Figure 1 ***Caddo Lake, Louisiana*** **by David Sommerfeldt**

University of Alberta

Whispered Song: Discerning Voices of 19th Century Louisianan Poets

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family in acknowledgement of their support and encouragement as well as to the people of Louisiana whose voices became evident while undertaking my research.

Abstract

The messages of Free People of Colour were spread through subtle and subversive poetry and song in 19th century French Louisiana. Reuniting the lyrical poetry with the original music provides a deep and rich understanding of the intentions and meaning of the poems. The songs portray the French ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity of the French Revolution situated in the context of life in Civil War era Louisiana. This research details the discovery process of contemporary attitudes toward French in Louisiana, a historical analysis of song and lyrics of the 19th to mid-20th century, and an interpretation of poetry written by Free People of Colour as it relates to the works of Pierre-Jean de Beranger, a French poet who chronicled the spirit of the French Revolution. The narrative describes voices, once silenced, becoming a whispered song.

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Introduction

I chose to write a thesis that focuses on 19th century poetry and music written by Free People of Colour in French Louisiana, not because I had an extensive knowledge of the area, but because I knew nothing on the subject. I was introduced to the area through a series of classes during the course of my Master's degree, most particularly a Louisiana literature class that gave me a broad overview of the subject matter. I studied music as a part of my undergraduate program and appreciated the value of underappreciated works. I knew that many poets and songwriters used other poets and songwriters as inspiration and sometimes even a template for their own works. The objective of my thesis was to find poetry that used a particular tune or air as its foundation and reunite the poetry with its music. I conducted research at Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana. When I began, I did not expect to find anything significant; however, through my research, I found that many Free People of Colour used tunes that originally contained French revolutionary messages. I discovered that they could publish a love poem, which superficially was not subversive of Louisiana norms; however, the poems promoted ideals such as liberty, equality and fraternity, which were the three ideals promoted during the French Revolution. To put this in context, the first poetry compilation that contained works entirely by Free People of Colour in Louisiana came out in the mid-1840s, which was almost twenty years before the civil war started. Although the Free People of Colour who were publishing poems at the time were unable to freely publish their message of

equality, they found a way to communicate their desire for social justice through poetry and song.

While collecting data during my thesis, I was confronted with the difficult decision of choosing a writing style to present my findings. Being quite unfamiliar with academic writing, I thumbed through a book entitled *Stylish Academic Writing*. Helen Sword points out that many people in the social sciences do not often use personal pronouns in their writing, thereby removing themselves from the text. In doing so, the author is able to hide behind a cloud of objectivity, but behind this façade lies the author's true subjectivity (Sword 39). She points out that authors who write using the personal pronouns present themselves as "fallible, emotive individuals" (Sword 40). The use of "I" does not make academic writing more elegant or eloquent, but it is "more honest, making no attempt to camouflage opinion as historical truth" (Sword 40). I knew that I wanted to present my research in a way that recounted my personal experiences, even if it could potentially expose personal vulnerabilities.

My decision to write using "I" was a cause of anxiety at times. I wanted to write academically, but at the same time recount my own personal experiences throughout my research. Sword suggests that many scholars in the humanities struggle to write compelling narratives because they "often bury their own best stories under layers of abstraction and critical theory" (88). She explains that just like a traditional story, research projects have a main character with an unsolved problem or question. I realized that I wanted to present my experiences in a way that showed the journey I took during my research. Although I truly enjoyed my

research experience, it was at times a very bumpy journey. But I felt like the rough patches were just as important to my research experiences as all of the other parts. I wanted to present my thesis as my personal story.

I am convinced that each of us has an innate desire to communicate a story. In order for communication to take place, there needs to be more than just a vocalization of an idea. It must be heard and understood. Sometimes there is a gap that needs to be overcome. That is where translation comes in. Before taking a few translation studies courses, I thought that translation was limited to taking things in one language and putting them into another. Ever since I began my Masters in translation studies without a desire to continue in professional translation myself, I began to reflect upon my ability to understand translation and why I was following that course of study. To many people it seemed rather odd to do a translation studies degree without any sort of desire to do translation. Many of them would leave the conversation with that "well that seems like a pointless degree" look on their faces. I can't blame them. They just didn't understand what I was doing. My Master's thesis examines the possibility of reuniting Louisiana French poetry with the tune to which it was originally written. I always had to justify my degree by saying that I was looking at more of a "cultural translation" side to Louisiana French than a "literal translation" of the texts. One thing that has been particularly interesting to me is that I have begun to question what exactly translation is.

Douglas Robinson assembled a compilation of essays in *What is Translation?: Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions*. Just as the title of his

book implies, these essays discuss the various methods and facets of translation; however, one stuck out in particular for me – *The Colonial Impulse: Eric Cheyfitz, The Poetics of Imperialism*. In this essay, Robinson discusses the dichotomy that is set up between the civilized culture and the "savage" culture through cultural translation, or in other words, the Western perception and Western images that are given to *others* in a text. By creating this binary, he states, "all voicings of the other silence the other, but all silencings or repressions of the other's voice contain negated (and therefore salvageable) traces of articulation" (Robinson 21). Something about this particular line rang true to me, especially when it dealt so closely with my subject matter of oppressed writers who were forced to write by means of hidden text. Through their silence, I knew that there were still traces of articulation that remained to be heard. My goal was to find these hidden voices that once used music as a means of articulation.

I found that by looking at translation, not as changing a text from one language to another, but rather as articulating the message of a silenced author, my understanding of translation broadened. My scope of translation further expanded after reading Roman Jakobson's *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* in which he explains that translation can happen not only between two languages, but within a single language as well, for example a simplified text or abridgment. The thing that struck me most was the notion that translation could also happen between different media – an intersemiotic translation (i.e. a book to a play) (138). With a greater, but still rather limited, comprehension of the many faces of translation, I felt like it was time to take a leap of faith and begin my research.

Like a baby bird that jumps from its nest hoping that its tiny wings will not fail, I started looking at how I could apply what I knew about translation to the research goals that I had before me.

I began this thesis with the hope that I would be able to find a few songs that could teach young Louisianans about their cultural history. Transmission of cultural histories is one of the reasons that we do translation. In fact, the more I work in the field of translation studies, the more I am convinced that translation and transmission are, more often than not, interchangeable. In my research of Louisiana music, I discovered that many of the songs that I found were extremely politically charged, but hidden under the mask of popular music, making music the perfect avenue for transmitting the desired message. Because of all of the different components contained in each song, it would be impossible to translate the multiplicity of layers for a contemporary audience. A translation of one hundred percent of my findings is impossible, but I have laid out my written thesis in a way that allows you, the reader, to discover what I found in a very similar fashion. By writing my thesis like this, I hope that you will be able to enjoy the highs and lows of my experience and partake in the intangibles of the translating experience. Even though I cannot translate my entire experience into words, I am satisfied that my writing provides a complete summary of everything I hoped to translate to the reader.

Louisiana French Overview

Before I delve into my experiences finding old poems, I think it is important to lay out a brief history of Louisiana, especially as it relates to its French language, people and music. Territorially, Louisiana was inhabited by Native Americans, then ruled by the French as early as 1682 (though it was not truly settled until the early 1700s). Next the Spanish received it as a gift in 1762-63. After that, Napoleon reacquired the territory in 1800 before selling the land to the newly formed United States of America in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 (*History*, Louisiana.gov) (Lachance 210). Clearly the entire process was not this simplistic, but each time Louisiana changed hands, its identity also changed as it collected various attributes from its diverse inhabitants. The Territory of Louisiana was first claimed by France in the late 17th century during the reign of Louis XIV (*History*, Louisiana.gov), hence the name Louisiana. Its location both on the North American continent as well as its proximity to many of the French Caribbean territories made Louisiana a valuable asset. At the time, many important exports were being exploited on Saint-Domingue (which is now divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Although Louisiana was located in an ideal location, much of its coastline remained uninhabited by European settlers until long after its discovery. For a few decades, the only inhabitants of Louisiana were native populations, and French soldiers who occupied a few military strongholds along the coast. Settlements began springing up inland, the oldest permanent settlement being Natchitoches (pronounced by the locals as *nak-a-dish*), which was settled in 1714 (*History*, Louisiana.gov). Once permanent establishments became more

prevalent in Louisiana, immigration to Louisiana increased. Many of these first communities grew substantially by those fleeing the French revolution (1789) and the Haitian revolution (1790s-1804) (*People*, Louisiana.gov) (Lachance 210) .

A few migration waves drastically increased the population of Louisiana. The first, and probably the most influential, was a result of the *Grand Dérangement*. To be entirely honest, as a western Canadian, I had little knowledge surrounding the *Grand Dérangement* before I learned the history of Louisiana. I knew that it is important for the Acadians, but this was the first time that I ever examined the event in a substantial way. About 1755, as the Seven Years War loomed, the English feared that many of the French settlers in the newly formed English territories would rise up and revolt (Dormon 39). The English and French had fought over strongholds in Atlantic Canada for many years prior to 1755, but in that year the English began deporting the Acadians. First, many Acadians were sent to English prisons; others were forced to flee to France. Over the next twenty-five to thirty years, Acadians fled back to Europe, down to Saint Domingue and along the eastern seaboard of the United States (Leblanc 99-124). Without a true place to call home a large number, estimated at approximately 10 000, went and settled in Louisiana between 1755 and the early 19th century (Dormon 39). These new Louisianan settlers from Acadia began calling themselves *Cadiens*. Through an evolution and distortion of this title, they became known as ‘Cajuns’.

As immigrants from various French-speaking areas began settling in Louisiana, the area to this day retains some very French characteristics. Besides

the obvious language differences, the Cadiens and other French immigrants kept their Catholic traditions, which differed from the protestant religions that were prevalent in what would become the United States. Because of this, Louisiana is divided into parishes instead of counties (*People* Louisiana.gov). Because I am also interested in law, I was surprised to see that in Louisiana, a civil code is used, like France[1]. British common law is used as well, but no other state uses the civil code to the same extent as Louisiana (*History*, Louisiana.gov). Although French speakers left undeniable traces on what is now Louisiana culture, I was fascinated to see that other cultures have heavily influenced the French language in the area. Since Jesuits also played an important role in the foundation of many Louisianan settlements in the 18th century, contact with the indigenous peoples introduced terms such as *ouaouron* and *chaoui* for frogs and raccoons, respectively, into Louisiana French (Barnett 34).

There were many influences that made Louisiana French distinct from other dialects of French. When Haiti declared itself independent in 1804, a second wave of immigrants sought refuge in Louisiana. It has been estimated that as many as ten thousand refugees sought asylum in New Orleans as a result of the Haitian Revolution (Lachance 210). This mass migration did not happen overnight, since some refugees first fled to Cuba before eventually immigrating to Louisiana as late as 1809 or early 1810 (Lachance 217). Many of the people

[1] Quebec also uses a civil code, which is residual from French settlement. Legal systems that use a civil code often approach legal questions very differently than common law systems. I was surprised by a civil code in Louisiana because of how integral common law is to the American legal history. Elements of civil code mixed with common law would create a very unique way of interpreting law in America.

fleeing Haiti were rich plantation owners who were well established and enjoyed extravagant lifestyles. I must admit that I originally thought that plantation owners were strictly white Europeans. It came as a surprise to me that there were Free People of Colour who also owned land and slaves in Haiti (Garrigus 233). Free People of Colour who owned slaves and land were among those who sought refuge in Louisiana. Along with their slaves, plantation owners brought with them two particular styles of French. Many of them spoke what has been termed "Colonial French." As well, many of them spoke a type of French Creole, which contrary to popular belief was spoken by many plantation owners and not just the slaves. These differences among the different dialects of French produced some interesting cultural and linguistic phenomena.

Overwhelmed by the multiple origins of French speakers in Louisiana, I began questioning what traces remained of their languages. I decided to start with the Cajuns. Many people who ended up in Louisiana as a result of the Grand Dérangement were lower class workers who were involved in farming and trapping. These laborers, even though they were French, were not very well esteemed by their fellow Frenchmen (Dormon 41). Because of this rejection by the upper classes, many Acadians remained together in Louisiana and formed Cajun communities, often located in the most inhospitable locations of Louisiana. One of the reasons that this dialect has survived for over 200 years is that these communities were somewhat isolated, but very closely knit. With each wave of immigration, Cajuns found themselves banding together with other Cajuns in an attempt to preserve their language and identity (Banzar 40). Much of the language

transmission was done in the family as opposed to formal education. As we will see later, French, especially Cajun French was strongly discouraged in the classroom. An interesting statistic was pulled from a survey of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette completed in 1997. This survey found that many of the people who completed the survey still perceive Cajun French as inferior to standard French (Banzar 216).

It seemed peculiar to me that to this day, Cajun French is still viewed unfavorably in Louisiana. I searched to find out what made it different than Standard French. Cajun French has maintained many of the archaic elements that it brought with it from the time of the Grand Derangement (Banzar 216). While the occurrence of these particularities becomes less and less prevalent in contemporary spoken French, extensive research has uncovered a few of these particularities, especially among the older generations. Many of these particularities involve the conjugation of verbs. One of the archaic conjugations that survived the Grand Dérangement and the 200 years that followed, is the ending *–ont* at the end of verbs conjugated in the third person present tense. This would cause *ils mangent* (from contemporary French) to be conjugated *ils mangeont*, a form of conjugation that was well documented in Acadia before the Grand Dérangement (Rottet 175).

Rottet brings up a second particularity involving conjugation. Rottet calls this phenomenon the "*J'avons*" phenomenon. Instead of using the pronoun *nous* to indicate the plural first person, the pronoun *je* remains but the conjugation endings still follow standard plural first person conjugation procedures. Sticking

with our example of *manger*, the conjugation *nous mangeons* would become *je mangeons*. While this may seem like a strange phenomenon, Rottet explains that this may have been a precursor to the replacement of *on* for *nous* in contemporary French (i.e. *Nous mangeons* became simplified to *on mange* in contemporary French) (180).

Another regional particularity that appears often in Louisiana is the use of "quoi" or "qui" for "que" when posing a question. This makes the question stem "qu'est-ce…?" into "quoi est-ce que…?" or "qui est-ce qui?" (Rottet 175). It is interesting to note that the "quoi" form of interrogation is more prevalent in the Parishes of Acadie, Assumption, Lafayette and Vermillion, while the "qui" form of interrogation seems to be limited to the Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes (Rottet 177). This may be due, in part, to the oral nature of language in these areas and the lack of formal education surrounding written language.

I figured that I had a better understanding of Cajun French and wanted to understand the other dialects from the area. Louisiana Creole, another important language in Louisiana's history, was almost entirely an oral language until quite recently. Before jumping into the Creole language, a few things need to be explained regarding what exactly Creole[2] means. There are many misconceptions about what it means and who it encompasses. The word initially designated those of European parentage (usually Spanish or French) who were born in the new world (Dominguez 94). People were using the term in this way as early as 1745

[2] There is still contention over the word Creole to this day. Some people use the term "Creole" interchangeably with the term "Free People of Colour". Originally these were not synonymous, but the line between these terms has become increasingly blurred.

(Dominguez 95). However, Dominguez, in her book *White by Definition*, underlines the fact that many people in earlier times used the term *Creole* when there was suspicion of mixed origin (95). Race played a huge role in social standing, so once the term took on a connotation that implied that a person possibly had black ancestry, the term lost favor among the white population, even though it originally designated white Europeans.

Knowing that Louisiana Creole was a disappearing language, but an important language in understanding poetry written by certain Free People of Colour, I decided it would be valuable to gain at least a minimal comprehension of the language. While I am not a linguist and do not pretend to be an expert in the area, I was able to pick up a few bits of information that greatly helped my reading ability in Louisiana Creole. Louisiana Creole differs from other creoles such as Haitian Creole, but there are certain similarities linguistically which need to be addressed. As far as creole languages are concerned "their lexicon is usually inherited from the superstrate language (the socially dominant language), whereas their grammar blends and combines the features of the substrates (languages of the dominated group)" (Baptista 34). During the time of colonization, the slaves from Africa were stripped of everything that they had and brought to the West Indies in *négriers*. In a similar fashion, these people were linguistically uprooted as they were dispersed throughout the Antilles and the southern United States. At first, communication was difficult, as there was no common language between the masters and the slaves. Tomasello describes communication as "shared intentionality" (342). He explains that "[c]ommon ground is necessary for the

recipient to determine both what the communicator is directing attention to (his referential intention) and why he is doing it (his social intention)" (75). From sheer necessity, the language that we now refer to as "Creole" was born. Creole can be seen as a vehicle for "shared intentionality" where a common language for communication between two parties was initially not available.

While the exact origin of Creole is still unclear, leading theorists have inferred that Creole is the result of generations of basic and simplified communication (Baptista 34). Another theory suggests that Creole languages are the result of the prolonged contact between multiple language groups (Baptista 35). Additionally, Baptista mentions *universalism*, in which children are assumed to be innately hardwired to learn language and would have unconsciously picked up the multiple linguistic elements from the languages that surrounded them (Baptista 35). To me, these three theories seem to be quite closely related and are historically supported.

In Louisiana, Creole was at one point a common language among the people. Alfred Mercier, one of the pioneers of Creole studies in Louisiana, is quoted as saying that even as recently as 1880 *"… le créole… est très répandu en Louisiane: il y a tout un quartier de la Nouvelle-Orléans où l'on s'en sert dans l'intimité, en s'adressant aux domestiques et aux enfants. Du reste quiconque parle ici le créole sait aussi s'exprimer en bon français*" (Banzar 222). As he points out, one could walk around many of the metropolitan areas and find a large number of people speaking Creole, regardless of race. Within the span of about 20 years, this claim was no longer true. Before discussing the drastic decline of

Creole speakers, one needs to understand possible reasons as to why so many people were speaking Creole in the first place.

While I found no specific document that outlined the history of Creole speakers in Louisiana, a possible reason for the elevated percentage of Creole speakers can be deduced from Mercier's *L'Habitation Saint-Ybars*, a book from 1881. Mercier insists that this book is a social commentary and not a novel. As a result, I am assuming that many of the aspects of social interaction in the book are based on evidence that Mercier experienced while in Louisiana and can thereby be taken as reflective of the time, or at least reflective of Mercier's perception of these interactions. In this book we see the dynamics of plantation life and the interactions that took place within the master's house walls. In my opinion, this book is of particular historical value because it shows that the slaves and the children that they cared for communicated with each other in Creole. This alone is interesting, but further on, we see that the children speak to their parents only in French. The conclusion that I am trying to demonstrate is that the children were fluent in both French and Creole. I did not want to jump to any sort of conclusions without thinking about why Mercier would write the book where the children spoke two languages. It became apparent that there are many possible reasons for which Mercier published a book where the children spoke French to their parents and Louisiana Creole to other children and others on the plantation. One reason is that since the book was written for a French audience, Mercier did not want to overtax the reader with reading too much Creole, so all interactions between French speakers took place in French. Another is to show the parents' interest in

tutoring their children in the French tradition. It may also be that for the children, French showed more respect to their parents, so they spoke to them in French, but in less formal situations, the children were comfortable to express themselves in Creole. Finally, it could also be that Mercier wanted to appeal to French audiences from France by making Louisiana seem exotic and a place where people spoke Creole. Although I do not know the real reason why Mercier wrote the book the way that he did, the evidence seems to indicate that speaking Creole was not an uncommon event in Louisiana.

Whenever I came across a passage of Louisiana Creole during my research, my brain seemed to think that it understood. But it didn't. I could pick out the general ideas, but never more than that. There are many similarities between French and Louisiana Creole, but it wasn't until I came across a conjugation chart that I really began understanding. Linguistically, Louisiana Creole, which is different from many of the other Atlantic Creoles, is characterized by the following tense indicators.

