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Madame du Barry: Images of a Mistress

by

Abigail Hortenstine

Under the Direction of Denise Davidson, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the many images of Madame du Barry, the last *maîtresse-en-titre* of King Louis XV of France. Through the interrogation of a variety of sources, including artwork, apocryphal memoirs, and her apartments within Versailles, I examine the ways in which Madame du Barry curated her own image as well as how she was rendered by others. By revealing the many masks worn by du Barry, this thesis explores the impact of du Barry's life and public persona while simultaneously exploring the concepts of celebrity, performance, and the Court as theater. This thesis argues that the Court served as a venue for social and political performance and that close examination of the *maîtresse-en-titre* illuminates the rise of celebrity and the importance of political performance in the decades leading up to the French Revolution.



INDEX WORDS: *Maîtresse-en-titre,* Royal mistress, Private and public sphere, France

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2021

Madame du Barry: Images of a Mistress

by

Abigail Hortenstine

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August 2021

# DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Charles Hortenstine.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who has helped me throughout this process. My husband's time and advice were invaluable in the completion of the thesis. I would also like to thank my parents and friends who took the time to read over the material and provide me with feedback. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Denise Davidson and Dr. Joe Perry, whose patience and expert advice made the completion of this project possible.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Born in 1743 to a working-class family, Jeanne Bécu was an unlikely subject to catch the eye of the King. By the 1760s, however, King Louis XV desired Bécu as his royal mistress. Jeanne Bécu, along with her mentor, Jean du Barry, were aware that for the two of them to acquire official access to the royal bedchamber and the Court, they had to manufacture a noble version of Bécu. To achieve this, Bécu married Jean du Barry's brother, Guillaume, Comte du Barry in 1768 and became the Comtesse du Barry, securing her role as the *maîtresse-en-titre*.[1] She acted as the King's royal mistress until his death in 1774. Her own death did not come until much later, in 1793, on the scaffold of the guillotine. This thesis is inspired and guided by the question of how Madame du Barry manipulated and engaged with the opinion of the court. Was she able to achieve political and social influence? What role did the gendered public and private spheres play in her access to political agency? My research stems from sources dating from Madame du Barry's lifetime and the decades following her death.

## 1.1 Historiography and Context

The emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century transformed the political participation of the people of France, but also paved the way for women's exclusion from politics.[2] Habermas argued that with the rise of literacy and salons came the emergence of this bourgeois public sphere. Joan Landes offered a feminist critique of Habermas' theories,

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[1] Contrat de mariage entre le comte Guillaume Du Barry, militaire de carrière, demeurant rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, fils d'Antoine Du Barry et de Catherine de La Cuze, et Jeanne Gomard de Vaubergnier, fille de Jean Jacques Gomard de Vau Bergnier (ou Vaubergnier), et d'Anne Bécu, épouse en secondes noces de Nicolas Rançon, 23 July 1768, MC/ET/XCIX/577, Minutes et répertoires du notaire Edme Garnier-Deschesnes, Archives Nationales, Paris, France. https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr (hereafter cited as Contrat de mariage, 23 July 1768, AN, MC/ET/XCIX/577).

[2] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1989).

arguing that the bourgeois public sphere excluded women, making it “masculinist,” at its core.[3] One of the primary failures of the monarchy in the eyes of the public was its degradation. The King and his family were supposed to be extensions of the divine, but by the time Louis XV reigned, he was involved in many earthly dalliances. These indiscretions often occurred in the arms of a woman, and it was in this way that the people of France came to blame the desacralization of the monarchy on women. By proxy, traits considered to be feminine, such as secrecy and policy making behind closed doors, further levied the blame against the women of Versailles.[4] In essence, Landes argued that the Revolution led to a less flexible understanding of the public and the private spheres and that they became more distinct than ever before. Landes, along with Lynn Hunt, built on this discussion by incorporating analysis of eroticism and the body politic. Hunt and Landes argued that women threatened men through their participation in salons because of the expectation of an inevitable feminine corruption of political life.[5] Sarah Maza contributed to this conversation through her work on the role of elite women in the public sphere. Maza highlighted the connections between elite women in the public sphere and the eroticism of the body politic via the elite female body.[6] Recent work by Tracy and Christine

---

[3] Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1988), 6-7. Here, Landes revises Habermas’ theories, articulating the importance of re-centering the discussion around the bourgeois public’s exclusion of women as a way to better understand the emergence of modern feminism.

[4] Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 177. See also Christine Adams and Tracy Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress: From Agnès Sorel to Madame du Barry* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

[5] Lynn Hunt, ed. *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 5. Here, Hunt summarizes Landes’ argument that women were viewed as possessing a “propensity for self-display in public,” which perpetuated “corrupting effects on masculine virtue,” thus blaming women for poor male behavior.

[6] Sarah Maza, “The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited (1785-1786): The Case of the Missing Queen,” In *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt, 63-89 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

Adams further discussed elite women who inserted themselves into the French public sphere, focused exclusively on the institution of the *maîtresse-en-titre*.[7]

The historiography on the concept of celebrity, *causes célèbres,* and the emergence of the category of celebrity is simultaneously varied and lacking. While there is much discussion on the topics, there is no comprehensive account on the birth of celebrity in eighteenth-century France, save the work of Antoine Lilti. Though Lilti attempted this, he spent more time creating and defining terminology than truly tracing the development of the concepts.[8] After considering the literature, I demonstrate that there are substantial historiographical gaps, including works on the roles of gender and sexuality in the emergence of celebrity in the eighteenth century, biographical works on eighteenth-century celebrities, the philosophe as a celebrity, the *maîtresse-en-titre* as celebrity, and finally, on the role of material culture in the development of self-propaganda and social influence in the decades leading up to the French Revolution.

Though Sarah Maza, Dena Goodman, Joan Landes, Mary Sheriff, and other prominent scholars laid the groundwork for the connection between the political and private worlds and carefully crafted the narrative on gender and sexuality in the transformation of the body politic around the time of the Revolution, their research did not delve into the role of gender and sexuality in the context of the emergence of celebrity.[9] In their edited volume, *The New Biography*, Jo Burr Margadant and her colleagues explored the use of biography as history from a new perspective. Margadant saw the importance of gender performance in the construction of

---

[7]Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress.* The authors trace the rise and the fall of the institution of the royal mistress in France, even going as far as lumping Marie Antoinette into the category of mistress. They interrogate their sources to answer the question of why this institution was peculiar to France and what about France allowed these women to become official members of court.

[8] Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity, 1750-1850*, trans. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

[9] This statement is not to say that their research should have done so. That was not even close to the target they were shooting for. They hit their target, that is the eroticism of the body politic as a symptom of civil unrest. I am merely acknowledging the importance of the foundation they laid in the study of gender and sexuality in eighteenth century-French history and calls for a new contribution to the field.

identity and celebrity status in the nineteenth century and proved that this is a valuable historical category, treading in the wake of the Scott-Ozouf debate.[10] Margadant's study not only highlighted the importance of gender and sexuality as key factors in the birth of celebrity but also brought the use of biography as a powerful form of historical storytelling back to the forefront of scholarship. With this approach in mind, this thesis studies the role of femininity and sexuality in the eighteenth century via a biographical route to analyze the emergence of celebrity within the ranks of elite women in that time period.

By tapping into material culture, my research contributes to the historiography on eighteenth-century France by illuminating the birth of celebrity. Portraiture as well as the physical spaces occupied by social elites offer the historian much in the way of understanding how these elites wished to portray themselves to their contemporaries. The challenge here is discerning whose eyes these elites were hoping to catch. Finally, though this thesis specifically argues for a comprehensive study of the emergence of celebrity in eighteenth-century France, it is not meant to argue that the emergence of celebrity was exclusive to France or to the eighteenth century. Sexuality, identity, and social performance through the lens of celebrity cultivates a better understanding of the nature of the public and the private spheres and aids in the revelation of the motives and causations for historical transformations.

This thesis examines the life of Madame du Barry, the last mistress to King Louis XV, as the embodiment of the gendered public and private spheres of France in the late eighteenth century. I depict du Barry as a patron of the arts, a celebrity, and a political agent, furthering the

[10] Jo Burr Margadant, *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France,* ed. Jo Burr Margadant (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 23-24. This debate between Mona Ozouf and Joan Scott is described in Margadant's introduction. She explains that Scott argues against the idea of "equality in difference" and that, "as long as gender retains its cultural power to differentiate and categorize individuals in the discourse of public life," success for women's equality is just out of reach. Margadant argues that "our [Margadant and her colleagues'] essays reflect upon the process of redefining what femininity meant along the way."

argument that elite women occupied the public sphere prior to the Revolution. I posit that the insertion of the *maîtresse-en-titre* into political discourse fostered the eroticization of the body politic and nurtured the creation of celebrity. Finally, the presence of the *maîtresse-en-titre* in the political forefront indicates that Madame du Barry was an active historical agent rather than a passive victim of her time. Her carefully curated identity along with the identity bestowed upon her by her contemporaries creates a far more dynamic portrait of Madame du Barry while simultaneously setting her up as one of the scapegoats for the failure of the monarchy and the beginnings of the Revolution. My research reveals a woman who wore many masks as she partook in a theatrical performance that would culminate in her own death as well contribute to the death of the old regime. Ultimately, Madame du Barry's life illuminates the rise of celebrity and the importance of social performance at the turn of the eighteenth century.

## 1.2 Sources

Compelling evidence of Madame du Barry's political and social influence is found in artwork both depicting the *maîtresse-en-titre* and in the artwork she commissioned. For example, there are several portraits and a bust of Madame du Barry housed in various repositories in France and the United States that illuminate the often-conflicting depictions of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as both sexually experienced as well as pure. The mistress's chambers within the Palace of Versailles provide additional source material. The physical environment as well as the objects commissioned by both the king and du Barry provide valuable insight into the role of the mistress as well as her power and influence over both elites and non-elites.

Textual evidence, including the apocryphal *Mémoires de la comtesse Du Barri sur les événements qui se sont passés pendant les règnes de Louis XV et de Louis XVI et sous la Révolution,* written by Etienne-Léon Lamothe, provides insight into the views of Madame du

Barry's contemporaries. Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert also wrote about Madame du Barry in his book, *Anecdotes sur la comtesse du Barry* in 1776, one of the bestselling books of its century. Close analysis of this text reveals its appeal to eighteenth-century readers. From these apocryphal memoirs and anecdotes, I explore the French view of du Barry. Other key written sources include records of commissions and other items purchased by Madame du Barry, as well as the memoirs of elite men and women who wrote about her, including the Duc du Choiseul, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, and the Duc de Castries.

### 1.3 Method and Theory

In order to interrogate my sources, my analysis incorporates an art history approach coupled with a gendered analysis of the works depicting Madame du Barry. The visual sources depict the ways in which the *maîtresse-en-titre* wished to be viewed by others. The second chapter of the thesis discusses the methodology and practices of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. My interrogation of texts will also rely on gendered analysis alongside an examination of the public and private spheres, building on the methodologies employed by Joan Landes, Dena Goodman, and Lynn Hunt. I explored my sources using a sociological lens, specifically focusing on du Barry's actions as an elite woman who possessed political agency. In addition, I examined du Barry as a celebrity and as an example of the eroticization of the body politic of France leading up to the French Revolution following the interrogation methods of historians such as Sarah Maza and Tracey Rizzo.

Furthermore, the work of Robert Darnton provided a framework through which to investigate the apocryphal memoirs and letters written about Madame du Barry. Darnton's work examined some of these apocryphal memoirs written about du Barry. He reframed the works by viewing these depictions of du Barry as "folkloric," indicating both the rise of celebrity and

subsequent high interest of the reading public in the life of the king's mistress.[11] I reexamined these sources through a gendered lens while applying Darnton's framework to the additional sources I have located. Additionally, I built on the work of Clifford Geertz and his descriptions of the theater state to construct a foundation for the argument that Madame du Barry and others on the royal court filled the roles of actors on a stage and that these performances were meant to stand in for real governmental action.[12] In conclusion, the methodologies utilized throughout this study combine an art history approach, as well as a sociological and gendered analysis of the sources in order to reveal du Barry as both an individual political agent as well as to uncover how her existence offers historians a larger view of the state of the French body politic leading up to and during the French Revolution.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter examines the biographical details of du Barry's life, how she rose to prominence, and the role of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as an official member of the King's court. The second chapter explores how du Barry wished to portray herself through written and visual sources as well as through examination of the apartments of the *maîtresse-en-titre*. It also focuses on du Barry as a patron of the arts, focusing on her commissions as well as on the artistic renderings of du Barry. The final chapter investigates the apocryphal works written about Madame du Barry by her contemporaries. These works aid in understanding the *mentalité* of the people of France in the years surrounding the Revolution, while also illuminating other versions, or images, of Madame du Barry.

[11] Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995).

[12] Clifford Geertz, *Negara*: *The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 15.

## 2 THE SCANDALOUS DAZZLE OF HER LIFE

Before considering the historical significance of Madame du Barry, it is helpful to explore who she was and how she worked her way into the social and political spotlight in order to better contextualize her life. Born to an unwed mother of low social status, Jeanne Bécu made her way into the King's bed and secured her spot as part of the royal court, but not without backlash. This chapter introduces the humble origins of the *maîtresse-en-titre,* her ability to network the opportunities in the royal court, her time at Versailles, her life after Louis XV's death, and ultimately, the events leading up to her own death on the scaffold. This chapter argues that Jeanne Bécu, la Comtesse du Barry, embodied the scandal, the splendor, and the downfall of the monarchy on the eve of the Revolution.

Though single events may seem inconsequential, what we consider to be history is, of course, a series of events spurred by people that coincided temporally and spatially to create stories worth retelling, analyzing, and debating. Though the introduction to this chapter is non-traditional in its use of storytelling, the narrative is woven with threads of empirical evidence. We begin at the end of Madame du Barry's life as she approaches the guillotine and then wind our way backwards, revealing the people and events that culminated in her public execution. By starting at the conclusion of her life, the chapter highlights how du Barry serves as a metaphor for the death of the monarchy and the end of an era, and thus suggests the broader historical significance of her life. The italicized text is a creative interpretation, based on what is known about Madame du Barry's life and the historical realities of the period. The creative writing aims to humanize the historical experience and make an event lost to time more approachable to the reader. This chapter uses a combination of published memoirs, official reports, trial records, and

correspondence to piece together the life of Madame du Barry. Secondary source material, including biographies, monographs, and another master's thesis are incorporated to support the conclusions drawn from the primary source material.

