

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Music is one of the most important aspects of cultural identity in Corsica. Rooted in ancient history and revitalized in the revolutionary political climate of the 1960s and 70s, its popular choral form—the *paghjella*—has come to define modern music upon the island. Music, like language, has the ability to communicate certain feelings and values beyond its structural form and can also serve as a marker for individual as well as collective identity. In a minority regional context such as that of Corsica, many view cultural expressions such as language and music as ‘guardians’ of a local tradition that is weakened in a globalizing world. Thus, according to them, these expressions should remain pure and ‘faithful’ to their heritage.

Yet, and likely in part because of globalization, music in Corsica has largely changed in recent decades. Musicians there today are combining ancient and modern forms, adopting instruments and styles not native to the island, and, in some cases, rejecting altogether ‘traditional’ Corsican music. Yet many of these, in as much as they represent a growing norm, often come under close scrutiny by those who regard their music as either inauthentic or betraying of tradition.

Although some balance or hybridity of both ‘new’ and ‘old’ appears to be the preferred form of modern musical expression, the very notions of traditional and non-traditional are still debated and are at present widely discussed in Corsica, in a larger, more general sense of identity. The island’s music provides a valuable perspective of the ongoing processes of cultural awareness and change.

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Modern Music and Cultural Identity in Corsica

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Christopher M. Baldrige, Author

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It is my honor to first thank Annette and Ken and the extended family of Poggio di Venaco, just as it was my honor to know them during my fieldwork and continue our friendship through today. May their families all grow, change, and change gracefully, and with humor. *Avà.*

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To Katja, who changed my life.

To Sarah, who gives it meaning.

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Note on Translation

Difficulties in translation can arise in the most subtle and (seemingly) innocent of instances, no matter how brief the text may be. The thesis that follows is written in English, although most citations from my primary and secondary research are in French, Corsican, and Italian. All translations into English are my own and are, of course, subject to discussion. As a way of facilitating the reader's understanding of non-English usages, I have included an English translation in parentheses after each citation throughout this work. The original French texts will be italicized, and the original Corsican passages will be italicized and boldface. As an afterthought, I have left the proper names of Corsican music groups (which are, for the most part, in Corsican) italicized, although they are no longer in boldface. Because I feel that the groups' tendency toward choosing a name in Corsican—furthermore a name typically dealing with a 'traditional' aspect of the island—is important, I have included a list of the groups and musicians considered in this thesis alongside an English translation, where appropriate, in Appendix A.

My fieldwork was conducted primarily in the French language, and at times in Italian. My knowledge of the latter certainly helped me in understanding and trying to converse in Corsican, which is closer to Italian than French in its syntax, phonology, and lexicon. I will take this opportunity to mention two Corsican vocabulary words important to this work: the verb *campà* can be translated into English as both 'to live' and 'to survive,' as in French, Spanish, Italian, and perhaps other Italic languages. The noun *cantu*, on the other hand, diverges slightly from the French and English '*chant*'/ 'chant' in that it no longer carries a religious or ritualistic connotation. Instead, it can denote either 'song' or 'voice.' I encourage the reader to consider both possible meanings when reading this thesis.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Arrival in Corsica and Outline of Thesis

I arrived in Bastia in mid-June of 2001. While finding my way from the port to the train station and stopping occasionally to ask or confirm directions, I was surprised that my Corsican '*Bon ghjurnu*', which I had taken care to practice, was met on each occasion with the French '*Bonjour*'. It was as if I were in Nice or Marseille or any coastal city in southern France, in terms of climate, architecture, and now, to my surprise, language as well. Having found the station and boarded the two-car train that links Bastia and Ajaccio, I set off on the two-hour journey for Corte, in the center of the island. The further inland we travelled, the more frequently the train would stop, either in small village stations or in between stations, or to wait for animals (on three different occasions, two cows, a herd of goats, and one pig) to clear the tracks.

At the stations, the same ticket-collector who had spoken to the passengers only in French (at least within my ear range), would get off the train for a chat with friends and sometimes a cigarette. As my window was open and often next to the jovial conversations, I was able to hear sounds that I hadn't heard all day long, the sounds of the Corsican language, *U Corsu*. As if a hidden treasure, there I was finally discovering the 'mysterious' Corsican language that I had so wanted to hear. I began taking notes immediately and, in the days following my arrival in the village of Poggio di Venaco, sought to hear and try speaking it with as many people as possible.

Unfortunately, it was not to be so easy. Even knowing that a certain person spoke the language (not every Corsican speaks Corsican), my attempts to speak it were most frequently met with a reply in French, often being told that whatever I had just said was Italian, i.e. not Corsican.

After a few weeks of immersing myself in the hospitable village of Poggio, I began falling into a sort of village rhythm best described as 'Mediterranean': work in the morning, a copious lunch and then rest, 'some' work in the afternoon, and walks in the evening after dinner. It was during these times and in speaking with the villagers that I

began to observe and hear hints of what life in Corsica is like: a strong emphasis on family and the village, on trust, on a 'private' language, on Corsica itself.

As it turned out, the scope of my ethnography turned away from a strict focus on language and toward a remarkable communication of culture in a different domain. Across ethnographic observations, discussions with Corsicans and visitors to the island, and research conducted at the University of Corsica in Corte, it became clear that there were, in fact, multiple identities on the island and different ways in which people engaged or rejected them. Beyond, yet akin to, language choice and use (e.g., who speaks Corsican with whom, when, why...?), I found the domain of music in Corsica to be an immensely insightful and expressive point of reference from which to explore identities within the island.

As in other areas of the Mediterranean, Corsica reveals a rich history of music, and its inhabitants are keenly aware of both the musical tradition and the cultural heritage that such music expresses. As I came to understand, music in Corsica—in particular the polyphonic or choral *paghjella*—conveys an *identity* closely tied to islandhood, tradition, and the Corsican language. However, I also came to discover music on the island that diverged from these themes. This non-standard *paghjella* expresses a different identity; one influenced by globalization, modernity, and the French language. Although the 'traditional' in music appears to remain the preferred form in many aspects, certain non-traditional approaches to music, in its creation, production, and perception, seem to be growing in Corsica. By exploring both forms and the numerous 'hybrid' varieties that have arisen in the past two decades, I hope to present a sense of musical identity upon the island, as it is intimately related to Corsican cultural identity in a larger sense. Experiencing—creating, listening to, discussing—popular music in Corsica today seems a balance between affirming traditional, insular values and participating in a modern, global community. In this thesis, I will attempt to acknowledge a link between musical expression and cultural identity, and show how cultural forces in Corsica's past, present, and future may be more fully understood through musical 'forces' which give voice to the island's transition from yesterday to tomorrow, from local to global.

In this thesis I will explore current musical and cultural trends, placing them within a historical and linguistic context. I will examine the place of 'traditional' and 'modern' identities in the lives of contemporary Corsicans, and question how music in Corsica today is indexical of larger and more general cultural trends. Finally, I will attempt to predict the direction and potential outcome of those trends.

In Chapter 2, I will give a general introduction to the island. Following a brief overview of the island's history, geo-cultural and political context within the Mediterranean, a discussion of the Corsican language and its socio-linguistic roles will be given.

In Chapter 3, I will explore some of the origins and outcomes of identity politics in Corsica over the past 30 years. Following a discussion of the theoretical assumptions around which this thesis is organized, I will present the political climate of the 1970s and 80s as well as the cultural revival that became interlaced with the political fervor of that time. After discussing the present-day implications and manifestations of that era, the focus shifts to music, and to its link with language and culture.

In Chapter 4, I will describe the island's musical landscape in terms of what C. Camillieri describes as 'soundscape'. From its Mediterranean origins to its political context in recent decades, I will present an overview of the current state of modern music in Corsica, through portraits of some of the musicians and musical groups which seem to represent the different directions and identities expressed in the island's music today.

In Chapter 5, I will further explore relations of music and culture, considering their inter-relatedness as indexical or symbolic of larger cultural, political, and institutional trends in Corsica. I will here discuss communication about music and its cultural significance, both among Corsicans and in Corsican media. The role of the island's music in a globalizing *and* localizing world will be discussed, with particular focus being given to musical phenomena that appear to synthesize the powerful forces that so often keep separate that which is 'local' from that which is 'foreign,' that which is 'traditional' from that which is 'modern.'

1.2 Poggio de Venaco/ *Pudhju di Vinacu*

Beginning one's fieldwork in a 'foreign' land (not the ethnographer's own) can be a difficult task, in that it may take time to orient one's self, both physically and culturally, to find lodging, to locate informants, to eventually earn their trust... I was fortunate to participate in an ecotourism project organized in the village of Poggio de Venaco (*Pudhju di Vinacu* in Corsican). The project was created as a joint effort by Dr. Annette Samec-Luciani (a native Corsican), Dr. Kenneth Colson, an American anthropologist, and the mayor of Poggio di Venaco. The three had organized the three-week work 'camp' as the first of three phases in which volunteers would, in the first year, clear brush from the town's river, and then, in the next two years, brandish a hiking trail upon the *Minutu*'s banks and mark it with small signs indicating the Corsican name for local flora and fauna to be found there. All of this would eventually increase the village's appeal to tourism, Corsica's primary industry.

In June, after a passage by boat from Livorno, Italy, to Bastia (Corsica), I took the train to Corte in the center of the island. Dr. Samec-Luciani picked me up by car and drove me to her house in Poggio de Venaco, 11 kilometers up the mountain.

Upon arriving at her home, I met her 3 daughters—who were to become my 'adopted' Corsican sisters and personal tour guides, and we all-but-immediately set out on foot so that they could show me the town of Poggio. After an approximately one-minute walk, we were at the edge of town, and after a short 5 minutes walking down the main road we had reached the far edge of the village.

In collaboration with the town's two civic workers, François and Denis (our supervisors), the project was a way for us volunteers to positively contribute to a small community's long-abandoned place of recreation, socialization, and, at one time, sustenance. Fishing, grazing herds of goats and sheep, and grinding chestnuts at the mill—now overgrown with ivy and brush—had all once been common practices. In return, the village graciously and generously welcomed the Corsican, French, Belgian, and American volunteers, as did Dr. Samec-Luciani, who lodged all ten of us in her home.

The project was both challenging and rewarding, and it familiarized me with both the village, its inhabitants, and the landscape of central Corsica. The island is a place of mountains, forests, and secluded rivers and waterfalls; not only special to native Corsicans, but also attractive to tourists and hikers. It is a region of intrigue, in which the legendary *vendetta* was once prevalent. It is a region of history and pride, from which Pasquale Paoli governed the island during its only autonomous period, in the eighteenth century. It is also the region in which the prominent form of Corsican music—the *paghjella*—was born, and about which it still sings praise, hundreds of years later.

I had wanted to do my field research in the Mediterranean, likely in France or Italy, since I already had language skills in French and Italian. Corsica seemed the perfect choice, a region of France with historic ties to Italy and a ‘regional’ language closer in structure to Italian than to French.

A community of about 100 year-round residents, Poggio boasts one restaurant and one bar, both along the anonymous main street, as well as an almost medieval section of perhaps 50 square meters stretching out above the restaurant, with residences and winding paths that lead to the town’s one church. Below the bar, ‘Le Quiroc’, on the other side of the main street, descends a sloping area of both pasture and wild brush, which culminate in a quiet valley through which the small river, *u Minutu*, passes.

After a few days and the arrival of a few other volunteers to Annette’s home, we were ready to begin work at the *Minutu* stream, said river. Although a few decades before, as the villagers told us on many occasions, the riverbank below the village was a lively place where people gathered to socialize, wash clothes, fish and where children played, over the years the same banks had grown silent and overgrown with *maquis*, or brush, as the river grew polluted and unfishable. Our task, then, was to remove brush alongside the banks and in the river, using humanpower and manual cutting tools. The project lasted three weeks, during which we worked chiefly in the morning, leaving the afternoons open for rest or exploration of the region. Later, we would generally regroup at the bar in the evening, together with many of the townsfolk, during the before-dinner time of the *apéritif* or for an often lengthy after-dinner *digestif*.

This near-month of work was an important time of initiation to the island and, specifically to one village and its people. By participating in a project important to the people of Poggio, I was able to meet them regularly, during and after work, and to get to know them and to exchange ideas, and, I believe, to earn their trust. Nowhere did I feel more a part of the Mediterranean region, the island, the village, than among François and Denis and the villagers, who often came down the hill to check our progress, to congratulate and to thank us. They sometimes told us stories of a 'place' that once existed there, where people gathered often to work or play. As the brush, or *maquis*, became cleared, we could envision the children playing, the adults working and socializing...we could almost hear their conversations, and imagine a harmony of voices singing *paghjella* from the village above.

For, this was the beginning stage of my research; immersing myself in the field and becoming familiar with my informants; feeling slightly more involved than T. Belmonte's initial feelings of 'unobtrusive observer', yet much less than his 'unwelcome intruder' (Belmonte 1989:9), as the people of Poggio were more than generous and hospitable.

As the townsfolk had become accustomed to my pad of paper and pen which I always carried with me, and, on occasion, accompanied with a hand-held recorder, I started bringing these out even more frequently, asking questions and jotting down notes in the style of informal interviews, and audio-recording in the case of more formal interviews and concerts. As if a cast of characters in a play, several personae began to emerge; such that the bar owners, Jean-Jacques and Eric, the restaurant's pizza-maker, Jacques, the elderly and physically active Hungarian immigrant, Olga, and many others, both named and unnamed, took time to tell me about the village and about Corsica, and to discuss such subjects as corrupt politics, cultural trends, village dessertification, and music.

1.3 The Ethnographic Method

During my first evening in Poggio and after a walk through town, Annette set about telling me about the village, its denizens, and various other aspects of life in Corsica. Of course, I was most interested in the Corsican language, but was excited also to hear about food, art, and academia on the island. In fact, as Annette told me, there was to be a university-organized conference on Corsican music the following day in Corte, and that she would drive me there and back if I wanted.

Eager to learn all I could about the island, I spent the following morning and afternoon at this relatively small conference (50-100 attendees) entitled *San Ghjuvà: "Chants et musiques religieux corses et de méditerranée: la tradition orale, le signe, le mode"*, which was held to discuss both historic and modern structural aspects of Corsican and Mediterranean religious music.

Although the discussions pertained to very technical (and mostly historic) aspects of sacred music—which would not become the focus of my ethnography—I was impressed with how charged with knowledge and opinion the small conference rooms were. As I learned, Corsican music has a rich and extensive history, as well as an important context (secular as well as religious) within the Mediterranean. The conference, for me, shed academic light upon what I was to discover along the banks of the *Minutu*: that Corsican music plays a crucial role in the island's identity, and, although ancient, is by no means forgotten.

In the first few days following the conference, my time in Poggio was spent getting to know the town and its citizens, and participating in two of its most popular activities, *fa' a passaggiata*, or 'taking a stroll', and having a drink inside the bar or outside, on the terrace, while always in the company of others.

When I asked people about the Corsican language in Poggio di Venaco, many expressed regret that it wasn't spoken as much as before, and others seemed more ambivalent about the language, and especially about the need to speak it. Others claimed not to know how to say certain things, if anything, in Corsican; and others still would not

comment at all, or would dismiss the topic quickly, in French, saying that there was no word for or way to convey a certain object or idea in Corsican.

One thing, however, upon which many villagers seemed more than ready to comment was music; that is, Corsican music. Most, aged 25 and over, explained to me first the context within which traditional Corsican music was born and reborn: from an ancient history of a mountain people to a heated political environment of the 1970s in which nationalist and 'revolutionary' movements were taking place. Today, as some told me, the island's music still has strong political tones, but also brings together communities such as Poggio in a social way. Music, as they said, invokes and celebrates traditional Corsican life, such as nature, the *maquis*, the village, and the island.

For the many citizens of Poggio and for other Corsicans alike, Corsican music is an important component of insular cultural identity. It seemed to express, to various degrees of positive and negative reception, what it means to be Corsican. The people of Poggio seemed keenly aware that Corsican music holds a much higher role than that of entertainment, much in the same way that the Corsican language is more than simply a means of communication between two people.

My ethnographic research began in this way: communicating regularly with people in the village and, later, elsewhere on the island. Talking with them, informally and in more-formal interviews, I was able to get an impression of Corsican music and the perceptions regarding the music itself, as well as of the musicians that performed it and what aspects of Corsican identity were or were not expressed through their music.

Besides interviewing informants, I soon began to research the topic at the University of Corte's library and at the island's Ethnographic Museum, also in Corte. I was chiefly interested in publications that discussed music and cultural identity, and although most scholarly works there mainly dealt with structural and historic aspects of the island's music (like the conference), I found an abundance of publications in semi-academic and popular journals, newspapers, magazines, and music/album reviews that took up the topic of identity expressed in Corsican music—i.e. how 'Corsican' is the music or album of a certain group or musician.

I informally interviewed both academic and non-academic persons regarding music, engaged myself in literature/media analysis on a daily basis, and then conducted more-formal interviews with the same or other individuals so as to balance opinion expressed both in popular media and by individuals.

As language was my principal vehicle in conducting this research, so too have I considered the subject of my research, music, for its expressive qualities. That is, what is the current state of music in Corsica and what does it 'say' about Corsican identity? In his discussion of linguistics in anthropology and the 'Ethnography of Speaking,' Hymes highlights the importance of considering the form of speech inasmuch as its context is described. "Thus, analysis of the role of speech in cognitive behavior leads into analysis of the ethnographic context of speech" (1968: 105)(emphasis my own).

Language can express, but also negotiate, reinforce, and/or challenge facets of cultural identity, both as a mode of communication and as a sociolinguistic marker (i.e., What does it mean to use a certain language? Why does it matter with whom, where, and when one uses a certain language/dialect/accent, and, indeed, what different forms are to be found?). Far beyond simple entertainment, music performs a similar function of cultural expression and understanding, and communicates meaning on many levels.

Music and language are both fundamental elements in discourse about Corsican identity. In this thesis I argue that both the performance and perceptions of music, and the communication thereof by individuals and the media, are indicative of larger cultural patterns and values as revealed through a central, active expression of culture. Having researched language in Great Britain and in Europe, J. Cheshire notes:

"Furthermore, since language is intricately related to the social, political, and cultural contexts in which we live, analysing current processes of continuity and change in language behaviour can provide us with insights into trajectories of continuity and change in social life generally" (Cheshire 2002: 19)

This thesis will, effectively, consider music as a language in-itself, in that it communicates, comments upon, and questions identity, just as language. It will also recognize the language surrounding music—again, of individuals and of media—as being insightful and, indeed, indicative of larger cultural patterns upon the island.

Hymes defines 'speech community' as "a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (1972: 54). There exists such a speech community among Corsicans, who examine, discuss, approve of or reject not only music in Corsica, but also what facets of identity are (or are not) conveyed therein. It was my task, then, to observe the *speech situations* (Ibid: 56) of this community, to participate therein when welcome or quietly observe when not invited, and to lastly, in this thesis, render an understanding of Corsican identity as expressed through music to both current academic discussion regarding identity among minority cultures, and to Corsicans themselves as an ethnographer's understanding of the island's current status of cultural identity.

This work is limited in several ways. The length of my fieldwork did not exceed three months and occurred only during the summer season, during the peak of tourism. A more complete period of ethnographic research in a small Corsican village would have spanned an entire calendar year, giving a fuller perspective of a particular community's experience. I feel that more attention as well, during my fieldwork and in research before and after that time, to gender roles in music, language, and cultural identity—in particular the role of women in these domains—would have led to a more holistic perspective of both lingering and changing identities in Corsica. These shortfalls, I can only hope, will be addressed in future projects. I do feel, however, that this work can offer a grounded and instructive insight into Corsican cultural identity, as well as a useful contribution to current academic discussion of minority identity, both internationally and within Corsica.

Chapter 2 Cultural Landscapes

To contextualize any one aspect (language, music, culture) of modern Corsica, it is essential to be familiar with the island's general history. Some of the different eras and events that have most marked the history of the island continue to play an important role in modern Corsica, whether one discusses language, music, settlement patterns, or cultural/ethnic identities, which all appear to influence one another.

The modern history of Corsica, briefly outlined below, is one of conquest and occupation, where the many cultures of the Mediterranean basin and of Europe arrived upon the island, with the intent of exploration, colonization, or trade. Many Corsicans are acutely aware of this history, and a lingering feeling of oppression seems to trouble more than a few. At the same time there can be felt a general strength and pride of Corsicans to have survived colonial occupation and cultural imperialism on numerous occasions. Expressions such as "*Dix fois conquise mais jamais soumise*" ('Ten times conquered but never defeated') and "*Sò corsu è ne sò fieru.*" ('Corsican and proud of it') often accompany the symbolic Moor's head (see appendix) on posters, stickers, and key chains.

While indeed certain aspects of history—such as political and militant revolutions—have perhaps become trivialized (as they resurface as tourist souvenirs) or have been forgotten, the general historic atmosphere of Corsica remains present in collective memory of an island people that has faced many a colonizer on its shores, from the resilient vantage point of its inland mountains. Language attests to cultural admixture over the ages, with traces of words and structures of foreign languages left deeply ingrained in speech communities, while French, English, and other languages have become increasingly commonplace in even the most removed of mountain villages.