Indicateur du temps qui vient avant le verbe	***Temps***
apé	le présent progressif
té	le passé
tété	le passé progressif
va(a), sa	le futur indéfini
alé	le future défini (futur proche)
sé	le conditionnel

(Banzar 220, Valdman et Klingler 125-127)

Another dialect that made its way into Louisiana at about the same time as Creole was Colonial French. This unique dialect became strictly associated with rich plantation owners, but does not appear to have survived past the late 19th century. Many of the citizens of Louisiana who spoke this dialect fled to Louisiana after the Haitian revolution in the early 19th century. While very similar to "Standard French" at the time, Colonial French was distinguished by the way it was spoken. It is described as having a slower rhythm with longer "e" and "o" vowels. Additionally, a few archaic words survived, but are not common. For example *banquette* was used instead of *trottoir* for the English equivalent of sidewalk and *îlet* was used over *un pâté de maisons* to describe a city block (Banzar 212). Banzar also describes Colonial French as having a musicality about it, almost as if it were sung (Banzar 212).

Even though the French language played a massive part in Louisiana's history, the number of French speakers drastically dropped in the early 20th century. This decline can be attributed to many of the initiatives that were taking place in Louisiana's public schools at the time. The first blow to French happened in 1915 when students who used French in public schools were punished if caught speaking French to another student (*History,* CODOFIL.org). While this affected many of the French-speaking students who were enrolled in public schools, all of the Cadiens or Cajuns who were being raised in isolated communities seemed unaffected. However, in 1916 the *Mandatory Attendance Act* was passed which obligated parents to send their children to school (*History,* CODOFIL.org). While some Cajun communities were able to gather enough students to organize a local

French public school and preserve their language, many were not able to do so and their children were required to attend other local public schools. In 1921 the final nail was hammered into the French language coffin as the Louisiana Constitution specified that public school be taught only in English (*History*, CODOFIL.org). Because of these three government mandates all French-speaking children who attended public school were then required to learn English and abandon the use of French outside the home.

These initiatives imposed by the government left many Acadians feeling conflicted. Barry Ancelet, under his pseudonym "Jean Arcenaux", wrote a moving poem called "Je suis Cadien" where he outlines some of his most painful experiences growing up as a Cadien in public school. He writes:

Je me trouve dégôuté,
En exil chez moi
Avec une culture perdue entre deux langues.
J'ai appris la leçon du stigmate.

I will not speak French on the schoolgrounds.
I will not speak French on the schoolgrounds.
I will not speak French...
I will not speak French...
I will not speak French...
Hé ! Ils sont pas bêtes, ces salauds.
Après mille fois, ça commence à pénétrer

Dans n'importe quel esprit

Ça fait mal : ça fait honte.

Et on speak pas French on the school grounds

Et ni anywhere else non plus.

(Ancelet, *Je suis Cadien* 20)

While it seemed that French would never regain the prominence that it once enjoyed in Louisiana, I was able to see for myself that today there are many government funded initiatives to reintroduce French back into the public schools. The first of these initiatives began in 1968 with the creation of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). This organization, at its creation, was lead by James Domengeaux. From many of the descriptions available, Domengeaux is often portrayed as the savior of French in Louisiana. He is described as "a formidable figure with unimpeachable Acadian credentials. Domengeaux and his supporters launched a movement to bring state political and financial support to the preservation of French in Louisiana" (Dormon 42). The creation of CODOFIL had serious repercussions. It truly was a revolutionary movement.

Domengeaux left a lasting impression on many French speakers who felt like they had been robbed of their language and culture. Jeanne Castille, who chronicled her own life and parts of the history of Louisiana, explained that Domengeaux "*parlait d'or*" or "spoke gold" (202). She wrote down a few words of Domengeaux's that she felt were reflective of her sentiments:

> *Les écoles nous ont privé du français et nous en sommes nous-mêmes responsables puisque c'étaient nos maîtres d'école acadiens qui nous punissaient pour avoir parlé français et qui ont refusé de nous enseigner notre langue et notre culture, chose à laquelle tout peuple libre a droit dans une société démocratique.*
>
> (Castille 202)

Through the efforts of Domengeaux and others, CODOFIL was successful in reintroducing French into the classroom. However, its mission was not to teach Cajun or even any other type of Louisiana French. CODOFIL sought to teach a universal French, especially since there were not enough local French speaking teachers to fill the school boards with qualified French teachers. In 1968 CODOFIL brought in its first group of French teachers from France and Quebec (*History*, CODOFIL.org). Shortly thereafter CODOFIL also began hiring teachers from Belgium (Dormon 42). What is surprising to me is that even after CODOFIL was established and running, it never made any attempts to incorporate Louisiana French into the curriculum. Even though Domengeaux "explicitly acknowledged the Acadian fact in French-Speaking Louisiana, under the auspices of CODOFIL he allowed only for the teaching of standard French in the public schools" (St. Hilaire 160). The directive to not include Louisiana French in the curriculum seems somewhat counterintuitive to the goals of CODOFIL but, despite this, French programs began springing up across the state.

Throughout the 70s CODOFIL began implementing an increasing number of French language initiatives in the Louisiana public schools system. At first

glance the programs seemed particularly effective. In the 1972-73 scholastic year, CODOFIL had successfully implemented the program in 88 schools where a total of over 16 000 students were able to receive some form of French instruction; the following year, these numbers augmented to 137 schools involved and over 28 000 students participating (St-Hilaire 160). These numbers rose continually every year until the 1990s when CODOFIL discovered that despite the fact that many students were passing through these French language programs, very few of them were actually able to communicate at an acceptable level outside contrived classroom settings. St-Hilaire attributes this insufficient language level to the fact that many of the schools where these programs were implemented only scheduled thirty minutes of French language instruction per day (160). Even though language success was limited, the French programs in public schools were still on the rise in the 1980s and early 1990s. In response to this, CODOFIL began actively searching out additional opportunities for students to be exposed to more French and began experimenting with French immersion possibilities. In 1991, the active enrollment of French immersion students in the Louisiana public school system was 711. By 2004, that number more than tripled to 2618 (St-Hilaire 161).

On paper, these statistics suggest that French in Louisiana was doing fine and well but French language and local French culture do not always equate to the same thing. St-Hilaire points out "the state-sponsored efforts to preserve and promote French not only ignored local Francophone culture, but, by treating it as inferior, also encouraged its extinction" (St-Hilaire 161). During my stay in Louisiana, I had the opportunity to personally interview the current president of

CODOFIL, Bill Arceneaux. I asked him if CODOFIL's mission was to teach a local French or a standard French. He told me that CODOFIL's aim was to teach students an international French, but that this French did not exclude teaching parts of Louisiana French (Arceneaux, *Interview*). Skeptical at first, I began to see a realistic hope for French in Louisiana. One of the biggest reasons that I am so hopeful for the future of French in Louisiana is that all of CODOFIL's initial "Standard French" initiatives created a grassroots movement by many people who still considered themselves Cajuns. A resurgence of traditional Cajun customs, food and music were all a result of these grassroots counter-movements (Dormon 42). The 'revolt' gave rise to groups such as *Action Cadienne* (a group specifically set out to promote immersion programs in schools), *les Amis de l'Immersion, les Partenaires du Franglais*, and the *Cajun French Music Association* (CFMA) (St-Hilaire 165-66). It is difficult to say that CODOFIL is against Cajun culture. In fact, it has taken great strides to promote French of all kinds in the community. The Mission Statement of CODOFIL reads:

> Our Mission is two-fold: to offer Louisiana's citizens, whether they be of French ancestry or not, the opportunity either to learn French or to enhance and utilize the French they already know; and to explore, understand and support Cajun, Creole and Francophone heritage in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of all its citizens.
>
> (*What is CODOFIL*, CODOFIL.org)

I was particularly encouraged by the fact that CODOFIL is promoting not only French language learning, but that it also encourages people to "to enhance

and utilize the French they already know." CODOFIL has also created posters that can be printed off of a computer. These posters are designed to raise awareness about "alternative" dialects of French that should be embraced in Louisiana. A few poster slogans that particularly stuck out for me were « *Parlez Créole ! C'est la langue de notre héritage* », « *Parlez Cadien ! C'est du bon français* », and finally, the one that I found perhaps the most intriguing, « *As-tu parlé français à un enfant aujourd'hui ?* » (*Mini-affiches*, CODOFIL.org).

During my stay in Shreveport, I also had the opportunity to see many of the language initiatives in action. One of the major language initiative events that took place while I was in Shreveport was the signing of a formal agreement between CODOFIL, the French Consul and the Centenary College president. The agreement formalized the project known as "*Escadrille Louisiane*". Since I had no idea what *Escadrille Louisiane* was prior to hearing Centenary would be hosting the event, I was able to collect information about the CODOFIL project. A news clip produced by PBS provided me with some of the back-story to how the idea of "*Escadrille Louisiane*" took flight.

> When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914 a group of American pilots volunteered to fight for France. They formed a squadron and called it "Escadrille Lafayette". 200 American pilots bravely fought German forces […] And nearly one hundred years later […] a small squadron of college students will soon be heading to France in the fall (2012), helping French students learn English. They will return to Louisiana to become elementary through high school French teachers. This pilot program was

> put together by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, also known as CODOFIL.
>
> (Louisiana Public Broadcasting)

The program is the brainchild of Bill Arceneaux, current president of CODOFIL. In an interview also included in the PBS documentary, he explained how the idea of having a language agreement between France and Louisiana could be initiated. He states:

> I had the idea of forming a Louisiana Escadrille and I approached the government of France. Basically, I told them that in 1914 they had accepted 200 brave Americans, many of them whom [sic] were killed, by the way, to fight for France, how about accepting 200 Louisianians to become French teachers? And they generously and eagerly jumped at the proposal, liked it very much, and we are on our way with the first class of 10 Louisianians to become French teachers.
>
> (Louisiana Public Broadcasting)

The report goes on to explain that each student who is enrolled in "*Escadrille Louisiane*" signs a contract to teach in either an immersion school or teach French in a public school for three years upon his or her return. Through this process Louisiana is able to reduce their dependence on other countries for French language teachers and encourage more students to stay enrolled in the French programs that are available.

One problem that was brought to my attention during my stay in Louisiana is that many students feel that besides a career in Education, there are very few

professional opportunities for French speakers. I was able to speak with Erin Stickney, who participated in a formal language exchange run by CODOFIL. Although the program that she participated in had no requirement to teach French upon her return, the program was intended to give students an immersion experience, allowing the student to enrich the Louisiana French speaking community upon his or her return. Erin brought to my attention some of the feelings that are common among students enrolled in French programs in Louisiana. She said:

> *Il y a certainement des avantages pour les jeunes d'apprendre le français en Louisiane, mais malheureusement ces avantages ne sont pas financiers --il existe très peu d'opportunités de gagner sa vie en français en Louisiane (surtout si on ne s'intéresse pas à l'enseignement), et à mon avis c'est ça qu'il faut créer si on veut continuer à voir une Louisiane francophone. Néanmoins, d'autres avantages existent. En tant que Franco-Louisianaise, je peux m'identifier à notre culture, qui s'exprime en français --d'abord, la capacité de comprendre la musique cadienne est essentielle pour moi, personnellement. Pouvoir parler français m'ouvre des portes, surtout au niveau des individus --cela donne accès aux personnes qui se méfient d'Anglophones (ce qui n'est pas rare parmi des Louisianais d'un certain âge) et aux conversations privilégiées (certaines blagues, contes, anecdotes, etc.). Je pourrais dire que le fait de parler français enrichit beaucoup ma vie --cela m'a donné l'occasion de voyager, de faire des amis partout au monde, etc.*

(Stickney, *Interview*)

Fortunately for Erin, she now has an opportunity to work every day in French. She is one of the few who was able to find employment in French in a field other than education. She is employed full-time by CODOFIL. Students that wish to participate in CODOFIL run programs also become eligible for funding through CODOFIL's large network of scholarships. Erin benefited from the additional funding provided by the Louisiana government. The scholarships that she received have become invaluable because of the additional language experience that existed through participating in a language exchange. She explains:

> *J'ai profité de deux bourses administrées par le CODOFIL pendant que j'étais jeune étudiante apprenant le français --une pour passer trois semaines à l'Université de Mons en été 2005 quand j'avais 18 ans et la deuxième pour passer l'année scolaire 2007-2008 à l'Institut Catholique de Paris. Ceci était très important pour moi parce que j'ai grandi dans une paroisse (Ouachita) qui n'avait pas d'école d'immersion française. J'ai eu une excellente prof de français et j'ai profité de son cours autant que je pouvais, mais j'avais vraiment besoin de l'expérience de vivre 24/7 en français. Ces occasions m'ont été offertes grâce à la générosité de la communauté française de Wallonie-Bruxelles (pour la bourse pour aller à Mons) et de la Fondation Louisiane (pour la bourse pour aller à Paris) ainsi qu'à l'administration de CODOFIL et de l'ALCFES (L'Association Louisianaise des Clubs de Français des Écoles Secondaires).*

(Stickney, *Interview*)

My experiences seeing the formalization of *Escadrille Louisiane* and speaking with Erin Stickney indicated to me that a large amount of time and money were going into promoting programs between Louisiana and France. During my stay I was also able to correspond with Philippe Aldon, *Attaché culturel adjoint,* from the department of *Service de coopération et d'action culturelle of the Consulat général de France à La Nouvelle-Orléans*. In our discussions I was able to ask him if he thought that there was hope for French in Louisiana. He explained:

> *C'était sans comprendre que le français est en fait le DNA d'un fait francophone louisianais qui, s'il paraissait s'être égaré voire dissout dans les bayous du sud de la Louisiane, n'a rien perdu de sa force de conviction et de son pouvoir d'expression. Résilient, le français se reconstruit dans l'adversité; il se retrouve dans la diversité qui le légitime. Le renouveau du CODOFIL (conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane) en est une preuve. Il est aujourd'hui, représentatif des différentes composantes de cette diversité francophone louisianaise ancienne et récente, porteur d'avenir. En effet, si les écoles d'immersion en français sont une affirmation de cette identité francophone louisianaise bien vivante, elles constituent aussi la démonstration du potentiel qualitatif de cette diversité historique qui, sur les bancs de l'école publique américaine, se construit un avenir ouvert à la pluralité des identités.*
>
> (Aldon, *Interview*)

I think one of the greatest surprises to me about conducting my research in Louisiana was that I was able to see so many things first hand and speak to people that I considered to be very influential in the French language movement. One such experience was attending the CODOFIL's annual consortium of Louisiana Colleges and Universities meeting. This organization, headed by CODOFIL, serves as a blanket program for all universities and colleges in the state. By creating this consortium, CODOFIL can extend its influence beyond public K-12 schools in the state and be a part of building French programs at the post-secondary level.

I actually had an opportunity to sit in on one of the Consortium's meetings and was surprised to see individuals from so many different types of institutions. There were representatives from the major universities, namely LSU, Tulane and University of Louisiana, Lafayette, but also from the smaller public institutions such as University of Louisiana - Monroe, and even plenty of private institutions were represented by colleges such as Centenary (Shreveport). In addition to the colleges and universities, CODOFIL sends their executive director (Joseph Dunn) and the Consulate sent Philippe Aldon. While most of the meeting focused on recruiting new students and retaining existing students, I was surprised to see individuals from so many universities and colleges working together for a single goal.

I also had the opportunity to sit in on the semi-annual CODOFIL meetings held at the CODOFIL headquarters in Lafayette, Louisiana. Since CODOFIL is a government-run organization, the meetings are considered open to the public.

Maybe because of my interest in law, I was intrigued that state laws required that public meetings by government organizations must be visibly posted with the date and time and that the meetings were open to the general public. Even though the meetings were open to the general public, only a handful of the people in attendance were not on the CODOFIL board. If I am not mistaken, there was me and 4 other people, and these 4 other people were involved in CODOFIL sponsored programs.

Regardless of how I perceived the programs, I was curious to know how people within Louisiana viewed the French language programs and the future of French in the state. In a survey conducted among French language public school teachers in 2010, 73% were in favor of teaching elements of Louisiana French in the classroom (Barnett 295). While this statistic is encouraging, only 18.5% were in favor of using entirely Louisiana French as the language of instruction (Barnett 295). One of the main reasons given for the hesitation to use Louisiana French in the classroom is that it would isolate Louisiana from the rest of the French speaking population in the world and that students who learned French in the classroom would be unable to communicate effectively with other Francophones (Barnett 295).

Another reason that teachers are reluctant to teach Louisiana French in the classroom is that there simply aren't enough resources. In order for a Louisiana French immersion program to function, all of the curriculum would have to either be translated or modified from its Standard French form. Because there is the potential for the curriculum to change on a yearly basis, the teachers would have

to potentially translate materials on a regular basis. Since many of the French language instructors currently employed by the school boards are from abroad, many of them reported that they would be unfamiliar with the context and the correct procedure to translate any documents that would need translation (Barnett 297). Even in 2010, many of the French language instructors reported that the pedagogical materials required for instruction were insufficient. They found that even for Standard French programs, they were spending additional time translating materials from English to French to fit the curriculum (Barnett 297). Additionally, I realized that many people responsible for teaching French in Louisiana are not professional translators and usually have no background in translation, which further complicates the process of translating a curriculum.

Teachers began to worry that they were spending far more time than their English counterparts in regards to lesson planning because they had to spend more time ensuring that they had enough materials. In addition to this, French language teachers, as members of CODOFIL, were charged with being French language promoters, which was another responsibility that French instructors had to deal with that English instructors did not. (Barnett 298). Instructors also reported that they felt like all of their extra work was in vain since so few of the students used French outside of the classroom (Barnett 299). Many of the students did not speak French in the home since several of their parents were discouraged from speaking French as children. This has created an interesting generational gap in French language speakers.

This generational gap has created a challenge in the classroom on multiple levels. Since few children begin school with any sort of knowledge of French, the French immersion programs at most schools in the system are destined for students between the ages of 8 and 14. Because children are only allowed to be enrolled in partial immersion until the age of 8, children are not exposed to as much French as they potentially could during important formative years (Barnett 28). While the learning curve involved for children entering a full immersion system with no prior experience in French would be incredibly steep, many teachers reported that they thought full French immersion programs should be offered from K-12 in order to maximize the potential learning (Barnett 300). Within the current curriculum established by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), approximately half of the instruction in Kindergarten is given in French (Barnett 28). This percentage gradually rises until the students arrive in full immersion classes. Once in the immersion program, students receive all of their subjects in French, apart from Language Arts, which is divided evenly between English and French (Barnett 29).

As the attitudes of teachers towards French became more apparent to me, I began to wonder what students thought of French in the public schools. I came across a survey that was conducted in 2010 among high school students. From this survey, I learned that 71% of the students that participated thought that learning French was important in Louisiana; 63% indicated that the emphasis should be placed on Louisiana French (Lindner 126). In a separate portion of the survey, Lindner attempted to discover the attitudes towards French, in general,

among the students. She discovered that 87% believe that French played an important role in Louisiana's history, 60% believe it currently plays an important role in Louisiana, and 81% indicated that they thought that French should remain a part of Louisiana culture and identity (Lindner 129).

Although these statistics are encouraging, they may not be a true indication of the real attitudes towards Louisiana French. While many students said that they thought French was important, many of these students indicated that their main motivation for learning French was to use it abroad for either travel or work possibilities (Lindner 130). Perhaps the best indicator of the true attitudes towards Louisiana French is reflected in the following statistic: of the high school students polled in the Lafayette Parish, 65% indicated that they wanted their future children to learn French. However, only 37% said that they wanted their children to learn Cajun French (Lindner 146-147).