### 2.1 Metamorphosis

*Numbness. I imagine that was the feeling in her legs as she approached the stage-like structure. Adrenaline coursing through her veins, Jeanne's senses were heightened. Compelled to move forward, no, forcibly thrust forward by unseen, unwanted arms, Jeanne Bécu inched closer and closer towards the final minutes, the final seconds, pounding by so slowly but too quickly. Finally, she stumbled on the scaffold in front of her audience. Perhaps she thought back to a time when she worked so hard to be noticed, to be seen. This was something she could not have fathomed back then. Back in the days of carriage rides, extravagant diamond necklaces, Rococo décor, gardens, dresses, sculptures, paintings. She did everything right. She caught the eye of the King, batting her own eyes, securing her membership in one of the most powerful courts in the world via the boudoir. Her reward: an empire turned to dust.*

*These faces staring at her now as she crouched down on her knees, these were not the faces of anyone who had ever loved her. Surely, she tried to convince herself that this could not really be the end. She likely imagined dying a much older woman, her exquisite beauty having faded over the years. Perhaps she envisioned laying atop a tufted mattress, surrounded by the riches that came to define her; the sun was supposed to be glowing playfully behind gauzy curtains as she dozed off for the last time. Instead, here she was atop this scaffold, likely overwhelmed by the searing, hateful gazes bombarding her. She glanced out at the faces again. She likely smelled wetness, the mildew growing in the wood beneath. Then, she might have smelled sweat, mingled with leather and metal. She allegedly cried out, "De grâce, monsieur le*

*bourreau, encore un petit moment!" as she pleaded with the executioner to spare her life.*[1] *Perhaps she began to let out a scream, but she heard nothing; she saw nothing; she said nothing. Blackness. The audience likely watched as her beauty prematurely faded. Her head, with what was left of her beautiful curls, unceremoniously tumbled onto the scaffold, signifying la fin for the final performance of Jeanne Bécu, la Comtesse du Barry.*

But how did Madame du Barry make her way to the scaffold? The course of events began some fifty years prior. Though the early life of Madame du Barry is veiled in ambiguity, she was born to Anne Bécu, most likely on 19 August 1743, in Vaucouleurs as Jeanne Bécu. According to birth records from that year, her godparents, Joseph Demange and Jeanne Birabin attended her baptism on that same day.[2] The identity of her biological father is uncertain, but is often listed as Jean Baptiste Gomard de Vaubernier, whom Claude Saint-André described as a monk called frère Ange.[3] The records implied that Jeanne Bécu was born out of wedlock to a woman of low-class origin, likely a seamstress.[4] Though Jeanne began life with little, she used what she had to find her way to the upper echelons of society. Like her mother, Jeanne Bécu possessed "extraordinary good looks."[5] With these extraordinary good looks in combination with her ability to devise and execute intricate plots, Jeanne Bécu pursued her first canny manipulation of social and political networks by quite literally redefining herself.[6] Jeanne Bécu became the *maîtresse-en-titre*, which, as the name suggests, came with the prerequisite of a title. The quaint

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[1] Joan Haslip, *Madame du Barry: The Wages of Beauty* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 201.

[2] Claude Saint-André, *A King's Favourite: Madame du Barry and Her Times from Hitherto Unpublished Documents* (New York: McBride, Nast, 1915). Here, Saint-André quotes Charles Vatel who used information obtained from the register of births in Vaucouleurs. Vatel noted that Anne Bécu was born in Vaucouleurs in 1713.

[3] Saint-André, *A King's Favourite*, 3.

[4] Haslip, *Madame du Barry,* 1.

[5] Haslip, 1.

[6] Erik Braeden Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution: Madame du Barry and the 1791 Theft of Her Jewelry," (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2015), 10-11. Lewis discusses how crucial it was for du Barry to reinvent herself in order to become the royal mistress.

origins of Jeanne Bécu, insufficient in securing her place in the king's bed, thus required her to rectify her name.

By the time she reached the age of six, Jeanne found herself in a convent, where she received her education. She returned to her mother at the age of fifteen.[7] After her return home, she became the companion of a noble woman. Perhaps due to her time living a more lavish lifestyle, Jeanne Bécu realized she wanted more out of life than her family could offer her. She wanted to live a life of luxury and the first step was to marry into a title.

By the late 1750s, Jeanne Bécu took the name Mademoiselle Lange, likely from her father's name, frère Ange.[8] As Mademoiselle Lange, Jeanne Bécu found work as a *demoiselle de compagnie,* or a lady-in-waiting for Madame Élisabeth Dedelay de la Garde, who was the widow of a former tax collector. Jeanne maintained this position for approximately two years, at which time she lost her job after being accused of having a sexual relationship with both of Madame de la Garde's married sons.[9] After losing her position, Jeanne allegedly began working at a brothel that served members of the French aristocracy, known as the *parc-aux-cerfs,* edging ever closer to Versailles.[10] Though there exists much speculation and fable pertaining to the *parc-aux-cerfs*, in reality it consisted of a single apartment where the King would go to spend time with various women. Rooted in the wane of Louis XV's sexual attraction to Madame de Pompadour, du Barry's predecessor, the *parc-aux-cerfs* served as a locale for sexual liaisons with younger women meant to satisfy the king's amorous desires.[11] Historians concur that this conduct injured

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[7] Saint-André, *A King's Favorite,* 4-6.

[8] Saint-André, 3. It has also been suggested that she chose this name to refer to her angelic appearance. See Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress,* 154.

[9] René de La Croix, Duc de Castries, *Madame du Barry* (Paris: Hachette, 1967) quoted in Erik Braeden Lewis' "The Countess of Counter-Revolution: Madame du Barry and the 1791 Theft of Her Jewelry," (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2015), 12.

[10] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 12.

[11] Rosamond Hooper-Hamersley, *The Hunt After Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour: Patronage, Politics, Art, and the French Enlightenment* (Washington D.C.: Lexington Books, 2011), 119.

the King's standing in the eyes of the French public.[12] Unlike the *maîtresse-en-titre*, these women did not meet the social standards expected for a king's consort. Despite their backgrounds, Jeanne Bécu and Madame de Pompadour gained access to the King's ear and influenced political opinion at court. The greater their power grew, the more the king's reputation plummeted.[13]

In his thesis, Erik Braeden Lewis emphasized that the surviving biographical accounts of Jeanne Bécu revolved around her sexuality, citing the fact that she was, "[an] illegitimate child, [who had an] affair with the sons de la Garde, [spent] time at the *parc-aux-cerfs*, [was a] Royal Mistress, and [had] love affairs while at Louveciennes."[14] While this fact is undeniable, it is also essential to highlight the fact that du Barry was not a victim, as many of these earlier biographical accounts make her out to be. She was a craftswoman who reformulated her own identity and sex was the tool that she had available to her. I argue that Jeanne Bécu's production of Madame du Barry was a carefully calculated conception forged by an active agent. Lewis concluded that "her sexuality is linked permanently to her identity."[15] This link between her identity and her sexuality emerged because Jeanne Bécu created Madame du Barry as a sexual object. Her sexuality allowed Bécu to find her place beside the King of France. She manipulated her sexual identity to manifest social mobility where it did not exist.[16]

In order to create this social mobility, Jeanne Bécu tapped into the power available to the men in her life. In 1764, a man named Jean-Baptiste du Barry took an interest in the promising and attractive young woman. "In addition to being her lover, he [du Barry] introduced her to a

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[12] Hooper-Hamersley, 120.
[13] Hooper-Hamersley, 120.
[14] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution,"12.
[15] Lewis, 12.
[16] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 200-201.

sumptuous and sociable lifestyle and to men that could help her maintain it."[17] Jean-Baptiste served as "her handler" and worked to gain her access to a title. To achieve this feat, he introduced her to his brother Guillaume, Comte du Barry.[18] Upon her marriage to Guillaume, on 23 July 1768, Jeanne Bécu secured her title.[19] Once she was officially presented to the King on 22 April 1769, she successfully emerged as Madame du Barry, the *maîtresse-en-titre.*[20] Just like that, Jeanne was no longer a member of the middle class; she was an official member of the King's court. Jeanne Bécu began to spend her nights comfortably under the roof of Versailles. Her metamorphosis was complete.

### 2.2 The Palace and Exile

The night before, Jeanne Bécu, ushered in by the Countess de Béarn, appeared before the royal court in an official presentation. Though she was quite late for her appointment, Jeanne and her entourage arrived precisely when she meant for them to. She hoped to keep the king and her opponents at court waiting. The former might be intrigued by her tardiness, and the latter would have long let their guard down by the time she arrived. She walked gracefully to the king and bowed before him. Upon rising, she kicked back her train as she had practiced and dazzled the crowd with her ensemble.[21] She wore a white, gauzy dress bespeckled with various collections of diamonds given to her by the king. Additional diamonds adorned her shoes and were scattered throughout her powdered elaborate coiffure. Her cheeks were warmed with rouge, drawing attention to her blue eyes. Jeanne looked as if she were a constellation of stars fallen straight

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[17] Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress*, 154.

[18] Adams and Adams, 154. See also Saint-André, *A King's Favorite,* 3 and Lewis, "Countess of Counter-Revolution," 43.

[19] Contrat de mariage, 23 July 1768, AN, MC/ET/XCIX/577.

[20] Saint-André, *A King's Favourite,* 2.

[21] Saint-André, 1-2. This description was taken from Saint-André's documentation of the presentation of Madame du Barry.

from the heavens, choosing to grace mankind with her presence, a fact that she was likely fully aware of.[22]

Though she succeeded in ascending into the halls of Versailles, she found herself immediately surrounded by scandal. As Pierre de Nolhac described in the introduction he wrote for Claude Saint-André's *A King's Favorite*, "Despite the elegance with which she sinned, she is to be pitied for having been taught by that terrible master of depravity, the 'Roué.'"[23] Nolhac's conclusions might leave today's reader scratching their head. At first glance, the reader may find themselves distracted by the dramatic flair often utilized by early twentieth-century writers, viewing through the mind's eye "that terrible master of depravity" the Roué. The Roué, a term used to refer to a man who lives his life devoted to sensual pleasures, described many men in Jeanne Bécu's life. While the "Roué" indisputably played a role in du Barry's life, pitying her may be somewhat difficult, if not inappropriate, both then and now. Initially, her contemporaries had little capacity for sympathy as she was viewed by many as a woman of low-class origin who cheated her way to the top.[24] As Nolhac goes on to say, "Her début at Versailles was a scandal, but it appears to have violated the rules of etiquette rather than those of morality."[25] Du Barry was not resented because of her role; she was an official member of the royal court. Instead, her contemporaries resented her because of her origin. This point of view makes it unlikely that they pitied the *maîtresse-en-titre.* Those not of elite status might also have trouble feeling sorry for someone who took up residence in Versailles while they continued to live humble, normal lives.

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[22] Saint-André, 1-2.

[23] Pierre de Nolhac "Introduction," in Claude Saint-André, *A King's Favourite*, x. The "Roué" was the nickname used for Jean Baptiste du Barry, the brother of Jeanne Bécu's husband who worked to have Jeanne noticed by the King, but it is also generally used as a term to describe a man, usually an older man, who lives a life of pleasure, and likely the origin of Jean Baptiste du Barry's nickname. The term literally translates to "broken on the wheel," implying that this form of punishment is what such men deserved.

[24] Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée-Lebrun, trans. by Lionel Strachey,* (New York: Doubleday Page & Company, 1903),114.

[25] Nolhac in Saint-André, x.

It would also be inappropriate to pity Madame du Barry from the point of view of the historian. Though the historian should refrain from judging the historical subject, emotional attachment is not always avoidable. The metamorphosis and manufacturing of the identity of Madame du Barry reveals that Jeanne Bécu was not a victim, as writers like Nolhac depicted her, but instead someone who actively contributed to the construction of her identity as the royal mistress. With this in mind, it is not surprising that, once inside the palace, Madame du Barry faced scandal after scandal and snub after snub from those around her.

In order to understand her time at court, it is first necessary to explore the evolution of the role of the French royal mistress. As previously noted, the *maîtresse-en-titre* served as an essential member of King's court. She partook in the creation of and activities surrounding political factions. In their work *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress,* Christine and Tracy Adams outline the transformation of this role from simply an extraconjugal affair into a uniquely French official mistress with a title. They argue that ideas about gender in France, in combination with changes in views of the royal court alongside the social and cultural changes that occurred during the Renaissance, contributed to the creation of the *maîtresse-en-titre*. Adams and Adams demonstrate that it was the view of women as political inferiors, not as intellectual inferiors, that led to this uniquely French institution. Additionally, the authors explain that the renaissance introduced the idea of performance and theater and the concept of the royal court as a theatrical performance emerged.[26]

Though she had a slew of opponents at court, du Barry also gained support from some elites during her time at Versailles. One of her staunchest supporters was Emmanuel-Armand de Richelieu, duc d'Aguillon. According to Adams and Adams, "rivalries at Versailles meant that

[26] Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress*, 168.

factions of courtiers sought to find a suitable mistress. Pompadour's death "'fan[ed] the flames of intrigue at Versailles, where courtiers engaged in what was effectively a competition to replace her.'"[27] The *maîtresse-en-titre* and Marie Antoinette essentially headed the two major factions at court, the Richelieu faction and the Choiseul supporters. It was Richelieu who brought Jeanne Bécu to the king's attention.[28] Many courtiers at Versailles openly opposed Madame du Barry and viewed her as a political rival of Marie Antoinette. One of her greatest adversaries was an avid supporter of the Queen, Etienne-François, duc du Choiseul. His *Mémoires* were rife with references to the low-born status of du Barry as well as with words of resentment towards the *maîtresse-en-titre*. He referred to the duc d'Aguillon as "one of the lost souls of Madame du Barry." Choiseul depicted the men in du Barry's life as essentially victims of a succubus, and thus drew dramatic comparison of Madame du Barry to a demon-like entity who damned the men who crossed her path.[29] The duc du Choiseul placed himself in the position of the righteous, as if he were a paladin charged with the protection of the sanctity of the monarchy. Though this is more than likely a somewhat sardonic description, his view of Madame du Barry is indicative of the prevalent conclusion of the time that the women of the Court were accruing far too much power.[30] The duc du Choiseul's opinion of the role of the *maîtresse-en-titre* was more multi-faceted, however. According to the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu, Choiseul described the *maîtresse-en-titre* as having a valuable and influential role in court. He did not openly oppose that position, but argued that, because of its importance, a high-ranking woman of noble origin should assume the role of royal mistress, even going so far as to suggest his own sister for the

[27] Julian Swann, *Politics and Parlement in Paris Under Louis XV, 1754*-1774 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 260, quoted in Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress*, 153.

