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Go, Litel Bok, Go: Concerns of Transmission In Troilus and Criseyde

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Cori Femminili:

A New Perspective on Sardinian Tradition

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Abstract

In the highland province of Nuoro, Sardinia, an autonomous island region of Italy, there is a well-preserved musical tradition, which, based on the scholarly writings, is entirely made up of male musicians. Within the last 20 years, however, a new genre of music has appeared that strays from this tradition, yet practices and preserves the ways of life of the Sardinian people: the *Cori Femminili*, or Women Choirs. This practice has not yet been approached in academic writing and part of this project attempts to understand why this is through an examination of the history, geography, and social structure of the island. Lastly, this project will focus on two choirs, the first two that began the new trend, Coro Ilune and Coro Eufonia, from Dorgali and Gavoi respectively.

Dedication

I dedicate this project to Snowflake

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This project arose from a personal passion for music, the diversity of Italian culture, and the Italian language. Sifting through the thousands of possibilities within those subjects, the sometimes forgotten and beautiful island of Sardinia, and more specifically the culture surrounding the music there, organically surfaced as the final topic. And so the project initially began with a wide research of the island's music. Through this broad research one thing became very obvious: the music that people studied, the music that people seemed to care about or deemed important was that of men, mainly the *Canto a Tenore* (which is listed as a piece of Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO), as well as the festival music which comprised mainly of male performers (singers or instrumentalists). The glaring absence of women in the music then became the jumping off point for the core of the project. While it is true that, historically, many men have written women out of the record, it seemed strange that on an island where music plays such an important role in the culture women would be left out completely. So, I decided to look into this peculiarity and sought after how women are involved with the music and the traditions of highland Sardinia.

A superficial search online for ‘Sardinia women music’ yields grim results; they suggest that women are not a large part of the musical culture. What appears is a single CD “Donne Sarde,” or “Sardinian Women.” Stepping back from this and leaving out 'music', videos and articles come up about the beauty of Sardinian women, and about their natural longevity. Upon leaving out 'women' and replacing it with 'music', the search revealed, unsurprisingly, a culturally

rich and diverse history of music on the island. The featured image within the search is of four men in traditional garb representing the common display of the *Canto a Tenore.* As mentioned above, there is nothing extraordinary about women being excluded. The world is, for the majority, a male-dominated place, especially in traditional, isolated societies. The extreme level of polarization of gender participation within the music, however, remains an oddity here. An initial thought was that the music belonging to women was never professionalized; they probably only performed, if at all, at private venues, and therefore they never really made a reputation. Male musicians, however, often built a career out performing. Logically, public appearances not only meant that they could make a name for themselves, but since their public profile has become essential to their livelihood it necessitated further public appearance.

However, through the work of ethnomusicologists and others, it has become clear that professionalism is not necessarily a significant factor in whether a type of music is distributed or studied. In fact, in his own words, Lortat-Jacob, French ethnomusicologist, informs us that in Sardinia, "Few musicians are completely professional. Usually all of them have another occupation, which leaves them a certain amount of leisure and which they can occasionally neglect in order to perform their second activity" (1981: 187). Again, the idea that women were completely detached from the music scene was peculiar and required further investigation.

What was eventually uncovered in the search for women singers and musical participants was a new trend in the province of Nuoro, and elsewhere, that did not seem to garner much attention in academic writing or within the local communities. In the last twenty years women have, in fact, infiltrated the predominantly male music scene in rural Sardinia and are finding

ways to contribute to the maintaining of traditions in the face of modernization of the larger cities and towns through a new genre of music: *cori femminili*, or women choirs. In the late 1990s, Sardinian women, specifically women in the highland region of Nuoro, formed choirs that created a new outlet for traditional music. The choirs filled the gap of a traditional practice that celebrated and exhibited women's experience in the musical world, a world that we will see is essential to the functioning of Sardinian society.

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In November I had the privilege of traveling to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to attend the annual conference of the Society of Ethnomusicology. I went so that I could learn first-hand how ethnomusicologists speak about their respective topics, and to gain deeper perspective about my own interests, specifically Sardinian music and women in music. It soon became clear that within the endless series of outstanding lectures there was not going to be a single academic talk that focused on Sardinia, or even Italy. The general absence of Sardinian music from the palate of scholarly research, I thought, could present an opening for new academic work. The absence of interest at the conference then raised for me the more delicate issue of defining what is or what might not be considered worthy of research from the perspective of academic scholars.

Upon my return from this trip, I stumbled across a piece of writing by the above mentioned Bernard Lortat-Jacob. Lortat-Jacob's writing responds to a larger discussion topic, titled "Between Folk and Popular: The Liminal Spaces of the Vernacular." This topic was proposed by the British Forum for Ethnomusicology's annual conference in 2007, and they intended for Lortat-Jacob`s response to spur a round table discussion.

In his response, Lortat-Jacob immediately strays from the tone set by the topic. He admits that “Playing with such definitions” such as “’what is viewed as ‘Traditional’ and what is called ‘folklore’” (2007) does not entice him. So, in lieu of that, he begins by discussing the idea of what he believes is a topic worthwhile for ethnomusicologists to research, and he discusses “how they make choices” among a world full of musical topics and cultures. He formulates his new question, suggesting it instead of the originally outlined topic. He wonders, “What constitutes a rich field of study for ethnomusicology” (2007)? He makes a point by explaining that he must approach the topic with open-mindedness, and that he wishes to stray away from the “reductive effect” (2007) that is inherent in such a question. In other words, he astutely and sensitively suggests that we should not expect any culture or location to be devoid of merit, rather, we should at all times assume with scholarly curiosity and good intention that all cultures and regions, no matter how isolated and remote, could be of invaluable importance to the field of ethnomusicology. Although he suggests this, he does go on to say later that there are certainly places and cultures that understandably attract more scholarly interest, and are a richer and more abundant soil for academic material and groundbreaking findings.

Lortat-Jacob offers four criteria as an initial and tentative guide to determine what sets these more fruitful places apart. One of these criteria is what he calls the “Noi Cultures.” Noi, the Italian pronoun that stands for ‘we’ or ‘us’ in English, signifies a relationship dynamic that he claims is a defining factor in rich musical cultures. The term, he argues, “has a variable dimension” and can refer to many different groups, including a town, a “brotherhood” (2007), or a small group of friends, anything that defines or spurs camaraderie. He points out that the ‘noi’ term cannot exist in a contextual vacuum. It cannot be defined on its own terms and without its

complement. He says that the 'noi' "is only as important as far as it is a term which is in opposition to another. It can only exist in relation to a sort of 'non-noi' who can be a stranger or more importantly a rival" (2007). In other words, the Noi cultures have a dynamic of inclusivity and exclusivity with the extraneous 'non-noi' groups, or cultures, that leads to the rivalry from which the fertile musical landscape can evolve.

Lortat-Jacob then relates this terminology to the culture of Sardinia, and we learn that this 'noi' is crucial for the understanding of Sardinia`s strong sense tradition and, therefore, culturally rich identity, which is also something that very ostensibly separates it from the outside world. He writes that

> Every conversation, whether it is about fishing, olives, wine, sense of honour, rules of hospitality – and music of course – is always interspaced with the pronoun noi. This noi is emphasised, it always starts a sentence. Some would talk of a 'Sardinian identity'. Let us say, more simply, that in Sardinia people know who they are (2007).

Lortat-Jacob continues by saying that "this particular social energy feeds into music, or rather the musics, of Sardinia" (2007). He admits that there "are other micro-sociological factors, which generate social dynamism, but in Sardinia, these are particularly efficient, therefore Sardinia is a 'rich field' of studies for ethnomusicologists" (2007). His insights regarding the Sardinians' strong sense of identity and their fertile culture diminished all my misgivings regarding the importance of this subject. Not only it became clear that there is in fact scholarly material on Sardinian music,

but Lortat-Jacob`s writing suggests that any research on Sardinian music, in fact, is of significant value to the world of ethnomusicology.

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After more in-depth research on Sardinian music I noticed, however, an interesting trend that, seemed to prevail in the literature that discussed this region. I found that nearly all of the research done on Sardinian music was done by men. Also, the primary focus of these works was on who they believed to be the main and representative figures of the musical niche of this region: men. For instance in Lortat-Jacob`s book *Sardinian Chronicles* we find twelve vignettes about Sardinian musicians, all of whom are men. In a review of the *Sardinian Chronicles,* one author, Jane K. Cowan, remarks on the absence or diminished role of women:

> Yet it is, of course, precisely his masculinity, age, and high social status that facilitate his relatively easy entry into this male-dominated music scene. Given their presumable absence from much music making, women make only rare appearances, as dramatic and if usually caricatured figures. The author has assimilated Sardinian codes of gender segregation: he credits women with great power but seems embarrassed in their presence… It is men, as musicians, who emerge in their full psychological complexity (158).