While Louisiana enjoys a complicated and rich linguistic history, it appears that it will continue to have a complicated future. Even though I do not know what the future of French will be in Louisiana, there are many people and organizations working to ensure that the French community remains an integral part of the Louisiana identity. Beyond the influential people and organizations, I feel that the future of French in Louisiana lies in the attitudes of the youth and it looks as if students hope that French remains a part of their identity and the identity of their state.

Louisiana Music Overview

Before I even started my Masters proposal, I knew I wanted to find a way to incorporate music into my research. During my undergraduate degree my major was French and my minor was music. Through my studies I was able to learn how music could be used as an effective teaching tool. I was fascinated by how responsive children were to music, including lyrics, at a young age (Berger and Cooper 152). As well, it has been documented that people associate their most positive childhood musical learning experiences with being sung to over any other form of musical teaching (i.e playing an instrument to learn a tune or choral singing) (Custodero and Johnson-Green 104). I felt that if I could find a way to combine singing with Louisiana French more children in Louisiana would further their knowledge of French. I realized that before I could be in any sort of musical teaching situation, I would first need to have materials to teach. Since I had nothing, I needed to find something. As a process of discovery I began looking at Louisiana's musical history.

Music is undeniably tied to the history of the United State's Deep South. Admittedly, prior to beginning my thesis, I thought of Louisiana's contribution to the United States' musical heritage as rather minimal and limited to jazz. However, as I have delved further and further into the musical history of Louisiana, a broader perspective has unveiled itself to me. Many of my initial findings about music in Louisiana helped me narrow my research down to the contributions "Free People of Colour" made to the areas of poetry and music through adapting popular tunes of the 19th century.

Before going much further, I think it is important to take a brief tangent to explain who I mean by "Free People of Colour". Free People of Colour are a distinct class of people who played an important role in Louisiana's history. Throughout Louisiana's existence, race was an extremely significant identifier. Not only did people distinguish each other by white or black, they further divided themselves into *griffés, briqués, mulattoes, quadroons* and *octoroons* (Kein 3). Socially, it was advantageous to be able to present oneself as close to white as possible and as distant as one could be from black slaves. The term Free People of Colour appeared in the early 1700s when determining which taxes applied to whom (Kein 8). Certain taxes applied to different individuals if they were European Creole, Mulatto, a Free Person of Colour or a slave. Initially, taxes were different between these same groups; however, Free People of Colour contested that they should not have to pay more than any group simply because of race. As early as 1724, Free People of Colour paid the same taxes as European Creoles. It did not remain this way, but Free People of Colour were treated much more favorably than slaves. That does not imply that they enjoyed a life without discrimination. Free People of Colour dealt with many forms of discrimination and were often censored in what they published about society. I was drawn to poetry and music written by Free People of Colour because they constantly struggled to find their place in society. They were not often considered to be socially equal to the whites, and yet they also were constantly trying to distinguish themselves from other blacks, in the hopes of enjoying a more privileged life.

Their struggles to fit in elicited some very complex pieces of poetry and music that contain so many layers of interesting material.

Even though my research narrowed itself to focus on Free People of Colour, I started it rather broadly. Through my encounters with others, I had the opportunity to glean knowledge from several people more knowledgeable than I. On one such occasion, I had the privilege of interviewing Alfred Lemmon from The Historic New Orleans' Collection, located in the Williams Research Center in the old French Quarter of New Orleans. I, a mere fledgling, attempted to pick the brains of this specialist in the field of music one afternoon in the hopes of collecting information that would help my thesis. His advice to me was this – in Louisiana, there is a lot of attention paid to Free People of Colour as musicians, but I needed to put their music in the "context of the whole new world experience" (Lemmon, *Interview*).

In a sense he was telling me to understand the bigger picture before narrowing my focus. This did not mean that I should water down my findings, but rather, that I needed to see music as part of an interconnected history. As I began to take this approach, I started to see the importance of getting a wider perspective.

One theme that I began to see across the board as I expanded my research was that music was an important means for cultural transmission and communication. The content changes from song to song but the general sense of using music as a vehicle for communication remains the same. I had heard growing up that some slave songs were used as a subversive means to

communicate the pathway to freedom. I did not see exactly how this could be done without the slave master hearing. It became more apparent to me as I read through *American History through Music: Music of the Civil War* by Steven Cornelius. One of the songs that it uses to demonstrate the potential for song to direct people to freedom is "Follow the Drinking Gourd". This song is "widely believed to have helped direct slaves escaping northward to freedom. Generally traveling alone, away from the roads, and under the cover of darkness, slaves relied on the North Star, or in overcast weather the moss on the trees, to tell them the way" (Cornelius 119). The words to this particular song are as follows:

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is waiting to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

[Chorus:]
Follow the drinking gourd,
Follow the drinking gourd
For the old man is a-waitin'
To carry you to freedom
Follow the drinking gourd.

The river bed makes a mighty fine road,

Dead trees to show you the way

And its left foot, peg foot, traveling on

Follow the drinking gourd.

[Chorus]

The river ends between two hills

Follow the drinking gourd

There's another river on the other side

Follow the drinking gourd.

[Chorus]

I thought I heard the angel say

Follow the drinking gourd

The stars in the heavens

Gonna show you the way

Follow the drinking gourd.

(Cornelius 119-120)

At first I did not see all of the symbolism present in this song, but as I read on in the book, it became more apparent as the symbolism was explained:

> The text seems to be coded instructions telling the resolute traveler how to make his way north. The "drinking gourd" refers to the constellation of the

> Little Dipper (Canis Minor), which holds the North Star at the end of the handle, or possibly, the "gourd" may be the Big Dipper (Canis Major), whose "pointer stars" at the end of the pot point almost straight to the North Star. The first stanza instructs the traveler to begin the journey around the winter solstice when "the sun comes back" to the northern hemisphere. The "old man" is perhaps Peg Leg Joe, an abolitionist who was said to have marked a trail, or any of the Underground Railroad conductors.
>
> (Cornelius 120)

The above poem was the first concrete example that I came across of subversive poetry. I could see how music could contain an additional layer that would not be apparent to someone who was not looking. I became excited by the idea of subversive poetry. It was captivating that people would use music to communicate specifically in this way. Music was the vehicle for their message.

The more I researched music of the period, the more I found the recurring importance of using music to communicate cultural histories. In Louisiana, not only were people of colour marginalized, but so were those of Cajun descent. As previously explained, Cajuns were often seen as inferior to "more civilized folk" and often ended up as a marginalized population that worked hard labor jobs that few others wanted. Music among the Cajun population held an important role in the late 19th century. Certainly music held important entertainment value within the community, but as Koster explains, music was far more than simply leisure:

> In early Cajun families, singing was a tradition that passed from one generation to another through house songs and dance music. The former consisted of solo narrative ballads typically sung by mothers to their children, and the latter generally by men to one another in working or post work relaxation environs. Both often served as musical history lessons depicting the origins and hardships of the culture. They were always French language and French ancestral songs, rendered solo or with fiddle and accordion accompaniment.
>
> (Koster 160)

If Cajuns were also using music as a way to communicate their history, I wanted to find an example to see how they did it. I came across an example in a book specifically about Cajun music in Louisiana. As an illustration of the hardships and difficulties associated with Cajun life, Brandon, in her essay "The Socio-Cultural Traits of the French Folksong", gives the following:

J'ai passé devant ta porte
J'ai crié baï-baï la belle
'l ya personne qui ma répondu
Oh yé yaï mon cœur fait mal,

J'ai passé devant ta porte
J'ai vu tout le monn' après pleurer
J'ai pensé y avait que'qu'chose

Oh yé yaï mon cœur fait mal.

J'ai passé devant ta porte
J'ai vu toutes les chandelles allumées
À l'entour de ton cercueil
Oh yé yaï mon cœur fait mal.

(Brandon 59)

Knowing that Louisiana was composed of many different groups of people, I began wondering if other cultural groups had their own distinct way of communicating through music. I found that Creole music also frequently used hardship as a starting point for musical inspiration. Even though the terms Creole and Free People of Colour are often used interchangeably when referring to race, Creole music is its own genre. Creole music can be better understood with the following description:

> [Creole music is unique because of] *juré* singing – rhythmic call and response patterns – and hollers that had their origins with the slaves and Haitian fieldworkers and were fueled by the Afro-Caribbean polyrhythms and songs of the Native Americans. These call-and-response creations, punctuated often with gull-like cries from the musicians, were focused on the emotions of jubilant hope and spiritual sorrow – the same feelings that simmer in the blues. The tunes were often accented with dance steps and intricate percussion figures on makeshift instruments.

(Koster 160)

I was beginning to get the sense that music was a way for oppressed communities to cope with difficult circumstances. To my astonishment, music was also being used in Louisiana as a means of perpetuating the status quo. A prime example of this is evident in the pre-civil war song, *Toucoutou*, by Joe Beaumont. In this song, written entirely in Louisiana Creole, Beaumont explains through music the history of the case and the proceedings of the Toucoutou trial, which went to the American Supreme Court.

The case all began when two females who had known each other growing up met in the market. Both were of mixed descent but one was darker skinned and the other was very fair, a "passe-blanche". The quarrel escalated when the "passe-blanche" began treating the other who was much darker as an inferior. This aggravated the darker woman because she felt that they were on equal ground, both being of mixed heritage. As the conflict grew, more people became involved. Insisting that she was not of African descent, the lighter girl, Anastasie, or "Toucoutou" as she was later called, became the focus of a massive trial to determine whether she was of African descent or white, as she claimed to be. In order to settle the dispute, the trial went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court ruled that Toucoutou was in fact of mixed origin. As a message to all other people of mixed descent who were trying to pass for white, Joe Beaumont wrote "Toucoutou" to discourage them from trying (Desdunes 61-65). What is particularly interesting is that Joe Beaumont was a quadroon, or a quarter Black (Kein 125). This song is the only case that I came across where people of colour tried to pass a message to other people of colour against trying to escape the racial

bound that trapped their community. In the mid-nineteenth century, Free People of Colour began forming a collective identity. When free blacks were treated as inferior to other groups, they often resisted or withdrew from the dominant white society. Creating a distinct identity allowed Free People of Colour the opportunity to seek refuge from discrimination but also to promote feelings of self worth and share collective beliefs (Hanger 168).

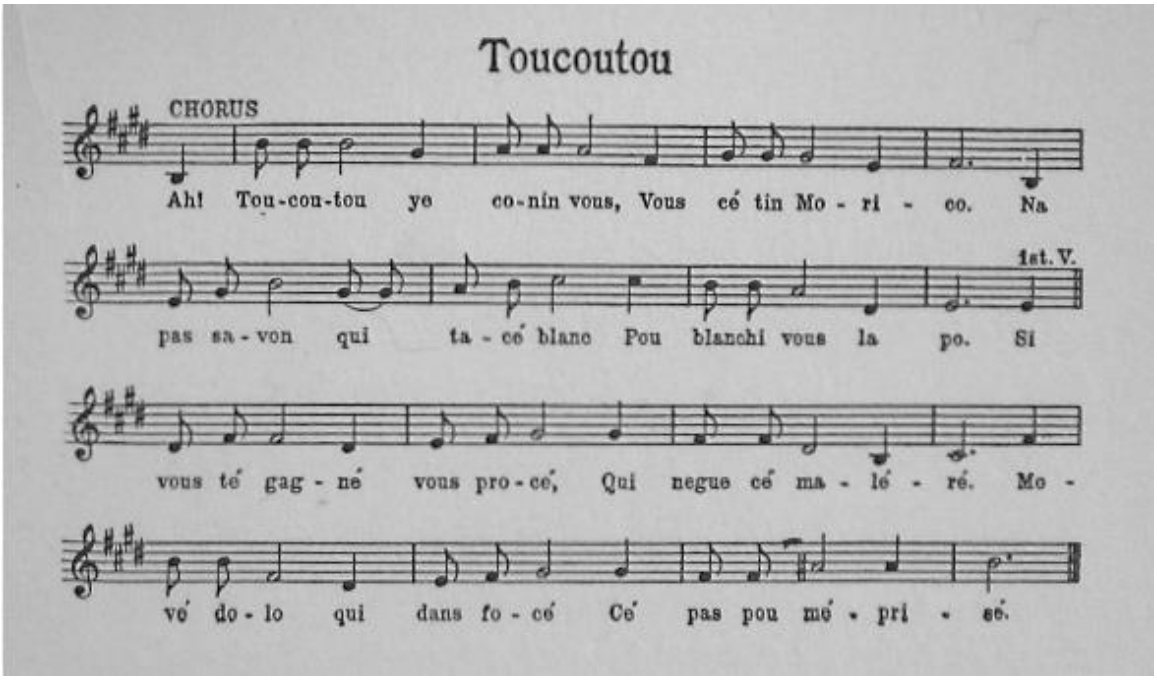


Figure 2 Toucoutou (Tinker 281)

Edward Laroque Tinker was so inspired by this song written by Beaumont that he decided to write an entire novel based on the true events. The line of the song that struck me hardest was "*na pas savon qui tacé blanc pou blanchi la po*" (my translation – *There isn't a soap that is white enough to bleach your skin*). It is clear that the message is to not try to pass as white. In the novel where this song is available in print, Tinker includes some of the verses but it is suggested that many

other verses were included after the original song was first written that he chose not to include. While the example of Toucoutou might not be the most positive message spread through music, it did show me that music in Louisiana during the 19th century could be very politically charged.

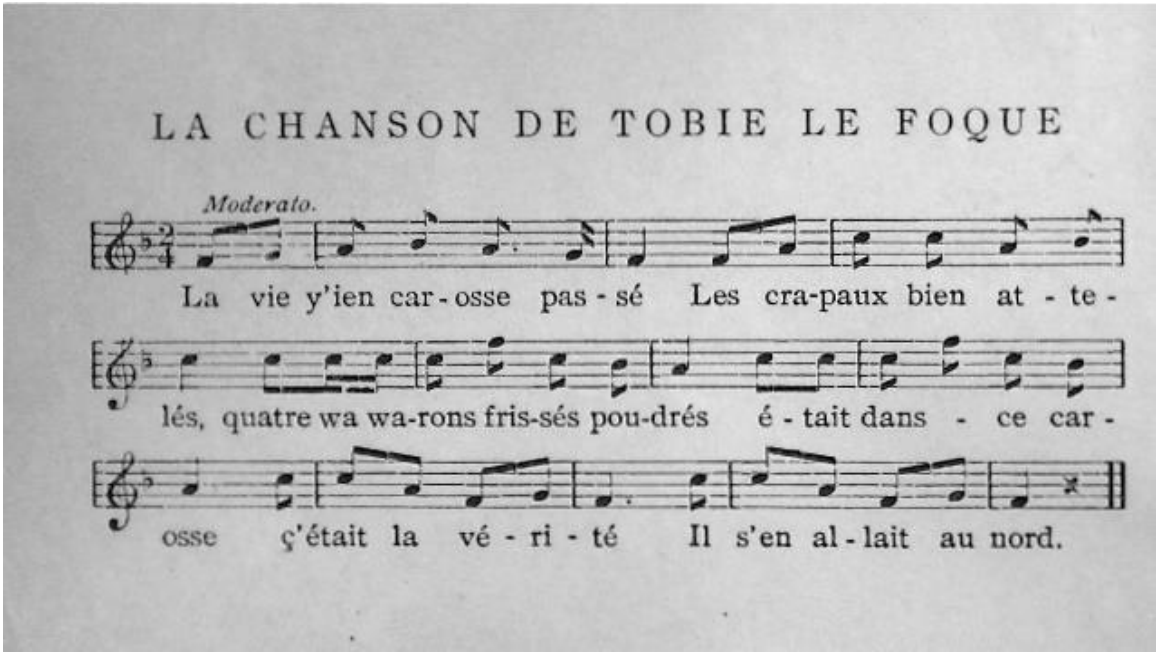
Having a global understanding of Louisiana music helped me better appreciate how poets used music as a vehicle for communication. While sometimes the message contained in a poem may be obvious, I found myself continually drawn to the message that lay hidden beneath layers of interpretation. Coming to this conclusion, I felt confident that I wanted to examine more closely the poetry and music written by Free People of Colour.

Searching for Louisiana Song

Having a better understanding of how important music was as a means of communicating cultural messages, I decided that I wanted to begin trying to find lost works of Louisiana music. Prior to leaving for Louisiana I did not know how available "lost" musical works would be. As I started my research in Louisiana, I honestly thought that I would have a nearly impossible time scrounging up material and music that would be relevant to my thesis. Though it was difficult, to my surprise, once I discovered a few sources, many others began appearing as well from these same sources. After a short while, I found myself overwhelmed by the amount of music that I had found. Most of it was not exactly what I was looking for because the music and lyrics were printed together and my purpose in going to Louisiana was to reunite lyrics with thier music. I resisted the urge to indulge myself too deeply in the early music that I was able to find with the help of Dr. Kress, but I soon asked myself why I was shying away from historic music that could be used to serve the same purpose that I was hoping to accomplish by reuniting songs with poetry.

The first group of songs that I decided were worthy of being included in my thesis was found in a rather unusual spot for music. Dr. Kress had an old Louisiana cookbook printed in 1903 that contained a handful of songs and illustrations. Most of the songs were written in French or Louisiana Creole but to my surprise, all of the recipes in the cookbook were in English. There were no other French excerpts in the cookbook except the songs, which had been glued in by hand after printing. Some of the songs in the cookbook were about the market,

some were traditional songs and some were written about people from the area. Each song contained in the cookbook was also paired with an artist's interpretation of the song. These images were a wonderful surprise to me, because I did not expect to find anything of the sort during my research. I decided to include them since my goal was to find music that children could use to learn French. These images, coupled with the music, would be a wonderful addition to any children's book.



