, cher père. Que le bonjour soit donné.
J'ai fait trois jours la morte pour garder mon honneur.

La fille du geôlier (recueilli de Madame Andrée Duffault dans le Berry par Roger Péarron; *Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 188-189*)

C'était la fille d'un geôlier,
Grand Dieu! Qu'elle est donc belle!
Elle est jolie comme le jour,
Un prisonnier lui fait l'amour.

De grand matin, elle s'est levée,
S'en va de chez son père,
Sous l'oreiller de son lit,
Les clefs de la prison elle a pris.

"Sortez, sortez de la prison,
O Pierre, mon ami Pierre!
Sortez, sortez de la prison.
Les portes en sont à l'abandon."

Ils étaient assis sur un banc,
C'était pour causer ensemble.
Il tourne la tête par derrière lui.
C'est le bourreau qu'il voit venir.

"C'est aujourd'hui qu'il faut mourir.
Françoise, ma mie Françoise.
Prends l'anneau d'or que j'ai à mon doigt,
Un autre amant te viendra."

"Un autre amant ne me viendra pas,
Que Pierre, mon ami Pierre!
Un autre amant ne me viendra pas,
J'aimerais bien mourir dans tes bras!"

Le juge a dit au bourreau,
"Grand Dieu! Quel dommage!
Habillons-les et marions-les,
Et ça n'en soit plus parlé!"

La fille du géolier (recueilli d'Edius Naquin par Ralph Rinzler)

C'est une fille d'un grand géolier qui est enamourachée d'un prisonnier
O par un beau dimanche au matin, elle tombe dessus ses genoux
Elle tombe dessus ses genoux en demandant la grâce au juge.

Le grand juge la prend par la main, il dit, "Lève-toi, Marguerite.
Il est condamné pour être pendu."

Elle se retourne à la chambre de son père. Elle vole les clefs de la prison.
Elle va tout droit à la prison, "Sortez, sortez, mon amour, Pierre.
Les clefs sont toutes, toutes à l'abandon."

O pour sortir, je ne sortirai pas. Prenez cet anneau j'ai dans le doigt.
Prenez cet anneau j'ai dans le doigt, faites-vous un autre amour que moi."

O tout le temps en causant et tout le temps s'amusant, le grand bourreau rentre.
"Sortez, sortez, pénitencier, j'ai la corde au côté pour lui mettre au cou."

O quand ils se sont fut dessus ce grand échafaud, il regarde en arrière de lui.
Il voit sa belle qui était tombée morte.
"Prenez, prenez mon grand manteau, couvrez ma belle que je la voye plus."

O le grand juge qui est à son côté, il répond o tout en colère.
"O tu veux pas, mais, l'oublier, tu l'oublieras. Ça sera pour toujours."

La fille du géolier (John Bertrand)

C' une une fille d' un grand géolier qui s' en amourachait d' un prisonnier.
Par un beau dimanche au matin, la belle part en sauvant trouver le juge.
Elle se met à genoux aux pieds du juge en lui demandant toutes les grâces.

Le grand juge, il la prend par la main, il lui dit, "Levez-vous, Marguerite,
Mais votre amant est condamné. Il condamné à être pendu."

La belle s' en va, elle s' en va chez son père toujours en pleurant
Dedans sa chambre, elle est allée en trouvant les clefs tous à l' abandon.

La belle repart, elle s' en va à la prison toujours en pleurant
"Sortez, sortez, jeune homme, mon cher, les clefs sont tous à l' abandon."

"Je vas pas sortir, je ne sortirai pas. Marguerite, j' ai refusé.
Je veux mourir ici pour toi, mais je veux mourir ici pour toi."

Tout en causant et tout en s' amusant, mais voilà le grand bourreau qui arrive.
"Sortez, sortez, pénitencier, mais que je vous mette la corde au cou."

Quand il se fut sur ce grand échafaud, il s' est tourné de bord en arrière.
"Prenez le manteau sur mes épaules et couvrez la belle, car elle, elle est morte."

J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mère (recueilli au Poitou par l'association La Marchoise; *Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 631*)

J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mer,
J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mer,
J'ai fait faire un navire en joncs
Pour aller voir ma mie aux champs.
J'ai fait faire un navire en joncs
Pour aller voir ma mie aux champs.

I had a sea-faring boat made,
I had a sea-faring boat made,
I had a ship of reeds made,
To visit my love in the fields.
I had a ship of reeds made,
To visit my love in the fields.

Je lui ai dit: "Bonjour, la belle,
Que le bonjour vous soit donné;
Belle, voulez-vous vous marier?"

I said to her, "Hello, beautiful maiden,
May you be given a proper welcome;
Beautiful maiden, do wish to marry?"

"Oh! Non Monsieur, je suis trop jeune,
Je n'ai pas encore dis-huit ans,
Pourquoi me parlez-vous d'amant?"

"Oh no, Sir, I am too young,
I am not yet eighteen years old,
Why do you speak to me of a lover?"

