THE BELOVED BODY OF THE KING: 
THE POLITICS OF LOUIS XV’S SACRED BODY

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“It is fortunate for our monarch that he became the well-loved; if not, he would have been the well-dethroned.”

-marquis d’Argenson

INTRODUCTION

On 31 July 1721, France found itself facing one of its greatest fears: its child king “was seized by a fever as he attended the Mass and was forced to leave it,” causing panic within the court and the city. Over the next two days, the king was bled repeatedly in accordance with typical 18th-century medical practice, which only sent the king into a fever-induced delirium. Doctors then turned to purging, which at last broke the king’s fever. By the next day, he was well.

Paris rejoiced:

Paris has learned the good news about the King’s health with extraordinary joy. Nothing could be added to the demonstrations of love from people of all classes and conditions. Prayers, Te Deums, bonfires, illuminations, danses, songs, cavalcades, celebrations are given by the

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2 Bernier, Oliver. Louis the Beloved: the Life of Louis XV. Doubleday, 1984, 27, quoting Barbier. During this time, the royal court was at the Palais Royal in Paris, with the king lodging at the Tuileries Palace nearby when in the city. The court would not return to Versailles until June of 1722.
bourgeois as well as the people, in a word, all one can imagine by way of excessive pleasure … has kept Paris busy for several days … and the streets echo night and day with shouts of ‘Long live the King.’

Their rejoicing was more than justified. They had been spared dynastic struggle, and Louis XV would have time yet to prove himself to be a great king.

Twenty-three years later, in early August 1744, France’s monarch was again on the brink of death. Though installed at the warfront, it was not a battle wound that plagued him, but a stomachache and fever. Frequently plagued with indigestion, his symptoms the morning of 8 August did not, at first, warrant exceptional alarm. His doctors gave him his standard remedy of repeated enemas to no avail. From there, his treatment followed the course of a typical 18th-century medical treatment—though the king of France was by no means a typical patient—alternating bleedings and purges. Louis continued to be in pain and his fever continued to rise. As his illness wore into its fifth day with no improvement, Louis and all those around him became convinced that his death was eminent. Desperately in need of absolution and last rites, he knew what he needed to do: on 13 August 1744, he sent away his mistresses and received last rites in exchange for a damning public confession that would be read from every pulpit throughout the realm.

The king did not die, but his illness also did not abate. For the rest of August, he continued to quiver on the verge of death. Finally, on August 26, he began to show improvement. By September 10, over a month after the onset of his ordeal, the king was in good health once more. The country rejoiced. A Paris leaflet describes the festivities:

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A Te Deum was celebrated in honor of the King’s recovery and fireworks were shown in the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville … The words ‘Long live Louis the Beloved’ were written everywhere in letters of fire and announced that the nation was conferring on its monarch a title which is above all others and contains them all. All through the night, the streets were filled not only with the people, who were shouting for joy, but with the nobility and bourgeoisie, who wanted to share in the public rejoicing. 

Thus, Louis became the beloved.

The responses to these pivotal events in the reign of Louis XV show a significant change in the public perception of the king that occurred in the 18th century. An examination of literature in verse from the period reveals that while the responses to his earlier illness reflect hope for his future potential as a ruler, the responses to his later illness express elation over a perceived religious transformation in their king. This essay will then attempt to explain the possible reasons for this change and the effects this change had on the institution of monarchy in the final years of the Ancien Régime.

“THE PASSION FOR RHYMING”

This essay will focus primarily on literature in verse as a source of popular expression. Though songs will make up the bulk of this analysis, some poems have also

\[ \text{Bernier, 129.} \]
\[ \text{His title, in French, was Louis le Bien-Aimé, which can be translated as either Louis the Beloved or Louis the Well-Loved. He is primarily referred to as Louis the Beloved in English.} \]
\[ \text{Taken from Barbier, Edmond-Jean-François. Chronique de la régence et du règne de Louis XV (1718-1763), ou Journal de Barbier. 1 Complete ed. Vol. 8. Paris: Charpentier & Cie, 1857. Gallica. Web. 1 Aug. 2014, 209. All references to Barbier refer to this author and typically to one of the 8 volumes of this text unless otherwise noted. Barbier writes, “Le fureur de rimer est plus forte que jamais....”} \]
been used. Few studies have focused on the significance of songs as a form of popular political expression. However, as a source they are invaluable. Songs concerning the king make up around 10% of the total conserved texts from 1680 to 1750 and more than 350 songs and 200 lyrics concerning the king have been identified during that time period.

