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The Constitution of an 'Alternative' Music Culture in French Rock Music, 1981-2001.

One volume and one CD.

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ABSTRACT

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THE CONSTITUTION OF AN 'ALTERNATIVE' MUSIC CULTURE IN FRENCH ROCK MUSIC, 1981-2001

by Barbara Lebrun

Since popular music has become an industry, the notion of 'authenticity' has played a role in shaping a cultural identity of 'resistance' to commercial products. This thesis focuses on French rock music as a product conveying this identity, and examines its constitution or invention as 'authentic' by looking at the interconnectedness of artists, music producers, the media, the state and the audience. In the early 1980s in France, French rock music developed in parallel to the setting-up of 'independent' record labels, which attempted to produce music autonomously from powerful companies. This material determinant, and the cultural identity derived from, is known as 'alternative'. Its paradox lies in the desire to represent a form of opposition to the contemporary conditions of production, in a music product in fact reliant on them.

Assessing the rarity of academic studies on French popular music, Chapter One establishes the theoretical framework within which the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'resistance' are studied. Following the pluridisciplinary method of Cultural Studies, it examines the historical, political and economic backgrounds in the evolution of French popular music, and underlines the role of republicanism in shaping a national mentality of 'dissidence'. Chapter Two analyses the industrial and state determinants that contribute to the production of French rock music. With case studies of record labels and artists' interviews, this chapter argues that the production and distribution of an 'alternative' music culture maps out over conflicting zones, and is relative to external pressures. The fact that the French Ministry of Culture promotes its rock music also raises the debate of 'cooption', as it appears that the state sanctions a discourse of 'resistance'.

Chapter Three accentuates questions of national identity by analysing the lyrics and music of French rock songs, as well as the artists' discourse. Two trends are examined. Retro rock music, mixing the accordion with punk-rock instruments, relies on nostalgic effects to express 'authenticity'. The paradox lies in its attempts to use a nationalist nostalgia for a pre-commercial past to formulate a dissident identity of 'humanism' as a contemporary credo. The second trend, known as rock métissé, merges Arabic and Latin influences with chanson, to produce new hybrid genres. This raises questions about the utility or otherwise of multiculturalism to challenge racial conservatism and French republicanism. French rock music thus serves as a tool of analysis for issues of nationhood, race and immigration in contemporary France.

Chapter Four focuses on the consumption practices of audiences, and is the first attempt to include audience research in an academic account of French popular music. Qualitative methods of analysis serve to highlight the mental oppositions and series of simplifications shaping the cultural identity of consumers. This chapter argues that the 'marginal' identity of consumers is in contradiction with their usually educated background. Chapter Five looks at live music performances and at the presumed destabilization of routine taking place there. It also underlines the utopian desire of audiences to invent a 'community', often at the expense of other groups. Thus this thesis details the contradictions at stake in shaping an 'alternative' music identity. It examines, via a theoretical framework illuminating ambivalences, how music tastes are based on cultural assumptions emerging from the interplay of historical, political, economic and social factors.

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Definitions and Sets of abbreviation used:

Acronyms:

ACI: Auteur-Compositeur-Interprète, French singer-songwriter

ADAMI: Administration des Droits des Artistes et Musiciens Interprètes.

ATTAC: Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens

CES: Contrat Emploi Solidarité

CIR: Centre d'Information du Rock

FAIR: Fonds d'Aide et d'Initiative pour le Rock

FCM: Fonds pour la Création Musicale

FLN: Front de Libération Nationale (Algérie)

FSV: Fonds de Soutien aux Variétés

GISTI: Groupe d'Information et de Soutien des Immigrés

IFCIC: Institut pour le Financement du Cinéma et des Industries Culturelles

IRMA: Informations et Ressources sur les Musiques Actuelles

LCR: Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire

MJC: Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture

PME: Petites et Moyennes Entreprises

PS: Parti Socialiste

RPR: Rassemblement pour la République

SACEM: Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musiques

SARL: Société à Responsabilité Limitée

SCPP: Société Civile des Producteurs de Phonogrammes

SNEP: Syndicat National de l'Edition Phonographique

SPPF: Société des Producteurs de Phonogrammes en France

UPFI: Union des Producteurs Phonographiques Français Indépendants

Music Terms: (definitions used in this thesis)

Variétés: so-called 'mainstream' French popular music, whose artists tend to be exposed on TV and singles heard on commercial radio stations. A genre focusing less on experimentation, political discourse or 'authenticity' than chanson or French rock artists.

Chanson: general term for contemporary French popular music, used in contrast to variétés; music genre with a cultural identity revolving around the concept of 'authenticity'. Its musical origins are traced in Chapter One.

Chanson à textes: 1950s and 1960s chanson whose composers lay a great emphasis on the skill of writing texts.

Rock alternatif: 1980s French rock music growing in parallel to attempts at autonomous management in 'independent' labels. Ends approximately in 1989.

Rock français: generic term used since the early 1990s for the continuation of 'serious' chanson into a musical form open to Anglo-American rock and punk music, and other influences. Rock français encompasses various trends, including rock métissé and chanson néoréaliste.

Chanson néoréaliste: a 1990s mix of chanson with rock music, sub-category of rock français. Usually playing acoustic and influenced by 1930s realism.

Rock métissé: sub-category of rock français and characterized by its melange of Latin, North African and Mediterranean music influences.

Retro Rock Music: English term used throughout this thesis in lieu of chanson néoréaliste.

I. Introduction: The Notion of 'Authenticity' in French Popular Music

A. Problematics of French Rock Music

The year 2001 saw the consecration of the French rock music group Têtes Raides. They had grown from playing 'alternative' rock on a small-scale basis in the late 1980s to being one of the most widely acclaimed bands in French popular music that year. They were granted a long article full of praise in the cultural magazine *Télérama* in February, were sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture to head the bill of the *Fête de la Musique* in June, and their two latest albums turned 'Gold' during the summer[1]. The career of Têtes Raides is exceptional in that few bands from the marginal scene of *rock alternatif* have achieved such media exposure. Yet, it is also indicative of the success of French 'alternative' rock which, claiming to be separate from the 'mainstream' circuit, has regularly managed to benefit from a large following and even from state support. The position of Têtes Raides in contemporary French culture therefore highlights contradictions about the claimed 'alternativity' of French rock music.

These contradictions become more salient if we consider the media and the audiences' discourse about the band. Musically, the band combines the two-beat speed and steadiness of rock music with the three-beat hesitation and *élan* of waltzes. They mostly play unplugged, but their instruments include the guitars, bass and drums of rock music, the more old-fashioned accordion of waltzes, and brass sections as in circus or marching bands (listen to CD, song 'Ginette'). In the *Télérama* issue of February 2001, the magazine's *chanson* journalist Anne-Marie Paquotte qualified this bridging of genres as '*radicalité*', a positive term in her discourse. Firstly, Têtes Raides' music seemed to oppose the 'mainstream' choices of most media, often deemed reluctant to broadcast atypical artists. Secondly, this music style confined the band to a relatively limited audience, and this connoted marginality

in contrast to an assumed undifferentiated 'mass' audience. However, if Têtes Raides have developed this combination to the point of making it their trademark, we will argue below that other bands were their precursors, and that the evolution of French popular music in the twentieth century anticipated this hybridity. Further, the French media, including the radio, the press and the stage, together with state and private sponsorship, have often coalesced to enhance the development of this 'different' music genre. Acknowledging these material conditions allows us to moderate the journalist's description of Têtes Raides as audacious, while we underline the fact that a section of the French music press, including this journalist from *Télérama*, considers the criteria of musical originality and distance from the 'mainstream' market as signs of high cultural value. This thesis offers to understand why, and how these criteria would apply in particular to French rock music.

In addition, Paquotte evoked the development of Têtes Raides in the stage circuit with a terminology that created a hierarchy between live concerts and media broadcast: "[La chanson] 'Ginette' depuis est de tous les concerts, et c'est là que le public l'a rencontrée. Le tube n'a pas été seriné à la radio, il a été élu dans les salles. L'histoire de ce groupe et de ce public est une histoire de transmission orale. [Leurs albums] ne font guère partie du paysage médiatique audiovisuel"[2]. Paquotte chose a derogatory verb (*seriné* means harped on) to refer to radio broadcast, and opposed it to direct interrelation with the audience (emphasized with '*rencontré*' and '*transmission orale*'). She hammered home the idea that live performances allowed for particularly meaningful music events, while radio or TV broadcast seemed to suffer from a lack of human contact, or to hold back from full enjoyment. Noting that Têtes Raides achieved artistic credibility with little media help, she concluded to the band's sense of '*éthique*' and '*probité*', stressing that when developing their careers outside the 'mainstream' profit laws, musicians shone out by their strong moral sense, their righteousness. As a journalist from *Libération* also noted, the fact that Têtes Raides have often played in halls of less than 2000 spectators marked their definite '*authenticité*', a moral

term implying the band's 'genuine' identity[3]. Using the arguments of live performance and audience participation as 'authentic' is an interesting reversal of the traditional Western discrimination against oral cultures[4]. For these journalists, however, the band's 'alternative' identity was charted thanks to the possibility of developing 'human' contact with the audience, which added to their autonomy from the technical facilities offered by media broadcast.

These definitions of 'authenticity' rely on the unquestioned assumption that the radio and the stage are two separate domains of music diffusion. Both however have been the two facets of the music industry for nearly a century now, and organizing concerts is part of the business requirements of artists. Moreover, as soon as a band contemplates a professional career and/or records an album, making profits becomes necessary. Têtes Raides started by producing their albums with an 'independent' label in the late 1980s, and were often credited as 'alternative' on that ground, yet they have also signed with a sub-label of the major company Warner since 1992. Therefore, the journalists' biases against mediatization and the industry, and their belief that an 'authentic' band should be non-commercial, appear short-sighted. Their judgements, then, illuminate the role of cultural distinctions in French popular music culture, and in particular the cultural power of the notion of 'alternativity' in French rock music. As one of the band's fans also said, "les Têtes Raides ça sort du lot, c'est pas pour un public large"[5]. Considering a marked difference between mass success ('*public large*') and a limited audience, this consumer implied that the small-scale success of Têtes Raides qualified them as more original than any 'wide-success' artist. However, already in 1999 (date of this interview), the band could be heard on the national radio France Inter, had been around for ten years and produced seven albums, so that its audience was already somehow 'large'. Its review in *Télérama* also implied a wide exposure, the magazine being the second best-selling national weekly[6]. The discrepancy between cultural assumptions

about the 'alternative' identity of French rock artists and the more complex configuration of the French music business is the focus of this thesis.

The discourse surrounding French rock music encapsulates a series of concepts which will be useful for unpicking the complex threads of its 'alternativity'. The first concept is that of 'resistance', or 'dissidence', which French rock music seeks to represent against the economic authority of capitalism. Developing in the 1980s, the music genre of *rock alternatif* was acclaimed as an 'alternative' music culture for its apparent ability to avoid the usual commercial routes to success. The study of the genre by Alexandre Meunier is typical of this analysis, as he writes that "l'appellation 'alternatif' prend alors tout son sens [in the early 1980s] puisqu'une époque de véritable autoproduction s'ouvre (...). C'est une véritable contre-culture qui naît, qui refuse toute étiquette et toute publicité"[7]. We notice in one paragraph the repetitive use of the word '*véritable*', inscribing the genre in the problematics of 'authenticity', and the contradictory juxtaposition of a meaningful designation (*alternatif*) to the refusal of labelling. This points to the paradoxical definition of *rock alternatif* as a music culture seeking disruption, while necessitating recognition as such. However, Meunier correctly insists on the particularity of the genre, which was to defend its autonomy from the dominant industry, and the concentration rule of capitalism, by prioritizing production in 'independent' labels (Têtes Raides were initially produced 'independently'). These attempts legitimized, at least on the surface, the 'resistance' of *rock alternatif* artists. As the music industry grew increasingly blurred in the 1990s, however, French rock bands (including Têtes Raides) became managed by the subsidiaries of multinational 'majors', and their 'alternativity' was increasingly restrained. The trust that audiences and journalists still put in these terms today reveals that, nonetheless, the cultural label of 'alternativity' continues to play a crucial role in French popular culture.

The concept of 'resistance' is linked to those of 'independence' and 'autonomy', and can be applied to the domain of political authority. In this domain, we will see that the French Ministry of Culture's official support of popular music, since 1981, has limited the 'dissidence' of French rock artists to an extent. In particular, the sense of superiority assumed within claims of 'alternativity' has occasionally echoed the French state's reliance on alleged 'cultural exceptionalism', so that French rock music's defense of independent structures was received in official circles as a 'quality' safeguard against the apparent imperialism of (foreign) multinationals. The 'autonomy' of French rock artists is thus relative to their attempts at economic independence being backed up by state sponsorship, even if other political areas may attract their disagreement or vocal 'resistance'.

French rock music also raises questions about national identity, or nationhood. The fact that French artists borrowed from Anglo-American music (rock and punk) to forge a new music style, has challenged their 'independence' as 'national' artists, possibly resisting the dominant music productions of Britain and the USA. However, French rock music was also acknowledged as a 'national' form in the 1990s, as shown by occasional state sponsorship. This raises questions about the definition of a 'national' identity and a 'national' music. In the 1960s, for instance, *Yéyé* was already a French form of rock music, but one that never achieved a significant degree of artistic credibility. We may thus wonder how the social and political context of the 1980s and 1990s differed from previous periods, and what determinants allowed for this 'national' recognition to take place.

Questions of nationhood also arise in relation to the concept of *métissage*, or the musical and cultural melange most transparent in the sub-category of French rock music called *rock métissé*. In addition to merging French *chanson* with Anglo-American rock music, French rock music was also from the start peppered with Latin, Arabic and African influences, as bands like Mano Negra and Négresses Vertes exemplified. This trend intensified in the 1990s, and musical *métissage* (or hybridization) often backed up political

debates for integration, in contrast to more conservative tendencies in French society seeking to perpetuate a Jacobin identity. However, in France, where Republicanism is also established as a political model presumably open to all, one may wonder in what respect this new hybrid music and its discourse appeared transgressive.

As *rock métissé* settled as a recognized category of French rock music, so did the other sub-genre known as *chanson néoréaliste* (or retro rock in English), characterized by the fusion of accordion waltzes with acoustic punk-rock guitars (Têtes Raides). In retro rock music, the concept of nostalgia is a central issue, as the artists' reliance on old-fashioned instruments and themes seems to oppose forces of modernization (sometimes in stark contrast to the contemporary challenge of *métissage*). Yet, nostalgia for a pre-modern society also locates French rock music in the perspective of a 'humanist' utopia, presenting contemporary audiences with the image of a potentially more fraternal society criticizing the social inadequacies brought by capitalism.

Eventually, in concerts where live music conditions appear to bypass the commodity status of popular music, the concept of festivity is another clue to understanding the cultural meanings conveyed by French rock music. Live performances are often experienced by music fans as challenging the 'banality' of record and radio consumption, providing a sense of collective and intense pleasure. However, the recent increase in concert-going practices has possibly altered the uniqueness of live representations as well as the rarity of collective experiences. In these conditions, we may wonder how the location and time of festivals may account for an apparent 'rupture' from the audience's routine, and examine how the public's participation to these events may still provide them with a sense of renewed enjoyment.

The notions of resistance, nationhood, *métissage*, nostalgia, utopia and festivity, can be best understood by relating them via the overarching concept of 'authenticity'. French rock music's search for 'alternativity' cries out for the recognition of 'authenticity' in its modes of production and diffusion, in its political and musical discourses, in its social appropriation by

the public. This thesis examines how French artists, producers, media people and audiences look at French rock music, and what cultural and social meanings they convey when qualifying it as 'alternative' or 'authentic'. Following Morley and Robins's approach to cultural identities, and their remark that "the production, maintenance and reconstitution of cultural identity is to be seen as a continuously problematic process"[8], this thesis considers that conceptions of 'authenticity' work as a cultural system. As such, 'authenticity' is produced by audiences, artists, music producers, media and state agents who reflect the interplay of economic, political and social factors, as well as technological determinants. Further, the fans and professionals' assumptions that 'authenticity' resides in French rock music contribute to shaping what Morley and Robins call 'spaces of identity', or zones of cultural expression that overlap and/or (sometimes) conflict with one another. French rock music culture is then understood as the 'mobilisation' of a common 'alternative' identity revolving around an understanding of 'authenticity', but that same culture is also potentially "the site of contradictory tendencies and interests", as cultural actors agree, disagree or compete for the recognition of that 'alternativity'[9]. Their agreements and disagreements about the 'authenticity' of French rock music are dependent on the shifts and evolutions of the music's material and social conditions.

B. Literature Review on French Popular Music

This thesis considers that French rock music is a cultural system, and that this system requires an interdisciplinary method of analysis. Interdisciplinarity has had, so far, strikingly little echo in French academia, and has been hardly applied to the study of French popular music. We can only speculate as to why this is so, yet the fact remains that French popular music has mostly been studied from the limits of distinct disciplines such as literary analysis, history or biography, and has to this day remained a journalistic genre rather than an academic study. While 'authenticity' has long preoccupied those who studied French music genres such as

chanson and *variétés*, their approach has mostly established assumptions about the inherent prestige of different styles and left their contradictions, as well as inscriptions in context, aside. In the late 1990s when British and US scholars argued as to which were the best tools for an interdisciplinary study of popular music, many French writers still complained about the lack of any theory to define *chanson* or any French music. In his study on rock and cultural politics, Philippe Teillet regretted that the academic study of French popular music was "un terrain quasi-vierge de ce côté-ci de l'Atlantique", and in July 1999 Paul Garapon argued that *chanson* still only had "peu de statut" as an academic topic[10]. This is a review of the existing works on French popular music, and an encouragement to use interdisciplinarity for its study, as long advocated by Anglo-American academics.

The literary approach to French *chanson* flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, detailing songs' lyrics so as to relate them to poetry and justify their nobility[11]. In his anthology, Marc Robine took for granted the 'popularity' of *chanson*, idealizing its origins in an exclusively low-class public and suggesting that contemporary mediatization had drastically modified this situation: "On chantait dans les bistrots, on chantait dans les prisons. La chanson était la culture du pauvre et son expression naturelle (...). La radio, la télévision, le walkman ont rendu le peuple muet"[12]. This declaration presented sweeping generalizations about popular music, and although Robine accounted for a conception of 'authenticity' ('*expression naturelle*'), he did not problematize the concept and took it for granted. With much gloom-mongering, the 1980s produced a large amount of journalistic accounts on, precisely, the loss of 'authenticity' in French popular music due to the increased commercialization of songs: "Tout s'effondre (...), la chanson française se meurt", lamented Lucien Rioux in his presentation of the French singles' charts system[13]. Similarly, the enthusiasm that some music journalists showed about the artists whom they believed escaped commercial networks was rarely channelled into a rigorous analysis[14]. For instance, Jean-Marie Séca wrote a semi-hagiography of rock music in France making such bold statements as "le rock est un modèle

de dissidence" and elaborated on his personal exaltation in meeting with musicians[15]. While many anthologies were published on French popular music, their format left little scope for a thorough analysis of the music's meanings.

A few writers have looked at French popular music practices, and either used multiple tools or highlighted the complex nature of popular music. In his study of brass and jazz bands in France, Ludovic Tournès combined historical and political aspects to explain the resilience of private musical associations[16]. Looking at Parisian public *bals* in the nineteenth century, the historian François Gasnault presented them as sites of social tension, as *enjeux* for the emerging bourgeois class to distinguish itself from the working classes, as places where bourgeois morality and sexuality were articulated[17]. Another example was Philippe Grimbert's psychoanalytic approach to contemporary *chanson*. Although his research aimed at showing that *chanson* could articulate psychological tensions such as desire and control, he speculated much about the fact that Freud had befriended the popular singer Yvette Guilbert not long before his death, and he lacked a formal analysis of audiences' interviews to be convincing[18]. Finally, in his study of the French music industry, Antoine Hennion had perceived the interest of combining marketing research with considerations of the audiences' reception, suggesting taking into account the "sociosentimental" meanings which audiences create[19]. However, he only pointed to this theoretical possibility without actually carrying out audience research. This thesis is the first academic attempt to do so.

On both sides of the Channel, the French and British academics Louis-Jean Calvet and Peter Hawkins have studied French popular music and recommended a plural analysis. Peter Hawkins's presentation of French singer-songwriters provided a foundational text on contemporary *chanson* for English readers, and he pointed to the potential pluridisciplinary study of *chanson*, recognizing its 'hybrid' aspect and suggesting an examination of its 'context'. However, he followed a mostly biographical pattern in his presentation, and showed his rather personal take on the subject when he undiscerningly declared that *chanson*

was "typically marginal, nonconformist and often dissident"[20]. While Hawkins argued for the combination of "a kind of reception theory" with market research, he also dismissed it as "enormously expensive in terms of resources and man-hours", in a fairly resigned position[21]. Calvet's *Chanson et Société* was, in 1981, one the best attempts to theorize French *chanson* from a pluralist academic perspective. Locating *chanson* in a historical, political, linguistic, musicological and semiological context, Calvet set the foundations for a French academic study of French popular music. Twenty years on, his work remains a reference for considering *chanson* at the complex articulation of various interests, but his research remains curiously isolated. It is possible that his acknowledgement of the material difficulty of combining different theoretical skills has deterred potential followers: "une telle entreprise implique, on l'aura deviné, de longues recherches et soit des compétences multiples, soit un travail collectif"[22]. In this thesis, the study of French popular music has been narrowed down to one genre (French rock music) and one period (the 1980s and 1990s), which facilitated the adaptation of interdisciplinary methods.

The academic field of popular music was constituted in the 1970s in the Anglo-American world, and if it still comprises some diverging currents today, it takes pluridisciplinarity as its central methodology. In Great Britain in 1990, Richard Middleton detailed the uses and limits of particular studies on music (historical, musicological, subcultural) and stressed the necessity of moving towards an encompassing analytical framework including sociology, ethnology, discourse analysis, history, semiology and other theories, all serving to locate popular music at the intersection of competing interests and contradictory definitions[23]. In 1997, the American scholar Richard A.Peterson agreed and underlined the need to account for the complex interpenetration of fans and professionals' interests: "The exciting research challenge now is to learn how this vast plurality of popular music is sorted and recombined by artists, by the people in the industry, and by diverse elements of the consuming public and

to find what people's popular music choices mean to them"[24]. Such 'articulation' projects, however, appeared laborious. Gary Burns, the editor of an academic journal on popular music, compared its study to a 'quixotic quest' requiring perfection, in a similarly challenging yet slightly disheartened fashion to Calvet and Hawkins above[25]. Studying rock music in the USA, Lawrence Grossberg focused on conceptions of 'authenticity', and analysed them as the product of conflicts arising between artists, producers, distributors, the media, political factors and the public[26]. Influenced by Stuart Hall (see below), he contributed to developing popular music theory by adding reflection on the 'imaginary' meanings and preferences that people held about music, and on the notion of pleasure that audiences experienced in listening to it. Grossberg's consideration that rock music was a 'site of struggle' led him, however, to consider it as potential 'oppositional politics' and to circulate an elitist vision in searching for the location of 'true' dissidence.

The classically trained US musicologist Susan McClary turned to the study of popular music in the 1990s, and stressed that "the power of [any] music - both for dominant cultures and for those who would promote alternatives - resides in its ability to shape the ways we experience our bodies, emotions, subjectivities, desires and social relations. And to study such effects demands that we recognize the ideological basis of music's operations -its cultural constructedness"[27]. This statement usefully summarizes the idea that the most efficient study of popular music should regard the role played by the concept of 'authenticity' as dependent on cultural conventions. For her and a number of other Anglo-American academics, the study of popular music should turn to questioning the meaning(s) of value judgements or 'artifical constructs' for particular consumer groups and at particular times. Further, one should accept that a judgement like that of 'authenticity' shall remain polysemous, varying with time, individuals, contexts and purposes. Besides, as David Brackett underlined in his guide to popular music studies, the study of 'authenticity' in popular music should be embedded in a context revealing its location "within the larger field

of the music's status as an exchangeable commodity", always stressing the role of this construct in people's experience and/or in their efforts to challenge the contemporary conditions of production[28].

Finally, McClary and others have stressed the need to refer to musicology to explain the music's impact on audiences' pleasure. Robert Walser, for instance, published in 1993 a research on heavy metal music incorporating history, sociology, analysis of empirical research and musicology[29]. While the present study deals with a few musicological points, it is regrettable that our expertise in this area remained limited. This review shows, however, that popular music is best considered as a cultural complex, and that the appropriate methodology for analysing its interrelational system should combine historical, political, economic, social and musicological considerations. The concept of 'authenticity' can then be studied as a cultural construct taking place in, around and perhaps against this system. Tracing the evolution of the debates surrounding this concept will now put into theoretical perspective the problematics raised by French rock music.

C. Theoretical Framework: 'Authenticity' as a Cultural System

In his study on nationalism, Benedict Anderson stressed the point that as early as 1454, the invention of print reproduction contributed to the development of a material base for capitalism[30]. At the same time, sentiments of anti-mechanization and 'authenticity' also developed, relying on the conception that there could exist a form of cultural creation thriving outside the pressures of mechanization and profit[31]. It is thus crucial to understand the concept of 'authenticity' as the proclaimed antithesis of capitalism, and as its necessary counterpart. With the Enlightenment, emancipation from religion and aristocracy progressed, as did the spirit of rationalization striving to re-organize the economy by quantifying, standardizing, ultimately exchanging goods and knowledge where possible. Then again, capitalism and humanism appeared as two sides of the same coin, paradoxically twinned as a

positive economic progress and as a search for liberation from the oppression that this economy seemed to bring in certain areas[32]. At the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, when industrialization gradually touched all aspects of society, including the arts, German Romantics forged the term 'mass culture' to connote the apparent degradation that capitalism had created by producing art objects *en masse*. The concept of 'mass culture' applied to reproducible objects such as paintings, photographies and later music records, and the arts which sought an autonomy from capitalism stood as 'authentic' or 'high' culture[33].

In Germany in the 1930s, various scholars set up the Frankfurt School with the broad purpose to reflect on the growth of Fascism and on the expansion of the commodification of culture. In this context, the Frankfurt School offered Communism as a potential solution to both. One of its leaders, Theodor Adorno, principally addressed the issue of industrial developments and their relation to culture. Adorno considered capitalism a distressing regression from an anterior and presumably better period when works of art were 'authentic'. For him, a hierarchical distinction emerged between 'authentic' forms of art and what he called the 'culture industry', or (in music) the music produced by the record industry, including Tin Pan Alley songs and jazz dance hits[34]. He considered popular music to be sold as a distraction from the hardship of ordinary life, and to respond to the desire of the 'masses' to escape boredom and effort during their leisure time. In espousing its conditions of production, popular music appeared primarily unchallenging and was potentially manipulative in helping consumers to accept the '*status quo*' of (re)production for more consumption. With such comments as "the more democratic jazz is, the worse it becomes"[35], critics often deemed Adorno reactionary in his consideration of the 'masses' as an unproblematic socio-cultural group, and of the industry as a homogeneous malevolent 'whole'. For the US scholar Fredric Jameson, for instance, Adorno suffered from limited 'positive value' in blindly trusting the existence of a form of 'authenticity' located outside the

realms of industrialization, as much as he appeared uninformed about the social and racial challenges that had, for instance, helped bring jazz about [36].

However, as Max Paddison later insisted, a view such as Jameson's was itself reductionist about Adorno's reflections, which should rather be inscribed in his broader aesthetic theory. Paddison argued that Adorno offered "a critique of the industrialized culture of the West" and had laboured crucial and still topical points on the role of art in its contemporary conditions of production[37]. These questions still inform the study of music today, and reflections on 'authenticity' imply questioning the autonomy of art or artists from the 'dominant' media (how 'independent' are Têtes Raides, for instance?). Paddison stressed that for Adorno, the aims of 'high', serious or 'authentic' music were self-reflection and attempts to find appropriate responses to reification. The fact of offering, even if ineffectively, a potential resistance to the tendency of commodification expressed 'authenticity', a quality which Adorno found in either classical (Beethoven) or contemporary classical music (Schoenberg)[38]. However, more than just opposing the music industry, its records and its star system, Adorno saw the success of 'authenticity' in the *endeavour* to reflect on the problems created by that industry. As Paddison explained, Adorno never took 'authenticity' for granted or thought it accomplished, but envisaged it as an equilibrium between two opposites, as a *system* entailing its own potential negation. Just as the Enlightenment period had, from the start, opened up onto contradictions, Adorno saw 'authenticity' as the effort to illuminate and manage contradictions. Yet, as some art could be regarded as 'authentic' when it denounced the fragmentations of modern life, so it paradoxically lost its critical acuteness in momentarily resolving these problems.

For Adorno, 'serious' music bore a moral and social significance in its alleged capacity to evoke the bleakness of life, the sufferings that humanity encountered, and in judging the evils of contemporary society. It relied on the artists' moral responsibility to criticize the world around them, and on their artistic force to create oeuvres escaping

traditional interpretative formats. We saw above how the French rock band Têtes Raides was regarded as 'ethical' by journalists for its attempt to stand aside from 'mainstream' media. In this sense, and as we shall develop below, 'authenticity' becomes a mirror for observing the role of artists in society and for examining art's capacity (or otherwise) to explore and criticize the contradictions shaped by capitalism.

Adorno studied music through the combined angles of production, artistic creation and reception, thus using a pluridisciplinary method[39]. In 1941, faced by the dilemma that popular music seemed to offer escape to 'the masses' without a reflection on the needs for escape, he asked, bewildered, "what, then, does music mean to them [the audience]?". He formulated the hypothesis that, next to its (lack of) aesthetic qualities, popular music must function as a 'social cement' for the audience[40]. He was crucially hinting at the role of social contexts behind cultural consumers' expressions of pleasure, but he dismissed his finding as "a mere socio-psychological function". For him, music had to offer resistance to either capitalism or Fascism, and the emotion encountered in 'socializing' through music could not be enough. Several other theorists, however, took his suggestion seriously.

Also from the Frankfurt School but not a specific contributor to the field of music, Walter Benjamin took a different course from Adorno, as he offered to take mass culture seriously. With the prerequisite that all art was now in the age of mechanical reproduction, and that mechanization only produced a series of similar objects, Benjamin argued that talking in 'authentic' terms did not have much material grounds[41]. In music for instance, there could be no intrinsic difference between the master copy of a song and different records of the same song. Further, Benjamin considered that through the increased access to the means of production and distribution, mass culture represented democratization and in this sense a form of progress[42]. The purpose of technology was to expand the creativity of individuals, and not to manipulate their tastes or their wallets. For Benjamin, 'authenticity' or 'the aura',

as he called the uniqueness of a work of art, had vanished with the industrialization of arts, but in his Marxist approach this loss was not prejudicial. The new purpose of art could be directed at political actions and serve "revolutionary demands" for the 'masses'[43]. Where Adorno considered 'authenticity' as a prerequisite for a politics of resistance, Benjamin on the contrary considered that wide access to popular culture and the loss of 'authenticity' potentially allowed for similar purposes to take place. Thus, Benjamin considered that there could be such a thing as commercial vanguard. Shifting from the commonplace opposition of high art as 'concentration', and low art as 'distraction' or acceptance of the *status quo*, he offered mass-produced culture as potentially revolutionary. What Adorno had called, with contempt, the 'culture industry', was now replaced by the term 'popular culture', and referred to the new industrial conditions of production that offered meanings and challenges in people's lives. With Benjamin, it became possible to study popular music as a social situation in which 'authenticity' could be articulated.

Subcultural theory, or the theory that users of cultural commodities can oppose the system even as they take part in it, was derived from Benjamin's position. In the 1970s, and following parallel developments in France with the works of De Certeau (see below), subcultural theory looked at 'people's cultures' and at how people's practices could be empowering to them, especially if derived from popular culture. For instance, Dick Hebdige looked at how punk music, in 1979, could be both a popular music genre set within the realm of the record industry, and a culture made meaningful as 'rebel' and 'authentic' by its listeners[44]. Although the advantage of subcultural studies has been to shift academic attention to trends of popular culture and to disturb the established cleavage between previously 'high' and 'mass' cultures, they eventually proved rather reductionist. Brackett stressed that subcultural theory too readily assumed homologies between sets of social characteristics and (in Hebdige's case for instance) a music genre. It drew too rigid bonds between one group

and one culture, dismissing the possibility that other types of music could be enjoyed by that group, or that other communities could also listen to that music[45].

In the 1960s and 1970s, the French sociologist Michel de Certeau developed the argument that consumers were not passive, but rather ingenious tacticians who chose which cultural objects to 'consume', use and/or buy, and how. For De Certeau, popular culture consumers led an active everyday life, inventing techniques and ruses precisely to bypass the oppressions of the production system in which they were working[46]. In the face of industrialized and 'oppressive' cultural products, they performed what De Certeau phrased a 'creative consumption', applying the term for instance to readers who, within the imposed parameters of a novel's text, invented their own significations by combining the text's elements differently from intended[47]. In other cultural fields (reading, walking, at work, but not in relation to music), De Certeau devised a new vocabulary of 'consumption' that stressed the consumers' activity and consciousness. Terms like procedures, tactics, strategies or 'ways of operating' underlined the fact that consumers of popular culture could figure out their own resistance to an imposed system. However, his theories, and subcultural studies, still placed consumers at the receiving end of the production system whence they seemed to wait for a signal to defend themselves, however 'creatively'. When we look at who consumes 'alternative' French rock music, we shall come back to these debates. The emerging conflict here is that, as some popular music artists seek 'authenticity' in attempting to expose or criticize capitalism, consumer society precisely caters for their expression. In addition, considering popular music as a cultural system relativizes artists or consumers' definitions of 'authenticity', and highlights contradictions between assumptions of 'resistance' and complex material parameters.

With the consideration that popular culture could give voice to criticism, the study of popular music evolved into the study of a set of articulations between numerous factors, including

social parameters and historical anchorage. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in particular, sought to locate cultural discourses in their social context and investigated the value judgements behind consumers' claims to 'authenticity'. In *La Distinction*, he opened the path for a sociology of popular culture, demonstrating how one's conception of culture as 'high' or 'low', or as 'authentic' or 'artificial' for instance, depended on one's social and economic background (the *habitus*), and helped establish one's personal prestige: "[il y a] des relations entre les groupes entretenant des rapports différents, voire antagonistes avec la culture, selon les conditions dans lesquelles ils ont acquis leur capital culturel et les marchés sur lesquels ils peuvent en tirer le meilleur profit"[48]. By insisting on the variety of positions and conceptions that one could hold in relation to culture, Bourdieu showed that talking of 'authentic' art only made sense within a wider social framework.

With statistics on preferences and interviews about different practices, Bourdieu presented a socio-cultural picture of France in the 1960s, with variations according to people's different educational capital and parental cultural heritage. In his few pages dedicated to the reception of music in France, Bourdieu distinguished between the "adhésion sélective" of various social groups to popular songs. Working classes tended to love 'simple' songs and liberal professions tended to dislike songs loved by the working classes, with middle-class teachers, intellectuals and artists asserting a taste in *chanson*, or songs with clever lyrics[49]. These distinctions implied that most members of different social categories had a vague yet strong and similar sentiment of what represented 'good' popular music. This underlined the fact that 'authenticity' was a shifting concept making sense in and for a definite social group, and that 'legitimate' or dominant tastes were not only taken for granted by the dominant bourgeoisie but also shaped other classes' reactions to culture. Therefore, taking seriously the 'socio-psychological' functions of tastes which Adorno had dismissed allowed to shift the debate on 'authenticity' from aesthetic considerations to issues of socio-cultural definitions.

Cultural Studies was influenced by Structuralism, the linguistic research established by Saussure which considered that language was made of single elements that interrelated in a system. In discourse, the meaning and place of words could not be isolated, but always depended on the influence of the context. Shifting the focus to everyday life, social structuralism or Cultural Studies examined cultural practices by detailing the interdependent relations between their various components. Considerations of age, race, gender, professional and geographical location, would for instance account for the broad social background of cultural actors, while cultural products or practices themselves needed to be inscribed in their wider historical and politico-economic contexts. Validating the study of popular culture, and being primarily influenced by sociology, Cultural Studies also borrowed from ethnology the need for empirical research and the method of participant observation, establishing itself as a pluridisciplinary method. Studying popular culture from every angle, it could deconstruct, for instance, the contradiction inherent to 'resistant' popular music by accepting that the latter functioned as a struggle between different social, political or economic forces.

The British sociologist Stuart Hall, in particular, pointed to the appropriateness of pluridisciplinarity for the study of music. For him, popular culture functioned as a complex circuit in which various meanings circulated, and which could only be understood by taking into account the various components of that system[50]. Like any other language, music answered codes and conventions, and making sense of its meaning(s) required taking into consideration the various possible interpretations of individuals interacting with it. In particular, Hall developed the theory that individuals and groups held 'imaginary' meanings that may differ from reality, but which were still transmitted and understandable by others. This led to the study of taste groups and audience research (see below). Fredric Jameson also focused on these symbolic meanings and on how people interpreted culture by articulating what he called 'raw materials', or people's fundamental and social anxieties, concerns and

hopes[51]. Studying the meanings of Hollywood musicals, Richard Dyer explained that cultural products could be interpreted as providing "imaginary resolutions" to the audiences' daily lives[52]. Reaching beyond Adorno's impasse about the paradox of 'authenticity' and its potential self-destruction, Cultural Studies examined the concept of 'authenticity' as a cultural construct serving consumers in their attempts to make sense of their own confrontation with popular culture. As such, it only made sense at the point of articulation of tensions between producers and consumers, between the domain of product-making (the industry) and that of product-consuming (the 'common' people).

Branching out of this theoretical shift, audience research theory considers consumers not at one end of the cultural chain (whether as passive respondents like Adorno or as active ones like de Certeau), but instead at the heart of a conflictual process of meaning-making. The term 'audience' has now preferably replaced that of 'consumer', in order to underline the former's position in an articulatory system. As Virginia Nightingale put it in her introduction to the study of film spectators as a particular kind of 'audiences' of popular culture, "the activity of audiences needs no longer be conceived as responsive, but can now better be understood as symbiotic or interactive"[53]. The study of this interaction was the focus of Morley and Robins' influential essay of 1989 on the theory of 'spaces of identity', which we use as a blueprint for our study of French rock music[54]. Reflecting on the role ascribed to popular culture (satellite TV) in the construction of 'imagined' European identities, they stressed the point that cultural identities were ideological experiences shaped by material determinants. One should study these identities or cultural judgements in their differentiation from other practices and tastes, and highlight the possibility that several and at times contradictory identities could overlap, as the elements shaping that culture regularly change and re-combine differently. Following this proposition, this thesis interrogates the role of French rock music in elaborating an imagined 'alternative' or 'authentic' community of listeners, artists, media and political figures. It locates this music genre at the interplay of

social, economic and political factors, themselves undergoing modifications and entailing conflicts. This thesis examines how, why and against which 'other(s)' French rock music has articulated a contemporary culture revolving around the concept of 'authenticity'. In order to do this, we need to contextualize the notion of 'authenticity' and study its resilience in French popular music so far.

D. Historicizing 'Authenticity' in French Popular Music

For Morley and Robins, a cultural identity is an ongoing and selective process taking place at both the individual and national levels, and it is only through "mechanisms of cultural reproduction [that] a particular version of the collective memory and thus a particular sense of the national and cultural identity is produced"[55]. The cultural identity related to French popular music, and in particular to its most common form called *chanson*, has been historically constructed by a series of selections and handing-down of particular values. For instance, it is commonly acknowledged nowadays that French *chanson* was born as a 'poor people's' expression, as Marc Robine would have it[56]. This conception locates 'authenticity' in *chanson* insofar as it is perceived as 'marginal', and 'marginality' is understood as a socially fixed identity. Lowly origins seem to legitimate a form of 'genuine' art. However, the contrast between that widely believed definition and *chanson*'s more complex origins precisely highlights the fact that simplifications and selections have occurred in French history during the evolution of *chanson* itself. Moreover, if modern *chanson* dates back to the birth of the record industry in the late nineteenth century, when the conditions of mechanized production stirred concerns about the artists' 'authenticity', earlier *chanson* has had cultural antecedents based on the invention of 'authenticity' too. This section briefly scans the social, political and industrial parameters which influenced the collective invention and re-invention of French *chanson* as such.

1. Social Struggles

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, poet-musicians composed poetic lyrics and sung their verses, often as a choir, to a tune which they also composed. This combination of words and music gradually evolved into the term '*chanson*'. These artists, called *troubadours* in the South of France and *trouvères* in the North, were members of the aristocracy and typically trained as erudites[57]. They performed their pieces in court, for the court, according to the courtly ideal of the *fin'amors*, so that early *chanson* started in the highest social spheres. However, like most social practices, it lent itself to various interpretations, and early *chanson* can be studied as primarily contradictory in nature. Firstly, as the genre was born of pre-romantic chivalry, it expressed both profane and pious love. On the one hand, *chansons* could depict human desire, and on the other hand, through the idealization of the lady, they could express religious and ecstatic adoration. Secondly, *trouvères* had developed their literary skills on the model of Latin rhetoric, but principally composed in vernacular French, so that *chansons* were both highly crafted pieces and vulgarizations of erudite language skills. Song-writing required a distinct self-conscious technique and was in this sense artificial, while it articulated a sense of 'authenticity' in its use of 'real' spoken language. Thirdly, in the song collections of the time, as well as, it seems, during live performances, *chansons* were set in relief against other genres like sacral pieces or bawdy songs, composed in their vast majority by the same erudites. Many clergy-trained singers and musicians, who were linked to local princely courts, composed a variety of songs ranging from celebratory to obscene, and performed for official celebrations as well as for the entertainment of upper classes. Conversely, the *joglars* and *jongleurs*, who often came from the lower classes, were not trained in these official circles and were usually itinerant. These have probably contributed to spreading the myth of the singing carefree minstrel, but even them were hired at the court on occasion, and sometimes granted the status of *troubadours*. Thus, we see that *chanson* mostly

originated in professional circles, and that the genre was not confined to any specific social realm. The craft of *chanson*-making and the themes tackled had a certain fluidity.

The history of the social usages of *chanson* remains to be written, and it would account for the ways in which early *chanson* was, or was not, considered an 'authentic' art form then, and against which other 'artificial' forms. What we can reasonably speculate, however, is that, as the genre navigated between social classes and ranges of expression, and as the middle-classes gradually attained a separate, but effectively 'mid-way', status, their specificity and contradictory aspirations were articulated in *chanson*. Indeed, during the later Middle Ages, song-writing followed the development of urbanization, and bourgeois circles, mostly in the North, hired the services of both *jongleurs* and *trouvères*, who also kept attending princely courts. Then, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when François 1er and then Louis XIV sought control of the arts for the purpose of national unity, opera and instrumental music grew as the court's favourites[58]. *Chanson* slowly disappeared from the domain of direct state intervention, and as the tighter regulation of all aspects of society led to controversy, it became a privileged expression for those seeking to disrupt the well-established classes in private *salons*. For instance, Catherine de Clermont's *salon* in the sixteenth century hosted the poet and composer Baïf. Drawing social criticism from different milieux, *chanson* became a choice expression for discontent, while remaining highly regarded for its concision and relative sophistication.

In Paris in the eighteenth century, the genre of *mazarinades*, or satirical songs against Mazarin, attracted audiences from across the social spectrum. This *chanson* was also banned from outdoor and public performances, and found refuge in eating and drinking establishments, and in *caveaux*, or private singing organizations adapted from aristocratic *salons*. A few names of establishments have remained, such as the Gallet *caveau* and *Le Petit Café des Musicos*, both located in Paris[59]. By the time of the Revolution, elite artists and intellectuals were codifying music and songs to reflect the developments of the

Enlightenment spirit. In the decades preceding the Revolution, Paris rivalled Versailles as a cosmopolitan city and the King's Court was slowly losing its power to attract the best musicians[60]. In the new fashionable and private circles of the middle-class, then, as well as undercover in *caveaux* and *cafés*, elite songwriters and occasional artists from more low-class backgrounds composed and performed some critical and controversial *chansons*. Authors like Moncrif developed an attachment to the 'rational' and anti-clerical spirit of the time, and others were influenced by nascent romanticism and anti-industrialism. After the Revolution and despite a few short-lived lax policies, public song performances remained on the whole forbidden. During the nineteenth century, members of the male bourgeoisie opened private *caveaux* as well, where chanson became a mostly middle-class expression, combining the mastery of high-flown French with irreverent accounts of contemporary politics.