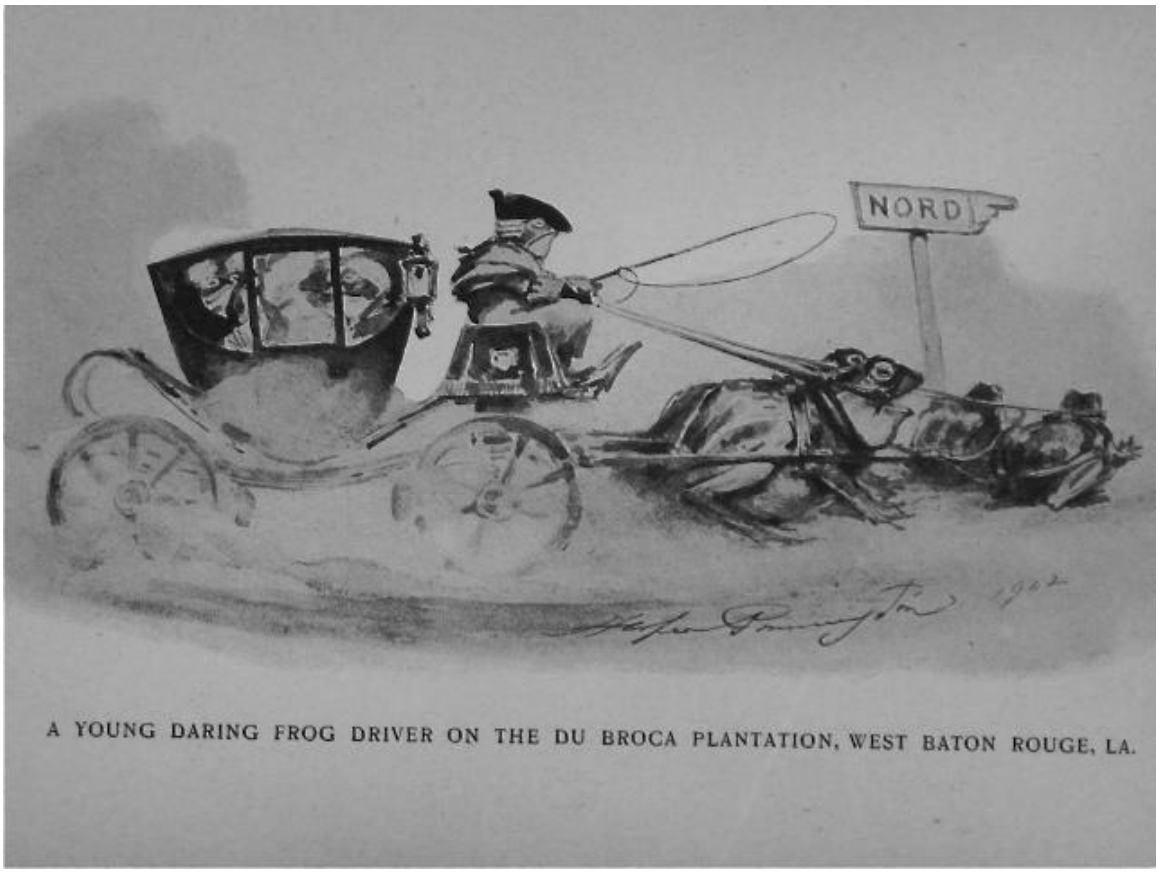


Figure 3 Chanson de Tobie le Foque (Eustis *Frontispiece*)

The above piece about Tobie le Foque was one of my favorites. The reason that I liked this song so much was that it contains the fantastical imagery of frogs in a carriage being pulled by toads. I was also particularly intrigued because the Louisiana French word of "wawaron" was used instead of the traditional "grenouille". This added uniqueness made me appreciate its historic value. I cannot be certain, but the reference to "frogs" in a carriage seems to me like an allusion to the French upper class who were fleeing to the north, potentially after the civil war.

The next song that I pulled out of the cookbook has less cultural references in it but it is rather unique. It is called *Belle dindi de jambe de bois.* As

the song title suggests, it is about a turkey with wooden legs (notice the distinct spelling of "dindi" instead of the traditional "dinde" or "dindon"). This short tune intitially grabbed my attention because of the unique spelling of "dinde", but retained my attention because the image of a turkey with wooden legs was enough to make me wonder why such a song was ever created (were prostheses common among turkeys in the 19th century?). In any event, here is one of the more playful songs contained in the cookbook.

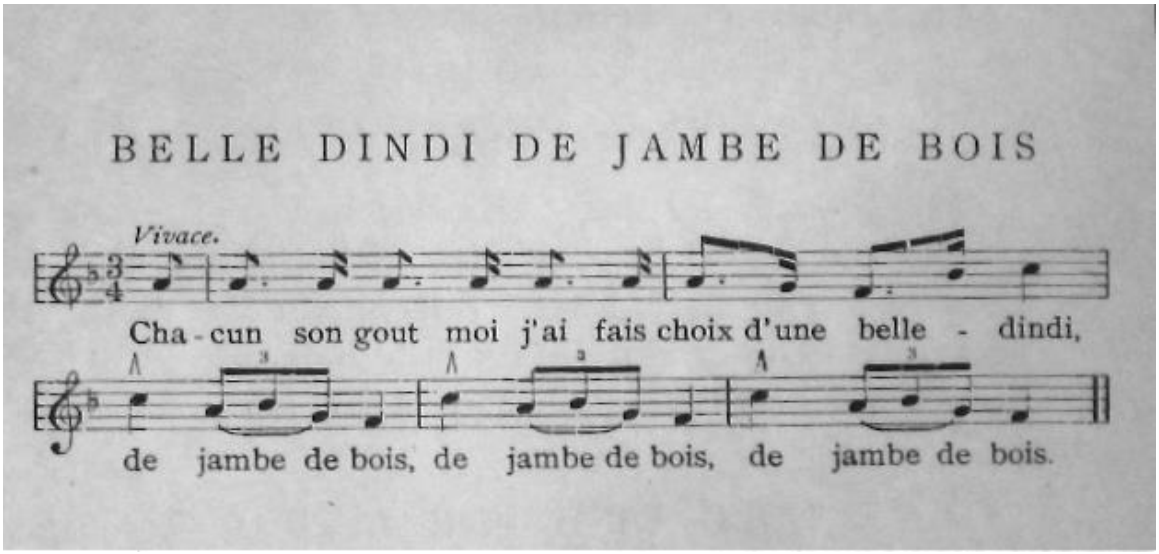


Figure 4 Belle dindi de jambe de bois (Eustis, 22a)

Perhaps the most intriguing of all of the songs in the cookbook is "Chanson de Mérance". The reason that I find it so intriguing is that it appears that Nurse Mérance appears to be a real person who existed. According to the caption on the bottom of the image, she lived "just above New Orleans". She apparently was a wet nurse to a white family and also did not like the children (how else can you explain why she would tell the child to "vas t'en dans les enfers"?). While I do not condone telling children to go to hell, and do not think

that the message has historic value, I do think that this song contains other valuable cultural treasures about the area that make this a unique find.

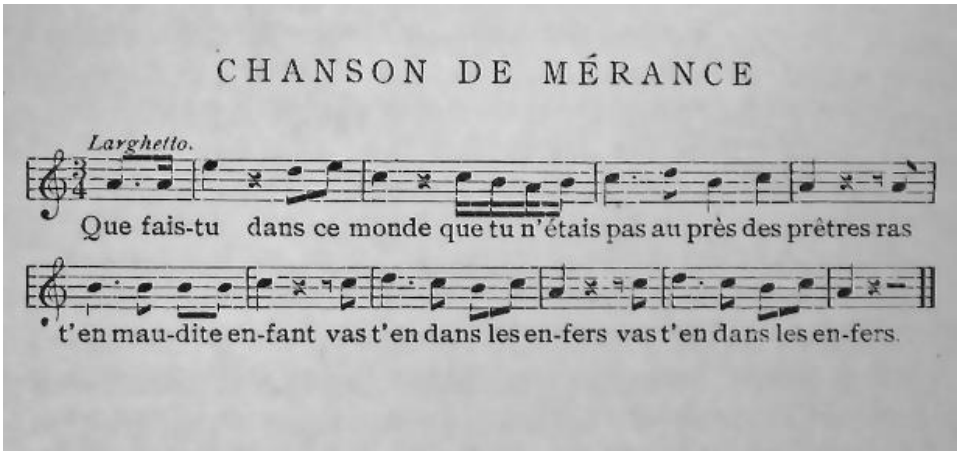


Figure 5 Canson de Mérance (Eustis, 32a)

The next two songs are well known Louisiana tunes that are easily accessible in print form from various sources, but I have chosen to include them for that very reason. These two songs were included in the cookbook because they served as the inspiration for two of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's compositions. (Gottschalk was one of the most significant classical composers and pianists to emerge from Louisiana—and was considered a great American composer—during the 19th century). The "Bamboula" served as the inspiration for Gottschalk's "Bamboula" or "Bamboule", (sometimes also known as "*Danse des Nègres*") and "Mamzelle Zizi" was the inspiration for Gottschalk's "*Savanne*". I felt that finding these two pieces reinforced my understanding that Louisiana music and its Creole influences did not exist in isolation from other types of music at the time. Creole music was having an impact on everything from jazz to classical music.

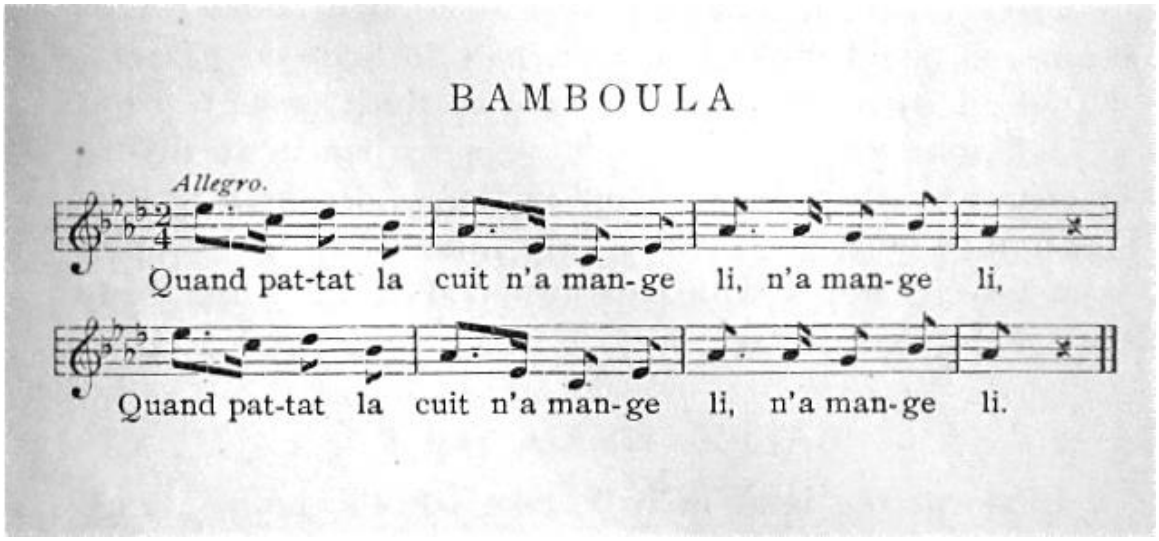
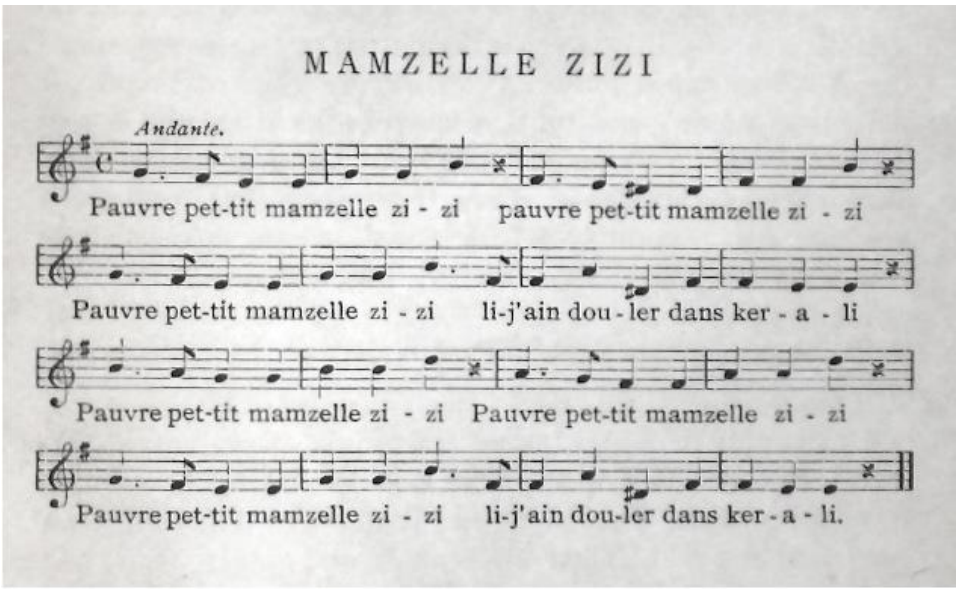


Figure 6 Bamboula (Eustis, 10a)



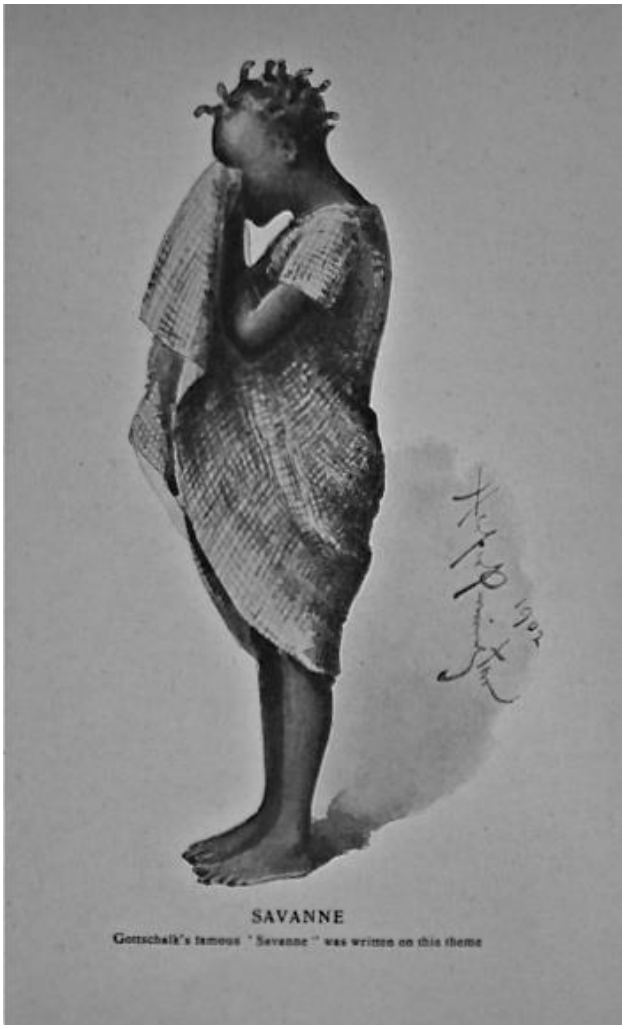


Figure 7 Mamzelle Zizi (Eustis, 64a)

While I only included my five favorite songs from the cookbook, there were others that I simply did not put in for lack of room. There were other interesting songs that I felt would be a better use of space in my thesis. Much of the work that I did in Louisiana required me to find a poem and then try to find its musical companion. While I often find the method portion of a paper to be particularly boring and uninspiring, I hope writing informally about how I accomplished reuniting a number of songs with a specific poem will inspire someone somewhere to begin looking by themselves (and if I can't inspire, hopefully I do not scare them away…). Whenever I try to explain what I am doing for my Master's thesis I am always confronted by the same question: "So what exactly are you doing in Louisiana?" As soon as I explain that my objective is to reunite poetry with music, the next question always is, "How exactly do you do that?" I will try to explain.

My research specifically focuses on late 19th century Louisiana poetry and music written in French. Many people have already begun the process of looking for Louisiana poetry. In fact that is what drew me to Centenary College in Shreveport. Shreveport is not known as an intellectual hub, nor was it a rich supplier of Louisiana French poetry, but since it has a French university printing press, whereas all the other universities in Louisiana publish strictly in English, many of the French resources that were originally published in French in Louisiana find their way through to Shreveport. The publishing company

Tintamarre[3] is run out of Centenary College and headed by Dana Kress (who agreed to supervise my research while I was in Louisiana).

Tintamarre has overseen many of the republications of Louisiana's greatest 19th century French poetry and short story compilations. For example, it was responsible for the republication of *Les Cenelles*, which was originally published in 1845. *Les Cenelles* is a poetry compilation of French speaking Free People of Colour from Louisiana. I knew that if I was going to reunite poetry with music, I would need to find poetry compilations. Looking at poetry and trying to pair it with music can at times be tedious, but there are systematic ways of going about it. Understanding the songwriting process of the time helped me out drastically.

Poets of the time often received inspiration from numerous sources and it was not uncommon in the 19th century to be inspired by one's favorite song (or a common tune from the period). All songs have a meter, or musical phrasing that allows a specific number of beats, which permits poets a certain number of syllables of poetry. When a poet used an existing song as the rhythmic template for his or her poem, the poet often included a note of this in the publication of his or her poem and indicated the 'air' to which the poem was written. The difficulty during my research was that even when the poet did write the musical air that he or she used, the musical score (the original composition containing the musical notes) was very rarely included in the publication of poetry. Because I was

[3] *Tintamarre* is a French word that implies a loud ruckus. Acadians have adopted this word to describe the noise with which they proclaim their presence and pride, especially on National Acadian Day (Lonergan 10).

completely unfamiliar with the tune names of common songs from the 19th century in Louisiana, finding a poem written to a specified tune did not do me any good unless I could then find the music. As Brandon points out, some of the poems were written to fit popular drinking songs from the period (65). The fact that poems could be written to drinking songs was a little discouraging at first, since I had no idea how to even begin looking for the musical score to a drinking song.

I tried not to think of all of the ways that I would not be able to find music and tried to work on finding ways that could work. A good example of the process that I used can be seen in my experience reuniting the poem "*Chant patriotique*" with its music. "*Chant Patriotique*" was a poem that was first printed in 1895 in a New Orleans' monthly periodical called *Les comptes rendus de l'Athénée Louisianais* or *l'Athénée louisianais*, as it was also known. Initially, like many of the poems that I dealt with, I had no idea that it even existed. I knew very little about Louisiana poetry, so I began looking in a binder that indexed all of the poetry publications contained in *l'Athénée louisianais*. I looked over the list of submissions to see if any of them had a title that might suggest that it was a musical submission. I found that the index listed two submissions by a single author, one of which was called "*Chant Patriotique*" the other "*Ronde des Créoles*". Thinking that these probably dealt with music, I wrote down the page numbers and the issue number that was listed in the binder. In most cases, I would have been forced to look at an online reproduction of *l'Athénée louisianais* but, since Centenary College has original publications of all of *l'Athénée louisianais*, I

was able to look at the original publication of "*Chant Patriotique*" and "*Ronde des Créoles*". I must say, looking over original publications was an amazing way to start my field research. As I found the first poem, "*Chant Patriotique*," I was drawn to a caption over it, almost like a header, which read:

> *Nous devons à l'obligeance de Monsieur H. L. Favrot, de la Nouvelle-Orléans, les deux chansons suivantes, composées probablement peu après la grande victoire du 8 janvier 1815. Nous ne croyons pas que ces poèmes aient jamais été publiés et nous les présentons à nos lecteurs plutôt comme documents historiques que comme œuvres littéraires.*
>
> (Leclerc 373)

The poem itself reads:

Chant Patriotique

Sur l'Air de Roland

Dédié à la milice de la Nouvelle-Orléans et aux braves accourus à la défense de cette ville – Par J. Leclerc – 1815

L'air retentit de chants guerriers ;
Partout brille le cimeterre :
Nos parents, nos jours, nos foyers
Sont menacés par l'Angleterre.
Qui donc nous défile aux combats ?

Des Africains et des Sauvages.

O fureur ! tels sont les soldats

Qu'Albions vomit sur nos plages.

Amis volons au champ d'honneur,

Gloire et Jackson, voilà nos guides !

Armons nos bras d'un fer vainqueur ;

Portons la mort (bis) à ces perfides (bis).

Où vont ce vieillard chancelant

Et cet adolescent timide ?

Dans nos murs tout est combattant,

Et l'enfance, et celle d'Alcide !

Emus d'un spectacle aussi beau,

Marchez fiers amants de Bellone :

La beauté prépare un drapeau,

Et la victoire une couronne,

Amis, volons, etc., etc.

Mais qu'ai-je vu ? de l'occident

Accourent les enfants robustes.

C'est Hercule et fort et puissant ;

Tremblez Anglais, fuyez Procrustes.

Bravant la rigueur de l'hiver

Dans nos rangs ces héros se rendent ;

Langage et climat sont divers ;

Mais les vaillants toujours s'entendent

Amis, volons, etc.

