

POESIES POPULAIRES DE LA FRANCE THE FORTOUL COLLECTION OF FRENCH FOLK SONGS (1853-1855)

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In 1852, the French Minister for Public Education Hyppolyte Fortoul launched an official national campaign for the collecting of french folk songs. On september 13th., Louis-Napoléon –who was to become emperor Napoléon III two months later– issued a decree ordering the publication of a *Recueil des poésies populaires de la France*,¹ to be published by the “Comité de la Langue, de l’ Histoire et des Arts de la France”.² To that effect, Jean-Jacques Ampère (son of the famous physicist André-Marie Ampère), secretary of the *Comité* and professor of litterature, was to write a guideline for collectors, *Instructions relatives aux poésies populaires de la France*. As a result of this campaign, a large number of songs were sent to the ministry, which however lost interest in the project after the fall of the government. The collection as a whole remained unpublished, although a number of the songs eventually found their way into various regional folk song publications.

In 1877 the material sent to the *Comité* –songs with or without musical notations, translations and contextual informations– was bound together into six huge in-folio volumes, *Poésies populaires de la France*, now to be found in the manuscripts department of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris under the marks Fr.n.a. 3348-3343. The *Poésies populaires de la France* are ordered for the most part according to the system suggested by the *Comité’s Instructions*, and each contribution has been provided with a hand-written note at the top indicating its geographical provenance and the identity of the informant who sent it. But the collection has no geographical, linguistic or informant index. This collection, which is sometimes referred to as the “Fortoul collection” and sometimes as the “Ampère collection”, has long lived a secluded life and mostly appeared as a mere foot-note in surveys of French folk song collecting in France.³ However, it was consulted by Conrad Laforte for his

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¹ Cf. Xavier Charmes, *Le Comité des Travaux Historiques et scientifiques (Histoire et Documents)*, tome troisième, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1886.

² First founded the following day (September 14th.) and regrouping various working groups within the *Comité des Travaux Historiques et scientifiques* under the same Ministry for Public Education. Cf. Martine François, *Le Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques. Livre blanc*, Paris, july 1996.

³ Though up to three pages in Paul Bénichou, *Nerval et la chanson folklorique*, Paris, José Corti, 1970, pp. 170-173.

comprehensive *Catalogue de la chanson folklorique française* (Laforte: 1958) and, partly at least, by Lajos Vargyas' for the *Index of French Ballad Types* that is to be found as an appendix in his book on *Hungarian Ballads*. (Vargyas: 1983).

These manuscripts make up a rich material, although very uneven regarding the extent and quality of transcriptions, musical notations and contextual informations. It is all the more valuable since many of these songs have been collected earlier than those that appear in most published regional collections of French folk songs in the 19th. century. They give us a picture of French traditional song at a stage when it has not yet been edited for publication, although already filtered through various layers of collectors and correspondents, but in response to the same constraining guideline, whether they chose to follow it or not.

THE FORTOUL COLLECTION AND CULTURE POLITICS IN FRANCE

Fortoul's concern with the collecting campaign was not exclusively scientific. Far from it! Napoleon I, a great fan of Macpherson, had already expressed the wish to have a comprehensive volume of French "poésies and chants populaires". Louis-Napoléon decided to fulfill his uncle's wish. His decree stated clearly that the publication he ordered, covering all provinces and all periods of French civilisation, was to be a patriotic monument to the glory of France. Other, lesser European countries had long had such a monument, so it was high time France, whose popular poetry was even greater, had one too!

In a way, the Fortoul campaign is due to the convergence of two cultural currents of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, a delayed interest among French scholars for folk poetry, in the antiquarian, national romantic spirit that had started in Scotland almost hundred years earlier, continued in Germany and had spread over most of Europe. On the other hand, the grandiose and slightly megalomaniac design of successive French central governments to centralise scholarship and undertake an exhaustive mapping of all historic "monuments", remnants of the national past, material and immaterial. The first current had found its best expression through the various "sociétés savantes", or learned societies, inherited from the eighteenth century. The second current led to the creation in 1834 of the *Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, for the purpose of coordinating and controlling the learned societies, which were for the most part regionally based, and publish their works. This *Comité* was reorganised in 1837 into five sections, devoted respectively to *Langue et littérature*, *History*, *Sciences*, *Arts and Monuments*, and *Moral and Political Sciences*. The *Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques* still exists, although it has been reshuffled several times during its long history.