Back in the sixteenth century, a technique referred to as the 'Parisian' *chanson* had developed, using homorythmy as a favourite device, according to which the music strictly followed the rhythm of the lyrics (with breaks, pauses, repetitions), and highlighted thus the words' meanings. Originally composed as polyphonic, these songs gradually became more suitable for solo performances because of the relative ease in following the lyric and melodic structures. This was the form that the middle-classes evolved to receive as *chanson* in their homes, in cafés, and progressively in *cabarets*. Growing in parallel to the development of the popular music industry (see later), the combined skills of composing and performing solo grew to define the specificity of modern *chanson*. In addition to this technical evolution, the creation of a society for the protection of writers' copyrights, in 1851, enabled the new songwriting profession to emerge as a more or less lucrative business. With the Third Republic, bans on public songs were eventually lifted and *cabarets*, initially located in the Paris outskirts, hired professional singers and songwriters who performed their own creations.

Aristide Bruant (1851-1925) was a *cabaret* singer-songwriter who developed a gripping individual persona acknowledged today as the forerunner of contemporary *chanson*[61]. Himself an educated man, Bruant combined the skills of writing, composing and interpreting his songs, becoming the first renowned *auteur-compositeur-interprète* (henceforth *ACI*) of his time. The term *ACI* was coined for the artists responsible for their songwriting and performance, and although Bruant rarely played music on stage, he still wrote the orchestration of his accompanying brass band. This individual and 'multi-task' performance became recognized as the main feature of modern French *chanson*, and foreigners even noted it to be a national specificity. German artists, also performing in *Kabarett* at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century, remarked that the French could compose and sing their own songs, unlike themselves[62]. In parallel, during the nineteenth century, German Romanticism had developed the vision of the autonomous and individual 'genius', or of the unique creator in whom unconventionality and political 'resistance' originated. For German Romanticism, only individuality could stand for artistic 'authenticity'[63]. Influenced by this Romantic concept, it may be that French culture saw *chanson* as its crystallization, given its history of prohibition and undercover satire, and its emphasis on solo skills.

In addition, during the nineteenth century, the emerging discipline of medieval studies, influenced by Romanticism, started to examine the music practices of *troubadours* and *trouvères*, only to draw unjustified homologies between the songs' characters and their composers, presenting the latter as carefree vagabonds[64]. These researchers depicted the early *chansons* as invented by and performed by the lower classes, if not underclass marginals, which promulgated the idea that oppositional 'authenticity' was located in the margins of society. This vision simplified considerably the complexity of the genre's formation. In the nineteenth century, in fact, the bourgeoisie enjoyed 'mixing with the riff-raff' and enjoyed the *cabaret* performances of lusty and satirical artists who played with the ambiguous

expectations of this well-established audience[65]. Bruant had become famous by depicting "the twilight world of petty criminals", the 'marginal' urban life of resting sailors, poor drinkers and prostitutes, while himself and most of his audience were typically well-off educated people[66]. Other artistic figures of the time, including Emile Zola, combined a middle-class fascination for *réaliste* working-class backgrounds with 'radical' intellectual politics. In the 1920s and 1930s and taking after the fascination for 'popular' backgrounds, *réaliste* artists like Fréhel (1881-1951) enjoyed national success with the depiction of sordid stories involving similar lowly characters. French retro rock music would later re-appropriate this theme in the 1990s.

The 'authentic' identity of modern *chanson* also crystallized in contrast to the other main attraction of the time, music-halls. Influenced by Great Britain, they appeared in France in the 1880s and offered various shows including contortionists, magicians, strip-teasers and (occasionally) singers. Like *cabarets*, they attracted a mixed audience of middle and working-class people, but fierce competition between the different acts often meant that music-hall singers had to be quite crude to win their audience, often miming sexual gestures. In contrast to *chanson* acts performed on the smaller stages of *cabarets*, the music genre attached to music-halls was defined from the start as less refined, and grew to be called *variétés* in reference to the variety of performances. *Chanson* became by contrast identified with poetic skills and sophistication.

The soloist 'authenticity' of *chanson* developed further in the careers of the mid-twentieth-century *chanson à textes* artists, anchored in the *cabarets* of the Left Bank of Paris. Calvet underlines the fact that the *cabarets*' confined stages allowed room for single artists only, often accompanying themselves on the guitar. The invention of the microphone in the 1930s also allowed the singers' voice to be heard over their instruments, so that artists could then compose clever lyrics for the audience to pay greater attention to them[67]. These technical

determinants, combined with the poetic skills of *ACI*s, gave birth to the highly prestigious and relatively consensual *chanson à textes*, also sometimes called *chanson rive gauche*. The music writer Paul Garapon unproblematically wrote in 1999 that "la chanson française de l'après-guerre relève donc d'un genre à dominante poétique (...) emmené par des créateurs et un public exigeant de l'art une expression d'authenticité"[68]. The storylines of *chanson à textes*, or just *chanson* in contrast to *variétés*, projected images of 'marginality' and left-wing resistance to post-war conservatism. Fred Hidalgo, the editor of the first French monthly magazine dedicated to modern *chanson*, chose to illustrate the cover of his first issue with a picture of the 1950s' *ACI* artist Georges Brassens (1921-1981), justifying his move thus: "mettre l'accent sur l'essence même de celle-ci [la chanson], fière, anticonformiste, révoltée, libre!"[69]. In his enthusiasm, Hidalgo not only assumed that Brassens epitomized all these qualities, but also that *chanson*'s identity was reducible to 'rebellion' and 'anti-establishment'. Carefully selecting these terms, Hidalgo formulated a definition of French *chanson* as 'authentic' and performed what Morley and Robins would call a cultural 'invention'. What Hidalgo or Garapon produced at their individual levels of music journalists, and what other cultural actors today articulate about French rock music, is a particular sense of French popular music, and of French identity, as 'resistant' and 'authentic'.

The 'street' or 'social' fascination evoked above found more ground after the Second World War, when Communism acquired a high profile among many members of the French political and intellectual elite. The Left Bank *cabarets* were the home of Communist fellow-travellers and literary figures such as Sartre, and *chanson* in the 1950s, via singers like Juliette Gréco (born 1927), became affiliated with an intellectual counterculture and defined as an object with a 'message', a society to criticize and challenge. More generally, *chanson* became related to left-wing protest, as the anarchist declarations of Léo Ferré (1916-1993) and Brassens also showed[70]. From a conservative point of view, *chanson à textes* principally

represented a form of political vanguard which, although rarely party political, stood for cultural dissidence. The Adornian (and Marxist-influenced) conception of 'authenticity' thus settled in *chanson*, at the same time as the latter was a product of the music industry.

2. The State

The French state's relation to the (popular) arts is another factor in explaining French *chanson*'s acclaim as an 'authentic' product. During the Middle Ages, *troubadours* and *trouvères* composed mostly for the court, while the aristocracy and clergy determined trends in art. They allowed 'protest' or 'lowly' songs to be performed and in fact controlled artistic creation mostly in terms of money and prestige, by granting or not the security to play at the court[71]. It is equally important to stress that *chanson* was, from the start, a rather mobile Western European product, travelling with courts and merchants' networks from the Low Countries to Northern Italy. However, it was precisely in the context of developing international commerce that national politics emerged, and that desires for control over national boundaries, and over the expression of a common national identity through culture, made progress[72].

In the early sixteenth century, François 1er expressed the desire to set up a national music identity. The state became the main patron of the arts, in accordance with the Church, by granting privileges to musicians, instrument makers and music publishers. The latter edited song books and music sheets for the amateur singing practices of, mostly, the members of the more educated urban classes who could write and read music[73]. *Chanson* thus remained indirectly sponsored by the state's printing allocations. In the later part of the seventeenth century with Louis XIV, the unification of the territory progressed and national music was further controlled so as to reflect, rather exclusively, the tastes of the upper class. Italian operas were banned for a time, although French composers remained influenced by their neighbours, and Louis XIV created the *Académie Royale de Musique* with the purpose

of playing only pieces by Lully. These *Académies* had a few provincial branches aimed at training and recruiting artists for the King's (national) orchestra, in a fiercely centralized manner which would later evolve into the Jacobin policy of Republicanism. In the provinces, stage managers and artists had to play Lully's pieces and pay taxes for this privilege. On occasions, the King presided alone the competitions to recruit musicians for the national orchestra, so that the state's musical identity was almost dictated as one person's tastes. During that period, *chanson* chiefly became a vehicle for expressing one's reaction to state absolutism, attracting in turn the secular ideas of Enlightenment.

With the Revolution and the development of the republican ideal, new debates emerged regarding the function of cultural policy. The democratic ideal of the Revolution, symbolically transferred into the Republic, theoretically allowed one and all, provincial inhabitants and immigrants, to partake in republican citizenship[74]. The enlightened vision of the state would render culture accessible to all, notably through the national education system, and reach beyond distinctions between elites and minorities. In practice however, the state allowed its citizens to only partake in the culture of the dominant power, the upper classes. Therefore, from the monarchy through the Restoration to the Republic, state control over music offered little changes, mostly limiting its intervention to the conservation of 'high' culture or Fine Arts. As music *Académies* (with their royal connotations) were closed down, they were replaced by the similarly elitist and centralized system of *Conservatoires*, whose regional branches trained a select number of professionals for Parisian careers. Although *chanson* was well received in some bourgeois circles, it connoted the 'lower' classes and was deemed too 'popular' to receive state sponsorship.

Presumably guided by its 'revolutionary' heritage, the French republican state developed a problematic relationship to those cultural practices that seemed to promote political destabilization, as *chanson* did. While the state sought national cohesion and looked to integrate and promote a variety of cultural practices, it also needed to manage, and

sometimes support, potential disruptiveness. For instance, during the revolutionary decade, village *fêtes* were turned into republican collective festivities[75]. During the second half of the nineteenth century, village brass bands also served the purpose of republican cohesion by gathering the population together for national celebrations[76]. Yet, the French state offered no specific control of the population's *chanson* practices, except through the banning of its most irreverent pieces. It was only during the later part of the twentieth century that the French state dealt with popular music, justifying that gesture with complex rhetoric *vis-à-vis* its potential subversion (Chapter Two).

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *chanson* integrated the world of the leisure industry and private capital, but, with the development of the record industry, the state faced a second dilemma. The French Left, influenced by Marxism, believed in the corrupting power of the dominant (bourgeois) culture and wished to celebrate the cultural practices of the proletariat, also seeking to highlight the 'artificiality' of the culture industry[77]. The working class, however, happened to be mostly receptive to 'mass' culture, so that devising a policy for popular music was problematic, and in fact non-existent for the most part of the century. Even with the Popular Front in 1936, *chanson* was still considered as primarily a product of the leisure industry and, for this reason, was excluded from official subsidies. The government emphasized instead the arts that represented the preferred practices of the upper classes (opera, literature, classical music), and identified 'authentic' national creations with works of symbolic 'high' quality and greatness. We will see later how the cultural policy of the 1980s and 1990s re-tailored this idea to the needs of popular music. As the culture historian David Looseley noted about the inter-war period, "popular entertainments and the rising mass-cultural forms -talkies, 78 records, radio- attracted very little government attention at all"[78]. The democratic ideal of giving cultural access to all was turned on its head with the Popular Front's project to democratise 'high' culture, promoting a

wider local access to a restricted number of Fine Arts. For instance, the price of opera and theatre tickets was lowered for workers, and more museums opened in the provinces.

During the Vichy years, regional popular music attracted some state sponsorship for nationalist purposes, but this policy was later dropped because of its far-right connotations[79]. Thus, with De Gaulle appointing Malraux to the Ministry of *Affaires Culturelles* in his newly-organized Fifth Republic (1958), the democratisation of 'high' culture resumed with the objective to "rendre accessibles les oeuvres capitales de l'Humanité, et d'abord de la France, au plus grand nombre possible de Français"[80]. Malraux stood fiercely against the industrial exploitation of culture and considered that popular music should only be addressed by consumer society, not by the Ministry[81]. Music concerts other than those of classical music remained organized and paid for by private parties, whether *producteurs* or concert managers. In the 1950s and 1960s, while the popular music industry boomed, the state appeared increasingly at odds with the French population's practices. For instance, Malraux's encouragement of local and individual creation via the development of *Maisons de la Culture* (state-sponsored cultural centres and hereafter *MJCs*) was ill-adapted to the particularities of popular music. The all-seater *MJC*s could host classical concerts but not rock music performances where the public usually stood up[82]. De Gaulle (and Malraux's) idea of *la grandeur de la France*, or the concept of 'cultural exceptionalism', placed 'quality' only in 'high' products and was concerned only with the 'dominant' aspect of French culture, and not its *chanson*.

In spite of the state's conservative preoccupations, the May 1968 events endowed French popular music with a renewed 'authenticity' as an object of 'popular dissidence'. This date seemed to work as a landmark for the reaffirmation of French national identity as 'oppositional', a journalist noting that "c'est *naturellement* à partir de 1968 que les premières musiques insurgées bourgeonnent un peu partout en France" (my italics)[83]. The adverb drew hasty parallels between apparent musical 'insurrection' and May 1968, seemingly endorsing

the 'revolutionary' heritage of 1789. The example of the media reception of François Béranger (born in 1937) is a case in point. Béranger, who started singing in the aftermath of 1968, evoked in his folk-*chanson* songs the failures of capitalism and often played at political meetings and charity concerts. As a result, the *ACI* was regularly acknowledged as the spokeperson of 'dissent'[84]. However, when his first song 'Tranche de vie' was launched in 1969, nothing in it directly referred to 'the events': "je crois bien n'avoir jamais fait allusion à mai 68 dans mes chansons", he confessed in a 1980 interview. Béranger also insisted that, as a young man, he had received "une éducation de jeune bourgeois" and that, signing with CBS (Columbia) he was "partie du show-biz, et du show-biz tout court, c'est évident"[85].

Despite these nuances, the interviewer stubbornly assumed Béranger's '*anti-conformisme*', dwelling on the artist' so-called 'rebellious' past in the 1970s, linking his anti-capitalist complaints to May 1968 as a symbol of French 'oppositional' identity. In this instance, French *chanson* was invented as 'authentic' in contrast to the broad industry, and this despite the artist's own admission of being linked to that industry. This overlap of contradictory definitions is paralleled in the fact that opponents of the state (Béranger, May 1968 followers) and Gaullists alike held similar positions that sought to challenge international commerce and external economic pressures, whether in *chanson* or in politics. The notion of 'rebellion' was in both cases simplified and, in effect, 'invented' as a token of national pride for the State, and as a sign of reaction against economic and political authorities, including the State, for other groups.

During the 1970s, the French state gradually solicited contacts with the leisure industry, 'coopting' it as a means of practising national 'resistance' to international forces, and incidentally as a means to make money. Music and cinema consumption increased all through that decade and its recession[86]. The Giscard D'Estaing presidency (1974-1981) showed a timely interest in popular culture by commissioning the sociologist Michel De Certeau to devise a policy in favour of popular culture[87]. This decison echoed the

government's openness to economic neo-liberalism while hoping to retain a 'national' specificity in doing so. De Certeau's *action culturelle* was designed to take into account and financially support the plurality of practices composing France's cultures, wishing to shed the distinction, associated with De Gaulle, between 'high' and 'low' status. Different from Malraux's model of patrimonial culture, this cultural pluralism aimed at shifting the state's interest towards activities that had been considered marginal so far, and towards the local and 'creative' input of individuals. A plan for the support of popular culture in general, and including popular music in particular, was set up from 1973 to 1979, but only materialized after Mitterrand's election, as French rock music boomed. Spurred by a left-wing government, this cultural policy then combined the conflicting positions of expressing national autonomy, defending 'popular' practices, and following a liberal-economic model (Chapter Two).

3. The Industry

A brief look at how the record industry developed in France will now put into perspective the dual evolution of modern French *chanson* as both a commercial product and one with the aspiration to 'resist' capitalism. With the development of print, music publishing became in France a large business, often responding to the printers' best interests. Printers and publishers worked in partnership with clerical music masters (themselves recognized by the state) who proof-read copies and provided them with new 'official' artists whose work they could print. In order to keep their business going, they needed to comply with state demands but, as we noted earlier, they also took advantage of their position to print other works that sold well, including song books. The existence of pirate song publications was also attested very early on, so that state control was regularly challenged as well as accepted[88]. With the invention of recording techniques at the end of the nineteenth century, the publishing business entered into competition with record companies. The growing popularity of *chanson*

artists coincided with the organization of popular music into an industry and the development, in particular, of the role of *agents* as intermediaries between artists and stage managers[89]. Music-hall interpreters like Mistinguett (1873-1956) and *chanson* artists like Bruant already enjoyed a status equivalent to that of contemporary 'stars', making full use of national coverage via touring and record sales. Bruant was one of the first French artists to record songs in 1910, and epitomized the fact that his 'authentic' art, close to political subversion and full of literary qualities, also relied on the industry.

Although Edison's recording machines were American, the music industry was from the start an international affair, mostly coalescing around the USA, Germany and Great Britain, following the trends set in instrument-making a few decades earlier[90]. In order to remain competitive nationally, French companies merged with and were contracted by foreign companies. For instance, the French company Pathé exploited the license of the US company Columbia as early as 1896, setting up a combined business of images and sound recording, able to tie cinema with music media[91]. During the twentieth century, the music industry underwent numerous mergers, until the European market was mostly coordinated by a small number of US (Columbia) and British-owned (EMI) multinationals. These held 'national' branches in various countries which expanded their 'parent' markets, and controlled (but relied on) the local/national production. The paradox of the French music industry was then its dependence on foreign-owned companies for the expansion of its national music, twinning a discourse of protectionist resistance with the need for foreign structures and funds to boost national production.

In the inter-war period, multinationals kept expanding due to their connections with the wider entertainment industry, and the 'star system' developed as the possibility of exposing 'home' artists on the radio, in films and on records[92]. In France, Tino Rossi (1907-1983) was one of the most successful examples of *vedette* (star) in the 1930s, playing with his exotic Mediterranean physique in films like *Marinella* (1936) and recording songs with EMI

France. The multi-media exposure of stars also included, for music artists, the development of live performance. What had so far been the unique way of communicating music, either privately or in public, became integrated into the industry as part of a promotion process (see Bruant above). In Paris in the late 1930s, *ACIs* like Charles Trenet (1913-2001) or interpreters like Edith Piaf (1915-1963) were first noticed in *cabarets* and contracted by record companies, which arranged touring dates for them. It seems that in the 1950s, however, *chanson ACIs* like Georges Brassens, Barbara, and Jacques Brel, for instance, signed with various sub-branches of the major Polygram (Phillips and Phonogram), which revealed their disinterest in attaining structural autonomy. In addition, the largest French record company of the 1960s, Barclay, produced both the *variétés* star Johnny Hallyday and the *chanson* self-proclaimed anarchist, Léo Ferré[93]. In this respect, *chanson* differed very little from its mainstream counterpart *variétés* and the culture historian Paul Yonnet noted about these artists that "Il s'agit de chanteurs 'commerciaux' même s'ils ne sont pas vécus comme tels"[94].

Precisely, however, *ACIs* were experienced *as* non-commercial and *as* 'authentic' artists. Their 'authenticity' did not stand against the music industry as a whole, as 'independent' French rock music would later attempt to do. Rather, in the 1950s and 1960s, *chanson*'s 'authenticity' revolved around a broad opposition to the music genre of *variétés*. Coming from music-hall practices, *variétés* referred to music interpreters or 'pretty faces', whose acts were usually put together by producers who sought to maximize sales and profit by generating maximum media exposure in films, on TV (in expansion) and in magazines. In contrast to the time when records typically crowned an artist's career[95], *variétés* artists first put a record together with the help of producers and then looked for stage promotion. This 'commercial' music was designed to please the largest audience possible, and its artists seemed to accept the overt profit motivation of the industry. Corresponding to the well-spread Romantic view that technology led to falsity[96], *chanson* artists at least suggested challenging

that new system, which added to their perception as 'authentic' because of their literary devices, solo skills and left-wing political sympathy[97].

In the late 1950s, the arrival of rock music in the French landscape led to contradictory reactions, ranging from outrageous upheaval to welcome rejuvenation. In France, rock music stood in the wake of many previous foreign influences, from Italian tunes in the seventeenth century to German polkas around the 1850s, jazz, 'exotic' African dances and tango in the 1920s. Appreciating rock music's full use of the star system, French promoters and artists put together the genre of *Yéyé*, cover versions with French-lyrics of songs of Gene Vincent, Elvis Presley and the like, or French songs closely inspired by these. *Yéyé* artists were exposed in the early 1960s on radio programmes, in the press, on TV and on stage, covering all media possible and becoming the epitome of successful stars, playing a music designed to make immediate profits for/from a new and young audience (*yéyé* being an early 1960s trend of *variétés*). Johnny Hallyday (born 1943) was the first singer to become a rock idol in France, presenting to a mass audience the first example of youth 'rebellion'[98]. In the USA, rock music's association with youth as a distinctive and newly-created consumer cluster led to reservations about its 'rebellious' aspirations[99]. In France too, *yéyé* received much criticism for its commercial connotations and a French journalist recently qualified it as "en réalité de la variété pour les jeunes, sur des rythmes binaires, avec de la guitare électrique", the term '*jeune*' being discredited because of its association with *variété*[100]. Nonetheless, this statement assumed that in France, where *chanson* was the 'official' protest genre when rock music arrived, the reception of a 'good' anti-authority and non-commercial music was the privilege of a 'literary' audience, of listeners relating apparently more 'seriously' to the music. It is possible to see here the lack of a distinct 'protest' *youth* culture in France, a point we will come back to when we tackle the issue of age and generation (Chapter Four).

In contrast to the French and commercial *Yéyé*, 'original' Anglo-American rock was received in France with the status of an 'authentic' music challenging conservatism and 'the mainstream'. Because Anglo-American rock was preceded by a violent reputation, however unjustified, it was broadcast very little in France on mainstream radio. Instead, it was broadcast through pirate radio programmes (like the British Radio Caroline transmitting in the North of France) and publicized through the written press. The music press had, in France, developed a tradition of monthly publications, allowing for a lengthy, semi-elitist, critical style, and French magazines like *Best* and *Rock & Folk* illustrated the fact that, as Philippe Teillet put it, "l'écrit a été, en France, la forme privilégiée d'accès et de participation au monde du rock"[101]. As for jazz before[102], and in a similar approach to *chanson*'s poetic skills, Anglo-American rock music in France became invested with 'authenticity' because of its literary journalism and rather marginal diffusion. Integrating this 'rebel rock' identity, French *chanson* evolved in the 1970s as a welcome crossover, with Jacques Higelin's clever lyrics and angry electric guitar characterized as defining the first attempt at "un rock authentiquement français"[103].

Although punk appeared as a "quintessentially British affair" for Malcolm McLaren[104], its impact in France, with a slight time-lag, proved rather durable. Punk in France renovated and solidified the discourse on 'authenticity' within popular music and pushed French audiences to explore further their national concern with 'dissident' music. Punk innovated in presenting the DIY ethos of playing rock music faster and with less sophistication, breaking down rules of musicality and even of virtuoso qualities existing in rock before (Jimi Hendrix). Punk's physical expression on stage and provocation with hurtful accessories seemed to express anger in the face of authoritarian or conservative societies, and gave flesh to a 'counterculture' that criticized a supposedly alienating consumer society. Of course, individual DIY reflected capitalist individualism, and the expression of 'dissidence' in punk bands was mediated by music majors. The Clash were produced by Columbia, the

British branch of the US major, and the Sex Pistols were produced by Virgin, a label not as big as it would later be, but already a company with diverse interests[105]. The first attempts at a French punk music, such as those by Trust and Starshooter, were short-lived because they had, by common retrospective consent, lacked coherence by remaining produced by large companies (respectively Polygram and Columbia). Commenting on the 1980s Manchester music scene, Dave Haslam suggested that techno music only took off in Britain around 1982-83, "once the authority of the punk generation began to wane"[106]. In France however, the early 1980s witnessed attempts at making more 'authentic' punk music than this first wave, summarized under the experience of *rock alternatif*. The term *rock alternatif* refers to the early steps of French rock music from the early 1980s onwards roughly to 1989, and is inseparable from the idea of commercial autonomy as explored in 'independent' music labels.

In Chapter Two, we examine how these fragile structures were significant in the reinvention of a sense of 'authenticity' in French popular music, while adapting it to a new hybrid genre composed of Anglo-American rock music and taking in its *chanson* heritage. In the 1990s, the 'independent' labels of early *rock alternatif* crumbled and/or changed, so that it became impossible to speak of that specific music genre anymore. However, throughout the last decade, many French bands pursued the musical hybridity originating in *rock alternatif*, as well as carried out the ideology of 'alternativity' in a more complex environment. The term *rock français* today, or French rock music, connotes 'difference', 'resistance' and 'authenticity'. The genre has obtained national recognition, and has become gradually confined to special sections in Fnac record shops, such is its reputation and seemingly fixed, or easily understandable, 'alternative' identity[107]. The cultural connotations of French rock music, with their roots in the history of 'authenticity' in French popular music, is the focus of this thesis.

E. Chapter Outline

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the cultural assumptions related to the notion of 'authenticity' in French rock music, by situating the genre at the interface of industrial, media and political interests, including its reception by audiences. The French rock music culture is thus understood as an interactive process, as the practice of various actors in creating its so-called 'alternative' production, distribution and consumption. The focus is the late 1980s until 2001. Chapter Two maps out the private and public material determinants that contributed to the production of French rock music. Exploring the intricacies of the music business in France, this chapter firstly argues that the production of 'alternative' rock music covers conflicting zones of interests and that the 'alternative' meanings attributed to the genre are related to external economic pressures. We bring out these ambiguities by using interviews with producers and artists. Secondly, the chapter interrogates the influence of the French state in musical creation. Since 1981, the French Ministry of Culture has regularly sponsored rock bands in a policy of 'resistance' to the American-lead global music industry. This had the ambivalent result of calling into question French rock's autonomy, and professionals uttered diverse opinions on how to deal with this apparent 'cooption'. Case studies of sponsorship of French rock music highlight how state control of cultural institutions contributed to building up a specific 'national' identity.

Chapter Three accentuates questions of national identity. In the 1980s, *rock alternatif* was acknowledged as the first 'authentic' form of French rock music, although it assimilated US rock to the national background of *chanson*. This chapter shows how, by challenging traditional identities while taking pride in the creation of a new national genre, French rock music seemed to echo the contradictory relations of France with the USA in the last two decades. Another issue arises in looking at retro rock, the 1990s trend branching out of *rock alternatif* which gained success by relying on *néoréalisme*, the myth of urban marginality and nostalgia. Using musicological analysis of songs and media discourse, we reveal that retro

rock music attempts to use a nationalist nostalgia for 'humanism' to formulate a contemporary identity of universal 'resistance'. Finally, we look at *rock métissé*, which appears to challenge national identity by including 'world' influences in its hybrid music. While it reflects contemporary debates about immigration policies and 'anti-globalization' struggles, *rock métissé* also exposes the limits of the French Republic in dealing with multiculturalism. The problematics of nostalgia and *métissage* are also the opportunity to raise questions about France's postmodern identity.

Chapter Four considers the reception of French rock music by audiences and locates them in their social, cultural and educational backgrounds. For this purpose, we interviewed various music fans at French concerts and festivals during the summers of 1999 and 2000, and our analysis of music consumption is based on methods of discourse analysis derived from audience research on films. This chapter examines the daily practices and the 'imaginary meanings' of these audiences who try to make sense of a shifting 'anti-commercial' object. Revealing contradictions in their formulation of a 'non-mainstream' identity in opposition to other 'taste' groups, we also define their social, generational and racial backgrounds.

Finally, Chapter Five focuses on the ideology of festivity and on audience participation in concerts and festivals, as French rock music considers live performance as an 'alternative' strategy to radio and TV broadcast. However, with the recognition that music festivals have boomed in the last twenty years, and often with state sponsorship, concerts prove a perfect place to investigate further contradictions. With Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, we explore how festivals could become, in the audiences' experience, 'special' moments contrasting with their everyday lives. Mikhael Bakhtin's theory of the carnival helps us to analyse these musical celebrations in terms of physical liberation (or otherwise) of participants, and to focus on their ability to express a 'serious' project of resistance during the 'unbound' time of festivals.

[1] *Télérama* 2667, 21/02/01; they played for the *Fête de la Musique* in the Jardins du Palais Royal on 21/06/01; *Chamboultou* (1998) and *Gratte-Poil* (2000) each exceeded, in summer 2001, the French Gold record limit of 100,000 copies sold.
[2] *Télérama* 2667, pp.56-59.
[3] "Comment expliquer cette ferveur? C'est là sans doute une certaine authenticité qui est récompensée. (...) La salle est inquiète que le succès lui vole ses vedettes", *Libération* 13/03/2001.
[4] Bourdieu, 1979, p.52. A point developed in Chapter Five.
[5] Interviewed in La Rochelle, *Francofolies* festival, July 1999.
[6] *Libération*, 05/03/02. *Télérama* second-best selling magazine after Paris-Match.
[7] Alex Meunier, 'Du Rififi chez les indépendants', 1998.
[8] David Morley and Kevin Robins, 'Spaces of Identity", 1989.
[9] *Ibid*, p.15.
[10] Philippe Teillet, 'La politique du rock', 1993; Paul Garapon, 1999, p.90.
[11] See Saka et Plougastel, *La chanson française et francophone*; Gilles Verlant, *L'Encyclopédie du rock français*.
[12] Marc Robine, *Anthologie de la chanson française*, p.9.
[13] Lucien Rioux in Kernel (ed), *Chanter Made in France*, 1987, p.11.
[14] Fred Hidalgo, *Putain de Chanson*; Kernel, *ibid.*
[15] Jean-Marie Séca, *Vocations Rock*, p.38.
[16] Ludovic Tournès, introduction to *De l'acculturation du politique au multiculturalisme,* 1999, pp.13-56.
[17] François Gasnault, *Guinguettes et Lorettes*.
[18] Philippe Grimbert, *Psychanalyse de la chanson*, 1996.
[19] Antoine Hennion, 'The Production of Success; An Antimusicology of the Pop Song' (1983), *On Record*, Frith and Goodwin (eds), pp.185-206. Hennion's research was carried out between 1977 and 1980.
[20] Peter Hawkins, *Chanson,* 2000, p.6
[21] Peter Hawkins, 'How do you write about *chanson?*', 1993, pp.69-79 (79).
[22] Louis-Jean Calvet, *Chanson et Société*, 1981, p.101.
[23] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 1990.
[24] Richard A.Peterson, 'Popular Music is Plural', 1997, p.55.
[25] Gary Burns, *Popular Music and Society*, 1997, p.130.
[26] Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Outta here*, 1992.
[27] Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom,* 2000, p.7.
[28] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music,* 1995, p.88.
[29] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil*, 1993.
[30] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1991 [1983], p.43.
[31] Keith Negus gives the example of anti-mechanization protests in sixteenth century Spain when the guitar was invented. Luth players thought that this 'popular' instrument was robbing music of its complexity and of its authenticity. Negus, *Producing Pop*, 1992, p.32.
[32] Max Paddison, *Adorno,* 1996, p.28.
[33] Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 1976, "culture".
[34] Theodor Adorno, 'On the fetish character of music', 1938, and 'On Popular Music', in *On Record*, 1990 [1941]. Recently, the works of Philip Rosen and Max Paddison have made it possible to take stock of Adorno's pioneering steps in the study of music and to put into perspective his allergy to the 'culture industry'. See Robert W.Witkin: *Adorno on Music*, 1998; Richard Middleton, 1990.
[35] Adorno quoted in Witkin, *ibid*, p.164.
[36] Adorno's conception of 'authenticity' is retold as the "valorization of traditional modernist high art as the locus of some genuinely critical and subversive, 'autonomous' aesthetic production", which Jameson sees as manichean and limited. Fredric Jameson, 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture', 1979, p.14.
[37] Paddison, 1996, p. 95.
[38] *Ibid*, pp.67-68. See 'Adorno, Popular Music and Mass Culture', pp.81-105.
[39] Middleton, 1990, p.34; Frith and Goodwin (eds), *On Record*, 1990, p.276. All reckon they owe a great debt to Adorno, although they criticize part of his method and findings.
[40] Adorno, 1941.
[41] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', 1992 [1968].
[42] Paddison, 1996, p.18.
[43] Benjamin, 1992, p.220. For Benjamin, the 'aura' was the principally visual relationship between viewer and work of art that secured a respectful distance (aura) to the unique object. Its awesome characteristic qualified art for cult and ritualistic purposes, p.225, and note 5 p.245.
[44] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture*, 1979.

[45] David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 1995, p.23.
[46] Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 1990. His research was twinned with that of two other scientists and first published in 1980, after several publications of extracts between 1975 and 1979.
[47] *Ibid*, p.247.
[48] Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction,* 1979, p.10. Pages devoted to popular music: 64-65.
[49] *Ibid*, p.65. These statistics were established with a list of singers from which members of various social groups, identified from their educational background and their father's profession, had to choose their favourite.
[50] Stuart Hall (ed), *Representation*, 1997: "Music is 'like a language' in so far as it uses musical notes to communicate feelings and ideas, even if these are very abstract, and do not refer in any obvious way to the 'real world'", p.5.
[51] Jameson, 1992, p.14. On how people make sense of the world around them through behaviours and practices, and with thoughts and emotions, see Stanley Fish's concept of 'interpretive communities', in Cruz and Lewis (eds), *Viewing, Reading, Listening*, 1994, p.270.
[52] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 1985.
[53] Virginia Nightingale, *Studying Audiences*, 1996, p.145.
[54] Morley and Robins, 1989.
[55] *Ibid,* p.15, referring to Patrick Wright.
[56] See the Literature Review above. Marc Robine considers that French *chanson* is traditionally "la culture du pauvre".
[57] "Chanson", "France" and "troubadour" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001.
[58] "Chanson" in *New Grove Dictionary*, and see Chapter Two on the state.
[59] Calvet, 1981.
[60] McClary, 2000.
[61] Hawkins on Bruant, 2000, pp.68-73.
[62] "Chanson" in *New Grove Dictionary*, quoting H.Ewers.
[63] On German Romanticism and its individual genius in Europe in late nineteenth century see McClary, 200, p.111.
[64] "Troubadour", in *New Grove Dictionary*.
[65] "An element of provocative artistic statement was the essence of cabaret during its heyday", *New Grove Dictionary*, "cabaret", vol.5 p.763.
[66] Bruant came from a middle-class family from the province and arrived in Paris to train as an apprentice jeweller. Hawkins, 2000, p.178.
[67] Calvet,1981.
[68] Garapon, 1999, p.97.
[69] Hidalgo,1991, p.110.
[70] For a commentary on the anarchist politics of Brassens and Ferré, see Hawkins and Chris Tinker's thesis (1999).
[71] Churches did not exclusively serve for sacred purposes, and the Court welcomed bawdy and obscene songs.
[72] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*,1991.
[73] In Paris, the Ballard family had the monopoly over music publishing during the seventeenth century, taking commands from the King for classical music and printing collections of drinking and dancing *chansons*. By the end of the eighteenth century, 150 engravers were registered in Paris. *New Grove Dictionary*, "France", p.151.
[74] E.J. Hobsbawm: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 1990.
[75] Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire,* 1976.
[76] Tournès on *fanfares*, 1999.
[77] See David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun,* 1995 ; David Hanley, *May 1968*, 1989.
[78] Looseley, *ibid,* p.13.
[79] *Ibid*, p.20.
[80] Quoted in Mario D'Angelo, *Socio-économie de la musique en France*, 1997, p.107.
[81] Looseley, 1995, p.26.
[82] Teillet, 1993, p.77.
[83] 'Made in France', *Les Inrockuptibles* n°206, juillet 1999, p.58.
[84] "[Béranger] symbolisa les espoirs d'une bonne partie de la génération nourrie de mai 1968", *La Chanson française et francophone*, p.142.
[85] Hidalgo, 1991, p.196 and p.204.
[86] Gérard Mermet, *Francoscopie 1999*, p.379.
[87] One witnessed "la progression continue des préoccupations culturelles des pouvoirs publics", Ory,1983, p.243.
[88] "France", *New Grove Dictionary*, p.151.
[89] *'Agents'*, soon to become an equivalent to the record companies 'A&R' people. See *New Grove* for their origins in France.

[90] By 1870, France's exports in piano-making fell dramatically due to new markets in Germany and the USA, while its imports had to increase ("France", *New Grove*).
[91] Negus, 1992. Gildas Lefeuvre, *Le producteur de disques*, 1998, pp.8-15.
[92] Negus gives the example of Bing Crosby as the first international star, *ibid*, p.24.
[93] Ferré composed an ironic song whose chorus went "Monsieur Barclay m'a demandé, Léo Ferré, j'veux un succès" ('Monsieur Barclay', 1965).
[94] Paul Yonnet, *Jeux, Modes et Masses*, 1985. Brassens and Aznavour mentioned p.193.
[95] See Calvet, 1981, for the inversion of the stage to record pattern.
[96] Negus (1992) notes that "the argument that musical technologies are in some way false and lead to a decline in the skills of music making, accompanied by a nostalgia for what was seen as more real and authentic, is not new and has recurred throughout the history of European music", p.33. The 'invention of authenticity' is attested in all music styles. Richard Middleton (1990) notes that "critics, fans and musicians have joined in these attempts to construct their own preferred music as a 'pure' alternative to the 'commercial manipulations' of the mainstream, and almost every variety of Afro-American and Country music, jazz, rock and now 'roots' or 'world' music styles has been construed as a new 'folk' genre", p.140; see David Brackett (1995) on Hank Williams.
[97] The use of literary comparisons to account for *chanson*'s emphasis on lyrics has created a divide between seemingly 'pure' artistic commitments and more money-minded ones in the case of *variétés*. It has also insisted on a high and low culture distinction within popular music. Ory (1983) relates the anecdote that the publishing company Seghers printed the lyrics of Brel, Brassens and Ferré in its 'poetry' section, while record compilations were sometimes entitled *oeuvres complètes* as in literature, p.84.
[98] *La chanson française et francophone*, p.266-71.
[99] Grossberg, 1992; Serge Denisoff in *Solid Gold* (1975) also calls popular music "an idiom of the young", p.29.
[100] *Chanson française et francophone*, p.448.
[101] Teillet, 1993, p.77.
[102] For a similar presentation of jazz in France through Hugues Panassié's *Hot Club* magazine in the 1930s, see Ludovic Tournès, *New Orleans sur Seine*, 1999.
[103] Yonnet, 1985, p.200; Ory, 1983, p.209 for similar credits; and Ory p.34 for Maxime Le Forestier 'logically' juxtaposing American folk to French *chanson*.
[104] Interview of Malcolm McLaren for Channel Four's programme Top Ten on Punk, broadcast 04/02/2000. McLaren was the producer and manager of the Sex Pistols.
[105] On punk music, see Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 1985, and Colegrave and Sullivan, *Punk: A Life Apart*, 2001
[106] Dave Haslam, *Manchester, England*, 1999, p.157.
[107] In Fnac shops the *rock français* sections were created around 1995-1996.

II. The Production of French Rock Music: Private and State Determinants

A. The French Music Industry

As Morley and Robins argue that cultural institutions shape the 'imagined' community of a nation[1], so we believe that the organization of the French music industry, under private ownership and often in partnership with state-funded projects, shapes particular perceptions of the French nation. Within French popular music, the genre of French rock conveys an image of 'difference' based on the notions of 'authenticity', 'resistance' and 'seriousness', which certain music producers, media, artists and state officials recognize and promote as such. We saw in Chapter One that this identity was however not unique, and stood in the wake of previous musical trends as much as it was determined by the development of industrial and political factors. In the 1980s, however, French rock music developed in exclusive connection with 'independent' production labels, or labels attempting an autonomous management from the concentrated forces of the industry. The combination of artistic and 'serious' interests with an 'autonomous' structural back-up justified the designation of French rock music as *rock 'alternatif'*, at least for a little while. This chapter firstly examines the material context behind French rock music's development in the 1980s and 1990s, and its progression to an 'alternative' culture within the music industry. Secondly, we explore the cultural measures that the French state developed since 1981 which contributed to boosting and asserting this cultural identity.

1. The French Music Market

In the twentieth century, the music industry has been organized as an international business of sound recording companies continuously merging with one another. In the late 1970s, with the emergence of the Japanese competitor Sony, further acquisitions forced the existence of a new deal in Europe, dividing the music industry between five multinational

companies, called majors. For the period of our study, the majors have fairly consistently been the following: Polygram/Universal (USA)[2], Warner (USA), EMI (GB), BMG (Germany) and Sony (Japan). Altogether, these majors lead the music industry in the world, and their profits amounted to 40 billion FF in 1995, after a steady increase since the 1980s when CDs were commercialized[3]. Figures for 1998 showed that the global turnover of the music industry represented 38 billion FF, the Americans of Universal leading the market with Sony following closely behind, respectively with 6.46 and 6.08 billion FF in 1997. For the period of our study, these majors have constantly led the French market, representing around 90% of all artists produced and sold in France. The other 10% is left to what is called the 'independent' sector (see table in appendix). Universal was bought by the French conglomerate Vivendi in 2000, which shifted the distribution of foreign and national forces on the French territory, but the reactions of French rock artists to majors have remained similar, as we will explore below[4]. The turnover of the French music industry (the French branches of majors and the independent sector) has been on the increase since the 1980s, reaching 7.6 billions FF in 1998, or 20% of the global market, and putting France at fifth place in terms of music units sold[5]. Whatever the nationality of their chairmen, majors find it in their interest to protect and boost French artists, whether 'alternative' or not.

Music majors are now part of immense conglomerates which have interests in areas as diverse as water supply, transports, the clothing industry, recycling, and, more relevant to this study, media and telecommunications. Just as early music companies owned the licences of recording techniques (image and sound), so today's majors have achieved a synergy between all aspects of the development of an artist, including soft and hardware (CDs, CD-Roms, cassettes, vinyls and pressing plants), recording equipment and studios, and the possibility of advertising and distributing artists via contracted media and contracted retailers (TV, radio, the press, music shops and e-commerce)[6]. This has ensured the vast concentration and control, in the hands of a few, of the multi-media star system. The period

of our study witnessed the growth of this convergence of power, and witnessed a growing reaction to it too. However, the analysis of the music industry as a complex system does not allow for manichean conclusions to be drawn. 'Resistance' to majors is not futile, but it is always problematic and enmeshed in personal and conflicting interests, which echo the equally complex configuration of majors.

In order to understand the organization of the music industry in France, and the hold of majors there, one needs to look at the music sold[7]. The French music market, managed in its vast majority by foreign majors (up until 2000), has had a complex relationship to foreign music, at times dominating the national market. Since 1998, the proportion of French music bought by French consumers has increased: in the Top Ten sales for that year, 7 French or francophone albums were charted, while French and francophone albums amounted to 54% of the best 50 albums sold. This proportion was a noticeable increase from the 34% of 1996[8], but it reached above the symbolic 50% with difficulty. Given the long-time implantation of majors in France, and the unequal divide over musical production in terms of national ownership, it is striking that French artists still manage to be as representative as they are. However, these figures highlight that foreign companies sell their (mostly Anglo-American) products very successfully in France. The strength of the French music market is thus ambivalently dependent on, and at times protectionist against, the foreign majors.

At the turn of the 1980s, the French music profession witnessed the intensive purchase of national labels by majors. In 1978, Barclay was sold to Polygram; in the mid-1980s, the French label Trema sold 15% of its shares to Sony for the production and to EMI for the distribution; in 1992, BMG bought the French label Vogue, last of the large national labels[9]. This situation has caused recurring alarm in certain areas of the French profession, and during the 1980s in particular, when concentration among majors rapidly increased, the French music business expressed its unease and fear of losing national artistic 'integrity'. The question of national identity merged with that of defense of 'quality', as majors appeared

to put to the fore the sole motivation of short-term profit. The charts system, appearing in 1984 in France and imported from Britain and the States, was in this sense highly revealing of national(ist) preoccupations.