[28] Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress*, 154. Jean Baptist du Barry sought out the help of Richelieu after taking Jeanne Bécu under his wing. He was said to have trained her in the art of lovemaking, which allegedly thoroughly impressed the King.

[29] Etienne-François, duc du Choiseul, *Mémoires* (Parris: Plon-Nourrit et cie, 1904), 15.

[30] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,*177.

position.[31] This criticism implies that Choiseul did not take issue with the performance of this function. In fact, he seemed to view it as essential and prestigious. What he took issue with, however, was Madame du Barry's low-birth. This description again confirms that it was her humble origin that garnered scorn from many French elites during du Barry's time as the *maîtresse-en-titre.*

Ultimately, it was the many enemies she made while at Versailles that led to her initial exile following the death of Louis XV. Much to the pleasure of Marie Antoinette, it seemed that the King decreed the removal of Madame du Barry and her husband from Versailles while on his deathbed.[32] Once the Comte du Barry learned of the king's wishes, he fled to Holland while Jeanne found herself living among nuns at Pont-aux-Dames. Eventually, Madame du Barry was no longer restricted to the convent and was allowed to move to her château at Louveciennes.[33] Louveciennes became her last permanent residence and she lived there until her arrest at the hands of the revolutionaries during the Reign of Terror. With the death of Louis XV, Madame du Barry's reign as *maîtresse-en-titre* came to an end, but she continued to live a life of high drama and luxury for years to come.

### 2.3 Her Crimes, Both Real and Perceived

Many elite women who lived during the eighteenth century have been depicted simultaneously as villains and as victims by their contemporaries and historians alike. Madame du Barry is no exception. Du Barry's name is often tied to scandals, including the famous Diamond Necklace Affair and the 1791 theft of her jewels. These events embody the grandeur

[31] Louis François Armand du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu, Mémoires, vol. 2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1868), 248, as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-revolution," 16.

[32] Saint-André, *A King's Favorite*, 204-205. There is a document Saint-André describes as a memo from the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon stating that the King requested that the Comte du Barry be sent to the château at Vincennes and Madame du Barry should be sent to the Abbey at Pont-aux-Dames.

[33] Saint-André, 214-215.

and frivolity attributed to the monarchy by the public and also highlight the degradation of the monarchy in the eyes of the public in the decades leading up to the Revolution.

Often linked to Marie Antoinette, the Diamond Necklace Affair remains one of the more notorious scandals that colored the life of Madame du Barry. The public took issue with the incredible monetary value of the necklace, juxtaposed against the poverty and struggle of the common man, rendering the royals as appallingly tone-deaf. The affair was far more intricate than it appears at first glance, however. The story began in the early 1770s, when King Louis XV commissioned the creation of a diamond necklace worth more than one and a half million livres.[34] Though rumored to belong to Marie Antoinette, the necklace was initially intended for Madame du Barry. The necklace never reached the Countess due to its completion after the death of Louis XV. As Sarah Maza revealed in *Private Lives and Public Affairs*, this event had social and cultural implications that reveal to the historian a transformation in the interaction between the public and private centers of power. The sensationalized event cemented the desacralization of the French monarchy, something that would not have been possible without the actions and reputation of Louis XV.[35] Knowledge of the Parc aux Cerfs and the power wielded by both Du Barry and Pompadour rippled throughout the public and rendered the image of a sovereign who was hardly divine, but who instead left the distinct impression of a fallible man. Maza includes a quotation from nineteenth-century historian Jules Michelet that sums up the consequences of this perception. "As Jules Michelet wrote hyperbolically though not inaccurately of Louis XV: 'The philosophers pull him to the right, the priests to the left. Who will carry him off? Women. This god is a god of flesh.'"[36]

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[34] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 184.
[35] Maza, 177.
[36] Maza, 178.

The events of the scandal centered around the actions of Jeanne de Saint-Rémi, whose rise to nobility echoed that of Madame du Barry. Her background was one of ruined nobility, though she manufactured a new identity: Jeanne de Valois. She claimed descent from the royal family through a bastard line. Again, like du Barry "by dint of charm and hubris" she gained protection from noble families who provided her with an education.[37] In 1780, she married Count Nicolas de La Motte "a penniless young officer of dubious nobility."[38] Madame de La Motte set her sights on Louis de Rohan, a member of the Rohan-Soubise family. Rohan wished to achieve high political office; he believed that only his poor relationship with the queen impeded his success. La Motte preyed on his political and social avarice and groomed him to aid her in her pursuit of wealth. In the summer of 1784, La Motte set up a meeting between Rohan and Nicole Le Guay, who resembled Marie Antoinette. Prior to this meeting, Louis XV commissioned a diamond necklace comprised of 647 gems and worth over one and a half million livres. By comparison, in 1790, average workers made a daily wage ranging from 25 to 100 sous, with there being 20 sous per livre. In other words, a goldsmith who earned up to 100 sous per day earned approximately 1,825 livres per year.[39] This means the necklace was worth over 800 years of labor for a goldsmith.

Louis XV never actually paid for the necklace and, in 1778, the jewelers Boehmer and Bassange offered to sell the necklace to Louis XVI to offer as a gift to Marie Antoinette, but he too did not wish to pay nearly two million livres for the necklace. Meanwhile, La Motte successfully sank her teeth into Rohan and convinced him that buying this necklace for the queen would allow him to finally attain the political office he desired. With a forged purchase order in

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[37] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 183.
[38] Maza, 183.
[39] George E. Rudé, "Prices, Wages, and Popular Movements in Paris During the French Revolution," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 3 (1954): 247-248.

hand, Rohan obtained the necklace, agreed to pay for it over the next several years, and delivered it into the hands of the queen's "valet." At this point, the gems were divvied up and sold across the black markets of both Paris and London, which left Rohan engulfed in political, social and financial ruin.[40] Employing cunning and mendacity, La Motte successfully increased her social and financial worth, albeit not without consequence. According to Maza, "On August 15 the nation was stunned to hear of the arrest of Cardinal Rohan at Versailles as he was preparing to conduct Assumption services, clad in full pontifical regalia. A few days later the countess, Nicole La Guay, and a few others were rounded up (Nicolas de La Motte was still in London), and the preparations began for the most sensational trial of the reign."[41]

Though the event itself is fascinating, it is the public interest surrounding the ongoings of the trial that hold significant meaning for the cultural historian. The public's fascination with the trial indicates a shift in the way that the elite were viewed in the eyes of the masses. Additionally, both the affair and the trial took place in the wake of shifting centers of power and fueled contempt aimed at elite women. These events highlight the importance of gender performance in the creation of celebrity status for elite women in the late eighteenth century. According to Maza, "the sexual power wielded by 'public women' over the sacred body of the king was perceived as the breach through which chaos was overtaking the realm."[42] Though the queen took the brunt of the damage, the atmosphere that allowed for this catastrophic destruction of Marie Antoinette's reputation was crafted by the manipulation of Pompadour as well as du Barry.[43] Though du Barry was not directly involved in the scandal, her use of the King as an

[40] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs*, 183. Maza regards these as, "the two most comprehensive and reliable accounts of the event." Therefore, the preceding explanation of events is based on Funck-Brentano, Mossiker, and Maza's descriptions.
[41] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 185.
[42] Maza, 201.
[43] Maza, 201.

avenue for the acquisition of wealth tainted her image in the wake of the scandal. The obsession with the sex life of the king, the interest in trials involving the social elite, and the persecution of the monarchy can be viewed as the result of the encroachment of the marginalized on the center of social order.[44] This encroachment was her crime. The courtiers at Versailles held little contempt for the fact that the king had a *maîtresse-en-titre*, but they could not comprehend the degree to which Louis XV degraded himself in the arms of non-elite women. Du Barry was not only his bedfellow, but she as well as Madame de Pompadour exerted an unprecedented amount of control over public opinion and court factions. Du Barry had the audacity to rise above her God-given lot in life and both achieved success. The fact that a scandal such as the Diamond Necklace Affair took place at all reflects the desacralization of the monarchy.

Less than a decade after the Diamond Necklace trial, Madame du Barry masterminded her own jewel heist. In 1791, a pamphlet released by du Barry after the fact reads, "There was a robbery at the home of Madame du Barry at the Château de Louvecienne…during the night of January 10th through 11th, 1791, the diamonds and jewels are below." The pamphlet provided a two-page list of the jewelry and other valuables stolen from the countess, including emeralds, diamonds, sapphires, ribbons, shoe buckles, and candlesticks, alone worth 120,000 livres.[45]

While a robbery seemed to leave Madame du Barry the victim of a crime, this was far from the truth. In fact, the robbery was an elaborate ruse undertaken by the former *maîtresse-en-titre* to smuggle her jewels out of France and into England.[46] Madame du Barry crafted this

[44] Maza, 201; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

[45] Jeanne Bécu du Barry, "Deux mille louis à gagner. Diamans et bijoux perdus," 1791, Bibliotheque nationale de France, département de la réserve des livres rares, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k856894k/f1.item.

[46] For a more comprehensive account of this event see Erik Braeden Lewis, "The Mistress of Misfortune," in "The Countess of Counter-Revolution: Madame du Barry and the 1791 Theft of Her Jewelry," (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2015) 54-75. See also André Castelot, *Madame du Barry*, (Paris: Perrin, 1989) and Joan

scheme in order to bypass the laws prohibiting her from crossing over from France to England with her belongings. She needed to officially reduce her wealth, while retaining it in private so that she could avoid losing access to her possessions during such a tumultuous time in France. She utilized both her friends and her employees to execute this elaborate plan, including Jean Joseph Rouen, Nathaniel Parker Forth, a man named Badoux, who was a member of the Swiss guard, Salanave, who was a former cook, and Zamor, her valet.[47] Forth, described as "the most mischievous player in the theft" found himself in the midst of many hijinks involving the French and English governments. Forth was an agent tasked with inciting chaos in France, supposedly to keep France in a state of confusion to ensure that Great Britain came out on top.[48] Forth aided du Barry by selling a large number of her jewels and smuggling them out of the country. Jean Joseph Rouen helped by providing du Barry with a comprehensive list of the jewels she planned on having stolen, as he served as her primary jeweler. This list appraised the value of her jewels at around 1,500,000 livres.[49] Badoux, the Swiss guard, helped by simply not being at his assigned post on the night of the theft.[50] Zamor should have been sleeping in Du Barry's room that night in order to guard her jewels. He, too, decided not to do as instructed, and, instead, slept in another room.[51] Both Zamor and Badoux received orders from Du Barry to "disobey" her orders on the evening of 10 January. That night, Du Barry spent the evening at the Duke du Brissac's home in Paris. Using a ladder intentionally left in the garden, the thieves, Simon

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Haslip, *Madame du Barry,* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991). Much of the following account is comprised using these sources.

[47] Castelot, *Madame du Barry,* 54.

[48] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 56.

[49] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 61.

[50] Castries, *Madame du Barry,* 237, as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 63.

[51] Castelot, *Madame du Barry*, 270-271 as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 54. Zamor was purchased by Madame du Barry when he was young. Though he was her valet, he was her slave. She was known to dress him up as if he were a doll and it is also believed that she would walk him on a leash like a pet. This is how he unsurprisingly came to harbor much resentment for the *maîtresse-en-titre,* ultimately leading to the chain of events leading up to her death on the scaffold in 1793.

Joseph, Joseph Harris, and Jacob Moyse, entered Du Barry's room, while a fourth man, Joseph Abraham, served as the lookout. Joseph, Harris, and Moyse took her jewels and made their escape. The release of the pamphlet drew attention from the public, putting on display Madame du Barry's wealth.[52]

The thieves took the jewels to London and set up a sale with a man named Simon Lion.[53] Lion recognized the jewels from the pamphlet Du Barry issued. He notified Forth and they arrested the thieves, all part of Forth and Du Barry's plan as the men could not be prosecuted in London for crimes committed in France.[54] One of the thieves did not act in accordance with the plan, however, and filed a counterclaim against Madame du Barry.[55] It is through the cascading waterfall of events that followed that Madame du Barry found herself at the center of a trial of her own, and, eventually, stumbled onto the scaffold.

## 2.4 A Trial of Her Own

So, how was it that Madame du Barry's "scandalous dazzle" of a life came to an abrupt end in the cold morning hours of 8 December 1793? We must wind our way back to the trial du Barry endured in the wake of her jewel heist. Though she carefully constructed the heist, intricately planning every move and detail along the way, what she did not take into account was her own pride and the potential for waning loyalty in the face of the crumbling monarchy. What could have been a minor foible in another temporal location ultimately led to the undoing of the *maîtresse-en-titre* in the tumultuous times surrounding her death.

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[52] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 66.

[53] Saint-Victor, *Madame du Barry, un nom de scandale*, 257 as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 66.

[54] Haslip, *Madame du Barry,* 162.

[55] Haslip, 162.

Perhaps a seed of doubt began to grow in Jeanne's mind as she made her way to her home in the spring of 1793. It would be the last spring her eyes would ever see. A man named George Greive reported du Barry's suspicious activity, taking it upon himself to collect more than thirty signatures to attest to du Barry's alleged status as a counter revolutionary.[56] Greive reported this behavior to the Committee of General Security and Madame du Barry was arrested on 1 July 1793. The Committee of General Safety found no legitimate charges on which to hold du Barry and she was released at that time. Months passed and the former *maîtresse-en-titre* continued allowing other nobles in and out of her home at Louveciennes. In other words, undeterred by her previous arrest, du Barry did not refrain from continuing to "live in the world of the *noblesse*."[57] On 21 September 1793, the final arrest warrant was issued, and Madame du Barry was imprisoned and taken to a convent-turned-jail in Saint Pélagie in Paris.[58] Following her arrest, du Barry faced an interrogation and a trial. In the interrogation, du Barry was asked about her travels to London, the jewel theft, and her activities at her home in Louvecienne, and, of course, her actions against the revolutionary cause.[59] The records of the interrogation as reprinted in Christiane Gil's *La Comtesse du Barry* provided the questions asked of Madame du Barry, but they somewhat more subtly indicated both the nearly impossible nature of proving one's innocence post-arrest as well as du Barry's entitlement and unshakable belief that she could not be touched. Du Barry repeatedly disregarded new laws and when asked if she was aware of new laws stated, "J'ai eu connaissance des décrets mais je n'ai pas cru qu'ils puissent me regarder, étant sortie pour une cause connue et avec un passeport," essentially saying that she

[56] Castelot, *Madame du Barry*, 274 as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 83.
[57] Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 84.
[58] "Arrest Warrant for Madame du Barry by the Comité de sûreté général," 21 September 1793, quoted in René de La Croix, Duc de Castries, *Madame du Barry* (Paris: Hachette, 1967) as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 84.
[59] "Interrogation of Madame du Barry," 30 October 1793, reprinted in Christiane Gil *La Comtesse du Barry*, 221-228.

had knowledge of the laws but that they did not specifically apply to her situation because she had a passport and a legitimate reason for departing the country; in other words, she viewed herself as the exception to the rules.[60] This refusal to be intimidated and refusal to acknowledge the rapidly changing laws during the Terror proved to be her undoing. As also noted by Erik Lewis, Caroline Weber wrote, "'Pursuant to this law [Law of Suspects, 17 September 1793], individuals could not only be arrested and killed for proven counterrevolutionary activities; they could also be executed for potentially counterrevolutionary *beliefs*.'"[61] Thus, it did not take much to come to the undeniable conclusion that Madame du Barry participated in counterrevolutionary activities that made clear her personal beliefs which contradicted the revolutionary cause. The fifteen charges waged against her, any of which, if she was found guilty, resulted in the death penalty made the preservation of her life nearly impossible.[62] At the conclusion of the Tribunal, du Barry, like many before her, was found guilty of her crimes, and made to walk to the scaffold, her final stage.