So culture politics has always been extremely centralized in France, and the Fortoul collection is no exception. It was organised with an iron hand. The “invitation” to collect was addressed mainly to two groups. First, to two hundred “correspondents”, chosen by the Ministry among the most learned scholars of their region, who had already proved their interest in the historical, archeological and artistic monuments of France; most were members of antiquarian and other learned societies, and were already official correspondents for the *Comité des Travaux historiques et scientifiques*’ other projects. And secondly, an appeal was made to the highly hierarchical network of primary education officials. On September 1852, Fortoul sent two letters to all “inspecteurs primaires” (controllers of primary school teachers and headmasters), and all “recteurs d’académie” (regional supervisors of education) respectively.⁴ He urged the inspectors to use their local knowledge and take advantage of their inspection rounds to trace all possible sources of traditional song, whether written, manuscript or oral:

You do not have to consult indiscriminately every single schoolteacher [sic!]. But you may ally yourself with those who, either personally or through longtime acquaintance with the local population, might be able to contribute precious information. Do not overlook the slightest hint; ask out the poorest villagers wherever you think some religious or war song, festivity song, ballad, historical narrative, legend, tale or satire may have remained in oral tradition.⁵

He also urges them to follow the example of La Villemarqué and consult local priests, who had proved a very valuable source for his *Barzaz Breiz*. They are to note the songs in their “primitive form”, whatever that means: hopefully the way they heard it from their informants, but more likely, one fears, the supposed original form it had in ancient times. Fortoul also gives inspectors some directives about transcription. If there is no standard orthography for the local language, they have to adopt their own, so as to keep as close as possible to the informant’s pronunciation; they are to add a literal translation; they are also asked to comment upon the “facts alluded to in the songs, the authors to whom these are commonly assigned, and at least their possible age”.

In the other letter, the rectors are urged to supervise the work of their inspectors, to guide them and help them in their collecting, to receive and classify their results and send them to him (Fortoul), together with a detailed report pointing out possible errors and omissions.

The duty of the collectors was purely to collect: “Là doit s’arrêter votre tâche”. The scientific treatment of the material collected was to be entrusted entirely to the learned members of the *Comité*, who were to select the received

⁴ Cf. Charmes, *op.cit.*, pp.157-159.

⁵ My translation.

materials, order them, and provide them with commentaries assessing their value “from the point of view of French history, history of the French language, and local idioms.” This patronising division of labour between field-workers and scholars was of course very common at the time.

In his eagerness to achieve Napoléon’s grandiose project, Fortoul used both the carrot and stick. The best contributors were to be rewarded by a medal, in recognition of their “patriotic deed”. But things seem to have gone too slowly for his taste, and fourteen months later, on December 5th, 1853, he wrote again to the recteurs d’académie, sending them a copy of Ampère’s guideline, *Instructions relatives aux Poésies populaires de la France*, which had been published in meantime,⁶ expressing in no veiled terms his “surprise” at the meagre results received so far and urging them to hurry things up. Fortoul seems to have been happily unaware of the time-consuming nature of field-work!

GUIDELINE FOR COLLECTING: *INSTRUCTIONS RELATIVES AUX POESIES POPULAIRES DE LA FRANCE*

The extensive *Instructions relatives aux Poésies populaires de la France*, written mostly by Jean-Jacques Ampère, shed an important light upon the scientific conceptions about folk songs prevailing in France at the time, and the tacit assumptions that underlie them. They were printed in august 1853, that is the same year as Grundtvig’s first volume of *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* (Grundtvig: 1853), devoted to heroic ballads; six years after he launched his revolutionary editing policy of publishing “everything there is, and as it is” (Grundtvig:1847), fourteen years after the first edition by Hersart de la Villemarqué of the *Barzaz Breiz, Chants populaires de Bretagne* (1839); and eighteen years after the first edition of Elias Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* (1935).⁷ The *Instructions* treat successively the following points: purpose of the collection; what to collect and what to leave out (i.e. an attempt at definition of “poésies populaires”); geographical and time limits for the material to be collected; transcription of melodies; sources (written sources and oral tradition); variants; various genres of songs to be collected.