In addition to being a prolific source, these songs are important because they reveal a contemporary nonofficial view of the king. While many historians have used police records to determine popular perception of the king, songs and poems are a more direct and far more reliable source in comparison. Censorship was in effect for most of Louis XV’s reign, with some laxity under the regency, making it especially difficult to determine the true perception of the king by his subjects. Because the prevailing belief under absolutism was that the king was chosen by God to reign and answered only to Him, any criticism of the king, no matter how mild or indirect, was an offense against God. Though written down, songs were not published in the manner a political pamphlet might be and, as a result, not subject to the same level of censorship. Indeed, many of the songs quoted in this essay came from the Journal de Barbier, which was not published until the 19th century. Thus, by definition, such songs present a nonofficial

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8 Two notable scholars on the topic are Jens Ivo Engels and Dorothy S. Packer, who have both published on the topic of song writing in early 18th-century France.
10 The major issue with police records as a historical source is that many of the allegations were false, as discussed in Graham, Lisa J. If the King Only Knew: Seditious Speech in the Reign of Louis XV. Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 2000. Print, 21.
11 Graham, 92.
12 Barbier was a juriconsult for the Parlement of Paris who had a habit of recording songs in his journal, which covers events from most of Louis XV’s reign.
view of the king and make the king seem less God-like and more mortal. Naturally, then, the king’s image is far more varied than in official literature. He lacks a definitive role or image in the songs, representing, among other things, “heroic warrior, good father, skirt-chaser, phlegmatic idler, very Christian monarch, deceived innocent, pimp, ferocious persecutor, naïve child, impartial judge, and imbecile.” Essentially, songs proved to be the eighteenth-century equivalent of a free press.

The majority of songs discussed in this essay are *vaudevilles*, satirical songs set to a well-known melody. Because such songs were written to well-known melodies, they often created a double-entendre with the connotation of the original song. “As a genre,” musicologist Dorothy S. Packer explains, “the vaudeville’s brevity encouraged a concise musical expression; its pointedness gave it a distinguishing piquancy.” However, these were not meant as aggressive political commentaries, arguments, or demands. Though serious in their assessments of events, *vaudevilles* were not without their playful elements. *Vaudevilles* were meant to amuse, while also piquing and maintaining the interest of the audience. Thus, they are full of wordplay. The following verse from a song written circa 1731 is an excellent example:

Le roi ne brille point  
Dans son lit de justice.  
C’est dans un autre lit,  
Qu’il fait bien mieux l’office.

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13 Engels, 100.  
14 Translated from Engels, 111-12.  
15 Gooch, 69.  
16 These vaudevilles should not be confused with the typical English meaning of the term, referring to an early 20th-century form of popular entertainment.  
18 06. Please see appendix for entire text of all songs. At least one other song shares the same opening verse.
The king does not stand out
In his bed of justice.
It is in another bed,
That he performs the office much better.\footnote{19} 

Perhaps the most significant aspect of songs was the universal nature of songwriting during this period. Most of the songs discussed in this essay were popular songs written by and intended for the public. However, song writing was a popular activity at the court, as well. Barbier’s text is especially useful in understanding how widespread songwriting, particularly as political or social commentary, was because he notes both popular songs and songs by courtiers. Even the king engaged in pejorative songwriting, penning a bawdy song about the comte de Clermont that Barbier recorded in his journal.\footnote{20}

“OUR KING, OUR HOPE”\footnote{21}

The elation over Louis XV’s convalescence in 1721 was truly profound. However, in light of the king’s young age, it may seem odd that the people were so enthusiastic for his recovery. This was, at least in part, because the succession was not secure and the most likely successor, Philippe d’Orléans, was not well-liked, but a greater reason for their happiness existed, and the songs that appeared in the days following his brush with death reveal it: the king represented their hope for the future. As Barbier drily

\footnote{19} \textit{Lits de justice}—literally translated as beds of justice—were formal proceedings in which the king ordered the compulsory registration of a royal edict. They were so-called because the king sat upon cushions on a dais beneath a canopy of state, forming a “bed.” Typically, the term is not translated into English, but it was necessary to understand the wordplay of this song.

\footnote{20} The song is found in Vol. 3, 343 and can be found in the appendix to this essay, 07.

\footnote{21} Taken from a 1721 poem entitled “La naïade des Tuileries,” which can be found in the appendix to this essay, 01.
observed: “One can tell how much we need him to live, and how deeply the Regent is hated, by the way everyone worries about his health, for, as to himself, we have yet no reason to love or hate him.”

Not yet head of the government, he was the symbolic center of society and in him was the potential to bring a Golden Age to France.

Many songs make some proclamation of happiness at Louis’ recovery. One song, for example, likens their visible outpouring of love for the king to a deeper affection among the people of France:

Ce sont des feux, ce sont des ris.
Ces feux sont de faibles images
Du feu dont nos cœurs sont épris.

There are fires, there is laughter.
These fires are but feeble reflections
Of the fire in our enamored hearts

Another song makes reference to the sadness of the French during his illness, contrasting this sadness with their newfound elation:

Que les ris chassent la tristesse
Vous tous chantez avecque moi,
Et disons dans notre allégresse :
Notre roi vit ! Vive le roi !

May the laughter chase away the sadness
All of you sing with me,
And we say in our happiness:
Our king lives! Long live the king!