(Au général Jackson)

Chef aussi fort dans les combats

Que modeste après la victoire,

Nous t'offrons nos cœurs et nos bras ;

Ouvre le chemin de la gloire :

Le jour où tonnera l'airain,

Sera pour nous un jour de fête ;

L'histoire apprête son burin,

Que la postérité répète :

Il fut ouvert le champ d'honneur !

Gloire et Jackson furent leurs guides :

Leur bras armé d'un fer vainqueur

Porta la mort (bis), a des perfides ! (bis).

(Leclerc 373-74)

The poem depicts one of the final battles of the war of 1812, which was fought in New Orleans. The Americans, lead by General Jackson, held off the British army from taking over the relatively new state of Louisiana. I was delighted to see that "*Chant Patriotique*" was written "*sur l'Air de Roland*," which seemed like a good song to look for. I thought it would be easy to find "*l'Air de Roland*" because I knew how popular the story of Roland or *Chanson de Roland* was in France. My hope quickly turned to despair because but if one simply Googles "Air de Roland" (which I did thinking I would find a musical score that would pair up nicely with the poem I just discovered), there are millions and millions of pages and sites to choose from. In some cases in my research, sometimes simply Googling the air to which a poem was written yielded wonderfully successful results, however this did not work for me on this occasion. The keywords of "*l'Air de Roland*" were just too popular and it unveiled a lot of texts that dealt with *Chanson de Roland* and not *l'Air de Roland*. Feeling like I was at a dead end, I asked Dr. Kress if he had any ideas on how to proceed. By sheer coincidence, Dr. Kress had written his thesis on the character of Roland as depicted in French and Italian plays and operas.

He explained that prior to the 19th century, many people only knew the "Orlando" or "Roland" as it was translated and depicted by the Italians because of the opera "Orlando Furioso" by Vivaldi (Kress, *Interview*). From my discussion with Dr. Kress, I learned that Roland was an actual French war hero from the 9th century. So then I began to wonder, if Roland was a 9th century hero, why would a

tune written about him have served as the inspiration for a song that was written in 1815, about defeating General Jackson?

It turns out that in the early 19th century, Napoleon became fascinated with the rule of Charlemagne (Kress 1). Since Roland (or Orlando) fought alongside Charlemagne to keep the Moors out of the Empire, Roland was inevitably tied to Charlemagne. Because the epic story of Orlando was regaining interest in Italy during the renaissance, operas were written at that time. As well, Napoleon wanted to remind the French people of the Empire that existed under the reign of Charlemagne so that a Napoleonic empire would seem more enticing to the public (Kress x, preface). Because of this new found interest in Roland, many Roland inspired works began springing up at the beginning of the 19th century, many depicting the great victory of Charlemagne and Roland over the Moors.

Simply finding out this information did not necessarily make my research for the accompanying music any easier, but it did allow me to understand why a song written in Louisiana about defeating General Jackson would have been paired with "*l'Air de Roland*". As I continued my search for "*l'Air de Roland*," I kept coming across *la Chanson de Roland* but whenever I clicked on a link to "*Chanson de Roland*," I was never led to any sort of music, but to historical texts because *Chanson de Roland* was a text, and not a musical score. The *chansons* from this time period actually refer to a form of epic poetry called "*chanson de geste*." Taking on a collective narrative about a particular hero, these poems often served as a form of propaganda (Cardini 81). Once again it seemed like my search for "*l'Air de Roland*" had hit another speed bump.

My research was further complicated by the fact that in the mid 19th century a second wave of Roland inspired texts began surfacing in France. Dr. Kress explained to me that this was due to the fact that *La Chanson de Roland*, a 12th century text, was found in an Oxford library. In almost a Homeresque kind of way, the battles of Roland were passed orally until they were written down. *La Chanson de Roland* was brought back to France and published in 1837 (Kress 20). This text solidified Roland as a French National hero, almost as popular as Jeanne d'Arc.

I began to ask myself how I was going to find the music that accompanied the poem that I had found in *l'Athénée Louisianais*. I thought of a couple of easy steps. First, since *l'Athénée louisianais* said that the poem was first printed in 1815, we could assume that no music printed after this date would be a plausible fit. As I began sifting through multiple songs entitled "*Air de Roland*" (remember, because of Napoleon, this character was popular), I found that it was most likely the "*Air de Roland*" by the composer Étienne Méhul that was written just a few years prior to 1815. Although I had a solid basis for this assumption, I still did not have a musical score to confirm that the rhythm and meters of Mehul's song matched my "Chant Patriotique".

Finding music to "*Air de Roland*" by Méhul was not as easy as I thought it was going to be either. I thought that I might be able to find the printed music to this song if I began by looking for other poems that were printed with their music that had any sort of connection to anything called "*air de Roland*". Because it was probably a popular tune at the time due to the newfound interest with Roland, it

was possible that another poet had used the same air for his or her poem and had printed it with music. To my luck, Pierre-Jean de Beranger, a well-known French poet who wrote most of his poetry to music, also wrote a poem using "*Air de Roland.*" Beranger's poem, however, was called "*Convoi de David*". After finding a copy of Beranger's "*Convoi de David" that included a musical score* written to the "*Air de Roland*" by Méhul, I was able to confirm that it matched "*Chant Patriotique*" by Leclerc. The rhythms and meter fit exactly. The structures of the poems were identical! I had found a match. I had successfully reunited my first poem with music, and had a method in place that I could try out on other poems that I would come across during my research. I have included a picture of the music for *Convoi de David* below, which cannot show the excitement that I felt upon finding it.

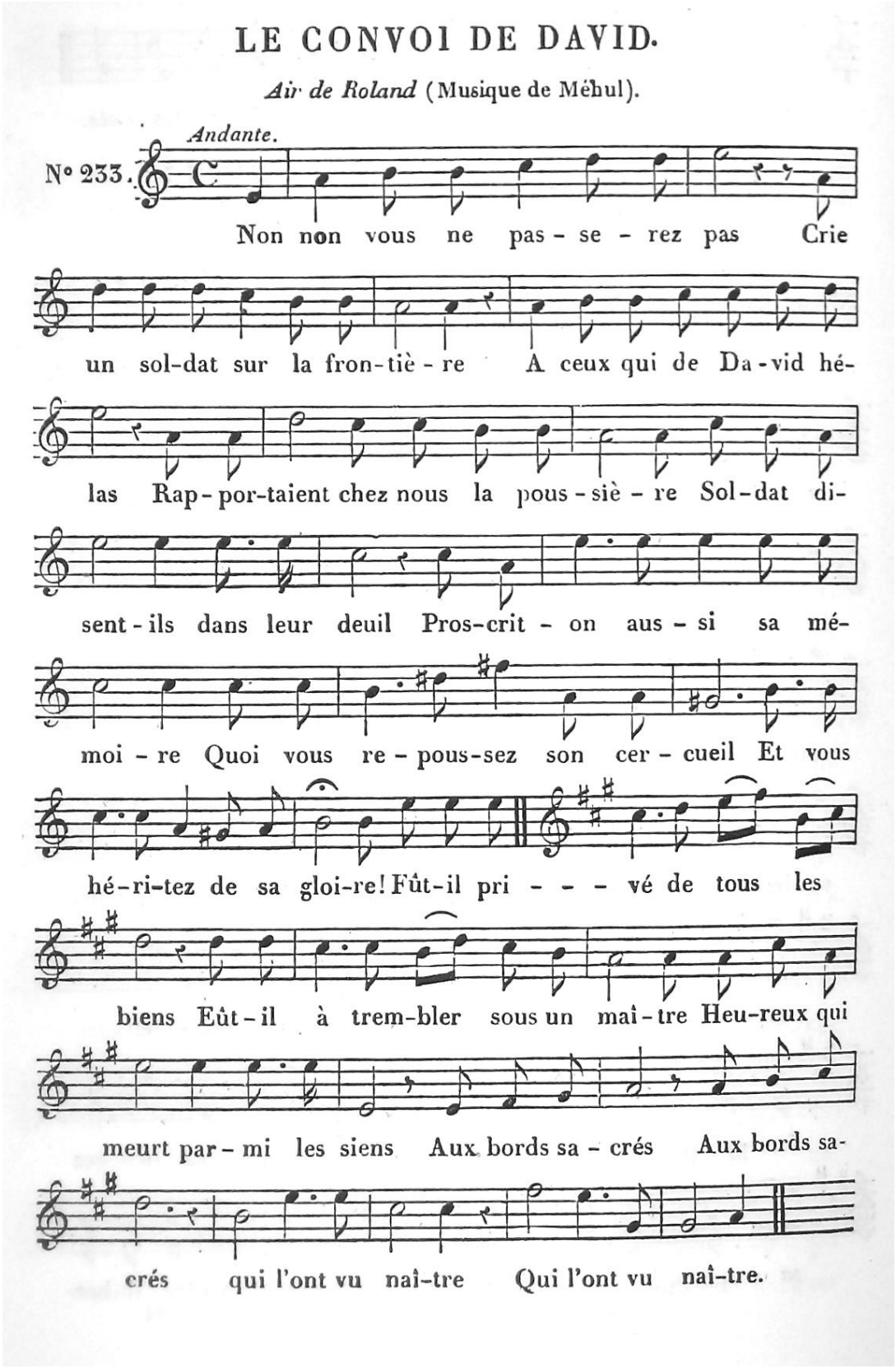


Figure 8 Convoi de David (De Beranger, *Convoi de David* 186-87)

As I repeated this musical reunification process, I began to see a thread joining many of the poems that had been separated from their music. Much like the first piece of music that I found, I continually saw the name Pierre-Jean de Beranger pop up in a huge number of works, particularly in the works of the Free People of Colour. I was not familiar with de Beranger's work, nor why he would play such a prominent role in Louisiana's poetic/musical history, so I began by asking my supervisor, Dr. Dana Kress. Because he was much more familiar with the poetic history of Louisiana and the influences that came from France, he began to explain to me that Beranger was one of France's most prolific and prominent poets/musicians from the 19th century. As I talked to Dr. Kress, I asked questions such as "why was Beranger so popular and what made him different from the other poets of the time?" He quickly responded that Beranger questioned the social constructs of the time and challenged existing social forms (Kress, *Interview*). At first, I thought that maybe all of the Beranger references that I found were simply due to the fact that Beranger was so popular, but then more and more evidence pointed to the fact that he was such a social activist, as Dr. Kress had mentioned. In my searches, I came across a short biographical summary of Beranger's life written by Alcée Fortier, one of Louisiana's best-known historians and writers from the 19th century. Fortier obviously held Beranger in high esteem. In commenting on some of the most well-known pieces in Beranger's repertoire, Fortier says:

> All his songs have a charm. His wit is not of the highest order, and he lacks the finesse of La Fontaine, but he is often quaint and always amusing

> in his songs devoted to love and Lisette, to youth and to wine. He is not one of the greatest French lyric poets, and cannot be compared with Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, and Vigny; nevertheless he has much originality, and is without doubt the greatest song-writer that France has produced. He elevated the song and made it both a poem and a drama, full of action and interest.
>
> (Fortier, *De Beranger*)

However, as I read the whole biographical blurb by Fortier, the thing that intrigued me the most in this short biography was that Fortier mentioned frequently the hidden (and sometimes not so hidden) messages contained in Beranger's poetry. Fortier explains how the French government received Beranger's work and the political friction that it created:

> Beranger's first volume of songs appeared at the beginning of the second Restoration; and although it was hostile to the Bourbons, the author was not prosecuted. In 1821, when his second volume was published, he resigned his position as clerk at the University, and was brought to trial for having written immoral and seditious songs. He was condemned, after exciting scenes in court, to three months' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred francs, and in 1828 to nine months' imprisonment and a fine of ten thousand francs, which was paid by public subscription.
>
> (Fortier, *De Beranger*)

At this point, although I found out that Beranger was jailed for his work, I did not see why the works would be so famous in Louisiana (apart from the fact that

Louisiana was still heavily connected to France at the beginning of the 19th Century). It was not until I came to the end of Fortier's summary that I realized the motivation for many of Beranger's poems. Fortier states:

> Beranger wrote slowly and with great care, and many of his songs cost him much labor. He was filled with compassion for the weak, for the poor and unfortunate; he loved humanity, and above all he dearly loved France. Posterity will do him justice and will preserve at least a great part of his work.
>
> (Fortier, *De Beranger*)

I was able to glean the fact that Beranger was concerned about those who had less and those who were oppressed. I began to see more clearly why many of the authors of colour who were writing in Louisiana would have naturally been drawn to the messages contained in the poems and music of Beranger. Beranger advocated equal rights to all and called for the ideals of "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*" to be extended to all.

Although this was a nice idea, it almost seemed too convenient. Fortier had the benefit of looking at Beranger's life after it was completed and could see the benefits that Beranger had brought upon society. I then began searching for more facts to confirm that Beranger himself was trying to promote these ideals through his work. Luckily for me, when I was in New Orleans I went into a tiny bookstore in the French Quarter in search of some old French poetry written by Louisianans. To my surprise, the man said, "I don't have any poetry by

Louisianans, but I do have an original copy of Beranger's autobiography that was owned by Dr. Armand Mercier" (Armand Mercier was the brother of Alfred Mercier, who was the founder of *Les comptes rendus de l'Athénée Louisianais)*. Although the Mercier brothers were prominent whites in Louisiana, the tangible connection between Beranger and the people of Louisiana began to solidify in my mind. Needless to say, I bought the Beranger biography, which has Mercier's Name and New Orleans office address written on the front cover. As I read, I was intrigued that the biography outlined in detail how the French Revolution played a significant part in Beranger's life and how it impacted his poetry and music (De Beranger, *Mon Autobiographie*).

It seemed like wherever I went, I found more and more information that confirmed how significant Beranger was in Louisiana in the 19th century. A short while after purchasing this book, I returned to Shreveport. There, I received an original copy of Beranger's poetry that became available after a French professor in the area passed away, leaving his books to Centenary College and those who would use them. Since I was looking for Beranger materials, and Centenary College had no interest in them, I was able to inherit two volumes of Beranger's work from the 1830s. In the preface of one of these volumes, Beranger himself writes:

> *Les chansons nées depuis 1830, semblent en effet se rattacher plutôt aux questions d'intérêt social qu'aux questions purement politiques. En doit-on être étonné ? Une fois qu'on suppose reconquis le principe gouvernemental pour lequel on a combattu, il est naturel que*

l'intelligence éprouve le besoin d'en faire l'application au profit du plus grand nombre. Le bonheur de l'humanité a été le songe de ma vie. J'en ai l'obligation, sans doute, à la classe dans laquelle je suis né, et à l'éducation pratique que j'y ai reçue. Mais il a fallu bien plus des circonstances extraordinaires pour qu'il fût permis à un chansonnier de s'immiscer dans les hautes questions d'améliorations sociales. Heureusement une foule d'hommes, jeunes et courageux, éclairés et ardents, ont donné, depuis peu, un grand développement à ces questions, et sont parvenus à les rendre presque vulgaires. Je souhaite que quelques-unes de mes compositions prouvent à ces esprits élevés ma sympathie pour leur généreuse entreprise.

(*Beranger Oeuvres Complètes Vol 1*, Préface de l'auteur ii)

At this point, I could see that Beranger was in fact promoting social justice through poetry and that people in Louisiana were reading it, but I did not know exactly how it was impacting the poetry at the time and if it really did inspire people with the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. I wanted to find evidence that gave me a better idea of how it was received by poets. I knew that a poetry compilation entitled *La Marseillaise Noire : et autres poèmes de la Nouvelle-Orléans* existed because I had haphazardly come across it in the library one day looking for other materials. I went back to the library and checked it out, thinking that if I was looking for a poem from Louisiana that contained ideals from the French Revolution, it would most likely be a poem called "*La Marseillaise*

Noire." The poem contained precisely what I was looking for and was directly pertinent to my research of finding French poetry written in Louisiana that could be reunited with a song. The poem goes as follows:

La Marseillaise Noire

Chant de paix

Air : La Marseillaise

Fils d'Africains, tristes victimes

Qu'un joug absurde abrutissait,

Des monstres oubliant les crimes,

Pensons à Jésus qui disait : (bis)

« Peuples, plus de sang, plus de guerres

Qui font rougir l'humanité !

Moi, je suis la Fraternité,

Embrassez-vous, vous êtes frères. »

Debout ! L'heure est venue, à chaque travailleur

Le pain (bis) qu'il a gagné, qu'importe sa couleur.

Assez longtemps le fouet infâme

De ses sillons nous a brisés,

Sans nom, sans patrie et sans âme.

Assez de fers ! De honte, assez ! (bis)

Que dans une sainte alliance

Les Noirs et les Blancs confondus

À la mort des anciens abus,

Marchent tous, pleins de confiance !

Debout ! etc.

Debout ! C'est l'heure solennelle

Où, sur le vieux monde écroulé,

Le despotisme qui chancelle

Vient couronner la Liberté.

La discorde reprend sa pomme,

La raison humaine grandit.

C'est l'intelligence et l'esprit,

Mais non plus la peau qui fait l'homme.

Debout ! etc.

Plus d'ombre ! Partout la lumière,

C'est l'Évangile qui paraît.

Le Blanc dit au Noir « mon frère »,

À jamais Caïn disparaît.

Plus de sang ! L'impie ignorance,

Arme terrible du tyran,

Aux peuples s'entre-déchirant

Ne dit plus « Mort, sang et vengeance ».

Debout ! etc.

Allons ! malgré votre race,

Hommes de cœur, unissez-vous.

Ici-bas, chacun a sa place,

Car le soleil luit pour tous.

Que chaque peuple heureux, prospère,

Au fronton de l'humanité,

Grave ces mots : « En toi j'espère ;

Tu régneras, Égalité. »

Dimanche, le 21 juillet 1867

Camille Naudin

(Naudin)

Although the title poem of *La Marseillaise Noire* was the reason that I first picked up the book, I began searching the other poems in the compilation to see if I could find other poems on similar subjects. Not only was I able to find something on a similar subject, I was able to find poetry that pointed to the direct impact that Beranger was having in the Free People of Colour community. In a poem entitled "*Communication d'outre-tombe*", Beranger's name is used almost as a rallying cry for those in search of universal suffrage. This poem was written by a certain J.B. in 1865. In consultation with Dr. Kress, our best guess is that this

poem could likely have been written by Jean Boise, one of the few Creoles of Colour who would have been writing at that time with the initials J.B. (I unfortunately have not found the music that accompanies this poem).The poem is as follows:

Communication d'outre-tombe

Cantate à mes amis.

Air : À la grâce de Dieu.

Enfants chéris de la victoire,

Vrais amis de la Liberté,

Francs admirateurs de la gloire,

Apôtres de l'Humanité,

Ô disciples du spiritisme,

Suivez le chemin des croyants ;

Bientôt la ruine et le mutisme

Abattront les sots, les méchants.

Écoutez Béranger,

Votre cher chansonnier. (bis)

Votre sublime république

Que l'on appelle États-Unis

Sera bientôt la terre unique

Des hommes d'honneur réunis.

Bientôt votre illustre contrée,

Par l'organe de son Congrès,

Dictera la loi vénérée,

La loi du monde, du progrès.

Écoutez Béranger,

Votre cher chansonnier. (bis)

Le jour arrive, il est bien proche,

Où le suffrage universel,

Des fous le remords, le reproche,

Régnera pour tous, immortel.

Alors, ô bonheur indicible,

La Liberté, L'Égalité,

Ces mots divins de l'Invisible,

Voudront dire Fraternité.

Écoutez Béranger,

Votre cher chansonnier. (bis)

Dimanche, le 17 décembre 1865

J.B.

(B., J.)