These instructions are very much children of their time when dealing with questions of definition, classification and sources; whereas they are surprisingly ahead of their time on the question of melodies and of text variants.

⁶ In two different editions, one in august and one in november 1853; the november version is reprinted in *Bulletin du Comité de la langue, de l’histoire et des arts de la France*, 1854.

⁷ For an estimate of the French translations of the *Kalevala* and of its impact in France, see Hugues Jean de Dianoux de la Perrotine, “Les Traducteurs du *Kalevala* en français”, in Louis Léouzon Le Duc et Jean-Louis Perret, *Le Monde kalévaléen en France et en Finlande. Avec un regard sur la tradition populaire et l’épopée bretonne*, Paris A.D.E.F.O. – Helsinki S.K.S., 1987, pp.13-61, Anna Kokko-zalcman, “Un adaptateur du *Kalevala*: Alexandre Dumas”, *idem*: pp. 64-76.

In their eagerness to demonstrate that France has a good a popular poetry as any other country, something which had been disputed by some, the members of the *Comité* stigmatise the unreflected disdain in which folk poetry has been held by the French literary establishment, and the “habitudes un peu mondaines”, the mundane varnish which had characterised French literature until then, too closely connected as it was with the upper classes. But this prejudice of the learned establishment against folk poetry must disappear in the new society.

It is not easy to translate the term “poésies populaires de la France” and keep it’s ambiguity for a modern reader. Does it mean “French folk poetry”, “French popular poetry”, “French folk songs” or “French popular songs”? The term “populaire” is even more ambiguous than the english “folk”, since it corresponds both to “folk” and to “popular”. The word “folklorique” was not yet in use in 1853. And anyway, this term has never managed to negotiate with the term “populaire” anything like a clear semantic dividing line. It has also extremely negative connotations in modern French, both in scholarly and in everyday language.

The concept of “populaire” seems to have been even more nebulous in 1852 than today. The *Comité* considers as truly populaires

“only those poetries that were born spontaneously among the masses and which are anonymous, or those written by a known author, but which the folk has adopted and therefore turned into its own. The latter will be admitted only exceptionally, and first after it has been quite ascertained that they have not only been temporarily fashionable, but that they have also taken part in the general circulation and have become the property of the folk. This excludes all poetries which are popular in intention but not in fact, which have been written for the folk but never reached them”.⁸

So the *Comité* seems to operate with both the so-called “production theory” (folk poetry as collective, spontaneous creation by the masses), and, albeit with less enthusiasm, with the “reception theory” (folk poetry as an individual creation later adopted by the collectivity). The *Instructions* themselves do not tell us whether this policy is the result of a compromise between internal divergences, or whether it reflects a conceptual confusion common to all members.

But on the whole, the *Instructions* seem to value “poésies populaires” not so much for their own sake as for their old age and for what they are supposed to tell about ancient customs and beliefs. They are still quite dependent upon the national romantic conception of “folk”, which means at the same time the contemporary lower classes and the ancient “nation”, a sort of ethnic unity not yet divided into social classes.

Next, the *Instructions* deal with the geographical limits for the collection,

⁸ My translation.

a very complicated question, considering the multiplicity of languages spoken in France until the first world war, and the extent of French-speaking communities outside France. Here, the *Comité* takes a shamelessly imperialist stand.

“Everything that has been produced in our country such as it is to-day belongs to us. However, if any “poésie populaire” has existed in some province before the latter was joined to France, we consider these as part of our conquest or acquired by annexion, and we do not hesitate to grab them”.