Of the total Corsican population of 260,000, over half live in the hundreds of villages that dot the island, while the other half resides, for the most part, in the larger cities of Bastia and Ajaccio. Corsica is divided (geographically, politically, musically...) into two main parts —North and South. However, many different customs, dialects, and

architectural styles typify the diverse coastlines and inland regions. Depending on which criteria are used, the island of Corsica can in fact be divided into many regions. Across several categories (e.g. geographic, linguistic, cultural), we might think of six principle areas, including the *Cap Corse*, *Aléria* Plain, Calvi region, central Corsica, Ajaccio region, and southern Corsica, or *Corse du sud* (see appendix). While each region differs geographically and linguistically, a politically regional and general cultural distinction is made between northern and southern Corsica, or *Haute Corse* and *Corse du sud*.

Once a tourist leaves the renown beaches of Corsica to go inland, he or she will immediately find hilly or quite mountainous terrain, with caverns, peaks, and hundreds of small villages to encounter, throughout the island. Modern efforts in the tourist industry—Corsica's largest—have indeed sought to bring tourists inland, to discover and adventure within the 'heart' of this 'protected' island, such as the ATC's (*Agence du tourisme de la Corse*) recent slogan in Belgium: "The sea created Corsica so as to better protect it." (L. 2001: 14).

Corsican (choral) music, while not yet an active symbol used by the ATC to entice tourists, is certainly one of the principal inland 'treasures' to be found by the adventurous tourist. There is little doubt that its origins lie in the center of the island, with the town of Sermanu typically considered to be *the* birthplace of the island's traditional musical form, *a paghjella*. One also notes a division, a sort of imaginary swath from Ajaccio to Bastia that separates the North's tradition of polyphony (the harmonizing of multiple voices) and the South's monodic, or single-voiced musical heritage. The focus of this thesis will remain—musically, linguistically, culturally—in the northern-central half of Corsica, specifically at the foot of the Restonica, Castagniccia and Niolu mountains, where it is said that the polyphonic tradition of *paghjella* was born. Reflecting a greater polyphonic trend of music in the Mediterranean, this form has of course spread outwards, but remains most intense in the center of the island. Turchini notes a connection between Corsica and Sardinia, where: "The two insular traditions (with particular mention of polyphony) seem to each crystallize on the mountain ranges.

Two large circles can be broadly traced, in Sardinia...and the other around a Niolu-Castagniccia core in Corsica” (Turchini 1996: 137).

Not only does this central region of Corsica give a ready insight into the island’s important musical tradition, it also serves as a locus from which one may more readily observe a stronghold of traditional culture, whether represented in occupation, festivals, and/or language.

2.1 History and Setting

As indicated above, it is important to be familiar with Corsica’s social and political history in order to understand much of the island’s social and political identity. What followed centuries of foreign conquest and occupation of the island culminated in a revolutionary period during the 1960s and and ’70s, called *U Riaghistu*. During this time, political factions formed, with their principal collective interest being independence from the French state and, thus, autonomy for the island. This was also an important era, as we will see, for a general cultural and specifically linguistic revival.

This ‘modern’ history of Corsica will be the principal point of departure for contextualizing this thesis on a temporal plane. The events that occurred during the mid-twentieth century marked not only a turbulent (and even violent) political era then, but also marked a sort of collective cultural identity that has continued into the twenty-first century. The nature of the (politically) revolutionary *Riaghistu* has present-day connotations in the domain of modern politics, but also in language, socio-cultural identity, and music.

2.1.1 Ancient History (and Modern Relevance)

—“*Méditerranée, littéralement, <<au milieu des terres>>. Et quelle entité, mieux que l’île, pourrait incarner ce symbole? L’île est le port de l’histoire, celui d’où l’on part et celui où tout revient, dans le mythe elle est l’étape, le but, l’aboutissement comme l’exil, le départ. Monde bivalent, tout s’en échappe et tout y aboutit*” (“Mediterranean, literally ‘in the middle of the lands.’ And which entity better than the island could incarnate this

symbol. The island is the port of history, from which one departs and to which all returns. In mythology, it is the step, the end, the outcome of exile, the departure. A bivalent world, from which all escapes and to which all returns”)(Turchini 1996: 135)

Before the turn of the second millennium, Corsica had experienced Saracen, or Moorish, occupation alongside Visigoth invaders, and was, until the Crusades, under Byzantine occupation. Since the beginning of the second millennium and for several hundred years, the island was passed —often back and forth—among different Italian states, such as the Etruscans, Syracusians, and Pisans. It was taken, lost, and retaken by the Genoese, alternating with French possession, until 1755 when Pasquale Paoli led the largest uprising and became the *Général en chef de la nation Corse* (Bianchi)¹. Ruling until 1769, at which point Corsica came under British control, Paoli regained control of the island from 1794 until 1796, at which point it became decisively French.

And so the island has remained until today, excepting a brief Italian occupation between 1942-1943 under Mussolini. In 1943 Corsica became “*le premier département français libéré*” (Bianchi), and today it accounts for two *départements* of the French Republic, *Haute Corse* and *Corse du Sud*.

Although the Moor’s head on Corsica’s flag reflects a North-African heritage, modern Greek is still spoken in one part of the island (in the town of Cargese), and other ‘foreign’ remnants in language and customs reflect a multicultural history in Corsica, the one aspect of the island’s past that seems most well-remembered is the brief period of independence under Pasquale Paoli. Streets, bars, and hotels are named after him, and his name is sung and praised in many songs from the 1970s and ’80s. One could have the impression that modern-day political or cultural groups in favor of Corsica’s independence are imagining a return to such ‘glory’ days of freedom and autonomy (both political *and* cultural/linguistic). Benedict Anderson, speaking of history and the ‘new nationalisms’ in Europe, describes a “modular, ‘continuous’ awakening from a chronologically gauged, A.D.-style slumber: a guaranteed return to an aboriginal essence” (1991: 195). It is surely not an ‘aboriginal essence’ of lack of electricity,

¹ This and the following information is taken from L. Bianchi’s website, “*Dix Fois Conquise mais jamais soumise*”. <http://www.sitec.fr/iledebeaute/france/htm>.

plumbing, or modern technologies such as cars or the internet that some Corsicans want, but rather an ideological return to a time in which—it is imagined—a Corsican culture and language flourished. These times became ‘remembered’ and glorified during the *Riaquistu* in the late twentieth century, in language and cultural activism, in music, and in politics.

2.1.2 Recent Political History

Much of the interest behind and involvement with political activism during the 1960s-80s was fueled by concern for restriction or loss of cultural and linguistic heritage. Though by this time Corsica now politically belonged to France, state laws that protected minority languages on the continent did *not* always apply to Corsica. The European and American spirit of protest in the late 1960s made its way to the island, taking on special meaning in a place that was ‘awakening’ from its proverbial slumber.

The spirit of independence was alive, and thus popular voice gave way to political action. Groups and organizations and, eventually, political parties were formed, and movements began seeking the recognition of Corsicans as a ‘separate’ people (separate from France). What soon arose, however, was the question: to what *political* degree should Corsica become separate? Should the island have more far-reaching autonomy within the French state, or should it become separate altogether? Many groups at the time sought the latter, though there was further division as to how to go about political secession from France. The most militant group, the FLNC (*Fronte di a Liberazione Naziunale di a Corsica*) was formed in 1976, seeking total separation of the ‘Corsican nation’ from France. The FLNC bombed institutional targets and assassinated political individuals, both upon the island and on the continent. Although such measures were extreme, they clearly did not mark the end of such activity. Alcock notes that:

“Despite these developments violence did not diminish, whether from those wanting more autonomy or outright secession, together with the refusal to recognise the Corsican

people as a separate people, invasion by 'foreigners' and an insensitive, heavy-handed police presence being given as further reasons" (Alcock 2000: 155).

Thus, the impetuous for revolution seemed clear to many, and the domains of music and language activism revealed a strong popular motivation behind the more politically-oriented *Riaquistu*. Yet, in this domain, not everyone was in agreement as to how to go about achieving political recognition. Many splits occurred, including within the FLNC, and debate intensified as to the means of attaining independence and to what degree. More political factions were formed, such as *A Conculta*, *Corsica Nazione*, and *Fronte Ribellu*, many of which are still present today.

In the past decades, one main target of the so-called nationalists has been the very center of Corsican economy, the tourist industry. Alcock explains that

"[During the 1980s] It was estimated that of the one billion dollars per year generated by tourism, 80 % was returning to France or went to hotel and property speculators abroad. As a result, holiday developments and private homes owned by 'foreigners', particularly French and Italians, have been blown up and the occupants taken as hostages in order to ward off 'Balearisation' of the island" (Alcock 2000:156)

Alcock tallies that "in the last twenty-five years well over 8,000 bombings and terrorist actions have taken place, including the assassination of the regional Prefect Claude Erignac in February of 1998.

Corsica is well-known for its recent history of political violence, yet it should also be recognized that the majority of the bombings target institutions and not individuals, and that the assassinations that do take place resemble, for the most part, mafia-style killings which take place within or among different factions, and do not target random individuals. It should also be recognized that what *indépendantiste* groups still exist today are rather marginalized, very secretive, and certainly do not express one, collective voice of the general Corsican population.

2.2 Language

The Corsican language carries important sociolinguistic and cultural meaning. Lying at the heart of most debates regarding the Corsican language, *u Corsu*, is the official status and domains of use of the language itself. After decades of struggle to have it formally declared as a regional language of France (it now is), debate continues *within* the island as to what place it should have in insular institutions, such as regional government, schools, media, etc. As with the political component of the *Riaquistu*, not everyone is in agreement as to which position(s) Corsican should occupy, nor to which degree. Jaffe cites a former member of the Corsican Assembly who rejected the idea of the mandatory education of Corsican, stating that “*Nous refusons l’illusion du monolinguisme français, comme du monolinguisme corse*” (“We refuse the fallacy of French monolingualism, and by the same token, Corsican monolingualism”) (Jaffe 1999: 175).

For, not all Corsicans speak Corsican, and for those who do, the decision to speak it, or French, or some hybrid variety of the two, is no light matter. I again evoke Anderson so as to frame the ‘modern’ search for understanding identity within a perceived history of a ‘traditional’ cultural. Speaking of the European popular nationalist movements, he notes those “becoming conscious of themselves as Czechs, Hungarians, or Finns to figure their study of Czech, Magyar, or Finnish languages, folklores, and musics as ‘re-discovering’ something deep-down always known” (Anderson 1991: 196).

2.2.1 French Language Policy and the Status of Corsican

The roots of the current status of Corsican lie in the vigorous, centralized language-planning of France. As with other regional languages in France, to understand the place of modern Corsican in say, Corte, one need look first to Paris. Lodge gives an apt description of France’s policy of political centralization during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

“The Third Republic (1871-1940) carried the notion of the centralized state to an extreme degree, seeking the absorption of all regional identities into the single national identity of a monolithic state. To this end, the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the implementation of a vigorous policy of language-planning” (Lodge 1993:216).

Though ‘centralization’ strictly refers to the political domain, it is clear that repercussions include that which is psychological, sociological, and cultural as well. Nowhere has this been perhaps better observed than in the cadre of public education, which Lodge rightly identifies as the “chief instrument for state policies of language planning” (217). Until the mid-twentieth century, French was the sole language in all schools of the French Republic. In 1951, the *Loi Deixonne* provided for one hour (and later, up to three hours) per week of voluntary instruction of regional languages. However, whereas Breton, Basque, Occitan, and Catalan could now be taught in schools, neither Corsican nor Flemish were included in the original law. In the case of Corsican, “[It] had been excluded...on the grounds that it was not a regional language of France but an Italian dialect for which the French government was not responsible” (Jaffe 1999:135).

For the next two decades, language activists of Corsican had to prove that it was different enough from Italian, yet different enough from French as well so as to gain special status as a regional language. Although debate would later grow among Corsicans as to the structure of the language (especially following attempts at standardization of dialects and orthography), the collective spirit of the *Riaquistu*’s cultural and linguistic components was strong enough to eventually convince Paris to apply the *Loi Deixonne* law to the island as well in 1974.

Since the 1950’s, the island had made political gains as well. In 1982, the island was [politically] detached from the *PACA* (*Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur*) region under the *lois Deferre*, becoming two separate departments of the French Republic. And, although Paris reserved the right to veto any legislative proposals, the Corsican Assembly was created later in the same year (Alcock 2000: 154).

As for education, the *loi Deixonne* had provided clear and long-awaited advancement in the instruction of Corsican in primary and secondary schools. In

1981, the University of Corte, founded by Pasquale Paoli but closed by the French in 1770, was reopened and Corsican was offered as both a subject of study and a medium of instruction. As curriculum in and about Corsican gained momentum, both pedagogical and literary publications arose and flourished.

Yet there have been and continue to be obstacles to implementing Corsican into school curricula. Alexandra Jaffe has done extensive research on the politics of language in Corsica, especially in the realms of activism and institutions, such as legislation and education (1993, 1999, 2000, 2001). For example, she cites 1990 (in Jaffe 1999:130) as a significant year in which Corsican was admitted as a CAPES subject. This meant that instructors of Corsican, after passing a national exam, could now be conferred an advanced teaching degree and civil service rank.

Yet, as much of Jaffe's work reveals, difficulties arise (or are already present) not only in the institutional recognition of a language, but in the popular treatment thereof. This concept is reminiscent of Hymes' (1968) concern that the ethnographer consider the 'form' of a language alongside its context. Many of the examples in the following section that describe the 'forms' and 'contexts' of Corsican are from Jaffe, as I consider her work to be illustrative and similar to my own research upon the island, and also because I will later refer to her findings in language variation, as similar themes exist in modern musical variation as well.

2.2.2 Sociolinguistics

"On Corsica, the political/symbolic value of the language far outstrips its level of practice in everyday life; there is more talk *about* Corsican than there is talk *in* Corsican. Everything to do with language in Corsica is politicized" (Jaffe 1999: 280).

On Corsica, there exists an environment of bilingualism with diglossia; that is, one in which two languages or linguistic registers coexist and individuals operate (in theory) competently in both languages. Charles Ferguson (1959) explained the concept of diglossia as one in which two languages coexist within a given speech community,

wherein one is considered the High (H) language and the other Low (L), that is, usually a dialect or 'non-standard' linguistic register. The choice between the two is constantly and continually made, according to criteria such as context, prestige, standardization, vocabulary, and especially *function*, as different forms elicit different effects upon different audiences.

Thus, discussions in Corsica pertaining to the larger state apparatus and/or its institutions, for example, will often be in French, whereas matters that regard the family, nature, tradition—regional or local concerns—are, likely, often more readily discussed in Corsican. *U Corsu* has typically been the language spoken by shepherds and farmers, although Thompson allows it slightly more room in “bars and cafés, the games of cards and *boules*, the witty political jibes, and the evening *passeggiata*, especially among the older generation” (1972:152). These are apt-enough, although not exhaustive, examples of the different contexts (or ‘domains’ according to Hymes (1968)) in which Corsican is typically to be spoken and overheard.

Two things must be realized, however. First, despite what might be technically called a diglossic situation, not every inhabitant of the island fully participates in the diglossia. As said above, not every Corsican speaks Corsican. Secondly, even if a person is not actually *speaking* Corsican, talking *about* the language carries a significant amount of meaning. Depending on one’s stance toward the standardization or institutionalization of Corsican, positive or negative feelings of *cultural* identity may be conveyed as well.

There are some transparent reasons for this, such as the lack of standardization of Corsican. Since the language is traditionally considered an oral one—as is claimed by scholars and native speakers alike—its written form is a relatively new and greatly contested issue. Lodge notes that “Given that the *patois* generally had no written form, they were denied the status of language altogether. Illiteracy became synonymous with barbarism” (Lodge 1993: 224). And, at the same time and for lack of education in Corsican, one can imagine why French became all the more considered the ‘High’ or language of prestige. Yet despite efforts to increase the teaching of Corsican in

elementary and secondary schools, many seem reluctant to have their children taught a language that, unlike French, will not necessarily guarantee them work or prestige.

Intellectuals at the university in Corte (*Corti* in Corsican) are behind most of the efforts to standardize the language—compiling dictionaries, deciding on questions of spelling and grammar, and making policy recommendations for bilingual educational programs. Yet, given dialectal difference upon the island and lack, thus far, of standard written or spoken forms, not everyone is in agreement as to what the ‘standard’ forms should be. Both this confusion over which Corsican to choose, and the underlying situation of diglossia suggest why the many immigrants to the island—Algerian, Moroccan, Portuguese, among others—will find French, not Corsican, to be the language of commerce, employment, and general communication. As for families native to the island, then, the same argument of economic viability holds: it is rarely economically advantageous on the island, and certainly not off of it, to be a competent speaker of Corsican. In the face of an 11.7 %² unemployment rate over the past 10 years on the island, it is often more profitable to leave the island in search of employment.

Yet there are lesser-apparent reasons as to why not all individuals on the island are competent speakers of both French and Corsican. For instance, there can be sensed a certain protectionist stance taken of Corsican by native speakers. It would appear that some want to safeguard ‘their’ language and culture as much as they want it to develop, as has been seen with certain Native American languages in the United States. Although ‘protection’ is perceived to be needed from ‘outsiders,’ there is also what might be described as a sort of inner-racism, a self-inflicted stigma to speaking Corsican, which many natives see as the language of uneducated shepherds, unemployed bumpkins, or, perhaps especially in today’s climate, political extremists.

H. Walter holds that, in Corsica, “...contrary to what has happened elsewhere...the universal use of French has not caused any noticeable decline in the local dialect, and the fidelity of Corsicans to their language remains exemplary” (Walter 1994: 102). One would do well, however, to compare Walter’s claim with a description by A.

² During the second trimester, 2001 (<http://www.educnet.education.fr/insee/chomage/ou/regions/corse/taux.htm>)

Lodge, in which French language policy is neatly reviewed and its effects upon the island's diglossic situation are highlighted:

"During the twentieth century the regional languages, located as they are in the peripheral areas of France, have frequently been associated with social and economic problems. In these areas French often came to be regarded as a symbol of oppression from the center, whereas the local language served as an identity-shield. Defense of the regional language has tended to be associated with demands for local autonomy ranging from federation to complete independence, and in the cases of Breton and Corsican this has led to violent political action." (Lodge 1993:219)

As the first part of this chapter has shown, violence has indeed been an instrument in the island's political repertoire. Since the FLNC, many like-minded political groups have formed and reformed, with varying degrees of militancy.

Yet there remains to be addressed another linguistic factor, which lies in a more subtle realm. Here, language itself can become a weapon perhaps even stronger than guns. J. Hill speaks of 'linguistic terrorism' in Central America, in which "young people prefer not to speak Mexicano...[and] purist rhetoric joins other pressures in driving Mexicano into an underground, often secret, solidarity code"(Hill 1995: 412). A similar process has occurred in Corsica, in which a negative association with *u corsu* has surfaced, and furthermore pressures to speak a 'proper' or 'pure' form are often great enough that a (young) speaker might sooner forego the effort. Yet one possible approach—perhaps eventually an 'instrument' of peace rather than war—is a blended, or hybrid variety of language use. What quite often occurs in Corsica is not a series of interactions that take place in **only** French or Corsican, but in many cases one type of mixture of the two, not quite like a creole, just as one might participate in and express hybrid varieties of daily life and culture.

Jaffe (1999) refers to *Francorse*, *Français Corse Régionale* (FRC), and 'gallicized Corsican' as three verbal modes of communication found upon the island. In the instance of Francorse, French words (morphologic) or syntactic processes are introduced into a Corsican utterance. For example, replacing a French word with a

gallicized Corsican word, such that “*Je (me) suis charbé/ scappé/ straccié (les pantalons, e.g.)*” (‘I fell / escaped / tore (my pants)’ begin in standard French but borrow and transform the Corsican verb ‘*scialbà*’/ ‘*scappà*’/ ‘*straccià*’.

In FRC, French spoken on the island may be peppered with a Corsican word or expression, including [words] that undergo French grammatical construction. This form tends to more deeply (and usually syntactically) integrate one language into the other, here French into Corsican, as in the utterance “It’s your turn”, where:

“*C’est ton tour.*”(French) = “*Tocca à tè.*”(Corsican) = “*Ça touche à toi.*”(FRC)

Lastly, there is that which Jaffe calls ‘gallicized Corsican.’³ Here, Corsican is the matrix language, and (often but not limited to) morphemes are taken from French and molded into a Corsican form, such that the Corsican ‘*amministazione*’ may become ‘*amministrazione*’ in gallicized Corsican, due to the French ‘*administration*.’

