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Chapter 6

War of Taste in Popular and Folk Music: French Chanson, 1940–42

Philippe Gumplowicz¹

For all those who returned to work in the autumn of 1940, France was entering a postwar period. The armistice brought with it difficult conditions imposed by the occupying force along with damaged reputations for some and new opportunities for others. For the majority, for those who were not Jews, communists or prisoners, however, life just continued as before.² France nevertheless still had to come to terms with the defeat, meaning it had to be able to understand and explain it. A discourse of defeat thus emerged from among a stream of regretful observations about the unpreparedness of the French army, the disarmament of the country and its elites and the lack of vision of its leadership.³ Both the right and far right as well as the 1930s essayists (many of whom are thought to have espoused collaborationism⁴) were pointing out the responsibilities of the Third Republic politicians, whose ultimate dread would have been the Front Populaire.⁵ This discourse of defeat drew on the same religious register of contrition illustrated by Maréchal Pétain in his speech of 17 June 1940: “Since the victory [of 1918], the spirit of pleasure [had] prevailed over the spirit of sacrifice.”⁶ This national examining of conscience thus indicated an extremely intense general state of mind that is difficult for us to grasp today. There was a need to explain the inexplicable, a convergence of factors that had spanned the political, moral, spiritual, and esthetic spheres. France had already found itself devitalized, morally disarmed, and unable to defend itself before this. Jean-Pierre Maxence, a non-conformist intellectual who subsequently became involved in active collaborationism, wrote at the end of an essay published in 1939: “France is exhausted from so many beatings, shaken by so much futile anger and broken by so many thwarted hopes. It is like a seriously ill patient, no longer moving and barely able to speak. It

just waits, pale, tired, and weary of creating fear. Engulfed by everything that has happened to it, it no longer rises up.”⁷

How could this defeat be explained in a country whose memory of the glorious moments of its history, particularly the Great War victory, still burned bright? “The disaster in my country has military, political, economic, and social causes, but we lack the necessary perspective to define and enumerate them exactly,”⁸ wrote Georges Bernanos. What France was lacking here was art. Although somewhat distanced from this theatre of operations, the world of music commentary was called upon to express its views on this devitalization. André Cœuroy, editor-in-chief of the *Revue musicale*, had detected the first signs of exhaustion in the musical press as early as 1930, and this exhaustion only increased as the decade went on. After the armistice of June 1940, he was asked by the writer and publisher Jacques Chardonne⁹ to draw up a medical image to explain the changing tastes in the field of song: “We need to know the reasons for our ruination, . . . This disaster cannot be traced back to just individual errors or technical accidents. Every organ in France’s body was undermined.”¹⁰

Was Chardonne also referring to the vocal organ here ? Indeed he was. The lamentation drew on metaphors from the clinical picture of viral and microbial infection. It depicted a healthy body that had been attacked by viruses. France had been subject to attacks from invisible agents prior to the military invasion, and music was certainly partly responsible for the defeat. Coeuroy spoke for the prosecution in his book *La Musique et le peuple en France*. A better title, one more in tune with its content, would have been “la musique *contre* le peuple en France” (music *against* the people of France). A series of corrosive factors had undone the inner song of the French people, the intangible testimony of an identity that Coeuroy would have wished eternal or, at the very least, unshakable.

Could traditional music reflect the inner soul of a France that, although long since unified under a state centralized by the monarchy, was divided into so many small countries? The antirepublican and nationalist unrest at the turn of the century had prompted the composer and teacher Vincent d'Indy to send his students out to conquer rural France. Michel Faure noted that folklore had become a “musical obsession among scholarly musicians.”¹¹ The emergence from war in 1940 aroused a renewed interest among musicographers in the traditional French chanson.¹² The genre had disappeared in the later stages of industrialization, a phenomenon that was marked by the professionalization and development of the chanson industry. Supported by a task force comprising records, radio and cinema, the industry had become technically and commercially efficient by the beginning of the 1930s. As regards the work songs, which was ironically described by Henri-Irénée Marrou as “an emanation from the collective soul,”¹³ the battle had already been lost.¹⁴ By the 1920s, the “Lyre et palette” group and “Les Six” were enthusing over the café-concert¹⁵ chanson, the music hall and the variety show. However, as mass circulation of the chanson increased, so the genre became progressively more suspect.¹⁶ According to Céline (and Coeuroy), folklore had become a recourse: “The world no longer has a melody. We are still lulled by folklore, the last whispers of our folklore. When that has gone, and night comes, so will the Negro’s tam-tam.”¹⁷