This potential oversight, the exclusion of women from the discussions revolving around Sardinian music, was also committed by people who reviewed and critiqued the writings done on the culture and music. In other words, in the majority of cases it is not just the literature itself, but

its nearest extension, the criticism of these very writings that also fails to discuss the importance of women in Sardinian music, or rather, their absence from it. In a review of the *Sardinian Chronicles*, published in *The Journal of American Folklore*, female anthropologist, Sabina Magliocco, writes that

> Reading *Sardinian Chronicles* is like having a rare glimpse into the ethnomusicologist's field notes. In the process, the reader develops an appreciation for the range of musical performances and styles on the island, and for the peculiar intensity, poignancy, and melancholy of Sardinian culture (1998: 75).

This review was published in 1998, and by that year there were two women choirs established in Sardinia; one in the coastal regions, and one in the inland of the island. Their significance is invaluable, and their work since their inception has been nothing short of pioneering. Yet, the scholarly acknowledgment and interest they have received, be it ethnomusicological or anthropological, pales in comparison to the attention they have gotten for instance at international festivals or competitions.

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Over winter break I was fortunate enough to make another trip – this time to Sardinia. I traveled to five Sardinian towns in two weeks, including two bigger cities, Nuoro and Cagliari, the capital of the island. I was able to meet lots of Sardinians and to get tiny glimpses into the lives of some of them. My time spent in Sardinia was accompanied by a very acute feeling of being an outsider. Thus, whenever I attempted to communicate in Italian they questioned my

presence; especially since it was the dead of winter, and most of the places I visited lacked the intrusive presence of Americans or non-European tourists. While talking to the locals I divulged my interest in *Cori Femminili* in the area, and I asked if they knew anything about them. Within the first day, the response from five different people (including a bookshop keeper, an employee of the Nuoro tourism office, a barista, a townswoman, and a waiter) was "*O, no, non esiste*," "They don't exist." I did not correct them, or push any farther, but I knew by then that women choirs did exist. In fact, one waiter did excitedly say that his mother participated in a choir. However, upon investigation, it turned out to be a church choir.

These encounters did provide an interesting insight into the rigidity of the social structure, especially when involving practices of tradition or culture, and they complemented the thin results of academic writing on these choirs, as well as women involved in singing Sardinian traditional music.

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While statements pointing to the backwardness or patriarchal structure of Sardinian society (as well as observations regarding the lack of literature on women`s music in Sardinia) are inherently generalized and can be reductive in their nature, there is definitely a ring of truth to them. Sardinia`s bucolic charm and traditional festivals are a touristified phenomenon today, and one of the 'attractions' that draw tourists to Sardinia from all parts Europe, mostly from mainland Italy, is the outdated and segregated social structure of the island. This social structure is essentially inseparable and is crucial for the perpetuation of the island`s cultural heritage. This project will, therefore, investigate the evolution of Sardinian culture and society, and how it became a realm of romanticized authenticity in the midst of a rapidly globalizing world.

The project will first look at the history and geography of the island. Both topics, as we will see, delineate Sardinia`s paradoxical status. The island is rich in resources and is situated in an advantageous location, and, accordingly, it has been a sought-after colony as well as a trading post during its history. Yet, archeological findings and historical documents prove that it has also been able to retain its selectively constructed identity, thus, often remaining an aloof anomaly in the larger global picture. For instance, in medieval times Sardinia adopted laws that made it the most progressive society for a brief time, while not much later feudalism was introduced to the island, at a much later time than anywhere else in the world. Thus, the balance shifted from one to extreme to the other, quickly making Sardinia one of the most regressive societies. This detachment from the currents of its environment seems to fittingly describe today`s Sardinia, or at least it offers us a point of departure in understanding Sardinia`s social structure and cultural heritage.

After discussing the history and geography of Sardinia, the project will examine the society of Sardinia. It will investigate the gender roles of the small communities of the island, and this section will also explain how the two other categories of analysis, which also overlap with the category of gender distinctions, can be used to describe Sardinia. Namely, the categories of authenticity will be contrasted with modernity, and this pairing will also necessitate the distinction and discussion of 'localist' communities in their contrast with the cosmopolitan niche of Sardinia. From both pairings, of course, emerge the above mentioned distinction, the spheres of men versus women within the society. This investigation intends to create the foundation for the understanding of this project`s final chapter that will examine two women choirs, or *cori femminili,* both founded in the late nineties. This last section will discuss the achievements and

significance of both groups and will place it within the context of the previous chapters, as we wonder why is it that they might not have been at the center of scholarly interest in the past two decades, and why they have not been as well recognized locally as they have been noticed in the international arena.

We will see the *cori femminili* are a rather accurate representation of a more real Sardinia, rather than the Sardinia which is – as we will further explain – depicted by both the cosmopolitans of the island and the visiting tourists. The *cori femminili* show us a Sardinia that is at this point in history straddling two worlds. Today`s modern and globalized world is characterized by mass consumption, ease of communication and the overwhelming amount of quickly accessible information. These factors cannot leave the communities of Sardinia unaffected, yet, the shifting identities and loosening of one`s local rootedness that characterize globalized communities bring about the imposition of authentic and traditional images. As anthropologist Antonio Sorge notes,

> Increased mobility and exchange with the outside world have witnessed a corresponding emergence of a commitment to 'tradition' throughout Sardinia. From the early 1990s onwards, village festivals have grown substantially, in many ways reflecting what Jeremy Boissevain […] noted about the resurgence of ritual celebrations throughout Europe as an apparent response to post-war modernization… (812).

The women choirs of Sardinia represent a transitioning phase, as they cultivate the traditional imagery of Sardinia, but merely with the existence of a so far un-traditional genre, that is, women choral singing, they have begun to outline the directions of social change that lead to a modernized future.

Chapter 1 – *L`ambiente della Sardegna*

In order to understand why the women choirs, the *cori femminili* of Sardinia have not been noticed and have not elicited scholarly interest, it must be noted, again, that the literature on Sardinian music has not proven pervasive enough to pierce through to exterior layer of the culture, and has not examined thoroughly the role and nature of the music cultivated by the women of Sardinia. Sardinian society is considered, even today, as an example of a place frozen in a different time, even though modernity has undeniably left its mark, and change is surely inevitable in Sardinia. Stanley Stewart, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and author of several travel books, writes in the 2009 September edition of the *National Geographic Traveler* about the northeastern shores of Sardinia that "Every summer it attracts yachtfuls of film stars and models, playboys and princes, Arab sheikhs and Russian oligarchs." But in the less exposed parts of Sardinia, where luxury and modernity have not yet anchored themselves completely, the precise distinction between gender roles is still extant. Stewart writes about the inland of the island that

> The notion that Sardinia's character is to be found in the mountains of the interior is not merely a reaction to the recent development of tourism along the coasts. Like many islanders, Sardinians fear the sea; it was the place from which threats arrived. So most people lived inland, as farmers and shepherds in the safety of the mountains. To find old Sardinia, this is where one must look (Stewart).

It is in these inner regions, as Stewart points out, where one can still find a strict separation between the two gender spheres that has given Sardinia its unique reputation, a reputation that the ethnomusicologists have often taken for granted and many times did not venture to further investigate. Lortat-Jacob, for instance, writes in *Sardinian Chronicles* that, "The street was the noisy world of men. The house was the world of women, where each one went to shelter her pain" (38). About this separated world, a society that often suggests backwardness, another anthropologist, Antonio Sorge notes that

> …essentialized popular images exist. Just as Schneider and Schneider […] speak of the 'myth of Sicily', we could as appropriately speak of a 'myth of Sardinia' that presents a stereotyped view of the island and its people as beholden to a self-defeating insularity that perpetuates poverty and 'backwardness'. As demonstrated in the work of Gino Satta […], the Sardinian interior is an important destination for travellers seeking bucolic country charm. A proliferation of ecotourism outifts cater to guests from across Italy, Europe, and beyond who come looking for remaining outcrops of 'tradition'' and 'authenticity' (810).

This project argues that the research on the music of Sardinia mimics the region`s often anachronistic social norms and helps perpetuate the image of a regressively traditional Sardinia. In order to understand the roots of this phenomenon, one must first examine the historical and the geographical factors that have so crucially contributed to the formation of Sardinian society.

The geography and history of a place play essential roles in the evolution of its cultural identity. Lortat-Jacob describes this as the 'noi', the strong sense of identity the Sardinians have and their keen ability in "[knowing] who they are" (2007), something that inevitably feeds into the music of this region. Peter van Dommelen, Mediterranean archaeologist, notes that the creation of cultural identity is an effort to engender distinction. In *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* he defines cultural identity as something that

> …enables people to group themselves together and set themselves apart from others: it is through the construction of a cultural identity that people can place themselves as well as others in the world. (26)

Cultural identity, then, must also necessarily change with time. However, Sardinia presents us with some form of anomaly: while the intruding colonizing powers have undeniably left their mark on Sardinia, the island`s communities have somehow been able to retain their own identity and defy the changes so readily imposed on them throughout history. In the construction of a cultural identity, separating one`s self from the rest of world, the natural features of the Sardinian island play a crucial role, and, therefore, we must investigate first the relationship between the Sardinian self and the island itself.