I had found what I was looking for. After these first finds, I knew that Beranger was an inspiration to poets in Louisiana and that the ideals of the French Revolution existed among the Free People of Colour. My interests narrowed as I searched not only for music and poetry in Louisiana, but specifically began looking at poetry written by Free People of Colour to popular Beranger songs. I started searching the various poetry compilations that contained works by Free People of Colour. One of the first poets that I came across was Camille Thierry and his poem "*Regrets d'une vieille mulâtresse*". Before examining the poem, a biographical excerpt helped me understand some of the difficulties that Thierry had because of his race:

> *Né en octobre 1814 à la Nouvelle-Orléans, Camille Thierry fut un poète notable dans l'histoire littéraire de la Louisiane française. Ayant un père bordelais et une mère louisianaise octavonne, c'est à dire, ayant un arrière grand-père noir, Camille Thierry eut beaucoup de difficultés à obtenir la publication de ses poèmes à la Nouvelle-Orléans, où la majorité des journaux, afin de ne pas échouer, devait surtout éviter l'étiquette « de couleur ».*
>
> (Kress, Mahoney and Skelton 187)

Ironically, according to this brief biography, Thierry tried to avoid references to his race. However, one of his well-known poems happens to draw heavy attention to race and is written in Louisiana Creole (as we will see shortly). Even though these facts alone would have been interesting to me, the first thing

that I noticed as I came across Thierry's "*Regrets d'une vieille mulâtresse*" was that the air was listed as the following:

Air: *Qu'il va lentement le navire* (de Beranger)

My heart nearly skipped a beat! Thierry specifically mentioned that he used a Beranger poem as his inspiration. If it was indeed written to a tune that was included with a Beranger poem, I would surely be able to find it (I was getting particularly good at finding Beranger's music at this point). However, the process was not as simple as matching the Thierry poem with the Beranger tune because, try as I might, I could not find a Beranger piece entitled "*Qu'il va lentement le navire*". It did not exist.

I began searching all of Beranger's work to see if there was any reference to "*Qu'il va lentement le navire*". I soon found that in one of Beranger's poems, "*Le Retour dans la Patrie*" the first line read "*Qu'il va lentement le navire*". This song, however, was listed as being written to the air of *"Suzon sortant de son village"* (and underneath in smaller print) *ou "Votre fortune est faite"*. Even though the Beranger poem was called *le Retour dans la Patrie*, I thought I would try putting the songs together to see if they matched. I realized that it made perfect sense that a poet, when writing the air that inspired him, would identify a poem by its first line rather than a title, since when one recites poetry, the first thing that usually comes to mind is not the title, but the first line.

Regrets d'une vieille mulâtresse
ou
Désespoir de Sainte Fouéron

(Thierry 105)

Air : Qu'il va lentement le navire (de Béranger)

Miré! Quand mon té Saint-Domingue,
Négresses même té bijoux;
Blancs layo té semblé seringue,
Yo té collé derrière à nous.
Dans yon ménage Jamain tapage,
L'amour yon blanc, c'était l'adoration!
Yo pa té chiches, Yo té bien riches,
Yon bon bounda té vaut yon bitation!…
Temps-là changé, nous sur la paille,
Nous que z'habitants té fèté…
*Avant longtemps yon blanc pété**
Va hélé nous canaille!!!
**Dénomination que les nègres donnaient aux petits blancs.*(Moreau de Saint-Méry)

English Translation : (by May Waggoner)

Look here! When I was in Saint-Domingue,
We were precious as jewels, we Negresses;
The white folks there seemed thin as rails,
Always messing with us and our dresses.
In their houses,
Never noises,
A white man's love was adoration!
They weren't stingy,
They were quite rich,
A big butt was worth a plantation!
Times have changed, now we're sleeping on straw,
We, once the toast of the town!
Before long the poor white low-class

Le Retour dans la Patrie

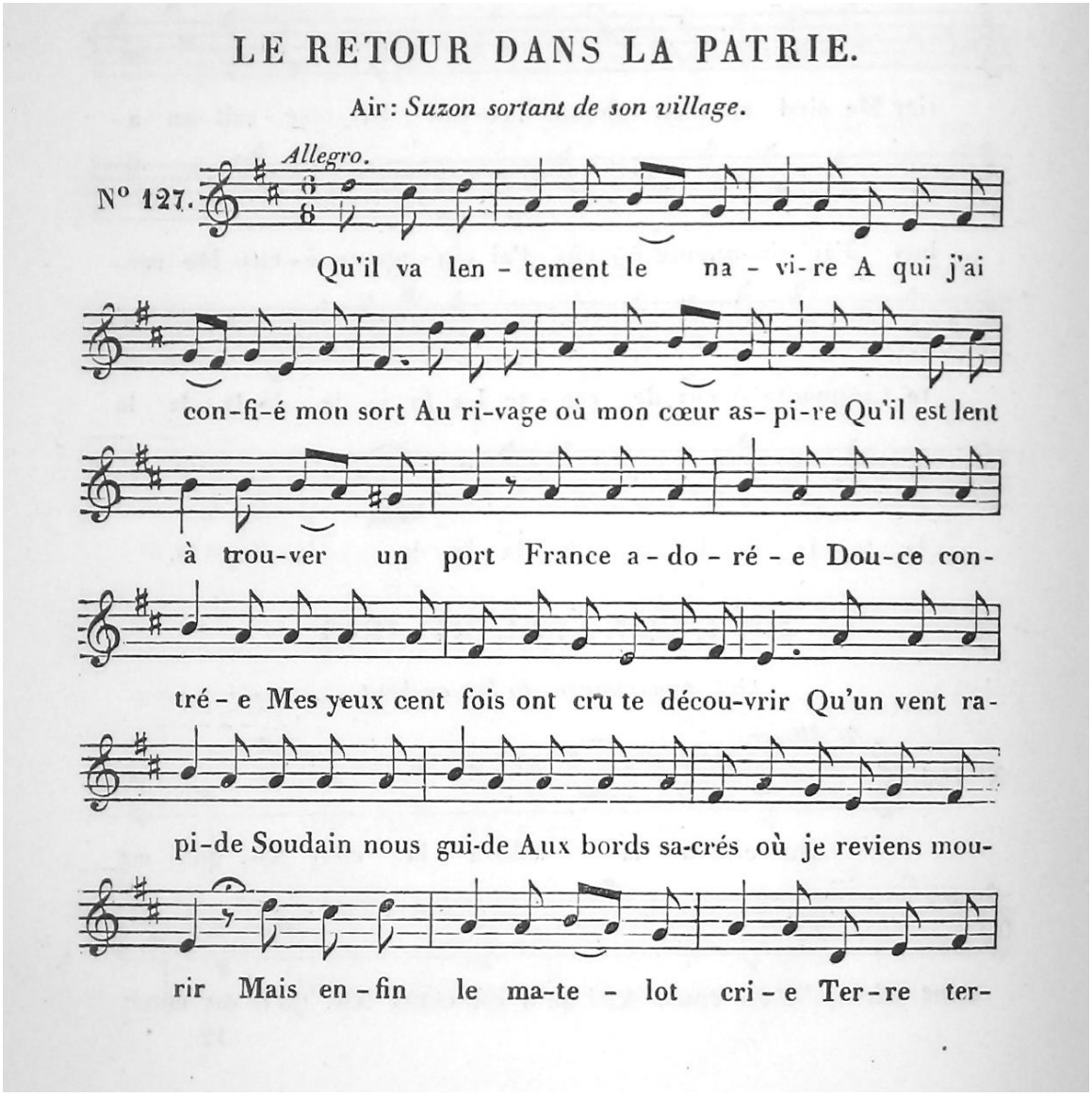
(De Béranger 90)

Air : Suzon sortant de son village

Qu'il va lentement le navire
À qui j'ai confié mon sort !
Au rivage où mon cœur aspire,
Qu'il est lent à trouver un port !
France adorée !
Douce contrée !
Mes yeux cent fois ont cru te découvrir.
Qu'un vent rapide
Soudain nous guide
Aux bords sacrés où je reviens mourir.
Mais enfin le matelot crie :
Terre ! terre ! là bas, voyez !
Ah ! tous mes maux sont oubliés.
Salut à ma patrie !

riffraff
Will begin to call us down

*Note – Dalcour also wrote a poem ("*Caractère*") that is included in *Les Cenelles* that shares the same air. I did not feel that it carried the same cultural significance as the Thierry poem, so I chose not to include the lyrics in my thesis.



LE RETOUR DANS LA PATRIE.

Air : *Suzon sortant de son village.*

N° 127. *Allegro.*

Qu'il va len - tement le na - vi-re A qui j'ai con-fi-é mon sort Au ri-vage où mon cœur as- pi-re Qu'il est lent à trou-ver un port France a - do - ré - e Dou-ce con- tré - e Mes yeux cent fois ont cru te décou-vrir Qu'un vent ra- pi-de Soudain nous gui-de Aux bords sa-crés où je reviens mou- rir Mais en - fin le ma-te - lot cri - e Ter-re ter-

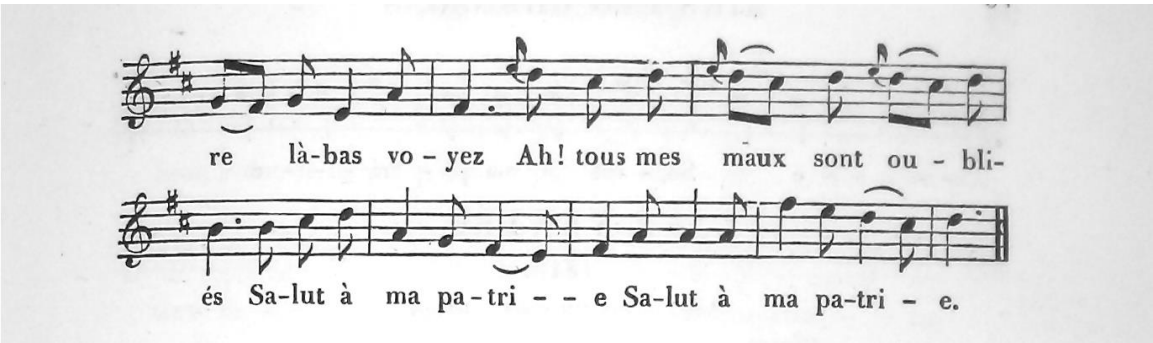


Figure 9 Le retour dans la patrie (A) (De Beranger, *Le retour dans la patrie* 90-91)

(The Beranger volumes that I had also contained alternate versions of the song. I am not sure which one inspired Thierry, so I thought to include both)

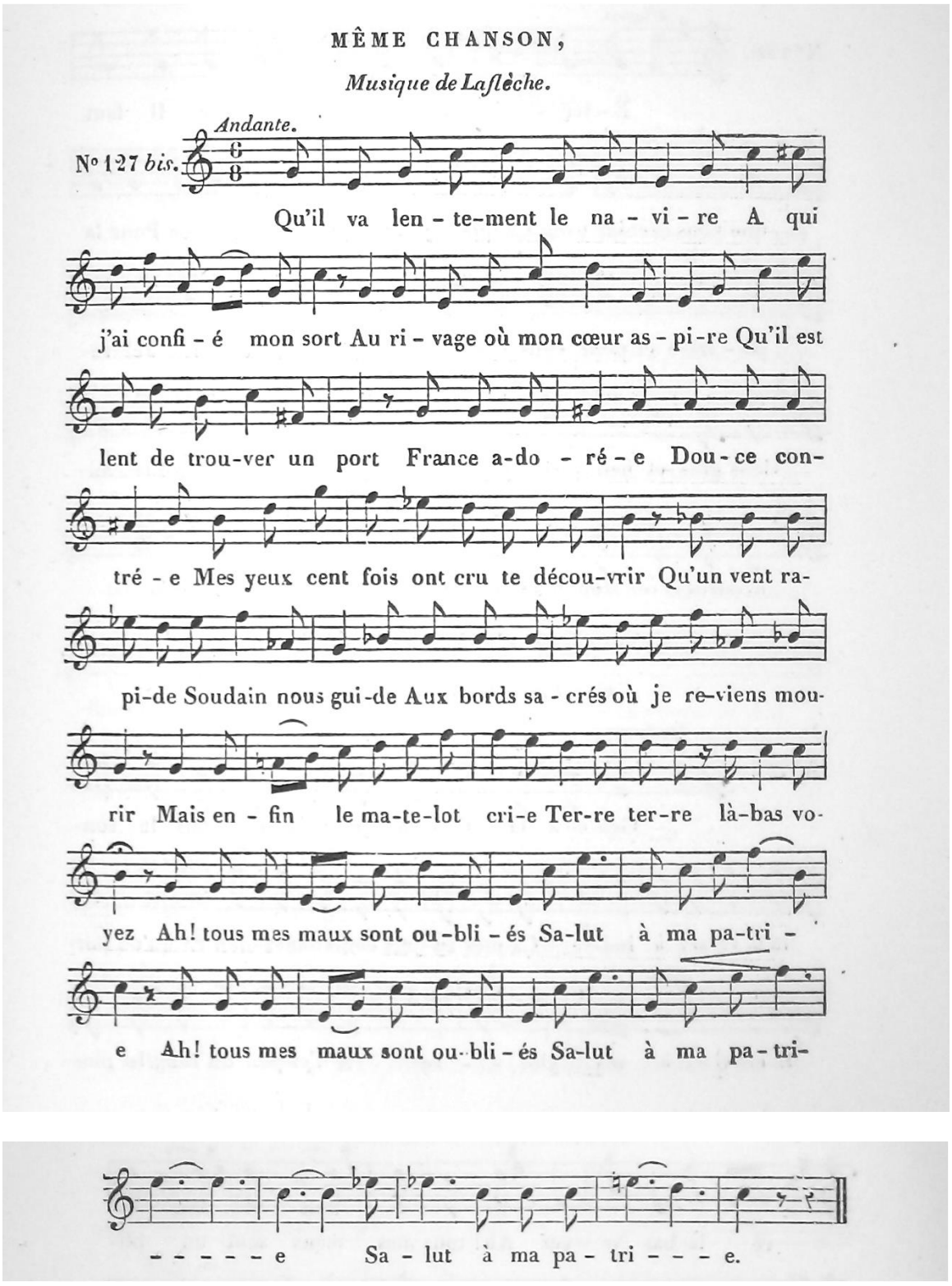


Figure 10 Le retour dans la patrie (B) (De Beranger, *Le retour dans la patrie* 90-91)

I do not think it is a coincidence that Thierry wrote a poem in Creole about a previous era to the air of a very patriotic Beranger song that also talks about returning to a familiar place, a place of heritage. As I continued my searches, I noticed that many of the Beranger songs to which new poems were written had a very strong political message contained behind a façade of beauty. The poems in and of themselves were harmless, but I have a hard time believing that these educated poets from Louisiana simply chose these airs *au hazard*. It seemed almost to be an acceptable way of writing subversive poetry. The poems on the surface seemed to be simply poems, but behind that first level of poetry lays the political message that Beranger wrote in his poems. The poets in Louisiana at the time were clearly influenced by the messages contained in Beranger's political works.

Le damné – Camille Thierry
Air de La Nostalgie. (de Béranger.)
(Thierry 43)

Pour aplanir le chemin de la vie,
Pour y jeter de la mousse et des fleurs,
A mes regards une femme jolie
Parut et dit:
"Confondons nos deux cœurs !"
Je méprisai la nymphe consolante,
Sans lui parler je l'appris à rougir...
Je ne vois point le regard d'une amante
Pour me bénir !

La foi manquait à mon âme fougueuse,
Pour l'adoucir un prêtre vint à moi :
Il me parla de cette vie heureuse

La nostalgie (ou La maladie du pays)
(De Beranger 245-47)

Vous m'avez dit : « A Paris, jeune pâtre,
Viens, suis-nous, cède à tes nobles penchants.
Notre or, nos soins, l'étude, le théâtre,
T'auront bientôt fait oublier les champs. »
Je suis venu ; mais voyez mon visage.
Sous tant de feux mon printemps s'est fané.
Ah! rendez-moi, rendez-moi mon village,
Et la montagne où je suis né !

La fièvre court triste et froide, en mes veines ;
A vos désirs cependant j'obéis.

Promise à ceux qui mourront dans la foi ;
Je répondis : "Je ne veux point connaître
Ce Dieu pour qui je n'ai pas un soupir !...
Je n'entends point la parole d'un prêtre
Pour me bénir !

J'avais pour guide une mère adorable,
Mon cœur de tigre, hélas ! la fit périr ;
A mon chevet nul être secourable !
Je lutte seul au moment de mourir !
Pour mettre un terme à mes jours de misère,
Auprès de moi la mort vient d'accourir !
Je ne vois point les larmes d'une mère
Pour me bénir !

Ces bals charmants où les femmes sont reines,
J'y meurs, hélas ! j'ai le mal du pays.
En vain l'étude a poli mon langage ;
Vos arts en vain ont ébloui mes yeux.
Ah ! rendez-moi, rendez-moi mon village,
Et ses dimanches si joyeux !

Avec raison vous méprisez nos veilles,
Nos vieux récits et nos chants si grossiers.
De la féerie égalant les merveilles,
Votre opéra confondrait nos sorciers.
Au Saint des saints le ciel, rendant hommage,
De vos concerts doit emprunter les sons.
Ah ! rendez-moi, rendez-moi mon village,
Et sa veillée et ses chansons !

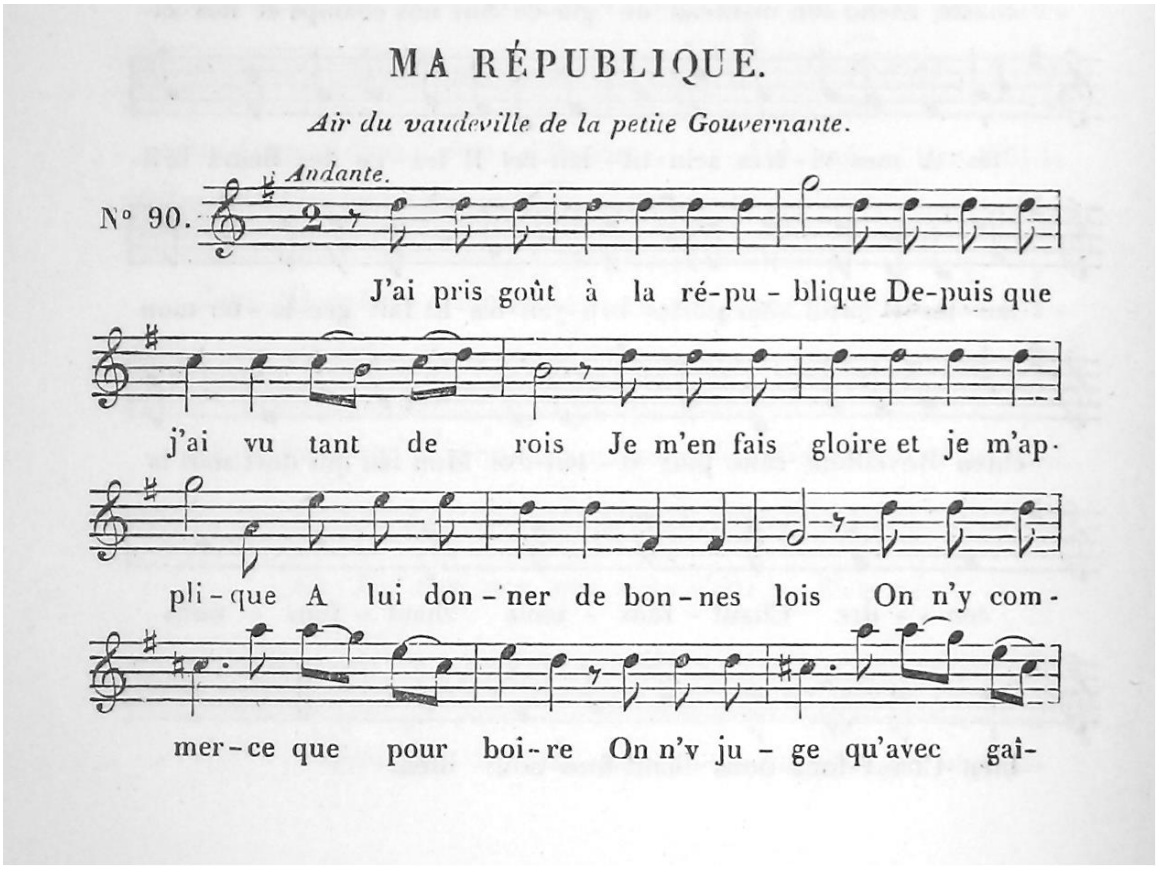
Nos toits obscurs, notre église qui croule,
M'ont à moi-même inspiré des dédains.
Des monuments j'admire ici la foule ;
Surtout ce Louvre et ces pompeux jardins.
Palais magique, on dirait un mirage
Que le soleil colore à son coucher.
Ah ! rendez-moi, rendez-moi mon village,
Et ses chaumes et son clocher !