André Coeuroy: Biographical Sketch

After spending four years in captivity during the Great War, this *École Normale Supérieure* alumnus, who was born in 1891 and who had been a pupil of the composer Max Reger in Leipzig, gave up his post as a professor to work in the press as an opinion columns editor (initially specialist and then generalist columns). He edited the *Revue musicale* from 1921 to 1937 (formally at least) as well as the music columns of *Paris-Midi* (1925 onward), *Gringoire*¹⁸ (1931 to 1939) and *Je suis partout* (1943 onward—the column had been

abandoned by Lucien Rebatet), where he published six specialist articles on music. This journalistic cartography suggests a career that was defined by esthetic discernment. In the early 1920s, Coeuroy was passionate about jazz and the festive esthetics of the “Les Six” composers. He commissioned articles on the Second Viennese School and protested against musical regionalism, “which ignored everything outside its own race, idiosyncrasies, and prejudices.”¹⁹ The first germs of nationalism appeared in his writing in 1928: “For a long time it was believed that music was an international language. But each race has its own musical style.”²⁰ By the end of the decade, his focus had shifted to musical roots. The lifeblood of folklore would provide the impetus that would revive France and revitalize its music. Classical music was all the better for having been regenerated by folklore. Non-conformist in his early writings, this musicographer came to champion a French-style *volkism*. This movement was espoused by a whole section of the musical world who, in 1940, committed themselves with eyes closed and ears open to the Vichy regime’s Révolution Nationale.²¹

There was nothing, however, in Coeuroy’s professional activities that had predestined him for this change in direction. As general secretary of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), a body attached to the League of Nations (whose management team he had joined in 1928), he supervised the various congresses and symposiums on the subject of music and folk art. Its ethos was one of cultural diplomacy and humanist and scientific cooperation between nations. This “UNESCO before UNESCO”²² disappeared in the wake of the 1940 defeat. Coeuroy was formally advised of the end of his collaboration on 30 September 1941. While *La Musique et le peuple en France* bears the traces of observations drawn from his professional experience, it also represents his first public siding with the Révolution Nationale after a long professional life spent in a radical-socialist, freemason environment.

“Nothing, Nil, Zero”: From Catalyst to Putrefaction

The “inner song” of this defeated nation that Coeuroy put forward was quite dark. With “the generational chain”²³ broken, the folk songs (or traditional songs, as they are known today) of the provinces now only existed as keepsakes, relics, replicas or archives: “Popular music, chansons, all these melodies said to be eternal that dreamers gather together in volumes and archives . . . The folk song can still be found in texts, but it no longer exists in people’s heads. Nothing, nil, zero . . . The farandoles, the pastourelles, are they really nothing more now than opéra-comique?”²⁴

“Popular” is the term that the IIC had substituted in its publications for “folklore” in the early 1930s. The disappearance of folk songs from France was striking from a comparative perspective. At the IIC, Coeuroy supervised the “Société Internationale de la Musique Populaire,” which inventoried and examined methods of collecting (recording or manually transferring recordings), identifying and classifying popular music.²⁵ The study trips he undertook after attending an international folk art congress in Prague in 1928 introduced him to traditional songs from Hungary, Tyrol, and Asturias. By comparison, he saw that the folklore of the French provinces was no longer just anemic, it was dead. Coeuroy appointed himself the coroner of what Michel de Certeau was later to describe as the “beauty of the dead.”²⁶ He carried out an autopsy and concluded that the cause of death was intentional. Its demise was due to an offensive of irony and sarcasm in the eighteenth century against the traditional old songs, and its prodromes could be traced back to the “singing societies, where the bourgeoisie came to sing their romances or to listen to those of their neighbor, a school of individualism.”²⁷ The Société du Caveau, which was located in the center of Paris and its most famous dining club in the eighteenth century, was at the heart of this “demolition mindset” and “hedonistic bourgeoisie culture . . . that has strangled us to death.” This first offensive had then been followed by the “humanitarian songs with their hoarse-voiced claims,”

the “merrymakers of the July Monarchy,” and the “serinettes, . . . operetta refrains, Offenbach’s vogue, Montmartre cabarets.” These “leisure pursuits of the gentry who presumed to epitomize Parisian elegance and the French spirit” ultimately led to “the café-concert chanson, which cultivated what it believed to be an art form that lacked inspiration, grace, style, taste, in short everything.” Satirical, bawdy, and bacchic, these songs spoke to the individual rather than to the people: “Popular chanson is for the collective soul. It is not individualistic. It has been toppled by the satirical and personal chanson, which aims not at the social spirit but at the critical mind.”