Or, syntactically, and to return to the example of FRC, it may be that ‘*Hè u to tornu*’ (gallicized Corsican) replaces the ‘standard’ Corsican ‘*Tocca à tè*’, reflecting the ‘standard’ French “*C’est ton tour.*”

Despite these *de facto* variations that one hears on the island, a singular nexus of the Corsican language remains both the strongest rallying point for pro-Corsican cultural identity and the most problematic issue for those Corsicans who don’t necessarily wish to diverge so explicitly from ‘the’ French culture, or who do diverge from one *Corsican* linguistic norm. Whether deciding to use Corsican or French or some hybrid variety of the two, we may predict the speaker’s choice in some instances based upon basic socio-linguistic/pragmatics theory, which explains that indeed more than simply linguistic information is conveyed in a given utterance. Gumperz notes that:

“Rather than claiming that speakers use language in response to a fixed, predetermined set of prescriptions, it seems more reasonable to assume that they build on their own and their audience’s abstract understanding of situational

³ This and previous examples are all taken from Jaffe (1999: 112-116)

norms, to communicate *metaphoric* information about how they intend their words to be understood” (Gumperz 1982:61)(emphasis my own)

What does it mean to speak Corsican? To some, it is a first language and a ‘natural’ tool with which to communicate. For these and for others, to speak Corsican may mean affirming certain or all aspects of a traditional culture feared by many of becoming lost. Others, in turn, may view speaking a language so often associated with negatively-viewed stereotypes of agricultural or political connotations. Of these two views of linguistic identity—let’s call them nationalist and post-nationalist—we can imagine when and where each might criticize the other, as well as why hybrid forms may develop as well. It becomes clear, furthermore, that language holds a particular role in shaping and reshaping cultural identity.

Chapter 3 Communicating Identities

An island in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, Corsica has long acted as a beacon for travelers, merchants, and colonizers alike. Its location between North Africa and Europe, while relatively close to both France and Italy, has made it a strategic and convenient place for occupation and trade. Though long gone are the days of warring Greeks, Moors, and Italian city-states, Corsica now experiences, indeed, welcomes other foreigners in the form of thousands of tourists who arrive at its shores each year. The tourists come in search of sun and secluded beaches, and those more-adventurous among them move inland to explore and hike the island's vast mountain ranges. Both groups, whether *monte* or *mare* (mountain or sea), tend to come to Corsica in search of the same ideal: 'savage,' natural beauty that offers just the right balance of repose and mystery. Common foreign perception of the Corsican people, it would seem, is also a balance, whereby the inhabitants that have so fiercely guarded their cultural heritage are to be revered (even feared) and are also considered hospitable and gracious enough to welcome the weary traveler into their own homes.

The tourism industry is Corsica's largest source of income, and in fostering this, planners have sought to entice visitors year-round and into the 'heart' of the island to discover its natural wonders as well as the traditions and hospitality of the Corsican people. Thanks to geography for the most part, traditional lifeways in Corsica have been best preserved in the center of the island, as one more readily finds there protected by the mountains the foods, music, and language deemed 'typical' of Corsica.

In large part due to a very real dependence upon the tourism industry, an economic dimension is added to the socio-cultural and linguistic realities known to Corsica. Like many minority populations in today's world, communities struggle to both maintain traditional customs and institutions, yet modernize those institutions at the same time and reconcile, where possible, local cultural traditions with 'foreign' and global cultures. Corsicans are very aware of 'being' Corsican, yet they are also aware of the perceived limitations of what this identity might entail.

In the first section of this chapter, I will explore what it appears to mean to 'be' Corsican. While outside perception no doubt has bearing upon this, I will strive to explore Corsican identity from a Corsican perspective, what is known as the emic perspective. In this way, discussing factors particular to Corsica such as geography, politics (especially the *Riaquistu*), and language can reveal different factors that make up Corsican cultural identities. Here I will also place the Corsican experience within a larger context of regional identity, within France and the European Union, in order to more fully understand the experience of one minority community, in a time of rapid globalization.

Considering one, shared sense of identity (both internally and with other regional groups) gives one insight into 'the' Corsican culture, it would be incomplete without identifying the *different* experiences of life and culture upon the island. Thus, in the second part of this chapter, I will discuss *authenticity* as it pertains to identity, and how one may be perceived to be an 'authentic' Corsican. Here, I hope to reveal a cultural continuum which could perhaps categorize the details and degrees of expressing (or rejecting) some or all aspects of Corsican identity.

A framework of reference thus established, the last part of this chapter and remaining half of this thesis will specifically consider *music* as a tangible point of reference for the themes of identity and authenticity. Music in Corsica has had an enormously important role in the island's history, tradition, and current cultural patrimony. Rooted deep within the island's ancient history, modern musical expression in Corsica gained new momentum in the late twentieth century, coinciding directly with the political and cultural forces of nationalism in the 1970s and '80s. I will thus examine what roles identity and authenticity had upon the musical scene of that time, and, especially, what roles they continue to play today.

3.1 Theories of Practice, Theories of Identity

In order to understand the phenomenon of 'Identity,' as both a politically real and socially perceived concept, it is important to consider both contextualized and global factors behind any one proscribed aspect of cultural identity. That is, both place-specific and place-general phenomena constitute a community's way of identifying itself. For example, Corsica is an island with its own particular topography and cultural traditions, yet is also an island upon which lives a minority community like many others. Corsicans seem interested in preserving what is unique and special to them, yet also pressured to make certain adaptations, even sacrifices, in order to successfully meet the increasing challenges of the larger national and global communities.

There is a sort of pan-insular identity which links most all Corsicans. History, geography, and experience with both local cultural traditions (food, language, music) and French state institutions (such as the educational system) have all contributed to a common understanding of what it means to 'be' Corsican. These things and more link Corsicans from one village to another, making possible shared daily experiences at home and common ways of understanding the world at large. In a way similar to Anderson's 'imagined' communities, "...the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 6). Although Corsica hardly fits the profile of a *dominant* nation-state using nationalism to further its agenda, it is a community large enough to have its own official, and certainly popular discourse regarding nationalism. And, in light of the increasing attention given by the European Union to its minority and 'regional' peoples, Corsicans may stand to have an even greater voice than that which it has struggled to gain from the French state.

The question remains: What is Corsican identity? In large part, it is a knowledge of history, especially Corsica's turbulent political history (both ancient and modern). In part, it is a knowledge of *brosciu* and other foods, flora, and fauna typical to the island. It is life, most typically, in a small village, which Jaffe calls a "microcosm of the larger society" (1999: 2) and even "the epitome of the intense experience of local identity" (33).

It is a shared experience of islandhood—dominated by mountains throughout most of its inland regions and surrounded on all sides by the Mediterranean. For some, the sea might provide or symbolize protection, for others a sort of cage. Graziani defines islandhood as “*le fait d’être entouré par ce qu’il faut traverser pour y échapper...Pour un Corse montagnard dans l’âme, la mer c’est le danger, l’invasion, la maladie*” (“the reality of being surrounded by that which one must cross to escape...For a Corsican’s mountain-dwelling soul, the sea means danger, invasion, sickness”)(Graziani 1999: 56).

From a spirit perceived as born within these inland mountains did Corsica once defend its shores, and a spirit of fiercely and proudly defended political autonomy has continued and been reborn in modern times. For everything already and later to be discussed about the *Riaquistu*, it suffices now to say that the 1970s and 80s are a very real period for Corsicans today. That epoch—while recognizing its continued, present-day ‘aftershocks’ of bombings and political assassinations—is likely the basis for a widespread international stereotype of Corsicans as proud and furtive terrorists, with little respect for foreign institutions upon their island. Yet it is also a sort of *internal* stereotype for Corsicans themselves. Jaffe invokes 1976, when the FLNC intensified its clandestine bombings: “From that point on, the fact of nationalism was an inevitable reference point for issues of Corsican identity, to include the question of the language ; the linguistic and cultural activism of the seventies cannot be understood outside of this political context” (Jaffe 1999 : 69). As a consequence, it would seem that cultural and linguistic identity in Corsica *today* cannot be understood outside of such an enduring political identity of yesteryear, neither by outsiders nor by Corsicans themselves.

Across all of these themes—politics, geography, cultural traditions and village life—language appears to stand out as the most prominent point of reference for identity in Corsica. The linguistic situation of diglossia in Corsica, as described in Chapter 2, suggests some of the various implications of speaking Corsican, French, or some hybrid variety of the two. In this section the reasons behind *choosing* which variety of language will be raised, as well as the notion that language choice is, for Corsica and for other minority regions of France, all-important.

Jaffe, of her fieldwork in 1988, notes that “There was no mistaking the central role that the issue of language played in the constant debate in Corsican public life over what it meant to be Corsican” (1999: 6). Thirteen years later, I found the same to be true in my fieldwork. Not only did I take careful notes of my conversations with villagers about language and other things, but often I felt nearly overwhelmed with the amount of discussion about the Corsican language. It could be read or heard on a daily basis on the radio, in newspapers and journals, and graffitied upon the walls in both Poggio and Corte, and on road signs in between the two. In her ethnography of Basque speakers in Spain, Urla (1993) asserts that a modern *construction* of cultural identity takes place within a community in as much as many of these are viewed (or view themselves) as *defending* linguistic identity. In Corsica, a modern application—in print media and spray-painted slogans and images—of language is apparent, and strict associations of *u corsu* with shepherds and terrorists is no longer necessarily the case. But why this resolute focus upon language? J. Thiers, prominent Corsican sociolinguist, notes that: “*Quelle que soit la nature du contexte, la parole, privée ou officielle, engage toujours la relation ainsi formulée: langue corse équivaut à identité corse, privation ou perte de la langue équivaut à privation ou perte de la culture...*” (“Whatever be the type of context, speech, whether private or official, always the follows the same formula: Corsican language equals Corsican identity, deprivation or loss of the language equals deprivation or loss of the culture”) (Thiers 1993: 1). Political groups of the *Riaquistu* in Corsica also cited language as the cornerstone of cultural identity, using slogans such as ‘*Morta a lingua, mortu u populu*’ (‘A dead language is a dead people’) to frame their argument.

The social and growing political climate of the time indeed reinforced this, while in France other minority groups experienced a surge in cultural revivals and autonomous political movements. As J. Reece wrote of contemporary Breton nationalists (then in 1977), “[They] have had the greatest success in mobilizing popular support behind their ideas by picturing Brittany as the ‘colony’ of an imperialistic French state. The leaders,” he continues, “of most other present-day ethnic minority movements, particularly those in

Scotland, Wales, Corsica, Sicily, and Flanders, have employed the same tactic with similar results" (Reece 1977: 228). Jaffe also comments on this solidarity, wherein: "The Corsican nationalists conceived of their opposition to France as being part of a wider, international struggle of oppressed minorities, and self-consciously modeled many of their strategies on those of the Basques, Catalonians, Bretons, and so on" (Jaffe 1999: 122).

Without unfounded sentiment of repression, these groups, along with Alsatians, Occitanians, and others in France shared common political realities, whereby stringent French state policies and legislation on, notably, language, had cultural consequences perceived by all groups. As we saw in chapter 2, the *Loi Deixonne* of 1951 did provide for some instruction in regional languages, yet not in regional dialects, nor did it provide for the quality or regularity of instruction (and, as we saw, did not apply to Corsica until 1974). Lund (1997) notes of the 1960s and early 70s the "development of a policy devised and implemented centrally by successive right-wing governments through the regional development agency *Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale* (DATAR), created in 1963, with limited regional consultation" (84). Under such tight reigns were also created language-specific policies and, especially, committees:

"In 1966, the *Haut Comité de défense et d'expansion de la langue française* was created by decree by Charles de Gaulle and was placed directly under the prime minister's control. It was the founding body of the present committees which have evolved from it: the *Délégation générale à la langue française* (1989), the *Conseil supérieur de la langue française* (1989), and the *Haut Conseil de la Francophonie* (1984)" (Brulard 1997: 192).

Under these institutions all regional groups in France were affected by state linguistic policies, whose prescriptivist tendencies again and again have defended the Republic's ideal of 'One nation, one people, one language.'

Surfacing from this discussion of strict state linguistic policy and the perceived solidarity of Corsicans with other marginalized ethnic groups in France, as well as among themselves on the island, is the importance of language in the context of identity.

Such a (deceptively) clear link between ethnic/regional language and cultural identity was forged within both the political and social contexts of the *Riaquistu*. The strength of that link has become difficult to dispute, and sometimes dangerous to question.

Again, referring back to the sociolinguistic atmosphere outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, we recognize that differing experiences and usages occur in daily life in Corsica, wherein neither France's 'One nation, one people, one language' maxim, nor the Corsican nationalist '*Morta a lingua, mortu u populu*' slogan seem to have much bearing, or meaning, to individuals with pluralistic identities. Yet as language is often treated as the 'true' litmus-like test of identity, then those who experience and engage different varieties are commonly perceived as failing that test, both by we ethnographers and tourists on the outside looking in, and from those who we observe, looking around their own home.

3.2 Authenticity and the 'Authentic' Corsican

"*Sò corsu, parlu corsu.*" ("I'm Corsican, I speak Corsican.")

In a tautology similar to "*Morta a lingua, mortu u populu*", this slogan, often seen today on bumper stickers and key chains, evokes a very clear sentiment that was vital to the *Riaquistu*—"Because I am Corsican, I (should) speak Corsican." Jaffe discusses 'biological and strategic essentialism' (1999: 122), whereby nationalist culture and language are rooted in a genetic framework of history, within which nationalists may then strategically attach to language and essentialize other aspects of culture, such as food, dress, or music. She notes that "Even though the Corsican language was weakened, it was in greater evidence than other features of their cultural heritage, which centered around a pastoral life that was clearly marginal in the modern context" (ibid).

Ever more so today, the Corsican language remains the most overtly-expressed and tenacious aspect of 'Corsican culture', and one is more likely to see graffiti in or about Corsican than shepherds in the island's overgrown fields or chestnut harvesters in

the crumbled mills. As the clearest and sometimes singular form of cultural expression, then, it has been perceived as the most fragile, even vulnerable, hence the perceived need to foster and 'protect' it.

Nationalist reluctance to hybrid varieties of Corsican are based on a desire to save the 'purity' or 'authenticity' of that most important aspect of their cultural identity: language. Why? Two ideas lend themselves here. Despite nationalist agendas, language *is* often the most visible (or audible) expression of a culture, and thus any variation of a standard form seems to destabilize or *deauthenticate* the perceptively strongest bastion of a culture's 'defense.' Also, if a defensive stance is taken, then any 'mixing' with the perceived aggressor's language or culture (remember *Francorse*, *FRC*, gallicized Corsican) could be seen as betraying the minority language and even culture.

Herein lies the dilemma behind the relationship of language and authenticity, as well as the second (perceived) reason to preserve the authenticity of a language. Language is not the only aspect of a culture, but as the most prominent, cracks in its foundation could seem to suggest cracks in the larger structure. Otherwise said, an affront to language might be seen as a rejection of the entire culture, if we may suppose that language, not only as the foremost characteristic of a culture, is also ubiquitous in so many other cultural facets of a society. How can we imagine film, literature, television, radio, or music without language?

Across these and countless other manifestations of a culture, one eventually sees how the ideologies of a more politically-oriented movement—the political *Riaquistu* in Corsica—become dispersed and slowly integrated into more mainstream popular ideologies. K. Zook has studied nationalism in 'Black' music in the United States, noting that: "Black articulations of the 'nation' which were voiced in the political realm of the 1960s have not died in the popular meanings of the people. Instead, they have been transferred to a cultural arena and reformulated in popular expressive forms such as film, television, rap music, clothing, literature, and language" (Zook 1992: 260)

When we think of, as in this example, film, music, or language as being 'more' or 'less' Black, we are commenting—whether out loud to an audience or silently

reaffirming the shared sentiment—on the *authenticity* of a certain cultural expression. When this is done, certain defining parameters are, explicitly *or* implicitly, set around the perceived total aggregate of traits making up a culture, wherein each of those traits comes under scrutiny and becomes, in dominant ideology, indexical of the whole. Although it might be more difficult in mainstream cultures to determine which trait is the most clearly indexical, ethnic and regional minorities such as in Corsica again and again reveal language to be the most prevalent *and* vulnerable cultural marker. Thiers quite aptly captures an underlying sentiment in *popular* (note: not staunch nationalist) Corsican discourse, where: “... *la conscience identitaire répugne à authentifier le mélange des langues qui à toute époque et en toute société passe pour une des manifestations premières de l’Impur*” (“...the conscious of identity resists authenticating the mixing of languages which in every era and in every society comes as one of the first manifestations of the Impure”)(Thiers 1993: 9). This ‘Impure’ offers a very clear metaphor of and insight into a fear of inter-group differences, which perceptively dismantle solidarity and lead to a loss of not just one aspect of culture, but of the entire culture. Blommaert and Verschueren label this the ‘dogma of homogeneity’, which guides popular ideology toward “a view of society in which differences are seen as dangerous and centrifugal and in which the ‘best’ society is suggested to be one without intergroup differences” (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998: 195). Thus, from a nationalist *cum* popular point of view, a Corsican people can only be strong if unified, and the first/best way to be unified is to speak Corsican. The bumper sticker’s message « I’m Corsican, I speak Corsican » becomes equally meaningful in its converse : « I am *not* Corsican if I don’t speak Corsican. »

While this latter slogan is nowhere to be found graffitied upon walls nor sold as tourist souvenirs, Corsica’s linguistic reality is, simply, that not everyone speaks Corsican.

Does this mean that not every Corsican is Corsican? This chapter has so far revealed identity and authenticity from a latent nationalist perspective, that is one in which there is a desire to ‘save’ the Corsican language so as to ‘save’ the minority culture at large.

According to this perspective, it is assumed that preserving the authenticity—here of language, as we have so far seen—of one aspect of culture assures the authenticity of other or all aspects.

Yet this thesis would not be complete without discussing another perspective, entirely present upon the island, which does *not* express the desire to preserve the authenticity of one or perhaps many forms of cultural expression, as that or those forms are indexical of, instead, a negatively-viewed culture. I will call it here a *post-nationalist* perspective, one in which those traits deemed ‘typical’ of Corsicanness are called into question and are either reformed or rejected altogether. In academia, there is a tendency to focus on what is ‘traditional’ of a culture, just as the adventurous tourist might go in search of a ‘typical’ culture, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Yet this typical or traditional culture is often not, simply, a viable nor desirable mode of life. National Geographic’s article ‘Corsica: France’s Paradox Island’ (April 2003), does allow on the title page’s caption that “*Some* residents of the French island, known for sun-blessed beauty and endless violence, remain defiantly un-French, pursuing separatist yearnings and a resurgent folk culture” (emphasis my own), yet the first words of the next page, in a caption beneath an image of a Greek Orthodox procession⁴ wherein six or more young men hold are holding large rifles, read “Guns and Corsicans go together...” (Range 2003: 57-59). Besides not having seen such a procession during my fieldwork, I must ask here if this is a typical image of Corsican culture, and question also if it is an image with which (especially) Corsican youth will identify in a positive light. From my experiences and research upon the island—indeed, in the geographic and said cultural center of the island—the answer to both is ‘no.’

While I did observe a group of young men with guns in a public and non-religious setting (I was one of three bartenders at Poggio’s village festival which lasted, like most village festivals throughout the summer, from noon on one day until sunrise, the next), these individuals were *not* at all looked upon favorably, and although no direct measure

⁴ Note that there is only *one* Greek Orthodox community in Corsica, in Cargèse.

was taken to kick them out of the festival, community elders came to words and at times shoves with the young men, throughout the night and into the morning.

These individuals, as I was told by other young residents of Poggio and neighboring towns, were just '*corses typiques*.' Whereas I was more surprised at (even scared of) the belligerent and arch-typical macho traits of these 6 or 7 men, my friends and informants all but dismissed those traits as 'typical' of Corsican men, who, I was also told, hunt, act 'cool', and speak Corsican. These traits, clearly, were not considered to be positive. From this example we can also frame the stereotypes of terrorism, violence, revolution...in a larger context—that is for the island as a whole—whereby they, although present even in modern days, are *not* typical of the norm, nor are they viewed in a positive light by many, arguably by even the majority. R. McKechnie points out that: "[Many activists'] espousal of an ideal Corsicanness excluded them from Corsican life." (1993: 147). She highlights this later, evoking the setting of a bar, wherein 'activists' were meeting and (usually ignored) by most people there, as "Their efforts to be 'more' Corsican only served to mark them as out of place, highlighting the aspects of their life that clashed with local understanding of what it was to be a Corsican man" (ibid.).

What then, does it mean to be a Corsican man?⁵ To summarize the chapter so far, we have first seen that, besides other facets of Corsican culture and similarities with other minority cultures in France, speaking the Corsican language seems to be the most prominent point of reference for cultural identity. Secondly, we have seen how the 'authentic' version is sought to be preserved, and why. We have lastly seen how resistance to accepting that 'authentic' norm may be better understood, and why. The next section of this chapter (and following chapters) will consider music in Corsica much in the same way that language has so far been explored: First, as domain of study, secondly, as marker of identity, and, thirdly, as a reaction (for or against) to the concept of cultural authenticity. Much as the use of Corsican language can both reinforce and

⁵ I consciously keep the question in the gender-specific male form for two reasons: most of my informants, including musicians and my research about musicians were men. Further study of women's identity, especially in music, will be appropriate and necessary. Secondly, masculinity seems closely tied with perceived 'authentic' Corsicanness, whereby hunting, oral performance, physical strength and militism all, at some point, seem valorized as ways to preserve a 'traditional' Corsica.

reject certain aspects of cultural identity, the island's music is also an important and reflexive point of reference for what it means to be Corsican. Corsican music, perhaps even more than language, seems to play a special role in the island's cultural scene, and has a particular ability to affirm, negate, and/or to navigate hybrid forms.