Please note the military metaphors! Fortunately, the *Instructions* take the logical conclusion of this point of view, and assert the necessity of collecting in all the languages which are currently spoken on the territory of France: Neo-latin dialects,⁹ German, Flamish, Breton, Italian, Catalan, Basque. They ask for literal translations to be added to the original texts, while recommending that this material in foreign languages be admitted in modest numbers, since it is only local poetry (!). Yet, they insist that these must be included, for their exclusion would mutilate French folk poetry. On the other hand, material from French populations who are no longer part of the state of France must also be included, provided they go back to the time before these populations were torn away from the homeland, e.g. Savoie, who was given to Piémont in 1815.¹⁰ In the same way, poésies from Canada and from the Indians of America should also be included, and even more so the Creole songs to be found in the colonies that still belong to France. So the *Comité* operates with the most extensive meaning of the word “French” possible: everything found in France, in whatever language, and everything found in the French colonies, past and present. On the other hand, it does not seem to occur to them that the colonies may have a folk poetry of their own in the vernacular.

The instructions concerning the age of the material to be collected are quite interesting. The collecting should go as far back as possible, since are also to be included material composed in latin before the creation of the French language, as well as material written later by latin-speaking Frenchmen, e.g. clerics and students. Material in medieval French has an even greater claim to be included, though not the lyrical production of troubadours and trouvères, because these are on the whole “products of art” (and not, we must understand, “products of nature”, in accordance with the famous romantic topos). But some of the narrative “romances” published by medievalists like Leroux de Lincy (Leroux de Lincy: 1842), although they are written by known authors, “seem to show the characteristics of

⁹ Occitan, spoken in one third of France, was apparently not yet regarded as a language in its own right, including several dialects of its own (provençal, gascon, etc.).

¹⁰ It was first to return to France in 1860.

poésie populaire”. Here Jean-Jacques Ampère refers to “chansons de toile” and “chansons d’histoire” such as *La Belle Erembourg*, a genre in which David Colbert among others finds one of the sources of the ballad genre (Colbert: 1989). Here the *Comité* is surprisingly modern, in the sense that it does not confuse medieval and popular, as was common at the time.

At the other end of the time scale, the *Comité* has decided (after discussions!) not to include material from after 1800. This decision, however, is not due to the devolutionist bias common at the time, according to which genuine folklore is necessarily ancient; it is grounded upon the *Comité*’s concern for public peace and “to avoid the polemics that would undoubtedly result from the collecting of poésies that either praise or attack live persons and contemporary opinions”. The spectre of the Great Revolution and of the troubled times that followed is not forgotten! The ideological, political and religious battles have been too fierce and too traumatic in France. Unfortunately for us, this means that whatever songs or “poetries” that may have been created around the heroes of the Revolution, the counter-revolutionary *Chouans*, or around Napoléon should not be collected.

The title of the planned “poésies populaires de la France” has led some scholars to assert that the Fortoul campaign was interested in texts rather than melodies. And it is a fact that many songs were sent without tunes. Yet there is no doubt at all, when reading the *Instructions*, that the *Comité* was looking first of all for songs. “The question was raised whether only sung poetry should be included. It was then decided that songs should make up the bulk of the collection, but that it should also include poetry without music, if it had been recited publicly, or even just read in manuscripts or printed material, provided that “their origin and destination were obviously popular, i.e. they had been widely circulated and therefore had a truly popular existence”. So the main bulk of the poésies populaires to be collected are songs, and it is essential that their melodies should be collected and noted together with their words, as far as possible, “either by indicating the name of the melody, if it is already well-known, or by writing it in musical notation or in *plainsong notation*” (my italics).

The part of the Ampère *Instructions* that concern the collecting and transcription of melodies have been drafted by another member of the *Comité*, Mr. Vincent. It is on this very point that the *Instructions* are astonishingly ahead of their time. Vincent states that there is in any French village at least one person able to write down a melody in musical notation. And he warns all correspondants of a mistake to be avoided, that could easily be made by collectors, especially because they are musical. Ancient melodies differ considerably and in several ways from the melodies of classical music which the learned correspondants of the *Comité* might be expected to be familiar with. First, they do not have a fast rhythm and measure. Secondly, they do not always end on the dominant. Thirdly, they do not always have a leading tone, that is to say the tone just below the ground tone is often at a whole