This construction of an “organic” link between a territory, its people, and its music was founded on an ideology inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). In addition to glorifying nativeness, the rural community was presented as a model of human unity. Tangible musical proof of this unity were the *Volkslieder*. The author and the listener were one and the same person: “The herdsmen did not write their poems for the peasants; they were the peasants and recognized each other as such.”²⁸ Only the chansons inspired by work, hardship, celebrations, and traditions deserved to be classed as “popular”: “The music that comes out of the people continues to live with the people. This music is real ‘popular’ music, responding, at any given moment, to the demands of everyday life.”²⁹

A complete contrast was established between chansons *by* the people and chansons *for* the people. The former emanated from and in turn sedimented a collective identity. The latter dissolved the collective identity through a critical onslaught. A pathogenic triad – politics, pleasure, facility—had spread to the whole social body and was deemed “the cause of our decline.”³⁰ The moral aspect of individualism was linked with esthetic judgment. Songwriters “knew what people liked. They banked on baseness, and it paid off every time.”³¹ These rootless, premeditated, formulaic, doctored chansons explained the “void into which the population had been descending for more than half a century.”³² Providing the last link in a

chain that was alien to the “musical substance of France,”³³ the music hall welcomed a whole parade of corrupting genres:

Under the influence of international exhibitions, especially that of 1900, the foreign contribution had become a threat at the turn of the twentieth century. Internal mindlessness was joined by external mindlessness. Tangos, maxixes, cake-walks. None of them inherently contemptible, but transplanted, they lost all their meaning. Only the coarse nuances could be understood, and the truly French rhythms disappeared.³⁴

A collateral effect of this chanson-based globalization was that many forms of strong regional music (strong because they were rooted in their territories) were misrepresented as “Spanish” or “Viennese,” first in the opéra-comiques and then in the music halls. These musical transfers undoubtedly had a degrading effect. No music could withstand the journey. It is important to take into account here the trauma of defeat and the fact that the concrete manifestation of this was the territory’s permeability. The German invasion had been preceded by a stealth invasion that had already been noted by theorists of nationalism. Charles Maurras had indicated that the aim of nationalism was to provide a “safeguard for all these treasures, which can come under threat without a foreign army ever crossing the border, without the territory being physically invaded.”³⁵

A History of Mixed Sounds

Coeuroy had already foreseen, at the beginning of the 1930s, the anthropological upheaval that would result from the mass emergence of mechanical music (radio and phonograph).³⁶ He had reported in detail on the merging or telescoping of music from far-off lands that had

begun to be mixed together. New sounds and indecent rhythms could now be heard coming out of 78-rpm records, music halls, and dance halls. This proliferation of mixed sounds accelerated the degradation begun at the end of the Enlightenment and launched an assault on the authority that united the individual with a shared destiny, a spirit of place or a national community, namely a shared sensibility resulting from a mixture of education and refinement. The mixed sounds were transforming good people into a gregarious rabble. The “here” was becoming open to the “elsewhere”:

It is no longer the village bell tower that tells the countryside folk what time it is. They set their clocks by Westminster’s chimes. These villagers dance to the sound of some luxury hotel’s orchestra of black musicians. They are given a brief glimpse of Paris, London, the far-off capitals that were previously just a name. With the huge diffuser placed at the corner of the outdated old shop, the village is transformed into a ballroom or concert hall, . . . the intrepid old grandmother, who never before knew the joy of hearing a musical note, will fall into her eternal sleep to the sound of Chopin’s funeral march.³⁷

Could these mixed sounds nevertheless revitalize the rather anemic scholarly music? Or did they represent a contamination threat? The word “variety” took on its full meaning here. This new cultural variety both disconcerted and deracinated the listener.