The majority of songs examined, however, narrow in on the most prominent reason for elation among the French: Louis represented their hope for the future. Each of these songs reflects the state of perceived, though not necessarily actual, “constant

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22 Quoted in Bernier, 28.
23 Engels, 114.
24 02.
25 03.
misery” that the French experienced. As Jens Ivo Engels discusses in his paper “Dénigrer, espérer, assumer la réalité,”

If misery reigned continuously, contemporaries never lost hope in the future. This hope was nourished by a genuine fixed idea: personal government of the king … It was the king alone that contemporaries waited on for their deliverance … Contemporaries were convinced that the king, once he had become the real head of the government, would transform naturally and infallibly into a perfect and ideal king.26

One song recalls their concern for both the young king himself and for themselves during Louis’ illness:

Le peuple français en alarmes
Tremblait pour lui, tremblait pour soi27

The French people in alarm
Trembled for him, trembled for themselves

Many, however, directly refer to the king as their hope. The above song opens by crying,

Vive le roi !
Vive le roi notre esperance !
Vive le roi !

Long live the king!
Long live the king our hope!
Long live the king!

Others declare hope for their future under Louis XV:

Prions la divine puissance
De conserver ce roi charmant
Et qu’il soit le soulagement
Du pauvre peuple de la France.28

26 115.
27 04; although the source I found said “en alarmes,” it is very possible the original was “en larmes” meaning “in tears.”
We pray to the divine power
To preserve this charming king
And that he be the relief
Of the poor people of France.

Conversely, some of the poems are more retrospective in nature and reflect a return to a medieval idea of kingship, emphasizing the “softer” bonds of mutual love between the people and the king:29

Ce n’est point la magnificence,
Ni la gloire de ses exploits,
C’est l’amour mutuel des peuples et des rois
Qui d’un trône éclatant affermit la puissance30

It is neither magnificence,
Nor the glory of his exploits,
It is the mutual love of people and kings
That from a brilliant throne consolidates power

The poem then extends the metaphor of mutual love into paternal love, despite the king’s young age:

Nous l’aimons, notre amour espère
Qu’il gouverna ses sujets
Moins comme roi que comme père

We love him, our love hopes
That he will govern his subjects
Less like a king than like a father

Another refers to homage, a concept distinctly grounded in the world of feudal France:

Offrons-lui nos cœurs en hommage31

We offer him our hearts in homage

28 05.
29 Kaiser, 133.
30 01.
31 04.
Still another attributes Louis’ convalescence to his knowledge of how much the people love him:

Il n’a pas fait cela sans cause,
Il sait combien je l’aimons tous

He did not do that without reason,
He knows how much we all love him

All of these excerpts reflect the concept of a mythic unity between the king and his subjects, which causes the king to do right by his subjects because he lacks a reason to do wrong. In this sense, the sentiment of mutual love is also closely linked with the idea of the king as the hope of the people.

Yet despite all of the love that these songs assert existed between the French and their king, the king in early modern France remained a sacral being in the eyes of his subjects. To rule well, he needed to live up to the expectations of his people:

En vertus il croît comme en âge,
Des rois il sera le plus sage.

In virtues he will grow as in age,
Of kings he will be the wisest

In this, Louis would fail, surrounding himself constantly with mistresses, who were seen as masking any wisdom he might possess by taking political matters too much into their own hands. In any case, his insatiable appetite for women was not the sign of a virtuous ruler. This would prove to be a bone of contention with his subjects and, as a ruler, would be perceived as his shortcoming.

“What HAVE I DONE TO BE LOVED LIKE THIS?”
When, in 1744, the king again escaped death, his subjects rejoiced. Upon witnessing the celebrations for his recovery, he exclaimed again and again, “What have I done to be loved like this?” Having only recently assumed direct rule of his country in 1743 upon the death of his first minister Cardinal Fleury, his illness in 1744 came at what was still the beginning of his personal reign, yet it has been commonly considered the high point of his reign.\textsuperscript{36} With Louis now head of the government, however, the French no longer looked forward with great optimism to his future as a ruler. Though loved nearly universally as a child, public infatuation with the king had been dwindling since his adolescence.\textsuperscript{37} Spineless and shy, his very decision to rule independently had come as a surprise, and he certainly had not ushered in the Golden Age expected of him.\textsuperscript{38} Now his subjects were hopeful that he would reassert control over his sexuality, return to the proper objects of his love—the queen and his people—and produce another heir for their throne.\textsuperscript{39}

One of the principle reasons for the joy of the people came from the dismissal of the king’s mistresses. Especially in light of the shocking revelations about their king’s conduct revealed in his publicly circulated confession, the French had had enough of what they saw as the interference of mistresses in matters of state. Such mistresses were nearly always perceived as prolonging the “misery” of the people, either because they distracted the king from his governing duties or, worse yet, directly interfered with affairs