3.3 Music and Culture

"The ancient paradox of musical semantics is simply this: music seems full of meaning to ordinary and often extraordinary listeners, yet no community of listeners can agree among themselves with any precision that comes close to natural language about the nature of that meaning"

—J. Swain, in *Musical Languages* (1997: 45)

"A u cantu, si ricunnosce l'ocellu"

("The bird is recognized by its song")

—Corsican proverb

Swain's description of this 'ancient paradox' highlights the difficulty of both academic and popular analysis of music to describe exactly what is 'meant' by a certain music. His point is well-taken if we remember that by describing a certain song, album, or musical tradition as 'sad' or 'jovial' or 'melancholy', for example, we are using subjective terms which mean different things to different listeners. In this way, a semantic analysis of music will understandably encounter difficulty, even impossibility, in defining one, precise meaning in staunch, objective terms.

Yet the systematic presence of certain themes in music can often combine so as to give the listener a *composite* of parameters which surround a certain sound. In other words, one can nonetheless, in many cases, *identify* a particular music, as well as the context—historic, regional, cultural—from which it emerges. Music is, in fact, by its very nature an aggregate of many aspects. Even in their simplest expressions, instrumentation, voice, message, and/or language are often all at work in communicating with the listener. In this way also music truly acts as a language; communicating information and meaning to its listener(s), and being continually reused and reinvented in various ways and in various forms. Slobin cites Hymes' (1974) insight that "musical

terminology will prove a great resource for exploration of speech styles” (in Slobin 1993: 85) as well as the suggestion that ethnomusicologists ‘return the favor’ and consider sociolinguistic approaches when seeking to understand a particular music. In what Slobin calls ‘subcultures’ of music—I am considering Corsica to be one of these—Labov’s (1972) and Gal’s (1988) studies of code-switching are particularly appropriate, where Labov described the shift between alternate [linguistic] forms and Gal looked in particular at code-switching as a “conversational strategy used to establish, cross, or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke, or change interpersonal relations” (in Slobin 1993: 85). In this way we may frame both the communicative aspect of music and its creative characteristics, just as language has thus far been considered in this thesis. Music informs anthropology and sociolinguistics by revealing profound insight into the identities of a culture as they are expressed, negotiated, and re-negotiated in ongoing communicative, and meaningful ways.

Having researched music in Afghanistan, Baily contends that: “The point is surely that music is itself a *potent* symbol of identity; like language it is one of those aspects of culture which can, when the need to assert ‘ethnic identity’ arises, most readily serve this purpose” (1994:48). Thus we can imagine how in the case of an ethnic or regional minority such as Corsica, the role of music might appear particularly important. Baily continues: “Its effectiveness may be twofold: not only does it act as a ready means for the identification of different ethnic or social groups, but it has potent emotional connotations and can be used to assert and negotiate identity in a particularly powerful manner” (ibid.). The *Riaquistu* of the 1970s in Corsica harnessed this idea and indeed communicated through music both the reclamation of an identity perceived as lost, and as an overt assertion of that identity. To say that the nationalist, political forces of that time ‘used’ music would be slightly misleading ; musicians were not under the direct control of any political organisations. Yet the musical climate of the time, as the linguistic one, reflected a larger cultural and political atmosphere. Eventually it became intimately engaged with that atmosphere, and a cultural ‘call’ was made to Corsicans, by Corsicans,

to rediscover a weakened but rich musical tradition through which insular identity could be reclaimed from the French political state, and its cultural and linguistic dominance.

The effects of the *Riaquistu* upon musical expression during that time have had long-lasting consequences upon the perception of Corsican music. As with language, the developments in music over the past three decades have contributed enormously to cultural identity in Corsica and, in many ways, music has come to be a primary indicator of ‘Corsicaness’ on and off the island.

As with a nationalist identity associated with a language that has endured the years—attracting some and dissuading others—so too has a similar association been made with Corsican music. In a political and cultural climate of reform and revival—here I speak of the 1970s and 80s—to make music was truly to make a political statement, and to be ‘*(politiquement) engagé(e)*’ (‘(politically) engaged’), a term still used broadly today in Corsica to refer to its musicians of that time. The ‘trend’ seems to have been to reach back to nationalist and resistance songs of the 18th and 19th centuries and to apply their message to a modern political struggle for independence from France. This was done solely in the Corsican language, and according to a particular choral (polyphonic) form, the *paghjella*, native to the island. Beyond the form and style of the music, however, there seems to have been a particularly close relationship among musicians—a sharing of music among each other and with audiences on a regular, even frequent basis. This is in part, no doubt, thanks to the demographics of inland Corsica, where numerous villages dot the many hills and mountains and travel among the villages is relatively easy.⁶ By staging concerts often, in improvisational settings, and usually charging little or no money for admission (as continues to be the case today), musicians have a ready platform for performance as well as, during the 1970s and 80s, a ripe context for their message. Stokes notes that “Contexts are constructed by musicians, audiences and media in these events, in which meanings are generated, controlled and negotiated” (1994: 15). Indeed, audiences as well as musicians in Corsica contribute to a

⁶ The microregion of the *Niolu* has been particularly important to the modern *paghjella*.

collective conversation about identity on the island, as the created and recreated music becomes a sort of language itself.

Music, unlike language in Corsica, has perhaps remained better 'protected' over the past thirty years. Although globalization has had great effect on many cultural traditions—food, transportation, and as has been especially explored here, language—Corsican music seems to have safeguarded a certain 'Corsican' identity, and at the same time resisted musical influences from other cultures, including popular French music and 'world' music alike. De Wallis & Mahn have discussed 'transculturation,' in which: "Various hybrid forms develop of either local music with a transnational flavor, or a transnational music with a local flavor" (Lull 1987: 32). Though this concept certainly exists in present-day Corsican music production (both recorded and live), the expression and acceptance of 'foreign' musical influences has been sluggish and even met with difficulty and disapproval.

Even more so than language, music seems to have a particular ability to traverse geographical and political boundaries. Yet, as with language, certain constraints of perceived 'authenticity' remain tightly in place for a music so important to a minority culture and language. Perhaps for this reason music in Corsica has been so closely 'protected' by its musicians and so well preserved in 'popular' notions of identity. Yet given also that its form and message are so closely associated with a very recent nationalist political environment, perhaps music is all-the-more poised for hybridity and change, and thus important to both an academic discussion of cultural identity, and especially to Corsicans themselves.

Chapter 4 Musical “Soundscapes”

Corsican music is a remarkable facet of Corsican culture and cultural identity. Its roots, like those of language, lie deep within the island’s rich history and were laid by the many peoples who inhabited Corsica over the centuries. Thus, hints of North African, Greek, and Italian (Pisan, Tuscan, and Genovese, mostly) musical traditions can be found in ‘traditional’ Corsican music, just as place names, religious faiths such as Orthodox Christianity, and architecture attest to the island’s cultural heritage in other realms. Corsican music in particular is a fascinating insight into not only the island’s cultural history, but also into the norms and values of cultural identity in modern times.

The island’s musical conventions affirm a historic tradition in the Mediterranean toward polyphonic or choral singing. Differing in terms of form, rhythm, and ornamentation, many different forms of polyphony exist on Corsica, such as the *madrigale* and *terzettu* (sung in Italian), the *nanna* (lullaby), *voceru* (song of mourning), *lamentu* (lament), *chjam’è rispondi* (‘call and response’, or improvisation), and others.⁷ The *paghjella* is the most typical form of polyphony and the Corsican name for a piece sung by a chorus of 6-10 members, traditionally all of whom are men. The *paghjella* is always sung in the Corsican language and typically about things Corsican, such as living on the island, in a village, or according to other traditional modes of life in Corsica. This ancient form, revitalized in the political and cultural atmosphere of the 1970s and ’80s, is still today created and recreated, with strong social and institutional support. It is a modern form that sustains not only a musical heritage, but also a cultural one.

Indeed, during the *Riaquistu* of the 1970s and ’80s, music played an enormous role, alongside language, in reaffirming a cultural identity deemed lost by popular ideology at that time. Music was used as both a mode of inspiration for and organization of cultural activism during that time, and also served as a primary vehicle through which the Corsican language was diffused.

In this chapter, I will explore Corsican music first in terms of its historic and geographic background, considering it in both its Mediterranean and insular contexts

⁷ See especially Chapter 4 of Cantichi’s *Polyphonies corses* (1999) for an excellent discussion of these.

(macro and micro). As if a sort of musical ‘landscape,’ I will use Charles Camillieri’s concept of “soundscape”, which is “[used] to indicate the total pattern constituted by all the noises, the silences, the human and non-human sounds, all the natural and artificial acoustic phenomena characteristic of a given environment” (Camillieri and Inglott 1988:9).

This idea of a soundscape will present not only an overview of Corsica’s musical heritage, but will also serve as a framework with which we may understand the musical revival of the 1970s and ’80s, its intimate relation with the *Riaquistu*, and what forces, patterns, and sounds from that time are still present and even influential today.

To best accomplish this, I will present an overview of Corsica’s primary musicians of the last three decades. Through these artists, I will explore three trends in modern music in Corsica: those musicians who seem to remain the most ‘traditional,’ those who integrate musical styles and are considered popular, and those who integrate styles but who lack general popularity, or who are marginally popular⁸. This will be done by examining these trends represented by the three best-known Corsican groups, *Canta u Populu Corsu*, *I Chjami Aghjalesi*, and *I Muvrini*. These groups all began in the 1970s and were adherent to the nationalist and/or revolutionary ideology of that time. They survive today as still the three most well-known artists of polyphony and proponents of Corsican music, albeit in different ways, with different levels of success, and varying degrees of adherence to nationalist/revolutionary ideology.

Despite the abundance of and accessibility to Corsican music, the ethnographer must acknowledge not only the diversity of experience regarding Corsican music, but also the diversity of music itself in Corsica. There are at present musicians who seem to be breaking away from a more traditional approach to *paghjella*. By not conforming to the island’s musical ‘norm’, these musicians who integrate instruments or styles not indigenous to the island risk being seen as rejecting an ‘authentic’ Corsican identity.

This chapter will examine what is symbolized in the differing evolutions of these three groups: from similar beginnings in a common ‘musico-political’ epicenter, to

⁸ By ‘popular’ I mean the positive evaluation of a group and its music in public and private discourse, as observed during my fieldwork.

clearly different statuses upon the musical stage of modern Corsica. In considering their common origins and then examining the social perceptions of and media reaction to their music today, certain themes of identity in Corsica's music may reflect cultural trends in a larger sense. In this way, too, one can again see the link between music and language: both music and language contain hybrid variations along a Corsican-French continuum, and each variation conveys a different sense of what it means to be Corsican.

In keeping with Camillieri's definition of a musical soundscape, this chapter seeks to reveal the background and fundamental tenants of 'one' Corsican music, and ultimately to expose the diverse and multiple interpretations of '*a musica corsa*' as found today.

4.1 Polyphony and *Paghjella*

Polyphony, or the choral harmonizing of multiple voices, is a benchmark of Mediterranean music. Its origins are unknown and yet can be traced to the earliest history of most every country in the region; from the Maghreb countries of North Africa to the southern regions of Spain, France, and both coasts of Italy, and upon all the islands between these countries.

Corsica is no exception, and we may safely say that polyphony is the most prominent aspect of both 'traditional' and 'modern' music in the northern half of the island (polyphonic singing is heard everywhere in Corsica; whether staged as a concert or improvised in a small bar, choral music is ubiquitous). The most prevalent style of Corsican polyphony (*pulifunia*) is the *paghjella*, named either from the harmonizing of three voices or the paired harmonies produced from three or more voices (made up of six eight-syllable verses, or octosyllabic sextets). Traditionally, the *paghjella* is sung by between 3 and 10 men with a range of voices from tenor to baritone. The three 'essential' voices are *bassu* (bass), *sigonda* (middle), *terza* (soprano). The singers typically stand in a circle or semi-circle, indeed 'pairing' one voice with another and producing a harmonized melody that literally rises above the singers. According to tradition—common knowledge among all of my consultants and taken for granted in popular

Corsican journals—the *paghjella* can only be sung in Corsican, and may be either religious or secular in nature. In the last century, it may be said that popular Corsican music has been secular for the most part, and that certain themes, such as nature, islandhood, and political/cultural independence remain prevalent in its lyrics. Because the *paghjella* is so widespread upon the island, it has in many ways come to represent the very essence of Corsican music.

In a recent work entitled *Polyphonies corses*, J.P. Cantichi seeks to reveal, in modern Corsican music, “*le sens du chant et le choix d’une expression polyphonique que chacun ressent comme l’expression même de l’âme corse*”(“the sense of the song and the choice of a polyphonic expression that all feel to be the very expression of the Corsican soul”)(1999:21). No new sentiment, A. De Croze, in the early twentieth century, comments on the most ‘typical’ characteristics of the Corsican soul revealed in these choral songs: “*Emanations spontanées et frémissantes de la vie d’un peuple, ces demi-improvisations le plus souvent ardentes et rudes font sentir avec une force et une saveur singulière combien cette âme est fière et passionnée*”(“Spontaneous and chilling emanations of the life of a people, these half-improvisations most often ardent and raw make heard with force and clarity just how proud and passionate is this soul”)(De Croze 1911: 173). These two authors, along with countless others, reflect a popular sentiment in which the very expression of a certain music (as with language) conveys important cultural meaning as well. Gross notes of traditional *décima* singing in Puerto Rico, “It also became clear to me that rather than merely stating ideas about cultural identity, the *décima* has come to *embody* Puerto Rican culture...” (Gross, n.p.)(emphasis my own). On Corsica, one quickly discovers two things about the island’s music: 1. Music = polyphonic singing, 2. It is a primary bastion, perhaps even the embodiment of the island’s cultural identity, and 3. There are common themes that dominate the subject matter of these polyphonies, namely the island’s villages, its nature, and its spirit of (political) revolution and independence.

Yet before such a strong association of polyphony and politics came about, the island’s music of the mid-twentieth century revealed an idyllic, peaceful place. The

1950s and 60s were marked by a majority of love songs, ballads, and ‘imported’ versions of the French *chanson* during that period. Antoine Ciosi and Tino Rossi, for example, both presented a nostalgic yet positive picture of Corsica; an island of beauty, love, escape, and magic. In ‘Ajaccio’, Rossi sang: “Ajaccio, Ajaccio/ aux sons des guitares/ viennent filles et garçons/Ajaccio, Ajaccio/et chacun y chante sa chanson” (“Ajaccio, Ajaccio/ to the sound of guitars/ come girls and boys/ Ajaccio, Ajaccio/ and everyone sings their song there”)⁹. Ciosi, who was to become an important musical figure during the *Riaquistu*, sang in ‘Angelina’: “Sur la route de Calvi/Ce jour-là quand je te vis/ Angelina, Angelina/Tu ne m’as pas semblé rebelle...quelle phrase allait le mieux...Je t’ai dit toutes les plus belles” (“On the road to Calvi/ I saw you that day/ Angelina, Angelina/ You didn’t seem to me a rebel...which verse would be best...I told you all of the most beautiful”)¹⁰.

These lyrics, in French, reflect the tranquil theme of the island’s music at this time; a place of beauty, love, and peace. At this time, the cultural and political forces of independence had not yet taken hold of the island, and music from this period spoke of an idyllic Corsica, innocent and open to all.

Toward the end of the 1960s, the *Riaquistu* had ‘reclaimed’ the ancient *paghjella*, bringing ‘*u cantu*’ (the voice, the song) to the forefront of the independence and separatist movements of that time. For, the *paghjella* represented the most sacred and traditional, if not mythic aspects of a perceptively threatened Corsica: history, family, and language. It was in reinforcing these notions, through music, that political and cultural forces both gained support and became part and parcel of a popular movement of cultural activism.

Today, despite the persistent stereotype (discussed in 5.1), political violence has greatly subsided and remains mostly confined to marginal political groups and/or the mafia. Corsica’s music, as well, has generally ‘lightened’ the intensity of its political message, its cultural interests remain extremely high. M. Pérès, professor at the

⁹ <http://www.paroles.net/chansons/10469.htm>

¹⁰ <http://el.juky.free.fr/Paroles/ART-T194AI.htm>

University of Corte and director of a 1996 conference on the state and perspectives of Corsican music, notes:

“Méprisé et tombé en désuétude depuis le début de ce siècle, le chant traditionnel corse connaît aujourd’hui un regain d’intérêt qui se focalise essentiellement autour des répertoires polyphoniques. Depuis quelques années surgissent des groupes de chant polyphonique qui souvent utilisent cette forme musicale comme emblème d’une culture insulaire, maltraitée depuis la francisation de l’île, mais revivifiée de nos jours par d’ardents thuriféraires”(“Mistaken and fallen into disuse since the beginning of the century, traditional Corsican music has today regained an interest that focuses essentially on polyphonic repertoires. As of several years, polyphonic choral groups have arisen, often using this musical form as the emblem of an insular culture, mistreated since the Francization of the island, but regenerated in our day by ardent acolytes”)(Pérès 1996: 7).

These ardent musicians are indeed numerous, and their dedication to *u cantu* is equally impressive. Many are students or full-time workers, and sing with one or more groups in their spare time. Fedeltà, like many others, is composed of singers who have gained recognition in other Corsican groups, and who, besides performing music, often hold ‘day’ jobs, such as painter, professor, engineer, and ambulance driver. Consideration of this reveals two important aspects of the makeup of many modern, Corsican polyphonic groups: first, there is a considerable amount of ‘sharing’ of musicians, whereby it is common for any one musician to have performed and/or recorded with various other groups on the island. Secondly, it would appear that to perform as a musician in Corsica, one need not necessarily forego other pursuits such as a career outside of music. To be sure, Corsican groups are quite diverse in their make-up and the educational/professional backgrounds of their members, yet all appear to uphold one standard in their musical identity and expression: vocal polyphony.

4.2 *Canta u Popolu Corsu*

Perhaps no group better captures the political and cultural spirit of the 1970s and ‘80s than *Canta u Popolu Corsu*—‘The Corsican People Sing.’ The international journal,

Geo, in an article about Corsican music, states that “*A partir des années soixante-dix, dans un fort contexte autonomiste, toute une génération de chanteurs prône un ressourcement identitaire. Le groupe Canta U Populu Corsu sera le creuset de ce redéploiement fondé sur la langue et la prise en compte de l’individu dans un univers en crise*”(“Beginning in the 1960s, in a strong autonomist context, a whole generation of singers advocated a ‘grassroots identity’. (The group, *Canta u Populu Corsu* was to be the crucible of this *redéploiement* founded on language and the enlightenment of the individual within a universe in crisis”)(Tenaille 1998: 135).

Canta, as the group is commonly called, was originally composed of about a dozen friends spread over the island and throughout several villages. Taking the traditional Corsican *paghjella*, singing historic nationalist songs, and eventually writing their own music, *Canta* both reinforced and recreated a climate of revolution against the French political state and supported a general reclaiming of Corsican culture and language. Two of their early songs, collected by Cantichi in *Polyphonies corses* (1999), are versions of older, ‘traditional’ songs of lament and of war. One *terzettu*, taken from *Terzetti di u piuvanu*, written in Tuscan by Marcu Ghjuvan Turchini while imprisoned in Toulon in 1774, ends with: “*Sono statu ridottu in cusì bassa stima/Chì mi vergognu dei miei proprii panni/Cum’è quell’animale chjamatu scimia/Ogni muraglia forma una spiscina/Ogni locu prduce un largu fiume/Per mio tormentu è mia maggior ruina*” (“I’ve been reduced to such low esteem/That I’m ashamed even of myself/As if that animal called monkey/ Water leaks from every wall/Every stream becomes river/As the object of my torment is the cause of my unhappiness”)(Cantichi 1999: 126).

From this lament to a 1936 warrior’s anthem, *Sunatu hè lu cornu*¹¹ (‘The Conch Has Sounded’), *Canta*’s selections such as these made it clear both their grievance and call to action: “*Sunatu hè lu cornu/ Òn ci hè più riscattu/ À populu fattu/ Bisogna à marchjà!// Tutti sottu à listessa bandara/ Bianca, ornata di la testa Mora/ Aiò Corsi chì turnata hè l’ora/ Di l’antica nostra libertà*” (“The conch has sounded/ No more

¹¹ According to Turchini the text by Corsican poet Don Petru de Mari paid homage to the Paolian revolts of the 18th century. *Canta*’s reprisal of this and other texts was “*comme une référence en écho aux luttes presentes*”(“like an echoing reference to present struggles”) (<http://canta.adecec.net/storia/liberta.php>).

compromises/ An oppressed people/ Must march!/ All united under the same flag/ White with the Moor's head/ Let us go, the hour has come/ Of our ancient liberty")(ibid : 131/2).

At the outset of an interview with Dumè Gallet, longtime violinist and singer with the group, when I asked him if there were particular themes in or motivations behind *Canta's* music in the 1970s, he described a climate wherein:

"...it corresponded with a time in Corsica during which a lot was going on. The cultural demands followed, in a way, the political demands, and those things worked alongside each other. We first [musically] did the traditional, then, little by little, towards writing our own music, which was often, very often, politically engaged...on the nationalist level" (Fieldnotes, 8/7/01).