Her demise along with the executions of many nobles before and after her, signified not only the end of their individual lives, but, of course, the end of a way of life for France. The hatred of the Crown culminated in both a symbolic and literal death of the monarchy and those who benefitted from it. Madame du Barry's place in the spotlight alongside her hold on the King set the stage for her to be viewed, alongside other elite women, as a scapegoat for the failure of the monarchy. The image of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as a scandalous woman who cut corners using

[60] "Interrogation of Madame du Barry," 221-228.

[61] Caroline Weber, *Terror and Its Discontents: Suspect Words in Revolutionary France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 80 as cited in Lewis, "The Countess of Counter-Revolution," 88, emphasis my own.

[62] The charges have been reprinted in Duc de Castries, *Madame du Barry* (Paris: Hachette, 1967) and have been translated from French to English by Erik Lewis. These charges include, but are not limited to, enjoying preference from the Crown, continued contact with those opposed to the Revolution, providing funds for the counter-revolution, harmed the overall financial health of the nation, being an *émigré,* and lying about her fortune. All of these charges would have forced her onto the scaffold.

her sexuality to improve her lot in life served as a metaphor for the eroticization of the body politic and embodied the scandal and splendor that the characterized the French monarchy in the years leading up to the Revolution.

# 3 PORTRAITURE, POLITICS, AND THE PUBLIC GAZE

Once Madame du Barry entered the halls of Versailles, she was thrust into a world she knew little about and she had to form alliances and social networks to thrive in high society. Like her predecessor, Madame de Pompadour, du Barry needed to establish herself as a lady of taste. To accomplish this task throughout her tenure as the *maîtresse-en-titre,* she and the King commissioned a variety of portraits of du Barry. This chapter explores some of the most notable portraits and teases out the symbolism and intentions of both the painters and their subject, while revealing the ways that Madame du Barry acted as a public figure and proto celebrity. Part of keeping up appearances required du Barry to perfect the art of keeping company which, when closely examined, can illuminate to the historian a version of du Barry that she wished to show to her acquaintances. The memoirs of her visitors as well as the physical environment of the mistress provides the historian with evidence on how she wished to portray herself to those who visited her, as well as how she was perceived. The conclusion explores the dissonance between these depictions and asserts that the *maîtresse-en-titre* used personal propaganda to promote herself.

## 3.1 The Female Body, Beauty, and Aesthetics in Eighteenth-Century France

Before engaging in discussion about the images of Madame du Barry, it is first essential to explore eighteenth-century ideals and perceptions of beauty and its relationship with the female body. With the exception of one prominent female artist, however, there persisted the problematic of the male gaze. Much of the primary source material available does not reveal feminine taste, but rather the taste of elite men in the mid to late eighteenth century. While a masculine perspective is not without its drawbacks, it will suffice for the purposes of this chapter

as I seek here to discern how contemporaries viewed the *maîtresse-en-titre* and how she portrayed herself to her contemporaries. Falling in line with male desire would reinforce the image of a mistress working to hold the male gaze.

One of the most compelling sources from the period is the *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert. In the *Encyclopédie*, Louis de Jaucourt set the tone when he wrote about the female sex as the fair sex and explains to the reader his evidence for such a claim:

> Strictly speaking, the sex, or rather, the fair sex, is the epithet applied to women, and one that cannot be denied them, since they are the principal embellishment of the world. That they should join to this deserved title all that is peculiar to their condition—modesty, restraint, gentleness, compassion and the virtues of tender souls: music, dance, the art of shading colors on canvas are the pastimes that suit them; yet the cultivation of their wit is even more important and more essential. That, on the other hand, their happy fertility should perpetuate loves and graces; that society should owe them its politeness and its most delicate tastes; that they should constitute the most precious delights of the peaceful citizen; that by a submissive prudence and a modest ability, skillful yet artless, they should excite virtue, revive the feeling of happiness, and soften all the work of human life: such is the glory, such is the power, of the fair sex.[1]

In his concession that woman is aesthetically superior to man, one cannot deny that Jaucourt rendered woman as an object. Wrought from the "most precious delights of the peaceful citizen," woman, according to Jaucourt, seemingly existed as a work of art. Terry F. Robinson argued that there is a clear "intersection between aesthetic appreciation and the act of viewing

[1] Louis chevalier de Jaucourt, "Female sex," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project,* trans. by Lyn Thompson Lemaire, accessed 20 July 2021 http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.307 (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, 2004).

the female form."[2] Robinson argued that, in England, this intersection created a space for the connoisseurship of the female form as art. In France, according to Daniela Bleichmar, this was a "Rococo space of graceful curves, among the froufrou of fashionable gowns" where "collectors' eyes are being trained to appraise with taste and learning."[3] The emerging concept of taste was paramount by the eighteenth century. René Wellek argued that "taste can be found throughout the Italian and French seventeenth centuries as a term, but it becomes the subject of elaborate theorizing only in the early eighteenth century."[4] In the *Encyclopédie*, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and d'Alembert wrote several articles titled *Goût*, or taste. Voltaire began by simply defining the origins of the term *goût* and how it came to be used in the context of the aesthetic, having described it as "the discernment of beauty and flaws in all the arts."[5] Voltaire described the difference between something of artistic value and something that is merely of frivolous, fashionable value, and explained that everyone was not capable of taste and that it is not something up for debate, but, rather, there was good taste and bad taste:

> It is said that one should not argue about matters of taste. This is true as long as it is only a question of sensual taste, of the revulsion one experiences for a certain food and the preference one feels for another. This is not subject to argument because it is impossible to correct a flaw that is organic. The same is not true in the arts: since the arts have genuine beauty, there exists a good taste that discerns it and a bad taste that is unaware of it, and often the flaw of the mind that produces wrong taste can be corrected. There are also cold souls and men incapable of sound reasoning; these can neither be inspired with

[2] Terry F. Robinson, "Eighteenth-Century Connoisseurship and the Female Body," *Oxford Handbooks Online: Oxford University Press*, (May 2017). Here, Robinson is discussing eighteenth-century England rather than France, showing the transnationality of the concept.

[3] Daniela Bleichmar, "Learning to Look: Visual Expertise Across Art and Science in Eighteenth-Century France," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 46, no. 1 (Fall, 2012): 110.

[4] René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 24.

[5] François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, and Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert. "Taste," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer, accessed 20 July 2021 http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.168 (Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, 2003). Originally published as "Goût," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* 7:761–770 (Paris, 1757).

> feeling nor corrected in their thinking; with them one should not argue about matters of taste since they have none. In many fields taste is arbitrary, such as in fabrics, finery, coaches, and all matters that cannot be considered on a level with the arts; in such cases we should use the word "whim." It is whim rather than taste that produces so many new fashions.[6]

Voltaire's discussion implied that activities deemed feminine were more whimsical and that finer taste is reserved for matters of the public, or masculine realm. Furthermore, he explained that taste was directly linked with the accomplishments and prominence of a nation. He believed that taste showed that a country was headed downhill from perfection, or that, cases where "good taste has never penetrated" indicated that a country, usually due to religious restrictions, did not foster "sociability" and that, without taste, a nation became full of shriveled minds, unsharpened by the fine arts.[7] An incomplete article by Montesquieu also commented on the idea of the aesthetic. Montesquieu explained that "when we find pleasure in seeing it, without discerning in the moment any utility in it, we call it beautiful." He discussed the importance of understanding pleasure as it related to the soul and found that taste was something that lied in the soul, including symmetry, surprises, variety, and contrast as sources of pleasure.[8]

These works provide much of the context necessary to understand how beauty, the aesthetic, and connoisseurship related to the female body in the eighteenth century. The literature supports the assertion that the female body in eighteenth-century French society was meant to be an object for enjoyment or consumption. How, then, does this literature lead us to the *maîtresse-en-titre*? She was a woman who crossed the thresholds of many realms usually barred to women.

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[6] Voltaire, "Taste," 761-770.

[7] Voltaire, 761-770. Voltaire also states that taste is something that is usually particular to European nations, and that countries in Asia have never been able to excel in the arts. His discussion veers into the territory of eugenic frames of thought.

[8] Montesquieu, 761-770. This incomplete article was added to Voltaire's article on Taste. This portion was written by Montesquieu but is included by the editors and translators of the *Encyclopédie* project in Volataire's work.

She was a woman who capitalized on her aesthetic value in order to bolster her societal worth and to lead a life of luxury. She was a woman whose elite status elevated her from an object of *jouissance,* to an object indicative of exquisite *goût*, and in some cases, a woman able to possess *goût* herself. The depiction of the *maîtresse-en-titre* in artwork as well as her commission of artwork reveals a space for Madame du Barry to possess and display her taste. How others perceived her taste can also aid the historian in better understanding her social worth in the eyes of other elites.

## 3.2 Images of a Mistress

The *maîtresse-en-titre* historically utilized art to perpetuate her role at Court, working to carefully maintain her image.[9] Some of the most compelling evidence for Madame du Barry curating her own image is found in artwork both depicting the *maîtresse-en-titre* and the artwork she commissioned. Madame du Barry, the last mistress of King Louis XV of France, commissioned numerous works of art in a variety of mediums. In addition to collecting works of art, du Barry agreed to serve as the subject of paintings and sculptures. For example, there are an array of portraits and a bust of Madame du Barry housed in various repositories in France and the United States. In these portraits, the *maîtresse-en-titre* is frequently depicted as gazing out at the viewer through large, alluring eyes above an impossibly slender nose and the hint of a smile, combining wiles and charm to exercise control over her life in ways that a majority of eighteenth-century women could not.

The first portrait is an oil painting on canvas created by François Hubert Drouais in the late eighteenth century, simply titled *Madame du Barry* (Figure 3.1), which depicts Du Barry almost as a goddess or celestial figure, seated on a large, ornamental chair draped in a silk-like

[9] James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 72.

fabric. The artistic rendering of goddesses was popular in eighteenth-century France, particularly the depiction of Venus, the goddess of beauty and pleasure.[10] The Comtesse du Barry is dressed in a relatively simplistic fashion, wearing a billowing gown with a simple bow tied around the waist. She is adorned with two bracelets on each wrist but wears no other jewelry and simple sandals. She holds a wreath and a harp, both decorated with an ornate floral arrangement. At her feet lie an artist's palette, a partially unfurled canvas or parchment, and a toppled bust. She seems to be serene, but in the midst of a chaotic environment. This portrait illustrates the depiction of the *maîtresse-en-titre* during her own time. She seems somewhat removed from the world around her and looks out at the viewer, appearing both regal and ethereal. Perhaps most compelling is the depiction of the mistress as pure or even maiden-like. Her gown is white, with regal gold trim, and her femininity is conveyed in her dainty and exaggerated features, including her small hands, feet, and nose. In many ways, her portrait embodies the concept of the "fair sex" as described by Jaucourt in the *Encyclopédie*. The portrait depicts Du Barry as possessing "modesty, restraint, gentleness, compassion and the virtues of tender souls."[11]

The second portrait is an oil painting done by Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun in 1781 (Figure 3.2), where Madame du Barry is depicted from the waist up, with her body facing towards the right. Though her body is in profile, du Barry looks slightly over her shoulder, engaging directly with the viewer. The Comtesse wears a cream dress, gathered at the waist with a sage ribbon. The collar of the dress is embellished with lace and another sage ribbon tied into a bow. She wears a wide-brimmed pale yellow-brown hat with a pale blue ribbon tied around it and several ostrich feathers tucked into the ribbon. She also has a sage ribbon woven into her

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[10] Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France*, 6-7. Leith discusses a panel commissioned by Madame du Barry. He states that Venus was a favorite of Louis XV's courtiers.

[11] Jaucourt, "Female sex."

hair. Unlike the first portrait, this painting depicts more of a woman than a goddess. Although she appears earthlier than before, Madame du Barry still radiates beauty and youth. She looks straight into the eyes of the viewer from her own large, hooded blue-green eyes. Her lips are full, rosy, and beginning to curl into a smile, and her skin is unblemished, appearing to be as smooth and pale as porcelain. The background is dark in stark contrast to the bright visage of du Barry. She is a colorful, cheerful pinnacle of beauty in a dark, vacuous environment. She does not seem to be guarded or cautious but, instead, is warm and inviting.

Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun painted another portrait of Madame du Barry in 1782 (Figure 3.3). Her female perspective perhaps offers a more honest rendering of the mistress. As Vigée-Lebrun describes her in her memoirs, du Barry's eyes are hooded, giving the impression that they are never quite open all the way. This effect presents the audience with a flirtatious gaze of a "coquette."[12] The mistress' cheeks are rosy, as are her lips. Her mouth is slightly turned up at the corners with the subtle hint of a smile. Her hair appears to be fine and falls down her shoulders in ash-blonde curls. In direct contrast to other depictions of du Barry, her hands are proportional rather than unrealistically small. Additionally, her waist, though slim, is not impossibly small. The dark background similar to the one found in a previous portrait painted by Vigée-Lebrun allows the bright image of the *maîtresse-en-titre* to stand out to the viewer. She gazes directly at the viewer, with her right hand open in an inviting gesture. Her left hand holds a small wreath of flowers similar to the one atop her head which encircles a collection of powder-blue feathers. She wears a relatively simple dress with lace adorning the cuffs of the sleeves as well as the neckline which showcases her flawless décolletage. The floral motif, like the

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[12] Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée-Lebrun,* 113. In her memoirs, Elisabeth Vigée- Lebrun notes du Barry's appearance as having, "the look of a coquette, for her eyes were never completely open, she had a pronunciation that sounded childish and was ill-suited to her age."

mistress, is beautiful, though all of it invokes a strong sense of temporality. The modern viewer knows how her story ends and that beauty always withers and fades away. This painting tells the historian, however, that Madame du Barry used portraiture to depict herself as a graceful and beautiful member of the court. She also seems to utilize these paintings to display her fashion, style, and high taste.[13]

Another valuable visual source is the *Bust of Madame du Barry*, sculpted by Augustin Pajou circa 1771-1773 (Figure 3.4), which depicts the mistress gazing towards the horizon, her face slightly upturned. Her eyes are crinkled at the outer corner with the hint of a smile. Her hair is gathered at the crown of her head with curls cascading down her neck and across her left shoulder. She is draped in a toga-like cloth gathered beneath her chest. The cloth is strategically covering her chest, but in a way in which it looks as if it could slip at any moment. Though she is completely clothed, the placement of the fabric as well as the mistress' countenance seem as if they are meant to seduce her audience.[14] In his book *The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics of the Eighteenth Century*, Ronit Milano described the bust as "universally acclaimed as a masterpiece," citing the *Les Salons des Bachaumont* written by Louis Petit de Bachaumont in in mid-eighteenth century.[15] In consensus with Milano, Bachaumont wrote:

> There is nothing so beautiful as this bust, unique in its authenticity, charm, and expression. It strikes even the most inept viewers with the air of sensuality that infuses the face; the gaze and posture support the sculptor's intentions. No one seeing this

[13] There is evidence to suggest that her predecessor, Madame de Pompadour, an avid patron of the arts, used her style and patronage to secure her place as a respected member of the King's court. See Hooper-Hamersley, *The Hunt After Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour,* 361.

[14] Ronit Milano, *The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 68.

[15] Milano, 68.

> celestial figure can fail to recognize the rank it occupies nor fail to cry out with M. de Voltaire: The Original was made for the Gods.[16]

Milano discussed the bust of du Barry and described the stylistic choices:

> The garment is not a reproduction of court dress or of contemporary clothing; rather, it is a cloth thrown freely over the body and held by a ribbon across the shoulder. This ribbon, which invokes the imagery of ancient mythology, endowed the bust with an allegorical charge related to the sitter's role in Louis XV's court: Madame du Barry was seen by her contemporaries as Hebe, restoring youth to the aging monarch. Yet despite its air of antiquity, her tunic calls to mind an alluring negligee, which leaves the beautiful and sensual neck and bosom of the comtesse du Barry exposed. Her coquetry is enhanced by the exuberance of the drapery and the movement of the creases around the ribbon. And since more specific attributes of Hebe are missing, it seems more productive to examine the bust in the context of other similar employments of such garb.[17]

This discussion is indicative of the trend of posing female subjects as goddesses. Like this bust, several portraits of Du Barry also depict the *maitresse-en-titre* as an otherworldly, intangible goddess, such as the portrait seen in Figure 3.1. Collectively, these works of art complicate the way in which the Court viewed the *maîtresse-en-titre*. She is often viewed as a passive victim of the Revolution with little to no power. As suggested by Rosamond Hooper-Hamersley in *The Hunt After Jean Antoinette de Pompadour*, engaging with the depiction of King Louis XV's mistresses in works of art as well as looking at the act of commissioning can inform historians about the true roles that these women played in French politics.[18] For example, by looking at the first portrait of Madame du Barry, the viewer sees a serene woman surrounded by chaos. Perhaps this image was meant to evoke a sense of calmness or lack of urgency despite

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[16] Milano, 68. See also: Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Les Salons de Bachaumont*, ed. Fabrice Faré (Nogent-Le-Roi, 1995), letter 111, 43–44.

[17] Milano, 69.

[18] Hooper-Hamersley, *The Hunt After Jeanne-Antoinette de Pompadour,* 219-222.

being in the midst of a tumultuous time in France. The second portrait displays a bright, beautiful face in front of a backdrop of darkness, evoking the same sense of serenity in the face of an abyss. This depiction could be indicative of the ways in which the *maîtresse-en-titre* tempted the king and distracted him, remaining beautiful, well-dressed, and surrounded by extravagance in the face of national debt. Furthermore, though Madame du Barry was often depicted as an experienced object of sexual desire, she is simultaneously depicted as pure or even almost as a virgin, again echoing the male ideal of the "fair sex."[19]

Throughout history, women have been depicted as possessing multiple, even conflicting, identities within a singular vessel. For example, within the goddess Hecate, there was the maiden, the mother and the crone. Though indicative of the life-stages of a woman, these are indeed conflicting, though Hecate embodied them simultaneously. According to Mary Sheriff, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun took notice of this facet of femininity. Vigée-Lebrun painted a self-portrait in which she is depicted as herself, Dibutadis, and as Painting. She also painted a woman, Madame de Staël, as herself, as Corinne, and as Sibyl.[20] According to Sheriff, "the tripled identity- Sibyl, Corinne, and Madame de Staël- not only allows the viewer/reader to choose a more or less specific interpretation, but also stresses the interplay among the real sitter, her fictional character, and the generic type."[21] Like Vigée-Lebrun's subjects, Madame du Barry, via commissioned artwork, was rendered as having various identities. The first painting of du Barry produced an image of a goddess. Goddesses are at once immaculate and sexually enticing.

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[19] Jaucourt, "Female sex."
[20] Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 241.
[21] Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman,* 241.

They can seem demure but also possess strength and agency. These images of Madame du Barry reflected a similar ambivalence: she was a seductress clad in white, a virgin and a whore.[22]

### 3.3 Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and Madame du Barry

The opinions expressed in the memoirs of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun render an image of Madame du Barry that is quite different from the one the mistress attempted to create. Vigée-Lebrun began with a discussion of a conversation between Louis XV and another man about olives that had gone bad, which ended with the remark that, "'It must be the bottom of the barrel, Sire.'" Vigée-Lebrun continued with, "This remark brings to my mind a woman, whom I have not yet mentioned, though I knew a good deal about her. She was a woman who sprang from the lowest class of society and passed through the palace of a king on her way to the scaffold, and whose sad end atones for the scandalous dazzle of her life."[23] This short remark can inform the historian about how other elites viewed du Barry. The *maîtresse-en-titre* lived a life of luxury, but that, perhaps, is not what bothered Vigée-Lebrun the most. More than that, it seems that the fact that the king scraped "the bottom of the barrel" and lifted du Barry up to that life of luxury is what most tarnished her image.

Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun spent a considerable amount of time discussing du Barry's shortcomings throughout various points in her memoirs. Vigée-Lebrun recalled visiting du Barry in Louveciennes in 1786, and she mentioned being "extremely curious" to meet with "this favourite, of whom I had heard so often," implying that Madame du Barry was a topic of frequent interest and discussion among other elites. Additionally, despite Vigée-Lebrun's

[22] Milano, *The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, 69.
[23] Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée-Lebrun,* 113.

seemingly low opinion of the woman, she could not help but want to visit with her.[24] She goes on to describe her visit with du Barry:

> Madame du Barry must have been then about forty-five years old. She was big, though not too much so. She was plump. Her throat was rather strong but very beautiful. Her face was still charming, the features being regular and graceful. Her hair was ash-coloured and curly like a child's. Only her complexion began to spoil. She received me very gracefully and seemed to me to have a very good style. I thought, however that she was more natural in her mind than in her manners.

This description is revealing for numerous reasons, the first being that it shows Vigée-Lebrun's careful attention to detail, which surely contributed to her accomplishments as a painter. Second, Vigée-Lebrun's blunt description tells the historian that, because of what she heard among other elites, Vigée-Lebrun expected to find a beautiful woman, though it seems that she was looking for reasons to criticize the *maîtresse-en-titre.* She homes in on her child-like characteristics, such as her hair, her eyes, her manners, and her pronunciation, which Vigée-Lebrun seemed to believe had lost charm with age. Much of this description also leaves the reader with the impression that Vigée-Lebrun found little worth in a figure such as du Barry, but what worth she held on to lay in her ability to entertain and receive guests as well as her ability to portray herself as beautiful and charming. As she continued her visit with du Barry, Vigee-Lebrun acknowledged that the mistress provided her with a lovely place to stay, but that it "annoyed me terribly with its noise."[25] She commented on the array of treasures Madame du Barry acquired from her time with Louis XV: "one might have thought they belonged to the mistress of several sovereigns who had enriched her with their gifts. These relics of grandeur were in direct contrast with the simplicity of the mistress of the house in her clothes and mode of

[24] Vigée-Lebrun, 113.
[25] Vigée-Lebrun, 114.

life."[26] This statement is multi-faceted in its criticism of du Barry and the royal family. Initially, her description plainly pointed out the current lack of elegance in du Barry's living situation.[27] It also commented on how the king showered du Barry with gifts in what Vigée-Lebrun perceives to be to an excessive degree. Lastly, it insinuated one of Vigée-Lebrun's greatest criticisms of du Barry. In her description of "direct contrast," she implied that she viewed du Barry as beneath herself and other elites. Though, at first glance, this criticism might appear to have something to do with du Barry's low-class origins, her story was not all that different from Vigée-Lebrun's own background. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun was born to a hairdresser and even spent her youth in a convent. What she had that separated her from du Barry was a more virtuous talent. While du Barry's craft was sex, Vigée-Lebrun's was, of course, painting. It is possible that she resented du Barry because, in her mind, Vigée-Lebrun worked tirelessly to prove herself as a prodigy in a male-dominated profession. She might have felt her own hard work cheapened by the fact that an alleged prostitute made her way into Versailles and did not work nearly as hard as she did. Vigée-Lebrun also hinted that she believed du Barry never culturally left the lower echelons despite her closeness with Louis XV. Vigée-Lebrun achieved social mobility using what she would likely describe as authentic talent. Taste came naturally to her, and du Barry's lack of social graces might have troubled Vigée-Lebrun because she managed to fit in with more ease, rendering du Barry a vulgar reminder of Vigée-Lebrun's own humble origins.

### 3.4 The Mistresses Apartments

Madame du Barry's living quarters at Versailles can reveal much about how she curated her image. There are two mistresses' apartments currently located within the Palace of

[26] Vigée-Lebrun, 114.

[27] At this point, du Barry, sent away from Versailles, lived in her chateau at Louveciennes. Vigée-Lebrun's remarks could have been meant to point out the stark contrast between the chateau and the lavish apartments du Barry resided in during her time at Versailles.

Versailles. One set of apartments belonged to Madame de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV until 1751. She remained in Versailles until her death in 1764. Several years later, Madame du Barry became the mistress of Louis XV, where she lived in her own apartments.[28] Though I was unable to visit the apartments due to both COVID-19 limitations as well as time constraints, there are video tours available on the official website. These tours provide useful imagery of both de Pompadour's and du Barry's apartments. Madame du Barry's apartments were located at the end of a secret passageway that provided a direct connection so that the king could visit her with ease. This dark, narrow passageway can be seen in Figure 3.5.

The *maîtresse-en-titre* used décor such as her bed to flaunt her wealth and her taste. Figure 3.6 provides an image of du Barry's bed in her apartment. The bed is upholstered with a beautiful floral fabric and painted gold, with filigree accents. The bedspread depicts the same floral design on a cream backdrop. The wall is painted white and is adorned with intricate gold filigree, exuding opulence. Near the bed is an ornamental swan basin (Figure 3.7) as well as a vanity topped with a nude statue placed on a satin bed-like cushion (Figure 3.8), perhaps representative of du Barry. Her bed, her vanity, her basin, and even the surrounding wall are indicative of the popular rococo style, showing du Barry's desire to reflect contemporary architecture and décor in her living quarters. As the visitor moves on to the main living room in du Barry's apartments, upon first entering the room it is difficult not to be struck by the stunning parquet flooring, present throughout much of Versailles. The walls are ornate and white, with gold filigree. There is a window with shutters to match the wall. Windows in her apartments open up to a view of both the Stag Courtyard and the Marble Courtyard.

[28] Brady Haran, "Meet the Mistresses of Louis XV at the Palace of Versailles," Created by Google Arts and Culture. Video, 6:06. http://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/estate/palace/mistresses-apartments#meet-the-mistresses-of-louis-xv%C2%A0.

The décor and artwork seen throughout du Barry's apartments can inform the historian of how the mistress sought to present herself to those visiting her, whether the King, a friend, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, or other elites. Her art collection, her ornate, rococo furnishings, and her stylish baubles suggest that du Barry desired to portray herself as a member of the top-tier elite within Versailles. Following in the footsteps of Madame de Pompadour must have been daunting as she was a mature, proud art connoisseur who had great political influence. Du Barry's apartments suggest a woman who succeeded at "fitting in" amongst the elites at Versailles.

### 3.5 Celebrity and Causes Célèbres

The focus of the *maîtresse-en-titre* on self-promotion as well as the public interest she garnered molds the image of a celebrity. In order to explore this idea of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as celebrity, it is first essential to highlight the historiography pertaining to the subject. In 1991, scholars including Sarah Maza and Lynn Hunt, published their research exploring the connection between politics and sexuality in the Old Regime in a collection of essays titled *Eroticism and the Body Politic*. In "The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited (1785-1786): The Case of the Missing Queen," Maza explored the influence of women in the public and political spotlight during times of crisis and focused on a political scandal involving Marie Antoinette. She reexamined the significance of the vitriol lobbed at the Queen before and during the French Revolution, a trendy historiographical topic throughout the 1990s. This trend was a result of a renewed interest in "such topics as the structure of court politics, the birth of public opinion, and the meaning of rhetoric, pageantry, and iconography in the public sphere."[29] The Diamond

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[29] Maza, "The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited," 63. Here Maza cites the works of Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

Necklace Affair, according to Maza, was the "last political drama of female sexuality under the Old Regime, a prelude to, and harbinger of, the fall of public woman."[30] Maza used this essay to explore the degradation of the monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century, following the "'desacralization'" of the monarchy between Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI.[31] Ultimately, this essay marked the nascent connection between politics, gender, and sexuality in the public sphere in eighteenth-century France.