\textsuperscript{35} Gooch, 109.
\textsuperscript{36} Kaiser, 132.
\textsuperscript{37} Kaiser, 140-41. Previously, the widely held scholarly view was that Louis had been well-liked until the late 1740s. However, Arlette Farge recently undermined that belief through her research into the Parisian police records. Though, as mentioned above, these records are not the most reliable source, her research is still valuable.
\textsuperscript{38} Gooch, 69.
\textsuperscript{39} Kaiser, 150.
of state or altered the social status quo.\textsuperscript{40} The king was to master himself and never allow himself to be mastered in order to rule well.\textsuperscript{41} Thus, maintaining \textit{a maitresse en titre} could be dangerous business for a king as any such perceived interference could damage the prestige of the Crown.\textsuperscript{42} Furthermore, stories of debauchery were damaging to the image of the king as sacred.\textsuperscript{43} His image as sacred was already diminishing as a result of his refusal to touch for scrofula, eliminating an important moment of direct contact between the people and their king, and his nonobservance of Easter in 1739.\textsuperscript{44} In addition, royal lubricity was no longer applauded as it once was, but was considered a personal defect, if not condemned as sin.\textsuperscript{45} This change in attitude had little to do with Louis’ personal conduct, but was more the result of a larger change in social values. A companionate model of marriage was slowly displacing patriarchal marriage, and the keeping of mistresses was most certainly a patriarchal construct.\textsuperscript{46} Additionally, the rise of a hard-working bourgeoisie stood in stark contrast with the traditional aristocratic

\textsuperscript{40} Engels, 115. Altering the social status quo in this context refers primarily to manipulation of social classes, which was especially an issue under Louis XV. Later in his reign, Louis frequently selected women of the lowest classes to be his mistresses and typically enobled the mistress (primarily so she could be publicly displayed at court) and some of her family. Such alterations caused discontent among the upper echelons of society.


\textsuperscript{42} Gooch, 95.

\textsuperscript{43} Engels, 100.

\textsuperscript{44} Kaiser, 153 and Graham, 117. Scrofula is a disease with glandular swellings that was probably a form of tuberculosis. It was believed to be curable by the royal touch. Normally, the king touched for scrofula four times per year in accordance with religious observances.

\textsuperscript{45} Graham, 115.

\textsuperscript{46} This is not to say marriage in the eighteenth-century evolved into a completely non-patriarchal institution, but the period between the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century and the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century was shockingly progressive, especially in regard to women.
et hosi of idleness. Thus, Louis’ flaunting of his mistresses swam against the cultural tide in that he was embracing his patriarchal rights by rejecting his wife and choosing the idle and erotic pleasure of a concubine over matrimonial relations.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, inevitably, royal mistresses became scapegoats and signs of despotic rule.\textsuperscript{48} It is not surprising, then, that two of the songs reference the dismissal of his mistresses with much elation. The first reads:

\begin{quote}
Le scandale a cessé partout
Par l’exil de la Châteauroux
Rendons grâçe à Dieu de cela.
Alleluia.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

The scandal has everywhere ceased
By the exile of Châteauroux
Let us thank God for that.
Alleluia.

The other describes more explicitly the bitter dismissal of both Madame de Châteauroux and her sister Madame de Lauraguais and expresses hope that it will serve as a warning to any women who might wish to work their way into the king’s bed in the future, lest they, too, be so disgraced:

\begin{quote}
Châteauroux est renvoyée ;
Quelle bénédiction !
Sa grandeur est éclipsée,
Chantons-en le Te Deum.
Quelle leçon pour les dames
Qui couraient notre Roi ;
Elles ont beau verser des larmes
Du pied au cul on les renvoie

Lauraguais est désolée
D’avoir perdu tout son temps.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} Graham, 94.
\textsuperscript{48} Graham, 112. Additionally, concubinage was traditionally associated with the perceived despotic rule of the eastern world.
\textsuperscript{49} 08.
De quoi s’est-elle avisée
D’aspirer au même rang ?
Honneur de courte durée,
Vous nous montrez maintenant
Qu’il faut bien être égarée
Pour chercher l’amour des grands.

Châteauroux is sent away ;
What a blessing!
Her grandeur has been eclipsed,
We sing the Te Deum for it.
What a lesson for the ladies
Who run after our King;
They have beautifully shed tears
Foot to the ass they are sent away.

Lauraguais is sorry
For having wasted all her time.
What advised her
To aspire to the same rank?
Short-lived honor
You show us now
That one must really be lost
To seek the love of the greats.

Some of the songs also reflect a distinct impression that, as a result of being spared death, Louis would cease sinning and become a model of virtue. They show that the monarchy’s sacral image was being eroded during this period by Louis’ scandalous conduct. At least for the moment, however, he appeared to have purged his body of

50 09.
51 Mesdames de Châteauroux and de Lauraguais were nearly murdered by an angry mob as they left Metz.
52 The nature of Louis’ relationship with Madame de Lauraguais at this period is a bit uncertain. Some reports said that Madame de Châteauroux used ménages à trois with her sister to keep the king’s interest. We do know that upon Madame de Châteauroux’s death later in 1744, he briefly consoled himself sexually with Madame de Lauraguais before beginning a liaison with Madame de Pompadour, who would be the love of his life.
female corruption and resacralized it.\textsuperscript{53} This song, for example, written before the king had recovered, makes such an assumption:

\begin{verbatim}
Si Dieu renvoie le roi charmant
La grâce en fait un pénitent
Ses péchés seront finis là
Alleluia\textsuperscript{54}
\end{verbatim}

If God sends the charming king back
Grace will make him a penitent
Then his sins will be finished
\textit{Alleluia}