By 1936, just as the arrival of Léon Blum’s Front Populaire government had prompted a shift of the right to the far right, Coeuroy’s antimodern reflections in *Gringoire* had become more radicalized. He railed against the brackish stream of dining clubs, cabarets, and café-concerts, which he considered to be “low-end products of an urban civilization [that were debasing] a shared sensibility, which was becoming poisoned as a result.”³⁸ The corrupting

agent was a passive consumption of chansons that were subject to the whims of fashion, a phenomenon that went hand in hand with the decline of rural France. He wrote that if there were to be a revival, it would come from “folk music, the only music capable of regenerating a musical inspiration that was threatened by formulas and intellectual idiosyncrasies.”³⁹ The change came with the Révolution Nationale. The traditional chanson was to be the soundtrack of the land that does not lie, a kind of “peasantry turned art form.”⁴⁰ In 1941, he wrote: “In short, we are unequivocally still peasants. French art, however subtle and unbridled, is connected to the land. In other words, there is nothing left of your Gossecs and your Lesueurs or any of the social music of that time, but not one of the chansons collected by Gérard de Nerval has perished.”⁴¹

Coeuroy’s esthetic discernments show an increasing predilection for the murky waters of origins as the decade progressed. Although nothing politically concrete emerges from his writings, there is evidence of cultural fascism. This was the “lead weight” of these dark years. There was a valorization of origins, stigmatization of the enemy, and sacralization of the link between music, a territory, and a people. It was an explosive association (race, land, people), and the Great War had acted as an accelerant. If civilization had led to barbarism, why not use the primitive as a catalyst to refound civilization?⁴² It would be useful to compare Coeuroy’s shifts in journalistic mindset with his IIC texts, where he reflected on the question of folklore and folk art. What was meant by “people”? Was a people defined by citizenship (*demos*) or by land and the dead (*ethnos*)? Unlike his institution, Coeuroy had made his choice.

Spirit of the Times

Coeuroy was not the only one protesting against the mixed sounds of the music hall. Other civil voices could also be heard. Both Céline and Abel Bonnard, a member of the Académie Française and Vichy minister of education in 1942, were critical of a musical genre that they

considered to be not just infected but also highly infectious because of its mass diffusion through radio and records. Like Coeuroy, Bonnard had spent his early school years at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (he failed the École Normale Supérieure entrance exam). Born a generation before Coeuroy, he was a contributor along with his younger brother to a column in the weekly newspaper *Je suis partout*. He also demonstrated the same repulsive reactions to a music hall that he believed to have been penetrated by “seedy Jewish sensuality and vile Negro sensuality”⁴³ (although Coeuroy avoided these kinds of lurches). Molded too by the rationalist teachings of this Third Republic that he had begun to loathe, he undertook to establish what we would now call its “traceability”:

In the eighteenth century, this brilliant and sinister period when the impoverishment of humankind was announced through the excitation of the individual, the number of chansons did not decline, but their nature altered and deteriorated. They shifted away from a focus on singing. Once carefree, they became malevolent, with more wings than they needed to transport their poisonous sting. Their wickedness was already evident long before the Revolution came along. Under the Restoration, Béranger’s songs were like ugly flies sullyng the nobility of the last remaining lilies. Under the Third Republic, the ignoble, innuendo-filled chanson prevailed at first, as the bawdy eighteenth-century spirit breathed its last in Paris. But the audience has changed. In place of the bourgeoisie, who wanted to mingle with the riff-raff, we now have a drunken mob that is increasingly made up of foreigners and stuffed with half-breeds. Seedy Jewish sensuality and vile Negro sensuality exert their power over this formless people. Mischievous excitation has thus given way to torpid eroticism. A softly bellowed romance floods fallen souls with its feral nonsense. We must drag ourselves out of this mire to return to the true song, the one that leads people to life and makes

them healthier, purer, and more honest, the one that makes love the brightest of all their feelings.⁴⁴

We can see here all the ingredients—individualism, the critical mindset, bitterness, the mark of the foreigner, degradation, unashamed moralism—of the pro-Nazism that Bonnard clearly displayed in 1941 in *Je suis partout*: “Last year, at that terrible moment when France was struck by a thunderbolt, when the French, taken by surprise, showed a moment of naked vulnerability, many were astonished to hear the German troops entering the cities singing a pure and sober song. There was more than just one of us who felt we might perhaps envy in our enemies a disposition that we would do well to rediscover for ourselves.”⁴⁵