The French hit-parade, called *Top 50*, was the initiative and property of the private radio Europe 1 which sold broadcasting rights to the private TV channel Canal Plus and to the weekly TV guide Télé 7 Jours. It was established thanks to the survey agency Nielsen which, from a ready-made list suggested by majors, phoned contracted record retailers to know their best sales of the previous week[10]. The *Top 50* brought out into the open the profit motives of the music business as it advertised on the radio, on TV and in the press the already best-selling products and encouraged their further consumption. It did not consult independent producers or independent record retailers. For some worried commentators, the grasp of the foreign and commercial system on national *chanson* revealed itself as threatening and 'vile'. For the music journalist Brigitte Kernel, "Les Top 50 et autres ersatz de réussite faussent les jugements. Le 'cousu sur mesure' de l'époque ne fait plus qu'éroder la valeur intrinsèque d'une chanson, d'un auteur"[11]. The journalist took for granted the existence of an essence in songs, presumably violated by the exclusive consideration of commercial results. She also implied that, so far, French *chanson* had put aside business requirements, which was obviously not the case (Chapter One, p.45). For the journalist Fred Hidalgo, the birth of the charts in France "fut le début d'une longue traversée du désert pour l'ensemble des artistes authentiques, pour qui la chanson est d'abord la forme aboutie d'une incontournable urgence d'exprimer"[12]. He too reduced the history of music-making to the existence of an uncontrolled, physical need (*'urgence d'exprimer'*), opposing a 'natural' discourse to industrialization and mystifying, indeed inventing, *chanson* as 'authentic'. In response to the concentration of media, these journalists expressed their defense of national integrity in a discourse already analysed as 'authentic' and coming across as rather moralist.

We will see below to what extent the question of national 'defense' fitted into the projects of French independent *producteurs* to remain distant from this media synergy.

The charts system also revealed the overwhelming success of French *variétés* in France, illuminating for the first time and for all consumers what were the overall tastes of the 'nation'. Some fifteen years after its introduction, in 1998, it transpired that Michel Sardou, a notoriously right-wing *ACI* who has been around since 1965, was quoted spontaneously as the favourite male singer of the French (produced by Trema/Sony)[13]. Although a singer-songwriter, Sardou has been affiliated to 'mainstream' music for his innumerable chart successes and his overt reactionary positions. In the same survey, the favourite female singer of the French appeared to be Céline Dion, her Canadian nationality rating her both as the favourite francophone and foreign artist. The success of *variétés* as the best-liked genre of the French was confirmed by another 1998 review about the best-selling French and francophone artists, in France and in the world. In France, the best-selling artists for that year were the cast of Notre Dame de Paris, Johnny Hallyday being the French artist the most broadcast on French radios. In the world, the best-selling francophone artists were Céline Dion, Richard Clayderman and the musical Notre Dame de Paris, all embodying an approach to music that is not that of French rock, and which suggests a rather conventional, even conservative, general national taste.

In contrast to this apparent 'swamping' of *variétés* in France, some music journalists have offered to locate 'resistance' and 'authenticity' in *chanson*, as we saw above. In the 1980s too, the emerging genre of French rock music offered to regenerate the 'quality' of *chanson* by mixing it with foreign genres, and to back it up in 'independent' music labels. Varied and fluctuating in sizes and profits, the French 'independent' sector gathers 900 to 1000 labels, and possibly many more which have escaped statistics because of their irregular or ephemeral activity[14]. Overall, these independent labels manage the production of artists independently from majors, but often for different if not opposed reasons. One aspect of their

identity is that, although they occasionally produce foreign artists, their means of production are in effect 'French'. This configuration explains why the French state has often kept an eye on its independent sector, which is largely overwhelmed by majors in terms of market shares. State measures for the protection of the music industry are studied later in this chapter.

Theoretically, independent labels are small firms of one to five hundred employees (*Petite et Moyenne Entreprise*, henceforth *PME*), focused on a specific music niche and with a small turnover rarely exceeding 45 million FF[15]. Majors, on the other hand, produce artists from all possible music styles (including French rock), and their turnovers are expressed in billion FF[16]. Boucherie Production, for instance, is a French independent label dedicated to rock music (in the widest sense), structured around 6 employees and claiming a turnover of 9.5 million FF in 1998[17]. It is one of the rare examples of successful 'independent' labels. Conversely, Musisoft is another French 'independent' set up in 1998 by the ex-general manager of Sony France, and is not dedicated to any music genre in particular. It pays 110 employees and its internal management as well as its turnover are similar to those of a major's (200 million FF in 1999). It is therefore crucial to keep in mind that there are structural disparities among French independent labels, even if the majority of them are fairly small.

Whereas majors deal with all the development stages of an artist, including publicity and retail distribution, French independent labels usually deal with only one aspect of an artist's production. This traditionally includes either the recording of albums in the case of an independent production label, or developing contacts with media and retailers in the case of a distribution label. There are few French independent distributors (Scalen) and, because distribution is a crucial phase in the commercialization of artists, French independent production labels (*producteurs*) almost always need to contact majors, at one stage or another for the distribution of their artists[18]. It is thus virtually impossible to evaluate the financial weight of French independent production and distribution alone, and most existing

figures include the independent *producteurs* who have dealt with majors for their distribution. In the professional organ *L'Année du disque,* the total French independent production for 1998 amounted to 30% of the French market, but that year saw the unusual and phenomenal success of two independent labels, Atmosphériques and Pomme, for their respective successes with the bands Louise Attaque and Notre Dame de Paris. Diametrically polarized in terms of cultural identity (see below), the two bands were distributed by majors, respectively Sony and Polygram. It appears meaningless, then, to consider the French independent sector as a single or static unit[19]. Besides, majors are relatively fragile and often take risks in producing unknown artists, their strength residing in their diversity, as one artist's success compensates for another's failure[20].

Nonetheless, nearly all the artists of early French rock music in the 1980s, called *rock alternatif,* sought to develop their music through independent labels. As Gildas Lefeuvre remarked, in his study of the French music industry, "les labels rock (Boucherie Production, Bond Age...) représentent un sous-ensemble plus homogène, de par leurs problématiques spécifiques"[21]. He did not elaborate on what these particularities might be, but at least pointed to the convergence of interests between playing rock music in France and the desire to produce it in 'special' structures. Below are examples of the links between this new music genre and its formal back-up in labels, which elaborated a common identity perceived as 'alternative' at the same time as it bore internal conflicts that weakened its durability.

There are no sources to locate when and where the expression '*rock alternatif*', in relation to French rock music, first appeared. According to the *Télérama* journalist Philippe Barbot, the adjective '*alternatif*' may have been the gallicization of the American 'alternative', used since the 1970s to refer not just to a music genre but also to a cultural network, including charts and radio shows. Its difference or 'otherness' ('*alter*') was established in contrast to the concentration of most media in the hands of a few owners, a situation which offered an alternative choice to consumers[22]. In connection with this, the

term took on anti-conformist characteristics which involved criticism of tight capitalist media control, and usually had left-wing connotations. In France, the qualifier *'alternatif'* appeared in the 1980s about the rock music genre that was initially, and exclusively, produced under 'independent' labels. The term bore similar connotations by encompassing a music genre with the cultural and economic networks that helped its diffusion, and which tried to step aside from the more profit-making, or neo-liberal, music structures.

2. *Case Studies of* Rock Alternatif (1980s)

a) Bérurier Noir and Bondage

"C'est très tentant de mythifier cette époque", recalled Jean-Yves Prieur about the mid-1980s when his production label, Bondage, was deemed by professionals and audiences the most 'radical' organization in the French music industry[23]. There is in retrospect a certain idealization of this period, when *rock alternatif* seemed to be the only musical expression in France seeking autonomy both from national *variétés* and from the domination of the majors. Bondage was initially set up as the non-profit making music association of a few friends (under the 1901 law[24]), that turned semi-professional in 1984 when the French punk band Les Brigades, sponsored by the association, achieved reasonably good sales. With this small success, revenues were injected into the production of other bands, and among these, the group Bérurier Noir gradually rose to fame, putting the label and its 'alternative' music culture on the national map. Bondage (the label) and Bérurier Noir (the band) established the music culture of *rock alternatif* as the fusion of a left-wing political message with economic independence in production. Prieur claimed that the label's motivation was turned towards artistic and political choices, not direct profits: "mes modèles c'était Alternative Tentacles et Crass Records: des labels qui défendaient une musique rigoureuse, sans cesse renouvelée, mais qui s'appuyaient aussi sur une base politique sérieuse". For instance, Alternative

Tentacles was the American label of the band Dead Kennedys, whose leader Jello Biaffra represented a form of confrontational and 'radical' politicization, going to court on one occasion for a shocking record sleeve[25]. Bondage's 'alternative' identity lay in holding moral principles such as 'rigour' and 'seriousness', which alone seemed to allow for the challenge to the *status quo* in the industry. These terms are very reminiscent of Adorno's expression of intellectual challenge as 'authenticity'. Similarly for Marsu, another founding member, "notre envie était de faire exister les groupes de manière autonome, de proposer un système sans concession suffisamment solide et efficace pour éviter le circuit normalisé"[26]. In his discourse, structural autonomy mirrored the hopes of avoiding the profit strategy of the mainstream media, radio and TV, so that the label explored ways, eventually, to sap the official broadcast system. Its method was to develop stage concerts and to sell records to the public directly afterwards, without the help of distributors or records retailers. The fragility of the system, as well as the small number of its staff and the 'team spirit' of the project, identified them as being in opposition to the majors' system. This discourse was fairly innovative as previous anti-corporate French bands like Trust of Starshooter had been supported by majors (Chapter One, p.48).

Overall, Bondage boasted an 'organic' or 'natural' approach to its business, a 'low-key' and more human identity than the major's big machinery. The 'organic' approach is a term used by Keith Negus in his study of the Anglo-American music industry, where he remarks that the A&R staff often justified signing artists 'on a hunch', with more 'gut feelings' than the traditional approach to marketing, which aimed at immediate profits. By contrast, Negus qualifies the latter as 'synthetic'[27]. He adds that the 'organic' approach to music production derives from the Romantic ideology of artistic 'genuineness', implying that experts would be 'naturally' drawn to 'authentic' art. He admits the total mystification at stake in this discourse, which contributes to establishing neat but abstract dichotomies between presumably 'authentic' and 'co-opted' cultures. Negus also analyses the distinction

between 'organic' and 'synthetic' as a typical "rock [music] prejudice", as he stresses the snobbish superiority of certain rock music professionals in producing such discourse[28]. In Bondage, this discourse was partly justified by the practical 'hardship' of promoting Bérurier Noir (and other bands) with little investment and almost no media coverage. The little money raised with concerts was constantly put back into the association to pay for materials and travel, and only occasionally to remunerate the artists. As the label gathered five or six friends, with artists and managers closely linked together, "la majeure partie des décisions étaient collégiales (...) on était tous vraiment potes", Prieur explained. His emphasis on a 'human' scale (*vraiment potes*) detaches the label from 'profit' preoccupations, and thus comes across as an 'organic' or 'authentic' approach. The retrospective idealization of this process thus has some material foundations.

The fact that Bondage was influenced by 'underground' American rock culture, when the USA also represented a form of capitalist domination in the music industry, demonstrates the complex nature of the expression of 'authenticity' in France. On the one hand, the 'synthetic' approach to popular culture became embodied, in the 1980s, by Americans. This simplification clearly occurred in the area of TV programmes, when the US series *Dallas*, broadcast on French TV, crystallized a discourse of national resistance to US-led capitalist imperialism[29]. Defending French cinema during occasional WTO meetings, the French government often restricted its vision of capitalism to an American monopoly, flattering its own Jacobin identity and its political image as 'resistant' (see below)[30]. In popular music, the defense of *chanson* often amounted to criticizing Americans too, whereby the 'quality' argument of this national art form seemed to oppose the blandness of imported music (see above with the charts). On the other hand, the situation was different with *rock alternatif*. The music genre proclaimed its successful combination of rock music with French lyrics, and criticized the (international) principle of economic liberalism rather than its American roots. The links between Bondage and their American 'independent' counterparts highlights

the fact that the struggle for 'authenticity' by artists and producers took place on an international scale, just as trade did not stop at geographical boundaries. Many French rock artists have noticed the impasse in linking their 'rebellious' statements to national particularisms. The 'identity space' of 'authenticity' was thus crossing over national borders, although it retained a French specificity because of the French government's involvement in it.

Bondage's low-scale approach proved successful for Bérurier Noir, who gradually achieved national recognition between 1984 and 1986 mostly thanks to word of mouth, fanzines, and associative radios whose DJs had seen the band on stage. The band toured Paris and the provinces non-stop, and even played elsewhere in Europe, each time attracting bigger audiences to their outrageous, sometimes violent, performances. Musically, Bérurier Noir covered all aspects of punk music with their fast electric guitars and steady drum tempo, the frantic diction and shouting of their singers, their theatricality (the artists would often wear masks, balaklavas, and dress up in drag). It was quite a large band with the support of two female chorists who also took part in the stage antics. Sung in French, their lyrics enabled the clear communication of their anti-National Front position, at a time when that party was going up in the public polls. Thus, they added the excess and energy of punk-rock music to the kind of 'serious' or 'committed' lyrics found in French *chanson*. Their rather arid style stressed a sense of urgency in symbiosis with the band's desire to detach itself from the majors' production system, and to disparage the latter's promotion of consensual music. It was in the fusion of Bérurier Noir's new music, stage concerts and the support of an independent label that *rock alternatif* was conveyed as an 'authentic' culture. As Prieur concluded about *rock alternatif*'s dynamism, contrasting with its otherwise precarious situation in the music business, "ça a été un accélérateur incroyable, qui a créé des vocations tout en permettant l'installation de structures". After Bondage's example, many other

'independent' labels were set up to produce French rock music and sought to combine 'resistant' politics with 'autonomous' production (see below).

In 1986, Bondage had to face the success of Bérurier Noir and turned its associative structure into a *SARL*, an organization allowing the generation of profits, which proved to be its undoing[31]. The increasing success of 'Les Bérus' had led the artists to ask for a rise in wages, which the label could not afford. "Il arrive fréquemment que des labels ou producteurs se retrouvent, parvenus à un certain stade, dans l'impossibilité matérielle, moyens financiers comme logistiques et humains, de poursuivre l'accompagnement de la carrière de leur artistes", Lefeuvre underlined[32]. Indeed, Prieur judged that, by 1987, "les exigences des groupes et du public devenaient ingérables". With their lead artists on strike on the one hand, and the major Sony offering to buy its catalogue on the other, Bondage's producers argued as to which decision to take. Prieur had thought of signing a distribution deal with the major, which usually benefits artists by offering them wider exposure, including TV and radio air-time, and perhaps the production of a video[33]. Distribution of 'small' artists, however, is almost inevitably towards the bottom of the major's list of priorities. This deal also implies that profits get shared between the *producteur* (Bondage) and the distributor (Sony), the distribution share representing up to 22% of a CD cost, versus around 13% for the production company[34]. In this case, however, the *producteur* remains the direct beneficiary of the band in terms of public image and notoriety.

The other members of Bondage rejected this deal, which they saw as compromising and 'selling out', and considered they had the choice to dissolve "dans l'honneur ou les majors"[35]. They chose 'integrity' and split up in 1989, Bérurier Noir disbanding at the same time. The shares of Bondage were gradually sold to other production companies. As Prieur bitterly commented in the late 1990s, "ça n'a plus rien à voir": the label is now called Bond Age and distributed by WMD (Warner). The idea of choosing an honourable way out instead of 'selling out' to the industry conveyed images of chivalry and enlightened consciousness

set against the 'evil' of capitalism. Yet, this messy end implied that there was no 'essence' in either *rock alternatif* or in independent production labels, the artists and the producers' dreams of commercial autonomy having been tested against the commercial success of 'alternativity' itself. This struggle for 'authenticity' was therefore mapped out over 'non-mainstream' and 'mainstream' zones, over the 'imagined' territory of an 'authentic' anti-major position, and the harsh reality of artists in need of the remuneration which only majors could provide.

b) Mano Negra and Boucherie Production

Boucherie Production is another example of a French independent label which started in a similar fashion to Bondage, the two labels' initial similarity reinforcing the coherence of an 'alternative' rock culture in France. In the early 1980s, under the leadership of François Hadji-Lazaro, the punk-rock band Les Garçons Bouchers had been looking for a label that would produce their demo tape; after many refusals, the band set up its own production company in 1986, Boucherie Production[36]. As with Bondage, the artists took part in the economic structure of the label and, having a measure of success, the label signed several bands in the following years. In 1988, Boucherie Production signed Mano Negra, a rock band organized around the lead singer and composer Manu Chao, which changed the face of French music and earmarked the late 1980s' *rock alternatif* period as 'authentic' in many ways.

Like Bérurier Noir, Mano Negra's numerous concerts in Paris and in the provinces attracted an audience via word of mouth. The energy of the musicians on stage, derived from a punk 'violence', was combined with a preference for marginal concert places, such as the bars and clubs of the Pigalle area. In the 'official' book on the band (written by the band), the artists' stamina and their desire to 'just' play for the audience, even for little or no

remuneration, was presented as making up for the absence of sophisticated routine and poor sound technique[37]. Mano Negra's 'authenticity' lay in its readiness to play without financial ties and its dedication to the public's pleasure. On top of anecdotes of bar fights against the police and a few neo-fascists, Mano Negra is renowned for meeting with the Dead Kennedys in Brazil while touring in South America, similarly encouraging audiences to anti-militarism and anti-conservatism. This overall left-wing commitment contributed to the establishment of *rock alternatif* as a medium for social 'dissidence', involving the defense of democratic rights, and a detachment from capitalist values. This identity was always packaged in the so-called subversive power of 'festivity', a point we will explore in Chapter Five. Turning up in 1988-89 when Bérurier Noir crumbled, Mano Negra also stressed its antiracism with its mixed music containing many foreign influences, notably from Spain, North Africa and the Third World. That initial 'mixity' would later evolve into the 1990s genre of *rock métissé*.

Mano Negra's first single, 'Mala Vida', made an impression on the French public because, on top of its fast electric guitars, fast steady drums and shouting voice (all similar to other punk-rock bands of the era), its lyrics were in Spanish (listen to CD). Although he was born in Paris (in 1961), Chao's Galician origins may account for the use of Spanish in many of the band's songs, and for a large Latin horn section, bridging French brass bands with Mexican music and ska-punk rhythms[38]. In the 1980s, 'Mala Vida' raised the standard of musical novelty by combining, for the first time, the protest energy of punk-rock music, the credibility of a 'stage' culture, the credibility of an independent label, and the originality of using foreign language and music when Latin music had so far been assigned to exoticism[39]. Mano Negra repeated this success the following year by making a hit of the traditional Arabic song 'Sidi'h'Bibi', performed on a fast ska-punk rhythm. Musically, the band shifted the 'serious' political issues of traditional *chanson* into new hybrid domains, and this *métissage* was a timely support for the antiracist cause in France. This point will be debated in Chapter Three.

Mano Negra met critical acclaim thanks to its cultural cross-over, but became also widely 'commercial' after a change in its production. As for Bondage, 1989 was a turning point for Boucherie Production when it had to deal with the success of Mano Negra. Boucherie's definition of 'independence' was to hold "les moyens de fonctionner sans être esclave du système imposé par la société de l'argent", achieving this goal being just "dur", or virtually impossible[40]. Practically, however, Boucherie was set up from the start as a *société civile* (co-operative) that allowed profits to come in, giving them "les moyens de se battre dans le système show-biznessien, qu'il faut affronter sur son propre terrain". Their marketing choices implied closer relationships with the majors than Bondage, as Boucherie's changing distribution deals with Polygram (via Island) and Warner (WMD) illustrated. By 1989, Mano Negra had gained a vast audience and its first album *Patchanka* had sold rather well by the standards of an independent label. Pushed by the conglomerate Virgin, which would become a sub-label of EMI in 1992, Boucherie agreed to sell its band's contract. After this, Mano Negra accessed an even wider audience thanks to TV, radio and press coverage. It became the first large national success of *rock alternatif* although its 'independent' back-up no longer formally existed. In 1998, four years after the end of the band, the band still sold 100,000 copies of their *best of* album, charting at the 20th rank of the best French sales in the world for that year[41]. Manu Chao's solo success, which we will assess in Chapter Three, has contributed to the regular boost of his former band's sales.

The turn of the 1980s-1990s was thus an ambiguous period which brought *rock alternatif* to (relative) stardom, and marked the end of its initial 'authenticity'. Comparing Mano Negra and Bérurier Noir's trajectories, the *producteur* Baïa from Bondage reckoned bitterly that "La Mano, chez Virgin, a vendu beaucoup plus de disques que les Bérus avec Bondage". He underlined the efficiency of Boucherie's choices for popularizing 'good' music[42]. Apparently compromising their alternativity, as some purists would maintain, Boucherie's intermittent and highly selective partnerships with majors actually enabled the

label to keep producing young and innovative bands. In fact, Boucherie always aimed at a wide diffusion: "Boucherie veut développer des musiques difficiles à diffuser, sans restriction de style et en tentant d'atteindre toutes les oreilles"[43]. Its intention was to discover artists and produce them, even if this meant that it would only ever be a springboard for the artists' future careers elsewhere[44]. This method proved the only pragmatic way to carry on challenging 'mainstream' music, and the profits Boucherie made in trading Mano Negra were reinvested in the development of newcomers who would have hardly been produced by the more 'traditionalist' majors. In 1994, Boucherie Production signed a distribution deal with Play it Again Sam (PIAS), an independent and international distributor based in Belgium. Boucherie found that PIAS were "eux enfin, des indépendants", but it did not prevent the label from contracting other deals with majors on occasions, as with Paris Combo, signed to Universal in 1998. Moreover, Boucherie Production filed for bankruptcy in winter 2001 when the pressures from distributors and record retailers such as Fnac became too difficult to handle. Whether 'radical' as in the case of Bondage, or 'compromising' as with Boucherie, it seems that French independent labels cannot sustain their desire to be autonomous from the power of majors, at least not for long.

After their transaction with Virgin, Mano Negra expressed concerns about maintaining a form of artistic autonomy and 'authenticity'. In particular, playing for a major involved arguing over the price of concert tickets, which the band (but not the label) wished to keep low. The band was also pressurized into giving interviews to 'mainstream' media. In *Libération* in 1991, Chao confessed that "le split pur et simple a été dans l'air ces derniers temps. Nous en avons parlé longuement, ça pouvait être une solution pour garder notre respectabilité"[45]. His conception of honour echoed that of Bondage above, and in 1994 the band agreed to dissolve when their contract with the major expired.

Even if the *'alternatif'* artists all appeared disenchanted by the early 1990s, many bands after them made similar attempts at financial autonomy and at 'challenging'

mainstream music. Manu Chao himself remarked that, even after the 'proper' *alternatif* period, the core meaning of being 'alternative' remained, as one's broad reaction to feelings of domination and to social problems believed to be caused by capitalism: "L'alternatif ça ne s'arrête pas, l'alternatif c'est la démerde", he summed up[46]. The term *'démerde'* or *'système D'* is a colloquial expression in French praising one's resourcefulness in the face of adversity. In this case, it referred to the artists' struggle for recognition when arguing a contract's terms, finding concerts, lowering tickets' price. The term also implies a street-wise attitude, a certain 'cool' identity with positive cultural connotations, that is also a matter of national pride in France. Here then, and given Chao's links with anti-corporate globalisation movements, it is possible to read his remark as an attempt to coalesce the structural independence of early *rock alternatif*, or its general opposition to the majors' monopoly, with a broader 'resistant' identity believed to be France's strength in certain artistic domains (Chapter Three).

Since Mano Negra split up, two members of the band (other than Chao) have set up *rock métissé* bands, including P18 and Sergent Garcia. Santi, the drummer of Mano Negra and cousin of Chao, became in 1998 the director of the French branch of Mercury/Island, subsidiary of the major Polygram, and headed in September 2001 the jury of the French 'Popstars' TV programme (broadcast on the private channel TF1 and jointly produced by TF1 and Polygram). His 'mainstream' career appeared as far removed as possible from the original identity of Mano Negra. Yet, this point proves that the cultural identity of *rock alternatif*, its 'authenticity', could evolve into different and perhaps conflicting zones, and that it never had a given 'essence'. Rather, 'alternativity' was always located at the heart of individuals' desires and possibilities, reacting to the incessant changes of the material conditions around them.

c) Pigalle and Boucherie Production

François Hadji-Lazaro, the manager of Boucherie Production, fronted several bands in the 1980s and 1990s, most importantly Les Garçons Bouchers and Pigalle. Both were described as playing a music style "entre [Edith] Piaf et Clash, entre le balloche et le garage"[47]. This hybrid definition highlights the fact that Pigalle, in particular, used the accordion in combination with the 4/4 beat of rock music, inserting 3/4 waltzes and javas into rock's regularity, thus paving the way for retro rock music. The singer's coarse diction and the songs' melodramatic storylines also justified this analogy. The fusion was qualified as 'daring', with Pigalle having "réussi à bousculer des a priori musicaux" and corresponding "fort bien à ce mélange qui dépasse le circuit punk en osant, par exemple, l'accordéon en plus de la guitare saturée, et aussi des chansons de Piaf"[48]. Defining '*mélange*' as a transgression ('*osant*'), an emancipation (*bousculer*) or as a progressist counter-power working against conventions (*a priori*), hammered home the 'radicality' of the band. In 1992, Boucherie also produced a compilation entitled *Ma grand'mère est une rockeuse*, for which various *rock alternatif* bands did cover versions of Piaf and Fréhel.

For the 1980s and 1990s audience confronted with charts music in most media, the first-time combination of electric guitars with the accordion appeared disruptive of certain musical conventions, including those of rock music[49]. The accordion is nicknamed in French the '*piano du pauvre*', which suggests that its use in the 1980s reflected the audiences' fascination for things 'popular', while its import from Italian immigrants in the nineteenth century already connoted low-life *métissage* and the 'authenticity' of hardship[50]. Like Bruant before, Fréhel, Brel or Renaud, Pigalle's use of the accordion claimed the French *chanson* heritage, and its location of 'authenticity' in the lower classes. Moreover, in contrast to the 'youth' image of rock guitars, the re-vitalization of the accordion allowed transgressive statements on generations, as the reference to grandparents above illustrates. We saw in Chapter One (p.47) that 'authentic' rock music in the 1960s involved a degree of 'adult'

reflection, and so it is possible to understand the long-lasting success of 'authenticity' in French *chanson* and French rock music as a bridge between generations, as the handing-down of similar values. In Chapter Four on audiences, we explore the question of inter-generational complicity.

Pigalle exposed in its often crude lyrics (nearly all composed by Hadji-Lazaro) the dilemmas of modern life, the banal and traumatizing daily life of working-class characters and social outcasts. He vividly described, for instance, the illegal practices taking place *Dans la salle du bar-tabac de la rue des Martyrs* (1990), where customers burnt heroin in their coffee spoons and had sex in filthy toilets (listen to CD). His 'collection of portraits' also included a road builder spending solitary nights away from home, a female petrol attendant fantasizing over her clients, a solitary old man believed to be a pedophile by his neighbours, or an incestuous father[51]. There was something of the Ken Loach snapshot in these songs, in the ferocious and at times desperate social criticism. The analogy with British cinema is not coincidental and this theme is further developed in Chapter Three with the study of retro rock's *néoréaliste* identity.

3. The 1990s and *Rock Métissé*

We saw that the music market was not a stable configuration, and that the meanings of 'autonomy' or 'alternativity' varied according to the fluctuations of the industry as a whole. In the 1990s, then, as independent labels were gradually contracted or bought by majors, French rock music lost its initial *'alternatif'* designation. Yet the non-mainstream spirit remained, as the music broadened and branched out into *métissé* and retro music (among other trends). *Rock français* (French rock music) became an umbrella term for identifying the numerous offspring of *rock alternatif*, and its growing popularity during the 1990s can be demonstrated by the fact that Fnac shops opened separate sections dedicated to the genre. In the increasingly blurred industry, however, structural autonomy became virtually impossible

to maintain. Moreover, French rock music slowly acquired credit as a national and 'quality' alternative to *variétés*, as a welcome rejuvenation of *chanson*'s 'authentic' credentials. The recognition of French rock music as a new choice cultural phenomenon, and its intricate relationship with majors, meant that it had to turn to other directions to articulate its 'difference'. Among several possibilities, *rock métissé* explored the issues of immigration and multiculturalism, and its musical illustration of a new 'mixed' France asserted the artists' left-wing position. Following Mano Negra's melange music, the bands Zebda and La Ruda Salska are examples of *rock métissé*'s renewal of anti-capitalist 'resistance'.

a) Case Study of La Ruda Salska

The band La Ruda Salska, originating from the Loire Valley, started playing ska-rock music, with French lyrics, in the early 1990s, and achieved reasonable fame recently with their three studio and one live albums, one TV performance, and endless touring in concerts and festivals. My interview with the band's ex-bass player, Jean-Marie Pottier (in December 2000), highlighted the problems that the band, and more generally young artists without a 'commercial' career in France, faced when crossing the line from obscurity to honourable media exposure. Pottier played the bass guitar with La Ruda Salska from 1995 to 2000, and although he had recently quit for personal reasons at the time of our meeting, he usefully detailed the band's route to success. The audience which we interviewed and whose discourse is reported in Chapter Four had attended different concerts by this band.

La Ruda Salska started, like so many others, as a group of amateur musicians who gradually organized themselves professionally. Around 1993, friends from Saumur and Angers set up the band and played ska-rock-*chanson* music influenced by the Latin rhythms of Mano Negra, and by the 1980s British white ska of The Specials and Selecter. Like 'La Mano', La Ruda's choice of integrating foreign music sought to challenge exoticism and

integrate a music deemed more 'festive' into the 'seriousness' of French *chanson* and rock music (Chapters Three and Five). Organized as a profitless association in the beginning, with personal money invested, La Ruda Salska's members worked, studied at university or did their military service, and played together in bars and small concert halls during their spare time. Finding venues was a constant struggle, as Pottier explained that they would buy phonecards (refunded by their association), phone organizers, offer to send their demo tapes and negotiate a fee. Demo tapes were recorded in a home studio with amateur material, and organizers were kindly asked to return them because the band could not afford to produce many. For two years, they toured the Loire valley and further afield, accepting very small fees usually between 1,800 and 4,000FF per concert. This sum would ideally be divided between the eight musicians and the sound engineer, but barely refunded their petrol money. Artists were often remunerated in free beers, except the sax, trumpet and trombone players who were all professional musicians, *intermittents*, and needed declared wages. It is important to keep in mind the unemployed status of *intermittent*; its social relevance for French rock audiences will be highlighted in Chapter Four[52].

Another French ska band, Spook and the Guay from Toulouse, pleasantly reckoned that around 1995 La Ruda Salska "cassait le marché", accepted too small fees and were thus highly competitive, hired more often than most by organizers, and attracted more audience. The price of their concert tickets, arranged with each organizer, was usually set around 40FF, "parce que si tu fais à 80 balles y'a personne, et nous ce qu'on voulait c'était faire du monde", Pottier confirmed. The association attracted some income from the sales of tapes after the concerts, and was immediately reinjected to produce more cassettes, and they basically played for nothing. "C'était vraiment l'envie de jouer, la sueur quoi, et vraiment la passion de la musique", he reckoned. As Mano Negra emphasized their pleasure to be with the audience and Chao underlined the 'hardship' of 'alternative' artists, so Pottier used the term '*sueur*' (sweat) to evoke the physical work of setting up concerts for very little

remuneration. Making up for lack of profit, the bands' 'passion' was its drive, phrased as a more human, bodily (and ultimately 'authentic') urge to communicate to others through music. The idea that live performances provided a more 'human' and 'natural' environment than, say, radio broadcast, is developed in Chapter Five when we look at the meanings attributed to French rock festivals.

Meeting constant success wherever they played, La Ruda Salska expressed around 1995 the desire to record a first album, while remaining non-professionals. They had so far a self-appointed manager, a friend with a regular job who advanced some money to rent a studio. Despite the poor technical quality of that first album, *Le prix du silence* (1996), they found a distributor (Tripsichord) who relied on the fact that their touring had secured a regular audience ready to buy their music. After some estimable sales, the independent label 3C, from Angers, contacted La Ruda Salska and distributed them as a *tourneur* (close to distributor). 3C was responsible for finding concert dates and discussing fees, contacting record retailers, editing payslips, and took 25% of the band's income for it. In 1998, 3C suggested putting La Ruda Salska together with Marcel et son Orchestre in a double act. Marcel was another ska-rock band from Lille also distributed by the label. Concerts and tours were organized jointly and, as Pottier put it, "là, ça a pas mal explosé". The two bands played in larger halls and filled them, meeting increasing success still thanks to word of mouth. The distributor organized tours in famous festivals, like Francofolies (1999), Vieilles Charrues (2000), Paléo-Festival (Switzerland, 2000). In the winter of 1999, after a long series of concerts, majors started approaching them and, as Pottier said, "quand l'une commence toutes les autres suivent". EMI, BMG, V2 (from Virgin and with EMI), and several sub-labels of Sony like Epic, Small and Yelen, all offered to produce their next album. Majors usually place 'talent scouts' in festivals, looking for potential new talents to sponsor.

Eventually, La Ruda Salska agreed to sign with Yelen (Sony France) for the distribution of their second album, *L'art de la joie* (1999). Yelen remixed their first album,

produced a live album and a videoclip for 200,000 FF. The company also secured a TV appearance for them on the Canal Plus programme, Nulle Part Ailleurs[53]. Meanwhile, the band negotiated for a new manager, a new sound engineer, a new roadie; they asked to be catered for and accommodated when on tour. Yelen did not 'discover' La Ruda Salska, but helped them become (semi) professionals. As Pottier left the band in August 2000, the other members were becoming *intermittents* and looking for an artistic director to supervise their third album. In December 2000, however, the band had still not received any income from the sales of their second album, having refused to sign a co-production deal with Yelen. This refusal meant that the recorded material belonged exclusively to them, but as an intermediary, the distributor was taking its time to remunerate the artists. This example clarifies how the grass-roots level of music playing, in France, depends on the artists' acceptance of no or low wages, their otherwise determination not to be trampled on by the majors, their collective strength, and the role of chance. It reveals that even when contracted by the sub-branch of a major, French rock artists still have to struggle if they are to live decently off their musical skills, so that a form of hardship is the material truth behind the concept of 'non-mainstream' music. However, it also shows that if music is going to be a career path, a form of compromise with the powerful recording industry is necessary.

b) Zebda, Left-Wing Politics and Mainstream Media

Considering Mano Negra as their predecessor, Pottier also warmed to the close links between his band and the Toulouse band Zebda: "Zebda, c'est complètement la même famille, c'est rock, c'est la scène alterno, c'est ska aussi vachement". The term *'alterno'*, which my interviewees often used, is a diminutive of *'alternatif'* which refers to *'rock français'* or any kind of French popular music from the 1990s that claims its roots in *rock alternatif*. Zebda is then an *'alterno'* band of the particular *métissé* kind which has, so far, made more of a mark

on the 1990s than 'La Ruda'. Zebda is often referred to as the Mano Negra of the late 1990s because of its combination of political (left-wing) credentials with popular success, such as their 1999 hit single 'Tomber la Chemise'. For its initial fans, Zebda's sudden fame in 1999 triggered confusion and attempts at either shedding or readjusting the band's 'authenticity', but the audiences' reactions are tackled in Chapter Four. The band's name, Zebda, means 'butter' in Arabic and is a pun on the double-entendre of the French '*beurre*' (butter) with '*beur*', designating second-generation Arab immigrants[54]. Zebda identifies itself jokingly and inter-linguistically as Arabs, raising questions about the place of cultural difference and immigrants in contemporary France. This debate is further explored in Chapter Three. Here, we outline how their mediatization as a 'mixed' and 'left-wing' band contributed to the expansion of French rock music's 'alternative' identity in new directions.

Starting in Toulouse in the mid-1980s, Zebda were the first Franco-Arab band to successfully integrate the 'authentic' identity of French rock music[55]. The lead singers and composers of the band, Magyd Cherfi and the Amokrane brothers (born in the 1960s), are all sons of Algerian immigrants. With their French musicians, they play a mixture, in their words, '*de raï, de rock, et de musette*'. Some lyrics, a few samples, *chaâbi* music and the choice of certain instruments like the oud, the violin or the flute, stress their Arabic influence. Overall however, Zebda's music remains of a rock beat (4/4 with electric guitars and sustained drums), allowing for reggae, raggamuffin or ska to mix in with the help of horn sections. Their *métissé* music has emphasized the artists' antiracism, and they have, in lyrics and during interviews, challenged the vision of a French Jacobin identity in both regional and ethnic terms (Chapter Three). This musical choice has been crucial in charting their 'alternative' identity, as their combination of speed guitars (as in punk), crafty and witty lyrics (as in *chanson*), and world influences (*métissage*), has put them, as they say "à la périphérie des succès cathodiques"[56]. That melange ensured their reception as heirs of *rock alternatif*, and was a backdrop for their re-thinking of contemporary citizenship.

Nevertheless, Zebda's first album in 1993 was signed by Barclay, a subsidiary of the major Polygram, now Universal. Selling enough copies thanks to their regular following in the Toulouse area, Zebda was trusted to record a second album in 1995, *Le Bruit et l'Odeur.* That album benefited from better recording conditions, maturity of music and lyrics, which helped its broadcast on a few select radios (France Inter). Above all, it featured an eponymous single which sampled a discourse by Jacques Chirac about the smell of immigrants, illuminating his reactionary, even racist, political line (listen to CD). That song was composed before the 1995 elections, but it proved a timely provocation, and one personally opposed to the new President. From then on, the band attracted the attention of some 'radical' left-wing media, where its 'committed' identity made the headline: "Zebda, les chanteurs de la contestation festive" (*Télérama*), "[leur] engagement politique sans faille" (*L'Evénement du Jeudi*), "résistance musicale" and "militantisme démocratique" (*Le Monde*)[57]. These claims had the publicity advantage of being catchy simplifications, but also represented the enthusiasm of French journalists in coming across the regeneration of 'oppositional' politics, and of French music. As a journalist stressed in *Le Monde*, whether reggae, rap or raï, Zebda's music reflected the new flexibility of 'quality' French music[58]. The fact that the band was produced by Barclay was almost never mentioned in these media, as Barclay had an image as a *variétés* producer and also was the sub-branch of a major. The *rock métissé* genre and 'resistant' politics seemed to go hand in hand.

In 1999, the band attracted a different audience after the huge media interest in their single 'Tomber la Chemise', a raggamuffin celebration of determination, of 'getting down with it', hence the sweaty shirt that needs taking off. The song was selected as a 'single' by their label for its uplifting theme and tune, and broadcast extensively on NRJ (a French commercial radio). The band then did several promotions on TV, until their single became the 1999 French best-seller, heard even in supermarkets as muzak. From their own admission, "sur cette chanson notre démarche ne va pas très loin"[59], but interviewed in the

Left-wing press, the band's spokesmen made it clear that external pressure and censorship had generated a misunderstanding about their success. Zebda claimed to have always looked for success and for 'mainstream' access, and that the sudden possibility, offered by their label, of facing a large audience did not, *a priori*, contradict their ideological positions. They just hoped that intensive media coverage would help expose their political ideas[60]. This compared them to Boucherie Production and its hopes to reach a wide audience with 'challenging' music. On four occasions however[61], the band attended prime-time TV debates where they spoke about political identity and the problem of *double peine*, only to realize during broadcast that this part of their interviews had been systematically edited. Their 'commitment' never came across, only their Toulouse jocularity. Further, upon Zebda's refusal to do an interview for M6 (because of the channel's overly commercial image), the private music channel threatened to stop broadcasting their video clips. Upon Zebda's refusal to be sponsored by NRJ for their concert tour (for similar reasons), the private radio threatened to stop broadcasting their songs. Each time however, the commercial media had to give in, such was the success of the band and the potential profit to derive from their broadcast.

As will be paralleled below in the discourse of audiences, some of the media that initially supported Zebda for their 'seriousness' were bewildered and embarrassed at the band's commercial success, and made sure they set the record straight about their prior acknowledgement of the band's 'authenticity'[62]. Charlie-Hebdo published a cartoon in which a couple watching Zebda on TV wondered: "Est-ce que Zebda est de droite parce qu'il passe sur TF1, ou bien TF1 de gauche parce qu'elle passe Zebda?"[63]. On a derisive note, this cartoon pointed to the commonplace simplification occurring in France between the political right and left, and to its reflection in cultural life. The TF1 conglomerate, which censored the band several times, is openly affiliated to the conservative and neo-liberal right. The cartoon suggested that the band sold out for agreeing to be on TF1, and general ignorance of the

censorship that went on would have reinforced that impression. Conversely, the TV channel seemed to buy some 'street', 'alternative', or even left-wing credibility by broadcasting a so far unheard-of *beur* and regional band. This situation demonstrates the fact that *rock métissé* is an important vehicle for much of the French media, 'commercial' and 'intellectual' alike, and obviously for music producers who hope for its success.

After Zebda's national recognition as mainstream artists, and the artists' perplexity at the repeated efforts by different media to sap their otherwise 'serious' intentions, the French conglomerate Vivendi bought the major Universal which owns Zebda's label Barclay. Since then, the French head of Vivendi/Universal, Jean-Marie Messier, has become the indirect manager of the band. In a bid to detach himself from the negative connotations that his super-company attracted, Messier has regularly praised Zebda as an example of 'rebellious' music, demonstrating that even majors were interested in 'dissidence' and could support artistic integrity[64]. Messier's declarations occurred in the context of a debate on 'French exceptionalism' and potential 'resistance' in national products which we develop below. So far, we can point to the fact that, even for the head of a powerful conglomerate, claiming to support anti-corporate 'authenticity' seemed an important discourse to hold even as it led to contradictions, while identifying Zebda as a 'rebellious' band is not as straightforward as it seems.

4. The 1990s and Retro Rock Music

In parallel to *rock métissé*, retro rock is another trend of French rock music that developed in the wake of *rock alternatif*. Its artists usually play acoustic instruments, play the accordion, and use a nostalgic storyline closely influenced by the French *réaliste* genres of Bruant, of the 1930s, and which became known as as *chanson néoréaliste* in the media and in shops. Pigalle were one of the first French rock artists to revive the genre for a contemporary

audience[65]. In Chapter Three, we explain how the nostalgic or 'retro' element of the genre has remained topical for contemporary audiences.

a) Têtes Raides and Tôt ou Tard

Têtes Raides are currently qualified as the "chefs de file d'un nouveau courant puisant dans la chanson réaliste, tout en gardant l'esprit rock de la scène alternative"[66]. They recorded their first album in 1988, and the trend they set is a mix of fast punk music with accordion waltzes and polkas, with a preference for symbolist texts suggesting moods rather than describing facts (*à la* Mallarmé, as an interviewee noted). This mix is the mark of *chanson néoréaliste*, or retro rock music, and we saw above how the waltzing accordion added to the credibility and originality of French rock music. Making profusive use of the 'urban poor' imagery, the songs of Têtes Raides evoke the lowly lives of drunks, the homeless, sailors from another time, and seem to expose the inadequacies of contemporary society by appealing to the listeners' sense of abstraction in associating with these characters. The decision to add strings from 1992 onwards, which the band itself saw as a feminization of their music[67], broadened the scope of their audience by including fervent female followers, their success steadily increasing since then. The analysis of the band's audience comes in Chapter Four.