Additionally, some of the songs express the belief that the king will cease sinning and return to the queen, Marie Leszczyńska,\textsuperscript{55} producing another heir for the throne.\textsuperscript{56} In the 1740s, the queen came to symbolize the people of France, who sympathized with her because just as they felt their king had abandoned them, he had abandoned her. Whereas a good ruler was conceptualized as a sensitive and loyal husband, a tyrant was selfish and indifferent toward his wife.\textsuperscript{57} Another song set to the same tune sings directly to the queen:

\begin{verbatim}
Grande reine, consolez-vous,
Votre sort deviendra plus doux,
Toujours Louis vous chérira,
\textit{Alleluia}.
\end{verbatim}

Quand avec vous il couchera

\textsuperscript{53} Kaiser, 155.
\textsuperscript{54} 08.
\textsuperscript{55} Louis XV married Marie Leszczyńska, a daughter of the overthrown king of Poland, Stanisław I Leszczyński, in 1725. The couple had issue, eight daughters and two sons. Her name is spelled Marie Leczinska in French. Leszczyńska is the spelling of her surname in modern Polish.
\textsuperscript{56} Though their marriage had produced two sons, only the eldest, Louis Ferdinand, survived infancy. Louis Ferdinand predeceased his father, but three of his sons ruled as Louis XVI (1774-1792), Louis XVIII (1814-1815; 1815-1824), and Charles X (1824-1830).
\textsuperscript{57} Graham, 84.
Il est bien sûr qu’il vous fera
Un biau garçon qui chantera
Alleluia.  

Great queen, console yourself,
Your future will become sweeter,
Louis will cherish you always,
Alleluia.

When he sleeps with you,
It is certain that he will make you
A handsome boy who will sing
Alleluia.

This song is especially interesting because of the last two lines. The reference to a boy who will sing “Alleluia” implies a desire for a higher standard of holiness in the next king of France. Already, the French had shifted focus from the current king to the next, ready for another king to ascend and bring about the Golden Age for which they had hoped. Louis was now useful only to father an heir to the throne. In this, however, he would also fail them for not only did he not reunite with his wife, but he was soon back in the arms of his mistress, and his popularity had plummeted to a new low. On 14 November 1744, just over two months after his recovery, the Marquis d’Argenson noted in his journal, “The king arrived in Paris yesterday … Few people cried out ‘Long live the king!’ The people had cried for him, sung for him, during his illness and convalescence. The rumor that he will take back the Châteauroux is having a negative effect on public opinion.”

The opportunity to show his gratitude to his people was gone forever.

CONCLUSION

58 10.
59 Graham, 63-64.
60 Gooch, 109.
In discussing why the king’s sexuality was so important to political matters, Lisa Graham said it best: “The king’s sexuality was a political issue because it placed his sacred status at risk and threatened to delegitimize both his personal authority and that of the church that sanctioned it.”\textsuperscript{61} Nowhere was this relationship more evident than in the 18th century. Between the time of Louis XV’s ascension in 1715 and the execution of his successor Louis XVI in 1793, France evolved from a country centered around its king, to a nation capable and desirous of making a permanent break with the ancien régime—very clearly illustrated in the execution of Louis XVI—and forging a new one focused on the people. The beginnings of such a drastic change in public perception of kingship are evident in these songs, taken from the beginning and middle of Louis XV’s reign. Already, the king’s sexuality—and on a larger scale, his immorality—were beginning to erode the power of church and state. Though displeasure with the institution of monarchy itself does not yet appear as a prominent theme in these works, or in much of the general literature of the time, the seeds of growing discontent are there. While king and institution were separate, they were also intrinsically intertwined, and it was impossible for the degradation of one image to not eventually take its toll on the other. The relationship between church and monarchy underwent a similar process, slowly secularizing the view of kingship during the reign of Louis XV.\textsuperscript{62} This ultimately led to a conversion of the once sacral king into a near citizen king in need of his people’s affirmation and election, opening the way for the Revolution.\textsuperscript{63} Even when public opinion shifted more favorably toward the king personally, but less favorably toward the

\textsuperscript{61} Graham, 117.
\textsuperscript{62} Graham, 92.
\textsuperscript{63} Kaiser, 158.
institution of monarchy itself in the 1770s and 80s, the end of the ancien régime was eminent.
Reproduced here are the songs used for this study, in their entirety, organized by date and by appearance in the text. I have not translated them, but hope they will be of use to those who read French. Much thanks goes to Henri Duranton of the Institut Claude Longeon at the Université Jean Monnet, Saint-Etienne for compiling these songs in an excellent online database, Poèmes Satiriques du XVIIIème siècle. Others were pulled from Journal de Barbier, which is available in its entirety on Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. I have given each a unique identification number, used in the footnotes above, with the full citation included here.