tone distance from it. It is essential that these three characteristics (which M. Vincent assigns to old age and which according to him relates traditional melodies to chanting and to plainsong) should not be lost in transcription. He is well aware of the fact that learned collectors, well schooled in modern classical tonality, could be tempted to wipe off “that precious rust, thinking they are wiping off a dirty spot”. In order to avoid that danger, Vincent gives a “simple” remedy: “Note the tune exactly as you have heard it and without any change”. This is of course easier said than done! Modern ethnomusicologists know that the intervals of traditional, modal music are very tricky to transcribe into classical notation. But the fact remains that Vincent warned at great length collectors to respect the musical specificity of traditional songs.

Vincent also asks his correspondents not to harmonise the melodies, and only to send musical accompaniments if they are as ancient as the melodies and an integral part of them. (It was to become a regrettable but common practice right up to the Second World War to publish traditional songs with piano accompaniment, just like the folk song revival of the 1960s was to do with the guitar). Melodies without words are also welcome, on condition that they are reported by tradition to belong to some text, which has been lost. So there is not doubt whatsoever that the Comity was looking primarily for songs.

On that account, the results of the campaign did not quite live up to the *Comité's* ambitions. Many songs were sent in without melody notation, and many of the notations that were sent in bear the mark of modern tonality. We cannot decide for sure whether the melodies noted had already become tonal by that time, or whether the correspondents could not get themselves attuned to earlier modal melodies, as they had been requested to. But the fact remains that the *Instructions* are very much ahead of their time.

The Ampère *Instructions* are also far ahead of their time on the question of variants. “If you find variants (of printed or manuscript songs) you must take the pain of collecting them and send them to the *Comité*. The same applies for songs collected in oral tradition, “*whose characteristics it is to be constantly modified by the living transmission that keeps them*”. (my italics). True enough, this emphasis upon variants as being in principle equally valuable, each in its own right, had already been asserted by Svend Grundtvig in his *Plan* in 1849 and practised that very same year (1853) in the first volume of *DgF*, and was also to become Child's editing policy. But it certainly was not the prevailing view among French scholars at the time and was not to be so for another century or so. In his *Romancero populaire de la France* (published posthumously in 1904), Georges Doncieux, who regards himself as the first scientific student of French ballads, still ambitions to give for each ballad a “scientific version”, that is a reconstruction of what he thinks to have been its “original” state.

RESULTS

Some correspondents have responded extensively, others more sporadically. It is difficult to give a more precise picture, since, regrettably, their contributions have been splitted and spread throughout the first four volumes according to the classification system adopted,¹¹ and since there is no informant register.

When working one's way through the *Poésies populaires de la France*, one comes across many dutiful *inspecteurs primaires* who seem to have obliged obediently to the ministerial order; priests, archivists and local erudites, e.g. the librarian at the Bibliothèque Méjanes in Aix; some famous writers who were genuinely interested in folk traditions and were already eager collectors, such as George Sand in the province of Berry, and Prosper Mérimée – himself a member of the *Comité* – who collected in Corsica; and of course eminent folklorists such as de la Villemarqué, who was working on a third and definitive edition of the *Barzaz Breiz*, to appear in 1865; Edmond de Coussemaker, the well-known scholar from French Flanders – historian, musicologist, archaeologist and composer as well as judge – who was to publish a few years later his influential *Chants populaires des Flamands de France*;¹² and Louis de Baecker, who was to publish *Chants historiques de la Flandre* in 1855. These professional folklorists of course had their own field-work techniques, and their own views on the material collected. De Coussemaker for example recorded among peasants, fishermen, laceworkers and in Sunday schools around Dunkerque and Hazebrouck, and Louis de Baecker contributed learned comparative comments.

Fortoul's ungentle rebuke must have had a certain effect, for the selected material which eventually found its way in the 6 manuscript volumes at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* count some 3.250 leaves. They include several thousands song texts, many with musical notation. And even more were sent in, since there is evidence that a selection was made as intended and that some songs have been discarded.

The manuscript of the *Poésies populaires de la France* starts with a general Table of Contents. The first four volumes are ordered according to the system recommended in the *Instructions*:

Volume I - 645 leaves I. Religious songs

¹¹ A regrettable process which has been practised by most folklore archives well into the second half of the twentieth century.