Coeuroy and Bonnard were not alone in singing the praises of folklore. Indeed, Céline’s voice was far more thunderous: “we just have to change people’s ideas and prioritize music, choral singing, painting, composition (especially), good individual dance ideas, some of the rigodons, everything that gives life its color, its ‘guillerette jolie’.”⁴⁶ The Célinian rigodon represented dance, joy, movement, the France of yesteryear⁴⁷: “France remained happy while we had the rigodon. We will never dance in a factory, we will never sing again.”⁴⁸ Folklore made the spirit thrive: “The world no longer has a melody. We are still lulled by folklore, the last whispers of our folklore. When that has gone, and night comes, so will the Negro’s tam-tam.”⁴⁹ Coeuroy sent *La Musique et le peuple en France* to Céline, whose response is presented below. Clearly, neither expected anything from public initiatives, from what we would now call cultural policies:

Absolutely in awe of your book. I was becoming quite optimistic, but the bitterness nevertheless prevails. How the evil goes deeper even than you describe it in your book.

We would need an Aryan Shinto for folk art to flourish here again, a creative feeling, a passion, an enthusiasm, a fervor, a heart that beats to its rhythm and melody. It is not that a thousand small choral societies are necessarily constipated or shrunken...[illegible], *with no mystical purpose*, which can recreate nothing at all. *Good intentions equal zero.*

It is not in Freemasonry that the light is found. That's a whole different matter.

As for Honegger and Delannoy, so deeply Jewish and Jewified. They are a million miles away from understanding everything. Their new thing now is Human Rights—the committee, arms and legs wide open, just got laid by King David. Colleague—absolutely not! I think that we ultimately, above all, need torpedo men.

Music will come quite naturally then.

Céline⁵⁰

Needless to say, this whole gloss on the effects of music appears quite unreal to us today. Music, a weapon of mass identity destruction? For Coeuroy, Bonnard and Céline, this postwar transition period, perhaps because it followed a defeat, did not permit any irony.

Conclusion

This discourse on music at a time of defeat in France highlights the traits of the members of the “non-conformist” nebula that engaged in collaborationism. The discourse’s contours are yet to be delimited. It also depicts a French society whose moderate fringes could voice their disgust at the music hall. Coeuroy’s complaint that “there is only one work song, ‘Le métier de Prosper,’ left [in France]”⁵¹ was subsequently echoed by the family of the writer François Nourissier. More than sixty years on, he still remembered the disgust felt by his bourgeois family in Saint-Germain-en-Laye that the radio in the dining room was imperceptibly

transforming into Prosper-Yop-la-Boum's passive accomplices!

Today, I see the France of 1935 as one huge dance hall where the pimps and their girls were given a triumphant welcome. You will no doubt remember Prosper (because the chanson's music and words have penetrated deep into our collective memory). He was the darling of these ladies and the hero of *Comme de bien entendu*, glorified for putting a beautiful young girl on the streets. What was that exaggerated pout called that the singers did, sideways-on, to accentuate the smutty words, like an arse pushing out its farts? Yes, the cockiness, the cheeky smile, that guaranteed the success of Chevalier, Préjean, Milton, Alibert, ah, and many more! Many more! . . . Has the response from respectable Frenchmen and women not been one of disgust? And has this disgust not justified the confidence that even the most naïve people have placed in Vichy, at least in the first few weeks, amidst the bewilderment of such a predictable defeat. Am I exaggerating? There may have been hopes for a change in tone. How can we forget that this chanson was one of the Théâtre aux Armées' great successes in the winter of 39–40? So were there no nauseated officers or ministers available to ban the tacky bragging that the French were gorging on?⁵²

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Biography

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2000); *Le Roman du Jazz*, t. III, *Les modernes* (Fayard, 2008); *Les Travaux d'Orphée*, 150 ans de vie musicale amateur en France (Aubier, 2001[1988]).

¹ This chapter was translated from French by Clare Ferguson.

² It may seem somewhat surprising to view the armistice request of 16 June 1940 as the beginning of a postwar transition period. The war was still ongoing outside France (especially for the United Kingdom), and within France, few agreed with General de Gaulle's declaration on 18 June that the country may have lost a battle, but it had not lost the war. In his 17 June radio address, Pétain urged his compatriots to "stop fighting" and "put an end to hostilities" ("cesser le combat" and "mettre un terme aux hostilités," respectively). On 10 July, 80 of the 850 deputies and senators voted against full powers for Marshal Pétain. Until the tipping point came internationally at the end of 1941, France was, despite its prisoners and early pockets of resistance, still able to nurture the impression (or illusion perhaps) that it was in a postwar transition period.

³ Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite*; Bernanos, "Les causes de la déroute"; Maurois, *Tragédie en France*; Morize, *France été 1940*.