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The island`s geographical features outline a region of paradoxical nature. While it can be perfectly self-sustaining due to its natural resources and climate, and it is a desirable destination and strategic point for political powers, its terrain has made Sardinia difficult to control and entirely subdue for longer stretches of time. This doesn`t mean, however, that Sardinia has not

been controlled by larger powers throughout its history. While for the overwhelming majority of its standing Sardinia has been treated as a colony by the Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines and the Spanish Aragonese, it was still able to preserve its independence, which many scholars interpret, with great lenience, as a sign of defiance. However, it is the geographical features of Sardinia that have given it the unique ability to self-preserve, or, in other words, to retain its isolation while selectively absorbing the rich cultural heritage of the colonizing powers.

The strategic advantages of the island are quite impressive, as it is essentially midway through North Africa and the mainland of Europe. D.H. Lawrence for instance, in his famous travel book, *Sea and Sardinia*, describes the island as being "lost between Europe and Africa and belonging nowhere" (103). Being the second largest island in the Mediterranean, Sardinia is large enough to have ample natural resources, such as silver, lead, and coal. The island also hosts a variety of different climates. Sardinia`s climate is best described as continental, and while the land does have significant elevation (its highest peak is over 6,000 feet), it is also affected by the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Genoa, both that contribute to the formation of cyclones that are tropical in nature and are responsible for Sardinia`s often extremely heavy rainfalls. Although Sicily (only about 300 miles westward) is known for the powerful presence of the volcanic Mount Etna, Sardinia is not earthquake-prone at all, yet still contains the allure of a severe mountainous landscape, which makes it an even more preferable location. Its location in the Mediterranean has made Sardinia an important player in the trading commerce as well. While Sardinia has never been a true trading destination, or a starting point, it has served in ancient times as an important mid-station, a resting stop for the Phoenician trading vessels.

Even though it is clear that Sardinia possesses outstanding geographical qualities, its rocky and mountainous terrain, the same feature that adds to its beauty, chops up the inland into smaller well-separated regions. The roads of Sardinia, even today, mimic the mountains instead of fighting against them, and so there is significant mileage added to any trip between localities. Historically speaking, the difficulty of traversing the landscape forced the invading powers to the coastal regions and gave the inland communities, at least, a delayed reprieve from the colonizers. This idea of independence is supported by archeological findings as well; or rather, by the lack of them.

In 3rd century BC Sardinia was torn between Carthage and the Roman Empire. By the end of the First Punic War Carthage lost Sicily to the Romans, but Sardinia was still under Punic control. Revolts against the Carthaginian troops in North Africa and Sardinia eventually weakened Carthage, and later gave the opportunity for the Romans to finally take control of Sardinia, and in 238 BC they seized the island. However, entirely taking control of Sardinia proved much more arduous. Peter van Dommelen notes that

> Whereas the mountainous interior of Sardinia would long remain reputed for numerous small uprisings and frequent attacks of Roman troops – who did not succeed in formally pacifying the region before AD 19 – Roman authority was seriously challenged by the inhabitants of both the plains and the upland regions. (25)

Sardinia, a potentially important strategic point and a land of resources, was still not comparable to the significance of the Italian peninsula. Archeologists have agreed that there are

two main possibilities that may account for the lack of Roman archeological findings in Sardinia. Van Dommelen notes that

> It was suggested that Sardinia represented a peripheral region within the expanding Roman state, thus dismissing the Sardinian situation as a case of 'failed Romanisation'; but the causes of this failure have not been well accounted for. (30)

While in theory this is compelling, as van Dommelen points out, there is a shortage of data supporting this claim. A different, second theory suggests that after the Roman invasion many regions of Sardinia began to wither, and Roman efforts to revive Sardinian community life were simply not considered a profitable undertaking. Peter van Dommelen refers to the initial idea of diminishing communities as the "limited survival" of an already "debased Punic culture which had lost its vitality" (30). However, archeological findings show that the presence of Punic objects overwhelmingly outweighs the scarce appearance of Roman objects. This should suggest that the relationship between Sardinia and Carthage lasted long into the period of Roman occupation. Van Dommelen refers to S.F. Bondì`s *La cultura punica nella Sardegna romana un fenomeno di sopravvivenza?* and writes that

> In particular, it has been shown that the Punic dimension of the archeological record from that period represents much more than mere isolated relics of an otherwise obsolete culture: the Punic evidence dating from the later third century BC and afterwards unmistakably demonstrates

> the vitality of the Punic culture in a wide range of aspects of social and economic life under the Roman Republic in Sardinia. (30)

He then astutely concludes that

> The significance of this alternative interpretation is that it not only emphasises continuity with the preceding period of Carthaginian domination but also draws attention to new and original achievements of Punic culture in Sardinia under Roman rule (32).

The findings and van Dommelen`s observations disprove the theory which suggests that certain communities in Sardinia have simply withered away under Roman rule. It seems that the main factor was Sardinia`s peripheral importance in the expansion of the Roman Empire. Also, Roman policy tended to focus on the urban regions rather than the rural ones. Van Dommelen notes that "Roman policy" was "directed towards the urban centers and left the countryside in the hands of local elites" (43). This undeniably played into the preservation of Punic culture among many of the Sardinian communities. The difficulties of reaching and traversing the jagged terrain of Sardinia must also have been a significant contributing factor, and some scholars have also noted the idea of cultural resistance as a possible component. But as compelling as the latter idea might be, it neglects to acknowledge the fact that what may seem as a well-defined resistance from the colonizer`s point of view might be a preference for certain traditional practices on part of the colonized people, which has little to do with a sense of identity. Referring to Roger M. Keesing`s article, titled 'Colonial and counter-colonial discourse in Melanesia', van Dommelen perceptively notes that

> These forms of practice which 'avoided' Roman imports from the Italian mainland and instead show a strong preference for Punic-style products can be seen as acts of resistance to Roman domination, which can be best labeled as 'cultural resistance'. Although a reluctance to depart from the established tradition can hardly be regarded as an act of resistance, clinging to tradition does contribute to the development of a 'counter-hegemonic' discourse (42).

Whether speaking of conscious resistance or a strong attachment to an established culture, it stands clear that the Roman occupation has not been able to impose its culture on Sardinia to the same degree as it did elsewhere. This historical phenomenon, quite unique to Sardinia and within the Roman Empire, foreshadows the island`s so called independence and sense of, to borrow Jacob-Lortat`s term, 'noi' identity.

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As noted earlier, throughout the history of Sardinia the consistently reappearing theme seems to be the island`s isolation and independence. Its geographic features, its location, terrain, climate, and natural resources have made it only a semi-desirable extension for the ruling empires. 'Semi-desirable' since it has been colonized throughout its entire history, but was always cast into a peripheral position in which the cultural traits it has selectively absorbed into its own culture was never truly subverted or threatened by the continuity of the newly appearing extraneous forces (such as the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Byzantines, the Aragonese). Aside

from the lack of Roman archeological findings from the period of Roman ruling, we may find other historical episodes that vividly confirm Sardinia's independence and self-containment.

1383, for instance, denotes the beginning of a uniquely progressive period in Sardinian history; unique to the extent that it unhinges Sardinia from its historical context. By the end of the tenth century Sardinia is scarcely mentioned in historical documents and is not listed as an imperial province in *De Administrando Imperio,* a domestic and foreign policy manual written by Constantine VII, ruler of the Byzantine Empire.[1] It is therefore not entirely sure whether Sardinia was simply abandoned by the Byzantine Empire, or the local communities asserted their leadership. Regardless, the so called *giudici*, or 'judges' (a position established during Byzantine rule) became the rulers of Sardinia. To be more precise, from the tenth century on, until the Crown of Aragon asserted its authority over Sardinia in 1420, the island was separated into four *giudicati,* or kingdoms, each with an appointed judge as its ruler.[2] In 1383, in the absence of a male heir, one of these kingdoms, the Giudicato of Arborea, witnessed a woman, Eleanor of Arborea taking control. Stanley Stewart writes that

> Her popularity, still evident today, was based on her defiance of the island's Aragonese overlords and on her remarkable legal code, which was published in the Sardinian language in 1395 and established a whole range of citizens' rights. Among the revolutionary concepts in this Carta de Logu was the right of women to refuse marriage and to own property. In terms

[1] See (Grierson and Travaini 287)
[2] See (Domenico 257)

> of civil liberties, the code made provincial 14th-century Sardinia one of the most developed societies in all of Europe (Stewart).

This code in 14th century Sardinia is truly one of a kind. One might even suggest that to have such progressive policies is as reflective of Eleanor of Arborea`s righteous ruling as it is indicative of the islands detachment from the mainland, and therefore the political scene of Europe and the rest of the world.