¹² For a recent assesment of this important and innovative book, see Stefaan Top, “*Chants populaires des Flamands de France (1856): A Contribution to Comparative Folk song Research, France/Belgium:Flanders*”, in James Porter ed. *Ballads and Boundaries. Narrative Singing in an Intercultural Context*. Proceedings of the 23rd International Ballad Conference of the Commission for Folk Poetry (SIEF), Department of Ethnomusicology and Systematic Musicology, UCLA, 1995.

1. Prayers
2. Legends, Lives of Saints, Miracles
3. Cantiques, Complaintes, and collecting songs
4. Songs for calender festivities

Volume II - 392 leaves

- II. Songs of pagan origin, repetitive songs
- III. Didactic and moral songs
- IV. Historical songs
 1. Battles
 2. Besieged cities
 3. Historical persons
 4. Various songs

Volume III - 551 leaves

- V.- Romantic songs
 1. *A la claire fontaine; La fille au cresson; Chanson de Dion; Marion ou le Jaloux; Renaud*
 2. Various songs (*Le Sire de Framboisy*)
- VI.- Songs connected with the life cycle
 1. *Chanson de la mariée*
 2. *Sur le pont d'Avignon*¹³
 3. Various wedding songs, etc.
- VII.- Soldiers' songs, sailors songs, etc.
- VIII.- Craftsmen's songs: smiths, weavers, tailors, etc.
- IX.- Songs connected with agriculture, sowing, harvesting songs, etc.
- X.- Hunting, fishing, herding songs, etc.

Volume IV- 538 leaves

- XI.- Satiric songs
- XII.- Occasional songs, in connection with some invention or new fashion
- XIII.
 1. Round dance tunes
 2. Other dance tunes (*bourrées, branles, etc.*)
 3. Jocular songs
 4. Lullabies
 5. Drinking songs

¹³ This does not refer to the well-known children's song, but to a wedding song wide-spread in western France, usually sung on a beautiful melody and attested since 1503 in Petrucci's *Odhecaton*.

The two last volumes contain printed booklets of various songs, and are ordered by provinces, not by song types:

Volume V - 585 leaves
From Agenais to Caux

Volume VI - 539 leaves.
From Champagne to Vendée (anonymous)

Most genres are represented, including narrative ballads, a genre which, with the notable exception of the *Complainte du Roi Renaud* popularized by Yves Montand, had not been very visible in recent oral tradition until the revival of the 1990s, and maybe has never been very rich in France at any time. But the Fortoul collection includes several versions of *Marianson*, *La Fille du roi Louis*, *Jean Renaud*, *Renaud le tueur de femmes*, *L'Ecrivette*, *La Courte paille*, *La blanche biche*, *Le Flambeau d'amour*, *La Maumariée vengée par ses frères*. Some genres can even be said to be overrepresented. For example, collectors have made a special effort to collect as many versions as possible of the repetitive song *Ah ! tu sortiras, biquette, biquette . . .*. This song, which also exists as a tale,¹⁴ tells of a goat which refuses to leave the vegetable garden; the master urges the dog to bite her, the stick to beat the dog, the fire to burn the stick, the water to drown the fire, etc. They all refuse, until a last being is willing to obey, thus reversing the chain of events. Since this last element is sometimes the Devil, Ampère, who calls this song type *Le Conjurateur et le loup* (*The Conjurator and the Wolf*), sees in it “a sort of incantation related with the Scandinavian and Finnish runes, [which] testifies to very ancient strange superstitions”! But to my mind, one of the most interesting results of the Fortoul collection are the many ritual songs connected with the individual life-cycle and with calendar customs, and the many informative, although unsystematic, contextual comments that go with them.