According to Gallet, then, a trend had begun by the 1970s in which music with a politically 'engaged' message both mirrored and inspired political awareness, concern, and even action. In Aboriginal communities in Australia, Magowan reveals a similar trend in modern Aboriginal music where: "Today Yolngu popular music is adopting a political tone as a strategy for attaining justice in all Aboriginal communities" (Magowan 1994:152). The relationship between music and politics is no new one, however, and there is no shortage of literature concerned with the association between the two, including the consequences of and ambiguities for minority communities (Stokes 1994; Lipsitz 1990; Garofalo 1992; Urla 1993). Stokes notes that "Musical styles can be made emblematic of national identities in complex and often contradictory ways" (Stokes 1994: 13). Elsewhere, Slobin has deemed this a 'superculture' of music, which "implies an umbrellalike, overarching structure that could be present anywhere in the system— ideology or practice, concept or performance"(Slobin 1993: 29). Both scholars here are commenting upon the multifaceted and often subtle ways in which music and politics influence one another and are more than just loosely connected.

Because of the political *and* cultural orientations of the *Riaquistu*, however, the distinction between political autonomy and regionalism (a geographic distinction) has become blurred, and, as we have seen in Chapter 3, the perceived lines between

'political' and 'cultural' have often become hazy as well. Murphy describes 'substate nationalism,' wherein "[The concern here] is with the aspirations of ethnic groups living within states to obtain a degree of control over local or regional political or cultural matters"(Murphy 1988: 19). Here, not only does the national become 'subnational,' but also does the political become cultural, or vice versa. A nationalist (political or cultural) agenda that takes control—officially or *de facto*—of a certain soundscape, has not only an effect on the radio airwaves and concert sites, but also, in time, of popular ideology and cultural identity, which in turn become norms of practice.

When I asked Dumè Gallet if many people during that time expressed dissatisfaction or disagreement with *Canta*'s underlying political message, he explained that "Certainly there were those who were not interested in or even against what [*Canta*] was doing, but largely, the music and the message reflected the era. At the same time we lived in that era, so political activity and action were... 'normal'"(Fieldnotes, 8/7/01). This 'normality' of political engagement in music during the *Riaquistu* would continue into the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, and groups such as *I Surghjenti* ('The Sources'), *Voce di Corsica* ('Voice of Corsica'), *A Cumpagnia* ("Company"), and many others have tended to keep a political message present in their music, and are still recording albums and performing today. True also to the cultural spirit of the *Riaquistu*, these groups—then and now—all extol a common desire to remain musically 'faithful' to the island's tradition of *paghjella*. Generally, the all-male choruses of these groups sing, in Corsican, of the 'traditional' ways of life upon the island—farming, singing, and speaking Corsican, to name a few. There is typically little instrumentation beyond the singers' voices, and the *paghjelle* (plural of *paghjella*) sung are either newer versions of traditional songs or original compositions in the same style of a nostalgic, yet troubled Corsica.

Many recent musical groups in this category seem to have as a common objective the education of a general public—both Corsican and tourist—of the traditional forms and features of Corsican music. *Caramusa* ('Bagpipe' made of reed and leather), for example, has as its primary focus the revitalization of traditional Corsican instruments which otherwise are no longer in use. The group's website claims:

“Plus que jamais, le groupe reste fidèle à ses engagements et à ses convictions initiales : contribuer à ménager des sentiers de redécouverte dans l’univers sonore patrimonial profane et sacré ; œuvrer à mieux faire connaître et partager largement, sur l’île comme à l’extérieur, la poésie de la langue Corse ainsi que les trésors retrouvés du chant et de la musique insulaire” (“More than ever, the group remains faithful to its commitments and to its initial convictions: to help manage the paths to rediscovery in the profane and sacred Corsican musical universe, to work to make known and share broadly, on the island as off of it, the poetry of the Corsican language as well as the rediscovered treasures of the insular voice and music”)(<http://caramusa.ifrance.com/caramusa>).

Another group, *Fedeltà*, takes pride in their adherence to the traditional aspects of Corsican song and voice. From their press book, the group claims:

“Fedeltà asserts vehemently their faithfulness to the Corsican spirit. Enriched by the experience in and mastery of polyphonic song of its individual members, the group sets about an educational tour, its sole purpose to preserve, validate, and enrich the cultural legacy of Corsica. Six voices...revelational, at times mournful, at times mirthful, often passionate, but always anxious to faithfully portray a timeless oral tradition” (Press Book, *Fedeltà* 2001).

This ‘timeless’ tradition is clearly the ideal to which the group’s name (‘Faithfulness’) refers, and the idea of a *timeless* music inextricably links the group to a glorified past. Gross notes that “Folkloric traditions self-consciously establish past practice as the model against which present day practices are judged”(Gross 2001:102). By focusing upon an ‘experience’ in polyphonic music and especially a ‘faithful’ portrayal of the past, groups such as *Fedeltà* can become, almost automatically, *authentic* authorities of their genre. Gross later explains that “Performers gain authority through their connections with past performances and certain aspects of the performance become rigidified”(ibid: 103). With this authority, as she notes, comes certain constraints to uphold the proper—what we have so far called *authentic*—form.

It suffices now to say that the ‘authorities’ *par excellence* of the *paghjella*, *Canta u Populu Corsu*, continue to tour and produce records, more than thirty years since their original formation. Their last album at the time of my fieldwork, *Mémoria* had been released in 1998. Albeit with only six scheduled performances, the group toured the

island during the summer when I was in Corsica and with, apparently, great success. In an article entitled *Canta: mémoire et émotion*, Corse Matin writer J. Paoli described the evening of one of the concerts (August 12th) as being “*en osmose totale avec les membres du groupe, jeunes et moins jeunes, anciens et nouveaux, mais plus que jamais la voix du peuple corse*”(“in total harmony with the members of the group, young and less young, old and new, *but more than ever the voice of the Corsican people*”)(emphasis my own). The author concludes the article by describing the evening as “*Sans artifice, mais d’une sincérité profonde*”(“Without a big show, but of a deep sincerity”)(Paoli, 2000).

4.3 *I Chjami Aghjalesi*

The first large concert that I attended during my stay in Corsica was at the Citadel, or old military fort, in Corte, which has now become the central locus of the University at Corte and the ethnographic museum. Posters with only the group’s name, *I Chjami Aghjalesi* and the emblematic Moor’s head advertising the concert had been up for about a week beforehand, and the night of the performance coincided with the end of a bicycle race that had apparently attracted cyclists from all over Europe. Outdoors, in the large courtyard of the Citadel, all of the seats were taken and standing room around the perimeter was scarce; it was more than a sold-out show. The concert began with the first and title track of their recent album, *Credo* (“I Believe”), with the leading 3 members on stage. The two Pesce brothers played guitars and sang, along with Paulu Nasica. About a third of the way through the song, spotlights lit the back half of the stage, shining upon a 7-member choir that stood side-by-side and belted out, in low voices, the chorus of ‘*Credo*’: “*CREDU in la bandiera incù la testa mora, cum’è simbulu comunu di a nostra presenza à mezu à tuti in issu mondu*” (“I believe in the Moor’s head flag, symbol of our presence among all the peoples of the world”) (liner notes, *Credo*, 1998)

The concert included mostly tracks from *Credo*, but also from previous albums, as well as somewhat famous revolutionary songs, *not* Corsican, like “*Hasta Siempre*”

(Cuban tribute to Che Guevara), “*Catena*” (Catalan independence song by Lluís Llach), and “*Bella Ciao*” (Italian Partisan marching song).

At the end of the approximately one and a half hours, two ‘encores’ or ‘call-backs’ were performed, including a second version of “*Hasta Siempre*” for which the crowd applauded at length. When I thought the concert would end with the loud applause and cheers which followed the Che Guevara tribute, a singular and very deep voice from the stage began, and without any instrumentation. The crowd quickly and collectively rose to its feet, as the concert goes, hands at their sides, began singing along.

I later found out that the final piece performed was the *Dio Vi Salvi Regina*—“God Save the Queen”, or the ‘national’ anthem of Corsica.

The words, ironically sung in Italian, express the vulnerability of the island and the ferocity of its aggressors, yet also the collective and fighting spirit of its inhabitants, and the sweetness of their ‘victory.’ (See lyrics in Appendix B.) The hymn’s origins are not exactly clear beyond the 10th or 11th century C.E. during which time the Latin “*Salve Regina*” was written.¹² It is thought that a certain Neapolitan, Saint Francesco de Geronimo, helped spread the devotional to the Virgin Mary across the Italian peninsula, including to Corsica. In January of 1755, at the beginning of Corsica’s brief period of independence under Pasquale Paoli, the “*Dio Vi Salvi Regina*” was adopted as the national anthem for the new ‘Corsican Kingdom’, with one major change. In the last stanza of the song, the first line’s “*Voi dai nemici vostri, A noi date vittoria*” was changed to “*Voi dai nemici nostri, A noi date vittoria*” (“You over **your** enemies, To us give victory” to “You over **our** enemies, To us give victory”), whereby the enemies of Mary, the sinners, became, by change to the possessive adjective ‘ours’, enemies of Corsica.

As I learned from attending many concerts throughout the summer, it is typical for a Corsican musical group to end its concerts with the collective (with the audience) singing of the ‘*Dio Vi Salvi*’, in a similar manner in which the national anthem is sung in the United States before sporting events. By performing, as a musical group, and by participating, as an audience, both parties are making a clear and conscious decision to

¹² This and all following information on the *Dio Vi Salvi Regina* comes from P. Antonini’s *Les Origines du ‘Dio Vi Salvi Regina.’* www.accademiacorsa.org/dio

identify with a certain aspect of a deeply-rooted, traditional Corsican identity. While this can no doubt be achieved in other ways (performing other ‘typically’ Corsican songs, simply singing in the Corsican language), the identification with a shared (musical) tradition seems brought most fully to light by participating in the recreation of this particular aspect of cultural identity. (Despite the fact that the lyric is in Italian, the closeness of this language and Corsican—arguably a dialect of the former—is such that most Corsican speakers are able to sing and understand the words.)

Like *Canta*, *I Chjami Aghjalesi* also have an impressive success story, having recorded nine albums in almost twenty-five years. Their approach, however, seems to be slightly different than that of *Canta*. ‘*I Chjami*’ have promoted a special version of *paghjella*, which remains traditional in all senses of the term, yet which also becomes subtly complemented with non-Corsican instruments or songs. For example, in their most recent album, *Credo*, instruments such as the accordion and various horns can be heard, and one covered track, ‘*Elo Hai*’ (Ofra Haza/Goran Bregovic) is sung in Hebrew, albeit *paghjella*-style. To recall also the ‘pop’ revolutionary hits mentioned above, it should be acknowledged that ‘*Catena*’ a once-revolutionary Catalan song, has been translated into Corsican, and also performed as a *paghjella*. By performing these, the group makes an important decision to go beyond the musico-cultural shores of Corsica. Notice, however, that the songs above—no doubt carefully selected—reflect a perceptively ‘common’ theme to the island; revolution, independence, and a spirit of freedom.

Whether these ideas or this spirit are integrated into *paghjella*, or the latter is ‘exported’ and integrated into other musical cultures, it would appear that, well beyond the albums and concerts of *I Chjami Aghjalesi*, there is quite an appreciation for the combination of Corsican music (*paghjella*) with other types of music. *Corse-Matin* reviewed a classical recital performed by Lætitia Himo in August in 2001, in a brief article entitled ‘The Talking Cello’: “A new cd album, ‘The Cello Speaks’, has just come out, which takes the essential pieces from Himo’s concert, including *Dio Vi Salvi Regina*, which brings a Corsican note to a recital without borders, as all music should” (G., 2000).

Other musicians have formed groups, such as *Zamballarana* and *Giramondù* ('Turning World'), who actively use typically non-Corsican instruments, including horns, percussion, and synthesizers, as well as non-traditional genres, such as jazz, middle-eastern, and latino. The texts of their music are equally interesting; *Zamballarana* sings in '*Tempu passa*' ('Time Passes') "*tempu passa vai à spassu/ guardi fora ùn ti vultà/ di la cumpagna ùn fà casu/ ch'ella sia schiocca o pazza/ strada longa è fronte in tascal/ stà vicinu à l'altra razza*" ('Time goes by, take a walk/ look forward, not back/ don't bother about your friend/ be she mad or whimsical/ The road is long, so peacefully/ approach other peoples') (Liner notes, *Zamballarana*, 1997).

Giramondù, which has a particularly pan-Mediterranean aspect to its music, sings in the first song of their first album: "*Nantu à i ricordi/ e i ghjochi secreti da chjuchi/colla una voce.../Sè tù voli puderemu andà/ a purtà a so anima/ luntanu da sti paesi/ salverà l'amore/ di sti occhi*" ('From these memories/ and the secret games of our childhood/ rises a voice.../ If you want we can go/ and take this soul/far from the villages/ to save the love/ of these places') (Liner notes, *Mediterraniu*, 1999).

Both lyrics cited here reveal a confident, 'safe,' and even desirable impetus to travel abroad, and that doing this will furthermore bring peaceful interaction, love, and even salvation. While neither text specifically names music or cultural identity, as such, as the ones that 'travel,' a metaphor can clearly be implied whereby: just as in personal relationships, instruments, songs, and languages from abroad can be beneficially incorporated into Corsican music.

It would seem that the key to the success of these groups is in fact their affinity for incorporating 'foreign' sounds into Corsica's soundscape. Yet, these groups still sing in Corsican, still sing in *paghjella* fashion, and still, mostly, sing about 'islandhood', whether directly or by metaphor. Here, another important thematic topic appears to be 'singing' itself, which seems to intrinsically have the power to convey a strong sense of tradition. Again, directly or by metaphor, a voice ('*u cantu*') can 'rise', 'tell you to walk'¹³, or when in harmony with other voices, 'United, echoes in the sky and covers the

¹³ '*ti dice di marchjà*', in '*Sperà*' (liner notes, *Credo* 1998)

earth'¹⁴. By presenting a 'different' style, yet remaining 'faithful' to particular aspects of Corsican musical identity, it would appear that these groups achieve some sort of a balance between the two notions of foreign and local, which are often perceived as conflicting.

Indeed, these groups—*I Chjami Aghelesi*, *Giramondù*, *A Filetta*, and others—are perhaps the most successful upon the island's modern musical stage, and might well offer further insight into the future of Corsican music. Yet, as will be explored in the next section, it would seem that there are different ways to go about balancing 'traditional' and 'modern'. Whereas the efforts of some artists are widely discussed and often praised in popular discourse, the attempts of others are not always well-received, and at times even remain ignored or ridiculed.

4.4 *I Muvrini*

"Je connais la plus belle des chansons/elle relie l'univers à nos maisons/elle chante chaque terre chaque pays/dans ces mots que les temps leur ont appris" ("I know the most beautiful of songs/it unites the universe to our homes/ it sings each land each country/ in the words that the times have taught them")

-from "*Erein eta joan*" / "*Je sème et je m'en vais*" (*I Muvrini*, *Umani*, 2002)

No doubt Corsica's most well-known—both on and off the island—music group, '*I Muvrini*' (the '*mouflons*', or 'small, mountain goats'), have had a successful career of almost 30 years in which they have recorded some 21 different albums and toured extensively, both in Corsica and internationally. Their beginnings closely resemble those of the other groups begun during the *Riaquistu*; *I Muvrini* 'reclaimed,' musically, a weakened cultural identity. Like *Canta u Populu Corsu* and *I Chjami Aghjalesi*, they did so by singing the *paghjella* and taking up such topics as political independence from

¹⁴ '*Unita, chì ribomba in celu u ricuccu di a terra*', in '*Bandera*' (liner notes, *Credo* 1998)

France and a general cultural revival in Corsica. Their support of the Corsican language and cultural traditions was absolute during the 1970s and 80s, yet something had clearly changed by the mid-90s.

The *Muvrini* have changed two essential aspects of their music in the past two decades: First, they have, in many ways, broken away from the stricter conventions of the *paghjella*. Besides changing its makeup (sometimes only one or two vocalists sing, as opposed to the traditionally required 3 or more), *I Muvrini* have brought in numerous musical instruments and sounds not native to traditional Corsican music, and they have also, as will be cited below, sung in *other* languages besides Corsican, yet in *paghjella*-style. Secondly, they have—in press releases, interviews, and the lyrics of their music—expressed a clear and ardent desire to ‘explore’ the musical world outside Corsica, and to bring that world back to the island inasmuch as they can offer traditional Corsican music to other cultures. Considering the lyric cited above: “I know the most beautiful of songs/she joins our homes to the universe/ she sings of every earth, every country...” we see a similar (albeit perceptively *more* ‘universal’) sentiment as that expressed in the lyrics discussed above by *Giramondù* and *Zamballarana*. Yet one fundamental difference remains : language choice. Not only is the title in Basque (given also in French, but, notice, not in Corsican), but the song itself is sung in French, Corsican, Catalan, Occitan, Breton, and Basque!

More so than any groups discussed in the previous sections, the *Muvrini* have most visibly (or audibly) been responsible for transporting foreign music upon Corsica’s soundscape, as well as exporting Corsican music elsewhere in the world. Yet unlike those groups, *I Muvrini* have not enjoyed the same popular success on the island, and in fact have been often criticized. My fieldwork and research revealed two main factors behind this—the first of which has been this very ‘mixture,’ of musical styles and cultures, for which the *Muvrini* have come to be known.

During my fieldwork, I was able to conduct an extensive interview with Antò, an established disc jockey at RCFM (*Radio Corsa Frequenza Mora*), Corsica’s largest radio station. Of the *Muvrini*’s ‘*métissage*’, or (cultural/ethnic) ‘mixture’, Antò had this to say:

“Ils ont essayé de faire un espèce de métissage de musique. Ils ont joué avec Sting et cetera. C’est joli. Mais ça reste ‘joli’. Il n’y a pas d’émotion, je trouve. Enfin, I Muvrini, aujourd’hui, il n’y a plus d’émotion comme les premiers disques, où tu as des chansons... mais les premiers, ils sont vraiment beaux...”
 (“They tried to do a kind of hybrid music. They played with Sting and *et cetera*. It’s nice but it remains ‘nice.’ There’s no emotion, I find. So, the *Muvrini*, today, there’s no emotion like in the first albums, where there are songs...the first ones, they’re really beautiful”)(Fieldnotes, 08/15/01).

Antò’s description highlights both the evolution of *I Muvrini*’s music, as well as the fundamental *métisse* element behind it, from his point of view. Yet following countless conversations, formal and informal, with Corsicans, it is not an opinion unique to Antoine (‘Antò’ in Corsican). Instead, it seems to be a widely shared perspective, and one that, following our interview, I categorized into four main themes, highlighted below¹⁵:

1. *“Mais autres chansons, je sais pas, les 4 derniers albums, on dirait que c’est la même chanson.”*(“Other songs, I don’t know, the last 4 albums, it’s like it’s the same song”)

Here is a subtle yet common critique of *I Muvrini* and any groups that seemingly rely on their reputations so as to sell records, without making much or any effort to create new styles, forms, or sounds. This same opinion was echoed in another interview, with Dumè Gallet of *Canta u Populu Corsu* (Fieldnotes: 8/7/01).

2. *“Il y a beaucoup de gens qui apprécient plus m’nant I Chjami (Aghjelesi), Zamballarana—ils sont restés plus authentiques...Alors qu’I Muvrini, c’est un espèce de ‘roadie’, de ‘showbusiness’ tu vois, du gros groupe.”*(“There are a lot of people who now appreciate more *I Chjami*, *Zamballarana*—they have remained more authentic... Whereas the *Muvrini*, it’s ‘roadie’ style, ‘showbusiness,’ you know, from a pop group”)

¹⁵ The following four citations are all taken from Fieldnotes, 08/15/01.

Here the word ‘authentic’ is used, yet in a different way than as seen earlier. Whereas the *Muvrini* still sing, for the most part in Corsican and, more often than not, *about* things Corsican—the village, Corsican nature, *paghjella*/polyphony—‘authentic’ here is directly contrasted with ‘showbusiness’ and ‘*gros groupe*.’ While I never came across any informants who told me that Corsican bands should be ‘modest’, ‘humble,’ or least of all, ‘local,’ most Corsicans with whom I spoke were quite convinced that the *Muvrini* had ‘sold out’—not culturally, but commercially. Antò was able to remember two verses from a comic ‘cover’ group, *I Montini*, that had aired on the radio within recent years : “I Muvrini, *ils sont riches/ils mangent du caviar, et nous, les sandwiches// Quand ils vont à la plage, eux ils s’amusent, nous on se fait piqué par les méduses*” (“The *Muvrini* are rich/ they eat caviar, and we eat a sandwich//When they go to the beach they have fun, and we by jellyfishes get stung ”

3. “*Mais attention, je suis un fan de la technologie et tout ce qui est informatique et tout, mais je trouve de la chanson corse, ils ont pas réussi à faire l’amalgame.*”(“But hang-on, I’m a fan of technology and all that, but I feel like they haven’t been able to make a mixture with the Corsican song (or voice))”

Here, I believe, the cultural discourse meets a modern context. Antò is ‘okay’ with, even a fan of technology, just as many other Corsicans seem ‘okay’, all in all, with the idea of a Corsican music ‘mixing’ with other musical styles. Yet, according to the perspective represented here, the *Muvrini* have not successfully made the ‘mix.’ Here we return to a discussion of authenticity, as it pertains to cultural norms and cultural identity. Typically, popular media in Corsica has supported and even praised *I Muvrini* for blending the ‘local’ and the ‘universal’ in their music. An introduction to his article/interview entitled ‘I Muvrini : « *La musique dépasse les frontières* » ’, F. Laurent describes the group’s recent album ‘*Umani*’ and its corresponding book, whose “*créations incarnent toutes deux cette démarche d’ouverture et de quête d’humanité d’une formation musicale à la fois enracinée en Corse et citoyenne du monde*”(“creations

both incarnate this beginning of *ouverture* and the search for the humanity of a musical context both rooted in Corsica and citizen of the world”)(Laurent: 2002, 31). While this sentiment perhaps sounds positive, it simply was not shared by the majority of my informants. Instead, they gave me the impression that in trying to be musico-culturally ‘outgoing,’ the *Muvrini* were ignoring, even rejecting, many of the fundamental traits of Corsican identity, as it is expressed in music.