⁴ Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années 30*.

⁵ See Céline, *Les Beaux Draps*; Rebatet, *Les décombres*; Fabre-Luce, *Journal de la France*; Jouvenel (de), *Après la défaite*.

⁶ "Depuis la victoire [de 1918], l'esprit de jouissance [l'avait] emporté sur l'esprit de sacrifice."

⁷ Maxence, *Histoire de dix ans*, 365. "La France épuisée de tant de sursauts, secouée de tant de colères vaines, brisée de tant d'espoirs déçus. Comme les grands malades, elle ne bouge plus, ne parle plus guère. Elle attend, pâle, lasse, lasse à faire peur. Les événements déferlent sur elle. Elle ne se dresse plus."

⁸ Bernanos, "Les Causes de la déroute," 67.

⁹ Jacques Chardonne (real name Jacques Boutelleau, 1884–1968) was a collaborationist during the war, particularly through his publishing. Coeuroy, *La Musique et le peuple en France* (preface).

¹⁰ Coeuroy, *La Musique et le peuple en France*, 6.

¹¹ Faure, *Du néoclassicisme musical*, 204. “Il faudra d’abord connaître les causes de la ruine, . . . La catastrophe ne se laisse pas déduire de fautes individuelles ou d’accidents techniques. La santé de la France était minée dans tous ses organes.”

¹² See Coeuroy, *op. cit.*; Chailley, *Petite histoire de la chanson populaire française*; Davenson, *Le Livre des chansons*; Dufourcq, *Petite histoire de la musique en Europe*; Landormy, *La musique française de la Révolution à 1940*; Voir Yannick Simon, « Le “francisme” musical sous l’Occupation »

¹³ Henri Davenson; *Ibid.* 42.

¹⁴ This conception of traditional music, which is said to be the conservatory of the memory of a collective people as delimited by territory, appeared at the end of the eighteenth century in the writings of the pastor Johann Gottfried Herder. See Gumpłowicz, *Les Résonances de l’ombre*.

¹⁵ Cafés with popular live entertainment.

¹⁶ Philippe Roussin has developed at length this question of the modernist cut-off between authentic art and mass culture. See Philippe Roussin, *Misère de la littérature, terreur de l’histoire*, 252.

¹⁷ Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, 191. “Le monde n’a plus de mélodie. C’est encore le folklore, les derniers murmures de nos folklores, qui nous bercent... Après ce sera fini, la nuit... et le tam-tam nègre.”

¹⁸ A right-wing political and literary weekly newspaper founded in 1928, *Gringoire* became openly antisemitic and xenophobic from 1936 onward. Its antibellicosity and hostility toward the left prompted Coeuroy’s collaborationism.

¹⁹ André Coeuroy, *La Musique française moderne*,. 5.

²⁰ André Coeuroy, *Panorama de la musique contemporaine*, 9. “Longtemps l’on a cru que la musique n’était qu’un langage international. Mais chaque race a son style musical.”

²¹ On Jacques Chailley, see Jean Gribenski, “L’exclusion des juifs du Conservatoire (1940–1942),” Sara Iglésias, *Musicologie et Occupation*, Paris, MSH, 2014; Karine Le Bail and Esteban Buch, “Les résonances contemporaines de Vichy dans le milieu musical.”

²² Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L’UNESCO oubliée, la Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919–1946)*, 10..

²³ “la chaîne fidèle des générations”.

²⁴ André Coeuroy, *La Musique et le peuple en France*. 8. “La musique populaire, la chanson, toutes ces mélodies que l’on dit éternelles et que de doux rêveurs recueillent dans des volumes et des archives . . . La chanson populaire existe encore dans les textes. Elle n’existe plus dans les têtes. Rien, zéro, néant . . . Les farandoles, les pastourelles, cela n’est plus que de l’opéra-comique?”

²⁵ International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, *Musique et chanson populaires*.

²⁶ M. de Certeau, D. Julia and J. Revel, “La beauté du mort,” *La culture au pluriel*, 54.