Another sign of Sardinia`s independence, or rather its seclusion from the rest of the world, is another development in its history, which contrary to Eleanor of Arborea`s *Carta de Logu* is quite regressive. In the 14th century with the Kingdom of Arborea as its allies, the Catalan-Aragonese armies occupied parts of Cagliari and Gallura, and along with Sassari they were named The Kingdom of Sardinia and Corsica. This kingdom from then on belonged to the Crown of Aragon, and it was the Aragonese Peter IV who attempted to introduce feudalism into areas of Sardinia. This attempt was unsuccessful, as the relatively self-governed Arborea strongly and effectively resisted. Throughout the second half of the 14th century Arborea's subsequent rulers regained control almost all of Sardinia from the Aragonese rulers. But despite all these efforts the Kingdom of Arborea eventually fell to the Aragonese, and by 1420 the kingdom essentially disappeared. However, with this defeat the Kingdom of Aragon was able to, finally, introduce feudalism to Sardinia, making this region a unique historical anomaly, as it was probably the only region that adopted the feudal system during the historical transition from the medieval to the modern period, making Sardinia as regressive as it was progressive only a few decades earlier.

While Eleanor of Arborea`s *Carta de Logu* was far ahead of its time, the adoption of feudalism at a time when most other territories were abandoning it shows, again, how Sardinia seems to stand aloof in history. This unique trait, this seclusion from the social, political and economic trends of the world, was still visibly present in the 20th century, and, in fact, is still felt today in parts of the region.

Sardinian traditional rural life, as it`s feudalism lasted into the late to mid-1800s (and was still felt in the 20th century), is considered a touristic spectacle. Sardinia`s retrograde economic system was of course complimented by a social structure that was equally outdated, and that, for many, represented a refuge from the stifling spreading and progression of modern industrial life.

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An outstanding example of how the underdevelopment of a region can be romanticized by some can be seen in D. H. Lawrence`s famous travel book, *Sea and Sardinia*. The book documents the travels of English writer, D. H. Lawrence to Sicily and Sardinia in 1921. Lawrence`s vivid descriptions of the island precisely evoke its bucolic charm, but they also paint an image of Sardinia`s social structure. Women scarcely appear outside of their stereotypical medium: we only see women as nannies, wives accompanying their husbands, or as women selling their goods at the market. Women as independent entities appearing outside of the household context hardly, if at all, appear. In fact, it is mostly men that we see. Upon his arrival to Sardinia from the island of Sicily Lawrence tells us that “There is a very little crowd waiting on the quay: mostly men with their hands in the pockets” (99). Lawrence welcomes their aloofness and reserve, but it

becomes clear that Lawrence situates himself in opposition to the modern world, and so this reserved quality in the men of Sardinia that the author celebrates is clearly inseparable in his mind from the lack of development that he perceives. He writes:

> But it still reminds me of Malta: lost between Europe and Africa and belonging nowhere. Belonging to nowhere, never having belonged to anywhere. To Spain and the Arabs and the Phoenicians most. But as if it had never really had a fate. No fate. Left outside of time and history (103).

Lawrence notes that the island is outside of time, and outside of history, but his observation, it becomes clear immediately, is appreciative. He is drawn to the idea of a more ancient world that is approachable from the hustle and bustle of modern life. As he observes two peasants in costumes he writes:

> But that curious, flashing, black-and-white costume! I seem to have known it before… It belongs in some way to something in me – to my past, perhaps. I don`t know. But the uneasy sense of blood-familiarity haunts me. I know I have known it before (114).

Later, upon seeing two other peasants, also in black-and-white costumes, he notes: “I feel it again, at once, at the sight of the men in frieze and linen, a heart yearning for something I have known, and which I want back again” (116). Lawrence believes that his experiences in Sardinia conjure up a sentiment of belonging in him, something ancient and inexplicable. He says later: “Strange and wonderful chords awake in us, and vibrate again after many hundreds of years of complete forgetfulness” (215). Lawrence observes a deep-rooted appreciation of primitive times

within himself, and writes long passages on how beautiful he finds the brutish, simple male population of Sardinia as he places them in contrast with the 'soft' male population of the Italian mainland:

> How fascinating it is, after the soft Italians, to see these limbs in their close knee-breeches, so definite, so manly, with the old fierceness in them still. One realizes, with horror, that the race of men is almost extinct in Europe. Only Christ-like heroes and woman-worshipping Don Juans, and rabid equality-mongrels. The old, hardy, indomitable male is gone (114).

Lawrence`s descriptions of women confirm the bias the reader might sense in him towards a patriarchal world where the spheres of men and women are neatly kept separate. As Antonio Sorge discerns in his article on Sardinia, the male population of the region was "predominantly based on transhumance" (810), meaning that throughout the history of Sardinia men mostly attended their flocks out on the pastures and were away from their homes for long stretches of time. Women, therefore, were left with a relatively "small year-round male resident population" (810). Thus, they were essential for the functioning of the village. Still, even with the absence of men, the spaces belonging to women were distinctly circumscribed. Sorge writes:

> Pronouncedly, female space include the solar market, held weekly in the central piazza, where women acquire provisions exchange news, and meet with others who do not live in their vicinity… Church services too are attended almost exclusively by women, to the chagrin of the parish priest (810).

The spaces that women occupy in Lawrence`s work follow Sorge`s observations to the letter. As mentioned earlier, we only see them in the close vicinity of their households, or if we are to see them outside of it, they appear in their extended 'roles' as they undertake household activities, for instance, at the market. His image of Sardinian women is accordingly stereotypical:

> When all is said and done, the most attractive costume for women in my eye, is the tight little bodice and the many-pleated skirt, full and vibrating with movement. It has a charm which modern elegance lacks completely – a bird-like play in movement (Lawrence 121).

Lawrence clearly appreciates the lack of modernity. The rawness, this trait which is a reminder for Lawrence of the idea of simpler times, is what attracts people to Sardinia. Today, making a spectacle of this underdevelopment is called 'alternative tourism'. Iride Azara and David Crouch write in their chapter on the dynamic between Sardinian festivals and identity that "During a long period, colonisers, and in general European travellers, have helped in constructing the discourse of the 'Other', describing Sardinia as different, savage, primitive, untouched by civilization, inferior but also a living fossil; intriguing, exotic" (35). It is this Sardinia, fossilized but still breathing, that tourists, as well as in the early twenties as today, seek and warmly appreciate. However, as Azara and Crouch notice, this tourism has a detrimental effect too: it reinforces the image that Sardinians have of themselves and it helps perpetuate a society which is exclusive to the women who wish to enter a more modern world.

Chapter 2 – *Società Sarda*

The texture of modern Sardinian society is inseparable from its history and geography. The previous chapter briefly outlined the backdrop of this romanticized and backward world which tourists seek today, and which inspired literary figures, such as D. H. Lawrence to visit and document his experiences. Lawrence`s perspective of the island is highly subjective, romanticized, and of course, outdated as it reflects on post-World War I Sardinia. This is not to say, however, that what Lawrence observed is irrelevant today. Many of the gender biases that he appreciatively observes are still an issue today, and they are an essential passageway to this chapter`s focus. This section of the project looks at Sardinian society both today and the recent decades. Specifically, it will outline the distinctive gender roles of the region, and more specifically, how women are not welcome to artistically express themselves in forms other than what is expected of them. The chapter will also discuss how, aside from gender distinctions, we must observe the separation between the modernized cosmopolitans and the more traditional and locally bound residents of Sardinia.

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One way to gain insight into Sardinia today is to look at its numerous festivals where aspects of the island`s culture come to the fore pronouncedly. As Sabina Magliocco writes in "Coordinates of Power and Performance: Festivals as Sites of (Re)presentation and Reclamation in Sardinia" the “Festivals are arenas where the combination of ideologies, coordinates of power and performances of identity that characterize cultural contact and conflict on the island are played out” (168).

Sardinian life revolves around its numerous festivals that take place year-round. Some are more local, for instance the *Sant`Efisio* that observes the carrying of the martyred saint`s effigy from Cagliari to Pula, and some are celebrated throughout the entire island, such as the *Shrove Tuesday `Carnival'*. The festivals are mostly religious, yet, some are tied to Sardinia`s feudal past and celebrate such events as the harvest. There are also festivities that celebrate local products coming into season, for instance the *Artichoke Festival* in Uri, as well as there are equestrian events, such as the *Sa Sartiglia* and *S`Arida,* that also speak to Sardinia's Spanish past. The festivals attract tourists by the thousands – mostly from mainland Italy – as the spectacles include the demonstration of traditional costumes, local artisan products, and stage performances of local music that are often accompanied by dancing. The demonstration of local cuisine is also an indispensable part of the festivities.