4. “*Il y a un truc, par contre, et ça je voulais te dire: tous les anciens qui écoutent I Muvrini ne comprennent pas ce qu’ils chantent*” (“There’s one thing, however, that I wanted to tell you: all the old folks who listen to *I Muvrini* don’t understand what they’re singing”).

In more of a side-note, Antò made this specific comment about the *Muvrini*’s use of language. What he meant (and then explained) by stating that the elders who listened to this group’s music didn’t understand, was that the *variety* of Corsican which the singers used was deemed ‘incomprehensible.’ Not, it should be noted, because they use a hybrid form such as *Francorse* or *FCR*, but instead because they sing in a dialect of Corsican that is, at best, ‘marginal.’ The dialect of the Castigniccia (eastern) region of Corsica from which the Bernadini brothers come likely contains words uncommon to other varieties of Corsican spoken elsewhere. As most *paghjella* groups have traditionally originated from a more central region of the Niolu, it is possible that the dialect in which *I Muvrini* lyrics are written is less-widely spoken, or at least from a smaller, lesser-known region. However, I question whether these regional and linguistic differences do not serve to further marginalize the group and devalue its music.

I feel that this last comment of Antò’s further reveals the pressures of authenticity as they reflect the dominant norms of cultural identity, and truly this seems to be the second reason behind the *lack* of success of the *Muvrini*, as expressed in popular Corsican discourse. While the group wishes to ‘expand’ Corsica’s musical horizons, they

do so at the risk of their music being labeled 'inauthentic.' As such, for many they have gained the reputation of 'sell-outs'—culturally as well as commercially.

Some musicians seem to disregard this subtle yet sharp critique of musical *cum* cultural *métissage*. *Les Varans*, a Corsican group that plays rock and R & B, but *sings* in Corsican, had labeled their recent album (2000) '*Mi Ne Futtu*', or 'I Don't Give a Fuck.' The album includes songs with such titles as '*A Pressione*', '*L'Americorsu*', '*Equilibriu*', and '*Passaportu*,' and the title track '*M.N.F.*', which opens with the lyric: "*MNF dí a ritrata, d'invechja/ MNF inguern'o estate, di campà/ MNF dí a rivoluzione, falla tù/ MNF ancu di sta canzona, una in piu*" ("I Don't Care (IDC) about retirement or aging/ IDC about surviving, winter or summer/ IDC about revolution, do it yourself (or 'on your own')/ IDC about this song either, that's one more")(Liner notes, *Mi ne futtu*, 2000).

Despite this nonchalant, almost anarchic attitude—or perhaps because of it—*Les Varans* have remained, at best, only marginally popular. Antò had this to say about the group: "*Les Varans? Non non non, parce que c'est du rock. Et moi, c'est, à mon avis, je trouve que ça sonne mal, le corse avec du rock. Non, I Chjami Aghjalesi, oui, c'est super, A Filetta, tout ça, mais chez les Varans, ça ne marche pas*" ("Les Varans? No no no, because that's rock. In my opinion, I don't think it sounds good, Corsican with rock. No, *I Chjami Aghjalesi*, yeah, that's great, *A Filetta*, all that, but with the *Varans*, it doesn't work")(Fieldnotes, 08/15/01). Here two main themes (re)surface: With the *Varans*, 'it doesn't work.' 'It' here is the music, specifically the *hybrid* music, that the group plays. When I saw them in concert, the performance gave every indication of a rock-and-roll show, except for two aspects. The lyrics of all songs were sung in Corsican, and one, particular moment was decidedly *not* typical of rock-and-roll. After one song toward the concert's end, the group's bassist, Anghjulu Torre, performed a vocal solo, *paghjella*-style. This approximately one-minute performance served as an intro to 'Hey, *Sentimammà*' ('Hey, Listen Mamma'), as George Thorogood-esque electric guitar riffs and vocals then bridged the intro into the main part of the song. Looks of confusion and surprise, as well as laughter, abounded in the audience. No one

seemed shocked or outraged, nor did they seem entirely impressed either. When I discussed the moment with friends after the show, they had little to say, and one comment was that the effort was '*nul*' ('stupid'). Instead of a bridge between the two styles, it seemed as though one, brief performance was in *paghjella* form, immediately which followed, but did not fuse with the solo, rock-and-roll.

Indeed, 'it' did not seem to work, and thus the second theme from Antò's comment: 'I find that it doesn't sound *good*' (emphasis my own). While this statement seems quite simple, it highlights what I understood to be a standing perception of 'modern' Corsican music that seeks to blend styles: it must be done well. *Les Varans* elicit humor (as, no doubt, *I Montini*) and tend not to be taken seriously. Another rock group, *Qui?*, has Corsican members, yet all songs are song in French and thus not considered Corsican. Rock-and-roll is clearly not the first genre that Corsican's are ready to accept alongside, or rather fused with, the *paghjella*. There are currently no rap or hip-hop artists recording in Corsica,¹⁶ and any electronica, or dance music, remains decidedly 'non-Corsican' and is restricted to dance clubs. Antò cited the music of *Giramondù* (and criticized the *Muvrini*) as representative of a mix 'well done' :

"Giramondù—*alors, voilà un groupe, moi je trouve, qui a bien réussi son melange. Giramondù, ils font du moderne, mais qui avait une sonorité qui reste quand-même traditionnelle. Il y a la batterie et synthétiseurs, mais c'est bien travaillé, je trouve. Ça passe bien. Alors qu' I Muvrini, c'est vraiment gonflant, quoi*" ("Giramondù—there's a group, I think, that has successfully made the mix. *Giramondù*, they do modern stuff, but with a sound that's still traditional. There are drums and keyboards, but it's well done. It's pretty cool. But the *Muvrini*, it's really annoying") (Fieldnotes 08/15/03).

Again, the notion of an 'authentic', Corsican sound seems to restrict most efforts at combining it with other genres or styles of music (Certain exceptions to and patterns of this will be discussed in Chapter 5). The *Muvrini*, then, find themselves in a difficult position of producing a more 'worldly' Corsican sound. It would seem that the more

¹⁶ Contrast this phenomenon with neighboring Sardinia's largely successful rap groups, *Sa Razza*, and Sicily's *I Nuovi Briganti*, who rap in Sardinian and Sicilian, respectively.

‘global’ they go, the more successful their music may be—but not in Corsica. Their recent album, *Umani* (‘Humans’), has sold approximately 200,000 copies since its release in 2002. The album includes many languages and guest performers, including MC Solaar and Zarina & Manila Fazel, two Afghan singers who provide the chorus for ‘A *Jalalabad*’, a musical (and, arguably feminist) approach toward a politically and socio-culturally ravaged Afghanistan. The song was released as a single and has had a significant amount of international success. Yet on the island of Corsica, the group’s home, success seems to remain limited.

This chapter has reviewed the style of Corsican polyphony since the *Riaquistu* and identified the island’s key musicians. The most ‘faithful’ to musical tradition (*Canta u Populu Corsu*) and those who most overtly retain traditional aspects in their music—whether in instrumentation, language choice, or thematic lyrics—are generally considered the most authentic musicians. Conversely, *I Muvrini* and *Les Varans* are often viewed as producing and performing the least authentic examples of Corsican music. Whereas discourse in Corsican media tends to approve of and even praise their hybrid approaches to music, popular opinion described a hybridity that is, at best, repetitious, and otherwise incomprehensible, ‘sold-out,’ and, ultimately, unsuccessful.

Between the two extremes in approaches—between local/traditional and global/modern—groups that have enjoyed a growing success (*I Chjami Aghjalesi*, *Giramondù*, *A Filetta*, *Zamballarana*) seem to have created an acceptable balance of both. In *subtly* integrating styles, languages, and genres, these groups are creating a hybrid music that is ‘well-done,’ it would appear, and well liked. Other factors lie behind the positive reception of their music, and will be discussed below.

Chapter 5 Making Music, (Re)making Culture

In this thesis I have so far explored the relationship of Corsican language and music and how the latter in particular has worked to shape and reshape the modern cultural identity of Corsica, both on and off the island. The ‘modernity’ of that identity seems to be a product of both a globalizing world and a local place with nostalgic, traditional attitudes toward language and music. This association with the ‘traditional,’ I argue, refers to a particular time frame in Corsica, specifically the years during and following the *Riaquistu*. Two trends and attitudes appear to reflect this. First, the island’s musicians tend to uphold traditional aspects of Corsican music—in style, form, and theme—and furthermore seem pressured to uphold ‘authentic’ representations of that music. Otherwise, they risk being judged performers of music that is ‘non-Corsican,’ ‘not good,’ or ‘sold-out.’ Secondly, however, there appears to be a reaction from both musicians and audiences—what I have called a *post-nationalist* perception—whereby an association of music with the *Riaquistu*’s linguistic and political activism would appear to discourage listeners. For them, a music’s perceived connotation of revolution, violence, and of a language of farmers and shepherds might conflict with a globalizing world wherein stability, peace, and modernity, at least in theory, are given precedence.

This, as revealed by examples cited in Chapter 4, is not to insinuate that modern music in Corsica must be revolutionary in nature or theme, nor must it necessarily be in Corsican or even in *paghjella* form. Yet an ever-present notion of authenticity seems to have so surrounded and defined *one* identity behind Corsican music that divergence from this norm would appear difficult. Even if there is now a perceived shift from a dominant musical ideology, many factors—especially authenticity—are making such a transition slow, difficult, and often marginalized. For example, the perceived ‘norms’ of revolution and independence (both political and cultural) in Corsica are still reinforced in many ways. Tourists visiting the island and in search of Corsican music will have no problem finding recordings of it. Not only are CDs and cassettes of *paghjelle* widely available, but a series of compilations that host images and songs of the *Riaquistu* seem particularly prevalent. Sold alongside key rings, stickers, and tee-shirts that display the island’s flag,

Riaquistu slogans, and other ‘traditional’ Corsican ideas and images, it would appear that music that reflects the traditional aspects of the island is the most validated and easy to find. Is this because the best-known cultural (and musical) stereotypes of the island—namely, tradition, ‘savage’ beauty, and rebellion—are the most profitable?

A recent article in National Geographic might suggest this, while speaking to the rise in success of popular, modern Corsican music: “At the same time there has been a revival of traditional Corsican music—haunting polyphonic laments and ballads that sing of clan rivalries, young widows, and aging mountain shepherds” (Range 2003:63). Here, Range is not presenting a historic account of the *Riaquistu*, but rather reinforcing a stereotypic and limited perception of *modern-day* life upon the island. While the improvised call and response (*chjam’è rispondi*) which the author mentions occurring in bars *can* indeed still be found, the otherwise ‘haunting’ nature of ‘polyphonic laments’ (*lamenti* are only sung at funerals) and the subject of ‘clan rivalries’ (*vendette*) are for the most part remnants of the past, and do not accurately describe Corsica’s modern soundscape.

But this is something that tourists and ethnographers will discover for themselves as they will (hopefully) critically analyze these notions of Corsican identity. In the meantime, however, there remains the question of how Corsicans themselves will interpret this cultural reputation by the outside world, as well as by themselves, within the island. Beyond recreating (or rejecting) a perceived image for the sake of tourists, Corsicans, like other minority and regional groups, have a need to negotiate their identities for their own sake. Whether to physically leave or stay upon the island, whether to validate some, all, or no facets of a traditional culture, whether to integrate non-Corsican cultures into their own, which variety of Corsica to export to other cultures...these are all important questions. In the domain of music, one finds all of them posed and discussed in turn.

While one cannot entirely predict the future of Corsican cultural identity—the scope of this thesis is certainly not to do so—certain perceived directions may surface based upon a collection of linguistic, cultural, and musical data; that which I hope to

convey in this work. My fieldwork in Corsica revealed many differing opinions expressed in conversations and in popular and literary media. Yet certain common trends were also revealed. For this reason I will, in this chapter, attempt to summarize the arguments of both 'sides' of a nationalist/post-nationalist debate, to examine where they diverge and converge, what hybrid forms have emerged and with what success, and what those forms might imply for the future of Corsican music. Modern musical identity in Corsica today, like linguistic and otherwise general cultural identities, is a complex composite of different attitudes and directions, hopes and desires, constraints and freedoms.

The first part of this chapter will consider the processes and effects of the dual and (perceptively) separate phenomena of 'globalizing' and 'localizing' music. If considered first separately, then we may attempt to understand the values and drawbacks to both, and better understand why Corsican musicians might have difficulty choosing between or balancing the two trends: to (musically) go abroad or to stay home. And if to stay 'home,' then which image to convey, which identity to pursue?

The second part of this chapter will look in particular at music that appears to synthesize both sides of the seemingly binary debate, as well as why such music might have difficulty doing so. Also, I will discuss which music might offer alternative, original responses to the question of musical identity. This section will especially explore the importance of Corsican media in this domain, and how, through its ongoing discussion of musical identity, cultural identity is conveyed and negotiated as well.

The third and final section will cite particular sources that comment on future directions of the island's music. These sources include musicians, media, and events which give voice to both musicians and audiences, and which also reflect institutions and opportunities for experiencing music in modern Corsica.

5.1 To Localize or Globalize?

“L’homme corse, l’homme corsophone ne porte pas le drapeau d’un obscurantisme, d’un archaïsme, d’un repli, d’une guerre des identités...Il porte le drapeau de l’homme enraciné et ouvert, lié à sa terre et au monde entier” (“The Corsican man, the Corsophone man does not carry the flag of obscurity, of archaism, of withdraw, of a war of identities...He carries the flag of a man both rooted and open, tied to his land and to the entire world”)

—Jean-François Bernadini (*I Muvrini*)¹⁷

While Jean-François Bernadini, the lead singer of *I Muvrini*, makes an eloquent claim for cultural *ouverture*, the general social climate in Corsica does not always appear to reveal such an open, plural identity. Whereas one might not hear the term ‘very French to describe a Corsican, the idea of ‘*très corse*’ (‘very Corsican’) is used, and is meant to denote someone who *actively* expresses some ‘typical’ feature of Corsican cultural identity—most notably language—and at the same time tends to reject perceptively encroaching cultural identities. The idea or expression ‘*un peu corse*’ or ‘a bit Corsican’ is nowhere to be found, however. Instead, the only clearly contrasting description that I heard of a person who was not labeled ‘*très corse*’ was, simply, ‘*français(e)*,’ in the sense of “I am not Corsican, I’m French.”

Perhaps the label isn’t so simple, given that ‘being’ French seems to preclude ‘being’ Corsican. Yet is Corsica not politically a part of France? The nationalists of the *Riaquistu* sought to reclaim their Corsican cultural identity by establishing a Corsican *nationality* in direct opposition with, as they saw it, an imposed French one. The *Riaquistu*, however, has passed, and the reality of a separate, Corsican nationality seems less valued. Unemployment on the island remains high, villages are being deserted, and economic and political independence from France seems impossible, if not undesirable. It appears that today, in fact, many Corsicans are seeking to ‘reclaim’ a French identity, by pointing out, first and foremost, their French *nationality*. We could imagine an individual from the United States, for example, who, no matter how proud to be from the state of Texas, might likely still consider his/herself to be foremost an ‘American.’ Yet in the

¹⁷ interview with F. Laurent, *Journal de la Corse*, Sept. 2002

context of a separatist military or civilian organization in that state, we could imagine that this group—marginal though it may be—would insist that its members, that its fellow statesmen and women, be ‘Texan’ above all.

In the same way we can imagine why, according to Corsican nationalist ideology, an individual insisting upon being labeled ‘French’ would seem to be rejecting his or her ‘Corsicanness.’ Yet we could also, if only from the analogy above, allow why a Corsican *not* in agreement with nationalist and often marginal ideals might *identify* first with a nationality—French—that does not seem to so fully embody the stereotypic aspects of a Corsican nationality *cum* identity (e.g. ‘clan rivalries, young widows, aging mountain shepherds’...). What arises from the two seemingly clashing identities is the perceived need to choose either side with which to identify; in this case the ‘local’ or the ‘global,’ or more specifically, the ‘continental.’ Merler makes an interesting observation, whereby *“La Corsica, in genere, è vista da una prospettiva che guarda dal continente, si chiama esso Francia o Italia. In questo modo l’isola appare sempre come un qualcosa di staccato, comunque diverso e « isolato »”* (“Corsica, in general, is seen from the perspective of the continent, be it France or Italy. In this way the island will always seem like something disconnected, different and ‘isolated’”)(Merler 1993:35). It would appear, in fact, that just as the continental view of the island is one of a separate entity, so too might it seem, and more acutely so, separate from the point of view of the island itself.

In this way do we finally come to the domain of music. Corsican language, dress, and economic livelihood, for example, have all been subject to sacrifice *vis à vis* a globalizing world wherein French or English are spoken, urban fashions are trendy, and jobs are infinitely more available off the island. Music, however, seems to hold a different place in the global market of cultural merchandise. At the same time that its ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ flavors are valued in world music, its ability to adapt to and integrate different styles (read: cultures) of music, while keeping its own, seems equally valued.

We should of course remain cognizant of *to whom* music is valued in this discussion. Foremost in this thesis, I seek to reveal the *Corsican* understanding of Corsican music, and the cultural implications that the island's music has for those in Corsica. Yet at the same time, consideration should respectively be given to the *international* experience of Corsican music, as this surely influences musical production and perception upon the island. For, should we not consider for whom the now commercialized slogans, images, and ideas of the *Riaquistu* are today marketed and sold upon key chains, bumper stickers, and tee shirts? In so far as many Corsicans may wish to uphold and safeguard aspects of a traditional culture for themselves, it needs be recognized that there is a substantial tourist population upon the island which is, perhaps especially, interested in an 'authentic' Corsican culture. Perhaps this is why so many compilations of *paghjelle* ('*Canta di a Libertà*,' '*Polyphonies corses*,' '*Les Plus belles chants corses*') are widely available across the island, in stores both large and small. André, the owner of a music store in Ajaccio and native Corsican, affirmed that "...il y a moins de nouveautés. Les maisons de disque qui s'occupent des produits corses ont trop la facilité de sortir les compilations" ("...there's less new stuff. The labels that do the Corsican music too easily put out compilations")(Fieldnotes 07/20/01). Whereas this might set the (commercial) tone for the surface of a soundscape, we know and have seen in Chapter 4 that new music (i.e. not compiled 'oldies') is nonetheless being produced, and not necessarily for tourists or for the international music industry.

Now, having explored for whom music may be made (and sold), the focus of this section remains whether that music is understood as 'local' or 'global,' and why. For those who would pursue a global direction in music, we can imagine several reasons as to why. The first: just as in other forms of cultural expression, besides a desire to 'remember' traditional aspects of a community's heritage, there is the (seemingly) conflicting pull from the globalized world outside, influenced, no doubt, by television, film, and indeed music. Yet a second, equally important factor behind 'going global,' is the simple desire on the part of the musician to do so, irrespective of local forces 'pulling' one home. That is, just as a painter or sculptor may be influenced by genres or

artists not native to her or his homeland, so too may a musician, without any intention in pursuing nationally-oriented influences to music, may be influenced and inspired by an infinite number of directions. Lastly, many—whether speaking in specific musical or general cultural terms—may feel that the only way for a minority culture to ‘survive’ is to be accepting of other culture influences and embrace plurality rather than resist or reject it.

Those who take the ‘local’ route to musical expression are not necessarily resisting or rejecting, but we may imagine the same rationale behind preserving a regional or traditional culture in other realms besides music. By upholding the past, musicians are making a conscious call to past times wherein the ‘essence’ of a culture and its nostalgically viewed days are evoked. Hill describes the “discourse of ‘nostalgia’...using ‘pastness’ as a ‘naturalizing’ ideological strategy: rhetorically, the claim is that those practices that are most like those of the past are the most valuable” (Hill 1998:78). Gross has noted of the Puerto Rican *decima* that “Whether you are for independence, the commonwealth, or statehood ; whether you are Catholic or Protestant, you can still make a stand for Puerto Rican culture by idealizing its past”(Gross, n.p.).