Convertissez le sauvage idolâtre ;
Près de mourir, il retourne à ses dieux.
Là-bas, mon chien m'attend auprès de l'âtre ;
Ma mère en pleurs repense à nos adieux.
J'ai vu cent fois l'avalanche et l'orage,
L'ours et les loups fondre sur mes brebis.
Ah ! rendez-moi, rendez-moi mon village,
Et la houlette et le pain bis !

Qu'entends-je, ô ciel ! pour moi remplis d'alarmes :
« Pars, dites-vous, demain pars au réveil,
C'est l'air natal qui séchera tes larmes ;
Va refleurir à ton premier soleil. »
Adieu Paris, doux et brillant rivage,
Où l'étranger reste comme enchaîné.
Ah ! je revois, je revois mon village,
Et la montagne où je suis né !

As you will see below, although the borrowed tune listed in *Les Cenelles* is *la Nostalgie* (ou *la Maladie du pays*), the Beranger poem *la Nostalgie* is listed as being written to "*Air du vaudeville de la petite Gouvernante*". I could not find a printed score to *la Nostalgie*, but I saw in a book of Beranger poetry that *Air du vaudeville de la petite Gouvernante* was listed as the tune name. Because I was constantly searching through Beranger poems, I was always on the lookout for titles that might be particularly interesting. It crossed my mind that maybe the Free Poets of Colour could look at Beranger's poetry for inspiration. Although I had no way to confirm this, it seemed like an interesting idea. My hypothesis did not yield anything fruitful, but it did force me to look at additional Beranger poetry. In one such instance I came across a poem called "*Ma République*". I found the title intriguing and shortly thereafter I noticed that *Ma République* shared the same tune name as one that I was desperately looking for, *la Nostalgie*. I was fascinated that the Thierry poem called "*le Damné*" was written to the air of a poem called "*la Nostalgie*" which also shared the same air as another poem called "*Ma République*". I continually found hints that Thierry was particularly drawn to the New World and a sense of patrimony. In a biographical blurb, I

discovered that Thierry returned to France to escape the racial difficulties that he was encountering (Anthology 187), but it seemed to me that he kept some sort of emotional connection to Louisiana and the place of his mother's heritage.



MA RÉPUBLIQUE.

Air du vaudeville de la petite Gouvernante.

N° 90. *Andante.*

J'ai pris goût à la ré-pu - blique De-puis que

j'ai vu tant de rois Je m'en fais gloire et je m'ap-

pli-que A lui don-ner de bon-nes lois On n'y com-

mer-ce que pour boi-re On n'y ju - ge qu'avec gai-

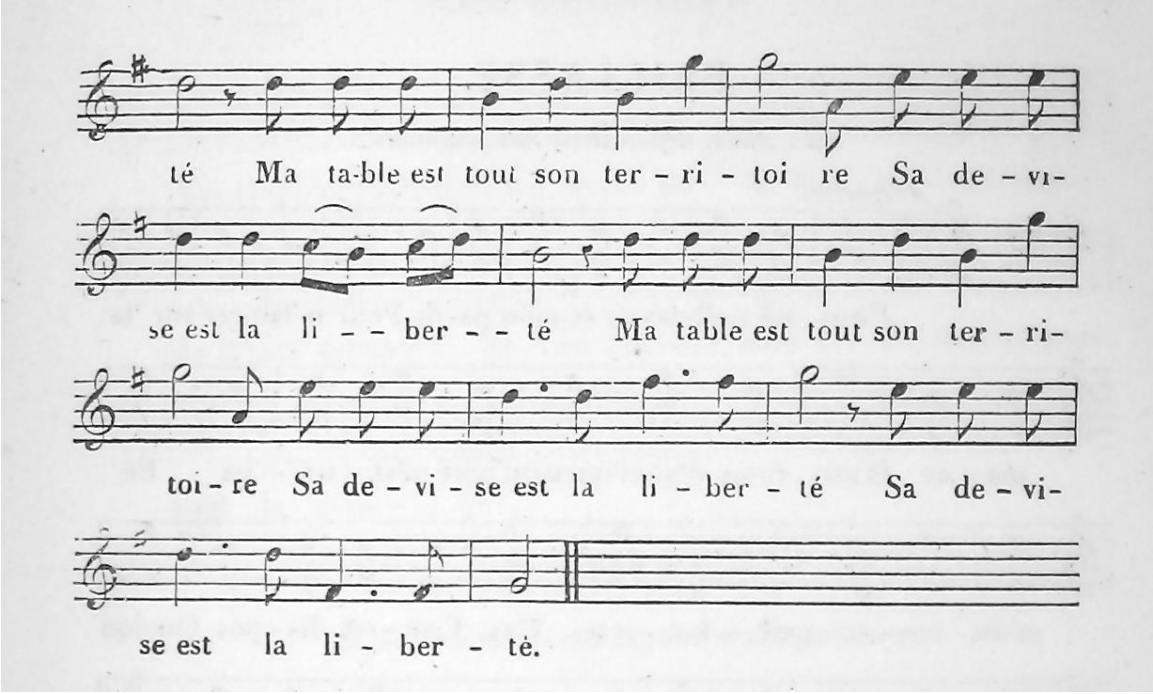


Figure 11 Ma république (De Beranger, *Ma république* 56-57)

One thing that made me excited (or perhaps more relieved than anything) was when two poems written by Free People of Colour shared the same Beranger tune. (I say "relieved" because it simply meant half as much work for me!) As I worked my way through *Les Cenelles*, I kept track of the Beranger airs used by the poets. A poem by Valcour[4] listed the air as "*Amis, voici la riante semaine (Béranger)"*. Since Valcour also stated that his poem was "*Imité de Béranger",* I knew that I just had to find that poem. As in previous situations, there was no song called "*Amis, voici la riante semaine"*, but there was one called "*Mon Carnaval*" that had the phrase "*Amis, voici la riante semaine"* as the first line. As I put them together, I saw that they matched up well and went with the tune listed by Beranger.

[4] I reference this author as *Valcour* because all that is known about his last name is an initial, *B.* The bibliographic reference therefore is B…Valcour.

L'ouvrier louisianais
À mon ami Armand Lanusse.
Air : Amis, voici la riante semaine.
(B…, Valcour 145)

Ah ! quoi, tu ris, tu ris jusques aux larmes,
Tu crois déjà que je suis amoureux ;
Tu dis aussi que j'ai mis bas les armes,
Qu'amour a mis son bandeau sur mes yeux.

Ne crois jamais que riche demoiselle
À ses genoux m'enchaîne pour toujours;
À Béranger, à sa muse fidèle :
Je suis du peuple ainsi que mes amours.

De ces beautés à face composée,
Pauvre ouvrier, j'excitais le mépris,
Je me sentais l'objet de leur risée
Lorsque mes pieds glissaient sur leur tapis.

Je me taisais... je souffrais en silence,
Car j'espérais avoir bientôt mon tour.
Ce jour arrive et gare à ma vengeance !...
Je suis du peuple ainsi que mes amours.

Va, ne crois pas que traître à ma parole,
J'aille à leurs pieds avilir mon encens.
Ma pauvre Rose ; oui, sois ma seule idole,
Simple beauté qui m'inspire mes chants!
Leurs beaux chapeaux et leurs robes de soie
Effrayeraient mes plaisirs pour toujours.
Est-on gêné ? loin de nous fuit la joie...
Rose est du peuple et voilà mes amours.

Mon Carnaval
(De Béranger 29-30)

Amis, voici la riante semaine
Que tous les ans je fêtais avec vous.
Marotte en main, dans le char qu'il promène,
Momus au bal conduit sages et fous.

Sur ma prison, dans l'ombre ensevelie,
Il m'a semblé voir passer les Amours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Oui, je les vois ces danses amoureuses
Où la beauté triomphe à chaque pas.
De vingt danseurs je vois les mains heureuses
Saisir, quitter, ressaisir mille appas.

Dans ces plaisirs que votre cœur m'oublie :
Un seul mot triste en peut troubler le cours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Combien de fois, auprès de la plus belle,
Dans vos banquets j'ai présidé chez vous !
Là de mon cœur jaillissait l'étincelle
Dont la gaîté vous électrisait tous.
De joyeux chants ma coupe était remplie ;
Je la vidais, mais vous versiez toujours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

À mes travaux six jours de la semaine,
Je n'ai qu'un seul à livrer aux plaisirs.
Ce jour venu, je marche à perte d'haleine,
Réalisant mes plus vastes désirs.
Je prends l'habit, je rabaisse mes manches,
Et j'ai par an cinquante deux beaux jours ;
Rose est aussi faraude les dimanches.
Rose est du peuple et voilà mes amours.

Des jours charmants la perte est seule à craindre ;
Fêtez-les bien, c'est un ordre des cieux.
Moi je vieillis, et parfois laisse éteindre
Le grain d'encens dont je nourris mes dieux.
Quand la plus tendre était la plus jolie,
Des fers alors m'auraient paru bien lourds.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Puis, m'a-t-on dit, tu dois aller en France,
Voir ses enfans, t'instruire à leurs chansons :
Pour adoucir des frères la souffrance
Point n'est besoin de prendre des leçons.
Fils méconnu d'Orléans la Nouvelle,
Malgré ses torts je la chéris toujours ;
À mon pays je veux rester fidèle,
Rosette et lui voilà mes seuls amours.

Mais accourez, dès qu'une longue ivresse
Du calme enfin vous impose la loi.
Dernier rayon, qu'un reste d'allégresse
Brille en vos yeux et vienne jusqu'à moi.
Dans vos plaisirs ainsi je me replie ;
Je suis vos pas, je chante vos amours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

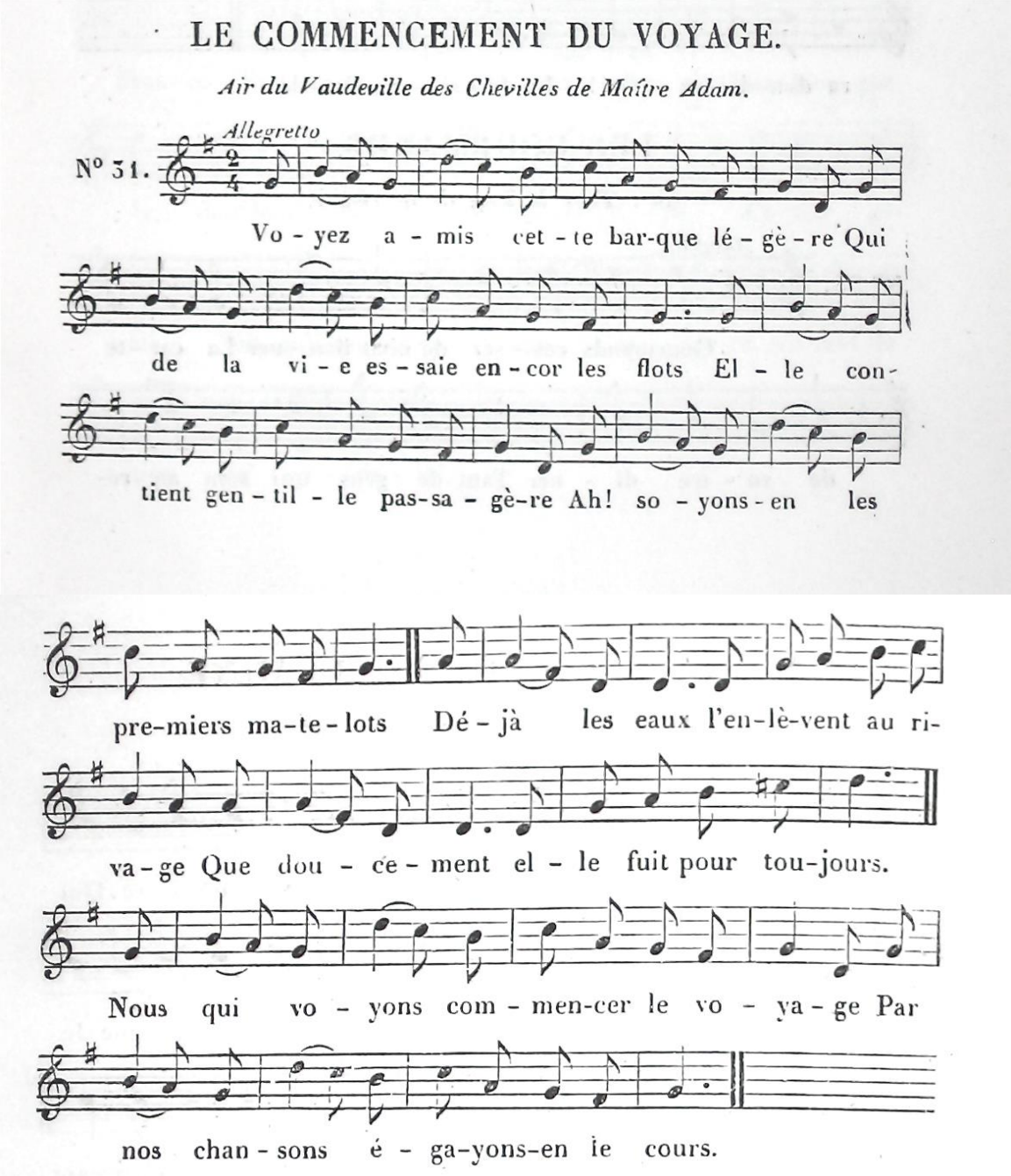


Figure 12 Le commencement du voyage (De Beranger, *Le commencement du voyage* 19-20)

As I stated above, it was always a joy to find two poems that went with a single Beranger poem. I would love to say that every poem that I found worked wonderfully with the music that I was able to find. However, it is clear that some

of the poets probably were just inspired by the words of the Beranger poems without writing their poetry to the specific air listed. When I look at the following poem "*Couplets*" by Numa Lanusse next to the music that is indicated, many of the stresses fall on strange syllables when sung to the air listed. Structurally the poems are similar, it is just the music that does not fit. Admittedly, I was disappointed to realize that I could not reunite all the poetry with a listed air in order to create some sort of anthology of Louisiana music, but I was able to see how certain poets approached poetry through the work of a well-known author. Although not every poem that I found could be paired perfectly with a Beranger song that inspired it, I was still fascinated at how influential Beranger was on the works by Free People of Colour.

COUPLETS
Chantés à la noce d'un ami.
Air : J'entends au loin l'archet de la folie.
(Lanusse, Numa 67)

Heureux amans, ô vous qui de Cythère
Entreprenez le voyage incertain,
Puisse un doux vent, puisse une mer prospère
Conduire au but votre amoureux destin.

Que de vos cœurs de sinistres images
Ne viennent point troubler le doux transport ;
Voguez, amis, sans craindre les orages,
Nos vœux ardents vous conduiront au port.

La nef bondit et les vents sont propices,
Un doux espoir flatte vos tendres cœurs;

Mon Carnaval
(De Béranger 29-30)

Amis, voici la riante semaine
Que tous les ans je fêtais avec vous.
Marotte en main, dans le char qu'il promène,
Momus au bal conduit sages et fous.

Sur ma prison, dans l'ombre ensevelie,
Il m'a semblé voir passer les Amours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Oui, je les vois ces danses amoureuses
Où la beauté triomphe à chaque pas.
De vingt danseurs je vois les mains

L'amour vous suit et d'abord pour prémices,
Ce Dieu charmant vous couronne de fleurs.

Pour prévenir tempêtes et naufrages
Nous prions tous et d'un commun accord.
Voguez, amis, sans craindre les orages,
Nos vœux ardents vous conduiront au port.

Un vent moins pur que le soupçon enfante
De votre marche a retardé l'essor ;
Le ciel s'ombrage et la vague écumante
Va vous couvrir !... non, l'espoir luit encor.
La vérité dissipe les nuages
Et l'air plus frais vous pousse sans effort.
Voguez, amis, sans craindre les orages,
Nos vœux ardents vous conduiront au port.

Déjà la plage à vos yeux se présente;
Et jusque là le bonheur vous a lui.
L'Amour s'en va, mais l'Amitié constante
Est avec vous ; ce sera votre appui.
Votre œil sourit à de charmans présages,
De beaux enfans veillent sur votre sort;
Voguez, amis, sans craindre les orages,
Nos vœux ardents vous conduiront au port.

heureuses
Saisir, quitter, ressaisir mille appas.

Dans ces plaisirs que votre cœur m'oublie :
Un seul mot triste en peut troubler le cours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Combien de fois, auprès de la plus belle,
Dans vos banquets j'ai présidé chez vous !
Là de mon cœur jaillissait l'étincelle
Dont la gaîté vous électrisait tous.
De joyeux chants ma coupe était remplie ;
Je la vidais, mais vous versiez toujours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Des jours charmants la perte est seule à craindre ;
Fêtez-les bien, c'est un ordre des cieux.
Moi je vieillis, et parfois laisse éteindre
Le grain d'encens dont je nourris mes dieux.
Quand la plus tendre était la plus jolie,
Des fers alors m'auraient paru bien lourds.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux jours !

Mais accourez, dès qu'une longue ivresse
Du calme enfin vous impose la loi.
Dernier rayon, qu'un reste d'allégresse
Brille en vos yeux et vienne jusqu'à moi.
Dans vos plaisirs ainsi je me replie ;

Je suis vos pas, je chante vos amours.
J'entends au loin l'archet de la Folie :
Ô mes amis ! prolongez d'heureux
jours !

A final song that I have chosen to include is written by Armand Lanusse himself, who was the brother of the above poet, Numa Lanusse. When I was able to find a poem by Armand Lanusse, I was ecstatic because Armand Lanusse was responsible for putting *Les Cenelles* together as a poetry compilation. I saw that Armand Lanusse had a poem called *Le Carnaval* to which he listed the air "*les oiseaux que l'hiver exile. etc.*" I found it interesting that the tune name had an "*etc.*" listed in it, so I immediately thought that it must not be the title of the poem, but the first line to the poem itself. My guess was correct and I was able to find a poem by Beranger called "*Les Oiseaux*" that had "*les oiseaux que l'hiver exile"* as the first line. I was so thrilled to have a poem by Armand Lanusse that I decided to examine it on a deeper level than the other poems that I had found. (I will show you the poems first and then get into discussion).