As the turn of the century grew closer, historians continued to research the female body and its impact on French politics, focusing on the eroticism of the body politic. Lynn Hunt contributed "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution" offering a fresh take on the exploitation of the physical bodies of those involved in politics. Hunt noted that erotic and pornographic literature with monarchs at the center has occurred in various temporal and geographic locales, but that their existence means that "we can be sure that something is at issue in the larger body politic."[32] According to Hunt, "Marie Antoinette occupies a curious place in this literature; she was not only lampooned and demeaned in an increasingly ferocious pornographic outpouring, but she was also tried and executed."[33] Hunt used this essay to provide insight on the role that pornography and erotic literature played in the republican rejection of women as public political figureheads and the ultimate relegation of women to the realm of domesticity. Hunt concluded her work, stating that Marie Antoinette "was the negative version of the female icon of

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[30] Maza, 84.

[31] Maza, 65-66. Here, Maza quickly describes the events leading up to this "desacralization" of the monarchy, "ranging from political ineptitude to the military fiascos of the Seven Years' War to the writings of the *philosophes*." She also points out the role of magistrates and lawyers in this process; these officials manipulated public opinion using printed sources, including *remontrances* against the monarchy (using republican/patriotic rhetoric to garner widespread support).

[32] Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, 108.

[33] Hunt, 108.

republican liberty but nonetheless iconic for the rejection," and "in this implicit and often unconscious gender drama, the body of Marie Antoinette played a critical, if uncomfortable, role."[34] In other words, the portrayals of Marie Antoinette's body as well as her demise at the hands of the public symbolized the homosocial, masculine nature of the new republican government ushered in by the Revolution. So, how does discussion of Marie Antoinette's political role factor into the discussion of the *causes célèbres* and celebrity in eighteenth and, eventually, nineteenth century France? These same scholars noted the connection between politics, the public, sexuality, and gender and used that as their foundation to pinpoint the link between the state and *causes célèbres*.

This research contributed to discussions on the role of the public sphere in the creation of celebrity. In her book, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Pre-revolutionary France*, Maza explored public opinion through the lens of court cases, and searches for connections between the Old Regime and the Revolution. More central to the topic of this thesis, however, is Maza's revelation of "how a segment of the legal profession came out from under the shadow of the *parlementaire* magistracy and seized the leadership of public opinion by simultaneously appropriating the legacy of the philosophes and making the world of law (judges, barristers, and an 'active' public of citizens) into the blueprint for a new polity."[35] In other words, many involved in the legal profession used the path paved by the philosophes to influence public opinion and lay down a new foundation for the innerworkings of French government. Maza used legal documents and literature published for public consumption to explore the "public impact of tales of private life."[36] Maza concluded that the barristers' actions

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[34] Hunt, 126.
[35] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 321.
[36] Maza, 1.

marked a substantial shift in public interest from the royal court to the court of law. This change is remarkable as it also allowed for the carving out of an increasingly active public.[37] This conclusion, of course, denoted the *causes célèbres* and their impact on the larger historical narrative of eighteenth-century France and clearly acknowledged the celebrity of barristers, but it also seemed to quietly hint that the members of the royal court who were at the center of the *causes célèbres* in the preceding decades could have arguably held celebrity status as individuals. Having explored the lengths to which Madame du Barry went to promote herself to the King alongside the elite public and the subsequent interest she garnered both during her life and posthumously, I argue that the mistress was, in fact, a celebrity in her own right.

### 3.6 Curating Her Public Image

After exploring the artwork commissioned by du Barry, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's memories of the *maîtresse-en-titre*, and the living quarters of the royal mistress, much can be learned about the way that Madame du Barry presented herself to her contemporaries as well as how those contemporaries perceived her. The portraits as well as the décor of the mistress's apartments can inform the historian about the ways in which du Barry wished to be viewed by her contemporaries. Like Madame de Pompadour, busts and goddess-like depictions of the mistress were artistically rendered. These images directly contrast with what many think of when they imagine a mistress. Though modern views of mistresses are often negative, it is important to understand the nature of the *maîtresse-en-titre.* She was more than a sexual object and was also an official member of the king's court. Evidence suggests that the sexual nature of the *maîtresse-en-titre's* relationship with the king was not objectionable to the French public and the Court, but

[37] Maza, 314. Maza only uses the term "celebrity" when describing trials, locations, and barristers involved in well-known cases. Here, Maza also points out that this change was a catalyst that made possible the enormous transformation swept in by the Revolution.

rather the fact that, in the case of Madame du Barry, she was of low-class origin.[38] Du Barry's portraits as well as the way she chose to decorate her apartment suggest a woman attempting to promote herself. She desired to hold her own among other elites. The use of portraiture to depict the "truth" of the artist's subject is not unprecedented. According to Mary Sheriff, "many in 1783 wanted to see a painting as the true indicator of the artist's inner self *and* as a true indicator of the truth of the subject portrayed."[39] Thus, is stands to reason that somewhere between the desires behind the commission of a portrait as well as the desires of the artist lies a "truth" about the subject.

The memoirs of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun inform the historian of how these elites du Barry wanted to impress might have actually viewed her. Vigée-Lebrun ultimately painted a verbal portrait of a woman whose charms are fading and who fails to impress. Vigée-Lebrun seemed to find du Barry's extravagance, particularly during the Revolution, to be tiring and ineffective and used that extravagance to cast judgment on du Barry's humble origins.[40] So, why do these numerous images of Madame du Barry matter? They not only provide us with a look at the life of a prominent member of the king's court, but they also indicate the influence that du Barry had over socio-political life in the decade leading up to the French Revolution. Her use of portraiture and her physical surroundings indicate a woman who acted as a historical agent. She was not a victim of the times as she is so often painted to be, but instead attained unlikely social mobility and secured her position within the Palace of Versailles. Additionally, I argue that her use of portraiture was akin to personal propaganda, in which she, following in the footsteps of her predecessor promoted their personal brand, becoming proto celebrities.

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[38] Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Lebrun*, 114.

[39] Mary Sheriff, "Woman? Hermaphrodite? History Painter? On the Self-Imaging of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun," *The Eighteenth Century* 35, no. 1 (1994): 24.

[40] Vigée-Lebrun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Lebrun,* 114.

## 4 APOCRYPHAL BEST-SELLERS: SHADOWS OF THE THEATER

This thesis has thus far explored the creation of Madame du Barry as well as the ways in which the *maîtresse-en-titre* worked to depict herself to her contemporaries. This chapter investigates the image of Madame du Barry through the eyes of the public. Throughout the course of my research on Jeanne Bécu, I came across a variety of memoirs, pamphlets, and anecdotes written by various authors from the perspective of Madame du Barry. At first glance, they seem to offer little insight into the life of the mistress and certainly illuminate little about how Madame du Barry wished to present herself to others. If one digs a little deeper, however, it is possible to glean information regarding the ways that the literate of France viewed the monarchy, the institution of the *maîtresse-en-titre,* and, more specifically, how they came to perceive Madame du Barry herself. Much of this method of investigation is inspired by the well-known work of Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*. In this book, Darnton explored the written word and how it was managed and restricted in the decades leading up to the French Revolution. Darnton argued that forbidden books "conveyed a political message and a general view of politics," going on to explain that "they [forbidden books] had so little to do with political reality that they represented what I have called a 'folklore.' But in doing so, they shaped reality itself and helped determine the course of events."[1] "The big questions in history often seem unmanageable. What causes revolutions? Why do value systems change? How does public opinion influence events?" Darnton postulated as he opened his book.[2] He used his work to explore those questions by examining what the public read in eighteenth-century France. This approach, he argued, might reveal to historians more about the mentalité leading up to the Revolution and, subsequently, highlighted the intersections between the public and private

[1] Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, xxiii.
[2] Darnton, xvii.

spheres and uncovered the ways in which the public served as an impetus for change in the decades surrounding the Revolution.

Following in Darnton's footsteps, this chapter explores the apocryphal and forbidden literature written about Madame du Barry to not only better understand the political atmosphere of the decades surrounding the French Revolution, but to also aid in crystalizing a comprehensive image of Madame du Barry by revealing another layer of her persona. In order to achieve this goal, we will move through the source material individually, winding our way back in the end in order to carve out an image of Madame du Barry.

### 4.1 The Shopgirl, the Prostitute, and the Joke

One of the biggest bestsellers in eighteenth-century France was a book allegedly sharing true stories, or "anecdotes," about Madame du Barry. Before delving into the content of the *Anecdotes sur Madame la Comtesse du Barri*, it is worth our time to examine more closely both the author and the title of the work. *Anecdotes* is attributed to Mathieu François Pidansat de Mairobert. Pidansat de Mairobert, alongside Mercier, Linguet, and Voltaire, dominated Darnton's bestseller list for 1771 to 1784.[3] Pidansat de Mairobert published a variety of apocryphal memoirs and letters from the perspective of the members of the upper echelon of society, including letters and journals about René-Nicolas de Maupeou as well as letters and memoirs about Madame du Barry. Though not considered one of the "great writers" of the eighteenth century, Pidansat de Mairobert was one of the bestselling authors of the period, which at first glance makes the historian ponder why it is that his name is not a household name like Voltaire's. Darnton attempted to explain this lack of renown: "Their disappearance may seem

[3] Darnton, 48, table 2.4. Darnton used data from Rigaud, Pons, & Compagnie, a bookseller located in Montpellier, France in the eighteenth century, to compile this list of bestsellers. Of the 64 orders made during that span of time, 53 of them were illegal works and the top 18 are listed in Darnton's table. This list of the top 18 is where Pidansat de Mairobert, Voltaire, Mercier, and Linguet frequently appear.

less surprising if one views literary history itself as an artificial construct, passed on and reworked from generation to generation. 'Minor' authors and 'major' best-sellers inevitably get lost in the shuffle."[4]

For example, though extremely popular in their heyday, the *Twilight Saga* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* offer little in terms of literary contributions. Two hundred years from now it seems unlikely that a majority of the public will have read these works and that even fewer will have heard of Stephenie Meyer and E.L. James. Despite their shortcomings, these works still dominated the bestsellers lists in their day.[5] Darnton would argue that these types of publications are more essential in ascertaining the *mentalité* of the time period than literary works of high cultural value. The "taste" and "demand" of the public informs the historian of what most people found interesting rather than only what the elite appreciated. Darnton seemed to suggest that the bestsellers offered a thick description, or to quote Clifford Geertz, "a story they tell themselves about themselves."[6] Geertz, when studying the tradition of cockfighting in Bali, wrote that one can learn much about the social construction of a place when examining such traditions. If one were to hold a magnifying glass to the content of the bestsellers of a specific temporal locale, one would likely find "a metasocial commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment."[7] Much like the Balinese cockfight shows how the Balinese viewed themselves

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[4] Darnton, 68.

[5] Gary Price "'Fifty Shades of Grey' Was the Best-Selling Book of the Decade in the U.S., The NPD Group Says," 18 December 2019, accessed 20 July 2021 https://www.infodocket.com/2019/12/18/npd-reports-fifty-shades-of-grey-was-the-best-selling-book-of-the-decade-in-the-u-s/. *Fifty Shades of Grey* was the bestselling book of the last decade, selling 15.2 million copies from 2010 through 2019. Stephenie Meyers sold 22 million books in 2008, see Tony Santaella, "'Twilight' Sets Book Sales Records," News19, 15 January 2009, accessed 20 July 2021 https://www.wltx.com/article/money/twilight-sets-book-sales-records/101-380884048.

[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 448.

[7] Geertz, 448. Here, Geertz is, of course, referencing the practice of cockfighting in Bali. Geertz is commenting on the structure of cockfighting and how it serves as "a Balinese reading of Balinese experience."

and subsequently chose to represent themselves, the bestsellers list of the eighteenth century can offer the historian an eighteenth-century French reading of eighteenth-century France by the French public. Darnton writes, "They provide only an interpretation of an interpretation."[8] Essentially, the French public created a "folklore," which encompassed the space between political reality and political fiction that came to create a new version of reality over time. It is in this way that the bestsellers list allows the historian to begin answering Darnton's initial questions, "What causes revolutions? Why do value systems change? How does public opinion influence events?"[9] The answer is subtle, "like the drip, drip of water on stone," *libelles*, "wore away the layer of sacredness that made the monarchy legitimate in the eye of its subjects."[10]

After contextualizing the cultural significance of Pidansat de Mairobert as an author, it is also helpful to interrogate the title of his work. In his preface, Pidansat de Mairobert wrote, "Although this work is a very complete life of Mme la Comtesse du Barri, the author, in order to avoid pretentiousness, has preferred the modest title of 'Anecdotes.'"[11] Of course the term "anecdotes" carries certain connotations. Merriam-Webster defines the term as "a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident." In French, it is defined as "histoire court et amusant." Both imply that the story may have some root in fact and reality, but both also emphasize the entertaining quality of the story in question. With entertainment as the priority, it seems safe to assume that the author did not make accuracy or sticking to the "facts" a top priority. Additionally, the blatant admittance of the volume as "entertainment" speaks to an assumption that there was an audience that would find such a tome entertaining. Pidansat de

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[8] Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 166.
[9] Darnton, xvii.
[10] Darnton, cover endorsement.
[11] Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barri* (London, 1775), 3. Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 337.

Mairobert wrote, "his work will delight both the austere philosopher and the frivolous reader, exciting the one to reflection and affording an agreeable pastime to the other. It will, in short, give pleasure to all kinds of readers."[12] As previously mentioned, the book secured a place at the top of the best-seller list from 1771-1784, further supporting the fact that there was indeed an undeniable public interest in *Anecdotes sur la Comtesse du Barri*.[13] The reasons that the public became fascinated with the personal life of Madame du Barry can be revealed by examining the nature of the stories fabricated within the *Anecdotes*.

Pidansat de Mairobert naturally started at the beginning of Madame du Barry's life and speculated about her origins. One notable section examined Madame du Barry's time as a shop girl. Using words that he claimed came straight from Madame Gourdan, whom he called the "Official Superintendent of Pleasures for the Town and Court," Pidansat de Mairobert set the scene for du Barry's transition from shopgirl to prostitute. He devotes pages to salacious details describing her appraisal by Madame Gourdan:

> As I was saying this, I made a pretense of having her try on a gorgeous new dressing gown which happened to be laid out for a girl who was supposed to come for supper there that very evening. I took her in hand and disrobed her completely until she was naked as a worm. I gazed upon a splendid body, and breasts- I've handled plenty of them in my day, but never with such elasticity, such a shape, such an admirable position; a backside to make you swoon, thighs, buttocks… Sculptors wouldn't be able to produce a work more perfect…As for the rest, I know my way around enough to be able to say that her maidenhead was very doubtful indeed but adequate enough to be sold again more than once. That's what I really wanted to find out about….[14]

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[12] Pidansat de Mairobert, 4. Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 338.

[13] Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 48. This note references Table 2.4 in Darnton's work which is comprised using data from Rigaud, Pons, & Compagnie in Montpellier.

[14] Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry.* Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 346.