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<th>Date: 1721</th>
<th>Author: Danchet</th>
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<tr>
<td>“La naïade des Tuileries”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le fleuve dont les eaux tranquilles</td>
<td>Embellissent le sein de la reine des villes,</td>
<td>Avait quitté sa source et visitait ses bords :</td>
<td>Il arrive, il entend mille cris d’allégresse,</td>
<td>Et voit tout Paris qui s’empresse</td>
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<td>A faire de sa joie éclater les transports.</td>
<td>Surpris, il s’arrête, il appelle</td>
<td>Au palais de nos rois la naïade fidèle :</td>
<td>Nymphé, qui, par le choix des dieux,</td>
<td>Partageant les honneurs de Zéphire et de Flore,</td>
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<td>Dans ces jardins délicieux</td>
<td>Baignez les jeunes fleurs et les pressez d’éclore,</td>
<td>Parlez, de quels concerts retentit ce séjour ?</td>
<td>Quels feux, transformés en étoiles,</td>
<td>Dans l’absence du dieu du jour,</td>
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<td>Ont de la nuit obscure écarté tous les voiles ?</td>
<td>D’où naissent ces plaisirs, ces danses, ces festins ?</td>
<td>De quels nouveaux biensfaits nous comblent les destins ? –</td>
<td>Dieu de ces bords, dit-elle, à quels torrents de larmes</td>
<td>Succèdent ces ris et ces jeux !</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hélas ! vous êtes trop heureux</td>
<td>D’avoir ignoré nos alarmes !</td>
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19
Notre roi, notre espoir, nos plus chères amours,
Ce reste précieux du plus grand des monarques
Ce prince… j’en frémis, nous avons vu ses jours
Menacés du ciseau des Parques !
Vous frémissez vous-même. Ah ! quels troubles affreux
Agitaient son peuple fidèle,
Aux moments qu’une ardeur cruelle
Pour cette tendre fleur faisait craindre ses feux !
Tel qu’un lis, la gloire de Flore,
Qu’en naissant l’Aurore embellit
Sitôt que du midi la chaleur le dévore
Perd son éclat et s’affaiblit
Déjà sa tige languissante
Succombe sous le poids de sa tête mourante ;
Tel, ce prince charmant, digne présent des dieux,
Perdait tous les attraits dont il brille à nos yeux.
Je ne vous dirai point la douleur répandue,
La terre portée en tous lieux,
Les pleurs d’une cour éperdue.
Et de quelles couleurs peindrais-je Villeroy,
Plus languissant encor, plus mourant que son roi ?
La valeur de guerrier ni la raison du sage
Ne parent point de si grands coups ;
Il croit voir les destins jalous,
Prêts à lui ravir son ouvrage.
Un regard, un soupir de son prince accablé
Pénètre son âme sensible !
Il se trouble, il pâlit à ce péril terrible,
Le seul où son coeur ait tremblé.
Et toi, qui nous as fait admirer ta prudence,
Lorsque de notre roi tu cultivais l’enfance,
Et préparais son jeune cœur
A ce qui doit un jour fonder notre bonheur,
Quelle mère jamais, livrée à la tristesse,
Voyant, dans son effroi, le bûcher préparé
Pour un fils expirant, seul fruit de sa tendresse,
Sentit de plus de traits tout son sein déchiré ?
Mais pourquoi rappeler ces images cruelles ?
Des horreurs du trépas notre roi sort vainqueur,
Il a déjà repris ces grâces naturelles
Qui lui savent ouvrir tous les chemins du coeur.
Chantez, Muses, chantez : il aime à vous entendre.
Le plus cher de vos favoris,
Soigneux de le former dès l’âge le plus tendre,
Lui fait de vos talents connaître tout le prix.
Vous le verrez bientôt, sur cette heureuse rive,
A la douceur de vos chansons
Prêter une oreille attentive,
Excited tous vos nourrissons.
Qu’à lui plaire chacun s’empresse,
Mais ne l’occupez point par de frivoles sons ;
Sous l’attrait du plaisir montrez-lui la sagesse,
Et jusque dans ses jeux tracez-lui les leçons.
Peignez les vifs transports que la France déploie ;
Et lui faisant voir notre amour ;
Source unique de notre joie,
Dites-lui qu’il nous doit le plus tendre retour.
Ce n’est point la magnificence,
Ni la gloire des grands exploits,
C’est l’amour mutuel des peuples et des rois
Qui d’un trône éclatant affermit la puissance.
Qu’à régner dans les cœurs il borne ses projets,
Nous l’aimons, notre amour espère
Qu’il gouvernera ses sujets
Moins comme roi que comme père. –
Nymphé, n’en doutez point : il comblera nos voeux,
S’écrie, à ce récit, le fleuve de la Seine ;
Favorables destins, puissance souveraine,
Qu’il vive seulement, et nous sommes heureux.
Vous, nymphé, marquez votre zèle,
Rassemblez à ses jeux les innocents plaisirs ;
Le ciel le rend à nos désirs,
Je cours au dieu des mers en porter la nouvelle.

Vivat ! la fièvre est passée
Pardi, j’avons eu la poussée.
J’étions désolés sur ma foi,
Mais vivat ! la fièvre [sic] est passée,
Il se porte bien notre roi.

Çà, réponds-moi, fièvre maudite,
A qui livres-tu tes assauts ?
Quelle téméraire conduite
D’attaquer un jeune héros !

Vouloir d’une auguste personne
Faire bouillonner tout le sang,
Le sang des Bourbons ne bouillonne
Que dans la guerre en combattant.

Hé ! que servirait à la France
D’avoir connu ce royal coeur ?
Ce cœur qui fait son espérance
Alors aurait fait sa douleur.