Yet, in another sense, perhaps these musicians are instead making a claim that some values and customs of yesteryear remain valid, and even valuable, in the present. Later, Gross notes of Walloon puppet theater that “...The notion of ‘survival,’ as something that has no real function in the present cultural context, misses the point that both nostalgia and self-conscious deployment of the past are, indeed, functional in the present” (2001: 99). Thus, instead of imagining Corsican musicians as ‘struggling’ to maintain a traditional genre of music, we might equally allow that the *paghjella*, in its form and content, holds meaning today for modern Corsicans and for global audiences alike. In this way—by not ‘struggling’—we might even imagine Corsican musicians to be relieved, as it were, to not feel such a need to (re)create a *paghjella* deemed ‘authentic,’ whether by the values of the *Riaquistu* or by the trends of the international music industry and its consumers. Robinson, in fact, holds that: “We see internationalized music as a global music system that transcends but does not overwhelm national

boundaries. Throughout the world the globalization process, as represented by the international music industry, is being *countered* by the production of unique musics by local musicians” (Robinson 1991: 227) (emphasis my own). Is this the case in Corsica? The music of *Zamballarana*, *Giramondù*, *A Filetta* (but not that of *I Muvrini* or *Canta*) might suggest as much. One might think of their music as incorporating elements of the global soundscape without letting them replace Corsican musical values, while at the same time not letting these latter block out any *outside* influences. Musicians such as these may perhaps feel more free to create a *paghjella* that is more readily able to change form, style, and even language.

Yet, from everything that we have seen so far, this is *not* the norm for Corsican music. Later, Robinson himself, of his study in Nigeria, notes that “Nigerians seem to acquire new musical ideas and styles from the international industry but, because of the strength of their musical traditions, do not replace old musical values with new ones” (ibid: 237). Whether a ‘traditional’ version of *paghjella* is kept for nostalgic or survival reasons, or whether the *paghjella*’s simple (without instrumentation), polyphonic form has modern meaning not associated with the past, the case remains that a local, choral polyphony—in the Corsican language—remains the standard form.

The reasons for discussing the position of this standard form in the context of an international, globalized or globalizing counterpart are threefold. First, the very presence of music groups that seem to diverge from a standard norm (and, as we have seen, to various degrees) suggests that an environment of musical hybridity, as with linguistic hybridity in Corsica, is present. Secondly, there is a perceived urge upon the island to rethink, reform, to *recreate* Corsican music, just as other aspects of culture—in Corsica and among other minority groups—are being reconsidered in the modern day. Briançon echoes a common sentiment upon the island:

“Il faut développer la culture en Corse et pas exclusivement la culture corse. ... La culture corse est complexe, fruit d’une histoire typée et d’un ensemble d’attitudes contradictoires, d’où la difficulté de la mettre en musique et de lui donner un sens. La Corse a du mal à exprimer « sa » culture, ou lorsqu’elle le fait, parfois maladroitement, cette affirmation est perçue comme une culture du conflit” (“We have to develop culture

in Corsica and not exclusively Corsican culture...Corsican culture is complex, the fruit of a particular history and the sum of contradictory attitudes, hence the difficulty to put it in music and give it meaning. Corsica has trouble expressing 'its' culture, or when it does, at times awkwardly, the expression is perceived as a culture of conflict"(2000: 48).

As we have seen, this decision of knowing *which* culture to express is an important and difficult one. Both sides—the 'traditional' and the 'modern'—are laden with meta-cultural meaning that have implications which stretch well beyond the domain of music. Hence the third reason behind this discussion, indeed the central reason behind writing this thesis: Music in Corsica may go in 'local,' 'global,' or hybrid directions, and in doing so may both reflect and perhaps reinforce trends and attitudes found on a larger scale of cultural identity. In this section we have explored the *local* and the *global* in music, as well as seen that there is a strong tendency toward the *local* in Corsica. In the following section I hope to shed more light on this by discussing the hybrid forms of Corsica's soundscape, and *why* a tendency toward the local persists.

5.2 Between *Paghjella* and Rap

"La je dois dire que les jeunes, ça me fait plaisir qu'ils achètent de la musique corse. Indirectement [ça] ne me fait pas plaisir parce qu'ils ignorent tout ce qui se fait en dehors de la musique corse"("I've got to say that I'm happy that kids are buying Corsican music, but indirectly unhappy that they ignore everything that's going on outside of Corsican music")
 —André (Fieldnotes 7/20/01)

Through a friend who I had made in Poggio, I was able to meet and later interview André, a thirtysomething music storeowner in Ajaccio. At 'Corsica Vibes', a selection of both Corsican (*musique corse*) and international (*variété internationale*) music was available. André is a native of Ajaccio, married to a Serbian immigrant, and has owned Corsica Vibes for several years. We had an approximately 45 minute interview at a nearby café, wherein I asked him about different Corsican groups, albums, and consumer trends at his store. That morning, I had read an article in GEO magazine entitled '*Corse, les polyphonies trésors d'un monde pastoral*' ('Corsica, polyphonic

treasures from a pastoral world') and was especially interested in asking André's opinion about a passage from the beginning of the article: "*Une paghjella qui, après être tombée en désuétude, est à présent interprétée par des adolescents qui assument sa cohabitation avec le rap ou la techno*" (" [It is] a *paghjella* that, after having fallen into obsolescence, is now interpreted by adolescents that take up its cohabitation with rap or techno") (Tenaille 1998: 133).

After reading the excerpt, André's first response was 'Rubbish...that is... rubbish' ('*N'importe quoi...oh, alors, là...c'est n'importe quoi*'). When I asked him to clarify he went on to explain that '*cohabitation*' here meant:

"Ben, [ça] veut dire qu'on fait un rythme de techno, et on greffe des chants par-dessus. La cohabitation, pour mieux comprendre, c'est quand mettre dans une même maison un arabe, un noir, et un français—et où il y est aucun heurt. C'est la cohabitation....c'est n'importe quoi. Ça n'existe même pas" ("Well, [it] means that you put down a techno beat, and graft *chants*¹⁸ on that. Cohabitation, to better understand, is when you put an Arab, a black, and a French in the same house and there's no collision. ...rubbish. That doesn't even exist") (Fieldnotes 07/20/01)

A fascinating insight into musical identity in Corsica, André's metaphor here with *ethnic* identity may reflect a larger perspective of culture whereby identities are kept separate and simply cannot, perhaps should not, merge. After the interview, when I asked him about music stores in '*Corti*' (using the Corsican word *Corti* and not the French *Corte*), he immediately interrupted me and thrice repeated "*Corte, Corte, Corte*" while looking quickly around him as we walked down a narrow alleyway.

One thing is certain: according to this one individual, the mixing of (musical) genres in Corsica is simply not possible. A remaining question that I have concerns not André but the article above cited; does '*cohabitation*' ultimately mean 'mixing'/'blending', or rather does it imply 'coexisting'? The entirety of my research would suggest that the latter seems difficult and the former even less likely. As mentioned in footnote 14 above, rap groups in Sardinia and Sicily have been quite

¹⁸ Somewhere between 'voice' and 'song', '*chant*' or '*cantu*' (Corsican) is the music of the *paghjella*.

popular, as well as Denez Prigent in Brittany and Massilia Sound System and many other groups in Provence have had much success rapping in Sardinian, Sicilian, Breton, Occitan...yet one notices a clear lack of Corsican rap or hip-hop, sung in Corsican. What 'mixing' that does occur, from what few examples I found, conforms to André's description of a *paghjella* verse directly fused with a techno (or, electronic) beat. The website, www.corsicanvibes.com, offers some interesting examples, although none are available for purchase, nor are they compiled on any produced album.

During the village festival in Casanova (very near to Poggio), a daring DJ, at the height of one electronica dance track, briefly mixed a *chant* from the *Chjami Aghjelesi*, which seemed either to confuse or amuse those on the dance floor (much like the reaction provoked by the *Varans*' similar attempt), without necessarily passing as 'serious' dance music. Attempts by artists to outright mix *paghjella* with other genres, such as jazz, blues, reggae, pop, opera...are equally as sparse or simply have not been yet tried. At best, only a few modern musicians in Corsica have integrated some aspects of these genres into their versions of the *paghjella*.

Moreover, it would seem that other musical styles require total separation from the *paghjella* (or *lamenti*, *voceri*...or any polyphonic varieties). One group in Ajaccio, AFFAK Sound System¹⁹, mixes electronica music at private parties, clubs, and at public village festivals, without any noted attempt at mixing *chants* with their beats. Their press release in *La Macagna* explains that "*Affak Sound System est née tout récemment de la rencontre de cinq jeunes passionnés à qui l'étiquette 'techno' ne fait pas peur. Pas du tout déstabilisés par la réputation sulfureuse de cette tendance, ils préfèrent en optimiser l'aspect créatif et novateur*" ("Affak Sound System has just been born out of the meeting of five passionate youths who are not scared of a 'techno' label. Not at all shaken up by the stinging reputation of this trend, they prefer to optimize their creative and innovative qualities because of it")(Press release 2001: 16). It is possible, then, that musicians such as these do have room for musical expression other than that of a polyphonic, 'traditional' style. Indeed, some might revel in it.

¹⁹ 'AFFAK' likely comes from the Corsican verb *affacà*, meaning 'to appear suddenly'.

Upon my return to the United States in 2001, a brief article in the NY Times summarized a recent performance of Kepa Junkera, world-renown Basque *trikigixa* player, and performer of a an international blend of Cuban, Cajun, and Celtic styles, with gypsy, rock, and African tones as well. The author states: “Knowing his tradition so well from the inside, he’s confident about looking beyond it” (Pareles 2001, NY Times). The article reminded me of AFFAK, *Les Varans*, *Qui ?*, and others who seemed confident in their departures from ‘Corsican music.’ Indeed, while searching for these ‘different’ Corsican musicians, I found myself specifying to potential informants that my research was on “*la musique en Corse*” (‘music in Corsica’) as opposed to “*la musique corse*” (‘Corsican music’), because this former seemed always to elicit tips on which *traditional* or *famous* (without necessarily using these words) musician to find, album to purchase, or town to visit. ‘Music *in* Corsica’, however, seemed to convey at least a sense that I was not researching the history, for example, of ‘traditional’ Corsican music, or its instruments or forms...

Instead, a survey of *everything* that is occurring musically on the island, as I explained to my informants and as I am labeling here ‘soundscape,’ at least in theory allowed for non-traditional and hybrid varieties. Yet whereas I found a few examples of ‘different’ (non-*paghjella* or polyphonic) styles, I ultimately understood a general preference for and practice of choral music. Instead of looking ‘beyond’ their tradition, Corsican musicians and audiences prefer instead to take heed of it, and to actively (re)interpret it in ways that are changing. Pérès, in defining the scope of a conference organized in Corte one decade earlier, stated that “...*certaines personnalités ont su réorienter le chant insulaire vers d’autres horizons et continuent encore à réaliser un profond travail sur le chant corse à la fois dans le sens d’une meilleure connaissance du patrimoine, mais également dans un esprit de création*”(“A few actors have found out how to reorient the island song (*chant*) toward other horizons and continue a profound exploration of the Corsican voice (*chant*) both for a better familiarity with our patrimony, but also in the spirit of creation”)(Pérès 1996: 7)(emphasis my own). This passage does indeed reflect a change within music in Corsica, yet a development *within* the traditional

genre of polyphony and not necessarily one whereby other genres are implied. While I admit a biased interest in hybrid forms in 'world music,' I believe that this bias helped me to seek out *music in Corsica* as much as it helped me to fully understand the often subtle diversity within *Corsican music*.

I feel it now appropriate to briefly discuss the role of Corsican media in music, and in particular its commentary—both direct and indirect—upon cultural identity. After three months of daily checks in newspapers, magazines (weekly and monthly), websites and electronic journals, concert schedules, and reviews of albums and groups by diverse publications, I gained a broad insight into both Corsican musicians and the perceived meanings behind their music. This was done through no overly extensive searching or analysis on my part—the articles themselves no matter how small almost always tended to comment upon both the factual (date, time, album, etc.) and the perceptual, or how a group's music *culturally* expressed itself. In the island's daily newspaper *Corse Matin*, at least one article per day about a group was printed. Often, a concert for the evening would be announced, or one from the previous evening would be reviewed. In both cases, at least some attention was almost always given to how much a certain group or musician reflected a traditional (read: *authentic*) component of Corsican identity. In one example among many, a brief review of a relatively new group, *Di Maghju*, described their music as follows: "*Terre de traditions et de chants, la Corse a vu éclore bien des talents. Le groupe Di Maghju qui s'efforce de préserver l'héritage musical, en est. Fondé en 1997, il offre un répertoire varié dans le respect de certaines valeurs...des polyphonies profanes et sacrées ainsi que des chants comme 'i lamenti' ou 'i voceri'*" ("Land of tradition and song, Corsica has seen many talents blossom. The group *Di Maghju*, endeavoring to preserve our musical heritage, is one of them. Begun in 1997, they offer a varied repertoire of certain themes...profane and sacred polyphonies as well as *lamenti* and *voceri*") (Cerlini 2001: 6).

Other publications, such as *Journal Scolaire de la Corse*, *Corsica*, and *La Macagna*, to name a few, typically offer similar reviews of both known and not-so-well known groups. What comes from such frequent music reviews, so richly laden with

cultural introspection, is, I argue, a sort of continual dialogue between the journal and the readers wherein more than just the structure, sound, or performance is discussed. Cultural identity, discussion itself, and direction are also considered, frequently and often at length.

In fact, these three all seem to be highly valued in the many journals that I reviewed. That is, that a group's music *reflects* Corsican cultural identity, that its music in some way *comments* upon that identity, and that, lastly, a group's music/album/particular performance *suggests* or *follows* a patterned trend for other musical expressions or performers. One example from *Corse Matin* praises *I Surghjenti* for both the (polyphonic) diversity of their music and its listener's appreciation: "*Ils savent alterner avec bonheur chants sacrés et profanes, polyphonies, etc. Cela induisant une variété que l'auditoire apprécie beaucoup*" ("They know how to happily alternate sacred and profane songs, polyphonies, etc. This indicating a variety that the listener really appreciates") (Guibert 2001:7). Another example from *Journal de la Corse* summarizes a concert by *A Ricuccata*, who incorporate Sardinian, Albanian, and Georgian polyphonic influences into their own compositions: "*Un concert empreint d'émotion et de sérénité où à la faveur des accents polyphoniques, l'âme d'un pays se révèle*" ("A concert imprinted with emotion and serenity where, by the grace of polyphonic accents, the soul of a land rises") (n.a. 2001: 28). In still another instance, an article in the Corsican language *U Ribombu* describes the '*canti suminati*' or 'rising voices' of *I Campagnoli*: "*Ma I Campagnoli ùn sò solu un gruppu di a tradizione. A creazione hè ancu ind'u core di i dece musicanti cantadori. Tra mudernità è tradizione...Eccu a manera di campà per sti ghjovani chì dapoi anni è anni, facenu serate è giri per una passione cumuna, quella di u cantu*" ("But the *Campagnoli* are not just a traditional group. Creation is also in the hearts of these 10 singer-songwriters. Between modernity and tradition...There is the way that these young people have survived, who after years and years tour and animate evenings in one common passion, that of the *cantu*") (Grazi 2001: 13).

This last case seems to most clearly highlight the major themes noted here and taken up again and again in Corsican press: 'tradition *and* creation', 'tradition *and*

modernity', and the 'survival' or 'life'²⁰ of *u cantu*. Instead of a decision between two (seemingly) opposing forces, these journals appear to favor a balance between them, and indeed suggest that such a balance is possible inasmuch as it is preferred.

5.3 New Directions

In all, it would appear that music in Corsica today is truly evolving, and quite likely stands to continue its development. Whereas forces may be in place which might suggest change in strictly 'traditional' or 'modern' directions, it appears that a cautious yet sincere orientation toward new and innovative directions is afoot. This orientation, or refiguring, of musical identity has been understandably deliberate, as it inherently reflects and fuels a larger cultural identity. This latter takes meaning in a modern, globalized context wherein a traditionally agricultural and geographically separate community must consider its traditional values alongside its modern needs.

Corsica seems particularly poised to do this through music, whereby several factors are in place that validate this form of cultural expression. First, the island possesses a strong musical tradition which, albeit its recent political connotations, reveals nevertheless a cherished and valuable facet of identity. Second, this mode of musical expression—polyphony and in particular the *paghjella*—seems far from perdition. Instead, musicians and audiences alike give the impression that they have every intention of safe-guarding 'traditional' Corsican music while making it or listening to it evolve. Thirdly, a reflexivity or awareness of this musical identity appears strong enough that discussion among islanders and in island media will likely continue and prove important to an additional platform for discussions of other cultural trends (language, art, immigration/emigration). De Zerbi comments that: "*Oghje u cantu pulifonicu hè quellu chì sprime a cerca d'identità di a giuventù corsa. Hà mutatu sensu a paghjella. Da espressione cullettiva di u piacè, da armunia di stonde cumune, hè diventata rivendicazione di un esse corsu chì ùn vole more*" ("Today the polyphonic song is that

²⁰ The Corsican verb *campà* means both 'to live' and 'to survive'.

which expresses the search for Corsican youth identity. The *paghjella* has changed form. By the collective expression of pleasure, by the harmony of communal verse, it has become the reclamation of a Corsican being who does not want to die”(de Zerbi 1990: 30). This ‘Corsican being’ that persists does so in many genres besides music (theater, cinema, literature) and in many ways within music. The final part of this chapter will examine the aspects and directions of these changes, as well as the structures and institutions that allow for such change to take place.

When I asked Dumè Gallet about *Les Varans* and how their style of music (rock) could change the sound of Corsican music, he replied that “*Si on fait évoluer la musique corse, il (ne) faut pas d’influences rock...chaque musicien s’emprègne de tous qu’il écoute, et il en fait des synthèses*”(“If one is to make Corsican music evolve, there can’t be any rock influences...every musician absorbs everything that he hears, and from this he synthesizes”)(Fieldnotes 08/07/01). Gallet’s support of (musical) syntheses is reflected in the title of one of *Cantu*’s recent albums *Sinteddi*, as well as in other group names (*Giramondù, Nouvelles Polyphonies Corses*, etc.), album titles (*(Mediterraniu, Umani*...), and countless song lyrics.

Beyond these names and lyrics, popular discussion in both interpersonal and media discussions tend more and more to reflect this value of synthesis and ‘bridge’ between the traditional and the modern. *I Muvrini*’s Jean-François Bernadini goes a step further in an interview with Fabrice Laurent, cautioning against the presence of any and perhaps all boundaries:

“La musique est musique justement parce qu’elle est quelquefois plus forte que les frontières, les murs, et les assignations à résidence culturelles: la Corse dans la polyphonie et uniquement dans la polyphonie, la Corse dans la mémoire et exclusivement dans la mémoire, la banlieue dans le rap et seulement dans le rap... (“Music is music indeed because it is sometimes stronger than borders, walls, and its assignment to cultural residences: Corsica in polyphonie and only in polyphony, Corsica in memory and exclusively in memory, the ghetto in rap and only in rap...”)(Laurent 2002: 31).

One important boundary that music in Corsica that has been crossed only within the past two decades, and as of yet not considered in this thesis, has been the role of women in the

expression and production of the *paghjella*. *Les Nouvelles polyphonies corses, E due Patrizia, Donnissulana, Soledonna...* are all-female *paghjella* groups whose very existence has radically changed the historically all-male identity of traditional Corsican music. In a forward to the CD insert to Jacky Micaelli's second album, Danièle Maoudj describes "[Ses] chants, où soleil et lune pleurent et rient ensemble, se désaltèrent à la même source: celle de la naissance de la lumière" ("[Her] songs, in which sun and moon weep and laugh together, slake their thirst at the same spring: that of the birth of light") (Liner notes, *Amor'esca* 2001). In this poetic description of Micaelli's music, a sense of both balance is expressed, and notions of 'traditional' ('source') and 'newness' ('la naissance de la lumière') are metaphorically conveyed as well. Elsewhere, a review of *Anghjula Dea*'s music in *Corse-Matin* describes the four women's music as "à la fois ancrée dans la tradition et tournée vers la modernité...[elles] ont également à coeur de s'ouvrir à d'autres musiques et ont intégré des morceaux venus d'Espagne, de Géorgie, de Sicile, de Sardaigne et d'ailleurs..." ("both anchored in tradition and oriented toward modernity...[they] also hold close to heart the openness to other musics and have integrated pieces from Spain, Georgia, Sicily, Sardinia and from elsewhere...") (n.a. 2001: 27). These musicians appear focused upon participating in and equally (or perhaps more easily?) forging this new direction of the *paghjella*. Collectively, their presence there as women no doubt contributes to a more holistic 'modern' musical identity, and future research into the specific role of women in this domain will surely be important.

That De Zerbi's '*esse corsu*' can cross all boundaries—gender, geographical and cultural—makes it seem truly oriented toward new horizons. An article in *Journal de la Corse* describes the music of (the all-male) *Cinqui Sò*: "*Compositions et traditions corses sont, bien entendu, évoqués mais ce spectacle est aussi un voyage musical qui portera le spectateur en Grèce, en Sardaigne, en Algérie, au Cameroun, en Espagne...*" ("Corsican compositions and traditions are, of course, evoked, but this spectacle is also a musical *voyage* that will bring the spectator to Greece, Sardinia, Algeria, Cameroon, Spain...") (n.a. 2001: 13) (emphasis my own).