While these events are a great setting for actively observing the separation of Sardinian gender roles, it must be noted that the authenticity inherent and demonstrated at these events does not necessarily reflect a society the way it perceives itself. Alex Weingrod and Emma Morin made a prognosis in the seventies that there would be a "continuing presence in Sardinia of a post-peasant society" (320) if things followed the course they were on. Several decades later we can see that the spectacles of the festivals neatly fit into the descriptive category of a 'post-peasant' world that was suggested several decades ago. Sabina Magliocco describes this same Sardinian authenticity with the term 'cultural conservatism'. Borrowing from Magliocco, Iride Azara and David Crouch point out in their work that there is an interlocking mechanism at work in which the image of a conservative and authentic Sardinia has not only been observed, but has

also been re-imposed on the island`s communities “by travellers and colonizers and later by Italian mainlanders” (34). Azara and Crouch write that

> In a sense, then, the very same Sardinian past and ‘culture’ that for two centuries has been the ‘romantisised’ symbol of backwardness and primitivism, has been gradually transformed since the rise of mass-tourism into a symbolic entity used for the purposes of consumption, preserved or even created ex-novo if it does not exist (36).

Magliocco similarly observes that “the projection of immutability is part of a mechanism by which the island has been transformed into a magic mirror in which tourists can see a reflected image of their own past” (2001: 174). This idea of a reflected image also appears, as mentioned in the first chapter, in D. H. Lawrence`s *Sea and Sardinia* when he writes about a sense of haunting “blood-familiarity” (114) upon seeing peasants in costumes. This interlocking mechanism in which the image of a ‘post-peasant’ Sardinian society is not merely looked at but is essentially upheld and perpetuated by the observers, must be consciously dealt with. Drawing far reaching conclusions on Sardinian gender roles, for instance, based on their representation at festivals should always be considered as suggestive and never finite. However, we should not question the inherent biases at display either. As Azara and Crouch conclude in regards to *La Cavalcata Sarda* annual festival:

> …newly invented and ‘touristified’ festivals remain expressions of community participation and identity operating within different social and spatial scopes. On one hand, a ‘romantic’ imagery of Sardinia created in

> the 19th century still drives the island's identity in its relation to Italian mainland. On the other hand, this festival is a space in which different internal dynamics and oppositions come to life by the performance of distinctive narratives and values (33).

One of these 'internal dynamics' constantly on display in Sardinia is the relation of men and women, as it is reflected in their participation at the festivals. Traditional costumes are worn by men and women, and dancing is done by both sexes, but more often than not women are excluded from other activities, such as instrumental and vocal music performances, and equestrian performances. Their participation often seems like an extension of their household activities as they are mostly responsible for running the food stalls, or they are simply spectators at events that only allow men participants. In D. H. Lawrence`s literary travel book, for example, it is clear that women are excluded from the festivities that the author is spectating. The first women we see are, in fact, men in women`s costumes. He writes:

> A man dressed as a peasant woman in native costume is clambering with his great wide skirts and wide strides on to the box and, flourishing his ribboned whip, is addressing a little crowd of listeners. He opens his mouth wide and goes on with a long yelling harangue of taking a drive with his mother – another man in old-woman`s gaudy finery and wig who sits already bobbing on the box… (108-109)

It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say that women are utterly excluded in most cases. Lawrence`s experiences date back to the 1920s, and many changes have been

implemented since. As Sabina Magliocco writes in 2006 regarding the Monteruju festivals, and the growing independence of modern women in the region: “There is some evidence that these changes are resulting in decreasing sex segregation” (32). While it is true, as Magliocco writes, that “…the once single-sex festival committees have been altered to include both men and women since 1979” (32) in Monteruju, there are still festivities, such as the the Mamuthones and Sant`Antonio festivals that are men-only to this day, to name a few.

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Magliocco writes that “Gender roles within the traditional Sardinian family are quite clearly defined” (2006: 28). She says that the women`s sphere is the household, and especially before the widespread usage of cars they were left in the village for long periods of time while the men were attending the flocks. She also observes that the trends in the late eighties and early nineties, due to the nature of men`s work, was the isolation of men from one another, and the clustering of women. She writes that

> …women’s work brings together relatives, neighbors, and friends, forming the nucleus of reciprocity networks which are important to village life. Women thus tend to be seen as responsible for the maintenance of social relations within the village (2006: 28).

While Magliocco defines the generally accepted sphere of women, accepted by Sardinians and considered archaic in today`s modern world, she does note the already changing landscape of the island. Writing about Monteruju in the late eighties she notes that

> Women today have greater educational opportunities than their mothers, due to the availability of public education, shrinking family size, and improved economic conditions. Much more personal freedom is available to women as well (2006: 31).

It is however very telling that after Sabina Magliocco hoped to publish her thesis written on the small society of Monteruju in Italian, it was rescinded by the local town council. She writes in the preface to the second edition of her dissertation that upon seeing the manuscript of her work the council "felt deeply disappointed by [her] portrayal of the village." She writes that "Although it was not my intent, they felt their village came off looking backwards and poor, and they nixed the book`s publication" (2006: xv). We learn that a Sardinian friend who earlier supported the publishing of her thesis also withdrew his endorsement after the council`s decision. Magliocco writes that after finally finding a publisher for the Italian edition of her book in 1995

> …the Christian Democratic majority was so angered… that they took their revenge by expropriating lands which belonged to the families of my supporters, ostensibly to build a road up the mountain, but for all intents and purposes depriving them of the meager income they drew from the fruit and olive orchards (2006: xv).

This proves to be a bitterly ironic scenario, since rather than refuting Magliocco`s portrayal of their village, the council`s decision confirms her well-intended and objective observations about how the community of Monteruju is still, in some senses, insular and backwards. She then continues to describe how the beginning of her marriage`s disintegration coincided with the

above-mentioned situation. She writes: "My status as a 'halfie'[3] had always meant that I was held to many of the same behavioral standards as local women" (2006: xv). Jumping back in time, she writes that after arriving to Monteruju with her husband in 1989, her husband was warmly welcomed into the community, while she

> …[drew] criticism for [her] 'unwifely' behavior – spending long hours away from home conducting interviews, working on the computer instead of cooking and cleaning, and in general not conforming to the village expectations of proper behavior for a married woman (2006: xv).

Magliocco, returning to Monteruju again in 1992, is subjected to further chastisement, this time by her Sardinian friend`s sister. We read about this particular episode:

> She was so offended by my inappropriate behavior as a married woman that she publicly forbade me from returning to their house. In drawing a line of demarcation between my own behavior and what was expected of local women, she called on differences of class rather than of culture or nationality, stating, 'The granddaughter of the marchioness is not welcome in my house' (2006: xvi).

Magliocco`s marriage eventually ended in a divorce, and it consequently drew further criticism. "When my marriage ended in divorce two years later," she tells us, "many of my village friends…

[3]A 'halfie' is the term for a person whose cultural identity is comprised of different elements due to migration, schooling abroad, or family members who grew up in another country. In this case, Magliocco spent lots of time in Monteruju as a young adult, living with her former caretaker and also her grandmother's housekeeper, who was Sardinian. The term 'halfie' was first coined by anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod in 1991.

believed I was ultimately at fault for not having fulfilled my wifely obligations" (2006: xvi). As we see, the same Sardinia that showed indignation upon being described in Magliocco`s dissertation as backwards in its values, shows strong signs of rigidity and bias and supports all of the anthropologist`s observations. Magliocco`s case, however is not unique.

Almost perfectly mirroring Magliocco's situation, Grazia Deledda (1871-1936) is another woman whose less than ideal portrayal of Sardinian life left her ostracized from her community. Deledda was a native of Sardinia and the only Italian woman to have ever won the Nobel Prize for literature (in 1926). Dolores Turchi in her essay titled "Grazia Deledda: the writer and her environment" tells us that Deledda began writing very young, around the age of sixteen, in Nuoro. "[The] upset was considerable," we are told. Deledda was looked upon with "mistrust, disgust almost" (45), and her mother worried about the now bleak marriage prospects of her daughter. Turchi emphasizes what other scholars repeatedly assert, that men dominate the professional and public sphere, women are expected to perform household duties only:

> The woman was acknowledged as 'signora' or 'padrona', the lady and the mistress of the house. Within the four domestic walls it was she who ruled and commanded even the men, but in the official world the man alone was present (46).

Deledda`s stories were published when she was twenty years old, and fellow Sardinians claimed that Deledda had presented them unfavorably in her work. Turchi quotes Deledda`s letter that she wrote about this incident to Stanis Manca, her friend and facilitator into the more enlightened world of mainland Italy:

> Imagine my pain, the first pain I felt when, as soon as the stories were published, I was almost stoned by my fellow-islanders. They claimed they knew who they were […] I was showered with abuse, insults and ridicule… (47)

Turchi notes that the main source of resentment harbored against Deledda came from the women who were upset about the fact that their stories, intimate and only meant to be "whispered from one doorstep to the next" (49) were made available to the world. This not only injured their sense of pride, but they felt as if it infringed upon their delicate 'microcosm'. Even winning the Noble Prize did not attenuate the begrudging islanders, and "Barely any congratulations were forthcoming from Nuoro" (49) after Deledda`s success. Turchi tells us that decades later, well into the late 1960s, Remo Branca did research on the Italian Nobel laureate and stumbled surprisingly upon pointed animosity. In *Il segreto di Grazia Deledda* Branca writes that,

> Recently a young, cultured priest from the Barbagia region scolded me for writing about Grazia Deledda: as far as he was concerned, these were his final words, he would happily burn all her books because she had treated priests so badly in them (Turchi 50).