Like most bands of the 1990s, Têtes Raides are produced by a major. After being signed, in 1989, by the independent label Just'In for two albums, they were spotted by Vincent Frèrebeau in 1991, the artistic director of Warner France. Frèrebeau certainly foresaw potential profits in choosing to produce this so far unheard-of French rock band, yet he also primarily stressed the 'gut feeling' he had when watching them live: "je les ai vus, j'ai aimé mais je n'ai pas compris. Je les ai signés sans mesurer l'importance qu'ils auraient dans ma vie"[68]. From 1992 to 1996, produced by Warner, the band kept touring and recorded

two new albums. In 1996, within the major, Frèrebeau set up and headed an 'integrated label', a branch called Tôt ou Tard which had the appearance of a distinct 'independent', and was marketed as a niche for French rock music. The journalist Gildas Lefeuvre called Tôt ou Tard an 'adult' rock music niche, which stresses again the cross-generation development of rock music in France[69]. Frèrebeau insisted that his job in Tôt ou Tard followed the trademark of 'authenticity' developed by Têtes Raides. He said: "le travail du label est calqué sur le leur: contact direct, artisanat, opiniâtreté"[70]. These terms once again highlight the producer's job as 'organic', creating a dual opposition between human contact (*contact direct*) versus artificial mediation, amateur attempts (*artisanat*) versus mechanized routine, persistency and hardship (*opiniâtreté*) versus the deemed carelessness of short-term success. In practical terms, the label's measures included fixing maximum prices for concert tickets (max. 130FF) in concertation with the artists, who accepted a fee below 1200FF per person per concert. Another marketing decision was to re-edit previous albums of the band in cardboard packages, a 'natural' device already used by some *rock alternatif* band like Nonnes Troppo (see CD for album covers). This had a noticeable impact on audiences as my interviewee Jibé, a fan of Têtes Raides, explained that he almost exclusively selected similar 'rough-looking' CDs in record shops, hoping that other artists would reproduce the music style he liked.

This is not to say that this particular success could be foretold, or that Tôt ou Tard carefully packaged the band's 'authenticity' with the confidence that it would improve the sales. All labels, even majors, encounter unexpected failures, and the business is overall unreliable. Yet, the 'marginal' methods of the label, which remain marginal *vis-à-vis* the usually much higher investments of majors in the artists they want to bring to the top, eventually paid off when Têtes Raides' 1998 *Chamboultou* album turned Gold in summer 2001 after three years of existence. More significantly, their 2000 album *Gratte-Poil* reached 100,000 copies sold in less than ten months[71]. In 2001 too, the band was nominated for the

Victoires de la Musique ceremony, and the TV broadcast of their performance enhanced their sales radically[72]. Within the branch of the major Warner, we see that there was room for the long-term support of an *a priori* outlandish music group. Celebrating its successful fifth anniversary in autumn 2001, Tôt ou Tard fixed specially low prices on its CDs (59FF in Fnac shops) and offered a free compilation for each album bought. Such a 'public-friendly' advertisement could only be backed up by a major, or one of its successful branches.

b) Louise Attaque and Atmosphériques

Atmosphériques is an 'independent' label set up by Marc Thonon in 1996, managing its artists in close partnership with a major. It counted 8 wage earners in 1999 and falls into the category of small labels, but works in partnership with Trema, a large French label of mostly *variétés*, 15% of whose shares belong to Sony[73]. Consequently, Atmosphériques benefits from a distribution by Sony, which shares the label's turnover with Trema. For two years the label did poorly, but in 1998, the band Louise Attaque, whom they had signed up the year before, started selling extremely well and eventually became the second best-selling French album of that year with three million copies sold to this day.

Set up in 1994 in Paris, Louise Attaque played an acoustic rock-*chanson* influenced by the American band Violent Femmes, marrying vigorous but acoustic guitars with violins and a voice inflection *à la* Jacques Brel. Affiliated to Mano Negra and Noir Désir for their heavy stage touring and skilled musicianship[74], they were presented in the media as an 'authentic' success, as the legitimate development of artists who had made it without commercial mediatization[75]. In *Libération*, one read: "on entend donc peu Louise Attaque sur la FM, on ne les voit quasiment pas à la télé (...) et avec eux toute une scène qui doit son rayonnement à son engagement sur le terrain, au soutien des médias spécialisés, et à un concept du métier à l'ancienne"[76]. The nostalgia expressed here (*'à l'ancienne'*) is another

addition to the concept of 'organic' music-making as the recipient of a 'natural' tradition. In this case, Louise Attaque's 'authenticity' was principally justified by their intense touring on stage, but the journalist's assumption that the gap between the live circuit and TV or radio broadcast was unbridgeable was wrong. Besides, Atmosphériques was often presented as an 'independent' label only, journalists neglecting to present its connections with Trema and Sony.

The marketing director of Atmosphériques, Laurent Macherey, commented on their success by stressing the label's specific strategies to meet the 'alternative' image of the band: "c'est le résultat -inespéré- de tout un travail de terrain mené par les artistes, une promotion et un marketing ciblé, des opérations commerciales discrètes (...). Nous ne sommes pas tombés dans le travers de la pub TV. Artistiquement, cela ne correspondait pas!"[77]. Select and discrete marketing operations included securing a concert performance for the rock festival *La Route du Rock* in August 1997, a festival with already a strong image of rock music counter-culture (Chapters Four and Five). While Macherey insisted on his apparently 'soft' or discreet approach, it also transpired that Atmosphériques managed Louise Attaque like any other music product. As he said, there had to be a correspondence between the band's music style, affiliated to post-*rock alternatif*, and its media coverage, infiltrating rock festivals. Further, their first album was adorned with a brown paper cover, reminiscent of the cardboard packaging of Têtes Raides and fitting in an already existing trend. There were no singles brought out at first, so that the 'mainstream' broadcast of songs on commercial radios was initially avoided. The label was also able to fix the CD price at 100FF, a marketing coup that required external back-up and that Boucherie Production, for instance, was not able to keep up with[78]. I sent a questionnaire to Atmosphériques about what criteria guided their choices of production, and Marc Thonon replied that it was "au coup de coeur et selon la validité économique". He interestingly combined the 'natural' approach (*coup de coeur*) with the 'artificial' one (*économique*), reconciling the usually opposite terms. However, if the

decision to sign Louise Attaque was somehow spontaneous, the tastes of the A&R department did not spring from nowhere, nor did the artists' affiliation to *rock alternatif*. The label's 'hunch' to produce a retro rock band in 1997 had been well supported by the growing success of French rock bands in general, retro rock in particular already producing estimable results (La Tordue since 1995, Têtes Raides since 1992).

c) Comparative Study of two French Rock Music Compilations

The issue of two compilations of French rock music in autumn 1999 revealed that the genre had become commercially viable, if not hugely profitable. Entitled *Chansons du bord de zinc* and *L'Alternative*, both albums featured Têtes Raides, La Tordue and Casse-Pipe, and other artists of the French rock scene, *métissé* and retro alike. The two were however produced by different labels, respectively by a small independent called Inc@, and by the major Universal. The two albums also showed small distinctions and similarities that highlighted the impact of the 'alternative' rock culture in contemporary France.

The title of the first compilation, *Chansons du bord de zinc*, evoked the working class environment of urban cafés, '*zinc*' referring to the counter of a bar. It is an old-fashioned term that echoed the origins of *chanson* located in *cabarets*. The cover of the album was an imitation of brown paper following the same 'natural' device as Louise Attaque and Têtes Raides's albums (see cover in CD). The sketch on the cover was a child-like, quickly hand-drawn picture of a wine glass, a chair and a counter. The title was a montage of newspaper letters. These design choices contributed to the 'simple', unskilled and ultimately 'natural' or 'authentic' identity of the album. Finally, the album featured a track by the French Quebec band, Les Colocs, that unconventionally lasted 9 minutes. Overall, the compilation never explicitly referred to a so-called 'alternative' trend, but suggested it by discrete cultural assumptions: *populaire* affiliation, 'natural' packaging, unusual timing.

On the other hand, the compilation *L'Alternative*, with its definite article, was the contrary of understatement. It resembled a catchy slogan closer to 'mainstream' marketing, appealing to the 'coolness' of the buyers. The word 'Alternative' was printed in large and bright yellow letters resembling a road sign, an arrow pointing to a supposedly 'other' route. The names of the artists were displayed on the front cover and bands with commercial hits were included, such as the reggae band Pierpoljak and the Celtic-rock band Matmatah, both responsible for *tubes* in the summer 1999. This compilation was produced by Universal and consequently could afford TV advertising, unlike Inc@. The supposed marginality of the artists was reviewed in a magazine thus: "la conscience politique claire d'artistes (...) résolument opposés aux compromis présents" and "la vitalité furieuse de cet 'autre son français'"[79]. Once again, definite terms like *'claire'* and *'résolumment'* expressed the assumption that 'authenticity' could be located in French rock music, and that this compilation was the quintessence of rebellion. The inverted commas at the end (*'autre son'*) made it plain that a dominant French style, presumably *variétés*, was also clearly defined, but that the compilation hopefully asserted its reaction to it, confirming it as more original. Not specific to a major's marketing, this argument was obviously a sweeping generalization.

This quick comparison highlights the fact that, although published at the same time and featuring similar artists, the two albums were not exactly aimed at the same audience and thus mapped out different 'identity zones' within French rock's 'alternativity'. The spatial display of the albums in Fnac shops reinforced this, as *L'Alternative* could be found in the sections of *'rock français'* and in the compartments dedicated to compilations. On the other hand, *Chansons...* was only displayed in the *'rock français'* trays because it had, to our knowledge, neither been reviewed in the press nor advertised on TV. Its potential buyers would have only heard of it in the press, through friends or discovered it by chance in the shop. In Chapter Four on audiences, we will see that this can be a perfectly profitable strategy, as some music fans do browse the shops for new discoveries. In 2001, a second

volume to *Chansons...* was edited, still by Inc@ but this time distributed by the major EMI. The fact that this major saw a potential in this retro rock compilation is something of an achievement, but the advertisement sticker on its cover, stating that it had to be listened to "avant tout pour la richesse des mots et la qualité des textes", linked the record to the prestige of the old *chanson à texte*. This marketing move somehow limited the 'novelty' of the music genre, while it sought to attract more 'traditional' buyers. Meanwhile, the major Warner also produced a double album of French rock music, called *Destination France Rock* (2001) featuring Têtes Raides once again, but also Mickey 3D, Noir Désir and Négresses Vertes, bands to which we will return. Within three years, three majors (Universal, EMI and Warner) had taken an interest in the French rock music style.

B. The Ministry of Culture and Measures for French Rock Music

We have examined how the French music industry, with its intricate relationship between majors and 'independent' labels, contributed to shaping an 'imagined community' of opponents to the perceived dominant and national taste for *variétés*. Another material condition for the 'invention' of that 'resistant' identity is the role played by the French state since the early 1980s. Since 1981, the French state has assessed the control of its national music production by the global industry, and has devised a cultural policy aimed at promoting national popular music, which met some of the concerns of 'independent' producers and French rock artists. However, as we look at a few measures attempting to boost French rock music, the paradox emerges that defending the national market has inevitably involved interacting with external and private pressure. This chapter thus assesses the connections between the French state and private determinants, and highlights how their agreements and conflicts could influence or contradict the 'alternative' music culture of France.

1. The Cultural Policy for Popular Music: Exceptionalism and Cooption

Since the end of the Second World War, French cinema has received partial state sponsorship, which demonstrates that, when thought fit, the French state could establish agreements with the private leisure industry. Popular music, however, remained a purely private domain until 1982, even as its consumption rate kept growing through the recession of the 1970s and 1980s. National statistics from the 1990s revealed that "l'écoute de la musique est le loisir qui a le plus progressé depuis une vingtaine d'années", and that going out to music concerts was the only outdoor leisure activity that had increased since the late 1970s[80]. Music sales rose in France by 54% between 1988 and 1989, when CDs replaced vinyl. Overall, the sales of music units in France grew from 100 million in 1981 to 150 million in 1997[81]. It was in this context that the French Socialist government of the 1980s eventually developed an interest in French popular music, gradually considering French rock music a legitimate area for public spending.

We saw in Chapter One that, during the 1970s, the French Ministry of Culture had elaborated the concept of cultural development as a response to the limits of cultural exceptionalism which, associated with De Gaulle, promoted only the artistic projects believed to represent France's 'high' culture. Recognizing the diversity of cultural practices on French territory, *développement culturel* aimed at shifting political interest and public funding from 'high' culture to all sorts of cultural practices, thereby acknowledging 'plurality' as a defining feature of France's identity. In 1981, François Mitterrand was elected President and, within the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), stood the desire to put into practice this so-far theoretical policy. The Ministry of Culture was granted a bigger budget supposed to reach 1% of the national budget[82], and Jack Lang became its colourful Minister. For different

reasons, the shift towards diversity caused many controversies within the Ministry of Culture[83].

Lang's Ministry (and the subsequent *cohabitation* governments) supported 'creativity' in the cultural expressions that had so far been regarded as 'popular' or marginal, such as fashion, *bande-dessinée* and popular music. One of the Ministry's rhetorical lines was the promotion of *'droit à la différence'*, or the defense of equal status between previously partitioned practices. Theoretically for instance, rock music had the same cultural 'weight' as classical music, which was an undeniable innovation from the Gaullist vision of Great Culture. This decompartmentalization (*décloisonnement*) also put on the same level Parisian and regional practices, against the previous concentration of cultural activities, subsidies and prestige in the capital. In this respect, the other great battlehorse of the PS, decentralization, converged with this approach to culture as funds were attributed to regions, departments and communes, for them to dispense according to local demand. Finally, the 'right to difference' found a live expression in the multicultural identity of France's youth, when second-generation immigrants started to voice their interests and cultural difference. Although the state always carefully avoided the term 'multicultural' and still favoured an 'assimilation' of differences, raising this debate innovated from previous policies (see Chapter Three)[84].

In this respect, the popular music genre of *chanson*, so far confined to the 'low' realm of the industry, was recognized as a crucially important form of music, as proved the 'canonization' of a number of *ACI*s when streets and schools were named after them. However, we saw above that, during the 1980s too, many journalists argued against the *Top 50*'s profit motivations by defending *chanson*'s 'quality', and praised the latter's role in the formation of an 'authentic' national heritage. They articulated their 'resistance' to global capitalism by praising the high 'quality' of *chanson* and established (imagined) links between *chanson*'s highness and its presence in France[85]. The insertion of *chanson* within

the state's realm of influence, during the same period, revealed that, if new art forms gained access to state sponsorship, the internal functioning of state sponsorship still relied on the recognition of 'quality' or 'high' products. The Ministry's argument about diversity thus appeared partly flawed. Similarly, state support for French cinema demonstrated its preference for 'quality' or *auteur* films[86]. Given French rock music's emphasis on articulate lyrics and its claimed 'resistance' to economic liberalism, it is possible to see its gradual inclusion into governmental policies not as a shift in priorities but as the official recognition of French rock's potentially 'high' qualities.

In 1982, Lang set up '*la politique du rock*', designed to boost creative projects by handing subsidies to small bands, and to revitalize the regions by opening rehearsal studios and concert halls. Although there was a degree of continuity with the preceding government, the PS identified this cultural policy as a 'radical' break from the traditional distance between the state and popular music practices[87]. As Looseley noted, rock music was assumed to be a 'dissident' and 'marginal' music form which could work as "an ideal vehicle for the government to make a daring statement"[88]. Being 'daring' was reiterated in 1995 and 1997 when the Ministry assessed fifteen years of policy towards rock music by underlining the "identité farouchement individualiste et, bien souvent, contestataire des systèmes établis" of rock music[89], and the Ministry's own attention to "marginalités socio-culturelles"[90]. On the Right, the same assumption about rock music's apparently inherent 'rebellious' identity led it to criticize its insertion in national politics. The Right had the project to return to a Ministry of Patrimony like Malraux's, and in the conservative *Figaro* magazine, one could read the simplified and panic-stricken remark that Lang's priority was to "promouvoir une contre-société culturelle"[91]. This reinforced *a contrario* the 'rebel' identity of the Minister and the Ministry[92].

However, this policy was based on inadequate and conflicting assumptions. On the one hand, it justified taking a 'pluralist' interest in French rock music because of the latter's

apparent marginality, but by integrating French rock music, the state also underlined its 'high' quality and made it an 'official' object or culture. On the other hand, the government's intervention in popular music had been supported by material evidence of economic growth, which relativized its profession of faith as an innovative social(ist) party. Moreover, as proved its growing success, rock music was far from being a marginal music genre at all. We shall develop this point in Chapter Four when studying audiences, but all surveys revealed that a quite well-off and educated youth composed the bulk of rock music's most active consumers[93]. The claims and identity of French rock music fans, if potentially 'dissident' in their rejection of 'mainstream' music and sympathy for left-wing ideals, did not antagonize the socialist government, *au contraire*. A survey from 1985 showed that 77% of the population viewed favourably the fact that the Ministry invested in popular music in general, rock music falling into this category[94]. It seemed that rock music was a very consensual music genre, and that its official recognition was no upheaval. Further, the *politique du rock* only really developed after 1986 via partnerships with the industry, when in fact other music genres like rap or techno were blossoming and expressed another, perhaps more 'oppositional', identity. Looseley observed that the Socialists' recognition of rock music really appeared rather limited and symbolic[95]. Nevertheless, the state intervened in a cultural area that had been frowned upon so far, and this perpetuated the international perception of the French Republic as relatively exceptional in world affairs.

Another aspect of the question of cultural exceptionalism is the modalities of the intervention of the state in the artistic domain, or the potential 'cooption' of art by governmental spending. Since Lang's involvement in popular culture, intellectuals like Guy Hocquenghem and Régis Debray had criticized what they called *'l'art fonctionnaire'*, or the now corrupted and blunt expression of artists who had given up their 'authenticity' by accepting state sponsorship[96]. Looseley noted "a certain unease in some quarters that through state aid the elements of revolt and provocation in rock were being officialised and tamed"[97].

Despite this remark, we found no evidence that intellectuals, *producteurs*, artists or journalists lamented rock music being 'sold to the enemy' because of state sponsorship[98]. Rather, French music artists in their vast majority were all too happy to receive external help. In 2000, the director of the *Centre du Patrimoine de la Chanson*, Serge Hureau, assessed fifteen years of regular state intervention in popular music thus: "on ne fait pas l'enfant capricieux quand on voyage, en revenant en France on est très content des subventions"[99]. His point of view underlined the fact that the 'distinctively French' voluntarist intervention in culture, or *'l'exception française'*, was not the crushing curse that some might have thought it to be, but rather a blessing for the development of French popular music. The fear of 'cooption' hides, in fact, the assumption that a particular artistic expression may be 'authentic' if it remains 'autonomous' from external (state or otherwise) influence. Its takes 'authenticity' for granted, and entails the moralist condemnation of whoever seemed to 'sell out' his or her integrity. However, our contention is that music springs from the interdependence of several material and ideological factors. This relativizes the meaning of 'authenticity', stresses its cultural constructedness and locates it at the heart of contradictory tendencies. In this sense, 'cooption' becomes irrelevant.

In practice, financial allocations to French rock music within 'la politique du rock' proved ambivalent, addressing both the needs of independent labels and those of labels owned by multinationals. The budget of the Ministry of Culture for its policy towards rock music was also difficult to assess, because several Ministries and local powers (towns, departments and regions) were responsible for allocating funds[100]. Besides, what we call 'French rock music' in this study covers a cultural identity revolving around the conception of 'alternativity', but is not a fixed musical category that the Ministry of Culture identifies like us. Figures for 1985 showed for instance that French rock music was addressed within the general heading of *'jazz, chanson et variétés'*, benefiting from an envelope of 19 million FF representing only 5% of the Ministry's spending on opera that year[101]. Whereas we

distinguish between rock, *chanson* and *variétés* (as the media, artists and audiences do), the Ministry mostly does not. For instance, the policy for *'spectacle vivant'* applied to all arts performed live on stage. Rock music entered this classification but the existing official figures did not distinguish between different allocations. In 1998, subsidies for *spectacle vivant* neared 65 million FF, including lyrical art (opera) and dance[102]. Given the minor variations of the cultural budget, which has represented over the years under 1% of the total state, our (rough) estimates for the funds attributed to *chanson* and rock music in 1994 amounted to nearly 30 million FF, only 0.19% of the total budget for 'culture' that year[103]. This minuscule budget, partially nipping scandals over 'cooption' in the bud, may not resolve the argument that producers may loose their 'subversive edge' with official help. While further research would be needed to understand the sentiments of producers and artists *vis-à-vis* the Ministry's policies better, the study of some 'rock' measures will now show to what extent the Ministry helped boosting French rock music. These will illustrate the fact that this cultural policy was not a straightforward hold onto the supposed integrity, or 'authenticity', of the music.

2. Case Studies of Some Measures

a) La Fête de la Musique

In June 1982, the Ministry of Culture created the *Fête de la musique*, a national festivity on Midsummer Day (21st June) during which amateur and professional musicians are invited to play out in the streets, well into the night. For 24 hours, the SACEM agrees not to tax concerts and artists, and the latter agree to play on a voluntary basis. Technicians remain paid by the state and/or private sponsors, but, with the input of the government, the 'commercial' aspect of music is put aside. The first *Fête* celebrated the appointment of the Socialists, hammering home their identity as republicans in line with previous music rejoicings (like

fanfares), and as 'radicals' who enticed the population to party. The newspaper *Le Monde* described this initiative as "une idée de mai 1968"[104], and for Looseley the *Fête* was Lang's best idea to mark "a festive conception of culture". Popular music and festivity became two tokens of the Socalists' democratic politics, inheritors of a revolutionary tradition. This measure was not aimed at promoting French rock music in particular, but contributed to the recognition of popular and amateur practices as valuable, in line with the Ministry's pluralist stance.

Twenty years after the Socialists' victory, the *Fête de la Musique* has become a national institution. In June 2001, the retro rock band Têtes Raides was sponsored by the Ministry to play live in Paris in the gardens of the *Palais Royal*. We noted the image of Têtes Raides as an 'alternative' rock band, but the fact that it was chosen to symbolize this national celebration, implying republican cohesion, was therefore revealing of its newly acquired prestige. The fact that 2001 was a period of cohabitation, with a Socialist government and Chirac as President, indicated that Lang's initial measure underwent few modifications and that French rock music had reached an overarching consensus, recognized as a beacon of national musical 'quality'. Besides, D'Angelo noticed that, during the 1980s and 1990s, there was "pas de bouleversement majeur" in the Ministry of Culture's policy, and that the two RPR cohabitation periods were "globalement dans la lignée de [leurs] prédecesseurs". On the part of Têtes Raides and their fans, we could not find any information on whether this official sponsorship represented 'cooption' or well-deserved recognition.

b) Concertation with Unions and Civil Societies

Because the French music industry is mapped over national and international production, and mapped over *variétés* and 'alternative' products, the Ministry's intervention in popular music requires ambivalent procedures. Juggling with socialist intentions and economic neo-

liberalism, the government "espouses modernity and entrepreneurialism", or in Lang's own words, it reconciles "la création et la production marchande"[105]. From the mid-1980s onwards, the state offered to engage with its popular music industry, but had to take into account the claims and grievances of authors, performers, *producteurs* and distributors. Its problematic was to devise projects in consultation with both major and independent labels, but this task has been complicated by the fact that artists and *producteurs* were gathered in different and often conflicting unions and *sociétés civiles* (a legal term for a non-trading company).

Created in 1851, SACEM is a civil society that collects and redistributes the taxes of music authors and composers for each public use of their pieces[106]. The French system ideologically differs from the Anglo-American one by forbidding authors to leave their rights to employers[107]. In the Anglo-American system, authors are welcome to transfer their rights, against a fee, to their employers (producers), which implies that artistic and intellectual property works on the same economic basis as other exchangeable skills. In France however, SACEM has underlined the separate status of artists, and defended particularly forcefully the specificities of *ACIs*. The latter can, in France, combine wages from their skills as writers and composers, which discriminates against 'simple' interpreters who receive a single fare. It was not until 1985 and after endless arguments within the profession, that the French system allowed for *droits voisins* to be collected, with a new legislation conducted by the Ministry of Culture authorizing the collection of copyright fees for non-composing professionals, interpreters, *producteurs*, editors and distributors[108]. Out of this legislation, two main civil societies were created which collected the fees of music producers in France. On the one hand, the SCPP now collects the taxes of all the music majors in France, of a majority of the majors' sub-labels and of a few large independents. In total, it manages funds nearing 90% of the national music production[109]. On the other hand, the SPPF totalizes a greater number of members who almost exclusively belong to the independent sector (bar a few majors' sub-

labels). It thus manages a far smaller amount of taxes, only 2.2% of the SCPP income in 1993. The SPPF (independents) was described "vu de l'extérieur, comme un contre-pouvoir", and its perceived identity broadly corresponds to the ideological choices of French rock music's 'alternative' position. Overall, the legislation for *droits voisins*, which was established thanks to the government's interest in the popular music industry, set up the conditions for the state to interact with private, and sometimes foreign, companies.

French music *producteurs*, who influence state decisions over music, belong to unions in a pattern following the difference between the two civil societies above. Created in 1923, the SNEP union defends the rights of all majors and of a few large independents. In 1998, its director was Paul-René Albertini, the manager of Sony France. Only set up in 1993, UPFI groups the remaining independents. In 1998, its director Jean-Michel Fava defined his union as having "un rôle de poil à gratter et d'agitateurs de dossiers", stressing its overall 'oppositional' identity close to that of the SPPF[110]. Ironically however, Fava was the manager of the biggest French independent label, AB Production, which has been extremely successful in the 1990s and manages a turnover similar to that of a major. If the creation of UPFI in 1993 signalled that the interests of the independent sector could be voiced in governmental debates, internal contradictions remained. Overall, the more powerful majors' unions and civil societies win disputes, and influence the state legislation for music.

For instance, in 1985, the FCM, *Fonds pour la Création Musicale*, was set up as a partnership between the state and the civil societies above in order to rechannel the additional copyrights of performers and *producteurs* into the formation of new artists and the development of concerts[111]. This was supposed to boost struggling and beginning artists, often ignored by majors. Unfortunately, each collecting body could only attribute funds within its range, and these funds were not directed at artists *per se*, but at structures like the *Francofolies* festival and the *Bureau Export* of New York, themselves largely financed by the majors' shareholds. In 1997 for instance, the SCPP (mostly majors) attributed 14.3 MF to

'new talents', against 2.5 MF for the SPPF[112]. As a consequence, a vicious circle was established through which new artists were sponsored insofar as major-licensed events could promote them.

Similarly, the government's authorization of record advertisement on TV, in 1989, was to the advantage of majors and large labels which could afford TV broadcasts. TV adverts for records opened the door to the further exposure of already potentially strong artists, who were signed by majors. As sales increased, this law on TV promotion generated more income for the SCPP, which could then re-inject select funds into *'spectacle vivant'*. Boucherie Production, for instance, expressed its desire to use TV advertisement for its atypical artists, but simply could not afford it[113]. While this law favoured the majors, the Ministry of Culture developed a *'Plan Label'* in 1989 designed to help small independent labels only. Acknowledging the fact that the music industry was mainly composed of small-sized firms and that most of them were financially weak, the government set up a music section within the IFCIC, a bank organization for arts, that lent money to *PME*s to invest in new music projects. The state helped to absorb the risks taken, but the companies who were "les plus performantes" (this time including Boucherie) made the greatest profits[114]. The plan ignored the large number of very small independent labels which were structured as *'associations'* for lack of investment to create a *PME* in the first place.

A problem also occurred when some independent labels suggested lowering the price of CDs. The question of a minimum price has been raised in relation to the fact that supermarkets in France distribute 55% of all records on the national territory, against 45% being distributed by specialist retailers (Fnac shops are the most competitive) and a few independent *disquaires*[115]. The sales of records in supermarkets represent only 1% of their income, and the likes of Auchan and Leclerc can discount CD prices and compensate their margins with other products, unlike record specialists. Besides, majors and big independents tend to distribute their 'mainstream' artists in supermarkets where chart albums sell best,

given the consumers who choose to shop there. By contrast, the *producteurs* of 'non-mainstream' artists usually distribute records to specialist retailers who cannot afford to reduce prices. Only government legislation could help the independents' union lower CD prices, in particular by fixing a lower VAT on music. The VAT on records in France is 19.6% today against 17.5% in Britain or 15% in Germany. In 1988, VAT had already decreased from 33.3% to 18.6%, but under Toubon's Ministry (1993-95) it had again risen to 20.6%. In the 1990s, although Lefeuvre noted that "le discours des indés semble mieux passer rue de Valois que celui des majors"[116], the successive Ministers of Culture, in particular Catherine Trautmann and Catherine Tasca, pushed towards its lowering. After 1995, however, they found themselves incapable of touching the VAT as a new law required a European agreement on this point. Moreover, rejected by the French Ministry of Finance which fears a drastic decrease in state income, the Ministry of Culture's efforts in this direction have remained unsuccessful.

c) Helping Creation: CIR and FAIR

One of the most efficient measures to boost French rock music was set up during the RPR government of 1986-88, when there was a greater disposition to create partnerships with the music industry. Under François Léotard, the Ministry of Culture set up the *Centre d'Information du Rock* (CIR), an organ of information on rock music practices, in partnership with the private sector. In 1993, it received 2 million FF as direct state subsidy, but the majority of its budget was financed by civil societies like SCPP and SPPF. The CIR opened three regional branches that relayed music information for local artists in search of opportunities, displayed repertories of music structures and labels in France, offered legal advice to young professionals. In 1994, it associated with other sponsors and created IRMA *(Information et Ressources sur les Musiques Actuelles)*, based in Paris and receiving 4,5 MF

from the state. IRMA centralizes free documentation on music business and organizes courses on how to set up a show or organize a label's budget[117]. Its emphasis is on the grass-root level of becoming professional, helping beginning artists getting by, and in, the business.

In 1989, the Ministry set up the *Fonds d'Aide et d'Initiative pour le Rock* (FAIR) in partnership with private societies of producers and authors (SCPP, SACEM) and other promotional associations (ADAMI, FSV). The state contributed to the project with 2 million FF. There again, whereas the association entailed the term 'rock', many other music styles were addressed, including rap. Every year, the FAIR selects 15 artists who receive a substantial help (around 30,000 FF) for the creation of an album, legal advice, help for artistic formation, promotion and diffusion. Some of the artists selected over the years have marked the 'alternative' French rock scene, as have Têtes Raides, Zebda, Les VRP or Louise Attaque, alongside rap, metal or techno artists. In 2000, a *Libération* journalist asked Claude Guyot, the FAIR director, if this governmental support represented cooption: "un 'assistanat' tel que celui proposé par le Fair n'est-il pas en contradiction avec la démarche même de certains artistes?"[118]. Guyot confessed that indeed there could be a contradiction there, but that from the government's point of view, sponsoring and supporting national creation could only work this way. As we found no evidence of artists who had rejected this help, we underline here again the fact that asking the question of cooption tells more about the cultural assumptions of the journalist than about the complexity of following an artist's career and putting an album together.

d) Example of Decentralization: The Bourges Festival

The founders of the label Bondage stressed that "depuis la scène alternative il se passe des tas de choses dans les régions. Bondage a au moins servi à contester l'hégémonie de

Paris"[119]. The success of their independent label was partly due to the active following of regional audiences, and to the bands' reliance on local structures like stages, squatts or radio shows which broadcast their concerts. Interviewed on France Inter in 2001, the members of Têtes Raides also claimed that they owed their success to the people in the regions[120], demonstrating that French rock music had reached its contemporary fame thanks to the musical activity and concert consumption of the public in the provinces (see Chapter Five for the role of festivals in France). In contrast to decades of centralization, the French provinces had, since the 1970s, developed their cultural activities with more autonomy, local music enthusiasts for instance founding associations to meet their needs. This tendency to decentralization soon became institutionalized with the Socialists, until the regions turned out to spend more money on culture collectively than the Ministry itself. In 1996, the sum of the cultural budget of all the French regions, departments and communes (of the metropole) equalled 5.4% of their general spending, comparatively more than the government (less than 1%). A large part of the state's measures were therefore conducted indirectly through local councils, responsible for funding the music projects of their communities.

One successful example of partnership between the state, local and private interests is the Bourges music festival. The *Printemps* de Bourges, taking place in mid-April every year, started in 1977 at the initiative of a private show producer, Daniel Colling, in partnership with the Communist town council. It was initially a non-profit making association[121]. It was set up with a particular 'anti-mainstream' intention ("résolument le contre-pied des vitrines médiatiques"), an identity regularly reasserted in the media as proved its 2001 edition when *Libération* underlined "les valeurs de contre-culture qui présidèrent à sa destinée"[122]. For instance, as a spokeperson of social criticism, François Béranger inaugurated the first *Printemp*s. Twenty years later, the Bourges festival remains a three-day urban mess with a drunken crowd staggering from one marquee to the next, discovering new music, actually enjoying artists. I met Lisa, a 24 year-old British student, whose laconic interpretation of *Le*

Printemps (in 2000) was: "it was bliss, all these people sitting around everywhere, everyone so cool and smoking spliffs in broad daylight... and the music in the background". Its prime appeal seemed to have been its transgressive identity and communal crowd, which raises questions about the role of the municipal authorities in controlling festivity (Chapter Five). Looking into the setting-up of the festival will give more depth to Lisa's rosy picture.

In 1985, after an attempt at co-management with the municipality, the steady increase of the festival takings allowed Colling, by then the only manager, to reform the association and make it a *SARL*, whose commercial profits became independent from the town council. This made *Le Printemps* a private music business. It quickly became obvious that, even in sustaining the music that appeared to avoid the market laws, one had to deal with marketing tools. Pragmatically, Colling reckoned that "c'est le marché qui décide de nos possibilités", specifying that programming such and such an artist was not just a matter of 'organic' choices, but depended mostly on production and distribution labels. For instance, touring venues were fixed well in advance of the festival dates, sometimes a year or two. The visit of President Mitterrand in 1987 comforted the Socialists' image as supportive of popular music, and contributed to making the (private) festival something of a national institution.

Slowly assessing this success, the Ministry of Culture offered in 1995 a partnership to Colling and became co-producer of *Le Printemps*. The plan was to promote local cultural life by setting up music competitions and springboards (*tremplins)*, in order to select several young artists to play during the festival and help two of them record their first albums. The direct state subsidies (2,1 million in 1995) were uncommitted to the choice of music styles, and Colling acknowledged that "[ces financements] peuvent être considérés comme de véritables subventions". The organization for the promotion of young talents was actually taking over a successful network set up since 1985, in which Têtes Raides took part in 1989 and Zebda in 1990. These subsidies however proved the (momentary) undoing of the festival's 'alternative' image.

Firstly, state interest was motivated by taxes on the production, distribution and record sales, on authors' copyrights, radio airplay and various other indirect deductions. Secondly, this particular deal was struck between the Ministry, the festival and the major EMI. While the organizers of *Le Printemps* could choose which two artists to select for a recording, EMI was responsible for the marketing and distribution of the records. In Fnac shops, the new talents' records were advertized with a special sticker, ensuring the consumer of the 'authenticity' of the artists as newcomers who had made it through the stage network (and they had, too). For instance, the band Paris Combo, produced by Boucherie, was selected in 1997 as part of the *Découvertes* and consequently spotted by the major Universal which later distributed its album (see above in the 'Boucherie' section).

The period when the state got heavily involved was actually criticized for its juxtaposition to commercial interests, as the festival seemed to have lost its 'radical' edge while the programme turned more and more towards *variétés*. *Libération* referred to this as a 'mainstream' drift, a festival "égaré par les sirènes du show-biz"[123]. This, however, only goes to show that the state could not sustain alone a 'free-handed' policy of sponsoring, and that only through an alliance with a major could it provide the festival with financial help.

In 1999, new programmers were appointed and asked to change again the image of the festival. In *Libération*, a journalist found that these new programmers were adequately '*alternatifs*', and had efficiently resumed the festival's initial identity by emphasizing "de la musique éclectique, curieuse et innovante". Contacting the organizers of the Bourges festival and the state officials involved at the time would help evaluate whether this return to 'alternativity' satisfied the state, the region and the private sponsors.

e) Private and National Radios, and Debating the 'Quotas'

The radio is the area of promotion of popular music *par excellence*, with 90% of 15-24 year olds claiming in 1996 to listen to it exclusively for music[124]. It is at the heart of a debate between state policies and the private interests of music businesses. In 1998, RTL was the first radio station in France with 18.5% of audience shares, against 10.8% for the national radio France Inter and 6.8% for NRJ in third position[125]. In the 1970s, radio broadcasting was the monopoly of one national company, *Télédiffusion de France* (TDF), which forbade all other stations beside three 'peripheral' stations, Europe 1, RMC and RTL[126]. Moreover, a national censorship was effective on TV and radio, forcing DJs to be rather conservative in their discourse and musical choices. In response, the decade witnessed the emergence of many pirate local radio stations which often combined an interest in anti-authority politics with a taste for rock music (Carbone 14). In 1978, Giscard d'Estaing reinforced the censorship on radio programmes and this, according to Debray, could only foretell a subsequent 'liberation'[127]. Despite some hesitation from the new PS government, one of Mitterrand's first decisions in 1981 was, indeed, to 'liberate' radio wavelengths of this ban via the creation of *radios libres*, whose DJs were free to broadcast whatever artists they wanted. Ex-pirate radio stations became legal programmes and for a few years they symbolised a musical effervescence, and evoked the Socialists' generosity. *Rock alternatif*, among other genres, benefited from this at local and national levels. In the early 1980s, all these stations, also called *locales privées* in contrast to the state-owned Radio-France and to other older private ones, were non-profit making associations.

After serious controversy within the PS, a law authorizing advertisement on local private radios was voted in 1984, leading to the polarization of two approaches to music broadcast[128]. Some radio managers expressed the need to work with sponsors, and competition among them led to a 'mainstreaming' of music programmes. "Si tu veux que la pub rentre, il faut faire de l'audience et si tu veux faire de l'audience, il faut passer de la

daube: l'équation était toute simple", recalled Bernard Lenoir, a famous France Inter DJ, about the 1980s[129]. *'Daube'* is a rude word referring here to the music that met the general tastes of the French and attracted the largest audience. In the mid-1980s, it applied to French and international (mostly Anglo-American) *variétés*. For Antoine Lefébure, the creator of a pirate radio in 1977, "les socialistes sont passés directement de l'interdiction à la loi du marché", a bitter comment that summarized much of the Left-wing disappointment with PS measures then[130]. Most commercial radio stations refused to broadcast French rock music which had a relatively small following. Meanwhile, the development of the local stage network, ideologically opposed to majors and commercial media, comforted the 'non-mainstream' identity of French rock music.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, most radio stations are, like record companies, concentrated in multinationals. The most powerful private one, NRJ, broadcasts "du hit, rien que du hit", songs described as "valeurs sûres" that are expected to attract audiences[131]. This stands in sharp contrast to the ideology of 'non-mainstream' producers and artists supposedly taking 'risks' for the sake of originality. Moreover, some private radio stations like NRJ want to become music producers and/or distributors, which should soon lead to a greater monopoly in the music system, with home artists broadcast again and again, influencing the sales. Both the independent and the majors' unions, UPFI and SNEP, have asked the Ministry for help this time, and a new law is currently under study[132].

Without sponsors and outside economic competition (if not prestige competition), a few stations continue to put forward a presumably 'libertarian' stance which strengthens their sense of marginality in contrast to the concentrated similarity of the commercial stations. Jet FM, based in Nantes and broadcasting for the West, is a local and private radio that dedicates hours to 'non-mainstream' music. Many of the interviewees I met in Brittany quoted it as their favourite station. From Toulouse, the local programme Cigale Mécanik introduces its music selection thus: "[nous diffusons] l'univers du rock parallèle en France, celui qui n'est

que peu diffusé, écouté par une jeunesse contestataire et différente, hors des sentiers du show-biz; le rock alternatif, le rock à tendance subversive, souterraine et hexagonale"[133]. Including bands we already mentioned, like Mano Negra or Zebda, its broadcasting choice represents the widespread assumption that French rock music epitomizes 'alternativity', and that it responds to a national ('*hexagonal*') time-honoured identity. In a brochure published by the Région Rhône-Alpes (1996), the assessment of these associative or private but non-commercial radios praised the eclecticism of their music broadcast, using the same rhetoric as that of 'independent' labels: "les radios associatives sont ouvertes aux musiques du monde, se montrent plus curieuses que les médias commerciaux"[134]. Issued in an official brochure, this statement assumed and comforted the existence of a cultural dichotomy between commercial stations and a so-called 'alternative', more challenging culture, itself 'naturally' supported by the state. As Morley and Robins phrase it, these media compose and redefine, on a daily basis, the invention of a national, 'resistant' and 'authentic' identity, by creating boundaries between national and private institutions.

The national radio company Radio France is owned by the state. Its general-interest branch France Inter is particularly relevant to our study as it broadcasts a selective music style, almost always different from the chart songs heard on commercial radios. France Inter has two or three music programmes a week dedicated to the discovery of new talents and to what is generally accepted as 'alternative', French or international, music[135]. This station constantly emphasizes an 'eclectic' playlist, which the director Jean-Luc Hees carefully reassessed after a strike in 1999. For him, the national radio service should fulfil challenging and intellectual needs, and its pride and success could only derive from 'high' challenges[136]. The music programmes of France Inter thus correspond to the state approach to the *auteur* sector. The independent label Boucherie recognized its help: "à part France-Inter, Boucherie n'a jamais eu droit à l'accueil des grosses radios du circuit"[137]. In particular, the programme

Là-bas si j'y suis, a travel documentary by Daniel Mermet, plays French rock music in between reports (La Tordue, Têtes Raides, Manu Chao, Zebda). In January 2002, for instance, Mermet hosted a show where José Bové, the Left-wing eco-leader, and Aminata Traoré, the Malian anti-globalisation and feminist activist, were present. The theme of that programme was resistance to corporate globalisation, and the band Têtes Raides were present to play music live between discussions. Mermet stressed the impact of the international 'civil society' in offering "une alternative à la mondialisation économique", emphasizing his argument with such terms as '*dissidence*' and '*résistance*'. He advertised, on this national station, political beliefs that are generally associated with left-wing (if not 'radical' left-wing) politics, and which French rock artists have adopted since the mid-1980s[138]. Mermet is occasionally criticized for his biased opinions on a 'public-interest' radio, but the fact that his prime-time programme remains one of France Inter's top broadcasts is representative of the French state's liberal policy towards left-wing journalism. It is clear that the 'imagined community' of listeners of *Là-bas si j'y suis* establish connections between Mermet's general left-wing stance and the French music artists selected for broadcast (see Chapter Four)[139].

The notion of cultural 'resistance' in national media was also illustrated in May 2000 when FIP radios, local 'outposts' of Radio France, were doomed to close. The French rock bands Zebda and Louise Attaque came to support the workers' demonstration, and stressed the usefulness of "l'exception culturelle du service public français"[140]. Moreover, when Radio France launched Le Mouv' in 1997, a station supervised by the Ministry of Culture, it was presented as "une alternative à ce que font les autres radios FM pour jeunes telles que NRJ. Notre rôle est de faire, dans le cadre de notre format rock, découvrir de nouveaux artistes, de prendre des risques"[141]. The fact that Le Mouv' is supported by the state, and that it uses the same rhetoric of discovery and risk as 'independent' labels or 'alternative' artists, is highly revealing of the well-spread consciousness of the necessity to 'differ from' or 'oppose' a 'mainstream' music believed to be threatening (see Chapter Four for the

audience's reaction to 'mainstream' media). The fact that this government-funded radio repeats a commonly assumed definition of 'authenticity' reinforces the polarization of 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream' cultural identities. Presenting its national specificity as a 'resistant' niche is perhaps Radio France's best way to remain competitive against private stations.

The radio quotas, or the Toubon law on the regulation of music broadcast in France, were voted in 1994 with the intention to boost national creation and react against the heavy broadcast of Anglo-American music on French stations. The law stated that all French radios had two years to fulfil the requirement of broadcasting at least 40% of French artists, including 50% of new talents or new albums[142]. This was imposed only during prime-time airplay from 6 pm to 10 pm, and mostly favoured French rap which, with its profusive lyrics in French but 'cool' image, met the law's requirement and the 'hit' demands of private stations like NRJ. However, the measure was not easy to respect. In 1998, the interdiction to broadcast for 24 hours was taken against an Orléans station which did not fulfil its 40% quota[143]. After this incident, it became manifest that few stations actually followed the law. The unions responsible for collecting taxes on public broadcast (SACEM and SNEP) argued in its favour as it boosted their income. On the other hand, most stations and the union of independent labels, UPFI, argued for its watering down, complaining that their artists working in music niches could not compete with the majors' heavy production of French *variétés* artists. Moreover, the law was supposed to encourage young artists, but stipulated that a 'new talent' was an artist with less than two Gold albums. This was in fact profitable for majors which, always in partnership with private radios, could redistribute and play the records of their French artists with average sales. The law on quotas aimed at protecting French language, and hoped to boost national music creation, but it reinforced an already-established dichotomy between all-music commercial radios, and the national, general-

interest branches of Radio France. With its limited play-list, the proportion of francophone artists broadcast on France Inter increased from 54% in 1995 to 60.2% in 1996, well above the required 40%. By contrast, the proportion of francophone artists broadcast on the all-music radio NRJ barely reached 39% in 1996[144]. Thus, the state interests in the prestige and 'quality' of its national music hardly modified the commercial motives of the already most successful stations.