Yet this journey of music in Corsica which I have considered from the *Riaquistu* until today has perhaps its most important itinerary at home—that is, upon the island itself. As I expressed at the beginning of this work, ‘finding’ music in Corsica is no difficult task. During the summer in particular, there is truly an abundance of concerts, colloquia, and festivals dedicated to music. These are structures, indeed institutions, wherein the *paghjella* and other polyphonic varieties can be explored as much as they can be preserved, and influenced by other music as much as they have to offer in exchange. The island is truly a meeting ground of music, and organizers do not set their sights short when planning music festivals. These events, such as *Festivoce*, *Estivoce-Festivoce*, *Settimbrinu di Tavagna*, *Festival du Vent*, and *Festival de Musique d’Erbalunga*, fill the spring, summer, and autumn months with showcases of Corsican music as well as multicultural music by guests invited from around the world. The *Rencontres polyphoniques* in September, for example, had already in August some 3,800 entries of which 100 planned performers, including Tibetan monks from Kyoto, gospel singers from New Jersey, an Occitan chorus, and Moroccan, with Georgian, and Bulgarian contributions planned as well. In a *Corse-Matin* article on the event, Jean-Claude Acquaviva of *A Filetta* was quoted as saying “*Notre chant n’a de sens que s’il est replacé dans sa matrice. Découvrir ses origines et ses frères²¹ dans le monde, c’est vital pour la musique de notre pays*” (“Our music makes sense only in its matrix. Discovering its origins and its brothers in the world is vital for the music of our land”)(Cazenave 2000: 11).

Besides the larger events (usually in larger cities), smaller village festivals dot the island during the summer and also constitute an important place for music, albeit in a slightly different way. From the many village festivals (*fêtes de village* or *paesi in festa*) that I attended throughout the summer, a small concert was sometimes a part of the general festivals during the day or night. Most often, however, a DJ was hired to spin dance records, creating more of a discothèque atmosphere, wherein younger and older attendees danced often until the early morning. At all of these *fêtes*, however, there was

²¹ Notice the use of only the masculine form (*frère*).

always a small group of men slightly further away from the dance floor. They would often be leaning against a bar or around a table, enjoying beer or pastis and each other's company and often speaking Corsican. On several occasions, I heard them break into song ; a softer though deep-voiced musical discussion more than performance, it often followed a *chjam'è rispondi* format wherein one man would sing a brief passage or sentence and another would 'respond', typically in joking fashion. Everyone in the impromptu group that wanted to participate could, it seemed, and this group—whether in Poggio or Casanova or Riventosa or Sermanu...—always seemed to be experiencing something different, something older. While most younger Corsicans were dancing to techno, and I was always ready to record *paghjella* mixed with the electronic beats, these older men stayed off to the side, laughing and arguing.

In this portrait of a village festival, we can imagine the traditional and the modern, as we could imagine hearing the lilting *paghjella* alongside a throbbing bass beat. But in considering the local festival alongside the larger, there lies an equally important account of 'local' and 'global' variations of the *same* spirit of music. Here, there appears to be less of a need to distinguish between two different worlds which would seemingly contrast. Instead, a more balanced impression is given, wherein both the local and global each have room for expression and stand even to grow together.

The only concerns for this development of musical and cultural identities in Corsica seem to question more practice than theory. Sociolinguist, professor, and poet Jacques Thiers is cited in an article entitled "*L'introuvable culture*," whereby a claim is made that in Corsica there are the "*moyens mais pas de structures*" or a "will but not a way." Thiers holds that "*Il faudrait une ingénierie culturelle pour les porteurs de projet qui sont nombreux*." ("We would need cultural engineering for the numerous project initiators.") The author concludes: "*Autrement dit, donner aux acteurs les moyens de leurs propres visions*" ("Otherwise said, to give to the actors the means to realize their own visions") (Briançon 2000: 48).

Apparently, there is no shortage of funds for cultural events in Corsica. Organizations such as the *Collectivité Territoriale de Corse (CTC)*, *Direction Régionale*

de l'Action Culturelle (DRAC), and the *Plan de Développement de la Corse (PDC)* regularly contribute to the planning and financing of projects, festivals, and events. These are all state-funded (by France) and regionally-managed (by Corsicans), yet a marked lack of resources is still apparent. According to Briançon, Corsica is still in a period of adaptation—culturally—and only patience and time will help cope with a lack of physical structure (theaters, cinemas, stages), a move toward urbanization upon the island, and newer, technological requirements as well.

This is not to say that certain players have not already adapted. AFFAK Sound System's press release claims that:

“L'Organisation est aussi un formidable vecteur pour la production artistique nouvelle, sous toutes ses formes : pas seulement musicale, mais aussi picturale, théâtrale, cinématographique, etc... A.S.S. se propose donc de produire, de promouvoir, à Ajaccio les formes artistiques liées au mouvement musical contemporain, Techno ou autre” (“The organization is also a formidable vector for new artistic production, in all of its forms: not only musical, but also pictorial, theatrical, cinematographic, etc...A.S.S. hopes, then to produce, to promote, in Ajaccio the artistic forms tied to the contemporary musical movement, Techno or otherwise”)(Press release 2001: 16).

Projects such as this, begun in an urban environment and aiming for a broad audience, seem to project a holistic message of vigor and newness that will perhaps become essential in a modern Corsican soundscape. When confronted with F. Laurent's question *“Certains en Corse vous reprochent de vous êtes éloignés de la tradition musicale de l'île. (Quels sont vos commentaires?)”* (“Certain people in Corsica reproach you for having furthered yourselves from the island's musical tradition. (What are your comments?)”), Jean-François Bernadini responded simply yet eloquently that *“Le discours du purisme et de l'authenticité fait davantage taire que chanter, répéter que créer”* (“The discourse of purism and authenticity make for more silence than song, more repetition than creation”)(Laurent 2002: 31). Although many have raised concerns about repetition in modern *paghjella*, silence in Corsican music hardly seems a likely word on the nearby horizon. Growth has taken place and events have still surely yet to unfold.

Perhaps the notion of revolution has given way to that of evolution, and if this latter be subtle, then so be it. At the end of my interview with Dumè Gallet, I asked him if *I Chjami Aghjelesi*'s new album, *Credo*, with its subtle Greek and Balkan influences, was representative of a new identity in Corsican music. "*Voilà...ça c'est bien...de tirer, d'intégrer...après ça passe dans le conscient des gens, ça passe dans la culture*"("Right on...that's good...to pull out, to integrate...after it passes into people's consciousness, it passes into culture")(Fieldnotes 08/07/01). When I asked him if he planned on making his own future music in this way, he answered "*Mais moi, je suis le fruit d'un métissage, un métissage ancien et nouveau*" ("Me, I'm the fruit of a hybrid, a hybrid both ancient and new")(ibid.).

Chapter 6 Conclusions

Corsica is a fascinating and complex composite of cultures, traditions, and identities. Its location at the near center of the Mediterranean sea has made it a beacon for merchants, colonizers, and travelers over the centuries, and its inland mountains have in turn sheltered particular customs and ways of life that have become typical of the island. In an idyllic description, hundreds of small villages lie amid these mountains, wherein many traditional aspects of Corsican cultural identity continue to thrive: language, agriculture, music... Whereas a notion of 'tradition' does often remain the strongest in these villages, Corsica's urban centers of Ajaccio, Bastia, Porto Vecchio, and Calvi outline the island's parameter and represent a bustling, modern counterpart to the island's stereotypic tradition and tranquility.

As in its dichotomy of village-city, Corsica also knows a distinction of the 'local' and 'global' in terms of cultural identity. Identity is a widely discussed yet sensitive topic in modern Corsica. I found that conducting my fieldwork in a small, central village certainly offered a 'local' perspective on identity, while the 'global' was not sacrificed either, given the relative ease of transportation and communication in the modern world of cars, airplanes, and the Internet. Many households in Poggio di Venaco, the site of my fieldwork, were equipped with modern conveniences as well as 'modern' and 'non-traditional' ideas about everything, including politics, culture, and language.

Yet these topics—as they related specifically to Corsican identity—were at times discussed by villagers with reservation or vagueness, or ignored altogether. Certainly they are no light matters for a minority culture striving to balance its historic, insular traditions with a rapidly globalizing world around it. But beyond verbal discussion of this (perceptively) binary division, I witnessed a larger, non-spoken manifestation of the careful balance of 'local' and 'global' while participating in the river clean-up work camp at the beginning of my fieldwork. The outcomes of the clean-up project were two-fold: to resuscitate, for the sake of the community, an impoverished local place of activity, sustenance, and cultural meaning, as well as to prepare the grounds which would

eventually appeal to and welcome Corsica's ever-growing tourist population, who of course bring revenue along with it.

In this way, I feel, the applied aspect of my anthropological research proved successful. In helping a community revive a place which represented local identity for them, the project also served as the groundwork behind an eventual means of income for the residents of Poggio. In working closely with two of the town's civic workers and regularly 'inspected' by the members of the small community, we volunteers knew that we were working in accordance with local approval and direction.

It was mostly through general discussion with the people of Poggio during my first weeks in Corsica that the applied nature of my fieldwork revealed a theoretical counterpart. I had gone to Corsica to assist in a local project and to discuss linguistic identity with Corsicans. There on the banks of the *Minutu*, I discovered that the *discussion* of language (rather than the (seemingly) simple choice of language) conveyed surprising amounts of cultural identity in a larger sense. And, when talk of language faltered, was glossed over, or on some occasions even discouraged (André's quick correction of my [*Corti*] with *Corte*), I found the subject of music to be both a safe and revelational topic. It seemed that perceptions of cultural identity could be more comfortably expressed in this realm, whereas the topic of language seemed to reveal stronger and more deeply-entrenched stigmas of usage and authenticity. Discussion about *u corsu*, I observed, at times raised tension among two or more Corsicans, who rarely took the subject of language lightly. To again cite Jaffe, "Everything to do with language in Corsica is politicized"(1999:280).

To understand these attitudes toward language, I first had to understand the geographic, historic, and other cultural contexts from which they were, in large part, born. Becoming acquainted with the island's villages and landscapes, one necessarily becomes familiar with the singular and collective histories of these places. Both in response to centuries of general conquest by diverse peoples of the Mediterranean and to the specific, strong-armed rule of the French republic for the past two hundred years, the *Riaquistu* of the 1960s sought to reclaim an identity—both political and cultural—

perceived as oppressed, devalued, or forgotten. As I have described in Chapter 2, political groups upon the island formed and carried out often militant protests against the centralist policies of the French state, which they perceived as repressive in general and, to some, specifically racist.

Nowhere was fodder for the debate more evident than in language, and French linguistic policy toward its regional and minority communities mirrored that of its general political approach: 'one nation, one language, one people.' Legislation such as the *Loi Deixonne* was slow to arrive in Corsica, and lack of institutional support and resources made instruction difficult and non-standardized. Though political recognition was eventually gained, the Corsican language itself had no dictionaries, grammars, or formal orthography, and what few instructors there were had difficulty teaching a non-standardized language.

Beyond this, however, progress was slow in language activism due also to social perceptions of *u corsu*. Many questioned the utility of learning a language that would guarantee little or no prestige or financial security, compared with French spoken on the continent and elsewhere in the world, where many more possibilities for education and employment were to be found. This attitude has continued today, although instead of 'abandoning' Corsican (as many activists had feared), many today are using Corsican in new ways. Several hybrid varieties (*FCR*, *Francorse*, Gallicized Corsican) have been documented, and perhaps these forms and others will continue to grow. While to many these may seem as detrimental to the 'purity' of the Corsican language, these forms may perhaps one day represent instead a harmony of Corsican and French rather than discord.

I have also sought to reveal a composite sense of cultural identity that lies behind the island's linguistic debate. Language, but also geography, history, politics, and nationalism, are all important factors that make up a general sense of the collective 'self' in Corsica. Although some aspects of the island's cultural identity are perhaps timeless or stretch back in history for centuries or even millennia, I argue that the period of the *Riaquistu* in the 1960s has been the springboard for modern cultural identity. As Anderson (1991) described a "modular, 'continuous' awakening from a slumber," so did

it seem that activists of that time had 'awoken' as well. The political and cultural revival that flourished during that time has come to represent many facets of Corsican identity, including language and politics. Ironically, the same notion of France's 'one language, one language, one people' against which Corsican activists struggled has come in many ways to represent their own efforts upon the island.

Following this 'reawakening' of culture in Corsica, certain perceptions of and attitudes toward the make-up of that culture have arisen in the decades following the *Riaquistu* and through modern days. Language, for example, has been the most salient aspect of Corsican identity, and, likely because of this, often perceived as the most in need of 'protection.' Yet it would appear that in striving to maintain one, essential aspect of culture, an effort is at the same time made to maintain culture in a larger sense, in all of its aspects. This has been the case, as we have seen, among Bretons, Basques, and other regional, minority cultures. By placing such scrutinized importance upon one, particular aspect of culture—here, language—the notion arises that such an aspect be as *authentic* as possible. In this pervasive concept of authenticity, it is believed that a Corsican should not only speak Corsican, but also speak an 'authentic' Corsican, without any internal mistakes or external influences from French (or Italian)²². Foreign or hybrid 'intrusions' upon Corsican, as it is perceived by some, would likely *deauthenticate*, devalue, perhaps even destroy the Corsican language, and serve also as a precursor, perhaps, to deauthenticating the entire culture. One backlash, however, to this cultural purist perspective in Corsica has been what I have called here a post-nationalist perspective. Corsicans of this mentality do not identify with some or any of the modern associations made with the *Riaquistu*, such as language, political independence from France, violence... These individuals, instead, are often not at all interested in things or ideas considered typically Corsican, which they may consider to be rural or outdated.

In this thesis, I have extended the discussion of identity and authenticity to the domain of music. Just as language has proven an important point of cultural reference for identity, so too does the island's music reflect and reinforce notions of what it means to

²² English, though increasingly present in Corsica does not seem to have (yet?) influenced Corsican in the way that the French language seems to have done.

be, or, now, to sound Corsican. Alongside the subject of language taken up by political and cultural activists in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Corsican music served as a vehicle for language and has become, in its own right, a conspicuous point of reference for cultural meaning and identity.

Music in Corsica, as extensively explored in Chapter 4, is an undoubtedly important phenomenon. A long tradition of polyphonic singing has manifested itself in modern days in a proliferation of musicians and albums, as well as an abundance of concert performances, both in Corsica and internationally. The *paghjella* has remained the salient form of the island's polyphony, and has come to represent Corsican music by its structure, composition, thematic elements, and its common, 'reborn' origins in the *Riaquistu*. While there has been an introduction of other forms and genres of music upon the island, the *paghjella* has remained the dominant form and has come to represent the 'essence' of Corsican music. The island's musicians, however, have represented that essence in different ways and to varying levels of audience approval.

Canta u Populu Corsu has retained the most traditional aspects of the *paghjella*: accapella or minimally instrumented performances and recordings, thematic subjects of their music such as the village, island, and/or independence, and a perceived adherence to the spirit of Corsican cultural revival in which they gained fame during the *Riaquistu*. Other groups, in the following decades, have continued in this vein of careful observance of musical tradition, such as *I Surghjenti*, *Voce di Corsica*, and *Caramusa*.

The *Chjami Aghjalesi* also formed during the *Riaquistu* and sang, at the time, ardent songs of political independence and cultural renaissance. Today these messages can still be found in many of their lyrics, whether in their own music or of popular, often revolutionary songs which they cover. Yet other aspects of identity are revealed in *I Chjami*'s and other groups' music as well, alongside a general decline in the political fervor of its message. Often subtle, non-traditional and non-Corsican influences can be found, such as instrumentation, composition of the groups members, and even language choice. While these would seem to clash with an 'authentic' expression of *paghjella*, these groups—including *Giramondù*, *Zamballarana*, *A Filetta*, *Cinque Sò*, and others—

seem to successfully integrate ‘foreign’ and/or non-traditional sounds into their music, without being perceived as betraying a musical tradition that remains fundamental to Corsica.

Other groups, however—*Les Varans*, *Qui?*, *L’Altru Latu*, and, most notably, *I Muvrini*—have been largely criticized, marginalized, or simply ignored. Although the groups themselves and popular Corsican journals often champion their ‘openness’ and multicultural directions, popular sentiment among my informants was mostly *not* of this opinion. These groups are typically discussed as having little or nothing to do with traditional (read: authentic) aspects of Corsican music, and thus often deemed not-Corsican. In the case of *I Muvrini*, the main elements of popular criticism of the band lie in the perceived repetition, insincerity, incomprehensibility, and/or lack of successful hybridity of their music. It would seem that—and perhaps more so than in language— a hybrid approach to Corsican music is possible and even appreciated, yet it must be done in certain ways.

As I have understood those ways, it should be noted that there is no list of them or set of rules that must be followed in order to make ‘successful’ modern music in Corsica. The basic tenants of such a ‘successful’ music vary among individuals and communities of listeners. Whereas ‘global’ or ‘modern’ approaches are appreciated by many, a high value for ‘local’ and ‘traditional’ aspects of music remains strong. Music that is able to incorporate both trends, without completely embracing one extreme or the other, is growing in popularity. Thus, rather than a total shift in genre or style, a general change *within* the genre of *paghjella* seems to be taking place. Corsican media, I have argued, has been in large part indexical (perhaps influential) of this shift. Both popular and more-academic journals reflect a general conversational norm in Corsica of commenting upon the quality of traditional identity expressed in music, as well as the creative, modern, and resulting positive trends found in such music.

This discussion of identity—in particular the navigation of cultural identity—in music will no doubt prove important for the future of cultural awareness in and about Corsica. Not only has music itself proven an able agent of social change, the *discussion*

of the identity that it communicates, contextualized in a larger discussion of general cultural identity, should facilitate the creation and acceptance of new forms. The musical stage, furthermore, represents a platform for identity upon which theater, cinema, art, and literature are also evolving in modern Corsica. These expressions of culture, like music, have need for physical loci as well as social acceptance for their manifestations. The growing success and quantity of cultural events reflect the increasing presence of these, as well as a broadening interest in reaching 'out' as well as 'within'.

Appendix A

Corsican group names cited in this thesis, with translation in English

L'Altru Latu	'The Other Side'
Anghjula Dea	'Goddess Angela'
Canta u Populu Corsu	'The Corsican People Sing'
Caramusa	'Bagpipe'
I Chjami Aghjalesi	'The Fieldworkers' Calls'
Cinque Sò	'They Are Five'
I Compagnoli	'The Count'
A Cumpagnia	'Friends'
Di Maghju	'Of May'
Donninsulana	'Island woman'
E Due Patrizia	'The Two Patricias'
A Filetta	'Fern'
Giramondù	'The World Turns'
I Montini	'The (Small) Mounts'
I Muvrini	'The Mountain Goats'
A Ricuccata	'[paghjella voice ornamentation]'
Soledonna	'Only Woman'
I Surghjenti	'The Sources'
Les Varans	(a kind of lizard)
Voce di Corscia	'Voice of Corsica'
Zamballarana	(no translation)

Appendix B
“Dio Vi Salvi, Regina”

**Dio vi salvi, Regina
 E Madre universale
 Per cui favore si sale
 Al Paradiso**

God save the Queen
 And universal Mother
 For whose favor we go
 To Heaven

**Voi siete gioia e riso
 Di tutti i sconsolati
 Di tutti i tribolati
 Unica speme**

You are the joy and laughter
 For all the disparaged
 And for all with tribulation
 The only hope

**A voi sospira e geme
 Il nostro afflito core
 In un mar di dolore
 E d'amarezza**

To you sighs and wails
 Our afflicted heart
 In a sea of pain
 And bitterness

**Maria, mar di dolcezza
 I vostri occhi pietosi
 Materni ed amorosi
 A noi volgete**

Mary, sea of sweetness
 Your merciful eyes
 Maternal and loving
 (Let them) turn to us

**Noi miseri accogliete
 Nel vostro santo velo
 E' il vostro filio in cielo
 A noi mostrate**

Take our miseries
 In your holy veil
 And your son in the sky
 Show to us

**Gradite ed'ascoltate
 O Vergine Maria
 Dolce, clemente e pia
 Gli affetti nostri**

Be pleased and listen
 O, Virgin Mary,
 Sweet, gentle, and charitable,
 To our affections

**Voi dai nemici nostri
 A noi date vittoria
 E poi l'eterna gloria
 In paradiso**

You over our enemies
 Give to us victory
 And eternal glory
 In heaven

**O nostra Immaculate
 Vicini e lontani
 I cori lisulani
 A voi per sempre.**

O, our Immaculate
 Near and far
 The island hearts
 Are yours forever.

Discography

Canta U Populu Corsu

1998 Memoria. Ricordu, CDR106.

Chjami Aghjalesi

1998 Credo. Odeon Records, FPM520.

Giramondù

1999 Mediterraniu. Warner Music, ASIN: BOOOO3WG22.

Micaelli, J.

2001 Amor'Esca. Naïve, ASIN: BOOOO5IC8K.

Muvrini

2002 Umani. EMI/Capitol, ASIN: BOOOO6916Q.

Varans

2000 Mi Ne Futtu. Selmer.

various artists

2000 Canti di Libertà. Ricordu, CDR165.

Zamballarana

1997 Zamballarana. Ricordu.

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