Such judgement and such strong emotions seem uncalled for, especially from the distance of more than four decades. Although the locals justified their grudge towards Deledda by accusing her of unfair representation, the rigidity and unwillingness to self-reflect, and the reluctance to accept women who intend to break out into modernity from their rural world shows obvious

insularity. Magliocco`s and Deledda`s cases show the divorce between the Sardinian rural setting and the modern world with an emphasis on the limited and strictly defined role of women in it, and with an emphasis on the expectations regarding the limited liberty to express themselves. It is important to note that in both cases we read plenty about the resentful response of local women, and not solely about the disdain of men. It is clear that the social role that women play is so clearly outlined in Sardinian culture that they perpetuate these roles themselves; especially when they are confronted with the prospects of a different lifestyle. A life that is too liberal and modern in its values seems to be unknown to many of the women of Sardinia, especially the older generations, and, therefore, it poses a threat to their well-established existence.

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Women`s role in the music of Sardinia, as we may see it portrayed at festivals and in the literature, is given much less credit than what it deserves. The lack of acknowledgment in regards to their contribution to music is in keeping with the difficulties they face when they wish to express themselves in manners that deviate from their prescribed roles. We saw earlier that Sabina Magliocco was held to the same standards of behavior as local women, and in her reluctance to conform to these values she was essentially ostracized from the community. Men`s entry into the Sardinian world is much easier of course, as their mobility and independence in the village life is considered acceptable. However, it seems that outsider men too are expected to conform. Unwillingly or not, the biased and patriarchal atmosphere of rural Sardinia is adapted or mimicked by much of the research done on the region`s music, as the focus of ethnomusicological and anthropological research is overwhelmingly focused on men. In fact,

Bruno Nettl writes in his work *The Study of Ethnomusicology: thirty-one concepts and issues*, updated and re-published only ten years ago, that

> Contemplating the older body of our field's literature, almost a century of it, in which women's participation in music is given a very unfair shake, and looking at the world's musics with the perspective of the large number of recent studies that attempt to redress the situation, I'm inclined to ask, "What took us so long?" (406)

Nettl emphasizes that most of the literature portrays "women's musical culture to be a kind of extension of that of men." He then admits that "[he hasn't] discovered accounts of societies in which men and women participate in musical life with total equality" (406). This unbalanced representation visibly comes to the fore in Bernard Lortat-Jacob`s work, *Sardinian Chronicles*.

In his book Lortat-Jacob investigates the world of Sardinia which he believes is so inseparable and essentially integral to the music of the region. The author offers insight into the lives of Sardinian musicians (mostly instrumentalists), and that of their families in a succession of twelve vignettes. Lortat-Jacob focuses on the lives of these musicians, and essentially draws out a character profile for each of them. However, no woman appears as a musician in any of the vignettes. The women in the book are the wives or girlfriends of musicians, townswomen, and, for instance, a hotel owner who assumes the role of a widow after her husband was incarcerated. More often than not, these women come off as nuisances to the musicians, and serve only as distractions. The *Sardinian Chronicles* was originally published in Paris in 1990, but the field work Lortat-Jacob did most likely dates back a few years before that. It seems very unlikely that no

female musician was in Sardinia at the time, although it seems reasonable to assume that the number of women musicians was far less than that of man, due to the traditions and 'accepted' forms of public appearances and forms of expression. It rather seems that there were not any women performers whose work Lortat-Jacob considered substantial enough to include as a representation of what he believed to be the core of Sardinian music. In his paper *Improvisation et modèle: le chant a guitar sarde*, written in` 1984, six years before the publishing of *Sardinian Chronicles*, he writes that women guitar players express themselves through the male repertoire, and they tend to stick within the well-defined script, thus producing stable forms. In other words, Lortat-Jacob explains that women do not venture to experiment or improvise like men do. But because their music is an extension of the music of Sardinian men, and because subconsciously they tend to extract the core melodies and patterns of Sardinian music, women play an essential role in drawing out the basic architecture of the male repertoire. With this in mind, and with no intention of accusing Lortat-Jacob of a conscious bias or disregard, it does seem all the more curious as to why he did not portray women musicians in *Sardinian Chronicles*. One might conclude, or rather entertain the idea among many other possibilities, that because men in Sardinia regard themselves as the facilitators and representatives of their music, this attitude is somewhat echoed in the focus of ethnomusicological research.

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We have spoken about the gender distinctions and roles of Sardinian society, and we described how eco-tourists perceive the region as authentic, thus making locality a 'product of consumption'. All of the distinctions and dimensions – men vs women, and authentic vs modern

– coincide with a separation that is explained by Antonio Sorge in his work 'Divergent visions: localist and cosmopolitan identities in highland Sardinia'.

Sorge tells us that in the small town of Orgosolo in the highlands of Sardinia a clear divide can be observed between the so called 'localists' and the cosmopolitans. Sorge explains that the orientation towards one or the other group is "primarily centered upon the degree of adherence to or deviation from the highland rural norms and values that are locally regarded as 'traditional'" (808). Sorge later repeats this concept and notes that one`s affiliation with these categories is not only dependent on the rural traditional norms, but it depends upon the "degree of commitment towards their [that is, the locals`] place of origin and residence" (810). In this regard, we may observe a willingness in cosmopolitans to stay open towards other places, other cultures, and a willingness to absorb them into their identity. Accordingly there is a rigid adherence to regularity among the localists. The openness of cosmopolitans, Sorge tells us, "is accompanied by a self-reflexiveness" (811) that is essential to the forming of a constantly changing and shaping identity. This identity is what makes them adaptable and always at ease in this global world, or, to use social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz`s term, in the global ecumene. This, he says, the traits of adaptability and self-reflexiveness, this cosmopolitanism "is also one of the defining features of late modernity" (811) and an indispensable part of one`s global identity.

Sorge warns the reader that this cosmopolitanism does not necessarily mean a complete divorce from one`s roots. In fact, we are told that cosmopolitans of Orgosolo deeply embrace their local heritage. This, for instance, resulted in a substantial growth of village festivals from the 1990s onwards, and the *Festa del Pastore: Protagonista della Montagna*, which was designed to "showcase the artisanal crafts of the agro-pastoral heritage" (812), is a good example of such

festivals. The need to revive tradition by the cosmopolitans is a response to "a fear that highland culture is not being transmitted to the next generation, and that the old skills requiring long apprenticeship are being forgotten" (812). Sorge, in referring to Frederick Buells *National Culture and the New Global System*, writes that "such cultural revivals asserting uniqueness are widespread wherever there is an increase in global integration and ease of communications" (Sorge: 812-13). In other words, as more and more people adopt a more cosmopolitan attitude in Sardinia, the fear of losing touch with something that is essential to their identity becomes stronger. However, they now cannot certainly define what they are losing, as they are not necessarily an integral member of their local heritage anymore. Sorge notes that the

> …commitment to tradition not uncommon among those who live at a remove from the agro-pastoral way of life, and whose positive engagement with late modernity is marked with a degree of ambivalence for what they perceive as having lost (813).

This means that the revival of tradition is paradoxically pioneered by those who do not live by the values and norms that they intend to exhibit. And accordingly, the *Festa del Pastore* which was organized and sponsored by the town hall of Orgosolo drew little interest from the cosmopolitans of the town. Sorge writes that "while the opportunities for socialization presented by this festival were thoroughly enjoyed by localists such as workers and shepherds, cosmopolitans were mostly absent from view" (813). Sorge writes, in reference to anthropologist Peter Schweizer, that

> …while Sardinian intellectuals live lives that set them radically apart from the shepherd or worker, they persist in the romantic representation of Sardinians as the inheritors of a *cultura subalterna*, subaltern culture, which should be protected from the corrupting forces of Italian consumer society (813).

These thoughts then raise an interesting issue. While the cosmopolitans of Orgosolo actively try to preserve traditions and norms, things which they do not live by, they often disapprove of those people, namely the localists, who in their lifestyle represent this authentic Sardinia. In other words, the subaltern culture, to use Peter Schweizer`s term, is an artificially and selectively created and distinctly romanticized image that is constructed by the cosmopolitans and intellectuals of the island. In this chapter we have suggested earlier that there is a phenomenon in which the authentic and backwards values are perpetuated and re-imposed on Sardinia and the Sardinians by the tourists who wish to seek the bucolic charm of the island. But now we see that the cosmopolitans of Sardinia (in this example it is the dwellers of Orgosolo) contribute to the bolstering of this imagery just as well. This is crucial, since this means that an authentic Sardinian profile is not only constructed from the outside, but is also formulated from within. But while the cosmopolitans contribute to this image, as they wish to preserve their local heritage, they consciously separate themselves from the traits that "would render [the localists] conspicuous away from the rural setting" (814). The localists of Orgosolo and central Sardinia, we are told, are mostly

> …the workers and shepherds who dominate the public space. They subscribe to a communitarian ethic, but do not perceive a need to

> revitalize cultural traditions because they believe them to be under threat (814).