Mais trêve ici de doléance !
Louis est en bonne santé,
Vous voîta, bonheur de la France,
Vous voilà donc ressuscité !

Notre joie est pure et sincère
Tous les Français sont si contents !
Chacun croit recouvrer un père
Cependant il n’a que dix ans.

Les grands, les petits applaudissent
A ce roi qui fait leur bonheur ;
Grands et petits se réunissent :
C’est qu’ils les a tous dans son cœur.

Tous les soirs nouveaux bainages ;
Ce sont des feux, ce sont des ris.
Ces feux sont de faibles images
Du feu dont nos cœurs sont épris.

Chacun de nous sans se contraindre
Saute à l’entour joyeusement ;
C’est les cœurs que je voudrais peindre
Ils tressaillent bien autrement.

Ma foi, j’avons sujet de rire ;
Louis est en bonne santé.
Il vient de nous l’envoyer dire
Voyez un peu quelle bonté !

Il n’a pas fait cela sans cause,
Il sait combien je l’aimons tous ;
Que je l’aimions, c’est peu de chose,
Qu’il le sache, c’est tout pour nous.

Il faut lui payer ce message
Par une chanson impromptu ;
Du cœur parlons-lui le langage.
L’amour parle mieux que Phébus.

Que les ris chassent la tristesse.
Vous tous chantez avecque moi,
Et disons dans notre allégresse :
Notre roi vit ! vive le roi !

Number: 04
Date: 1721
Author: Unknown
Type: Song
Reference: Poèmes Satiriques du XVIIIème Siècle, $0460

“L’allégresse publique”

Vive le roi !
Vive le roi notre espérance,
Vive le roi !
Remettons-nous de notre effroi,
Louis est en convalescence,
Chantons tous en réjouissance
Vive le roi !

Le peuple français en alarmes
Tremblait pour lui, tremblait pour soi.
Les plaisirs succèdent aux alarmes ;
Il vit, ce prince plein de charmes.

Grands et petits, chacun s’empresse,
De marques son amour, sa foi ;
Tous lui témoignent leur tendresse,
Tous disent dans leur allégresse :

L’on n’entend plus que ce langage.
Partout on chante, on danse, on boit ;
Feux joyeux partout sont d’usage,
C’est à qui criera davantage :

Vivons sous son obéissance,
Qu’il nous donne à jamais la loi ;
Il remplira notre espérance.
Vive le destin de la France !

Offrons-lui nos cœurs en hommage,
Ils lui sont tous acquis de droit ;
En vertus il croît comme en âge,
Des rois il sera le plus sage.

Que son empire soit durable !
Quel bonheur d’être sous ses lois !
Pourrions-nous trouver son semblable,
Vive à jamais ce prince aimable !

Vive le roi !
Prions le ciel qu’il s’intéresse
Pour notre roi.
Qu’il nous conserve Villeroy,
Fréjus et la maman duchesse,
Qu’avec eux nous disions sans cesse :
Vive le roi !

| Number: 05  |
| Date: 1721  |
| Author: Unknown |
| Type: Song |
| Reference: Poèmes Satiriques du XVIIIème Siècle, $0461 |

Morgué, Piarrot, j’ons bonne chance
Notre bon roi se porte mieux ;
J’en avons le cœur si joyeux,
Que j’en crions avec outrance :
Vive le roi ! vive le roi !
Et monseigneur de Villeroy.

Son gouverneur, sa gouvernante,
Quoiqu’ils soyont de vieilles gens,
Valont mieux qu’autres de quinze ans ;
Ils sont cause que chacun chante.

Si je tenais sa gouvernante,
Sangué ! que je la baiserais ;
Un beau garçon je lui ferais
Qui chanterait comme je chante.

Noutre minagère Colette,
Aime itou ce bon gouverneur,
Elle voudrait, dit-elle, à cette heure
Etre par lui tenue seulette.

Palsangué ! point de jalousie,
Je le voudrais de tout mon cœur ;
S’il lui faisait un tel honneur,
Je chanterais toute ma vie.

Notre curé vient de sa grâce
Faire chanter le Tidion ;
A présent, plus gai qu’un pinson,
Il danse et chante à my la place.

Le fiscal est un bon ivrogne,
Qui fait préparer un repas,
Où seront Jean, Blaise et Lucas,
Chantant en rougissant leur trogne.

Le magister de ce village,
Plus amoureux qu’un jeune chat,
Prend Margot, quitte son rabat,
Pour chanter seul dans ce bocage.

Ce soir, j’allons faire tapage,
Et je boirons comme des trous,
Je sauterons comme des fous
En chantant par tout le village.

Chaque berger et sa bergère,
S’en allant prendre leurs ébats,
Et sans mener tant de fracas,
Pourront chanter sur la fougère.

J’allons faire des feux de joie,
Tout à l’entour j’y danserons,
Et pour boire dépenserons
Le peu que j’avons de monnoie.

En récompense, notre sire
De bon œil nous regardera,
Et d’impôts nous soulagera,
Quand bien saura que j’ons su dire.