Among many examples, let me quote this beautiful version of the widespread ritual wedding song from the province of Aunis:

Sur le pont d'Avignon / J'entends chanter la belle
Qui chante joliment / Chansonnette nouvelle
Les p'tits oiseaux du ciel / Sont morts sur la gelée
Ils ne sont point tous morts / Ils ont pris la volée
Dans le chateau du roi / Ont fait leur appuyée
Ont pondu et couvé / Ont fict belle niitée.
Ouvrez la porte, ouvrez / Nouvelle mariée,
Si vous ne l'ouvrez pas / Elle vous sera cassée
Comment puis-je l'ouvrir / Je ne suis que couchée
Avec mon bien aimé / la premiere nuitée

¹⁴ *The Goat who would not go home*, AT 2015.

Si vous ne l'ouvrez pas / Elle vous sera cassée
A grands coups de marteaux / A grands coups de cognée

A toutes les noces qui se font dans les campagnes il est d'usage de porter, sur le coup de minuit, la soupe à l'oignon aux nouveaux mariés, qui, pour la recevoir, se renferment dans une chambre. Toute la noce se rend à la porte. Une jeune fille chante, à pleine voix, la chanson suivante, que les assistants répètent sur le même ton, et couplet par couplet. La chanson finie, on frappe à la porte à coups redoublés, elle s'ouvre, chacun mange une ou deux cuillerées de soupe, on casse le plat, et on se sépare, en faisant entendre des cris de joie."¹⁵

These ritual songs, which have played an essential role in pre-industrial societies, appear rarely, if ever, in printed folk song collections, and are scattered in folklore journals of the period. The *Poésies populaires de la France* make up a welcome addition to these scarce sources.

Amusingly, the real reason for the relatively huge number of calender songs in the Fortoul collection may well be the celtic obsession of many scholars of the time, forty years after the dissolution of the *Académie celtique*.¹⁶ The *Instructions* deal at some length with the "aguilaneus" ("aguillonées", "guillanou", "haguignette", etc.), i.e. questing songs used by the youth while going house visiting during the twelve days of Christmas, asking for food in exchange of New Year wishes. For example:

Le Guillaneu

Arrivés, sont arrivés,
Le guillaneu vous faut donner
Arrivés, sont arrivés, gentil seigneur,
Le guillaneu vous faut donner aux compagnons
Des noix, des noisettes,
Le guillaneu vous faut donner
Des noix, des noisettes, gentil seigneur,
Le guillaneu vous faut donner aux compagnons
Des pommes et des poires...,
Châtaignes bouillies, châtaignes rôties...
Des sous et de l'argent blanc...

¹⁵ Vol. III, p. 349.

¹⁶ The *Académie celtique*, founded in 1805 by Eloi Johanneau et Michel-Ange de Mangourit, in order to systematise the study of French celtic (gaulois) antiquities, has despite its scientific bias, had a tremendous importance for the collecting of folklore in France. Six volumes of "memoires" on various subjects were published between 1807 and 1812. And its detailed *Questionnaire*, worked out for the systematic collecting of celtic antiquities, is an invaluable source of information about the state of Folkloristics in France at the time of the Grimm brothers. In 1814 some of its members got together again in order to found the *Société royale des Anquitaires de France*. Cf. Nicole Belmont (ed.), *Aux sources de l'ethnologie française. L'académie celtique*, Paris, Editions du C.T.H.S., 1995.

Une jolie fille si vous l'avez...
Un bon cheval pour la porter...
Le guillaneu vous faut donner
Un bon cheval pour la porter...
Qu'il soit ferré des quatre pieds,
Un bon lit pour la faire coucher...
Un beau gars pour la caresser...
Que Dieu garde votre bouvier...
Qui fournit le blé au grenier...
Que Dieu garde votre porcher,
Que Dieu garde votre porcher...,
Qui fournit le lard au charnier (= *au saloir*)
Lève-toi, vieille, du foyer...
Pour couper le lard en quartiers...
Le guillaneu vous faut donner
Pour couper le lard en quartiers, gentil seigneur,
*Le guillaneu vous faut donner aux compagnons!*¹⁷

Ampère considers the various regional names of this type of songs as dialectal transformations of the expression “Au gui l’an neuf” (“The new year misletoe”), which for him proves that we here have to do with an ancient druidic ritual. Modern philologists regard this etymology as completely fanciful.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