²⁷ André Coeuroy, *La Musique et le peuple en France* 62: “sociétés chantantes où le bourgeois venait pousser sa romance ou écouter celle du voisin: école d’individualisme.” The quotations that follow come from the same work (p. 61, 63, 69, 70): “l’esprit démolisseur”; “bourgeoisisme jouisseur . . . dont nous avons crevé”; “chansons humanitaires à revendications enrôlées”; “goguettes de la monarchie de Juillet”; “serinettes . . . , refrains d’opérette, vogue d’Offenbach, cabarets de Montmartre”; “divertissements de gens bien nés qui [avaient] la prétention de résumer l’élégance parisienne et l’esprit français”; “la chanson du café-concert qui fait ce qu’elle croit être son art avec le manque de tout: le manque de souffle, le manque de grâce, le manque de ligne, le manque de gout.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 49. “Les bergers poètes ne composaient pas pour les paysans; ils étaient eux-mêmes ces paysans et se reconnaissaient entre eux.”

²⁹ *Ibid.* “La musique qui sort du peuple continue de vivre avec le peuple, et celle-là est la plus vraiment “Populaire” qui répond, à chaque instant donné, aux exigences de la vie de chaque jour.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65: “l’origine de notre abaissement.”

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34: “savent ce qui plaît. . . Ils misent sur la bassesse et gagnent à tout coup.”

³² *Ibid.*, p. 29: “nullité dans laquelle le peuple est tombé depuis plus d’un demi-siècle.”

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 29: “substance musicale de la France.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29: “Avec le début du vingtième siècle, sous l’influence des expositions universelles, surtout celle de 1900, l’apport étranger devient menaçant. À l’abêtissement interne se joint un abêtissement externe: tangos, maxixes, cake-walk—non méprisables en soi; mais, transplantés, ils perdent tout leur sens—; on n’en saisit que le coloris populacrier, et les rythmes proprement français disparaissent.”

³⁵ Maurras, *Mes idées politiques*, 264.

³⁶ Coeuroy (with G. Clarence), *Le Phonographe*.

³⁷ Coeuroy, *Panorama de la radio*, 12. “Ce n’est plus le clocher du village qui donne l’heure aux campagnes: ils règlent leurs pendules sur le carillon de Westminster. Ils dansent, ces villageois, au son de l’orchestre nègre d’un

palace. Paris, Londres, les capitales lointaines qui, pour eux, n'étaient volontiers qu'un mot, se rapprochent et sont entrevues. Le bourg est transformé en salle de bal ou de concerts, grâce à l'énorme diffuseur placé au coin de la boutique désuète, . . . c'est au son de la marche funèbre de Chopin que la brave aïeule n'ayant jamais connu la joie d'entendre une note de musique s'endormira de l'éternel sommeil."

³⁸ André Coeuroy, *Gringoire*, 5 May 1936. "bas produits d'une civilisation citadine [qui abaissaient] un goût qui [allait] en s'intoxicant."

³⁹ Coeuroy, *La Musique et le peuple en France*, 75. "Musique populaire, seule capable de régénérer l'inspiration musicale menacée par les formules et les manies intellectuelles."

⁴⁰ Ibid. 76: "Paysannerie faite art."

⁴¹ Ibid., 160. "Pour le dire en gros et sans nuances, nous sommes et nous restons des paysans. L'art français, si subtil et si délié qu'il puisse être, se rattache à la terre. Il ne reste autant dire rien d'un Gossec, d'un Lesueur et toutes les musiques sociales de ce temps-là; mais aucune des chansons que recueillit Gérard de Nerval n'a péri."

⁴² Gumpłowicz, "Debussy. Un nationalisme au miroir du Cake-Walk," 64.

⁴³ "La louche sensualité juive et la lâche sensualité nègre."

⁴⁴ Abel Bonnard, "Chanter," *Je suis partout*, 29 May 1941. "Le XVIII^e siècle, dans ce moment brillant et sinistre où l'appauvrissement de l'homme s'annonce par l'excitation de l'individu, le nombre des chansons ne diminue pas, mais leur caractère change et s'altère; elles rompent avec le chant; de gaies, elles deviennent malignes et ont plus d'ailes que ce qu'il en faut pour transporter leur dard venimeux. Bien avant la Révolution, leur méchanceté est atroce. Sous la Restauration, les chansons de Béranger sont de vilaines mouches qui souillent la noblesse des derniers lys. Sous la Troisième République règne d'abord l'ignoble chanson à sous-entendus, où l'esprit grivois du XVIII^e siècle vient expirer dans l'esprit parisien. Mais déjà le public change; à des bourgeois qui demandent qu'on les mette en train, se substitue une foule alourdie par l'alcool, de plus en plus remplie d'étrangers, farcie de métis; la louche sensualité juive, la lâche sensualité nègre étendent leur pouvoir sur ce peuple informe [nous soulignons]. Alors, une excitation polissonne cède le pas à un érotisme torpide. Une romance mollement beuglée inonde de sa niaiserie bestiale des âmes déchues. C'est de cette bourbe qu'il faut nous tirer pour revenir au vrai chant, qui mène les hommes vers la vie, qui les rend plus dispos, plus purs et plus francs, et qui fait de l'amour le plus clair de leurs sentiments."