This section shows that there is a certain national consensus about the 'resistant' identity of French rock music, and that certain state-funded projects have aimed at boosting that particular identity within French popular music. In this sense, the question of 'cooption' should be reconsidered as a welcome 'support' from the state to 'alternative' artists, as a guarantee for their expression of 'opposition' to the power of majors. However, the French state has also responded to the influence of powerful private unions, and hardly influenced or regulated the production and broadcast of French music on the national territory. What transpires is that, despite an ongoing -if vague- trust in the concept of 'exceptionalism', successive French governments of the 1980s and 1990s have tightened connections with the music industry, however 'private' or foreign.

This was demonstrated by Jean-Philippe Joseph, who scrutinized the links between Vivendi (which bought the music major Universal) and the elite members of the French state[145]. Joseph concluded that "le pouvoir politique ne se pense plus qu'en position de soutien derrière les entreprises françaises", and that whether French-owned or not, transnational companies were no longer competing with the French state. Rather, the French state aimed to support successful companies. For example, Laurent Fabius, the Socialist Minister of Finance, partly exempted Vivendi from taxes in 2000 during its merger with Universal (see note 145). Meanwhile, many French rock artists and journalists have ongoingly re-invented the notion of 'resistance' as an identity to assert, rendered all the more

meaningful since majors have attempted to use similar lines of arguments to justify their own production of French rock music. The genre has indeed become a site of struggle for opposite sides since Messier claimed, in various talk-shows, his respect for the 'dissident' music of bands like Zebda and Noir Désir, indirectly produced by his company. The artists concerned responded to his vocal 'cooption' through TV declarations and articles in the press, wishing to distance themselves from Messier's use of what they believed were 'their' arguments[146]. The heavily mediatized dispute over the meaning of 'authentic' rebellion, to which we return below, is representative of the ideological weight of the term in French cultural life. The following chapter focuses on the contradictory discourses that French society has shaped about 'resistance', and how these are echoed or challenged in French rock music.

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[1] Morley and Robins on the 'invention of tradition' and how cultural institutions have "played a fundamental role in promoting national unity at a symbolic level (...) Offering the audience an image of itself and of the nation as a knowable community", 1989, p.31.

[2] In 1998, Universal realized the largest merger ever in the music industry by acquiring Polygram. Sometimes referred to as Unigram, it leads the market with 22 to 33% of market shares in the world, depending on its implantation (*L'Année du Disque*, 1999). The French conglomerate Vivendi then bought Universal in 2000. For more details, see *L'Année du Disque 1999*; Lefeuvre, 1998; 'Les milliards de la cyber-musique', *L'Expansion* 640, 01/03/2001.

[3] The recession witnessed since the development of the Internet and the possibility of exchanging music for free is an issue we do not deal with in this thesis. Firstly, our period of study (1981-2001) focuses on the concentration of music majors while small labels attempted to 'resist' it. Secondly, the Internet has not been a widespread tool of information and communication for French rock audiences.

[4] Vivendi/Universal now leads the French music market with up to 36% of market shares, *Télérama* 2175, 23/01/02. Let us also note that before Messier headed this merger, the French Pascal Nègre already headed the music section of Universal. The chairman of EMI for Great Britain is Alain Lévy, another French man.

[5] 5.7% is the French market share in the world for 1997 (Lefeuvre, 1998, p.22).

[6] See Warner with its joint-venture with the Internet servicer AOL.

[7] Units of music sold is only one aspect of music consumption, as Chapter Five studies the 'live' practices of audiences in concerts and festivals.

[8] *L'Année du disque 1999*, p.134.

[9] Lefeuvre, 1998, p.78. A table of labels and majors is in the appendix.

[10] Eric Lacoeuilhe, 'Le Top 50: Fumisterie?' in Kernel (ed), 1987, pp.95-102.

[11] Kernel, *ibid*, p.9.

[12] Hidalgo, 1991, p.93-4.

[13] Spontaneous answers given by a quota panel of French citizens over 18, *Les goûts musicaux des français*, enquête Sofrès pour la SACEM, publication SACEM, janvier 1999. The 'quota' panel combines age, gender, social and regional data.

[14] Figures vary for the financial weight of French independent labels on the French market and in the world. See Lefeuvre p.114 for 1996 with an income of 1.7 billion FF, representing 10 to 20% of the French market. See *L'Année du disque 1999*, p.45 for 1998: the French independent production alone (not the distribution) gathered an income of 1.1 billion FF, 30% of the French market.

[15] Lefeuvre, 1998 and D'Angelo, 1997.

[16] For 1997, the approximative global turnover of the music industry was of 38 billion FF, with Polygram's share amounting to 17%, and Sony's to 16% (Lefeuvre p.71).

[17] *L'Année du disque 1999*, p.33.

[18] A problem arises in translating in English the term *producteur*, as it does not cover the same reality as 'producer'. In an independent French production label, the manager or *producteur* may combine the Anglo-American skills of producer and A&R manager. For a clearer distinction, see Antoine Hennion,"The production of Success", in Frith and Goodwin (eds), *On Record*, note 1 p.206. In this thesis, we use the French term *producteur*.

[19] Louise Attaque's first album approximated 2 million copies sold between 1997 and 1999, ranking second after the 5 million copies sold of Notre Dame de Paris (live and studio versions combined) between 1998 and 1999 (*L'Année du Disque*).

[20] Negus (1992) labours the point that for X number of artists who 'make it', there is an array of total financial failures. Besides, majors face failures too, and EMI had to make 1,800 employees redundant in March 2002.

[21] Lefeuvre, 1998, p.110; D'Angelo, 1997.

[22] Personal communication with Philippe Barbot, *Télérama* journalist, December 2001.

[23] This and the following quotes come from the interview of the Bondage founders, Jean-Yves Prieur and Marsu, in *Les Inrockuptibles* 206, July 1999, p.37. See Erwan Marcill, *Bérurier Noir*, 1997.

[24] The law of 1901 on associations stands for the free grouping of individuals (two being the minimum), whose aim is to develop the object of their association (for instance, a music band) "dans un autre but que de partager les bénéfices" (*Quid*).

[25] In 1985. See Anne Benetollo, *Rock et Politique*, 1999, p.114-115.

[26] *Inrockuptibles* 206, July 1999.

[27] Negus (1992) debunks the myth of 'indie' rock music, and its 'underground' ideology, in GB and the USA by studying the personnel of the music industry (pp.54-5 and p.61).

[28] We cannot quote all French independent labels inclined to this discourse, but the label Kerig, based in Brittany, is one striking example. Mostly producing retro rock bands (Casse-Pipe, Jack O'Lanternes), Kerig boasts its "goût de l'aventure", its "incessante curiosité" and its preference for musical "mélange détonnant", all expressions emphasizing a taste for risk or destabilization, in opposition to the presumably tedious and mechanized monotony of other labels. See www.msai-music.com/kerig

[29] See Morley and Robins, 1989, p.27; Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas*, 1984; Lucy Mazdon, *Encore Hollywood*, 2000.

[30] The GATT treatee of 1993 and the Uruguay round. See Jean-Philippe Joseph, from *Observatoire des transnationales*, who specifies that the defense of 'cultural exceptionalism' is purely a political concept with no legal implications. 'La pensée Universal', *Télérama* 2715, 23/01/02.

[31] SARL: Société à responsabilité limitée: "La responsabilité pécuniaire est limitée au montant des apports; les parts sociales ne sont pas négotiables" (*Robert*).

[32] Lefeuvre, 1998, p.117.

[33] "On aurait gardé les groupes avec nous tout en leur permettant de grandir", *Inrockuptibles* 206, p.37.

[34] Lefeuvre, 1998.

[35] Interview of the French rock band Les Thugs who commented on the end of *rock alternatif*'s independent labels, *Inrockuptibles* 225, January 2000, p.82.

[36] *L'Echo des Côtelettes* 12, Autumn 1998. Also online: www.chez.com/boucherieprod/index1.html

[37] *Mano Negra, Le livre*, 1994.

[38] The influence of ska music in France is difficult to assess, but its occurrence in the late 1980s was undoubtedly linked to the outburst of white British ska from a few years before. In the 1990s, many French artists were influenced by ska, as was the band La Ruda Salska, whose models were Selecter and The Specials. *Variétés* also integrated ska with the notorious hit 'La salsa du démon' by L'Orchestre du Splendid (1980).

[39] Louis-Jean Calvet (1989) and Tewfik Hakem (1999).

[40] *L'écho des Côtelettes* 12 (1998).

[41] *L'Année du Disque* 1999.

[42] *Inrockuptibles* 206, p.37. Boucherie's *société civile* was created with an initial capital of 2000FF only.

[43] *L'Echo des Côtelettes* 12, 1998, p.12.

[44] The female ACI Clarika is another example. She was initially produced by Boucherie and then went to Tristar, French branch of Sony.

[45] Quoted in *Mano Negra, Le Livre* (chapter 6).

[46] www.inrockuptibles.com, interview of Chao in 1998.

[47] Emmanuel Sepchat, *EDJ* 15/04/99. '*Balloche*' is slang for *bal populaire* or *bal musette*.

[48] *Echo des Côtelettes* 12, 1998.

[49] In Chapter Three, we quote the retro rock band Têtes Raides which similarly conceives that its lighting show, theatre-like, breaks down the rock music routine.

[50] Adrian Rifkin, 'French Popular Song', 1991, p.204.

[51] Songs 'Lettres de l'autoroute', 'Vendredi 13', 'Le fou au chien fou', 'Il incesta'.

[52] *Intermittent* is the French unemployment status for artists and art technicians who work for more than 500 hours or 43 fees a year. They get unemployment benefit when out of work, provided they fulfil the above. All amounts are given in French Francs in this thesis as it was the currency at the time of research.
[53] That programme's 'alternative' identity is highlighted in Chapter Four about the audiences' choice of media.
[54] *'Beur'* in French is the backward and shortened version of the word *'arabe'*. For divided opinions on its usage, see Chapter Three.
[55] We compare them later with Carte de Séjour, a failed attempt from 1986 at 'authentic' Franco-Arab rock music.
[56] "Nous qui vivons de raï, de rock et de musette, à la périphérie des succès cathodiques...", 'Toulouse', 1995.
[57] *Télérama* 2566, 17/03/99, p.31; *EDJ*, 15-21/04/99, p.62; *Le Monde*, 08/11/98, p.27.
[58] "La musique produite en France est identifiée clairement comme française à l'étranger, qu'il s'agisse du raï, du rap, de la chanson à géometrie variable, de la Mano Negra, des Négresses Vertes, d'iam, de l'accordéon et de l'oud", *Le Monde*, 08/11/98.
[59] *Charlie-Hebdo* 26/01/2000, p.10-11.
[60] "Proposant des chansons populaires et accessibles, on a toujours voulu avoir du succès (...). Par ailleurs, connaissant l'attente des radios et du public, on pensait que ce titre marcherait, surtout à cette époque de l'année", *Libération*, 06/09/99, p.32.
[61] The talk-shows of Thierry Ardisson 'Tout le monde en parle' for France 2, Michel Field for Canal Plus, Pernaud for the TF1 One o'clock news, and Ruth Elkrief for TF1 again.
[62] In *Libération*, one read "Il convient *illico* de replacer leur action musicale et sociale dans un contexte autrement plus réfléchi qu'il n'y paraît", 06/09/99.
[63] *Charlie-Hebdo*, 26/01/00, cartoon by Charb.
[64] According to Zebda, these examples of 'cooption' happened in January 2002 during a France Inter interview, and on TV, during an argument with José Bové, when Messier justified his own 'resistance' by quoting his support for Zebda. *Le Monde* 14/03/02.
[65] "La nouvelle chanson française (La Tordue, Casse-Pipe, les Têtes Raides), apparue au tout début des années quatre-vingt-dix dans les milieux rock et parfois qualifiée de 'néoréaliste', donne une seconde vie au genre [réaliste]", *Chanson française et francophone*, p.175.
[66] *Chanson francaise et francophone*, p.411. See Paquotte, *Télérama* 2667 (21/02/01).
[67] ".. Et une fille dans le groupe, c'est une autre approche: on était un peu 'croquenots' jusque là", commented Christian Olivier, singer and main composer of Têtes Raides, *Télérama* 2667 (21/02/01) p.58.
[68] *Ibid*, p.59.
[69] Gildas Lefeuvre, 1998, p.87.
[70] *Télérama* 2667.
[71] All figures officially given by the communication manager of the label.
[72] Vincent Frèrebeau: "la semaine qui a suivi les Victoires, leur album est monté de vingt places dans le top albums des ventes", *Libération* 09/03/02, p.47.
[73] Personal communication from Marc Thonon.
[74] Noir Désir is a French rock band that we mention again in Chapter Three. Their 'authentic' credibility is high, yet they are neither *métissé* nor retro in style, so that their specificity overlaps this study.
[75] "En marge des coups de marketing (...) Ils se sont construits à l'école de la scène", *La chanson française et francophone*, p.310.
[76] *Libération* 06/04/1998, p.32. See also *Télérama* 2613.
[77] Laurent Macherey, quoted in *L'Année du disque 1999* p.45.
[78] In 1998, Boucherie regretfully increased its CD prices from 100 to 110FF because of commercial pressure. *L'Echo des Côtelettes* 12, 1998.
[79] This quote and the following ones from *Buzz* 34, p.29.
[80] Gérard Mermet, *Francoscopie 1999,* p.379.
[81] D'Angelo, 1997, p.178.
[82] Despite several changes of governments, of ministers and three cohabitations, the budget for culture always varied slightly below the announced 1%, concluding our reseach period in 2001 with 16.5 billion FF, representing 0.994% of the total budget that year. See online www.culture.gouv.fr
[83] Looseley, 1995, p.113; Laurence Bell, "Democratic Socialism", 1997, p.49.
[84] Alec Hargeaves, *Post-colonial cultures in France*, 1997, p.184. See Chapter Three.
[85] See Arif Dirlik's remark about "the articulation of native cultures in a capitalist narrative", in *The Postcolonial Aura*, 1994.
[86] In France, "the traditional answer to this dilemma [the dilemma of expressing one's identity in a capitalist narrative] has been the production of a state-subsidized 'cinema of quality'", Lucy Mazdon, *Translation and Nation*, 1996, p.194.
[87] The approach was a "processus de légitimation de nouveaux domaines culturels d'intervention", in the wake of the general project of pluralism; D'Angelo, 1997, p.116.

[88] Looseley, 1995, p.124.
[89] Daniel Roussel, 'L'état, le rock et la chanson', 1995, p.50.
[90] D'Angelo, 1997, p.116.
[91] Jacques Baumel from *Le Figaro*, 1986, in Looseley, 1995, pp.162-3.
[92] For a colourful depiction of Lang's personal investment in the rock policy, see Looseley, *ibid*, pp.160-61.
[93] Teillet, 1993, p.74. Teillet shows how rock music (including Anglo-American rock) could gradually enter the *'champ des possibles'* of the Ministry of Culture, but does not quote any French artists who benefited from this policy.
[94] Harris poll in 1985, reproduced in Looseley, *ibid*, p.160.
[95] "The chief innovation in the Ministry's recognition lay in its receptiveness to an existing trend", Looseley, 1995, p.125.
[96] Guy Hocquenghem denounced *'l'art fonctionnaire'* of several artists and intellectuals who had signed a manifesto led by Jack Lang in 1985 (Looseley p.165). No French rock artists were in the list. Guy Hocquenghem, *Lettre ouverte*, 1986.
[97] Looseley, 1995, p.125.
[98] The FAIR director Claude Guyot mentioned that a few artists had refused her sponsor, but did not name them. *Libération* 18/01/2000, p.39.
[99] Interview for 'Trafic d'influences', France Inter, 28/02/2000.
[100] The Ministry of Environment was for instance responsible for soundproofing a few concert halls. Roussel, 1995.
[101] Looseley, 1995, p.125.
[102] See www.culture.gouv.fr
[103] After unsuccessful attempts at getting figures from the Ministry of Culture on the budget for French popular music only, I added all figures given by Roussel in 1995, representing direct subsidies from the state and helps in creating partnerships with civil societies or labels. This sum amounted to 28.8 million FF for 1993-94. I compared this sum to the culture budget for 2001, 16.5 billion FF, to which 28.8 million only represented 0.19%. In addition, 11.5 million FF were attributed by the Ministry between 1989 and 1993 to build new halls and help independent labels.
[104] *Le Monde*, 04/06/1982 p.25, quoted in Looseley, 1995, p.121.
[105] Lang's speech from November 1981, quoted in Looseley, *ibid*, p.123 and p.158.
[106] All acronyms are in the appendix.
[107] Lefeuvre, 1998, pp.190-213.
[108] Before then, these people were paid but did not benefit from a particular judicial status that allowed them, for instance, to form unions. See Ory, 1983, p.82 for the treatment of the "crise de la chanson française", occurring in the late 1970s when the SACEM alerted the government to the fact that taxes on national creation were lower than that of foreign artists. Already then, the government supported *chanson d'auteurs*.
[109] Figures from Lefeuvre, 1998, p.194.
[110] Quoted in *L'Année du disque 1999*, p.45.
[111] Roussel, 1995.
[112] Lefeuvre, 1998, pp.201 and 204.
[113] *Echo des Côtelettes* 12, 1998.
[114] Roussel, 1995, p.50.
[115] Lefeuvre, 1998, p.126.
[116] *L'année du disque 1999*, p.45.
[117] Roussel, 1995, p.47.
[118] *Libération*, 18/01/2000, p.39.
[119] *Inrockuptibles* 206, July 1999.
[120] Albert Algoud, 'La partie continue', France Inter, 20/03/2001.
[121] For this information and the following quotes, see Stéphane Davet et Franck Tenaille *Le Printemps de Bourges,* 1996. See p.101 for statistics on 'le public du Printemps'.
[122] *Libération* 23/04/2001, p.38.
[123] *Libération* 23/04/2001.
[124] D'Angelo,1997, p.80.
[125] Mermet, 1998, p.373.
[126] *Libération* 05/05/2001, anniversary of May 1981, p.12.
[127] "L'illégalité présente fraye courageusement la voie à la loi du futur, les violations du statut périmé de 1972 au nouveau statut de la radio-télévision française de 1982". Régis Debray, *Modeste contribution*, 1978, p.61 (postword to his text of 1978).
[128] The then Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy was quoted saying "je ne veux pas de radios fric", *Libération* 05/05/01 about 1981 promises, p.13.

[129] Bernard Lenoir has worked on TV music programme Les Enfants du Rock in the 1980s, then set up a rock music radio programme on France Inter, called *Les Inrockuptibles*. The latter now has its own weekly rock magazine and a music festival every August.
[130] *Libération*, 05/05/01.
[131] Christophe Sabot, NRJ's music programmer, in *L'année du disque 1999*, p.64.
[132] *Ibid*, p.62.
[133] See www.radio-fmr.net/cigmek
[134] Grégory Ramos, in *Musiques Urbaines,* 1996, p.61.
[135] 'Sur le pont les artistes' by Isabelle Dhordain; JL Foulquier and Ambre Foulquier; Lenoir; music programmes like those of Philippe Meyer and François Morel on Saturday mornings (in 2000-2001).
[136] Jean-Luc Hees on France Inter, assessing two weeks of strikes in November 1999. He was replying to listeners who had regretted that the station had broadcast mainstream music during the strike.
[137] *Echo des Côtelettes* 12, 1998.
[138] Programme of the 18/01/02. Daniel Mermet is a notorious supporter of the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, and the Chirac's election in May 2002 may signal the end of his radio programme. See Chapter Three for more examples of Mermet's support for French rock music in particular, and 'anti-corporate globalisation' in general.
[139] It is highly possible that the change of government (to the Right) in May 2002 will bring about a change of programmes on France Inter in September, and possibly cancel Mermet's programme.
[140] *Libération* 25/05/2000, p.31.
[141] Quoted in *Les Inrockuptibles* 225, January 2000, p.67. See also *Inrockuptibles* 257, 25/09/2000, p.81 on Férarock.
[142] Lefeuvre, 1998, p.244.
[143] *L'Année du disque 1999*, p.64.
[144] Lefeuvre, 1998.
[145] Both Vivendi and the government recruit from the elite school ENA, and the ex-Minister of Culture Catherine Tasca was, from 1993 to 1997, the administrative head of a branch of the private company Canal Plus, now part of the Vivendi conglomerate. 'Vol au dessus d'un nid de profits', *Télérama* 2715, 23/01/02.
[146] See *Le Monde* 14/03/02, p.34; *Libération* 09 and 10/03/02, p.47.

III. National Identities in French Rock Music

Together with material determinants, discourses and ideologies play a part in shaping the identity of French rock music. Locating the perception of French rock music as 'alternative' within national discourses about French identity, this chapter examines the contemporary use of national history by French rock artists. Our approach is to know how past discourses of what constitutes 'Frenchness' have influenced, and/or counter-influenced, the 'alternative' identity of the genre. The concept of national identity is commonly understood, nowadays, as an inventive process, as the ongoing selection and presentation of past events in a certain light, for the purpose of constructing one's group in terms of similarities and differences from perceived 'others'. As Benedict Anderson puts it, "the nation is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign"[1]. His definition highlights the process of identity construction as 'imagined', and the confluence of commonality and distinction for the purpose of identifying 'groups'.

French rock music attempts to project universalism and fraternity as contemporary goals, and apparently disrupts any national or 'group' boundaries. However, its insistence on 'alternativity' also generates a series of exclusions, and thus appears a contradictory culture. Similarly, competing readings of what constitutes a national identity can coexist. For instance, if Republicanism has been the dominant ideology in France in the past 200 years, it has contributed to legitimizing, on the one hand, a certain discourse of 'resistance' against oppression (more recently applied against global trade), while accomodating itself to capitalism, especially since the Second World War. Using Morley and Robins's perception that a community invents itself by 'mobilising' a certain past, perceived and 'imagined' as common to the group, this chapter questions the contemporary reappropriation of French history by French rock music, in particular by looking at the songs' lyrics and at the discourse of artists as interviews given to the media. This chapter also focuses on the variety

of interpretations possible and processes of 'selection' operated by French rock artists, for certain contemporary purposes.

As Morley and Robins emphasize, "the politics of identity is examined in terms of the contemporary re-invention of tradition and re-evaluation of 'heritage'"[2]. In particular, apprehending the past is crucial to the genre of retro rock music, which selects elements of French history for a 'performance' of identity in the present. Its reliance on nostalgia raises the paradox of choosing a pre-modern and mostly white community in the perspective of articulating a contemporary and potentially universal ideal of fraternity. Nostalgia, as the aesthetic choice to convey 'pastness', is also the opportunity to debate issues of postmodernism.

In addition, French Republicanism has theoretically integrated all, socially, racially or culturally different individuals, to the transcending goal of national citizenship and democratic equality[3]. Being French has thus relied on the negation of cultural, ethnic or social differences, and reduced national identity to the abstraction of republican citizenship. A limitation, which became very salient after decolonisation, was the relative inability of Republicanism to cope with or integrate the expression of cultural differences. For Diana Pinto, writing in the 1980s, the manifestly different ethnicity of North African immigrants particularly challenged the traditionally white and centralized identity of France[4]. France's Jacobinism was undergoing, as she saw it, a 'mellowing', pushed by a political current on the Left welcoming more flexibility for the inclusion of differences. The music of *rock métissé*, which appeared at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, has actively included foreign imports into French music, and this chapter examines how it paralleled debates for 'alternative' models to traditional Republicanism. French rock music is thus 'plugged into' different sets of discourses about the nation, dealing with issues related to the contemporary signification of, mostly, Republicanism and (anti-) globalisation.

A. Republicanism between Conservatism and 'Radicalism'

1. Zebda: Participative Democracy and the 'Unfinished Revolution'

Insofar as they articulate an 'authentic' music that ponders and exposes social injustice, French rock artists have reflected on the distress and poverty brought by capitalism, and followed the evolution of the French Left. Their 'political' commitment has often combined a call for democracy with the criticism of neo-liberal economics, the latter believed to contradict the full development of the former. From Bruant in the late nineteenth century to artists in the late twentieth, the emphasis on 'serious' lyrics has almost always followed a broad allegiance to the Left, without being party specific[5]. In 2000, the Toulouse band Zebda claimed for instance that "des socialistes à l'extrême-gauche, il y a un vaste terrain sur lequel on peut s'impliquer", demonstrating their overall sympathy for the Left and their filiation with earlier 'serious' French artists[6]. Zebda is an interesting band for its members inscribe themselves in contemporary politics, and elaborate on what it means to be French in their songs and declarations in the media.

As the son of Algerian immigrants growing up in France, Zebda's frontman Magyd Cherfi agrees with the abstract principle of French republican citizenship. His lyrics are crammed with such declarations as "moi je suis Français, j'ai tous mes papiers, je suis bien intégré, je suis dans la norme française", or "je suis laïc et républicain"[7]. He has taken laicity and integration to heart, agreeing to shed his Arab identity: "Beur, (...) c'est une transition. Nous étions arabes, puis beurs avant de devenir français. C'est l'aspect positif de la société"[8]. When he worked as an *éducateur* (social worker), his role was to convince other immigrants' children of the suitability of the French identity model: "on se crevait à dire aux mômes d'intégrer un repère démocratique, une identité française, la leur"[9]. Cherfi's slightly disheartened tone implied that he trusted the republican framework to be adequate for the socialization of this *banlieue* youth, adequate for taking them into account as individuals. He insisted that following the republican procedures of representability was the only way for

them to assert their identity. Cherfi also stressed the necessity to reassess, again and again and in the face of reactionary tendencies, the theoretical 'righteousness' or 'humanism' of the republican model. Contrasting his music with, in his own words, tendencies of anger in French rap, he considered that "[liberté, égalité, fraternité] voilà la vraie colère, le vrai combat, celui de la maturité"[10]. Through its songs and comments made in interviews, Zebda has thus carved a rather conventional identity space, taking republican politics seriously and appealing to the citizens' rational sense of selves.

Meanwhile, the band's 'commitment' to contemporary politics has also assumed a more 'radical' edge, as when the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (LCR) sponsored its 1997 *Motivé* album. This album covered different revolutionary hymns from various nationalities, including the French 'Le Chant des Partisans', the Mexican 'La Cucaracha', or the Italian 'Bella Ciao', inscribing Zebda's discourse on an international level[11]. On the national territory, Zebda has also operated a series of selections and simplifications about French history which contributed to redefining Republicanism as a model of potential 'dissidence'. This was most salient in the winter of 2000-2001, when some members of the band created an electoral roll in preparation for the Toulouse 2001 municipal elections. The roll was called *Motivé-e-s*, taking after their LCR-sponsored album, and its broad identity was *'une liste citoyenne'*. It was not (initially) affiliated to a specific party, although it remained linked to the Left. In a radio interview in December 2000, Cherfi explained that participative democracy was the roll's central credo, that his desire was to "renouer avec la politique, le sérieux et l'engagement" (*sérieux* repeating the idea of *maturité* from above), and that the main option for achieving this goal was "foutre le bordel"[12]. The leap from republican attachment in terms of defense of citizenship, to disruption (*bordel*) as a means of achieving the former, indicates a historical simplification. Although it had a revolutionary basis, the French Republic was built by combining order and control to the idea of 'rebellion', and by installing a hierarchical system within its apparently 'equal' frame. Thus,

Cherfi's selective re-phrasing of French history equates republican allegiance with desires of disruption, which contributes to the re-invention of contemporary French identity (and of himself, his band and his audience) as 'resistant'[13].

The *Motivé-e-s* ran for the municipal elections in March 2001, gathered 12% of votes on the first round and redistributed them towards the Socialist candidate François Simon in the second round. Simon did not win, but the impact of this rock and politics combination attracted an unprecedented following, which points to the readiness of a section of French audiences, and voters, to imagine their contemporary national identity as 'committed' and potentially disruptive of a perceived oppression. In revitalizing a sense of 'rebellion' as inherent to French Republicanism, Zebda signals that the abstract goal of the French Republic, democracy, is not yet fully obtained and remains topical. As a consequence, disrupting institutions (*le bordel*) could be the means to obtain further social justice and fraternity (*le sérieux* is understood as equity and fairness too). As historians noted, the central question about French identity may be the 'unfinished' character of its revolution, or the ongoing relevance of this concept to justify new struggles. In rekindling a 'power to the people' discourse, Zebda contributes to situating democracy as a valid goal towards which to tend, although the premise for considering 'dissidence' as emblematic of Republicanism is partially flawed.

In the face of more conservative forces in French politics, Zebda and the left-wing coalition of 2000 have appeared as the unique champion of democracy and 'rebellion', and thus as the keepers of 'authenticity'. The national radio programme *Là-bas si j'y suis*, mentioned in the previous chapter, dedicated one of its series to the band's struggle, which played a part in locating Zebda's cultural identity at the heart of contemporary 'radical' politics. Parallel examples in the French rock music culture illustrated that the genre could be perceived to 'logically' twin with a left-wing discourse, and that both the Left and that music could be understood as enmeshed and 'radical' French identities[14]. We will see later how

Zebda also criticizes the centralizing tendencies of Republicanism from the double viewpoint of the region (Toulouse) and the North African immigrant.

2. Jolie Môme: the French Revolution and its Abstract Symbol

Another illustration of a French rock music band appropriating a traditional republican discourse into seemingly radical politics is Jolie Môme. The band was named after Léo Ferré's song (1960) and bears strong connotations of the Parisian '*populo*', from the accent of the singers to their praise of the Parisian resistance during the Commune. Jolie Môme combines electric guitars with acoustic instruments and the accordion, bridging *rock alternatif* and retro rock. In their song *L'Insurgé* (1999), the band refers to the 1871 Paris Commune when bloody riots between the Parisian communards, the French army *insurgés* and the Versaillais left about 30,000 dead in the streets of the capital. On stage, the artists wave a red flag symbolizing a call to the revolution, drawing vague connections between the French *barricades* of 1789 and 1871, and the International Communist revolution. In the lyrics, they establish a wide cross-reference by equating Republicanism to revolutionary behaviours and to anticapitalism: "À la classe patronale, il fait la guerre sociale (...) l'insurgé se lève le fusil chargé". '*Insurgé*' initially referred to those of the French army who had decided to counter the President's orders. Here, the term is ridden of historical reality and symbolizes any 'good' fight or resistance, drawing a parallel between resistance against unjust orders and resistance against the supposedly 'evil' masters of capitalism (*la classe patronale*). This simplification does not take into account the rather complex context of the Commune, when the French fought against the French, nor does it consider the modalities of anticapitalism, another complex struggle on which to embark. As in Zebda's case, a precise historical event is freed of its complex reality, and becomes emblematic of contemporary identity in only one respect, that of an abstract 'resistance'.

This attitude to the past, which reveals its limits in the face of historical knowledge, raises the question of postmodernism about French rock music. In his 1984 essay, Fredric Jameson argued that a deliberate intertextuality with the past creates "new connotations of 'pastness' and pseudo-historical depth", a postmodern characteristic which is evident in Jolie Môme[15]. Indeed, the effect of their selection of past events is to invent contemporary French identity as unproblematically 'oppositional' and generally 'authentic'. An interesting contradiction about the band is thus that, while they claim 'seriousness' in leading political struggles, they also appear rather uninformed about French history, and seem to 'lack intentional depth' as a postmodern analysis would suggest. On the one hand, Jolie Môme is 'postmodern' in operating a collage between simplified events of the past and the present. On the other hand, however, it is not 'postmodern' as its apparent pastiche actually has a motive for the present, has a topicality, which is to articulate a sense of renewed goal for democracy. This rather makes them 'Modernist', but the question of postmodernism is accentuated below about retro rock's specific use of nostalgia for contemporary discourses.

According to Jibé, one of my interviewees, in 1999 Jolie Môme refused to be included in the official programme of the August festivies in Aurillac, because the town council was RPR. Instead, they attended the festival "dans le off" (equivalent to 'fringe', as opposed to 'in'). Jibé's response to this was that Jolie Môme was "très politique", or committed, the term losing any particular meaning to imply apparently uncompromising left-wing arguments. As above, we see that individuals make sense of the present through simplifications, which confers on the band and its audience, over-readily, a 'committed' identity. The concept of 'invention' of the present is again used as background theory for our analysis of audience behaviours (Chapter Four).

Finally, it is worth noting that the 'serious' attitude to politics of French rock artists is firmly detached from any call to destruction, whatever their use of warlike images. Unlike the British punks who initially influenced French *rock alternatif*, contemporary rock artists

do not call for riots. Jolie Môme recorded a cover version of the anti-militarist anthem *La Chanson de Craonne*, from 1917, which sounded a symbolic cry against contemporary injustice. The band claimed its revolutionary heritage only insofar as it remained a peaceful process, which is a hasty reading of French (or any) history. Similarly, in Zebda's cover version of 'Le chant des partisans' (1997 [1943]), the stanza initially calling to arms disappeared, so that French history was ridden of its belligerent reality. If these examples show the limits of French rock music in dealing with national identity, other examples below confer more depth to the genre as we look at bands who choose to emphasize the 'darker' side of French history.

3. Critical Voices; The Murderous Basis of the French Republic

In contrast to Jolie Môme, two other French rock bands have composed critical songs about the murderous basis of French history. In particular, La Tordue and Têtes Raides have linked the bloody battles of the Paris Commune to the murder of Arab civilians during the demonstration of October 1961. Apart from constructing a national identity turned towards a certain traditionalism (see the discussion of their *néoréaliste* nostalgia below), they have been quite exceptional in tackling this highly sensitive subject which only recently appeared on the political agenda after forty years of consensual silence. On 17 October 1961, the Algerian FLN had called for a peaceful demonstration against the recent curfew directed exclusively at *'Français d'Algérie'* in central Paris, with effect from 8:30 pm. The demonstation ended in a bloodbath as many Arab demonstrators were stabbed and thrown in the River Seine by the police[16].

'Paris Oct.61', the opening song of La Tordue's first album *Les Choses de Rien* (1995), described the demonstration and appealed to the sense of duty of the Parisian population, silent accomplices and keepers of a historical secret. The song started like a melancholy ballad, on the accordion and acoustic guitar, describing the charms of Paris and

the wandering Seine, when, hidden in the rather complex versification, the massacres were hinted at: "Que la Seine est jolie, ne seraient-ce ces moribonds qui déshonorent son lit et qu'elle traîne par le fond, inhumant dans l'oubli..." (listen to CD). In the playful way that characterizes the linguistic inventions of this band, the lyrics cast the French as a guilty nation refusing to acknowledge its responsibility: "Français chères grenouilles, que l'histoire ne chatouille..." and "Les boules Quiès et la France (...), qui ne dit mot acquièsce", *boules Quiès* being earplugs. Another line, "qu'un sang impur et noir abreuve le caniveau, et on leur fit la peau pour en perdre la mémoire", suggests that the French 'white' nation deliberately ignored the impact of its colonial behaviour and by-passed the numerous 'black' deaths it caused. The reference to *La Marseillaise* ("qu'un sang impur abreuve...") revives the savage connotations of the republican anthem and qualifies the action of the French police during these demonstrations as murderous. Quite unlike Jolie Môme who referred to the Revolution only insofar as it meant rebelling against oppression, La Tordue exposes the historical ambivalence of French history, and sets up this shameful event as a reminder for the present, hoping to ward off further bouts of violence.

In 1998, the band Têtes Raides composed music for the poem 'Dans la gueule du loup' by the Algerian poet Yacine Kateb (1929-1989), released in 1998 on their album *Chamboultou*[17]. On a slow accordion tune reminiscent of nursery rhymes, the song's lyrics compare the violence of 1961 to the bloody battles of 1789 and 1871. The massacres of October 1961 were conducted "à la face du peuple de la Commune, qui rappelaient au peuple parisien leur propre révolution, leur propre résistance". This poem establishes an interesting parallel between the Communards' insurrection of 1871 and the Algerian immigrants' demonstration of 1962, both taking place in the streets of Paris. The fact that the October 1962 demonstration ended in a bloodbath, like the violent repression of 1871, casts today's French Arabs as martyrs of France's history in a similar fashion to the *insurgés*. However, whereas this parallel works when considering the two groups' struggles (and death) for their

rights to live free, it becomes critical of the 1962 Parisians when considering their silence and immobility in front of the massacres against the Arab settlers.

Although Têtes Raides refers to the same historical event as Jolie Môme, the treatment is here different as the symbolism of 'rebellion' is replaced by a sense of accusation and injustice. The grim yet poetic description of the scene ("la Seine rougissante n'a pas cessé les jours suivants de vomir"), as well as the apostrophe ("Peuple français, tu as tout vu (...) et maintenant vas-tu parler?"), demands that the French face their responsibility for murder. Reappropriating this text for a younger audience who may, firstly, not know Kateb and, secondly, have never heard of October 1961, Têtes Raides warn against hasty appropriations of French 'republican' or 'revolutionary' values when the latter were repeatedly based on murders. They equate the Commune with chauvinism and self-centred pettiness. Têtes Raides' *Chamboultou* album turned Gold in 2001, which suggests that their 'challenge' of consensual silence was heard fairly widely. We comment on audience reception in Chapter Four. The fact that Jolie Môme and these two bands play similar music genres but refer to French history in different ways indicates how French rock music covers different 'zones of identity'. Below, we examine the specific trend of *chanson néoréaliste*, or retro rock, which refers to the past by operating a series of simplifications but does so for the purpose of articulating the contemporary conciliation of national contradictions.

B. Retro Rock, Nostalgia and the Abstraction of 'Authenticity'

Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, which enjoyed huge national and international success in 2001, led to a debate about the '*Amélie* effect'. Depicting the life of a young, generous and neighbour-loving Parisian girl, for most admirers the film expressed the contemporary desire of the French to revive humanist values, kindness and fraternity. For its detractors, it was hopelessly anchored in a Gaullist traditionalism evoked by the 1950s settings, clothing and photographic choices, although the story actually took

place in the late 1990s[18]. Like *Amélie*, retro rock music, with its use of the old-fashioned accordion and the '*néoréaliste*' storyline, has been in tension between representations of the past and aspirations for the future, as well as between national references and international (or universal) goals. Later, we will consider the 'horizontal' community of *rock métissé*, or the various international influences that have shaped its musical particularity. With retro rock music, however, it seems that talking of a 'vertical' community is more appropriate, as contemporary artists and audiences draw constant links with an imagined version of the national past.

1. 'Authenticity' in Instruments, Onomastics, Graphics and Lighting Choices

Ten years after Pigalle and Têtes Raides' débuts, retro rock has become a national and commercial success (Chapter Two). In 2000, an article in *Libération* even hinted at its 'overflow': "un créneau déja sérieusement *embouteillé* par tous les Têtes Raides, La Tordue, Hurleurs, Jack O'Lanternes, Casse-Pipe, Hurlements d'Léo et, bien-sûr, Louise Attaque" (my italics)[19]. The band Rageous Gratoons, from Bordeaux, was compared to Négresses Vertes and Têtes Raides, and introduced as "une bonne alternative à ceux qui voudraient découvrir une mouvance désormais bien établie dans le panorama musical actuel"[20]. The use of '*désormais bien établie*', well established, like '*embouteillé*' above, suggests that the now widespread genre has entered a form of mainstream[21]. Similarly, its identityis now readily understood as relying on assumptions that the past is 'authentic', imagined as pre-modern and 'simple'.

We saw in Chapter Two how anti-mechanization positions conferred a sense of 'credibility' to artists or producers who wished to rely on perceived 'pre-modern', or traditional, music style and techniques. Following this, the preference of retro rock artists has gone to the practice of acoustic instruments (in an overall 4/4 rock frame), to the point that

Têtes Raides toured in 1999 with an entirely unplugged show without any amps or microphones (*'Non!'*). In contrast to the constant development of electric and electronic technology, the choice of playing unplugged has underlined a quest for 'authenticity'. In the 1990s, retro rock artists have also played a wide range of old-fashioned instruments connoting simplicity. The use of the accordion, for instance, permitted a generational and socially transgressive position, especially in the post-punk era (Chapter Two, p.71). Other favourite instruments include the barrel organ, the helicon, the banjo, the jew's harp, the musical saw, the harmonica, or the washtub-bass (the *contrebassine* popularized by Les VRP). All these are portable and rather cheap instruments which tend to be associated with ambulatory, popular street musics, such as circus marches, polkas, javas, *musettes*. This mobility is associated with a lack of sophistication and has emphasized a musical identity in contrast to the pretended 'glamour' of most *variétés*. The past, connoting here of simplicity and inexpensiveness, becomes emblematic of an opposition to sophistication and 'mainstream' music. The possibility of travelling with instruments is repeated in the audiences' sense of identification with transient communities, especially during the time of festivals (Chapter Five).

Retro rock bands include Blankass, Paris Combo, Les Escrocs, Jack O'Lanternes, Les Hurleurs, Les Ogres de Barback, Garage Rigaud, Ramsès, Casse-Pipe, La Rue Kétanou, Bénabar, Sanseverino, Debout sur le Zinc, and many more. Offering to bridge the genre towards rap is also the band Java. The vast majority of these names carry connotations of either 'low' or anti-conformist life, in socially and/or physical terms. For instance, La Tordue means 'twisted' or 'damaged', while the feminine genre suggests a resemblance with the music-hall actress of the late 1880s, La Goulue, often pictured in a similar poster style to Bruant. The band Casse-Pipe refers to war and death, *'casser sa pipe'* being an expression for 'kicking the bucket', also echoing the title of a book by Louis-Ferdinand Céline detailing the horrors of the First World War. The band Les Ogres de Barback is a pun with *orgue de*

Barbarie, barrel-organ, and meat-eating ogres (*barbaque* is meat). Images of medieval children's tales spring to mind, evoking a gory musical version of Tom Thumb perhaps. Other names suggest the urban and 'popular' daily life of petty criminals, as Les Escrocs means 'crooks' for instance. Blankass and Debout sur le Zinc both refer to the traditional practice of drinking *apéritif* in a café, 'Blankass' being a diminutive for '*blanc-cassis*', a white wine and blackcurrant drink, while '*zinc*' refers to the counter of a bar. Blankass, moreover, was described as "le groupe du cru au rude goût rustique"[22], which is an interesting juxtaposition of terms connoting the countryside (with its idealized 'authenticity', *cru* meaning both rough and natural), to the urban setting of the band's name. On studying literary, photographic and musical images of Paris in the 1930s-50s, Adrian Rifkin found that already in the 1930s, the 'city idyll' combined elements of the countryside with popular urban settings[23]. Today, the identity of retro rock music is conveyed in similar terms, imagining past urban life as a warm community in contrast to the 'artificiality' of contemporary (more) industrial settings.

The graphics and iconography of the bands' albums are other tell-tale signs of their conception of 'authenticity' as being constituted of 'anti-modern' features. Often, retro rock album covers are made of cardboard (La Tordue, Têtes Raides, Nonnes Troppo) or use brown paper as backdrops (Louise Attaque). They often show sketchy, rough or child-like drawings (Têtes Raides, Chanson du Bord de Zinc) or paintings by the artists themselves (Jack O'Lanternes, Ogres, La Tordue). This emphasizes conceptions of simplicity and of multiple artistic skills, both contrasting in their own way with the sophistication of computer-generated pictures and flashy colours. The graphic designers Les Chats Pelés, working for Têtes Raides and La Tordue and actually formed of the singers of each band, created collages and cut-outs with newspaper scraps and play-doh figurines, often painted in 'natural', warm, earthy colours which evoke children's activities and *art brut*. The designers were hired by Paris city council in June 2001 to draw a poster for the *Fête de la Musique*

which, as with the presence of Têtes Raides in these festivities, pointed to the national consensus that this 'simple' and apparently 'natural' identity had achieved (see album covers and the *Fête* poster in CD).