"La belle, n'en auriez-vous que quinze,
only

Beautiful maiden, even if you were

Puisque vous êtes à mon goût,
La belle, j'veux m'marier avec vous!

fifteen,
Because you suit my tastes,
Beautiful maiden, I want to marry you.

"La belle, le premier soir des noces,
night
Vous aimerez votre mari,
La belle, vous coucherez avec lui!

"Beautiful maiden, on our wedding
You will love your husband,
Beautiful maiden, you will sleep with
him!

"Vous vous coucherez la première,
Votre mari auprès de vous;
Mon petit coeur, consolez-vous!

You will lay down first,
Your husband next to you;
My dearest heart, take courage!

La belle, quand vous s'rez en ménage,
a
Adieu les plaisirs, les gaités;
L'habit de fille faut plus porter!
maiden.

Beautiful maiden, when you will have
household,
Adieu the pleasures, the gaities;
To wear no more the clothes of a

Adieu la belle fleur de jeunesse!
Adieu les plaisirs les gaités;
La vie de fille faut plus mener."

Adieu the beautiful flower of youth!
Adieu the pleasures, the gaities;
To live no more the life of a maiden.

La valse de la belle (Shirley Bergeron)

Oh c'est la valse de la belle,
Habillée dans sa robe déteindue et haillonnée
C'est comme ça que je l'avais vue longtemps passé
En bas du grand chêne vert, une orpheline qu'elle était.

J'ai demandé pour sa main en mariage,
Elle a dit, "Espère-moi quelques années," en pleurant.
"L'amitié que t'as pour moi est pas perdue.
C'est juste que je suis trop jeune." Et la belle m'a quitté.

Oh it's the waltz of the maiden,
Dressed in her faded and tattered dress.
That's how I first saw her long ago
Under the big live oak, a orphan was she.

I asked for her hand in marriage.
She said, "Wait for me a few years," weeping.
"The love that you have for me is not lost.
It's just that I'm too young." And the maiden left me.

Filles qui êtes à marier (recueilli dans la région de Narbonne; *Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 587-588*)

Filles qui êtes à marier,
Filles qui êtes à marier,
N'levez pas tant la tête,
Car on vous la fera baisser,
Quand vous serez mariées;
Car on vous la fera baisser,
Quand vous serez mariées.

Lorsque vous serez mariées,
Un peu de meilleur temps aurez.
Un peu, mais non pas guère:
Votre mari sera jaloux
Et même un peu sévère.

Si vous voulez vous promener,
Il ne vous laissera aller
Qu'auprès de votre mère,
Et même encore, il vous dira:
"Va, mais n'y reste guère."

Au bout de neuf mois ou d'un an,
Vous aurez fille ou enfant,
Et un enfant ça pleure;
Toute la nuit le bercerez:
Vous ne dormirez guère.

Vos tabliers seront crasseux
Et vos cotillons tout pisseux;
Vous serez mal coiffées,
Vous maudirez l'heure et le jour
De votre mariage.

Jeunes filles de la campagne (Iry Lejeune)

Jeunes filles de la campagne, mariez vous autres jamais.
'Gardez quoi moi, j'ai fait, mis une femme dans l'embarras.
'Garde donc, c'est pas la peine t'essaies à les aimer.
Tu connais donc être musicien, ça paiera pas comme ça.

Jeunes filles de la campagne, mariez vous autres jamais.
'Gardez donc quoi moi, j'ai fait, je m'ai mis dans les misères.
La femme est malheureuse, mais les enfants est bleus.
Garde donc comme c'est misérable, les voir à la traine comme ça.

Jeunes filles de la campagne, mariez vous autres jamais.
Jeune fille, c'est une amulette. 'Garde donc, comment je vas faire.
C'est pas la peine dire non, ils vont toujours te condamner.
Ils vont te faire les aimer, chères, ils vont toujours te condamner.

La complainte de Mandrin (*Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 180-181*)

Z'étions rassemblés trente,
Trente brigands ensemble,
Tous habillés de blanc,
A la mode... vous m'entendez,
Tous habillées de blanc,
A la mode des marchands.

La première volerie
Que j'ai faite dans ma vie,
C'est d'avoir goupillé
La bourse d'un... vous m'entendez,
C'est d'avoir goupillé
La bourse d'un curé.

J'entrai dedans sa chambre,
Mon Dieu, qu'elle était grande!
Il y avait mille écus,
Je mis la main... vous m'entendez,
Il y avait mille écus,
Je mis la main dessus.

J'entrai dedans une autre,
Mon Dieu, qu'elle était haute!
Tant robes que manteaux,
J'en chargeai quatre... vous m'entendez,
Tant robes que manteaux,
J'en chargeai quatre chariots.

Je les menai pour vendre
A la foire en Hollande;
Les vendis bon marché,
Il m'avaient rien... vous m'entendez,
Les vendis bon marché,
Ils m'avaient rien coûté.

Ces messieurs de Grenoble,
Avec les grandes robes
Et leurs bonnets carrés,
Ils m'eurent bientôt... vous m'entendez,
Et leurs bonnets carrés,
Ils m'eurent bientôt jugé.