⁴⁵ Bonnard, "Chanter." "L'an dernier, au moment terrible où la foudre a frappé la France, quand les Français surpris offrirent un moment une sensibilité nue, beaucoup d'entre eux furent étonnés lorsqu'ils entendirent les

troupes allemandes entrer dans les villes en chantant un chant grave et pur. Plus d'un sentit que nous pouvions envier à nos adversaires une disposition qu'il serait bon de retrouver."

⁴⁶ Céline, *Les Beaux Draps*, 172. "Y a qu'à bouleverser les notions, donner la prime à la musique, aux chants en chœur, à la peinture, à la composition surtout, aux trouvailles des danses personnelles, aux rigodons particuliers, tout ce qui donne parfum à la vie, guilleretterie jolie."

⁴⁷ Hardy, "Rigodon," 45.

⁴⁸ Céline, *Les Beaux Draps*, 148. "La France est demeurée heureuse jusqu'au rigodon. On dansera jamais en usine, on chantera plus jamais non plus."

⁴⁹ Céline, *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, 191; Part 9. "Le monde n'a plus de mélodie. C'est encore le folklore, les derniers murmures de nos folklores qui nous bercent... Après, ce sera fini... la nuit et le tam-tam nègre."

⁵⁰ Letter from Céline to Coeuroy, (Bibliothèque Nationale de France—Département de la Musique—André Coeuroy, Correspondance reçue, NLA 15). "Émerveillé par votre livre. Je devenais déjà tout optimiste, mais tout de même l'amère fortement triomphe. Que le mal est encore plus profond que vous le décrivez dans votre ouvrage. / Il nous faudrait un shintoïsme aryen pour que reflourisse ici un art populaire, un sentiment créateur, une fougue, une ferveur, un cœur qui bat de son rythme et sa mélodie. Ce ne sont pas mille petites sociétés chorales forcément constipées, ratatinées... [illisible], *sans but mystique*, qui peut recréer rien du tout. *Bonne volonté égale zéro*. / Ce n'est pas de ce côté maçonnique que se trouve la lumière. C'est tout autre chose. / Quant à Honegger, Delannoy, si profondément juifs et enjuivés. Ils sont à mille [lieues] de tout comprendre. Le neuf pour eux, c'est les Droits de l'Homme et le comité bras ouverts tira un coup de Roi David. Mon confrère – absolument non ! Je crois qu'au fond, nous avons surtout besoin d'hommes torpilles. / La musique vient là-dessus tout naturellement. / Céline."

⁵¹ Coeuroy, *La musique...*, 70.

⁵² Nourissier, *À défaut de génie*, 83–84. "La France de 1935, je la vois aujourd'hui comme un vaste bastringue où on faisait un triomphe aux marlous et aux filles. Rappelez-vous—car ces musiques et ces paroles-là ont pénétré au plus profond de notre mémoire collective: Prosper, le chéri de ces dames; et le héros de *Comme de bien entendu*, glorifié pour avoir mis sur le trottoir cette fille qui était jeune et belle... Comment appelait-on cette lippe que les chanteurs gonflaient, de profil, pour détailler les paroles graveleuses, comme un cul pousse ses pets? Oui, la gouaille, le sourire gouailleur, qui assurait le succès des Chevalier, Préjean, Milton, Alibert, ah, j'en passe! J'en passe! . . . N'y a-t-il pas eu, et chez des Français de qualité honorable, un dégoût, et ce dégoût n'a-t-il pas justifié chez les plus naïfs d'entre eux la confiance faite à Vichy, du moins les premières semaines, dans

l'ahurissement d'une défaite pourtant si prévisible. J'exagère? Il peut y avoir eu l'espoir d'un changement de ton. Comment oublier qu'elle fut, cette chanson, l'hiver 39-40, un des succès du Théâtre aux Armées? Il ne se trouva donc aucun officier, ni aucun ministre pour éprouver une nausée et interdire les fanfaronnades poisseuses dont se gorgeaient les Français?"