The striking absence of artists' photos in their albums implies their disdain of the star system, and serves to emphasize their musical creation instead of pretty faces. When actually pictured on record covers, artists pose in backgrounds often conveying an 'old-style' imagery. For instance, on their first album (2000), the two members of Java were pictured in the kitsch living-room of a French *concierge*, whose coffee-table was adorned with plastic flowers (see CD). This is highly reminiscent of the *'mère à Titi'* lifestyle as institutionalized by the singer Renaud. Renaud's own links with 'popular' Parisian life reinforced a coherent 'retro' identity as 'lowly', and marginal as 'authentic'[24]. In a different register, the band Paris Combo was featured on the cover of their second album, *Living-Room* (1999), dressed in pimp style (*marlou*) and posing in a decadent chic manner reminiscent of the 1950s. The personae of French rock artists are examined in Chapter Five in relation to their impact on the physical response of audiences.

2. Neorealism, Nostalgia and Conservatism

Retro rock music, called *chanson néoréaliste* in French, has rooted its thematics in *chanson réaliste* from the 1930s, which itself derived from the already-existing 'popular' imagery, expressing truth through hardship. Back in the 1930s, realism already raised the question of selecting particular elements for the purpose of a music and stage performance. Ory understood the term *'réaliste'* as "une prétention à la quotidienneté"[25], which aptly expresses how daily life, poverty, boredom, and by extension social injustice, were chosen as elements to represent, but in the conventions of a performance, the supposed 'real' life of the lower classes and various outcasts. In the 'authentic' perspective of exposing inadequacies, the mythology of *chanson réaliste* relied on the device of 'the grimmer the truer', as Rifkin

noted[26]. Today, French rock artists make similar choices, depicting many distressed drunkards and prostitutes moving in derelict settings. Pigalle remains an exception for its contemporary and grim narratives (Chapter Two, p.72), but 1990s retro rock mostly describes stereotypical and marginal people, socially-marked outcasts like pimps (Casse-Pipe's 'Stilitano') or drunks and homeless (Hurlements d'Léo's 'Louise', Têtes Raides' 'Ginette', La Tordue's 'René Bouteille'). These social misfits represent the opposite of 'glamour' and contrast with the characters of most chart songs, confirming retro rock's 'oppositional' identity to the star system.

The choice of 'popular authenticity' in retro rock music raises the question of the use of nostalgia for contemporary audiences. *Chanson néoréaliste* sets out to convey a certain 'pastness', and one that is, to paraphrase Jameson again, a deliberate stereotype with pseudo-historical depth, which identifies retro rock as postmodern[27]. When, for instance, the leader of the band Paris Combo remarks that "notre esprit est très proche de celui des années 30 [parce qu'] on aimait cette idée de la vie libre", she operates a generalization about the past in order to reflect vague goals for the present[28]. Studying the presentation of the 1950s in 1970s American 'nostalgia' films, Jameson qualified that period as "the privileged lost object of desire". In French retro rock, the 1930s appear similarly 'raided' for the ideal 'pastness' they convey, whose effect is to create a 'glossy mirage' of ideal fraternity. However, as Jameson also argues, these postmodern effects allow to deal with "the waning of our historicity", or with the fact that we are increasingly capable, today, of "fashioning representations of our own current experience"[29]. Thus, nostalgia for the (idealized) past serves also to criticize our contemporary inability to deal with our contemporary lives, and expresses a longing for a time when the sense of community seemed to be more meaningful. In anchoring poverty and fraternity in the past, French retro rock music demonstrates the contemporary impossibility of dealing with social justice in up-to-date and concrete terms, and the consciousness of their bewilderment makes the genre postmodern. However, by

using stereotypical images and music rhythms with obvious connotations for the Western ear (the waltzing accordion evokes old-time bonhomie), retro rock music generalizes the difficulties of life, accentuates their permanence, and creates a resonance for the present. This reveals its 'modern' project, its belief in a certain 'truth'.

Two songs by Têtes Raides, 'Gino' and 'Ginette', illustrate how simplifying one's perception of the past can, paradoxically, serve to illuminate contradictions about contemporary life. A third song is studied below which insists more on the projection of a 'utopian' truth. From their first album *Not Dead but Bien Raides* (1989), 'Ginette' is a rock-waltz hybrid that has acquired over the years a relative iconic status, claimed as the band's trademark. 'Gino' is a later song mixing punk and polka (from *Les Oiseaux*, 1992), which is always played before 'Ginette' in concerts, and with it makes for a 13 to 14 minute set of variations across acoustic rock music, fast punk, accordion waltz and brass band polka (listen to CD, 'Ginette' follows 'Gino' at 6'10 in live version). 'Gino' starts with a fast polka in minor mode, led by a cello and an accordion on the upbeat. The overall 2 beat rhythm of rock music is sustained by regular drums. The deep and throaty voice of the singer follows the melody of the cello, each verse ending with a saxophone's slow and distorted whining. The lyrics are overall obscure and symbolic, *à la* Mallarmé, evoking the story of a widow losing her caged bird, who afterwards falls in love with a sailor, Gino. The ambiance is thus both retro (waltz, sombre, a *putain* and a sailor), and timeless (lost love, falling in love). As the final sentences of each stanza are repeated four times ('il vend des oiseaux'/'il ne revient pas'), the repetition conjures up a sense of helplessness or despair. However, the fast rhythm of the music and the intermingling of different instruments seem to prevent a one-dimensional reading of the song. After a pause in the song, the musicians start playing again a polka very slowly, adding one instrument with each musical phrase: first the accordion, then the drums, then the double cello, then the guitar and finally the saxophone, picking up, but much faster, the initial melody. The sentiment of hope ("aimer à nouveau") is thus built

up by the progressive re-activation of the melody, ending somewhere between hope and confusion as the song ends with a fast ska-punk tune, falling back on the 2/4 beat of the beginning.

During live performances, 'Ginette' follows 'Gino'. 'Ginette' starts as a slow and melancholy waltz (minor mode) on the accordion and cello. The lyrics are similarly obscure, the theme of birds carrying on as the evocation of potential freedom, but this simplistic image contrasts with the earth-bound story of the drunken Ginette, stumbling and dancing in a desolate cabaret place, the musicians (characters of the song) struggling to play their waltz "sur cet air de ferraille et de ver cassé". The deep voice of the singer has a near stutter that renders the drunkenness of Ginette. Once this storyline is set-up, the melody accelerates, sustained by the drums, the violin and the acoustic guitar, following the same 'swelling' effect as above, and the waltz becomes java. The drums gradually mark each beat of the rhythm, increasing the speed. After the line "la mer, ça s'invente pas", evoking the impossibility of hope (as above), the music stops suddenly, a long pause follows, and the singer ends with the abrupt conclusion: "et c'est tout". This harsh end, which is the exposure of hardship (hopes may be useless because we die eventually), is cheered by the crowd as the revelation of an 'authentic' approach to life. However, the constant hesitation between slow and faster rhythms, between old waltzes and contemporary punk-rock, also conveys a sense of energy and festivity. The songs are thus ambivalent, and this destabilization is intentional as the choice to illuminate contradictions, as the purpose to underline the ambivalence of life. These contradictions are carried out in the perspective of articulating a critical and 'serious' identity. The juxtaposition of the past to the present this is not done, as Jameson argued about films, for lack of other images to evoke. The fact nostalgia is tied up to ska music, for instance, is a sign of its openness onto something else than itself. We also demonstrate below that nostalgia and *métissage* can be two approaches to the same goal or 'truth' (or 'grand narrative') of universal fraternity. The juxtaposition of the past to the present is, instead, a

sign of the importance that artists grant to history, and shows their desire to understand (however vaguely) the outcomes of their contemporary lives.

The relevance of techniques from the past is also underlined by the lighting choices of Têtes Raides on stage. The band's light technician, nicknamed Fantôme, was asked to reproduce a lighting close to the 1930s expressionist movies, alternating zones of light and shade. When playing 'Gino' and 'Ginette' on stage, the musicians stand immobile and are lit up slowly and alternately, with a vacillating lamp swinging above their heads. This gives a striking 'slow motion' effect, projecting long shadows in the background, displacing the gaze from the lead singer to the ensemble of the musicians. The band's singer Christian Olivier remarked that these lighting choices, closer to theatre performance than rock music concerts, characterized their art as a challenge of rock music conventions: "On est tous dans cet état d'esprit, cette mise en danger qui rompt avec le danger de la routine"[30]. Such a scenic choice fits into the long tradition of staging *chanson* as mini-dramas (Fréhel, Piaf), but his remark emphasizes the 'alternative' thought that everyday routine, even the rock music routine, is a danger or boredom. By contrast, a form of risk (*'mise en danger'*) is sought after, as an escape from comfort and apparent routine. Returning to past techniques thus works, in this case, to create destabilization in the present, as a tool to challenge boredom. Nostalgia serves to expose contradictions, from the juxtaposition of past and present to that of fast and slow music, and here of light and shade.

As Jameson argues that the nostalgia mode can be the symptom of an impossibility to deal with contemporary issues, so retro rock artists, media and audiences are aware that relying on nostalgic references can indicate a lack of 'radicality' or 'challenge'. In particular, one notes a certain discomfort in the media about the use of 'pastness', and journalists have attempted to reject nostalgia *per se* for its perceived lack of innovation. For instance, Garapon wrote of Les Négresses Vertes that "la valse musette n'est pas du revivalisme mais simplement un choix esthétique pour évoquer Paris et ses guinguettes, sa classe ouvrière,

Renoir... dans un système culturel facile à décoder"[31]. He dismissed the notion of 'revival' about *chanson néoréaliste*, assuming that paying a tribute to the older *réaliste* genre would alter the uniqueness of its contemporary usage. Another music critique drew the same conclusions about Paris Combo, who plays acoustic jazz *à la* Django Reinhardt, and wrote: "Pour autant, Paris Combo ne fait pas du revival". Instead, he emphasized the singer's particular voice and the originality of the orchestration[32]. The efforts of these journalists to reject the notion of 'revivalism', when contemporary artists so obviously reactualize a music genre of the inter-war period, indicate their struggle to validate the use of nostalgia for expressing 'radicality'.

In fact, Garapon's reliance on an 'aesthetic choice' to legitimize the relevance of nostalgia for contemporary audience does not reach the core of the problem. The point is that, while past references may be used to highlight ambivalence in an 'authentic' approach, this selection of the past is problematic for the present. In selecting this pre-war period and dwelling on the imagery of the 'urban poor', retro rock artists invent a contemporary national identity that is, indeed, far from being 'radical'. Above all, the 'past' they recollect is blatantly anterior to post-colonial immigration, which identifies their music as unproblematically white, relies on an unnamed Jacobin French identity, and thus does not reflect contemporary France. Its contemporary utopia of fraternity is devoid of pluralism. This is an important limitation to the impact of retro rock as a potentially 'radical' music genre, and the fact that their 'aesthetic choice' simplifies French history like thus make the genre, somewhere, undeniably conservative. The choice of the name 'Ginette' for Têtes Raides is, in this sense, representative of the discrepancy between their will to evoke a fraternal or even universal working-class, and the implantation of the name in a white, 'classically French' and old-fashioned context. The connotations of 'Ginette' are totally different from, for instance, those of the name 'Fatima', which would immediately locate the

song into a problematic scheme about ethnic identity. The name is also far removed from the reality of the band's audience, which is another point we return to (Chapter Four).

However, it may be in this kind of (unconscious) simplification that Têtes Raides, and much of French retro music, achieves idealization and the presentation of fraternity and humanism as quite intensely desirable goals. The cliché of a single woman hoping for love becomes the symbol of all human hopes. Christian Olivier from Têtes Raides considered that, indeed, "un groupe (...) c'est la réunion de fortes personnalités qui se mettent d'accord sur une belle utopie: (...) expérimenter une autre transmission culturelle, un autre partage de musique et de vie"[33]. He put forward the notion of '*partage*' and of utopia, underlining the idealist aim of his music. We saw that with Zebda and Jolie Môme, for instance, the French revolution was revitalized as a still topical goal, because of its 'unfinished' character. Similarly, it seems here that democracy and humanism are reinvented and desirable because of their (relative) absence in contemporary life.

3. 'L'iditenté': French Universalism and Why Not

In 2000, Têtes Raides wrote a song entitled 'L'iditenté' (album *Gratte-Poil*), which was interestingly implanted in the contemporary preoccupation with illegal immigration. There again, however, the recourse to symbols served to highlight the practical need to take action against unjust policies. The title of the song, ressembling the stuttered pronunciation of the French word '*identité*', suggests the difficulty of being French, the confusion over what it could mean, the limits of single identity boundaries. This stutter is carefully paralleled by the musical orchestration and the lyrics' meanings, as the song is performed in duet with the singer from the band Noir Désir, Bertrand Cantat. Noir Désir has traditionally played a rather more arid and regular 4/4 rock music with electric guitars. Têtes Raides for their part have evolved closer to acoustic *chanson* and experimented with strings, horns and accordion (typical *retro rock*, see above). Their juxtaposition in this song thus hesitates between

straightforward electric rock, as the initial speed guitar and sax riff announces, and a slow accordion waltz as in the break before the end. The song ends in the fusion of a polka accelerating to meet the initial rock tempo. This combination is not surprising *per se*, but 'L'iditenté' is designed to be 'different' with its inscription in the overal acoustic and 'retro' album of Têtes Raides (listen to CD).

This song is first and foremost not a *variétés* song, as it lasts over 5 minutes and does not follow the regular pattern of stanza-chorus-stanza-bridge. Secondly, the regular leitmotiv of the bass in D-C-A contrasts with the orchestration which differs in each stanza. First a distorted sax intervenes, then the violins, then the accordion. The accordion remains a counter-point to the bass, destabilizing the initial rock tempo. In addition, the two singers, Olivier and Cantat, either sing in turn following a pattern of call and response, or sing in chorus with one singing on the major third. Their voices never quite meet and always contrast with one another. This musical pattern creates a feeling of divergence and instability, which is replicated in the lyrics.

Rather obscure in the sense that there is no classic narrative progression, 'L'Iditenté' evokes the situation of '*sans papiers*' and '*clandestins*' in want of an official identity from the French authorities. The lyrics hint at the 'real-life' participation of Noir Désir and Têtes Raides in the GISTI concerts, an organization they took part in for the purpose of helping illegal immigrants get legal advice and social benefits[34]. One of the song lines is "j'suis pas inscrit sur la mappemonde", supposedly pronounced by a 'nation-less' immigrant, to whom the second voice replies that he can have his country, France: "si tu le veux, prends le mien". This line points to the inadequacies of national boundaries *vis-à-vis* migrations of population, and to the potential exchangeability of national identities, on the basis of their imagined meanings. The song's 'generosity' contrasts with the incompetence of the French government on the question. In 1997, Jospin promised during his campaign for the legislative elections that he would cancel the Pasqua law on the strict regulation of

immigration, but never did[35]. In the song, the musical chaos evokes the discrepancy between hope and despair, between potential solutions and injustice. The repeated chorus line is, symbolically: "que Paris est beau quand chantent les oiseaux, que Paris est laid quand il se croit français". The second part of this quotation hammers home the idea that Paris should not restrict its identity to being just 'French'. Pragmatically, the song evokes the national obsession with identity papers, as well as the dramatic expulsion of individuals on the basis of national discrimination. In a flight of poetic and linguistic abstraction, the song also evokes the potential universalism of French hospitality ('les oiseaux'), and reaches beyond the specific preoccupations of immigrants to encompass all individuals living in France. Paris, or France, could be 'good' and equitable if they re-assessed the principle of universal hospitality.

One criticism could be that, like most retro rock songs, 'L'iditenté' skims over the concrete problems of clandestine immigration and falls back on the rather ironed out abstraction of universalism, which has gained wide currency in France. Conversely, the song's force is to acknowledge the power of this national heritage, of humanism as a political project, and to keep offering it as a potential solution. In this sense, it suggests that the 'French' revolution is indeed unfinished and reactualizes the struggle for fraternity. In so doing, it transgresses the contemporary *status quo* on the question of immigrants, and confers a topicality to a long-standing ideology. The song, and the genre in general, also comes across as utopian and in this sense 'Modernist', managing the evocation of the past into valid discourses and struggles for the present and the future.

C. Rock Métissé: *Integration, Hybridity and Celebration*

Rock métissé, the other music genre branching out of *rock alternatif* in the early 1990s, has chosen to integrate a majority of 'foreign' sounds and instruments into its 'French' basis. First with rock and punk, then with Latin, raggamuffin, reggae and ska, it has presented a

hybrid challenge to forces of conservatism and ethnic stasis, and thus debated contemporary life apparently more 'practically' than retro rock.

1. From Chanson to French Rock, and from Monoculturalism to Hybridity

The unifying and transcendent goal of French Republicanism has traditionally levelled all ethnic differences or cultural particularities. As a result, ethnic or racial differences have been concealed, whether in academic circles or in everyday cultural life[36]. As concerns French *chanson à textes*, it is a widespread criticism among music journalists that the genre, back in the 1950s and 1960s, appeared closed in upon its 'Frenchness' or, as Paul Yonnet wrote, was monocultural. Reflecting on its lack of fusion with foreign genres, he wrote of *chanson* that "il s'agit d'une production franco-française qui ne synthétise rien du tout, n'assimilant aucun élément étranger, (...) une musique que je qualifierai de jacobine. Ce monoculturalisme va stériliser pendant longtemps toute possibilité d'un rock français autonome"[37]. Although he ignored the regional and international influences that had shaped French *chanson* so far, Yonnet was probably right to define it as 'Jacobin', in the sense that most *chanson* artists developed their careers in Paris, and thus represented for a long time a centralized vision of the French middle-class[38]. By using 'faire la synthèse' and 'assimilant' as antonyms to 'Jacobin' and 'monocultural', Yonnet also implied that cultural syntheses, assimilation or hybridization, would be more desirable than the self-centredness of French *chanson*. However, in the 1960s, *yéyé* had already realized a fusion of US music and French lyrics. The second part of Yonnet's quotation, about the potential (and, in his mind, positive) hybridization represented by a 'French rock' music, illuminates the fact that hybridization should paradoxically remain somehow 'autonomous', or independent of its foreign influences and sources. In other words, Yonnet's line of arguments follows the paradox of French Republicanism *vis-à-vis* immigration, which is that a culture or a society (*yéyé* music

or France) become pluricultural only insofar as they retain a degree of 'autonomy', or of distance from the object (or culture) they integrated. *Yéyé* probably claimed its Anglo-American influence too loudly, and was never deemed a 'proper' French music style. This point was made even clearer about Jacques Higelin (born 1940), the *ACI* who started playing in the 1970s a mixture of elaborate French lyrics with rock music. Yonnet enthusiastically called him the first artist to achieve "un rock authentiquement français"[39]. This designation illustrates the paradox that voicing a new French identity should somehow reflect an assumed 'quality' (as with the principle of meritocracy in integration), and achieve more 'Frenchness' than hybridity, or should assimilate foreign elements but eventually stand away from their influence.

Writing in 1985, Yonnet did not have the hindsight to comment on the rock and *chanson* fusion operated by *rock alternatif* from then on, but his remark reflected the problematics faced by French rock music, consciously designed as a hybrid object. On the one hand, *rock alternatif* sought to assimilate Anglo-American rock music to its French format, in an attempt to unsettle the foundations of a centralized identity. On the other hand, it sought to achieve a new 'resistant' or 'quality' music style, which willingly or not, fitted into a traditional perception of 'French' identity. Indeed, we noted how 'independent' *producteurs* in the 1980s had been fascinated by US and British underground labels like Alternative Tentacles and Rough Trade. British punk music (The Clash, Sex Pistols), 'alternative' US rock (Père Ubu, Violent Femmes), reggae and (white) ska music (Selecter, The Specials) also strongly influenced the compositions of *rock alternatif* artists. In 1999, evaluating the identity of *rock alternatif* for the Ministry of Culture, a journalist wrote for instance: "l'émergence du mouvement alternatif qui fait accéder Bérurier Noir et autres Garçons Bouchers à une notoriété nationale prônait la combinaison hautement inflammable des énergies punk et du vocable français fleuri par l'argot"[40]. The adjective '*inflammable*' implied that the meeting of punk music's energy with French language appeared as a

transgression, and that *rock alternatif* was primarily hybrid, and in this sense a welcome challenge of Jacobinism.

On the other hand, and in contrast to the 'commercial' hybrid of *yéyé, rock alternatif* also reflected a particular cultural prestige by emphasizing the notion of 'resistance'. It assimilated Anglo-American rock/punk music, but remained French overall. For instance, in the late 1980s Têtes Raides had voiced their artistic approach thus: "ne plus se prendre pour des Américains". The leading member of the band, Olivier, had asserted that "avant en France, on reprenait la musique anglo-saxonne (...); nous avons eu besoin de casser tout ça"[41]. He expressed the frustrations and complexes that rock music in France had experienced since the 'weak' copy of *Yéyé*. No longer interested in producing copies of Anglo-American music, the band sought to integrate foreign influences and transcend them in the creation of a new national product. Consciously or not, this specific 'fusion' espoused the assimilationist principle of French Republicanism. Many rock critiques saw 1980s' French rock music as both a long-awaited liberation from the monoculturalism of *chanson*, and as a successful new 'authentic' music style (hence falling back on the meritocratic principle of 'a' French identity). For Meunier for instance, "il faudra attendre le tout début des années 80 pour voir se former le noyau dur de la scène alternative française. On trouve enfin un rock français, chanté en français"[42]. The term '*enfin*' hinted at sentiments of relief at finally finding a 'rebel' credibility in a hybrid music. For Sepchat, "le rock français doit être français. Une lapalissade? Pas sûr. La preuve: personne n'y avait vraiment pensé avant les Têtes Raides"[43]. Although describing Têtes Raides as the initial French rock band is erroneous, this journalist expressed a sentiment of national pride in the eventual existence of the 'French rock' synthesis, but prefered the single designation of 'français' to that of synthesis. For the artists and the media alike, it seemed important that French rock music expressed a new hybrid Frenchness but that, although influenced by Anglo-American rock, it should root itself in the national cultural landscape.

2. The Postcolonial Issue

With the question of integrating North African and 'Third World' musics, the emphasis towards hybridity shifted towards the possibility of considering multiculturalism as an appropriate redefinition of French identity. Multiculturalism theoretically lets separate cultural elements coexist on equal footing (the American citizenship model), while French Republicanism theoretically levels differences and makes citizenship an abstract affair. Since decolonization and the consideration that "the end of colonialism presents the colonizer as much as the colonized with a problem of identity"[44], the influx of immigrants coming from North and Sub-Saharan Africa visibly disrupted the traditionally white ethnicity of the French metropolitan population. The end of imperialism/colonialism meant that the French universalist discourse, its traditional abstraction of differences into the model of integration or assimilation, needed reconsidering[45]. As second-generation immigrants (*Beurs*) increasingly challenged its relevance, and argued for a recognition of their particularisms, a trend in French politics and culture emerged to suggest *métissage* as an alternative model to jacobinism. *Métissage* was inspired by multiculturalism, but tailored to French history. Here, we examine how the French artists of *rock métissé*, both of French and North African origins, used this concept to challenge the traditional principle of assimilation.

In the 1980s, the *Front National* was in France one of the first parties to tackle a redefinition of nationalism, advocating the racist concept of *droit du sang* to justify citizenship only for those born of French parents (versus *droit du sol* as applied so far in France and for instance in the USA). As the FN vocally appropriated the concept of 'national identity' and connoted it with racial exclusion, it became more and more irrelevant for opposing parties to try to define contemporary French identity by appealing to the 'nation' as formed of disparate elements[46]. Thus, even when evoking the possibility of a more pluralist society in France, on the model of the USA for instance, the specific elements that formed

the basis of North African cultures remained overlooked. For instance, in 1987-88, the debate on the *Code de la Nationalité* illustrated the State attempts to discuss integration, with the Left arguing in favour of a total *droit du sol*, in line with the PS slogan of '*droit à la différence*' (Chapter Two, p.89). On the one hand, this was conceived as a rather radical redefinition of Republican nationhood, multiculturalism remaining so far a taboo concept because of its emphasis on differences[47]. On the other hand, the reformed nationality code, formulated in 1988 and less restrictive than the initial 1973 law, remained a partial *droit du sol*, so that France stuck to the principle of an abstract (and meritocratic) integration. The debates caused by the failure to recognize a total *droit du sol* proved that France had nonetheless gone "far down the pluralist road". The terms pluralism or multiculturalism were, however, rarely uttered[48].

During the first cohabitation in 1987, the then ex-Minister of Culture Jack Lang campaigned for '*droit à la difference*' (French euphemism for pluralism) and distributed, in a publicity coup, the records of the Franco-*Beur* band Carte de Séjour in the National Assembly. The band, formed in Lyon around the singer Rachid Taha, of Algerian origins, had become famous a few months before with a raï-rock version of Charles Trenet's '*Douce France*' (1947)[49]. Initially a somewhat nationalist hymn to the sweetness of living in France, the song, packaged in a hybrid semi-Arab and French pop music, suggested that the government should take an interest in its immigrant population. Taha, now an international star with an 'ethno-techno' career, explained that he had totally supported Lang in this action, wanting his music to help put the debate on nationality forward in the media. He wanted to denounce "l'absurdité d'un système qui veut que l'intégration ne soit qu'une manière de raboter les individus" and argued against the assimilationist principle of French Republicanism[50]. His pluralist stance unfortunately led to few changes. Carte de Séjour disbanded in 1989 and a journalist remarked that "l'Hexagone n'était pas prêt pour cette ébauche de raï"[51]. Indeed, celebrating North African differences as integral features of

French nationality took ten years to blossom, albeit with constant tension between jacobinism, its conservative tones of assimilation, and 'progress' or multiculturalism. On the one hand, the Minister of Justice Elizabeth Guiguou reassessed in 1998 the *'droit du sol'* for those born in France of foreign parents, as the expression of a personal development, of a *'manifestation de volonté'*[52]. Despite debates, French citizenship was still not granted like any political right but implied "a highly symbolic voluntaristic act" from young adults who had allegedly developed an affinity with the 'enlightened' model of citizenship[53]. French nationality kept an element of meritocracy, although it theoretically accepted all foreigners into this elitist schema. On the other hand, 1998 witnessed the French football victory at the World Cup with a multi-racial national team, giving rise to anticipatory comments on the collapse of traditional Republicanism: "Même les esprits les plus rétifs aux délires sportifs vantaient ce groupe 'black, blanc, beur', modèle d'une France pluriethnique, symbole d'intégration", the editor of *Télérama* wrote[54]. Instead of levelling differences, it seemed that France could now proudly boast the multiplicity of its constitution. For instance, the Franco-Tunisian football player and captain of the French team, Zinedine Zidane, symbolised the hybrid identity of a French North African, but only insofar as he remained a success story.

3. *Rock Métissé* and the Celebration of Differences

Just as the word *'métis'* in French applies to the child of a mixed relationship, the birth of French *rock métissé* implied a new production, an evolution. The elements composing *rock métissé* usually include a 4/4 base of electric or acoustic rock music, spiced up by gypsy violins and/or horn ska sections, and mix in reggae, raggamuffin or various Latin beats (salsa, mambo, bossa). *Rock métissé* bands are often characterized by hybrids for want of terminology to address each specific combination. Les Négresses Vertes, one of the precursors, were described as "a French band that are a kind of mix of punk, folk, raï and Latin"[55]. As the band also illustrated a point about *java* and the recourse to 'the past' (see

above), we see that *métissé* and retro rock music weave entwined identities. More recent groups were qualified as "compositions françaises-rock-orientales-grooves" (Zen Zila), "sonorité originale, mélange de ragga, de rock, de chants arabes" (Gnawa), "contestation festive mêlant rock, rap, châabi, reggae sur des textes militants" (Zebda), or as artists of "*chanson*, ballade, chaabi, accordian lunacy and dub fusionists from France" for Lo'Jo[56]. Among other bands, Zebda, Fabulous Trobadors, Massilia Sound System, La Ruda Salska, Gnawa, P18, Sergent Garcia, Général Alcazar, Lo'Jo, Sinsémilia or Zen Zila have all coined a contemporary French identity characterized by a musical mix inducing a new hybrid Frenchness, or *métissage*. *Métissage* also involves considering French music as more physical and festive than its 'quality' ancestor *chanson*, a point we discuss in Chapter Five.

Rock métissé's apparent lack of precise implantation seems the best guarantee of its 'non-commercial' identity. Analysing world music, Chris Warne found that it evolved around "the tactic to deliberately and provocatively disrupt[ing] the commercial compartementalizing"[57]. Like 'world music', *rock métissé* disrupts fixed categories, as no generic term exists to qualify it. For Boucherie production, where I sent a questionnaire, their artists' compositions were labelled '*sans étiquettes*'. In a special issue of *Les Inrockuptibles* on French music (July 1999), almost every article introduced the need to go beyond the apparent simplification of single definitions. Critics were concerned with "tordre le cou à ces a-priori qui cloisonnent encore trop souvent les genres"[58]. In their song 'Toulouse' (1995), Zebda claimed "nous qui vivons de raï, de rock et de musette, à la périphérie des succès cathodiques"[59], polarizing their mixed music to the commercial exposure of mainstream music. Equally, the musical fusion of the band P18 (with ex-Mano Negra members), qualified as '*salsamuffin*' and proved an apparent answer to "la dissolution mortifère dans la grande marmite FM"[60]. *Rock métissé* asserted its 'non-mainstreamness' by crossing musical borders, while assuming that 'commercial' media were resistant to this pluralism. As we noted with reference to *rock alternatif*'s integration of rock and punk, the force of *rock*

métissé in the 1990s lay in its hybridity, in celebrating its '*métissage*' as apparently transgressive of traditional models of 'Frenchness', and by extension of any perceived *status quo*.

In particular, *rock métissé* represents 'resistance' against the assumed conformism of those who accept social or ethnic divisions, identified simplistically in French by the derogatory term of *beaufs*. In 1988, the journalist Philippe Vandel from *Actuel* praised the fusion of the band Négresses Vertes, playing the accordion with Latin punk-rock music, as a response to reactionary and racist forces in French society: "la vraie java, la java populo et gouailleuse menace plus Le Pen que tous les discours politiques (...) les Négresses Vertes préfèrent l'accordéon (...) cet esprit français n'a rien à voir avec la beaufitude franchouillarde"[61]. Vandel drew a parallel between 'authenticity' (*la vraie*), the challenge of conventions in preferring accordion (to synths, for instance) and commitment against the Front National (FN) and *beaufs*. While there could be an internal contradiction in relying on 'popular' Frenchness to challenge the FN, the efficiency of the band appeared in the reassertion of the lower classes as home of 'authenticity' and democracy, in a similar abstract way to retro rock music. On the other hand, their more Latin take on music justified their apparent anti-racism. Mano Negra with their Arabic hit 'Sidi'h'bibi', became for many "l'amorce, révoltée et métissée de la résistance au FN"[62]. In the perspective of articulating an 'authentic' musical culture against commercial *variétés*, French rock music's fusion was considered as an appropriate answer to racism. In turn, *rock métissé* revealed its high *morality*, its 'serious' struggle for a universal ideal of justice, that could potentially find an expression on the national French soil. As for the discussion about nostalgia, the juxtaposition here of various cultural elements is not carried out at random, but for the benefit of establishing a 'truth' about ideal contemporary behaviours (respect) and policies (justice).

Nevertheless, *rock métissé* often verges on near-conservatism when, like retro rock, it over-simplifies the problematics of articulating identities. In his study of contemporary French politics, Hargreaves warns against "the tendency to indiscriminately celebrate the post-modern play of hybrid difference", a remark which could adapt to *rock métissé*[63]. For instance, the journalist Garapon waxed lyrical about *rock métissé* and implied that a universal potential was within French music's reach: "Devenues parties du langage commun, musique africaine, raï, rap contribuent, avec toutes les autres couleurs de la palette musicale planétaire dont dispose désormais le chanteur, à façonner le nouveau visage de la chanson française"[64]. In a brochure promoting the concert of the band Gnawa, one also read "ils [the band] représentent donc un métissage profond, synonyme de tolérance et de richesse". This cliché assumed an unproblematic equation between hybridity and humanism, between *métissage* and tolerance, and implied the practical realization of a new, more open, French society[65]. In 2001, the London-based French Music Bureau (dedicated to exporting French music) set up a 'Mosaïques Festival' whose aim was to "celebrate cultural diversity in contemporary France"[66]. This implied that at last French jacobinism was shed, while musical hybrids stood as new icons to celebrate. We will now see, however, that this emphatic celebration of pluralism can be tested against the salience of social inequalities, in particular concerning those whose home musical influences were borrowed.

4. Celebration is Not Enough (Zebda)

In his study of the interaction of Afro-Caribbean and British music cultures, Paul Gilroy evoked the concept of anti-anti-essentialism, or the criticism of the unproblematic celebration of differences (anti-essentialism)[67]. He argued that as long as, in a given society (he focused on Great Britain), social inequalities were effective and based on ethnic discrimination, or that ethnic minorities suffered from unequal opportunities in education, social services and job qualifications, there could be no relevant celebration of, say, cultural

equality between these minorities' music and the ethnic majority's music. In France, where ethnic and cultural differences may conventionally disappear for the abstract purpose of citizenship, or where the 'celebration' of *métissage* has sometimes replaced the old Jacobin model, ethnic and cultural differences continue to discriminate against immigrants in many cases. Whereas David McMurray has commented on "the extraordinary plenitude of all things Arab in French popular culture", Zebda's members insist that being North African is still looked down upon in many aspects of contemporary social life[68]. With their personal lives taken as examples, they warn against sentimental celebration or easy festivity about a potential and successful 'hybridization'. For them, French society remains shaped by tensions about the assumed identities of its citizens and their music still represents a challenge to a certain white 'Frenchness'.

Almost ten years after the missed attempt by Carte de Séjour at challenging integration, or at least at doing so effectively in terms of an 'authentic' recognition, Zebda's second album *Le bruit et l'odeur* (1995) seemed to defend multiculturalism successfully. We started this chapter by showing how Magyd Cherfi, the band's frontman, both accepted the abstract principle of republican citizenship, and reactualized democracy as a left-wing and 'radical' value. In the mid-1990s, Zebda also celebrated the new apparent mixity of the French population. With their song 'Toulouse', occasionally broadcast on France Inter and attracting attention from the intellectual left-wing press (Chapter Two, p.78), the band achieved a political credibility that Carte de Séjour never acquired[69]. 'Toulouse' paid homage to the band's hometown and referred to an already famous song by the prestigious *ACI* from the 1970s, Claude Nougaro, also from Toulouse. In his song (1966), Nougaro described an adult's nostalgic return to the town of his childhood, rendering an idealized vision of warm community, using uplifting strings. Zebda's 'Toulouse', on the other hand, opened with the sample of a slow Arabic prayer, and kicked off with a fast raggamuffin beat, its lyrics sung in French with a Southern accent. This mixity shunned the white cliché of the

town, and the lyrics described the social and ethnic variety of the city's inhabitants: tramps at the train station, North African and Spanish immigrants in the *banlieues*, middle-class engineers in the city centre. Instead of celebrating a happy melting-pot (like Zen Zila for instance), Zebda warned against the social inequalities produced by ethnic origins. In 'Le bruit et l'odeur' on the same album, and parodying another line by Nougaro who said he wished to be a black singer, Zebda sung "si certains regrettent de ne pas être noir de peau, je n'ai qu'une réponse, les gars, vous avez du pot!". This underlined the fact that racial differences were not always worth celebrating and that, in a contemporary context where Chirac commented on the smell of immigrants, there was much leeway for further assertion of the respect and inclusion of differences in France. Zebda's songs thus evoked the flaws of integration (like Têtes Raides and Noir Désir above), and narrated ordinary racist events taking place against French citizens of North African origins. In the humorous song 'Je crois que ça va pas être possible' (1999), an 'Arab-looking' man is, for instance, refused entrance to a nightclub, a bank and a letting agency. With their mixed music, Zebda showed that *métissage* was not only about happy celebration, but could be interpreted as thoughtful and 'serious' music. In other words, it could become accepted as the renewal of 'authentic' criticism of social injustice, in direct filiation with 'quality' French *chanson* and in parallel to the efforts of retro rock for highlighting 'universal' goals.

Thus far (Summer 2002), Zebda has pointed to the inadequacies of contemporary French society, the limits of French Republicanism in assuming that differences could disappear, and the irrelevance of purely festive *métissage*. Their reflections on French identity have however remained open, and at times reached a bewildered dead-end about the ambivalence of French society. In the song *Je suis* (1999), Cherfi wrote: "Je suis pas né le jour de ma naissance, je suis né lorsque j'ai compris ma différence", implying that if integration was supposed to level differences, it did not work for non-white people who were still referred to as 'different' and thus non-assimilable[70]. Two other songs revealed the

incapacity of French institutions (and most French people) to deal with those of North African origins in need of still more respect. "Quand j'ai compris la loi j'ai compris ma défaite: 'intégrez-vous' disait-elle, mais c'était chose faite" and "intégré je le suis où est la solution, intégré je le suis où est la solution...?" (repeated *ad lib*) are two extracts stressing the impasse reached by French politics[71]. On the one hand, both the government and some North African immigrants seemed to agree on the need to integrate a common political model, but on the other hand this model ignored the ethnic differences between French citizens and, most crucially, ignored the racist assumptions that still impeded the development of an equitable society. Thus, being Arab (or of any ethnic origin other than white French) *and* French still had to be asserted, and Zebda's struggle for this has proved quite powerful in contemporary French popular music[72]. The 'mellowing' of Republicanism, as Pinto noted, still remains a cause to fight, and Zebda's repeated attempts to do so have earned them credit from the French left.

D. Humanist Utopia and Anti-Corporate Globalisation

Considering *métissage* as a replacement model for jacobinism, *rock métissé* bears assimilationist undertones that stand as a limitation (the end product remains 'French', or even 'quality') and as a force ('Frenchness' evolves by hybridizing). In representing 'serious' political commitment, *rock métissé* (like *retro rock* but in another direction) also involves a utopian element in constantly putting on the agenda a struggle for more equality, more fraternity, more democracy among different cultural and ethnic groups. This utopia is another phrase for the yet-unattained goal of the democratic revolution, a French ideal that has also played a role in international politics. In 1993 for the GATT treaty, France insisted that its cinema production would not be considered as a 'merchandise', and was taken out of the final agreements. It stood (relatively) firm against the concentration of multinational powers in the hand of neo-liberal strategies. Because of its integration of foreign influences and its

desire to present a universal ideal of justice, *rock métissé* has also played a part in imagining, and re-inventing, the French nation as critical of neo-liberalism.

1. France and 'Resistance' to Global Trade

As the Franco-American academic Susan George suggested, France may have a special role to play in promulgating the objective of 'anti-globalisation'. George, member of ATTAC and present at the Millau conference (France) in June 2000 for the support of the eco-leader José Bové, said: "La France, je le dis le plus sérieusement du monde, est le seul pays capable d'opposer un contre-modèle au modèle américain"[73]. In a left-wing and anti-capitalist perspective, she relied on the time-worn principle of grandeur and exceptionalism, playing with the idea of the 'specificity' of France and French politics to embody an international 'resistance' to global trade. While we assessed the underlying self-satisfaction of such a position, it seems that defending a certain form of French national 'resistance' could help project a 'humanist' ideal, and insist on the potentially universal concept of 'resistance'[74]. Since December 1999 and the demonstrations in Seattle against the WTO conference, many summits against neo-liberalism have sprung up over the world, such as in Prague in September 2000 against the IMF meeting, in Millau (France) in 2000, in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2000 and 2002, and in Genoa (Italy) in July 2001 against the G8 summit. In addition, events like the Subcommander Marcos' march to Mexico (February 2001), the formation of the French association for the taxation of monetary transactions (ATTAC), or vocal declarations by Bové against the neo-imperialist functioning of the 'McWorld' have coalesced to express the existence of a resistance to corporate liberalism. Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2000) and Christophe Aguiton's *Le monde nous appartient* (2001)[75] were also published in the wake of the above. All these events paralleled a strong current in contemporary French politics that seems to believe, like Susan George, that 'liberal'

globalisation has started to decline, or at least that France can play a crucial part in 'resisting' its spread.

In *Le Monde* in August 2001, one could read that "ce qui est très remarquable dans les revendications portées par les manifestants, à Gênes et ailleurs, c'est qu'elles marquent l'émergence d'une modernité politique réelle (...), l'émergence d'une conscience politique internationale, qui n'est pas révolutionnaire mais bien réformiste"[76]. The emphasis on '*réelle*' and '*émergence*' implies that a form of international 'resistance' (to corporate globalisation) has indeed started. In *Les Inrockuptibles*, an article assessed the success of Millau and Porto Alegre by stating that there existed "la patiente mais efficace constitution d'un indispensable contre-poids mondial aux oukases de la Bourse et du marché"[77]. Terms like *'réelle'* and '*efficace*' again showed the widespread belief in the strength of this movement. In *Libération*, Zebda's involvement in the Toulouse 2001 elections was characterized as "l'expression d'une sorte de radicalité, (...) plurielle, (...) plus sociétale"[78], as a new *'gauche de la gauche'*, linking their local action to the emergence of a wider international left-wing consciousness. Zebda's members have also underlined their anti-capitalist attitude thus: "On se retrouve dans un certain nombre de causes, dans l'espoir antilibéral"[79]. The term *'libéral'* is here strictly taken in its economic sense (as often in France) and is understood as a synonym for capitalism. The anti-liberal hope of Zebda therefore attacks the foundations of economic neo-liberalism, and sides with, as the Americans put it, anti-corporate globalisation. In the perspective of keeping a 'non-mainstream' and 'anti-commercial' identity, the 'third world' influences of *rock métissé* and the broad left-wing allegiance of French rock artists have helped support this French 'resistance'. The bands Zebda and Noir Désir notably supported Bové in Millau in 2000, and Manu Chao demonstrated in Genoa in 2001[80]. Further connections between these artists and others have established French rock music as a medium of choice for exploring the theme of

'anti-globalisation'[81]. The case study of Manu Chao below illustrates the bonding of *métissé* music with political 'resistance' on an international scale.

2. Manu Chao: a French Symbol of 'International Resistance'

The French singer Manu Chao, ex-leader of the *rock alternatif* band Mano Negra, became something of an international and 'radical' icon with his first solo album *Clandestino*, published in 1998. As *Le Monde* reported, this album and his second one, *Proxima Estación: Esperanza* (2001), were heard non-stop during the Genoa demonstrations in July 2001. Published by Virgin, a subsidiary of EMI, both albums sold extremely well, *Clandestino* nearing 1 million copies sold in France alone (ten times a Gold album) and totalling 3 million copies sold worldwide with its success in Spain, Italy and South America. What is quite remarkable about Chao is that he has become an icon of left-wing 'authenticity', and that his *métissé* music is the best French national export[82]. Alone, he seems to embody the national aspiration to represent an international 'resistance', or the universal goal of French identity. As Chao himself admitted, however, "je suis incapable d'analyser pourquoi il y a un million de Français qui ont acheté *Clandestino*. Je n'arrive pas à comprendre ce qui les a touchés"[83]. A few 'material' determinants may explain it for him.