In other words, the localists react to the externally imposed romanticized imagery of their land, and to the active engagement of the cosmopolitans, by ossifying their own values and traditions. This of course induces insularity and the lack of self-reflection, which can result in behavioral traits that are both unchecked and often brutish.

Sorge astutely notes that the cosmopolitans are "nostalgic but ambivalent" (814) in their attitudes towards the localists, and this selective vision creates a rift between the two, although thankfully it is not by any means violent. Sorge tells us that the cosmopolitans often use the term *paesini* (villagers) to designate the localists, while the

> …Italian term *cittadini* (singular *cittadino*, urbanite) is often used by localists, with mild derision, to refer to those working within the tertiary or the public sector, either in Orgosolo or in the nearby provincial capital of Nuoro… (814)

This name-calling is clearly indicative of a new trend in Sardinia (not by any means singular to this region) in which modernity compels an attachment to tradition and creates factions based on generation and class. But it must be noted that this tradition is an idea. The cosmopolitans not only construct their romantic image of Sardinia, but they project their idea of authenticity on the localists as well. Sorge writes about the *pastore*, the shepherds who he lists under the category of *paesini*, that

> They are easy to romanticize, but also to reproach. They do not bend to cosmopolitan expectations, but none the less serve as the metaphorical tableaus upon which cosmopolitan Orgolesi project their own understandings of the heritage which they claim (814).

Localists are often characterized to live by the values of the so called *ballentia*, which Sorge describes as "garrulous masculinity" (815). The common public space for localists is the bar or pub. The pub culture invites men to engage in a competitive exchange where one is expected to emulate the other by displaying "one`s own eloquence, and therefore precedence" (817). This competitive performance is balanced by a more congenial form of emulation in which they exhibit reciprocal hospitality. While these might seem harmless in the confines of the pub they do conduce to the articulation of the localists` separation from their environment. Sorge notes that there is clearly an "exclusiveness that characterizes the male pastoral milieu" (817), and this impression is reinforced as we come to understand that while cosmopolitans are not welcome, women are entirely excluded from this sphere.

While men were mostly absent from the village before the widespread use of cars and due to attending the flocks out on the remote fields, after the introduction of automobiles the "masculinization and 'ruralization' of village space" (818) became the new trend. Sorge notes that cosmopolitans view this trend and the lifestyle of the shepherds as a "personal failure," and he writes that "Clearly, idealizations of country life are counterbalanced by trenchant criticisms" (815). But the criticism goes both ways and while localists are portrayed as retrograde, the cosmopolitans are resentfully described by the localists as "having forsaken Orgosolo in favor of

urbane artifice, and [having] adopted a sheen of superficial refinement and affectation that stands at odds with [their] expectations of simplicity" (818).

While these terms, localist and cosmopolitan, are limited by nature, and as generalized terms may entail erroneous inferences, it does delineate a social atmosphere which is both changing and rigid. It is into this world that women choirs attempted to enter in the late nineties. Their entry into the public spheres was and still is understandably arduous, since the traditional expectations towards women are conflicting with the values of a modern and urbanized world. But what is hopeful, and what might bring about advantageous change for women in the future is not only accepting change but finding common ground with most members of their community. As Sorge writes, "the different visions inherent in localism and cosmopolitanism lose at least some of their salience when collective village identity is refracted through social memory" (821). It is in this hope of working towards inclusivity rather than exclusivity, that the women choirs, of whom we will speak in the next chapter, will be acknowledged for their groundbreaking efforts over time.

Chapter 3 – *Cori Femminili*

In the late 1990s two women choirs, or *cori femminili*, were established in Sardinia. Coro Ilune was founded in Dorgali in 1997, and a year later another choir, Coro Eufonia was established in Gavoi. Coro Ilune, we learn from the scarce sources available online, was born out of the desire of local women to sing, which as we have seen in the previous chapters, does not necessarily comply with traditional Sardinian values as the sphere of women is mostly confined to the household space and to the extensions of it. The other choir, Coro Eufonia, similar to its pioneering peer, began singing together out of sheer enthusiasm and their common appreciation for choral and Sardinian music. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough, however, that public appearances prior to the debut of these choirs were restricted to male-only groups, which in this case not only indicates the social progression pioneered by these women, but also suggests that there must have been a scarcity of repertoire for women choirs before. This means that for the functioning of these women groups the pre-existing male repertoire would either have had to be transposed, in order to fit their vocal register, or the choirs would need to commission or compose their own pieces.

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While Gavoi is situated in the inner parts of Sardinia, Dorgali is a coastal town. Dorgali is surrounded by sharp mountains, tropical-like vegetation, and it relies on its tourism industry during the summer months as well as on its agricultural products.

Fig. 1

Gavoi, on the other hand, is located almost in the exact center of Sardinia, and is in a hilly, forested region, directly next to Lake Gusana, and serves as a retreat for the city dwellers, or the *cittadini*. While there is some tourism, they mainly rely on their agricultural products as well, such as their famous pecorino, or sheep's cheese. This suggests that while Coro Ilune (Dorgali) was formed in a location much more dependent on tourism, in the case of Coro Eufonia (Gavoi) the desire for communal and public singing was spurred in a social environment that is much more traditional and rigid. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that while both choirs are Nuorese (from the Nuoro region), they represent two distinct landscapes and populations. Thus, aside from being the first two choirs, their differences in location make them just representatives of the genre.

The establishments of these choirs, however, may readily be understood as a response to social change that has already begun in Sardinia in the past few decades. Both choirs claim to be the first to come up with the idea of introducing the genre of female choral singing to Sardinia, and we might assume that the entrance of these choirs into the public sphere closely corresponds with the gradual globalization of Sardinia and, to use Antonio Sorge`s terminology, the emergence of a more cosmopolitan attitude within the overwhelmingly localist communities.

Fig. 2

The gradual transition from localist to cosmopolitan identities of course takes place over several generations. But in this transition the women, for whom "Much more personal freedom is available" (2006: 31) today as before, as Magliocco reminds us, function as fillers of a void. They function as the next rung in the evolution of their society, since they have to straddle the two worlds of 'traditional' and 'modern'. This means that while they fulfil their roles as mothers, wives, and in general, leaders of the household, now they are also actors of the public domain. The transition, or pioneering is than manifested in several ways. For instance, the way the choirs straddle both the expectations of the modern world and that of their traditional local heritage can be observed in their choice of name and attire. While Coro Ilune wears modern outfits, their name pays respect to their magnificent landscape and references the Cala Luna cave and beach.

The members of the group dress in black pants and suit made of velvet and brocade that has been designed by the Nuoro-based tailoress Francesca Pilotto. While the uniform intends to recall to the Dorgali costumes and heritage, it has clearly been modernized.

Fig. 3

On the other hand, Coro Eufonia chose a name that divorces them from local attachment and has a simple musical connotation. *Eufonia* simply stands for *euphony*, which refers to the quality of something that is pleasing to the ear. Yet, their traditional outfit very obviously ties them to the heritage of the town of Gavoi.

As we said, while at one end these groups are clearly doing pioneering work, on the other they are still anchored to their past. One must, for instance, note that both choirs have male conductors. We may read on The Contemporary A Cappella Society`s website that while female choral singing is not women`s prerogative ("*Pur non essendo il canto corale femminile una prerogativa della cultura popolare sarda…"),* the choir of Dorgali, Coro Ilune, was able to enhance certain songs that were intended for male voices. We are told that they have done so by the help of maestro Alessandro Catte who has aided them since their inception. From another source ("Folcloresardo: Coro femminile Ilune") we may learn that thanks to Catte they expanded their repertoire with pieces specifically written for this choir. While in 2002 Coro Ilune became a

cultural association with the purpose of preserving tradition, it has appeared at several venues since then, and in 2009 the choir was the only group to represent the island of Sardinia in the aula of Palazzo Montecitorio at the *Concerto di Natale della Coralitá di Montagna*. This is more than just a fleeting moment of reputation in the public arena. To be the only group from Sardinia to perform at that venue is a testimony to progress, and must be considered a great success for the women of Sardinia. To endeavor on an activity which had been a male prerogative before, and to do so with new and original musical material, not to speak of doing it in the public arena, again, a place reserved for men, it is truly a great achievement.