The motivation behind the inclusion of this passage cannot be known without doubt, but alongside other texts and research from this period, it is likely that Madame Gourdan's story was included primarily to provide the reader with pornographic material. This paragraph set young Jeanne Bécu up as a sexual object whose purpose was to satisfy the needs of others, including the eighteenth-century reader. Giving such attention to the intimate details of the shape of Bécu's body as well as the description of fondling and groping the girl would likely serve no other purpose but to titillate the literate public.

The link between pornography and politics in the late eighteenth century was noted by scholars such as Lynn Hunt. In Hunt's work, the Queen served as an example of what happened when women entered the public sphere.[15] This work explored the sexualization of the Queen by the public as a form of character defamation and traced the link between pornography and politics. Hunt detailed several of the pornographic depictions of the Queen. Pamphlets depicted Marie Antoinette in various sexually precarious situations with a wide array of individuals, which Hunt argued demonstrated the view that the Queen used her "sexual body to corrupt the body politic."[16] Hunt argued that Marie Antoinette's story was particularly poignant because of her being both metaphorically and physically executed by the people of France.[17] Passages such as the one depicted here create the fodder for a similar argument for Madame du Barry as having used her sexuality to denigrate the body politic. Additionally, like the Queen, du Barry was both metaphorically and physically executed by the people of France.[18]

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[15] Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette, 108-130.

[16] Hunt, 111.

[17] Hunt, 108-115. The queen faced accusations unseen by her male counterparts. The sexual deviance of the queen played a prominent role in her trial. While the king was brought up on political crimes, Marie Antoinette was accused of crimes such as incest, where she was described as sexually abusive to her son, resulting in his genital mutilation.

[18] Hunt, 111.

The passage described Jeanne Bécu's descent from a young girl into the ranks of "willing young women who present themselves." Pidansat de Mairobert, using the voice of Madame Gourdan, continued to describe how her virginity was sold time and time again to men who requested the company of virgins, until the day that her madam unintentionally booked Jeanne's godfather as her client, leading him into a fit of rage and effectively ending Jeanne's employment with Gourdan. The account ended with Gourdan describing how Jeanne took up with du Barry, and that they occasionally "pooled our [their] talent in collaborative ventures," at which point she would work with Jeanne. After finishing the account, Pidansat de Mairobert wrote, "For we see that she only went there [to the brothel] out of curiosity, and not out of any decided taste for debauchery; nor was she drawn there by any sordid desire for gain, which motivated so many of her comrades, but by that attraction, which is so pardonable in women, for glamour and dressing up."[19] Thus, Pidansat de Mairobert constructed an image of Madame du Barry as a flighty young girl suddenly thrust into the arms of the *Roué* and subsequently thrown into the ranks of womanhood.[20] He "pardoned" du Barry for her flights of fancy, as her womanhood made her susceptible to making poor decisions in order to maintain a life of glitz and glamor. She was only subject to the natural desires of a woman; she was not searching for a life of "debauchery" and "sordid gain," but only yearned for beauty and found herself driven by the inclination of womankind to seek it out. This supposed "female" innocence might have contributed to the book's prurient appeal.

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[19] Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry.* Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 350.

[20] *Le Roué* is typically a description for a lecherous older man. It was also the nickname given to the man who essentially became Jeanne Bécu's "handler," Jean Baptiste du Barry, the brother of Bécu's (eventual) husband, Guillaume du Barry.

In Pidansat de Mairobert's description of the young du Barry, he created an image of a woman who did not begin her quest for beauty with sinister designs. Additionally, we can learn about the state of the monarchy from this passage. By painting an image of du Barry as merely a girl understandably distracted by wealth, the author made clear the public perception that "the throne has been debased through the general depravation of the court."[21] This also supports the conclusion that the people of France were seemingly more concerned with Madame du Barry's origins than with her role in court. Someone who did not begin their life with unlimited access to money and glamor seems more likely to be easily swayed to do whatever is necessary to acquire wealth. This is pardonable, according to the author, though it is still an example of women debasing the monarchy by burdening the Crown with her human flaws. Another example of the literate public resenting du Barry's background can be found in some of the songs or *chansons* included in the anecdotes:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Quelle merveille!* | What a marvel! |
| *Une fille de rien;* | A worthless girl; |
| *Une fille de rien,* | A worthless girl, |
| *Quelle marveille!* | What a marvel! |
| *Donne au Roi de l'amour,* | Makes love to the King, |
| *Est à la cour* | Is at court! |
| *Elle est gentile,* | She is kind, |
| *Elle a les yeux fripons;* | She has mischievous eyes; |
| *Elle a les yeux fripons,* | She has mischievous eyes, |
| *Elle est gentile;* | She is kind |
| *Elle excite avec art* | She excites with art |
| *Un vieux paillard* | An old lecher |

[21] Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry.* Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 157. According to Darnton, many of the anecdotes essentially create a supercut of the debauched nature of the church, the judiciary, and the throne.

| | |
|---|---|
| *En maison bonne* | In a good house |
| *Elle a pris des leçons;* | She took some lessons; |
| *Elle a pris des leçons* | She took some lessons |
| *En maison bonne,* | In a good house, |
| *Chez Gourdan, chez Brisson;* | At Gourdan's, at Brisson's |
| *Elle en sait long* | She knows all about it. |
| *Que de postures!* | So many positions! |
| *Elle a lu l'Arétin;* | She has read Aretino;[22] |
| *Elle a lu l'Arétin;* | She has read Aretino; |
| *Que de postures!* | So many positions! |
| *Elle sait en tout sens,* | She knows every way, |
| *Prendre les sens* | How to excite the senses.[23] |

This excerpt of one of the many *chansons* found in the *Anecdotes* informs the historian of ambivalent depictions of Madame du Barry. On one hand, Madame du Barry was portrayed as a foolish young girl with an excusable propensity for frivolity and vanity. On the other hand, she was rendered as a trained, experienced prostitute. She was simultaneously youthful, even virgin-like, and highly skilled in the boudoir. The lyrics began by describing du Barry as "a worthless girl, what a marvel! Makes love to the king, is at court."[24] This description makes clear that du Barry's "worthless[ness]" is what criminalized her presence at court. Though her role as mistress is noteworthy to the author, what seemed to draw more of his attention is the fact that du Barry was born a commoner. Additionally, her background as an alleged prostitute is what made her

[22]Saad El-Gabalawy, "Aretino's Pornography and Renaissance Satire," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 87.

[23] Pidansat de Mairobert, *Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry*, 99-100. Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 365. According to Darnton, it was originally written on 16 June 1768 when du Barry was introduced to the King. There are many subsequent versions of the song.

[24] Pidansat de Mairobert, 99. Quoted and translated in Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, 365.

the object of derision, or the "butt of the joke." The *chanson* read, "She is kind; she excites with art an old lecher," further emphasizing love making as her craft, and insulting the King at the same time. The poem focused on du Barry's skills in the art of sex: "In a good house she took some lessons…So many positions! She has read Aretino; she has read Aretino; so many positions! She knows every way, how to excite the senses." Pietro Aretino was well known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for his works of pornography. His most notorious book discussed the sexual preferences of courtesans, nuns, and other social elites from the perspective of sex workers.[25] He also wrote explicit sonnets that included both discussion and illustrations of sexual positions. Thus, this reference is clearly suggesting that Madame du Barry was well-educated in the art of love making. This is not merely suggesting that she was an excellent lover, but that she received formal training in the profession of lovemaking.[26]

This iteration of du Barry "the whore" born without a title was, of course, meant to illustrate that the King was a man of flesh; it was meant to indicate that with the consummation of Madame du Barry as the *maîtresse-en-titre*, Louis XV robbed the monarchy of its divinity through his personal fall from grace. Though most kings took mistresses, they did so within the confines of the expectations of noble origins. Louis XV's descent was propelled by his inability to adhere to the established norms. He was a man of the flesh not because he engaged in extramarital affairs, but because his preferred partners were not of noble birth. Not only were they not aristocrats, but they had the audacity to deceive the public into acting as if they were. This could easily be a source of anger not only for other elites, but for the public. If Jeanne Bécu could become the Comtesse du Barry, what precluded anyone else from nobility? A purported prostitute took residence in Versailles, but many other hardworking people remained destitute,

[25] El-Gabalawy, "Aretino's Pornography and Renaissance Satire," 87.
[26] El-Gabalawy, 87.

cheapening the entirety of monarchy and nobility. The *Anecdotes* tell the historian that Madame du Barry, despite her desire to appear as a woman of taste, was a joke in the eyes of the French public. She was a joke at the expense of the King; a joke not even worth telling if she had not been charged with making a mockery of the monarchy.

### 4.2 The Actress on a Stage

Another major apocryphal work written about Madame du Barry, *Mémoires de Madame La Comtesse du Barri*, by Etienne-Léon de Lamothe-Langon, provides the historian with insight into how the public viewed Madame du Barry as an actress on a stage. As with the *Anecdotes*, it is helpful to gain a better understanding of the historical significance of the document by contextualizing its author. Lamothe-Langon was a prolific writer of apocryphal memoirs, novels, and questionable histories; one of his most well-known memoirs was written from the perspective of Madame du Barry. He wrote four large volumes detailing the life and "career" of Madame du Barry as the *maîtresse-en-titre.* The volumes were not published until 1829-1830, in post-Revolutionary France; though presumably due to their length Lamothe-Langon began writing them much earlier. At the time of Madame du Barry's death, Lamothe-Langon would have been only seven years old. By the end of the Revolution, he was in his early teenage years. The Revolution and its aftermath likely colored Lamothe-Langon's entire life as his formative years were engulfed in those fires of change, challenge, and uncertainty. Regardless, he took the time to write four volumes on the Comtesse du Barry and pretended that they were written by her own hand. Though his motivations cannot be known with certainty, it is possible that Lamothe-Langon attempted to capitalize on the French need to come to terms with their shared traumatic

past by revisiting the life of a woman often credited with having played a tremendous role in the desacralization of the monarchy.[27]

Historian Ronan Steinberg discussed the long-term effects of the Reign of Terror on the psyche of France, describing it as collective trauma. Part of the process of recovering from trauma, according to Steinberg, was the concept of reparation. The author wrote about the June 1795 Law of Restitution in France which was intended to provide the families of the victims of the Terror with compensation for their losses. Everyone touched by the Terror was not eligible for restitution, however. According to Steinberg, "the list of exceptions to the law is particularly telling. It included "Louis Capet" and the royal family; the Dubarry family; those who were executed or sentenced to death in relation to 9 Thermidor; the émigrés, counterfeiters, distributors of fake *assignats*, squanderers of public funds, and more generally, conspirators."[28] Of course, the du Barry family included Madame du Barry, her husband Guillaume, the Comte du Barry, and his brother, the *Roué*, Jean Baptiste du Barry. This inclusion of Madame du Barry's family as ineligible for reparations despite her execution was significant in part because it illustrated the deep-seated loathing of the French public towards the *maîtresse-en-titre*, further solidifying the assertion that Madame du Barry's contemporaries vilified her. In addition, it set Madame du Barry up as a victim. Steinberg states that the law "created, in effect, a distinction between deserving and undeserving victims," implying that du Barry was an "undeserving victim."[29] This is noteworthy in that it not only reaffirms that du Barry was viewed as a victim, but that, even as a victim, she was not equal to other victims. Her actions, perceived to be against the whole of France, were inexcusable in the eyes of the public. Examining the details of the

[27] Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs,* 178.
[28] Ronen Steinberg, *The Afterlives of the Terror: Facing the Legacies of Mass Violence in Postrevolutionary France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2019), 87.
[29] Steinberg, 87.

*Mémoires* can reveal the intentions of the author and aid the historian in recovering details of the *mentalité* of the period, exposing yet another image of Madame du Barry.

The *Mémoires* begin with a preface from the "editor," who is, of course, the author, where he engages directly with the reader regarding du Barry's origins and addresses her crimes: "here we have one objection to get over. Does Madame du Barri really lay before us the 'round unvarnished tale' she promises in her first letter? This is indeed embarrassing for an editor to reply to; nevertheless, we will candidly confess that in the first instance Madame du Barri deceives us by pretending to legitimacy of birth, while a recent decree from the Court of Paris pronounces her to have been a natural daughter."[30] Here again the reader sees the obsession that the public had with Madame du Barry's lowly origins. In the first several pages of the document, the "editor" highlights the fact that Madame du Barry "deceives us" by falsifying her title and claiming to be of noble birth when she was a "natural daughter," or one born out of wedlock, both homing in on the fact that the *maîtresse-en-titre* lied to the public and additionally that she was not highborn.

Madame du Barry was frequently characterized by her sexuality. Lamothe-Langon reduced Madame du Barry to a being of sensual pleasure and described her youth as a dissipated time. "But there is one fact of which she could not have been in ignorance, the dissipated life she led in her early youth; and here, it must be confessed, she does not treat us with the candour she engaged to do. It may easily be perceived that she feels shame at the retrospect of this part of her life, in which she abandoned to the first comer charms which, some years afterwards, were sufficient to enslave a monarch."[31] Again, the language is accusatory, depicting the *maîtresse-en-*

[30] Etienne-Léon Lamothe-Langon, *Memoirs of Madame du Barri,* trans. by H.T. Riley, (London: H.S. Nichols, 1896), xii.
[31] Lamothe-Langon, xiii.

*titre* as duplicitous while also clearly indicating that Madame du Barry had a past worthy of shame and concealment. Lamothe-Langon also wrote of Madame du Barry's "charms" of which he is doubtlessly referring to du Barry's alleged time as a prostitute. Upon examining the original French text, a closer translation might be, "We see a woman who is ashamed of this time of her life, where she abandoned to the first comer that beauty which, a few years later, belonged to the King."[32] Though enslavement may not be exact, the French text insinuated that du Barry essentially possessed the King, or at least a portion of him. Possession of the King, a being imbued with divine power, whether in part or in entirety, could not be possible, and to state that the *maîtresse-en-titre* owned Louis XV suggests that by the end of the eighteenth century, the public viewed him as no longer ruling autonomously, but, instead, as the marionette whose strings were pulled by the woman who warmed his bed. Here, we uncover another image of Madame du Barry, that of the deceitful puppet master. This depiction implied that in the decades following the Revolution, the public viewed women and the secrecy they associated with them as one source of the failure of the monarchy.