The *Instructions relatives aux poésies populaires de la France* make very interesting reading. The members of the *Comité* still struggle with seemingly insoluble contradictions about what is to be regarded as “poésies populaires” and what is not, with questions of origins, age, production theory and reception theory. On that account, they are very much dependent upon romanticism and its view of folklore. Yet they are aware of the fact that the modifications of a traditional song through times is not a regrettable vice due to a faulty transmission, but the very characteristics of a living tradition. But they are not yet prepared to see in this characteristics of traditional poetry its constitutive feature and its very definition. For modern scholars, a “chanson populaire”, a folk song, a traditional song (call it what you want) is simply, whatever its origin or the social milieu which practices it, a song which has no “authorized” version and which generates variants, which only exist as a series of variants. Yet, three quarters of a century were to elapse before scholarship came to that recognition with Piotr Bogatyrev and

¹⁷ Volume 1, p. 633.

¹⁸ For a lengthy discussion of this question, see Arnold Van Gennep, *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* (1943,1946,1948), Laffont, 1998, vol. 3, pp. 2787-2794

Roman Jakobson's seminal article *Folklore als eine besonders Form des Schaffens*. (1929). The members of the *Comité de la Langue et des Arts de la France* were not prepared to take that small logical step. They were too influenced by the romantic dichotomy between "Art Poetry" and "Nature Poetry", "Kunstdichtung" and "Naturdichtung", to really scrutinize the poetics of folk poetry. As long as one believes something to be natural (a notion which is a very cultural construction!), one lacks the incentive to analyse it. This confirms the validity of the concept of scientific paradigm, according to which even small progress can take ages to be made, if they do not fit into the current mental frame of reference.

Of course, the Ampère *Instructions* show no concern for the singer as an individual artist; no attention to performance and its social and esthetic importance for the community that practices it. In that respect, the *Instructions relatives aux Poésies populaires de la France* are still light years away from modern ballad scholarship.

Nevertheless, the Fortoul campaign for the collecting of traditional songs in France, and its visible result, the six manuscript volumes of *Poésies populaires de la France*, whatever their shortcomings, constitute a precious source of empirical song material and present an immense interest for the history of traditional song research in France. It certainly deserves to be the object of an extensive scholarly study.

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Resumo

Em 1852, por ordem do futuro imperador Napoleão III, o ministro francês da Educação Pública Hyppolyte Fortoul lançou uma campanha oficial a nível nacional para a recolha de canções populares francesas que seriam publicadas como um “monumento” à história de França segundo o espírito romântico-nacionalista. A recolha foi organizada numa forma muito centralizada, e acompanhada por um longo guia de instruções elaborado por Jean-Jacques Ampère para a recolha de textos e M. Vincent para a anotação de melodias. Como resultado desta campanha, um grande número de canções foram enviadas ao ministério, muitas delas com anotações musicais e informações sobre o contexto. Este imenso material nunca foi publicado completo, e encontra-se agora na secção de manuscritos da Biblioteca Nacional, Paris: *Poésies populaires de France*. A colecção Fortoul, sejam quais forem as suas falhas, constitui uma preciosa fonte de materiais e, juntamente com o guia de *Instruções*, apresenta um imenso interesse para a história da pesquisa sobre a canção tradicional em França. Merece certamente ser objecto de um extenso estudo académico.

Abstract

In 1852, on the orders of future emperor Napoleon III, the French Minister for Public Education Hyppolyte Fortoul launched an official national campaign for the collecting of french folk songs, to be published as a “monument” to France’s history in a national-romantic spirit. The collecting was very centralistically organised, and accompanied with a lengthy guideline by Jean-Jacques Ampère for the collecting of texts and M. Vincent for the notation of melodies. As a result of this campaign, a great number of songs were sent to the ministry, many of them together with musical notations and contextual information. This huge material was never published as a whole, and is now to be found in the manuscripts department of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: *Poésies populaires de la France*. The Fortoul collection, whatever its shortcomings, constitutes a precious source of empirical material and, together with the guiding *Instructions*, presents an immense interest for the history of traditional song research in France. It certainly deserves to be the object of an extensive scholarly study.