Prions la divine puissance
De conserver ce roi charmant
Et qu’il soit le soulagement
Du pauvre peuple de la France.
| Number: | 06 |
| Date:   | 1731/1733 |
| Author: | Unknown |
| Type:   | Song |
| Reference: | Poèmes Satiriques du XVIIIème Siècle, $1735 |

Le roi ne brille point  
Dans son lit de justice.  
C’est dans un autre lit,  
Qu’il fait bien mieux l’office.

Quel affreux changement  
Dans notre ministère,  
Le Parlement grand train  
On envoie faire faire.

Le cardinal bien fin  
Prend pour son secrétaire  
Le petit Chauvelin  
Qui fait bien ses affaires.

Notre Roi ne veut point  
Que nous fassions la guerre.  
Il n’en veut qu’aux lapins,  
Voilà sa ménagère.

Nous n’avons encore vu  
Rien qui soit légitime.  
Aujourd’hui la vertu  
Du vice est la victime.

Nos braves conseillers  
S’en vont en décadence  
Dans le pays lointain  
Faire leur résidence.

Et quand reviendront-ils ?  
Ils reviendront dimanche.  
Au cardinal Fleury  
Ils chieront dans la manche.
Type: Song
Reference: Chronique de la régence et du règne de Louis XV (1718-1763), ou Journal de Barbier, tome 3 by Edmond-Jean-François Barbier, pg. 343
Note: Example of song by the king (about M. le comte de Clermont)

Un char à ta catin,
Mon cousin,
Ce n’est pas son allure ;
Le coché à Pataclin,
Mon cousin,
Et un habit de bure,
Mon cousin.
Ah ! voilà l’allure, l’allure,
Mon cousin,
Oh ! voilà son allure.

Number: 08
Date: c. August 1744
Author: Unknown
Type: Song
Reference: Chansons Satiriques du XVIIIème siècle, $2997

“Chanson au sujet de la disgrâce de Mme de Châteauroux”

Richelieu, Mercure obligeant,
Ta faveur ne dure pas longtemps
Ton crime opère tout cela,
Alleluia.

Mailly tu dois cesser tes pleurs.
Ton roi vient de chasser ta sœur.
Ton repentir obtient cela.
Alleluia.

Le scandale a cessé partout
Par l’exil de la Châteauroux.
Rendons grâce à Dieu de cela.
Alleluia.

Le peuple se répand en pleurs
De voir son roi la mort au cœur
De le lui rend alleluia (sic)
Alleluia.

Si Dieu renvoie le roi charmant
La grâce en fait un pénitent
Ses péchés seront finis là
Alleluia.
Une belle conversion  
Vient de l’évêque de Soissons  
Que ne sut faire Loyola.

_Alleluia._

| Number: 09 | Date: c. August 1744 |
| Author: Unknown | Type: Poem |
| Reference: Poèmes satiriques du XVIIIème siècle, $3635 |

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Châteauroux est renvoyée ;
Quelle bénéédiction !
Sa grandeur est éclipsée,
Chantons-en le _Te Deum._
Quelle leçon pour les dames
Qui courisaient notre Roi ;
Elles ont beau verser des larmes,
Du pied au cul on les renvoie.

Lauraguais est désolée
D’avoir perdu tout son temps.
De quoi s’est-elle avisée
D’aspirer au même rang ?
Honneur de courte durée,
Vous nous montrez maintenant
Qu’il faut bien être égarée
Pour chercher l’amour des grands.

Il en faut faire une troisième
Pour Monseigneur de Soissons.
C’est la sagesse elle-même
Qui a dicté sa leçon.
A Louis il a su dire :
Est-ce votre intention
Que j’envoie faire faire
Ce tas de demoisillons ?

A cela notre bon sire
Dit à Monsieur de Soissons :
Quoique mon cœur en soupire
Je me rends à vos raisons.
J’aimais trop la créature,
J’en demande à Dieu pardon.
Pour laver cette souillure,
Vite l’absolution !
Admirez le grand courage
De Louis le bien aimé :
Ce qu’il aimait à la rage
A Dieu il l’a sacrifié ;
Il allait vaincre les autres
Et lui-même il s’est vaincu.
D’exemples comme les apôtres
Il nous prêche la vertu.

Prends la poste, grande Reine,
Tu vas rentrer dans tes droits ;
Nous avions bien de la peine
De te voir souffler aux doigts.
Tu seras la souveraine
Du plus aimable des rois ;
Et si bien tu te démènes,
Seras grosse dans un mois.

Number: 10
Date: 1744
Author: Unknown
Type: Song
Reference: Poèmes Satiriques du XVIIIème Siècle, $3006

Louis quinze est ressuscité
C’est la pure vérité,
Avec son peuple il chantera
Alleluia.

Décampez vite, Châteauroux,
Du peuple évitez le courroux
Sinon il vous lapidera
Alleluia.

Grande reine, consolez-vous,
Votre sort deviendra plus doux,
Toujours Louis vous chérira,
Alleluia.

Quand avec vous il couchera,
Il est bien sûr qu’il vous fera
Un biau garçon qui chantera
Alleluia.
WORKS CITED


ADDITIONAL WORKS CONSULTED