Towards the end of the preface, Lamothe-Langon directly addressed the issue of Madame du Barry's crimes:

> How comes it, then, that Madame du Barri, in spite of the constant kindness evinced by her, has been represented under such odious colours? We might almost suppose that the hatred with which Louis XV was regarded had reflected upon his favourite; for with what, personally, could she be reproached? --- her enormous expenses? But to that we answer that surely the King had a right to confer on his mistress unlimited command over his privy purse; and even if otherwise, six millions more or less in the treasury of the

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[32]Lamothe-Langon, xiij. This text is my own translation of the original French "On voit qu'elle a honte de cette époque de sa vie, oú elle abandonnait au premier venu cette beauté qui, quelches années après, était encore un morceau du roi."

> State were nothing at a period when each Court intriguer was permitted to carry it away by handfuls.[33]

Here, we learned about Lamothe-Langon's personal views, but we can also presume that the popular opinion might have been in opposition to his own as he took the time to develop an argument against that opinion. In his examination of the faults of Madame du Barry, Lamothe-Langon first addressed the fact that many might have taken issue with the vast expenditures of the *maîtresse-en-titre.* To that he levied the blame against Louis XV and pointed out somewhat sardonically that the King had the "right to confer on his mistress unlimited command over his privy purse." This implied that, at the end of the day, the King made the decision to give Madame du Barry unlimited access to the royal coffers. The author therefore placed the blame more on the sovereign than on the mistress herself. He said, "six millions more or less in the treasury of the State were nothing at a period when each Court intriguer was permitted to carry it away by handfuls," again highlighting the incompetence of the Crown in maintaining control over expenditures.[34]

Lamothe-Langon's depiction of du Barry was one of a woman, who, though she committed regrettable acts, was not entirely to blame for those actions; from Lamothe-Langon's perspective, the King should have controlled his mistress. Essentially, Lamothe-Langon shaped popular opinion by contradicting a well-known version of Madame du Barry as a woman who swindled Louis XV and robbed the Crown and the French people. Lamothe-Langon's perspective showed a woman who merely couldn't help herself, similar to the depiction of du Barry as a silly young shopgirl by Pidansat de Mairobert. What separates this depiction of Madame du Barry from Pidansat de Mairobert's rendering of the mistress is its context. As

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[33]Lamothe-Langon, xix-xx.
[34] Lamothe-Langon, xix-xx.

mentioned earlier, this version of Madame du Barry did not exist until after the Revolution. Because he was writing in the wake of the Revolution, Lamothe-Langon had more room to render du Barry as a victim. She is reduced to a victim, though of course, as Steinberg describes, she was a less deserving victim than others.[35]

In reading the *Mémoires*, we see evidence of the court as theatrical performance.[36] The extensive four volumes of the *Mémoires* are both interesting and easy to read. One can imagine the literate of France picking up a copy and reading it in the same manner that we view a Netflix series today. Before examining how the text discusses performance, it is helpful to tease out the meaning of "theater." Though the term seems self-explanatory, closer examination of its implications in Old Regime France is helpful in uncovering the French public's view of the Court. As early as the sixteenth century, there were direct references to the Court as a locale for theatrical performance. According to Christine and Tracy Adams, "Visitors understood court life as a show and expected to be dazzled. In a treatise on kingship first presented to François I in 1519, Guillaume Budé described crowds watching 'as at a spectacle of honor' and 'a theater of nobility.'"[37]Adams and Adams argued that, "this sense of theatricality, we suggest, along with the vision of gender that we have laid out, was a historical precondition for a politically powerful royal mistress as the role developed in France." [38] According to Adams and Adams, ambassadors and other visitors benefitted from this theatricality. "These men [ambassadors] spent their days observing courtiers to glean intelligence that would allow their lords to make informed decisions and trying to make contact with the king and his intimates to promote their lord's interests."[39]

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[35] Steinberg, *The Afterlives of the Terror*, 87.

[36] Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress*, 168. See also Thomas E. Kaiser, "Madame de Pompadour and the Theaters of Power," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 4 (1996): 1025-1027.

[37] Guillaume Budé, *Livre de l'institution du prince,* 25-26, as quoted in Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress,* 10.

[38] Adams and Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress,* 42-43.

[39] Adams and Adams, 43.

Thus, we see the early development of the Court as a site for theatrical performance and this theatrical performance facilitated the creation of a brand of theater state which utilized performance, ceremony, and symbol rather than force to settle disputes and organize the state. Finally, Adams and Adams highlight the correlation between theatricality, secrecy, gender, and the *maîtresse-en-titre.* “The mistress was the privileged emblem of theatricality and secrecy in politics, which only worked in a polity based on both of those elements. This kind of secrecy was expected under the old regime but untenable in the new one.”[40] Additionally, we have the concept of the “theater state,” as defined by Clifford Geertz. Geertz argued, specifically in the context of Bali, that there existed a “theater state,” or a state whose power is based in symbols and ritual rather than force.[41] “Bali was thus ruled… in ceremonial, stratificatory, and administrative terms.”[42]

The *Mémoires* provide the historian with a snapshot of the afterglow of the Court as theatrical performance. The four volumes provide the reader with a play by play of every aspect of Madame du Barry’s life. The veracity of the story is irrelevant to the reader much in the way that the veracity of the series *The Crown* is irrelevant to its viewers. There is enough truth in the story that the creative portions of the *Mémoires* are palatable. One passage in particular provided an example of the drama associated with the Court. It described the political and social conditions surrounding Madame du Barry’s Court presentation:

> The old Bishop,[43] with his mischievous frankness, catechized Madame de Bearn so closely that at length she replied that, so much respect and deference did she entertain towards the Princesses, she would not present me until they should accord their permission for me to appear before them. M. de Roquelaure took this reply to the

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[40] Adams and Adams, 167-168.
[41] Geertz, *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, 15.
[42] Geertz, 15.
[43] This text refers to M. de Roquelaure, Bishop of Senlis.

> Choiseuls. Madame de Grammont, enchanted, thinking the point already gained, sent Madame de Bearn an invitation to supper the next day. But this was not the Countess's game. She was compelled to decide promptly, and she thought to preserve a strict neutrality until fresh orders should issue. What do you suppose she did? She wrote to both of us, Madame de Grammont and myself, that she had scalded her foot, and that it was impossible for her to go from home. On receiving my note I believed myself betrayed—forsaken. Comte Jean and I suspected that this was a feint, and went with all speed to call on the Comtesse de Bearn. She received us with her usual courtesy, complained that we had arrived at the very moment of the dressing of her wound, and told us she would defer it. But I would not agree to this. My brother-in-law went into another room, and Madame de Bearn began to unswathe her foot in my presence with the utmost caution and tenderness. I awaited the evidence of her falsehood, when, to my astonishment, I saw a horrible burn! I did not for a moment doubt, what was afterwards confirmed, namely, that Madame de Bearn had actually perpetrated this, and maimed herself of her own free will. I mentally cursed her Roman courage, and would have sent my heroic godmother to the devil with all my heart. Thus then was my presentation stopped by the foot of Madame de Bearn.[44]

This excerpt provides insight on how noblewomen might have been viewed by the public. On one hand, the story holds a magnifying glass up to the private lives of nobles. Instead of being mysterious and respectable, this story paints a ridiculous picture of Madame du Barry trying to be officially presented at Court. The entire concept of being officially presented might have seemed frivolous to the public, as made evident in the almost slapstick attempts of du Barry to secure her presentation. Additionally, this illustrated the deceitful nature of women. Madame du Barry assumed that Bearn duped her and then concluded that she must have injured herself to remain neutral in the conflict between du Barry and Grammont. The story continued with the antics of the courtiers. This section of the *Mémoires* painted an absurdist's picture of Court

[44] Lamothe-Langon, *Memoirs of Madame du Barry*, 168-170.

proceedings, ending with the scorched foot of Madame de Béarn, Madame du Barry's sponsor. The story played out somewhat like a comedy, exhibiting the foolish, dishonest nature of the women at Court. The entirety of Madame du Barry's story followed the trajectory of a tragic comedy, culminating in her death and the death of the monarchy. It is here, with an understanding of the Court as a theater of power, performance, and polity that we can reveal yet another image of Madame du Barry. Here, we see Madame du Barry, the actress; Madame du Barry the public woman against a private backdrop; and Madame du Barry the embodiment of subterfuge.

### 4.3 The Scapegoat

The *Anecdotes* and *Mémoires* provide the historian with additional illustrations of the *maîtresse-en-titre* from the perspective of the French public. The *Anecdotes* created an image of Madame du Barry as an object of derision and as the "butt" of the joke that was the monarchy. This version of the mistress makes it difficult for the historian not to feel sympathy towards Madame du Barry against her better judgment. Though one should not place contemporary thought onto the past, it is difficult not to view Madame du Barry at age sixteen, her breasts and genitals groped by the hands of Madame Gourdan so as to ascertain her value as a source of income, as unsettling. Though the veracity of this exact retelling is dubious, it is not hard to imagine that an instance such as this likely occurred before many young women began their careers in sex work. The *Anecdotes* spent a considerable amount of time hypersexualizing Madame du Barry as both a child and as an adult, as is evident in the *chanson* provided in this chapter. It was one of many *chansons* found in the work that created the image of the mistress as a low-class prostitute. Though her past as a purported sex worker is clearly frowned upon, it is the social status associated with this alleged sex work that is the primary point of contention,

rather than sex itself. She, as well as every other *maîtresse-en-titre*, obviously fulfilled the sexual desires of the King as part of her job description. Ultimately, though, the *Anecdotes* focused on the social status of Madame du Barry as the backdrop for a joke about the King. She was essentially inconsequential, save for her role in highlighting the shortcomings of the King as a man, rather than as an extension of the divine. Thus, the *Anecdotes* reveal to the historian a Jeanne Bécu reduced to a jest.

The *Mémoires*, on the other hand provide a slightly different image of the mistress; this version of Madame du Barry is one of an actress. When viewed through the lens of theater, the *Mémoires* depicted a woman expected to fulfill the role of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as a character in a play on the world stage, against the backdrop of the French monarchy. Madame du Barry, as an actress, deceived her audience, the King and the Court, but her performance came across as ingenuine and failed to convince the people of France. Her failure to mesmerize the French public is evident in the style in which her performance is conducted. She was thrust into a tragicomedy in which she and Marie Antoinette both served as highly sexualized scapegoats. Madame du Barry acted as a metaphor for the fall of the Old Regime and literally lived out the death of the Regime. She was both the agent of disaster and the final act of the theatrical performance of the monarchy. Ultimately, the texts examined in this chapter aid in the construction of a more multifaceted depiction of the *maîtresse-en-titre* as well as in a better understanding of the causes of the French Revolution and its aftermath.

# 5 CONCLUSIONS

"Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were."

-Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*

All histories are written with the intent to recover the past. In most instances, this is done to reveal the truth, whether for the first time or in an effort to correct the mistakes of the previous generations of historians. This thesis is no exception. The intent, at its simplest, is to recover the past by examining the life of a single woman: Jeanne Bécu, la Comtesse du Barry. Research thus far has done little to create a comprehensive picture of this woman. She has not been completely lost in time; she was never forgotten. She was, however, not entirely remembered as she was. This thesis has revealed the many masks worn by Madame du Barry to gain a better understanding of the impact of her life on the entirety of France while simultaneously exploring the concepts of celebrity, performance, the Court as theater, and the mentalité of the French public in the decades surrounding the Revolution.

So, why do these numerous images of Madame du Barry matter? They not only provide us with a look at the life of a prominent member of the king's court, but they also indicate the influence that du Barry had over socio-political life in the decade leading up to the French Revolution. Her use of portraiture and her physical surroundings indicate a woman who acted as a historical agent. She was not a victim of the times as she is so often painted to be, but instead attained unlikely social mobility and secured her position within the Palace of Versailles. Additionally, I argue that her use of portraiture was akin to personal propaganda, which she used to promote her personal brand to become a proto celebrity.

After exploring a variety of sources, including portraiture, living quarters, memoirs, legal documents, and apocryphal works written about Madame du Barry, this thesis has worked to

crystalize a meaningful representation of France's last *maîtresse-en-titre.* There are various versions of Jeanne Bécu now revealed to the historian. In her story we find a child, a virgin, a prostitute, a struggling young woman trying to fit in, a curator, a silly shopgirl, a talented con-artist, a joke, a scapegoat, a villain, a victim, and ultimately, an actress faking her way to the top. We even find some answers to Robert Darnton's questions, "What causes revolutions? Why do value systems change? How does public opinion influence events?"[1] We see that Madame du Barry, viewed as the embodiment of scandal by her contemporaries, bore much of the blame for the desacralization of the King and, by proxy, was charged with degrading the monarchy in the years leading up to the Revolution. Her feminine influence, along with the influence of Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette, stood in direct opposition to the new philosophies taking hold of the French public. We see that public opinion created a folklore around the character of Madame du Barry, forcing her to be an actress on a stage and making real in the minds of the public these manufactured stories. In this way, Madame du Barry became a permanent resident in the folklore, allowing public opinion to change the course of history. In many ways, Madame du Barry represented the worst parts of the *Ancien Régime,* but it is important not to end her story with a reduction. Madame du Barry, like all individuals, was not simply any one of her identities. She was a culmination of all the various identities she chose and those superimposed over her visage. Madame du Barry was a multifaceted individual whose actions, like the flap of a butterfly's wings, forever altered the history of France.

[1] Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, xvii.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

Figure 3.1. Portrait of Madame du Barry. Eighteenth-century. François Hubert Drouais. Oil on canvas, 78 ¾ x 55 in. Location: Chambre de Commerce, Versailles, France. Accessed through JSTOR.

Figure 3.2.Portrait of Madame du Barry. 1781. Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. Oil on panel, 27 ¼ x 20 ¼ in. Location: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Accessed through JSTOR.

Figure 3.3. Portrait of Madame du Barry. 1782. Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. Oil on canvas, 114.94 x 89.54 cm. Location: National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Collection, Washington, D.C.,USA.

Figure 3.4. Bust of Madame du Barry. Circa 1771-1773. Augustin Pajou. Ceramics, soft-paste porcelain, 12 ¾ x 8 ½ x 5 in. Location: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA. Photograph credit: Thomas R. DuBrock. Accessed through JSTOR.

Figure 3.5. Secret passageway from the king’s apartments to Madame du Barry’s apartments. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress’ Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

Figure 3.6. Madame du Barry’s bed. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress’ Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

Figure 3.7. Swan basin in Madame du Barry's apartments. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress' Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

Figure 3.8. Vanity and nude statue in Madame du Barry's apartments. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress' Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

Figure 3.9. Photo of the shutters and window in Madame du Barry’s living room. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress’ Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

Figure 3.10. Photo of Madame du Barry’s living room and parquet flooring. Photo of the video tour of the Mistress’ Apartments at the Palace of Versailles by Brady Haran.

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