Four years after Mano Negra's final album, Manu Chao's solo career remained produced by the same major company and his existing 'credibility' benefited from this commercial exposure. In terms of leading a public career, Chao's rather good looks have been an undeniable factor for his female audience, as the large proportion of young women at his concerts testifies. He has also been portrayed in the press with a candid smile, a Peruvian hat on his head and wearing casual clothes like combat trousers, football tops and a worn-out denim jacket, all projecting an image of simplicity, of commonness and similarity with the audience. Chao is packaged as the outdoor travelling type, with outward signs of disdain of 'glamour' and, despite his millions of albums sold, ostensibly steps outside conventional

fashion. More importantly, Chao is a notorious member of ATTAC, has met José Bové in Millau in 2000, and gave a concert in June 2001 to collect money for the buses of 'paperless' associations to attend the Genoa demonstrations. Chao was also fascinated by the Subcommander Marcos and met him in Mexico. He said of Marcos that "Il a fait un travail fabuleux au niveau de son quartier, le Chiapas. (...) À l'époque c'était une des rares lumières que je voyais dans le monde"[84]. Marcos has embodied a renewed 'radical' left and intellectual support of the oppressed, linking local 'commitment' to global issues. It remains interesting however that it should be a French artist, Manu Chao, who achieved international recognition on the basis of his own left-wing commitment. Chao was often mistaken for a Spanish or Latin American, as he noted about his Argentinian audience[85], yet his French public claims his French origins. A *Télérama* journalist affectionately nicknamed him "notre titi espingouin"[86], '*titi*' referring to a Parisian 'smart' kid, and '*espingouin*' being an *argot* term for Spanish. The possessive article and the Parisian references stress the fact that a certain national pride lies in giving birth to such a mixed character, and once again designates French identity as unproblematically composed of multiple influences, all theoretically equal and equally valued. By extension, this also qualifies Chao's *métissé* music as ideal for the expression of 'anti-globalisation' claims, particularly well supported in France by left-wing politicians and media.

Manu Chao's music is both extremely personal, his dry guitar style distinct from the crowd, and simple enough to cross over audiences and appeal to many different nationalities. In fact, and here is a contradiction about his 'alternative' identity, Chao's supposedly 'non-mainstream' music is relatively spare and repetitive, the same chords repeated endlessly on several songs. It is possible that this musical simplicity expanded his international appeal on the same principle as 'mainstream' or 'commercial' music has a 'low national implantation' that allows the crossing of market borders[87]. Moreover, his mostly Spanish lyrics are peppered with easily understandable cliché phrases in French ('mon amour/tous les jours') or

in English ('rasta baby'; 'long way from home/long, long night'). This has worked in favour of a straightforward, idealistic message of peace and fraternity, which can take on an 'authentically committed' resonance because of Chao's own presence at international political gatherings, in addition to his non-stop touring. With him, French *rock métissé* inscribes itself into the international struggle against corporate globalisation.

Chao has reflected on the irony of his successful position and interaction with music multinationals, a self-reflexive position which reinforces his credibility as someone 'serious'. Like Boucherie Production which devised selective collaborations, Chao once asserted, "Est-ce à dire qu'il faut rester à l'écart du système? Je ne crois pas. Il faut se battre avec les mêmes armes qu'eux (...). Pour être avec les gens, avec la collectivité, il faut être dans le système"[88]. For him, the struggle for social justice and solidarity needed recognition, press coverage, and Virgin helped in providing this. Chao is similarly aware of his official 'alternative' position within French rock music, as he declared during the promotion of his second album that "Il n'y a rien de plus marketing que la rébellion en ce moment"[89] and "Je ne veux surtout pas que la rébellion devienne mon fonds de commerce (...) pas question pour moi de devenir la petite caution de la rébellion à cent balles"[90]. He offered to debunk the commercial success of his own 'authenticity'. His self-awareness and criticism of the contradictions in selling 'resistance' highlighted his intelligence and added to his high 'sympathy capital'.

Chao has then interestingly overlapped, and consciously so, the identity space of 'alternativity'. Musically for instance, his second album was nearly a total re-run of the previous one, sampling extracts of both Mano Negra and the *Clandestino* album. It ignored the credo of innovation, musical challenge and destabilization typically associated with 'non-mainstreamness'. Chao commented on the coverage of his own music thus: "[il y a] cette dictature qui veut que tout soit nouveau. Je la refuse. Je n'essaie pas de lancer des modes, je suis pragmatique: si un truc marche pour moi, pourquoi irais-je chercher plus loin?". He

therefore stimulatingly turned around the 'alternative' precept by qualifying it as a 'diktat'. However, in a similar fashion to the functioning of the French republican ideal, which entails its own challenge and rejuvenation, Chao's self-awareness has ensured his continued perception as 'authentic'. The *Inrockuptibles*, *Télérama* and *Libération* journalists who would otherwise have criticized artists for repetitiveness, were careful to qualify his second album as "une nouvelle pilule de bonheur", "le successeur", or "le petit frère" of *Clandestino*. A journalist from *Les Inrockuptibles* even distanced himself from the rigidity of 'alternativity' and reckoned that his second album was "un disque dont personne ne trouvera jamais le moyen de dire du mal"[91]. Chao and his music therefore presented an ultimate consensus within the culture of 'radicality', and mapped out different identity zones over different attachments to 'radicality'. His second album has partially broken down the elitist tone of French rock culture, like Zebda had before him by combining intellectual legitimacy to mainstream commercial success in 1999.

3. Horizontal Communities of French Rock Music

Rock métissé has created what Morley and Robins call a 'horizontal community', or a sense of togetherness realized across geographical boundaries and through the media (here music)[92]. For French audiences, listening to *rock métissé* has served to highlight an international affinity with other left-wing 'anti-globalisation' movements. Manu Chao met José Bové who met Marcos (who met Chao) who was interviewed by Naomi Klein[93]: we see a cultural chain forming and mapping out an elastic 'resistance', crediting a role to French rock artists on this scene. Several examples of contacts and exchanges between French and international artists in the world of *métissé* music could illustrate this point, one of the most obvious being Zebda's constant comparison (and personal links) with the *métissé* British band Asian Dub Foundation[94]. Another example is the international compilation of *métissé* music, produced in Spain in 1998 and entitled *Radical Mestizo*, which featured several

French *métissé* bands like P18, Spook and the Guay, and Sergent Garcia. It also featured bands from Italy, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Spain, Portugal, Mexico and Brazil. All played a rather similar combination of ragga-rock, singing in the language of their regions. The Spanish sleeve notes used the term *rock mestizado* to encompass all the bands, providing a perfect equivalent to our own definition of *rock métissé*. These notes underlined the '*espíritu rebelde*' of the bands featured, tying them all in an apparently coherent international identity of 'resistance' to global capitalism[95].

The foreign influences of French *rock métissé* mostly come from Latin American or Caribbean countries, countries that could symbolically be affiliated to Third World oppression and thus 'authenticate', on the surface, French 'resistance' against the economic power of the Western/First World. Indeed, as the audiences' discourse will make clearer in the following chapter, cultural identities are often formed of simplifications, and French rock music audiences have seen sense in simplifying between the 'North' (or the West, as oppressor) and the 'South' (as victim and 'resistant'). In often vague terms, any 'southern' music has endorsed a certain 'authenticity', a 'pre-modern' specificity that legitimized its opposition against the West. About the *rock métissé* band Lo'Jo, one interviewee for instance remarked: "c'est vachement bien, y'a un orchestre un peu africain, enfin je sais pas s'ils sont roumains ou tsiganes ou quoi, mais c'est original". About Mano Negra another confessed: "j'aime bien ça fait pas trop français, y'a plein de langues différentes. C'est comme les Négresses, on sait pas trop si c'est français à l'origine ou quoi, en tous cas c'est super". Another said about Têtes Raides: "le fait qu'ils mélangent pas mal de styles et de cultures musicales, et des trucs de l'est, yiddish à fond, ça me fait bien kiffer [accrocher]. C'est de la musique vraiment très riche". In all these instances, the audiences ignored the specific ethnic or cultural anchorage of these bands (just as the artists intended to celebrate this mixity), and lauded their 'Third World' identity, hence legitimating their musical 'resistance'.

Paraphrasing Morley and Robins, we saw how French rock music charted both competing and complementary (re)definitions of French identities[96]. One trend has turned to an imaginary past, the other praised the (imaginary) union of a universal community. Together, however, both retro and *métissé* French rock musics have anchored their 'politics' on the Left and shaped a common 'alternative' identity to 'mainstream' music and conservative politics. Together, and often jointly as audiences listen to both trends, they have reassessed the validity of 'humanist' goals such as fraternity and democracy, believed to be French heritage material. Both trends have also showed their limitations in exposing naïve points about universalism and an elitist confidence in its own worth.

The links between the two trends are stronger than its differences, and a close interconnectedness is manifest in several collaborations among artists. For instance, the band Les Hurlements d'Léo took their name from the title of a song by the *alternatif* band Les VRP[97]. That same song was covered by another retro band, Les Ogres de Barback, in their first album (1997), who also did an album of cover versions, *Repris de justesse* (2000) including songs by Têtes Raides, Mano Negra and Bérurier Noir. Louise Attaque, for their part, have covered 'Ronde de nuit' by Mano Negra on stage, and in 2001, a compilation of "20 groupes de la scène rock actuelle", including Ogres de Barback, Hurlements d'Léo and La Ruda Salska, did cover versions of Mano Negra songs[98]. Another example is the declaration, in 1998, of Zebda's members, who compared their social criticism to the contemporary British 'social realist' cinema. Taking part in a compilation of Jacques Brel cover versions, Zebda justified their choice of the song 'Jaurès' thus: "c'est une chanson très explicite sur la condition ouvrière, proche d'un certain cinéma anglais d'aujourd'hui, Ken Loach, The Full Monty, Les Virtuoses [Brassed Off]"[99]. This intertextuality with British cinema establishes fascinating 'horizontal' links with the music and cinema cultures of France and the UK. Meanwhile, past and present intermingle as this Brel compilation was the opportunity to establish international links, and to gather together retro with *métissé*

music (Têtes Raides were also featuring). With these numerous interconnections, retro and *métissé* rock have carved a coherent niche for themselves within French popular music. How their audiences accept, reproduce or challenge this identity is the focus of our next chapter.

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[1] Anderson, 1991, p.6. For Walker Connor (1978), a nation is "a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiate it", which similarly lays an emphasis on the notion of invention, p.379.
[2] Morley and Robins, 1989, p.11; also: "tradition is very much a matter of present day politics and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past and to mobilise them in contemporary practices", p.15.
[3] Jolyon Howorth, 'Image and Political Culture in Contemporary France', 1987, pp.106-107.
[4] Diana Pinto, 'The Atlantic Influence', 1988, p.117.
[5] In 1988, Bérurier Noir declared "on ne veut pas rouler pour un parti, nous ne voulons pas être récupérés", but quoted that the PCF and LCR had asked for their participation. E.Marcill, 1997, p.75.
[6] *Charlie-Hebdo* 397, 26/01/2000, p.11.
[7] Songs 'France 2' and 'Le Bruit et l'odeur' (both 1995).
[8] *EDJ*, 15-21/04/1999, p.64. *Beur* is the shortened and backwards slang for '*Arabe*' in French. It refers to the second generation immigrants of North African origins, simplistically called Arabs in France, and is dated as a 1980s term. It is also a controversial term among '*Beurs*' themselves, who sometimes find it condescending as an overarching replacement for more precise origins like Berber or Kabyl. Amazigh Kateb, from the *métissé* band Gnawa, considers that the word is "un peu des façons de nous exclure, parce qu'on invente des identités hybrides, des trucs qui ne correspondent à rien" (*Périphéries*, online at: peripheries.net/i-amaz.htm). Others, including Magyd Cherfi, accept the term as a sign of republican integration.
[9] *EDJ*, *ibid*, p.65.
[10] Interview by Pierre Sorgue, *Télérama* 2548, 14/11/98, p.15.
[11] In this album, Zebda covered 'Hasta siempre', the hymn composed in 1965 by Carlos Puebla for Che Guevara. At the same time (Winter 1997-98), a young French starlet, Nathalie Cardone, sung the same song in a more dancy and sexy version. Her video, broadcast on prime-time TV, showed her wandering down the *favelas* of Cuba (?), her dress drenched from the tropical rain and sticking to her slim body. There was no video clip for the Motivés, no prime-time TV exposure, so that they took on their 'non-mainstream' identity by contrast to this other product.
[12] 'Là-bas si j'y suis', in Toulouse, France Inter, 5 and 6/12/2000.
[13] The *chanson*-rock band Mickey 3D was also described in *Les Inrockuptibles* (286) as composing "des chansons électriques et citoyennes, mal élevées", reasserting French rock identity as a potential token of dissidence, relying on the legitimacy of democratic rebellion, in the same manner (*'mal élevé'*) as Cherfi's *'bordel'*. 17/04/2001, p.46.
[14] Preparing for the 2001 municipal elections in Brittany, the manager of the *Vieilles Charrues* festival, Christian Troadec, competed for the mayor's post in Carhaix, hometown of his festival. Troadec dwelt on the same themes as the *Motivé-e-s*, and *Libération* described him thus: "Face aux partis traditionnels, il se veut aussi modeste et 'proche des gens', avec un credo central: la démocratie participative", *Libération*, 21/02/2001, p.14. Troadec won the elections. The Toulouse band Fabulous Trobadors have also integrated this discourse of local and 'radical' politics, emphasizing the importance of the *quartier* as a place of socialization. They also claimed the French revolutionary heritage, casting threats of 'over-throwing' Dominique Baudis for being a bad *maire* ('Come on every Baudis'). See Jacme Gaudas, *Fabulous Stories,* 1995.
[15] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', 1984, p.67.
[16] In October 2001, the PS mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, ordered a commemorative plaque for 17/10/61. It was the first official gesture of the French state to recognize its responsibility during these massacres. According to Daniel Mermet ('Là-bas si j'y suis', 17/10/2001), the death figures were of 2 down (and drown) for the authorities, against 200 lost for the demonstrators.
[17] Yacine Kateb is the father of Amazigh Kateb, the singer and composer of Gnawa, so that we see a cultural connection between retro and *métissé* rock music.
[18] For negative reviews of *Amélie*, see Serge Kagansky in *Libération*, 31/05/01; Philippe Lançon, *Libération* 01/06/01.
[19] *Libération*, 16/02/2000, p.33.
[20] 'Musiks à Manosque' leaflet, 22-27/07/2001.
[21] In January 2002, the retro band Rue de la Muette was reviewed thus: "le coup du groupe rock-java-world, on nous l'a fait si souvent que la recette paraît aujourd'hui tenir plus du fast-food que de la fine cuisine", A.-

M.Paquotte, *Télérama* 2713, 09/01/02, p.53. Paquotte did not actually consider Rue de la Muette to be 'bad', but she implied that at one stage, the retro style was *'fine cuisine'*, and that this quality had by now fallen into the mainstream of 'fast-food'.

[22] *Télérama-Paris* 357, supplément XII.

[23] About Paris: "Urban to its core, yet more than a bit rural in its troping, in its abundance of flowers and garderns", Adrian Rifkin, 1991, p.206. See Chapter Five for the invention of pastoral 'authenticity' in festivals.

[24] On Renaud as follower of the Bruant style and precursor of the retro spirit, see Hawkins (2000). In 2000, Paquotte wrote about Renaud that "la virulence de sa colère citoyenne apparaît plus que jamais salutaire, dans le flot tiède des variét' FM et du consensus mollement correct", *Télérama* 2636, 19/07/2000 p.47. Note the use of civic commitment, similar to Zebda's for instance, underlined as moral and 'radical' against chart music and 'the *status quo*'. It would be interesting to analyse the role of music videos in forging a visual 'retro' imagery.

[25] Ory, 1983, 31.

[26] Rifkin, 1991.

[27] Jameson, 1984, p.67.

[28] Interview online for *Printemps de Bourges* 1997, www.reseau-printemps.com/rpb/cyber/home_1997.html

[29] Jameson, 1984, p.68.

[30] "Il nous fait des éclairages de théâtre, pas de concerts rock, donc...", *Télérama* 2667, p.59.

[31] Garapon, 1999, p.168.

[32] Paquotte, *Télérama* 2580, 23/06/99, p.74.

[33] 'Les Têtes Raides chamboulent tout', *Télérama* 2667, 21/02/01.

[34] It would be interesting to contrast the GISTI concert and its 'alternative' image to 'mainstream' charity concerts like *Enfoirés*, in which many French stars take part.

[35] 'Le seuil d'intolérance', *Inrockuptibles* 303, 04/09/01, p.19.

[36] "In France, the post-colonial problematic is seldom encountered in political or cultural discourse", Hargreaves, 'Introduction', 1997, p.3.

[37] Yonnet, 1985, p.193.

[38] On the critique of bourgeoisie by Brassens, Brel and Ferré, see Chris Tinker, 1999.

[39] Yonnet, 1985, p. 200. See Chapter One, p.47 and note 103.

[40] Christophe Conte, 'Le rock français, libre comme l'air', July 1999.

[41] Interview of Têtes Raides by Emmanuel Sepchat, *EDJ*, 23/03/00, p.36.

[42] Alex Meunier, 1998.

[43] Emmanuel Sepchat, *EDJ*, 2000.

[44] Dirlik, 1994, 337.

[45] On integration and assimilation as synonyms: "Today, all the main political parties except for Le Pen's exclusionary Front National are united in arguing for *intégration*, a term which is (...) More than often used as a polite circumlocution for assimilation", Hargreaves, 'introduction', 1997, p.21. The successive *foulard* affairs in France raised the question of knowing to what extent the republican school could tolerate manifest signs of cultural (and religious) difference.

[46] McMurray suggests that the political mainstream avoids tackling Arabness in certain terms "because of the right's corner on that particular angle", 'La France Arabe', 1997, p.35. We may draw a parallel with the issue of nationalism that got a bad press because of its appropriation by (far-)right parties.

[47] See Alec Hargreaves, 'Multiculturalism', in Flood and Bell (eds), 1997, pp.180-199.

[48] "A sign of just how far down the pluralist road the debate over citizenship has gone", Pinto, 1988, p.127.

[49] Trenet first performed the song on stage during the German occupation, in 1941, but it was first recorded and broadcast in 1947.

[50] 'Douce Transe', *Les Inrockuptibles* 257, 19/09/00, p.35-39.

[51] *La Chanson française et francophone*, p.172.

[52] 'Circulaire relative à l'amélioration des conditions de délivrance des certificats de nationalité française', online at: www.justice.gouv.fr

[53] Pinto, 1988, 128.

[54] See Marc Lecarpentier's editorial note, *Télérama* 2629, 31/05/00, p.5.

[55] Chris Ridd, www.digiserve.com/lnv

[56] *Libération* 19/02/00, p.41; *Dauphiné Libéré*, 01/99; *Télérama* 2566, 17/03/99, p.31; flyer for Lo'Jo's concert at Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 14/11/01.

[57] Chris Warne, 'Articulating identity from the margins', 1997, p.147.

[58] *Inrockuptibles*, July 1999, p.42.

[59] 'Toulouse', 1995.

[60] H.Von Badaboum, *Charlie-Hebdo* 350, 03/99.

[61] Philippe Vandel et Paul Rambali, 'La java contre Le Pen', *Actuel* 108, 06/88, pp.105-115.

[62] *Télérama* 14/11/98.

[63] Hargreaves, 'Introduction', 1997, p.15.

[64] Garapon, 1999, p.112.
[65] about Gnawa, L'Abordage music programme, Evreux, September 2000.
[66] See *Mosaïques*, the 2001 French culture festival organized by the Institut Français, London. Other examples of 'celebration' of cultural differences include the Franco-Arab band Zen Zila, who produced an album in 1999 entitled 'Le mélange sans appel', whose single's chorus went "je fais l'apologie des bouillons de cultures". The Arab expression *'Zen Zila'* apparently means *métissage*, and the use of diglossia expressed mutual respect between the two cultures: "à tous ceux qui voudraient faire croire que le mélange est un danger (...), Je peux leur dire Salam Aleykoum dans ma langue d'origine, et 'Que la paix soit sur vous' dans ma langue d'adoption".
[67] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 1993.
[68] David McMurray, 'La France arabe', 1997, p.33
[69] Carte de Séjour used the synthesizers and emerged as a commercially successful band because of its Trenet cover versions, while 'serious' committed rock music preferred electric or acoustic instruments, and songs composed personally.
[70] On the 'oriental other' as non-assimilable, and Islam as the ongoing threat of Christian Europe, see Hargreaves, 'Introduction', 1997 p.17. On exoticism, see Calvet (1989) and Hakem (1999). One may also think of André Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902).
[71] 'Le bruit et l'odeur' (1995) and 'Quinze ans' (1999).
[72] The two Toulouse bands Fabulous Trobadors and Zebda subverted the Poitiers battle of 782, traditionally presented in school books as a national liberation against the Maurs, and reversed it as a national defeat, the failure of realizing a multicultural society: "Qui dit 'français' dit pas qu'à Poitiers on ait tout paumé, on a tout gagné" (Zebda's 'France 2', 1995) and "te mets pas Martel en tête, pour nous Poitiers fut une défaite" (Fabulous Trobadors, 'Baudis'). The journalist Thierrey Leclère wondered in 2000 "Et puis, pourquoi un 'bon' étranger serait-il forcément quelqu'un qui a vocation à devenir français?", Precisely challenging the principle of 'integration', *Télérama* 2616, 01/03/00, p.16. Such efforts however strike by their absence in contemporary French media.
[73] Interviewed in Millau for *Les Inrockuptibles* 251, 07/00, p.14. Noir désir and Zebda sung in Millau. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu also supported Bové's commitment and Bové and Daniel Mermet both celebrated Bourdieu's *'combat'* on the day after this death (France Inter, 25/01/02).
[74] In December 2001, the presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Chevènement reasserted his belief in the universal principle of France's culture: "l'exception culturelle n'est pas spécifiquement française, d'autres pays peuvent s'en emparer. L'exception culturelle est donc universelle", *Libération* 28/12/01. The Green candidate Noël Mamère celebrated the utility of "la mobilisation des mouvements sociaux contre la mondialisation néo-libérale" or against what he also called the "McDo-Hollywood" world. *Ibid.*
[75] See also José Bové, *Le monde n'est pas une marchandise* (2000). The phrase 'McWorld' is taken from 'Between Jihad and mcworld', Naomi Klein, *The Guardian Weekend Supplement*, 27/10/2001, p.30.
[76] C.Paul et V.Peillon, 'Un nouvel internationalisme s'est ébauché à Gênes', *Le Monde*, 10/08/2001, p.10.
[77] 'L'autre mondialisation', *Inrockuptibles* 290, 15/05/01, p.34-5. 'Oukase' or ukase in English is the Russian word for an arbitrary decision, a diktat.
[78] *Libération*, 13/03/2001, p.2.
[79] *EDJ*, 2000, p.65.
[80] Incidentally, the *chanson* artist Francis Cabrel, long-time RPR mayor of his hometown, also supported the event.
[81] The term is in inverted commas because Klein dislikes it; she seeks to unite anti-corporate claims globally. Noir Désir played with Têtes Raides for the GISTI concert. Têtes Raides, Zebda and Noir Désir all appeared on the album of cover versions of Jacques Brel's songs, *Aux Suivants* (1998). Manu Chao, present in Millau, played the guitar on Noir Désir's 2001 album ('Le vent l'emportera'). Close cultural links tie all these French rock artists together, reinforcing the conception of a consistent and united 'oppositional' French rock identity.
[82] Emma E.Forrest: "This is Manu Chao, anti-globalisation folk hero and France's most successful music export", 'Busker in Babylon', *The Guardian Weekend*, 13/04/02, p.37-8.
[83] 'Un indien dans la vie', *Les Inrockuptibles* 290, 15/05/01, p.36-43.
[84] 'Le retour du Clandestino', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 31/05/01, p.126. For a parallel discourse in Anglo-American academia, see Naomi Klein's conclusion to *No Logo* (2000) where she envisages the only possible alternative to global consumerism as "the most basic principle of citizenship: people should govern themselves", p.441. Resistance can only come from "a citizen-centred alternative", p.446. Although Klein's book was only published in French in summer 2001, and thus did not influence the majority of the French demonstrators in Millau, one clearly sees emerging an international consciousness reappropriating democratic and republican values as a global resistance to capitalism, thus creating in its French rock music expression, an 'alternative' rebellious identity.
[85] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2001.
[86] 'L'été sera Chao', *Télérama* 2681, 30/05/01, pp.72-74.

[87] On cultures overlapping their own definition, see Robert Walser on a heavy metal magazine which "becomes a site for contestation of the term [heavy metal]", *Running with the Devil*, 1993, p.5; see Lawrence Grossberg on rock and punk musics which "attack the very conditions of [their] existence", 'Is there rock after punk?', 1986, p.122.
[88] *Libération*, 28/11/1999.
[89] *Le Monde*, 19/07/2001.
[90] *Télérama* 2681.
[91] Stéphane Deschamps, *Inrockuptibles* 290, 15/05/01, p.39.
[92] Morley and Robins, 1989, p.26.
[93] Naomi Klein, *The Guardian*, *ibid.*
[94] Further research could examine the contrasts and similarities of integration, *métissage* and multiculturalism. The London-based band Asian Dub Foundation present an equivalent discourse to French rock music with its hybrid, 'anti-commercial' and politically challenging identity. ADF play a punk-rock-ragga-electronic fusion combining several Asian influences. They have been compared to Zebda in the French press: "ADF (...) Se place au coeur d'une constellation musicale où brillent quelques groupes phares de la scène française, (...) Zebda et les Fabulous Trobadors. À l'image de ces derniers, ADF associe chanson engagée et lutte de proximité", and "[ADF] c'est l'un des groupes les plus politisés du Royaume-Uni, 'militants dans leur quartier' à l'image de formations françaises telles que Zebda ou les Fabulous Trobadors". Respectively *Télérama* 2653, 15/11/2000, p.106 and *Le Monde*, 23/03/2000, p.31.
[95] Sleeve notes of the record: "Hay un mundo de las mil lenguas que crece en las ciudades de Europa y América a ritmo de ska, batucada, hip hop, afro, salsa, reggae, rock, jungle o raggamuffm. Es esa energía cosmopolita que hace posibles las revoluciones pendientes. (...) Actitud estética en un calidoscopio multicolor, fusión de ritmos y explosión de independencia, insumisión (...) Con el espíritu rebelde", 1998, see online at www.fonomusic.com
[96] Morley and Robins, 1989, p.10.
[97] See the presentation of retro band Ramsès: "en les écoutant, on pense bien-sûr aux Têtes Raides, VRP, aux Négresses Vertes, La Tordue, à Mano Solo ou encore à la Mano Negra" (Agora music-hall, Le Havre, April 2000).
[98] Compilation *Illégal*, 2001.
[99] *Télérama* 2548, 07/10/98.

IV. Audiences of French Rock Music, Consumption and Self-Representations

A. Consumption and Audience Research

The limited use of audience research about French popular music was discussed in Chapter One, and existing surveys about the music tastes of the French continue to draw statistics from ready-made questionnaires. This both limits the scope of answers and fails to assess the meanings that audiences attribute to various artists, and to their own identity as consumers. For instance, a state-funded survey from 1997 and a private SACEM survey from 1998 both drew their questionnaires in such a manner that the term '*variétés*' appeared interchangeable with that of '*chanson*', while, as a separate category, 'rock and pop' seemed only to include Anglo-American music[1]. We saw, however, that French *rock* music exists as a distinct category, for instance in Fnac shops, and that it covers, for professionals, a different reality from *variétés* by elaborating a discourse of 'resistance' and 'authenticity'. This research is the first attempt to analyse consumers of French popular music in this context, and to give voice to French rock audiences themselves, so as to highlight their role in shaping that music culture. Our focus is the *sense* they put in their musical preferences and practices.

Outside France and since the 1970s, most studies on the consumers of popular music have focused on their 'creativity' and its expression within a singular fanbase or subculture[2]. These studies are limited as they consider that audiences identify themselves as consumers of a particular kind in response *to* the industry or the media, however creatively (Chapter One, p.27). On the other hand, a major trend in Cultural Studies now believes that the elements entering into the making and consuming of popular culture are so intricate that no party can be identified as exclusively 'oppressive' or 'resistant'. Consumers are considered as one of the elements at the interplay of a complex articulatory system, hence the now favoured term of 'audience'. Focusing on this articulation implies that, as Shaun Moores noted in his guide

to audience research, audiences cannot be simply studied as 'active' or 'creative' consumers. Rather, audiences themselves may show reactionary characteristics[3]. For instance, for Plummer who studied sexual narratives, his interviewees revealed that "stories [were] often conservative and preservative, tapping into the dominant worldview"[4]. In the domain of French rock music, we saw how the relevant media, state institutions, music producers and artists identified themselves as 'resistant' to various kinds of oppression. Enmeshed in this, they also showed contradictory signs of conservatism, as with the reliance on nostalgia, easy celebration or servicing capitalist interests (the state). Focusing on audiences, we now examine how a similar mechanism of selection occurs at the individual and group levels of popular music consumers, also producing a series of contradictory perceptions.

Audience research theory can account for the formation of cultural identities and the meanings audiences convey in terms of self-perceptions. Audience research is a method of collection and analysis of the practices and discourses of popular culture consumers, so far little applied to the consumption of popular music. Against the 'quantitative' methods of statistics, it is 'qualitative' research which illuminates the "doubts and uncertainties" of people's own modes of consumption[5]. Its interest lies in studying how and why people relate to popular culture the way they do, how they devise personal strategies of consumption, how they reflect on these acts and see themselves as consumers of a particular kind (or not). It focuses on the 'imagined' meanings and cultural constructs that consumers create and use, and which in turn produce a particular sense of community. Our emphasis lies in the 'imaginative' characteristics of cultural groups and identities, on their 'invention' of daily identities around and against other groups[6].

Audience research examines consumption practices by gathering verbal data and live observations, and I followed this method by carrying out my own 'live' research on French rock music audiences. My fieldwork took place at French rock music concerts and during popular music festivals, in the summers of 1999 and of 2000. Festivals were more

'profitable' than concerts as I could carry out several interviews there in one day. On average, I spent 15 to 20 minutes with a group of people. In concerts, interviews took place during intervals or at the end. In festivals, interviews occurred mostly in the daytime in the adjacent campsites where audiences relaxed between concerts.

I attended the music festivals of *Les Francofolies* in La Rochelle, of *La Route du Rock*, *Un Eté à Saint-Nolff* and *Les Vieilles Charrues* in Brittany, as well as some one-off concerts in the North-West region of France. As I resided in Great Britain at the time of this research, the West of France proved the closest and most practical area to which to travel. My personal connections with Normandy also allowed for one interview in the home of participants, in Rouen, where audiences responded to a poster I put up in the University. I went to music venues of varying sizes so as to get a wide panel of French rock audiences and a variety of impressions on their practices. I attended small concerts with under 200 people with tickets at 40-80FF (La Ruda Salska), average size concerts with about 1,000 people and tickets at 80-120FF (Têtes Raides), average size festivals like *Un Eté à Saint Nolff* with 4,000 people over 3 days for 240F, and the largest French popular music festival to this date, *Vieilles Charrues*, where 50,000 people were reported for one night (in 2000) and tickets sold at 320FF for three days, reaching over 600FF on the black market[7]. Details of the total fieldwork is given in the appendix. Overall, I recorded about 100 people (with about 45% of female speakers), totalling 16 hours of recording.

There are no festivals in France purely dedicated to French rock music, and French rock artists in festivals play alongside artists of sometimes totally different genres. This means that audiences of French rock music cannot be considered as a 'singular fanbase or subculture', as they not only listen to other music genres themselves, but also interact with other music communities (artists and audiences), especially during the time of festivals. Moreover, the sentiment of being 'different from the mainstream' is not the exclusivity of French rock music, but broadly applies to music listeners, almost everywhere, who are eager

to 'distinguish' from others. However, what connects listeners of French rock music together is the particular expression of their similarity in response to the textual, musical and social specificities of French rock. Thus, this chapter focuses on the daily (re-)invention of the 'alternative' identity for a number of French rock music listeners, but also on the fluidity of that cultural identity, and on its overlaps with other tastes and attitudes towards popular music.

In her presentation of 'qualitative' research, Jennifer Mason explains that semi-structured or semi-guided interviews create "a degree of openness necessary to produce authentic and credible data"[8]. Although Mason's use of the word 'authentic' needs further qualification, she stresses the point that the flexibility of semi-guided interviews provides the best 'true to life' data attainable, including verbal recordings and live observations. I followed this method having prepared a set of open questions on music tastes, consumption habits and details. I never directly asked audiences their feelings about the question of 'alternativity' or 'authenticity', but as they elaborated on distinctions between artists, media or social groups, their understanding of a binarism in music culture would become salient, and identify them as part of an 'alternative' community (or not). Interviews would end with practical questions on the speakers' educational and social background. Overall, it was 'participant observation' as I engaged in the same activities as the audiences, from one evening for a concert to several days for a festival. Audiences were interviewed mostly at random. I only used a small tape recorder, no pads or other 'technical' tools, so that interviewing happened as 'casually' as possible, the way a conversation would go about music in general.

My main obstacle in collecting data was to adapt the existing research methods set up for studies on 'spectatorship' to music audiences. 'Audience' theory was primarily devised for studies on TV and cinema spectatorship, and focused mostly on family viewing practices and on the 'politics of the living-room'[9]. For instance, Morley and Robins concentrated their

research on domestic and household TV audiences yet, as Nightingale noted, the family today has stopped being the most important social institution: "Less permanent structures that are often little more than alliances, like work groups, friendship groups" have replaced it[10]. In concerts and festivals, friendship groups were indeed my main focus. French rock listeners proved to be mostly autonomous young adults carrying out their cultural practices within groups of friends, outside the family home. However, in the same way that a family is 'naturally' gathered together, the members of the groups I interviewed formed what Flick called 'real groups', or people sharing previous interactions and who "have already developed forms of common activities and underlying patterns of meaning"[11]. In festivals and concerts, my audiences were ready-formed groups, they were not artificially gathered for the purpose of my interviews. Film audience research has also looked at how programme viewing, and the audiences' discourse about their practices, shaped their everyday lives. Music too is often experienced as a daily routine, at least in the domestic environment and especially so for fans, but concert-going is rarely an everyday event. This chapter then covers considerations of everyday or regular music practices, and Chapter Five focuses on the 'out-of-the-ordinary' concert-going experience, on festivals as a potential 'rupture' from daily life.

The verbal data gathered during interviews were transcribed and analysed using discourse, conversation and narrative analyses. Discourse analysis generally permits the listing of the audiences' factual knowledge but, unlike the pre-established lists in questionnaires, it leaves room for the audiences' own answers and interpretations of the questions. The focus group interview was also useful for laying emphasis on the conversation itself, understood as a particular social dynamic producing particular opinions on the subject of music. Conversations are understood as situations in which "social representations or social knowledge in general" are generated, which allows for the study of patterns of power among

participants[12]. The 'authoritative' power of 'alternative' audiences is briefly discussed below. Interviews with individuals were mostly studied from the angle of narrative analysis theory. Narrative theory considers that informants construct, as they speak, "first-person accounts of experience", versions of their grasp on the socio-cultural world around them[13]. In this sense, narrative theory permits the understanding of how individuals 'invent' their cultural identities. We understand that interviewees operate selections in relating their daily lives to the researcher, and that we can account for only one aspect of their more complex cultural behaviours. However, the audiences' discourses can be analysed as including traditional patterns of story-telling (hence the term 'narrative'), as personal tales of reality. The researcher's goal is to understand "how social actors order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell what they do"[14]. Narrative theory considers that speakers consciously or unconsciously choose to tell what they do for certain reasons, and that what they say is inevitably shaped by the social environment in which their discourse is produced. Thus, my analysis of narratives included noticing and deconstructing the cultural assumptions about an 'alternative' identity underlying my interviewees' discourse.

In particular, I selected sequences of 'narratives' and broke them down into patterns of story-telling, which enabled me to understand how interviewees constructed their sense of self, in the presence of myself as interviewer[15]. Such patterns were usually reduceable to the plot sequence of a departure point, followed by a complication (or obstacle), ending with a result (or evaluation). Coffey and Atkinson analysed the stage of the complication or obstacle as the expression of turning points, crises or problems, and considered it central to the constitution of personal narratives, in the sense that obstacles usually lead to a resolution, an affirmative sense of self. In my recordings, it appeared that personal narratives were often constructed with binary oppositions, with 'mainstream' or 'dominant' modes of consumption perceived as threats which required a form of 'resistance' to allow for the enactment of one's 'authentic' identity.

The quality of my research depended on the degree of trust that interviewees could have in me, and on the initial contact that took place between us. The fact that interviews were carried out face to face with the speakers meant that a certain influence may be attributed to 'what I looked like'. My age for instance was an asset in most cases as I appeared to be in the same age group as the people I recorded, allowing for casual introductions on the subject of music, almost always using *tutoiement* spontaneously. As I happen to be brown-haired and quite Mediterranean-looking, audiences of North African origin have easily confided in me about their musical tastes. On one occasion, a North-African security guard actually mistook me for an Arab and strongly criticised the 'white' consumption of music, leading to an interesting ethnic comparison about 'rebellion' (reported in Chapter Five). Being a woman has had disadvantages as well as advantages. Sometimes it allowed for pseudo-chatting up situations that could be redirected into the subject of music. On the other hand, conducting interviews on my own has (very occasionally) been risky and forced me to rule out meetings too late at night or in isolated sites such as technivals. Technivals are impromptu rave parties set up next to official festivals, and how the two spaces blur and differentiate is tackled in Chapter Five.

Finally, the fact that I was (and still am) a French rock music fan is open to controversy as I could be biased in my selections and analyses. Yet, researchers like Richard Middleton and Stan Hawkins have assessed the advantages of the 'scholar-fan position' and legitimized it[16]. My position was quite exceptional in that, being French and studying in England, I was able to conduct my research from the double point of view of a native and a foreigner. Having lived in Britain for two years prior to the study, I was distanced enough from my subject to look at it with a critical eye. On the other hand, my own concert-going experience and avid music listening were useful for 'knowing the score' about such

gatherings and their public, for formulating hypotheses about where to find French rock music audiences and how to 'approach' them.

B. The Invention of 'Alternativity' in Music Practices and Discourse

Popular music, including French rock music, is a commercial artefact sold and consumed within a complex industrial system. In this sense, contemporary France is a consumption democracy more or less like any other in the West. Yet, we saw that the argument for an 'other' or 'alternative' way of consuming music is resilient in France, and that the argument for 'authenticity' has found a particular fertile ground in French rock music, its artists attempting to oppose economic liberalism, its producers seeking a form of commercial autonomy, and media and the state thriving on, sometimes sponsoring, this 'resistant' music style. Taking the point of view of audiences, we now want to address the ways they imagine their role as consumers, and what their practices involve in terms of negotiating the paradox of consuming an 'anti-commercial' music genre. Because of the precariousness of the definition of 'alternative' music, and the overlap between 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream' zones of production or broadcast, as for instance when artists achieve huge sales, audiences need to define and redefine, through their everyday consumption practices, the 'alternative' boundaries of their specific identity.

1. 'Alternativity' versus 'Mainstreamness', and Overlaps

The general trends in French music consumption highlight the continuing success of *variétés*, both as the best-liked and best-sold music genre (Chapter Two, p.58). Audiences of French rock music, in this sense, belong to a statistical margin of music consumers. In addition, if not all of them actually enjoy the same artists or agree with the same cultural distinctions, they are, in their vast majority, characterized by their strict rejection of *variétés* or what constitutes the French mainstream of music consumption. In July and August 1999, out of 19

group interviews conducted in the streets of La Rochelle during the *Francofolies* festival and in the *Route du Rock* fortress, 17 groups of respondents insisted that they did not listen to 'commercial' music or any *'variété française'*. In July 2000, out of 32 interviews conducted in the festivals of Saint-Nolff and *Vieilles Charrues*, an average of 80% not only claimed not to listen to *variétés* but also advocated another way of relating to music, a way less conventional which they considered more 'authentic' than the former. Quotes like "j'écoute de tout sauf de la varièt'!" were repeated again and again. The 'non-mainstream' or 'alternative' identity of these interviewees was thus constructed as a clear opposition between whatever was believed to constitute the current 'mainstream', and themselves. They invented their cultural identity in terms of a clear-cut polarity[17].

I asked respondents to reflect more deeply on what motivated their distrust of the 'mainstream', and their answers always revolved around the criticism of heavy mediatization, quick profits and short-term career development. They, for instance, considered that "la variété c'est vraiment des mecs qui veulent faire du fric", "la variété ça veut rien dire, c'est commercial, un tube et on les revoit plus", or "nous on n'aime pas la musique préfabriquée, tous les artistes français qui passent à la télé, ils font tous la même chose". These remarks assumed that 'commercial' music had no aesthetic or reflexive purpose (*rien dire*), was repetitive (*même chose*), and that its sole motivation was *faire du fric*. Profit was thus opposed to intellectual substance and originality. One interviewee in particular, called Imelda, expanded her understanding of the division between 'mainstream' (or 'commercial') and 'non-mainstream' (or 'authentic') music practices during a one-to-one interview. I met Imelda in July 2000 at the Saint-Nolff festival, where French and British venues were mixed (the retro rock band La Tordue, the American band Muse). She was sitting alone at a bar table, adopting a 'hippy' style with her long brown hair and a colourful top, smoking rolled-up cigarettes. Imelda, 23, came from Brittany and had completed a degree *(licence)* in German the year before; she would also be starting a different degree in

history and archeology in September. She had a summer job delivering products for a pharmaceutical company in the Brittany area. We chatted for about an hour.

Imelda refused to listen to any kind of what she considered 'mainstream' music. She remarked: "la variété c'est quand même pour un public moins initié, il faut que tout le monde aime ça, c'est la grosse masse, quoi". She claimed that her approach was different: "je fuis un peu la grosse masse, ça me fait un peu peur. Peut-être parce que c'est trop facile, écouter la même chose que tout le monde, c'est aussi rentrer dans un certain... c'est bien d'aller dans d'autres sentiers, quoi". She contrasted the idea of being *initié* (knowledgeable, experienced) to that of belonging to a 'mass' audience, assuming that music consumers gave in to similitude and facility in large numbers. The phrase '*certain moule*' was expected in the sentence she left suspended, so that, while she tried to modulate her discourse with '*quand même*', '*moins*' and '*quoi*', she also assumed the existence of a homogeneous and conformist general audience. By contrast, she staged herself as the victim of the dangers of mass consumption ('*fait peur*', '*je fuis*'). She did not express her music consumption in 'positive' or 'creative' terms, potentially *choosing* to be 'alternative', but rather as an individual trapped by consumer society, left with only one 'alternative' possible. In terms of narrative, she conceived 'mass' consumption as a threatening and powerful obstacle, which required escape if she was to stop living in fear, or to develop her unique and intelligent personality. Her conception of music consumption as binary implied a hierarchical frame of mind, with her individualism connoting 'better' than 'mass' choices. For Morley and Robins, the concept of fear (as revealed here in Imelda's discourse) is crucial in the process of elaborating 'cultural identities', and dangerous in that it can lead to a defensive and moralist attitude: "The defense of a given 'cultural identity' easily slips into the most hackneyed nationalism, or even racism, and the nationalist affirmation of the superiority of one group over another"[18]. Just as the debates about France's 'cultural exceptionalism' involved a degree of national pride and elitism (Chapter Two), so Imelda revealed her superiority in

claiming her difference so peremptorily. Her 'alternative' discourse identified her as somehow elitist and narrow-minded.

Asked to elaborate on what she liked, Imelda became quite evasive: "la qualité, euh c'est vachement prétentieux de dire ça, mais c'est ce qui m'ouvre l'esprit" (listen to extract on CD). Adding to the idea of intellectual stimulation, her overall vagueness suggested that what mattered for her 'identity' was that there existed a difference or a boundary between her and other consumers, whatever the criteria for the existence of that boundary. In addition, Imelda was aware of the 'snobby' connotations of her discourse, as her self-criticism underlined. We come back to this below as this seemed to be a resilient feature of my interviewees' self-perceptions.

Another extract of Imelda's discourse expressed her reaction to some artists' growing fame. Imelda recreated a mainstream and non-mainstream distinction *within* 'alternative' music when she talked about the retro rock band La Tordue, previously identified as 'alternative' because of its use of the accordion and 'serious' commitment to left-wing politics (Chapter Three, p.122). She said: "Tu vois, La Tordue, c'est un phénomène de mode, c'est une mode de bouche à oreille mais tous les jeunes autour de moi ils écoutent ça, et j'ai pas envie d'écouter comme eux. J'ai décidé que je voulais pas faire comme eux alors j'écoute pas". She justified discarding this band on the ground of fashion (*'phénomène de mode'*), while recognizing that their fame was not due to the traditional success system of TV and radio broadcast, but to the more marginal way of word of mouth. Her repetitive remark about 'not listening' established as an obstacle the fact that many of her acquaintances listened to the band, so that within her own 'alternative' circle of friends, she remained conscious of a certain uniformity and tried to avoid it. She had decided to behave differently so as to feel as 'individual' as possible in her musical choices. She then concluded that "je passe à côté, ça se trouve, mais bon", acknowledging the possibility of missing out on pleasure on the sole ground of defying a perceived ordinariness, or order. Her attitude was

stricking by its extreme naivety but revealed how she consciously created defiance and originality so as to establish her sense of self-worth. This extreme case illustrates how the cultural conception of 'alternativity' is consciously invented in some cases, so as to function as a personal reward.