Ils m'ont jugé à pendre,

Dieu, qu'c'est dur à entendre!
A pendre et étrangler,
Sur la place du... vous m'entendez,
A pendre et étrangler,
Sur la place du marché.

Monté sur la potence,
Je regarde la France;
J'y vois compagnons
A l'ombre d'un... vous m'entendez,
J'y vois compagnons
A l'ombre d'un buisson.

Comgagnon de misère,
Va donc dire à ma mère
Qu'elle ne m'attende plus,
J'suis un enfant... vous m'entendez,
Qu'elle ne m'attende plus,
J'suis un enfant perdu.

Fin alternative (183):

Le curé de Bazoges,
Avec sa longue toge
Et son bonnet carré,
Il nous a bien mal jugés.

Nous a jugés à pendre,
Lundi sans plus attendre.
A pendre et à brûler
Sur la place du marché.

Si j'avais cru mon père,
Mon père aussi ma mère,
Je n'serais pas ici
Dans ce maudit pays!

Barres de la prison (Canray Fontenot; Bois sec: La Musique Créole; Arhoolie 1070)

Good-bye, chère vieille mam,
Good-bye, pauvre vieux pap,
Good-bye à mes frères
Et mes chères petites soeurs.
Moi, j'ai été condamné
Pour la balance de ma vie
Dans les barres de la prison.

Moi, j'ai roulé.
Je m'ai mis à malfaire.
J'avais la tête dure.
J'ai rentré dans le tracas.
Asteur je suis condamné
Pour la balance de ma vie
Dans les barres de la prison.

Ma pauvre vieille maman,
Elle s'a mis sur ses genoux,
Les deux mains sur la tête,
En pleurant pour moi.
Elle dit, 'Mmmmmmmmm,
Cher petit garçon,
Moi, je vas jamais te revoir.
Toi, t'as été condamné
Pour la balance de ta vie
Dans les barres de la prison.'

J'ai dit, 'Chère vieille maman,
Pleure pas pour moi.
Il faut tu pries pour ton enfant
Pour essayer de sauver son âme
De les flammes de l'enfer.'

Sur le bord de l'eau (Alcide Gaspard)

Un jour je m'y promène tout le long de mon jardin.
Tout le long de mon jardin, sur le bord de l'île.
Tout le long de mon jardin, sur le bord l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

Je m'aperçois d'une belle de trente matelots
De trente matelots, sur le bord de l'île.
De trente matelots, sur le bord de l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

Le plus jeune des trente chantait une chanson.
Chanter une chanson, sur le bord de l'île.
Chanter une chanson, sur le bord de l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

La belle chanson tu chantes, j'aimerais la savoir.
J'aimerais la savoir, sur le bord de l'île.
J'aimerais la savoir sur le bord de l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

Ma belle, rentrez dans ma berge, je vous la monterai.
Je vous la monterai, sur le bord de l'île.
Je vous la monterai sur le bord de l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

La belle fut embarquée, elle se mit à pleurer.
Elle se mit à pleurer sur le bord de l'île.
Elle se mit à pleurer sur le bord de l'eau, sur le bord d'un vaisseau.

La belle se promène (recueilli au Pays Nantais; *Anthologie de la chanson française: La tradition, 368*)

La belle se promène
Au fond de son jardin
Au fond de son jardin
Sur les bords de la Loire,
Au fond de son jardin,
Sur les bords du ruisseau.

Elle voit venir une barque
De trente matelots.
De trente matelots
Sur les bords de la Loire...

La plus jeune des trente
Chantait une chanson.

"Votre chanson est belle;
Je voudrais la savoir.

“Montez dans notre barque
Et je vous l’apprendrai!”

Quand elle fut dans la barque,
Elle se mit à pleurer.

“Qu’avez-vous donc, la belle?
Qu’avez-vous à pleurer?”

“Je pleure mon avantage
Que vous m’avez volé.

“Ne pleurez pas, la belle,
Je vous le rendrai.”

“Ça ne se rend pas, dit-elle,
Comme de l’argent prêté.”

Mercredi soir passé (Delma Lachney)

Où t'étais mercredi passé?
O après boire tout ce vin doux.
Et après charrer avec une jolie fille
Qu'a pris mon coeur à moi.

Viens ma chère, casse pas mon coeur.
O je veux pas t'entendre pleurer.
Approche, ma chère, il faudra on se prépare
Pour se séparer moi et toi.

Je voudrais que t'aurais jamais vu
O c'est moi, quand j'étais petit.
J'aurais jamais eu des larmes à jeter
Pour cette chère jolie fille.

Qui qui va mettre tes petits souliers, ma chère?
Qui va mettre tes chers petits gants?
Qui qui va embrasser tes chères petits lèvres
Quand moi, je seras loin de toi?

O écoute un grand char qui vient.
O faut je vas prendre mon ticket.
Tu connais c'est dur pour se séparer
Mais je vas me battre pour toi et mon pays.

Ouais, ma chère, c'est beaucoup dur
De voir il faut quitter
Et te quitter pour l'amour
C'est pour toujours te rejoindre.