Le Carnaval
Air : Les oiseaux que l'hiver exile. etc.
(Lanusse, Armand 168)

L'hiver, sémillante Palmyre,
Reprend, hélas ! son triste cours.
Décembre, les vents, tout conspire
Pour effaroucher les Amours.
En les ralliant, la Folie
Donne partout l'heureux signal !...
Bannissons la mélancolie ;
Voici le temps de Carnaval.

Dans cette foule où l'on se presse,
Déjà j'entends autour de toi,

Les Oiseaux
(De Beranger 223-24)

L'hiver redoublant ses ravages
Désole nos toits et nos champs ;
Les oiseaux sur d'autres rivages
Portent leurs amours et leurs chants.
Mais le calme d'un autre asile
Ne les rendra pas inconstants :
Les oiseaux que l'hiver exile
Reviendront avec le printemps.

À l'exil le sort les condamne,
Et plus qu'eux nous en gémissons !

Mille amans répéter sans cesse :
“Je t’aime... Palmyre, aime-moi !...
Sans craindre d’être inconséquente,
Dis à tous ce refrain banal :
“Je vous aime et serai constante.”
Tout est permis en Carnaval.

Mais lorsque ta bouche rieuse
Leur promet amour éternel,
Songe qu’à moi, belle oublieuse,
Tu fis un aveu plus formel.
Pour mieux lier notre existence
Je veux qu’un serment conjugal
Ait pour nous plus de consistance
Qu’une promesse en Carnaval.

Du palais et de la cabane
L’écho redisait leurs chansons.
Qu’ils aillent d’un bord plus tranquille
Charmer les heureux habitants.
Les oiseaux que l’hiver exile
Reviendront avec le printemps.

Oiseaux fixés sur cette plage,
Nous portons envie à leur sort.
Déjà plus d’un sombre nuage
S’élève et gronde au fond du Nord.
Heureux qui sur une aile agile
Peut s’éloigner quelques instants !
Les oiseaux que l’hiver exile
Reviendront avec le printemps.

Ils penseront à notre peine,
Et, l’orage enfin dissipé,
Ils reviendront sous le vieux chêne
Que tant de fois il a frappé.
Pour prédire au vallon fertile
De beaux jours alors plus constants,
Les oiseaux que l’hiver exile
Reviendront avec le printemps.

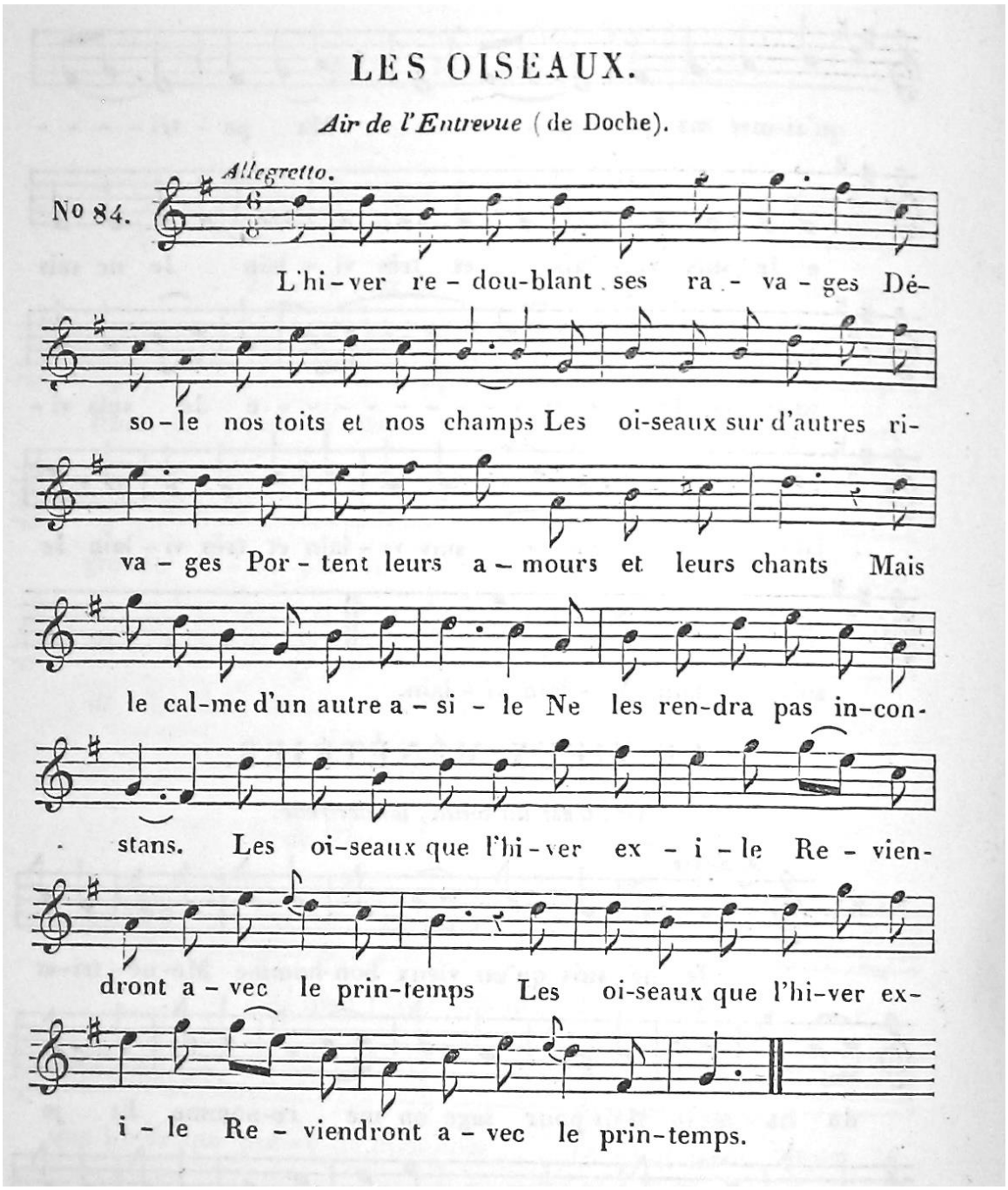


Figure 13 Les oiseaux (A) (De Beranger, *Les oiseaux* 52)

(Once again, I was able to find an alternate tune to the poem, and I am not sure which one served as the inspiration to Lanusse's poem.)

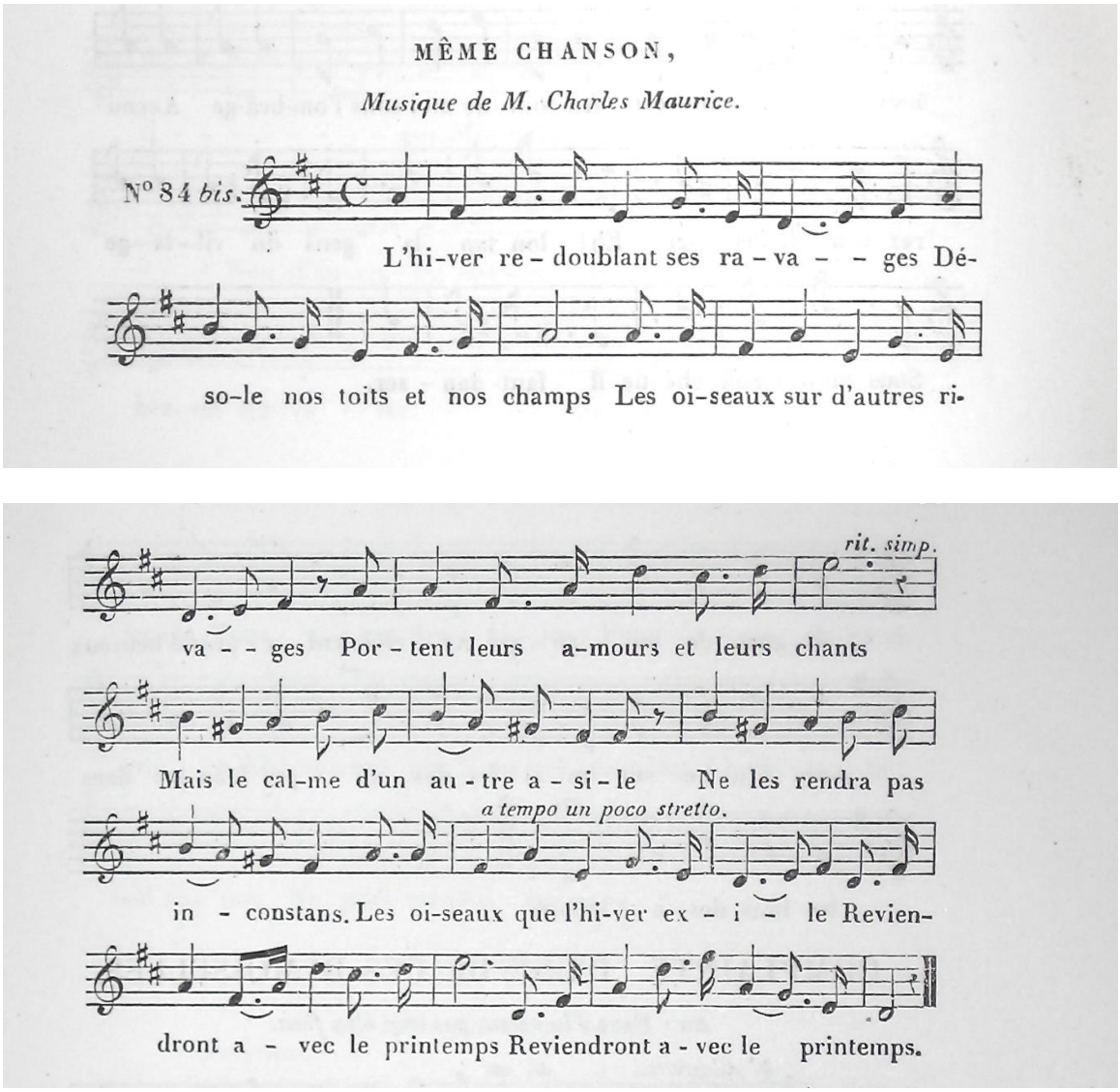


Figure 14 Les oiseaux (B)(De Beranger, *Les oiseaux* 52-53)

During my analysis of Lanusse's poem, I began to see a multiplicity of layers. In this poem Lanusse speaks of a fleeting love that happens during *Carnaval*, a popular festival that is part of the *Mardi Gras* celebration, which is immediately followed by Lent. During Carnaval "anything goes" or as Lanusse put it "*Tout est permis en Carnaval*". People dress up in costumes, some men dress in drag and other people dress up in costumes similar to Halloween. Indulgence during *Mardi Gras* is common, since people must give up their

indulgences for Lent. During *Carnaval* societal rules and roles are frequently reversed as a playful disruption of hierarchy, where regular life is contrasted with practices and behaviors that are only acceptable during *Carnaval* (Bakhtin 123). Superficially, this seems like a harmless concept especially since Mardi Grad is such an integral part New Orleans history, where Lanusse was living. Beranger's poem, however, deals with birds that have been abruptly and brutally exiled by winter. I quickly understood that birds were simply a metaphor in Beranger's poem for people exiled by an oppressive hand. Beranger's poem suggests that the birds have done nothing to merit this harsh treatment, and yet it has happened. In each verse of the poem, Beranger hints that even though the "birds" have been exiled, their song lives on and they will return in spring. Since Beranger was known to be subversive in his poetry, I have no doubt that he was suggesting that whatever the French government did to try to silence those who rebelled, the message of rebellion would live on and revolutionists would always return.

Since I could see why Lanusse would use this particular Beranger poem, I thought it would be interesting to also look at what Lanusse wrote to see if he also had written anything particularly exciting. At this point, I knew a lot more about Beranger than Lanusse, so much of what I speculating was based on my understanding of Beranger and subversive undertones. I began my analysis of the Lanusse poem by assuming that the girl named Palmyre referred to in the poem is probably supposed to be white. I am also working under the assumption that the author of this poem is supposed to be a person of colour, since Armand Lanusse was a Free Person of Colour. These assumptions are rooted in the line where

Palmyre responds to the unknown suitor, "'*Je vous aime et serai constante*.' *Tout est permis en Carnaval*." I believe that the line "*Tout est permis en Carnaval*" is deeper than simply making a statement about the festival of *Carnaval*. That particular line from the poem seems to indicate that outside of *Carnaval*, their love would not be permitted. At that time, laws regulating interracial relationships existed to discourage differing classes from marrying (Hanger 92).

Since I did not know much about Louisiana's history or folklore, I wanted to see whether the character of Palmyre resurfaced in any other works to confirm this forbidden love. Was it possible that she was a symbol for beauty in Louisiana at the time? Although I could not find anything that dated prior to Lanusse's poem, I discovered that George Washinton Cable had written about a beautiful young girl named Palmyre in *The Grandissimes* (Cable). Cable's book from the late 19th century takes place in Louisiana. Among the multiple storylines, a white family, the De Grapons, takes in Palmyre, a mixed-race young girl. Palmyre's life is a life of inner conflict since she is raised like many white girls, bonding with De Grapon's white daughter of the same age. As Palmyre grows, she becomes increasingly disobedient and the family ultimately disowns Palmyre because she is free-willed and not as submissive as the De Grapons anticipated. At the same time, when one of the De Grapon slaves, Bras Coupé (who is also the subject of a well known Louisiana short story from the early 19th century by Louis-Armand Garreau) asks Palmyre to marry him, the De Grapon father steps in to forbid it. Palmyre is trapped in a world where she, a beautiful young lady, is an outsider to both the white and black worlds (Jackson 83).

I went to the original Bras Coupé story but there is no mention of the De Grapon family or Palmyre. While I was first drawn to Cable's story simply because I was looking to see if the character of Palmyre in his book was potentially the same as the one mentioned in Lanusse's poem, I was not disappointed by the fact that they were most likely not the same. Stories like *The Grandissimes* highlight the complexities experienced by Free People of Colour and, much like Toucoutou, shows the rigidity of the racial bounds that existed in 19th century Louisiana.

While I could not find a reference to Palmyre in the context that I had hoped, I did come across information that helped me understand how society prevented people from loving across racial bounds. I could see that Armand Lanusse, through his poem "*Le Carnaval*," was drawing attention to the fact that although Free People of Colour were free, they were not able to love those whom they chose to love, simply because of race. It was amazing to me that Lanusse's poetry could be read in two ways – First, simply the fact that anything goes during *Carnaval* as far as indulgences are concerned, but also, that *Carnaval* might be the only time when love was not bound by race. For people, such as Lanusse and Beranger, who understood the possibility of writing messages that had dual meanings, poetry could serve as a vehicle for increased awareness of social problems and social change.

Conclusion

I have learned through my research that one may often look at 19th century poetry from Louisiana and discard it as second rate. While the imagery contained in Louisiana poetry may not be accepted by most as on par with poems from France of the same period, I am not convinced that the poets from Louisiana at the time were writing for the same reasons. I also think that they were trying to share a different message with those who were willing to listen to the additional meanings. I believe that I have only scratched the surface of all of the layers contained in this poetry, and as my interest continues in the subject I hope to find more information about the individuals themselves who would open up further understanding into the significance of each poem.

When I set out on my journey, I had read some poetry by Free People of Colour and admittedly I was one who cast it by the wayside, deeming it subpar, or too pedestrian. While on the surface, I suppose based on the criteria that I was using, the poetry did not stack up to other poems of their time, but I learned that poetry, especially politically charged poetry, cannot be taken at face value. Many of the works of the poets contained in *Les Cenelles* and other works that published poetry by Free People of Colour were written to convey a message to others who were willing to look for it and knew where to find it. Many of the poems that I was able to find were inspired by a politically active Jean Pierre de Beranger. It is apparent that Beranger's call for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity was of particular interest to many Free People of Colour in the Louisiana in the 19th century. The ideals that Beranger promoted after the French Revolution were the same as those

that the Free People of Colour were seeking in Louisiana. I can imagine that it was particularly difficult to write politically charged works as a Free Person of Colour at the time, but I am excited that many of these poems still exist. While I am no expert on the subject, I do feel like I am coming away from this experience with a much greater appreciation for the work that went in to writing poetry at the time.

After returning from Louisiana, I asked myself what I would take away from my experience. First I realized that as a translator, my primary objective was to convey the message of the author. Initially, I was convinced that I needed to translate the poems I was using so that they would be available to an English audience, but every time I sat down to translate, I found that I was imposing my experiences on the text, which is not necessarily a bad thing. However, since many of the poets who I studied already used music by De Beranger, a privileged white male, as filter to convey their message, I did not want to impose my interpretation (that of another privileged white male) on the text. Rather than changing the language from French to English, my translation consisted of taking poems and reuniting them with music, thereby unveiling the true intention of the author. Like light that passes through a prism thereby revealing a spectrum of colors, I felt like my work as a translator allowed me to take theses poems, find their original music and reveal a new spectrum of interpretations. Music also became a new medium by which the poems could be transmitted. My experiences changed how I viewed translation.

As far as what I learned about Louisiana poetry, ironically what I

discovered was not at all what I expected to find, but at the same time, far exceeded anything that could have I hoped to find. I cannot say exactly what surprised me the most about my findings; however, I am delighted that I was able to discover so much more than I could have ever anticipated about Free People of Colour and their positive contribution to an under-referenced body of work. When looking at poetry by Free People of Colour, I think that we are only scratching the surface. It is easy to assume that what is written on the page is all that matters when looking at poetry and all of the poetic devices found in the poem can be deciphered to provide a logical interpretation of the poem, but I discovered that when reuniting poetry with music, an additional dimension comes into play. Not only do the words of the poet come into play, but also those of the original musician.

In addition, it is important to remember that Louisiana had a very rich but complicated past. There are many identities that have come together to form what we now know as Louisiana. Because so many cultures have come together to form a single one, Louisiana's poetic and musical histories are immensely rich. While I did not spend as much time examining the music as I would have liked, I am convinced that there is plenty of work to be done in that field as well. The contributions of Cajun, Creole and Zydeco musicians is highly undervalued in the contemporary music world and sometimes cast off as insignificant; however, many Cajun and Creole influences can be found in Jazz as we know it today.

One thing that constantly surprises me is how little I knew about my thesis subject. I know it is naïve of me to say, but I thought that I was pretty

knowledgeable when I started my research, only to be shown shortly thereafter how little I knew. This fact bothered me at first but I now think that it drives me to learn more.

Prior to starting my thesis, I thought that research was a straightforward process (i.e. read an article on the subject, analyze, apply, etc.), I found that it is a journey. I did not understand why someone would choose the profession of a scholar, but I realize that once it becomes apparent how much research remains to be done in so many different fields, it is obvious how a desire to answer those questions can consume a person. Research does not simply answer questions, it forces the researcher to ask more.

While I do not entirely know how I will resume my interest in the field of poetry and music in Louisiana, I did see an application that I thought would be worthwhile exploring. CODOFIL, as a branch of the Louisiana government, is making a strong push to strengthen French immersion programs in public schools. This could also be a good time to redevelop French materials for all public schools French programs. If new curricula are required anyway, a French program that examined local poets could seem more relevant to some students. The demographics found on the United States Census Bureau web page suggest that a large portion of the populations in the major cities in Louisiana are not white, so French curricula should not only be composed of European materials (*Quickfacts.census.gov*). I think that much of what I found would fit particularly well with the new curriculum. Not only does it provide context for Louisiana history, it allows students access to local materials that promote equality. During

the process of my research, I found that many people in Louisiana had no idea that poetry by Free People of Colour, of the kind I was working with, was so abundant, and even fewer understood the implications that such texts could potentially have. I hope that in the future, the possibility of using this poetry in public schools will be explored on a significant level.

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