Fig. 4

Gavoi`s choir, Coro Eufonia also has a male leader, Mauro Lisei. Coro Eufonia, after a period of experimenting with the male repertoire, decided to go even further than Coro Ilune. They began focusing on building an entirely new repertoire, rather than following the more secure and tested path.[4] While creating and commissioning pieces is not at all foreign to Coro

[4] See ("Coro femminile Eufonia")

Ilune, Coro Eufonia`s dedication to an entirely characteristic and unique repertoire sends a very strong message. Their distancing from tradition and experimenting with new voices is more acute than Coro Ilune`s, and this partly could be due to the fact that Dorgali is already much more absorbed in the global world than Gavoi, which therefore seems more eager to prove its capacity for progress.

Coro Eufonia`s achievements are on par with their admirable initiative to revitalize the choral repertoire. In 2012 they too performed at the *Coralitá di Montagna* representing Sardinia in Palazzo Montecitorio in Rome, which is the seat of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. The group performed in the center of the chamber, where the singers beautifully gave voice to their people, as Giovanni Maria Sedda reported in *La Barbagia*. The choir performed two pieces "Duru-duru" and "Anninnia, Anninnia," both which are pieces carried over from the traditional world of women. The melodies and texts of these songs have been influenced by lullabies, legends and various sound effects that mothers often use to soothe and entertain their babies and children. Again, the significance of bringing this to a male-dominated political venue in Rome must not be underestimated. The recording of this performance can be found on YouTube and it is a testimony to the heartfelt and professional music-making of these women.[5]

In 2006 Coro Eufonia sang in Venice and at the International Competition of Gorizia. However, the local recognition of the group is quite extensive as well. The choir participated at the event called the Premio Maria Carta (*Maria Carta Prize*), something which in itself is a great privilege, and was invited, although not to compete, to the Premio di Ozieri (*Ozieri Prize*) as well,

[5] See (Lisei)

in which only male choirs can compete. In 2007 the choir won first prize at Rassegna Competitiva G. Barilari (*G. Barilari Competition*) in Buddusó, in which, again, mostly male choirs participate. It is very telling that even though Coro Eufonia was invited to participate at several local awards and events, they were not invited to compete at the Premio di Ozieri, which suggests the still marginalized role that women choirs have in Sardinia. As Sorge notes, borrowing the perspective of many Sardinian men, "the ideal woman is a housewife, and, while not to be cloistered from public view, she should endeavour to perform her daily rounds and avoid male spaces" (819).

Later, in 2008 Coro Eufonia pocketed the Trofeo Provincia di Sassari award (*Trophy of the Province of Sassari*), another Sardinian prize. But then the choir`s international endeavors picked up again in 2009 when they began working with German jazz musician Hans-Peter Salentin, and later that year Coro Eufonia represented Sardinia in Barcelona at the XI. International Folksong Choir Festival "Europe and its Songs." The jury at the festival awarded the choir with the Special Prize for Best Song for the same song they had performed in Montecitorio, "Anninnia, Anninnia." At this festival the choir also received the silver medal in the 'Vocal Groups Up to 12 Voices' category.[6]

The duality of these choirs is apparent as we see how these Sardinian women organize themselves into music ensembles, something that has been unprecedented before. We see them being internationally recognized for original songs they have composed themselves often more so than they are being acknowledge in Sardinia. They straddle two worlds with male leaders navigating them, and with their roots to their homeland and cultural heritage still being

[6] See (*XI International Folksong Choir*)

ostensible through their names, uniforms, and songs that circle around the private sphere of women. It is important to note again that at Sardinian competitions and award ceremonies, such as the Premio di Ozieri, women choirs are still often not considered equal participants. This suggests that while the women choirs of Sardinia represent the reality of the region, showing an attempt by women to be heard and to change with the highly modernized world, the image that both cosmopolitans and tourists have constructed of Sardinia still remains often misleading, or, at least, highly subjective. As we have discussed it above, this perception is mirrored in much of the literature on Sardinia, and while there is ample resource on male musicians, such as the *Sardinian Chronicles*, it is almost impossible to find research material on the music of Sardinian women.

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We must make a note here about *la lingua Sarda,* or the Sardinian language. The women choirs sing in their native Sardinian language, which is not the same as Italian. It is not a dialect even, as many outsiders, and some mainland Italians believe. Furthermore, each region has its own distinct dialect. It is still a romance language, like Italian, but it is actually closer to its parent language, Latin, than any other romance language. Sardinian is its own unique language, with its own history, however, the language was not officially recognized or protected until 1997, another telling act about its unique place in the world. The majority of the population understands and speaks Italian, as they teach it in schools. So singing in Sardinian lends a very traditional overtone to these choirs. While this might not be conscious on their part, this too supports the observation that these *cori femminili* tie themselves to their local heritage as much as they try to separate themselves from it, thus they have a foot in both the authentic and the modern world. While the

language itself is part of their heritage, the manner in which they sing tends to emphasize their new and original identity as female choirs. As they sing they appear to be filled with pride, and their method of tone production creates a shrill and loud singing voice. This shrillness is by no mean displeasing to the ear, rather it unrelentingly demands the listener`s attention and makes their presence unmistakably known.

Other women choirs exist on the island too, aside from the above discussed two *cori femminili*. However, their presence is still not fully acknowledged by the local community, and the repertoires vary from choir to choir. We saw that Grazia Deledda was far more acknowledged internationally than locally, and this seems to be reiterated in the case of these choirs. These women choirs express themselves in the way that they wish and if anything, this in itself is invaluable. Although they are not necessarily breaking away from tradition, they have created a form of expression in which they can voice their own and individual understanding of Sardinian culture and tradition.

Conclusion

In her book titled *The Construction of the Sardinian Character in Italian Cinema*, Maria Bonaria Urban`s words recapitulate what we have learned so far from various sources in this project. She writes in the section titled "Sardinian Tropes in Literature after 1900," that

> In the narratives of 19th –century travelers the attention devoted to female figures translated into descriptions which betrayed the primitivist, archaistic perspective dominating every discourse on Sardinia and its inhabitants. Accounts written in the early 20th century followed the same pattern; there are abundant reference to Sardinian women`s beauty and to their principal role as wife and mother in a society which confined them to the home and forced them to hide as much as possible from the prying eyes of outsiders (245).

Considering this viewpoint, the women choirs of the late 20th and early 21st century provide a very hopeful prospect, as they defy exactly the archaic expectations of what Urban describes as 'hiding' from the "eyes of outsiders." Urban goes on to reference writer Giuseppe Dessì`s *Le Donne Italiane*, and borrowing from Dessì she writes that "'everything that depends on women functions properly, everything that depends on men functions badly'" (Urban 254) in Sardinian society. This is obviously a stance on the opposite end of the spectrum, and a great exaggeration, but it does suggest that renowned literary figures have astutely noted the discrepancy between gender roles as well, with more scrutiny than others, such as D.H. Lawrence. More validity is

attributed to Dessì`s words once we understand that this criticism is coming from an author who is a native of Sardinia; just like Grazia Deledda.

Briefly going back in history, Urbana tells us that Dessì observes an interesting phenomenon in the *nuraghi* period of Sardinia (18th century BC to 2nd century AD), a period that is of great importance to the culture and uniqueness of Sardinia. We are told that this period, "in which builders of the *nuraghi* – men – were able to show their ability […] also expresses their limitations, since they left no trace of writing" (254). Dessì reminds us that in contrast to the sea-fearing men, "women do not hate water and are usually able to read and write" (255). Urban concludes that

> …the female sex has been the civilizing force of a people otherwise destined for eternal barbarism. But on one more careful scrutiny of Dessi's words, women excel above all in the skills bound up with a traditional, and therefore patriarchal, way of life, one in which women were the queens of their domestic spaces but slaves to their men (255).

These observations set up men as the unknowing enforcers of a primitive society, and if we view Sardinia`s recent past and society as having a strongly patriarchal structure, then these observations stand accurate. The women choirs fit neatly into the fabric of this. Dessì writes, "That bit of imagination which is needed to become a great man seems to have been denied to us Sardinians. There are only two people in the history of Sardinia who have this character of imagination: Eleanor of Arborea and Grazia Deledda. Both of whom are women, not men"

(Dessì).[7] Dessì writes that it would be interesting to study the characters of these women to find out how much of their strength rested upon their matriarchal concept of life which they set against the famously virile and rugged imagery of men.

I hope that the brief introduction of these women choirs, and the emphasizing of their importance in advancing the Sardinian society towards a modern world, can add these women groups to Dessì`s list as the third member. Centuries had to pass after Eleanor of Arborea`s ruling for a Grazia Deledda to appear in Sardinia, and nearly a century passed before women choral singing was able to emerge from and within Sardinian society. It appears that progress is slow, and while there is scarce material on the *cori femminil* to be found today, I write this project in hope that their acceptance locally, and their scholarly acknowledgment (not merely from a professional standpoint, but from their impact on Sardinian gender spheres), should not take another century.

[7] Translated by Page Redding

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