Following Imelda's *cas limite*, several interviewees reacted against commercial success too, in particular showing contempt for artists who were once deemed 'alternative' but had fallen into the 'mainstream' zone. This, however, is a fairly ordinary progression in one's career, and Manu Chao, Zebda or Louise Attaque all brought along their share of disappointed fans between 1999 and 2000 because of this. All three had initially earned an 'alternative' fame after their years of touring, 'hardship' and/or left-wing political declarations (Chapters Two and Three). Yet, after singles were extracted from their respective albums, they also became gradually exposed on TV, commercial radios, and relentlessly broadcast in shops as muzak[19]. Many interviewees expressed their intransigence thus: "Le fait que ça soit connu ça m'a vite fait chier" (about Zebda); "on en a eu ras le bol de l'écouter partout, dans les magasins et tout" (Zebda again); "au début on écoutait et puis c'est devenu célèbre, alors on n'écoute plus" (Louise Attaque); "ça fait partie des musiques pas fabriquées, mais j'ai un peu de mal... et puis, [Chao] a eu un succès énorme, ça joue dans la mesure où j'aime pas trop ça". These statements explained that once an artist had passed a certain degree of exposure in 'commercial', prime-time or general media, he or she then entered the 'mainstream' and fell 'in disgrace'. The 'mainstream' was thus identified rather loosely, as an identity that could vary in intensity, with time, and according to individual perceptions of that general exposure.

During the Rouen focus group (January 1999), the arts students of the panel discussed the respective merits and flaws of the retro rock band Louise Attaque (see Chapter Two, p.83). Loïs, a male informant of 23 (with a French *licence*), commented thus: "la première fois j'avais jamais entendu ça, je me suis dit c'est bien, ça bouge et c'est bizarre. Mais après

trois-quatre mois, on l'entendait même au supermarché, et de savoir que ça s'entendait partout, j'ai arrêté de l'écouter". Loïs had first enjoyed the band's apparent outlandishness (with *'bizarre'* = *'bien'*), a judgement that highlights his taste for destabilization and risk, and an equation already encountered with music producers (Chapter Two, p.63). The taste for destabilization is a cultural feature highlighted by Bourdieu as characteristic of the so-called 'vanguard' middle-class (see below)[20]. As Louise Attaque achieved growing media success, Loïs activated a conscious 'avoiding strategy', even flicking radio channels when the band was broadcast, so as to avoid listening to it. During the same interview, Xavier (English *licence*, 25) also assessed his knowledge of the band prior to their nationwide success ("le CD était sorti depuis longtemps avant que ça marche"), and considered that it had achieved "un succès à l'ancienne, en tournant beaucoup". Yann (English *licence*, 24) qualified Louise Attaque as "des indépendants, ils avaient une certaine éthique". Both Yann and Xavier activated a conception of 'authenticity' by drawing moral conclusions from the opposition of the live circuit and small labels, to media exposure and majors. We saw, however, that live performance and mediatization (on records or radio) have cohabited since the development of the music industry, so that there was little ground in qualifying *'à l'ancienne'* with more status. Moreover, Yann was somehow ill-informed as the 'independent' label Atmosphériques had a distribution deal with the major Sony (p.84). Yet, both considered that Louise Attaque had enjoyed, albeit temporarily, a stage of 'genuine independence', and that they, as 'special' consumers, had witnessed it. As friends, they activated similar conceptions of what constituted 'authenticity'. To paraphrase Morley and Robins, they recognized themselves as belonging to a similar 'identity group' through the recollection (and invention) of common values, based on pre-modernity, cultural antecedence and anti-corporate morals[21]. We will refer to Bourdieu's sociological categories below, and contrast some of his findings on French cultural consumption to the present research. Nevertheless, Bourdieu has analysed one's claim of prior knowledge of a work of art, and

one's consequent change of taste when put to the test of mediatization, as the *antécédent culturel*. This claim is a pivotal element in the affirmation of one's cultural identity and one's distinction from others, and my interviewees clearly re-actualized their difference and prestige by the use and claim of cultural antecedents.

2. Media Selection

We saw in Chapter Two how the state controlled certain media institutions, like the radio station France Inter, and produced through them a cultural and national identity that acknowledged cultural prestige in the expression of a certain 'resistance' to global capitalism. Conversely, the French rock audience's selective use of the media (press, radio, TV), 'mobilises' and shapes a specific cultural identity, also contributing to the invention of 'alternativity'. In general terms, interviewees underlined the fact that discovering new music, keeping up-to-date with innovations, was necessary to activate their 'antecedence' or priority on artists, and prevented them from falling into the 'traps' of 'mainstreamness'. For instance Yann had rather "aller voir plutôt autre chose que je connais pas", while Imelda wished to "découvrir des artistes qu'on connaît pas du tout". Discovering new music implied putting oneself in a position of constant discovery, or of destabilization (see above). It also implied renewing one's tastes quickly in order to outpace the fashion system. This in turn required spending a large amount of time gathering information from magazines, radio shows, TV programmes, or (like Imelda) to take into account word of mouth. Indeed, audiences pointed to the interweaving activity of cross-checking information between different media: "je lis les critiques, je fais des tris, des sélections (...) c'est bien de recouper ces avis", one said. Another reached the same conclusion: "ouais, j'ai l'impression d'être actif, plein d'infos se recoupent et t'évites le truc commercial". That strategy was collectively imagined as an active avoidance of the obstacles of 'mass consumption', and could define them as 'active' in the De Certeau sense.

In terms of radio consumption, the practices of French rock audiences differ from the bulk of national practices. A 1998 survey revealed that 39% of the French switched on the radio when wanting to hear music, while 50% put on their personal tapes or CDs[22]. Among my interviewees, the vast majority (nearing 90%) rejected the idea of listening to the radio altogether: "Oh non! Pas la radio!", most of them exclaimed[23]. Uttering such criticisms as "c'est répétitif" or "c'est trop mécanique", they had in mind the 'commercial' radios like Fun and NRJ which advocated broadcasting "du hit, rien que du hit" (Chapter Two, p.104 and note 131). One interviewee explained that "sur NRJ, c'est que de la musique pour vendre, c'est commercial", evoking the quote on fame from earlier ("faire du fric"). Apart from brodcast music, audiences assumed that there existed another type of music, presumably a *'musique pour écouter'* rather than for profit, and that French rock music was part of it (until its artists crossed the line). Usually having free-time to process information, audiences knew about different media and had made their minds about which they preferred.

In Saint-Nolff, I met Marie (a newly qualified teacher of 24) who needed to confirm the media's 'quality' before accepting its music programme: "moi, je fais un choix de qualité avant tout". She linked the weekly *Télérama* with the national radio France Inter: "sur *Télérama* y'a quand même un certain critère de qualité [en musique]", and "sur France Inter, c'est déjà plus ciblé, genre *Télérama*". *Télérama*'s long-time *chanson* and rock critics, Anne-Marie Paquotte and Philippe Barbot, have regularly covered French rock music artists (chapters Two and Three). Marie conceded that this magazine and that radio station possessed a minimum of qualities, as opposed to the vast quantity of other media which supposedly possessed none (*'quand même'* and *'déjà'*). This implied a pretty gloomy vision of the media in general. The adjective *'ciblé'* was the unique qualification for that 'minimum above average', an elitist term close to Imelda's discrimination against the *'public moins initié'*. With similar terms, the *Route du Rock* festival boasted in 1999 its "pointue, audacieuse, ouverte et surprenante" identity[24]. The emphasis on 'surprise' and 'audacity'

assumed that the festival challenged some perceived musical conventions, which is by now understood as typical 'alternative' talk. Its use of the adjective '*pointue*', meaning specialized and a close synonym to '*ciblé*', implied the same understanding of 'difference' as Marie operated in her discourse, and relied on a sense of distinction. Salient is also the parallel use of similar definitions by audiences and by certain media, here festival organizers.

Most of my interviewees watched little television, at least not with the purpose of listening to or watching music. However, they did mention a few music programmes like Tracks and Music Planet, both broadcast on Arte. Arte is a Franco-German channel nicknamed 'la chaîne culturelle', which has established a reputation as an unconventional channel for its emphasis on 'intellectual' subjects. Many informants also mentioned the programme of general interest *Nulle Part Ailleurs* (*NPA*) from Canal Plus, a prime-time show that ceased to be broadcast in 2001 but had over the previous ten years become (with highs and lows) one of the most fashionable, provocative, part-informative and part-satircal TV programmes[25]. *NPA* always had a 5 minute live music session, where the artists featured were often associated with the overall 'alternativity' of the programme. We may recall that the *rock métissé* band La Ruda Salska played there in 2000.

It was a coincidence, but one week after Marie linked *Télérama* to France Inter and many informants quoted *Tracks* as a good TV music programme, *Télérama* reviewed these TV programmes too[26]. The magazine deplored the fact that such music genres as rock, rap or techno were hardly broadcast on French TV, and described these trends quite objectively as "musiques en mal de visibilité". It then proceeded with the most 'alternative' and elitist vocabulary conceivable, summarizing *Nulle Part Ailleurs*' fame thus: "les 'live' de *NPA* se sont imposés comme le rendez-vous prisé d'un public branché et pointu". The adjective 'pointu' once again echoed Marie's care for 'targeted' audiences, and *La Route du Rock's* image. The journalist also described *Tracks* with such qualifiers as '*à contre-courants*' and "avant-gardiste, curieuse et friande d'underground", with terms typical of a counter-cultural

image. The similarity of thought and language between my audiences and that magazine, furthermore about the same programmes, clarified the fact that audiences were able to 'mobilise' their identity through the use of selected media, and that consumers and the object of their consumption all produced a similar, coherent cultural identity.

The music magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* opened its pages to French popular music in the late 1990s, after years of reviewing almost exclusively British and American 'indie' pop-rock. In the Autumn 2000, the magazine published a music compilation featuring 'alternative' French rock and *chanson* artists like Femmouzes T, Têtes Raides and Arthur H. It also featured a song by Vanessa Paradis, who has so far been pigeonholed as a *variétés* singer, since her 1987 hit 'Joe le Taxi' and subsequent starlet image. Her featuring in a magazine usually dedicated to foreign indie acts, and more recently to 'quality' French rock (and rap), could have been perceived as a radical change of direction, as questioning *Les Inrocks'* traditionally elitist and 'non-mainstream' identity. However, a closer observation reveals that Paradis has gradually acquired some artistic legitimacy thanks to the combination of her acting in selected films, her marrying the 'indie' actor Johnny Depp, and her musical collaborations with Serge Gainsbourg and the *ACI* Mathieu Chédid for her latest album[27]. Recently, she even started composing herself, attracting sympathetic reviews from the 'non-mainstream' press, but the song featured on the *Inrocks* compilation was actually the one she wrote herself. Thus, even when an 'alternative' music magazine like *Les Inrockuptibles* seems to open its pages to 'commercial' artists, there is a re-adjustment taking place *vis-à-vis* the evolution of artists' careers[28]. Bourdieu argued that the logical reaction to the blurring of a traditional bi-polarization (between 'mainstream' and 'non-mainstream') was, for audiences, to remain original in the mode of consumption of the overlapping product: "Il ne reste à la recherche de l'exclusivité que la singularité du mode d'appropriation: aimer autrement les mêmes choses"[29]. Indeed, the readers of *Les Inrockuptibles* related to Paradis

in a different manner than 'mainstream' audiences would have, simply by the fact of listening to her on a compilation issued with a copy of the magazine. It is a different approach from switching on a mainstream radio. Thus, the *Inrockuptibles* readers of the Autumn 2000 listened to an 'ex-' mainstream artist in a cultural and musical environment that retained its traditional 'alternative' touch[30]. More generally, we see that the community of the 'alternative' French rock audience reacts to changes in the industry by rejecting some artists at some point (Louise Attaque), and by incorporating others at other times (Paradis). 'Alternativity' is an essentially shifting identity.

Identifying 'alternative' or 'non-mainstream' artefacts and media is an ever-changing activity, and provokes debates within groups of self-appointed 'alternative' audiences. For instance, an argument sprung up during the Rouen focus group about the cultural magazine *Télérama*. The weekly magazine can hardly be labelled as 'non-mainstream' given its wide distribution, but its journalists mostly review 'quality' music and take a left-wing stance against 'commercial' exposure (above). The focus group was talking about the media when Sophie, a German *licence* student of 24, said that she read the music pages of *Télérama* every week for the purpose of discovery. "La musique là-dedans [*Télérama*] c'est pas populo comme ..., c'est des trucs plus ... je sais pas si on peut dire underground, mais moi j'ai découvert des trucs géniaux grâce à leurs articles! [She mentioned Lhasa]". Sophie implied that the artists she liked were 'non-mainstream' (*géniaux = underground*), but interestingly hesitated at the patronizing connotations of her equation, like Imelda above when she recognized that she was possibly '*prétentieuse*'. Yann, for his part, replied: "Oh la la , *Télérama* et 'underground', ça se discute! Ça se veut tellement super, culturel et tout, que moi ça me fait chier". He criticized the fact that *Télérama* claimed its distinction ("ça se veut culturel"), he too rejecting overt connotations of elitism. Thus *Télérama* stood at the threshold of 'mainstream' consideration here, spreading too far the label of 'high' culture for some and subsequently losing its marginal interest, while representing a valid alternative to

'commercial' music for others. Both fans of French rock bands, Yann and Sophie proved that their 'alternative' identity could span conflicting arguments. They were at variance over *Télérama*, yet both defined themselves as 'alternative'.

In addition, the negotiation of power was made apparent during this focus group when, asked about their tastes, Sophie confessed, to me and for the first time to the group, that she liked to listen to Jane Birkin and De Palmas. These two artists are usually considered 'mainstream', Birkin being 'only' an interpreter with a heavily mediatized star-like persona, and De Palmas mostly composing pop-ballads that rate quite well in the charts. So far, Sophie had preferred to keep these musical tastes quiet so as to avoid receiving unfavourable comments from her friends. She said she listened to them on her own, for fear of "se faire foutre de [sa] gueule, sinon". This implied that she forced upon herself a form of social exclusion, not necessarily because her friends operated a direct pressure on her tastes (they effectively replied that her tastes were 'fair enough'), but because she herself sensed that, in the social world in which she lived, these artists connoted 'the mainstream'. We have unfortunately little further information about social pressure within groups of friends, but it is our contention that this kind of 'self-effacement', related to cultural prestige and the lack of it, is not uncommon.

3. 'Alternative' Shopping

As music lovers, my interviewees faced the dilemma of seeking a form of 'resistance' to the 'commercial' aspect of music while giving in to 'capitalism' by buying music. We saw in Chapter Two how French supermarkets hold the near monopoly of music distribution, with 55% of total record sales, representing only 1% of their income (p.97 and note 115). They are followed by specialist shops like Fnac (about 40% of music sales) and by a very small number of independent record retailers. Almost none of my interviewees claimed to have ever bought a CD in a supermarket, and most went to Fnac or small *disquaires* in their

towns, when there were any. However, among record specialists, Fnac shops hold the monopoly in France and appear thus a tantalizing temple of consumption. When shopping in Fnac, and in order to escape what they believed were consumerist 'traps', many audiences had devised personal 'avoiding strategies'.

In La Rochelle in 1999, I met a 20 year old student called Léonore who reflected on the best ways to be an 'alternative' music consumer. An identity crisis arose in the recognition that she was "une grande consommatrice de CDs", therefore embarrassingly responding to consumer society. She conceded: "c'est vrai, je peux pas dire que je l'évite, le système". Aware of this contradiction, she nevertheless carried on by ignoring it, as she then presented the 'system' as a one-way process, trying to get money out of her: "y'a des pièges, quoi. Faut pas oublier que c'est pour le profit avant tout. Faut faire attention". In narrative terms, she created a 'complication' (*pièges*) which the impersonal turn of the sentences (*'il y a'*, *'il faut'*) presented as general, widespread, concerning everyone. She also foregrounded herself as aware of obstacles, as a guide able to lead others to safer consumption, but quickly bypassed the fact that *she* was a consumer like anyone else. In order to avoid the obstacle of profit, Léonore explained that she had a 'trick'. When looking for CDs, she went to specific aisles only ("chez les disquaires, je vais au rayon indépendant"), and carefully looked at the records on display: "par exemple à la Fnac, je regarde ce qu'il y a en tête de gondole, tous les albums qui sont par dix ou par vingt, mais ceux qui sont en un exemplaire, bon bah je préfère". She presented all the features of being a 'tactician' in the De Certeau sense, having observed differences in the spatial display of records and putting into practice 'avoiding tactics'.

Yet, her 'creativity' was enacted from the basis of a simplified understanding of consumer society. Indeed, we saw there was not much coherence in the term '*indépendants*' today. While such sections exist in the shops, the bands Léonore named as her favourite actually belonged to the general sections of '*rock français*' and '*variétés françaises*'[31]. She

mentioned Tété, Ramsès and Les Négresses Vertes, some of which have been classified as both *'rock français'* and *'variétés'*. Fnac assistants carefully play on the fact that some audiences prefer to look for 'alternative' artists in small aisles, and often display albums in both the *'rock français'* sections (assimilated to 'alternativity') and in the *variétés* sections, enabling two types of audiences to buy the same records[32]. We thus see how a certain naïvety and delusion are at stake in the formation of self-assertive discourses, how the conception of a 'selective' and 'oppositional' consumer identity is about 'inventing' the world around oneself[33]. Léonore performed what Flick calls a 'subjective definition' of the social world, a personal interpretation of the music business which does not necessarily correspond to the reality. In *The Political Unconscious*, and rephrasing Claude Levi-Strauss, Fredric Jameson also summarized the process of cultural identity as an individual narrative which "is to be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction"[34]. Faced by the real contradiction of being a music consumer while hoping to stand aside consumerism, Léonore firstly reduced the contradiction to a single obstacle (overlooking her own role in it), and secondly projected herself as 'aware' of and 'resistant' against that problem by inventing a series of selective practices.

C. Social Representations

1. The Petite-Bourgeoisie

The interviewees who claimed an 'alternative' participation in French rock music culture had, in their vast majority, the characteristics of what Bourdieu called the *petite-bourgeoisie*, a socio-cultural group of relatively well-educated people coming from (relatively) well-off backgrounds. Given the often derogatory connotations of the term 'bourgeois', and the apparent contradictions of that term when applied to a group claiming its 'marginality', a note of explanation seems useful. In its traditional usage, the bourgeoisie is a social group with relatively high economic capital, believing in non-political organisations such as the

church, the school and the family, and in the idea of transmitting financial possessions to following generations, or reproducing its own class[35]. It is also a class representing a legitimate relation to culture, a cultural superiority partly brought about by its familiarity with cultural objects, and handed from one generation to the next. However, this description mostly applies nowadays to the *'grande bourgeoisie'* (upper middle-class), the economically dominant class. Indeed, Bourdieu insisted that the French bourgeoisie was split in two with another, newer, up-and-coming bourgeoisie identified as the *'petite bourgeoisie ascendante (ou nouvelle)'*, or which he also called the dominated fraction of the dominant class (he compared it in English with the 'lower middle-class'). This *petite bourgeoisie* is mainly constituted of educated people, teachers, intellectuals and artists, and Bourdieu specified that "les plus jeunes, surtout s'ils ont des titres scolaires élevés, s'apparentent aux membres en ascension de la petite bourgeoisie nouvelle"[36].

Now, most of my interviewees in French music festivals were university students with a high level of education, which relates them to Bourdieu's category. Imelda was a university student with two *licence*s. Yann, Sophie, Xavier and Loïs from Rouen were at various stages of completing *licences* or *maîtrises* in Arts. Léonore was an undergraduate and Marie a newly qualified teacher. Anne, Manue and Jérémy were other interviewees who had a strong educational background. In addition, most surveys in France reveal that the more educated have always tended to prefer the genre of rock music. In 1988, among the French population of 15 to 24 year olds attending rock music concerts, the bulk came from a 'superior intellectual background' (46%), versus 24% coming from 'low-class backgrounds' (*ménages populaires*)[37]. Similar patterns appeared in other Western countries, most notably in Great Britain and the United States. In 1996, attendance figures for the *Printemps* festival in Bourges revealed that 31% of participants had a secondary education, and 50% higher education. In *Francofolies*, 35% of spectators are university students, the most represented 'social' group[38]. The survey for *La Route du Rock* similarly underlined the fact that the

'superior intellectual professions' were by far the most represented, which implies that participants in their twenties had achieved a high education level[39]. These figures indicate that it should come as no surprise that the most active participants in rock music culture, and those with time to cross-check cultural information as my interviewees claimed to do, were from a relatively well-off class.

Unlike the upper bourgeoisie which has valued its economic wealth, the ascendant 'intellectual' bourgeoisie has traditionally placed more importance on its 'cultural capital' than on monetary possessions. Against the so-called 'conservative' art usually favoured by the upper class, it has developed an anti-bourgeois or 'vanguard' culture, with 'bourgeois' taken in its prime (dominant) sense. Bourdieu and Roland Barthes both qualified this attitude as problematic, for several reasons[40]. Firstly, when the *avant-garde* aims to revolt against the edifying ideology of the upper bourgeoisie, it also preserves a form of authority and elitism by valuing 'authenticity'. Its anti-bourgeois 'authentic' position has also criticized the mechanical conditions of production, the low quality of 'mass' culture or the single goal of financial profit for those in control of industries (see Adorno). Yet, belonging to a fairly well-off class, the 'vanguard' has full and repeated access to production and consumption, and 'opposes' the system only with a sense of ambivalence. Bourdieu also characterized the ascendant 'cultural' bourgeoisie as the social group generally enjoying the most intense relationship to culture. In all surveys on cultural consumption, people from 'superior intellectual trades' tended to practise different cultural activities the most, and their cultural practices were those which increased the most since the 1980s[41]. The lower-classes rated the lowest in terms of cultural practices, especially in relation to music. Between 1975 and 1995, French university students were identified as "les plus gros consommateurs de culture", enjoying "une intense sociabilité de loisirs", which clearly drew connections between my study and Bourdieu's category of the *petite-bourgeoisie*[42].

As students, single persons without children or workers with part-time or precarious jobs, my interviewees were, overall, young people *without* a time-consuming full-time job. This criterion was crucial for Bourdieu in analysing the ascendant middle-class[43]. In this sense, my interviewees had the *petit bourgeois* characteristic of possessing more free time than either a (presumably exhausted) manual worker or high-flying businessman. They had more time to engage in distinctions and to validate the unheard-of. Bourdieu called this accumulation of information *thésaurisation*, an equivalent to high 'cultural savings' which in turn reinforced these consumers' uniqueness and self-contentment: "un long investissement de temps [...apparaît donc comme le témoignage de] la qualité intrinsèque de la personne"[44]. When my interviewees claimed knowing such artists before they became 'mainstream', as Xavier and Loïs did for instance, their self-satisfaction emerged, sometimes verging on elitism (Imelda).

When asked about their parental background, most of my interviewees came from the middle-class, and had already well-educated parents, often teachers. For example, Jérémy's parents were both secondary teachers in the state sector, a social category that Bourdieu saw at the core of the ascendant and intellectual *petite-bourgeoisie*. Yann was the son of *lycée* teachers, Julie the daughter of a primary school teacher and self-employed electrician. Léonore was the daughter of an architect and a psychiatrist (different pattern here). Manue, the daughter of a bank clerk, responded in a semi-embarrassed and disheartened tone that "bah oui, mes parents sont des bourgeois", and her self-criticism will be discussed below. Interviewees who worked were mostly newly-qualified teachers, or had jobs in the public sector as social workers. Others followed careers in the arts (*intermittents*). A few were young educated people without a guarantee of continuous employment, benefiting from temporary *CES* or receiving such state payments as the dole, the minimum wage, or other 'solidarity' and young people job schemes[45]. Finally, those under 18 were all *lycée* students.

Bourdieu noted about teachers in the 1960s that they were "... presque toujours capables de citer le nom des metteurs en scène et des acteurs des films qu'ils ont vus, [and that] les professeurs de l'enseignement secondaire excluent systématiquement les films de grand comique ou les grands succès commerciaux"[46]. Swapping cinema for music, and the social category of teachers for that of university students (which my panel mostly comprised), I found that French rock audiences were extremely knowledgeable about their music culture too. They knew artists and labels' names, knew all tracks on albums, and the complete discographies of many artists (not just French rock artists). They could quote different festivals and compare their location, entry prices, the programmes or the atmosphere. They knew by heart the order of gigs at different venues. They knew the released dates of albums they possessed and even of those they did not, and they knew with whom artists had collaborated for particular cover versions, duets or concerts. Like Bourdieu's teachers, this extensive knowledge served to identify them (to me) as active music listeners able to discriminate between genres, and able to organize different artists, media and labels in hierarchical patterns. Indeed, among all this, they certified which artists were compelling and which were not, obviously identifying themselves with positive definitions (see Imelda's self-assertion against 'others').

2. Generation

French music surveys reveal that, for 1997, 35% of 20-24 year olds claimed to listen principally to 'rock', and 22% to French *chanson* and *variétés* (combined). By contrast, 34% of 25-34 year olds principally listened to French *chanson*, and 23% of them to 'rock'[47]. It is thus in strikingly parallel proportions that French popular music and (presumably Anglo-American) rock music appear the two best-liked genres of 20 to 35 year olds in France. With the evaluation that *'rock français'* is a fusion between French *chanson* and rock music, my fieldwork in French rock music concerts confirmed that general trend. My interviewees

ranged approximately from 18 to 35, which is a trend inferred by *Le Printemps de Bourges*'s attendance rate in 1996, when 82% of participants were under 35. In *Francofolies*, the average attendance age was 29 in 2001[48]. Another survey established that in 1997, among rock music concert-goers in France, 80% were between 16 and 30, a third of that audience being above 25[49]. The tendency for the older section of that age group to consume live music the most was inferred by another piece of research, showing that if the average age for 'rock' concert attendance in 1997 was 24, those between 25 and 35 went to more concerts a year[50]. When asked to reflect on their age range, my interviewees tended to identify themselves as "surtout des jeunes, jusqu'à trente ans".

In the 1960s and 1970s, 24 was considered the statistical age after which one entered into 'adulthood', having by then secured a full-time job and/or started a family[51]. Since then, researchers have noted the tendency of the French population to remain in the 'youth' category much later, until the early to mid-thirties. The increased flexibility of matrimonial models, the prolongation of university studies and the later dependence on parents' financing have accounted for the "tendance au vieillissement de la population 'jeune'". Belonging to "situations naguères atypiques", contemporary French students and young workers now "traversent une période intermédiaire et incertaine"[52]. Our French rock music audiences, in terms of age and generation, clearly followed that pattern. Characterized overall by (relative) financial dependence on their parents because of their late studies, their situation raises the question of knowing which kind of a cultural relationship exists between them and their parents. The French baby-boom generation, or parents of those between 20 and 35 today, have tended to keep their vinyl records since CDs appeared, and have remained faithful to their own youth music styles as new genres like rap and techno emerged. Anglo-American rock music from the 1960s rates the highest for their age group[53]. Now, French rock music is, as we analysed it, the fusion of Anglo-American rock music with French *chanson*. Unlike the newer genres of rap and techno, it was partly created as a nostalgic hybrid, even if links also

exist between French rock music and these rather more innovative styles. In these conditions, it was expected that my audiences would tend to get on well with their parents and to accept their cultural heritage, whereas these 'baby-boom' parents had tended to challenge their own 'conservative' parents in the 1960s[54].

I interviewed Jérémy, aged 21, whose evocation of the parental bond shed light on this point. I met him by chance in a café (Le Havre, October 2000) after noticing his guitar nearby. We started having a chat about music and it transpired that he had just left university after a *DUT* (two years' study) in environmental studies. Jérémy was now trying to become an *intermittent* musician and street theatre performer[55]. As he had currently no wages, his parents had agreed to accommodate him and support him financially, and we discussed his upbringing and parental relationship. He narrated that his childhood had been 'torn' between records of Georges Brassens and Frank Zappa, who could both represent two trends of 'non-mainstream' music culture, with disrespectful and carefully-crafted French songs on the one hand, and American rock creativity on the other. Jérémy had thus grown up in a cultural environment already disparaging *variétés* and representing a form of musical 'dissidence'. He said: "le milieu familial a joué un rôle, c'est clair. Mes parents ont beaucoup écouté de musique, je l'ai forcément écoutée en même temps qu'eux. Peut-être que ça a formé mon oreille musicale par rapport à certaines choses". He considered his own contemporary musical tastes, including French retro and *métissé* rock music, in filiation with his upbringing (logic markers *'c'est clair'* and *'forcément'*). Jérémy's father, a *lycée technique* art teacher, occasionally played music and Jérémy took pride in the fact that "y'avait toujours de la musique à la maison quand j'étais petit. Y'a plein de disques chez moi, un piano, des guitares". He had thus inherited the probably 'vanguard' cultural capital of his parents, a pattern of inheritance and repetition that could be considered rather conservative if it were not for the 'non-mainstream' genre of the heritage. The fact that his parents had agreed to back him up financially to spend the year playing music and juggling with a street theatre

group implied their validation of their son's relatively 'marginal' choice. Jérémy confessed that "mon père, il aurait toujours aimé faire l'artiste, entre guillemets", so that there seemed to exist mutual support from parents to son and son to parents. Rephrasing Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*, Shaun Moores said that subjects developed a "durable yet transposable set of dispositions that is inculcated in the subject during the early years of socialization within the family"[56]. In Jérémy's case, the 'subject' himself clearly acknowledged the role played by this socialization.

I also met Manue, a 23 year-old (female) sociology student, in 2000 at the concert of the *rock métissé* band Spook and the Guay. She was proud to have in her student flat her father's vinyl collection including some early French rock artists such as Jacques Higelin, Brigitte Fontaine and Charlélie Couture, commonly perceived as 'non-mainstream'[57]. She gave the anecdote that her father had attended the Isle of Wight rock festival in 1973, three years before her birth, and that they occasionally smoked joints together now. He had also told her about his own 'alternative' music experience in the 1960s when he listened, from Le Havre, to the British pirate station Radio Caroline[58], so that it seemed that she (and Jérémy) legitimated their own contemporary 'alternative' culture by right of birth.

In the *Vieilles Charrues* festival (2000), I met Julie who was preparing for the English *CAPES* and played the guitar in a hard-core band. Talking about her parents, she said that she sometimes accompanied her Dad with his brass-band, while he enjoyed attending her concerts. It is interesting to note that, although these two music types sound radically different, Julie bridged the gap between generations and echoed the renewed ties today between brass-band music, ska and punk-rock[59]. In April 2000 at a Têtes Raides concert in Le Havre, there seemed to be at least as many adults (parents) in the audience as 'younger' members, although that band rather 'belonged' to the younger generation present that night. This indicates that French rock music has established connections across generations, and even become rather consensual as a token of renewed and contemporary 'alternativity'. Têtes

Raides' selection for the *Fête de la Musique* in 2001 underlined this (Chapters One and Two).

3. Self-Representations

In Chapter Three we noted that Manu Chao was conscious (and critical) of his role as a token of 'rebellion' in the music industry, while he struggled to make his music listeners (mostly from the West) aware of the injustice of neo-liberalism in the Third World (p.151). Other French rock artists today underline and reject the fact that (their) 'dissidence' is a selling argument, as Noir Désir's frontman Cantat exclaimed in February 2002 during the *Victoires* ceremony, in relation to Messier's 'cooption' of his band and Zebda's 'alternative' image (Chapter Two, p.80 and note 64). A journalist from *Les Inrockuptibles* similarly wrote that Chao's music in France mostly attracted "nous autres les privilégiés du Vieux Monde qui peuvent [sic] se payer des CDs"[60]. With a dose of embarrassment at belonging to a 'privileged' group when Chao's music presicely criticized the existence of privileges, that journalist marked his awareness of the contradictions of popular culture today as an inherent product of consumer society. My interviewees too acknowledged rather willingly the contradictions at stake in their music consumption, and often recognized that they came from relatively well-off backgrounds.

At a concert of La Ruda Salska, Benoît's self-perception was that "le public c'est tous les mêmes: des étudiants habillés tous pareils, avec des pantalons trop grands et des capuches, des cheveux soit archi-longs avec des locks, soit rasés. Franchement, je sais qu'on est archi-caricatural" (listen to extract on CD). Firstly he highlighted his group's attachment to a 'marginal' look, which matched Bourdieu's analysis of the *petite-bourgeoisie* composing "une euphémisation de toutes les manifestations (...) en particulier vestimentaires"[61]. It is a fact that audiences during French rock concerts or, even more so, during festivals, dress particularly casually, apparently without 'sophistication', and follow a

trend in 'natural' fabrics and outdoor clothes (Chao). Secondly, Benoît expressed his awareness of belonging to a left-wing 'cliché'. His self-awareness was followed by Jérémy who, after detailing his parents' support, concluded that "moi franchement, je suis nanti". The word '*nanti*' is often a derogatory substitute for the well-off bourgeoisie, used with connotations of conservatism, if not reactionary attitudes. This was thus a surprising choice as Jérémy's situation was, in a sense, rather precarious. He had dropped his studies, had no savings whatsoever, and was only starting, at 21, to take his artistic career seriously. His non-conventional clothes and hair-style (nondescript baggy trousers, a shaven head with a natty lock) also contrasted with this label. Yet, Jérémy was also right to assess, like the journalist above, his own privileged position in contrast to poorer people than him, social outcasts like homeless or illegal immigrants, or the population of the Third World. Being a young, white, healthy and educated person in Western Europe at the turn of twentieth century, with supportive parents, was the epitome of social privilege.

The embarrassment perceptible in his and the others' confessions would imply that, on top of displaying a humanist 'fairness' in criticizing their own (relative) wealth, they expressed the complex of the ascendant *petite-bourgeoisie*, torn between an ideal left-wing commitment to social equality and the fact of having access to consumption in contemporary society. French rock music culture is not the culture of a 'marginal' social group, but that of a group torn between its aspiration to 'resist' conservatism, and its relatively well-off background that represents a form of privilege, certainly making possible their participation to a culture of 'resistance'. The parallel between my audiences and the social formation of the 'anti-globalisation' movement is very clear, as when journalists remarked that, during the Millau, Gênes or Porto Alegre demonstrations, "on aura beau chercher, difficile de trouver dans leurs rangs des jeunes blacks ou beurs, venus de quartiers plus difficiles"[62]. The discourse of 'resistance' and its political structure are mostly organized by intellectuals (like Naomi Klein, Bové or Marcos), and French students have particularly reappropriated this

struggle in order to articulate their social ambiguities. French rock-music culture and the 'anti-globalisation' movement bear the same internal contradictions, which are also the contradictions of the French left, but which represent the endeavour to bypass these contradictions, offering to side with the most destitute. Their idealism explains that 'authenticity' should be located, as they see it, in the social 'margins'.

Relating one's awareness of this dilemma led to one incident, with Imelda. She asked me to stop the recording at one stage as she had become afraid of uttering a contradictory discourse. She was trying to distinguish, in terms of 'good and bad', between two festivals she knew, and her conclusion was becoming very obscure as she tried to keep up with her precedent assertions on marginality, yet wished to praise the 'free spirit' of festivals in general. She started to become muddled, flustered, and wanted to stop because, as she put it, "je vais mélanger mes idées, te dire tout et le contraire de tout". This was a crucial point in the interview as she became self-conscious of her discourse on 'alternativity', and conscious of the naïvety of some of her statements. She realized she could not carry on with the elitist vision of 'authenticity' and changed sides by conceding that her disapproval of '*grand public*' needed to be balanced. "Finalement, chacun aborde un festival à sa façon", she concluded. Talking about the large and apparently mainstream festival of *Vieilles Charrues*, she balanced: "enfin, en même temps on peut être séduit, mais bon". The adverbs (*finalement, enfin, bon*) marked an insistent concession to 'good thinking', to respectful declarations on tastes.

Imelda proceeded to describe the class she came from as "un milieu intello-gauchiste". She had done further university studies so that her affiliation to an 'intellectual' group was understandable to an extent. The compound she used to describe her own group, however, was a derogatory cliché. The shortened word '*intello*' usually denotes over-intellectual, boring or non-sensual people. The term '*gauchiste*' is also slightly pejorative (unlike the neutral '*de gauche*') and generally refers to the old-fashioned *post-soixante-*

huitards, their naivety and illusion. Given Imelda's own naivety in many respects, that choice proved indeed self-critical. The compound *'intello-gauchiste'* evokes the ambivalent situation of intellectuals in France, who have *a priori* belonged to an educated and dominant class while tending towards leftism, the traditional credo of the working-class. Already in the 1910s, the SFIO (later to evolve into the PS) was torn between its declarations of being a workers' party and its support by teachers and the middle-class[63]. Later, the emergence of the PCF (*Parti Communiste*) also reflected a simultaneous intellectual and working-class appeal, while the 1980s were marked with the growth of an affluent middle-class interested in socialist issues, personified by the PS ambivalence about neo-liberalism and its openness to 'popular' practices[64]. Imelda's use of that phrase to identify herself relativized her snobbishness and indicated her awareness of the complexities of holding a particular cultural identity. She still claimed a fierce opposition to the presumably conservative voters *'de droite'*, but acknowledged the contradictions of her 'vanguard' identity.

Like most interviewees, and the 'self-conscious' artists quoted above, Imelda stressed the fact that appearing articulate and self-critical about one's practices seemed hugely important for the expression of further 'authenticity'. In La Rochelle, Léonore conceded that her musical tastes mattered little: "mais bon, c'est suivant les goûts et les couleurs". After audiences had expanded and refined their own distinctiveness and 'quality', they often ended with their assessment of 'the right to difference' in other people's music tastes. Benoît said, for instance: "Oh moi j'aime pas la variété, et puis ça m'énerve les gens qui écoutent que ce qu'on leur donne, ce qui passe à la télé. Y'en a d'autres qui font peut-être plus gaffe au... mais oh! En fait non, c'est con ce que je dis, ça fait intolérant, chacun ses goûts et merde". Although he had started, like so many others, by opposing *'les gens'* (mass consumption) to a small initiated group (those who carefully distinguish), his conclusion actually annihilated the elitism of 'alternativity' while he still did not fall for *variétés*. This suggested that he also

saw through the 'invention' of specific tastes, the calculation of leading an 'alternative identity[65].

In Rouen, Sophie had concluded that Loïs's comment on the lost 'ethics' of Louise Attaque was "un peu snob", but Loïs had replied that "c'est sûr, y'a un goût de l'exclusif, mais c'est un snobisme humain!". While Sophie's worry related to Imelda and other people's self-awareness about appearing politically incorrect, Loïs's fatalistic response relativized the process of identity construction. He implied that he understood how cultural identities were dependent on an array of social and cultural factors, and how they functioned through a processus of selections and distinctions at the expense of other groups. He accepted his own 'snobism', understood as a form of incorrectness, and accepted that other people may similarly express their own preferences at the expense of his own tastes. Loïs may have expressed an 'alternative' discourse against the existence of music products geared towards immediate profit, but he found his own process of distinction rather *normal*. He considered his tastes as inscribed in a social, economic and cultural context, on a par with different people's contexts and tastes. In other words, Loïs was conscious of the mechanism of taste formation, and found that his apparent elitism did not invalidate his culture (or French rock-music culture in general), although it characterized it.

Overall, my audiences mapped out different 'zones' of tastes and self-awareness, some categorically rejecting the 'mainstream', others having a more tolerant understanding of music practices while favouring a perceived 'alternative'. In the context of festivals, where domestic consumption and media broadcast momentarily disappear, 'non-mainstream' audiences may not need to assess their differences and consumption 'strategies' so strongly. However, as places where festivity and community seem to be realized, festivals are where audiences experience a further sense of 'distinction' from conventional modes of music consumption.

[1] Olivier Donnat, *Les pratiques culturelles des Français,* 1998; 'Les goûts musicaux des Français', SACEM, 1999.
[2] See Fiske (1989), Laing (1991).
[3] Shaun Moores criticizes De Certeau for remaining "oblivious to reactionary elements within popular culture", *Interpreting Audiences*, 1993, p.131.
[4] Ken Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories*, 1995, p.178.
[5] Deborah Cameron, *Working with Spoken Discourse*, 2001, p.14.
[6] Morley and Robins referring to Philip Schlesinger: a collective identity is "based on the (selective) processes of memory, so that a given group recognises itself through its recollection of a common past", 1989, p.14.
[7] Music festivals in France are often state or locally sponsored (Chapter Two), smaller than in the UK, and the staff is often voluntary. All this certainly accounts for their much lower ticket prices than in Great-Britain (the Glastonbury ticket in 2000 was £90).
[8] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 1996, p.39.
[9] It is strange that the theory was named after the Latin *audeo*, meaning 'to hear' or 'to listen', while it primarily deals with viewing practices. Morley and Robins, 1989; Ien Ang, *Dallas*, 1985.
[10] Virginia Nightingale, *Studying Audiences,* 1996, p.141.
[11] Uwe Flick, 1998, 117.
[12] *Ibid*, 124.
[13] Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.54.
[14] *Ibid*, p.57.
[15] *Ibid*, p.60.
[16] Richard Middleton, 'Popular Music Analysis and Musicology', 1993, especially p.180. Stan Hawkins, 'Perspectives in Popular Musicology', 1996. Robert Walser raises the point in his introduction too. No research is exempt from limitations and biased choices.
[17] See Morley and Robins on the construction of a collective identity, preferably "clinging to familiar polarities", 1989, p.15.
[18] *Ibid*, p.15.
[19] In September 2001 in France, one ironic experience was shopping in the supermarket Auchan where Naomi Klein's *No Logo* was on display, while Chao's *Clandestino* played as muzak.
[20] About the credits of Jean-Christophe Averty's TV show, in which bodies were distorted, a baker woman exclaimed "j'aime pas, c'est bête, je ne vois pas l'intérêt de déformer les choses", Bourdieu, 1979, p.35. Similarly, Hugues Panassié remarked that 'le jazz hot' in France in the 1930s (versus 'straight jazz') was considered "infiniment plus déroutant" and better. *Le Jazz Hot*, 1934, p.52. I am grateful to Jeremy Lane for coming across this quotation.
[21] Morley and Robins, 1989, p.14.
[22] Sacem survey.
[23] When audiences mention radio stations, they quote 'local' or 'independent' radios, such as Canal B in Rennes, Jet FM in Nantes, Radio Gribouille in Angers.
[24] *Route du Rock 1999* report, communicated by Alban Coutoux.
[25] The British will know Antoine de Caunes (of Eurotrash fame) who hosted the show for years in the late 1980s-early 1990s.
[26] 'Pas très rock'n'roll, la télé', *Télérama* 2636, 19/07/00, pp.52-54.
[27] Vanessa Paradis, *Bliss*, 2000.
[28] Shaun Moores notes that the singer Pavarotti is a cultural product similarly "circulating in various taste zones" (p.121), both appreciated by a discriminating 'classical' audience and widely exposed on 'commercial' networks.
[29] Bourdieu, 1979, p.321.
[30] In his study of the readership of *Les Inrockuptibles*, Chris Andrews used the same references to Bourdieu as here, analysing the readers as mostly belonging to a culturally ascendant 'vanguard'. Chris Andrews, 'The social ageing of *Les Inrockuptibles*', 2000.
[31] The *'rayon indépendant'* in FNAC shops applies exclusively to self-produced artists (of French music).
[32] This was the case for Négresses Vertes and Têté; also for La Tordue and Yann Tiersen in January 1999.
[33] Coffey and Atkinson mention 'self-assertive' pieces of narratives, 1996, p.67.
[34] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 1981, p.77.
[35] See Michel Pinçon et Monique Pinçon-Charlot, *Sociologie de la bourgeoisie*, 2000. I shall use the English 'middle-class' as an equivalent to *bourgeoisie*.
[36] Bourdieu, 1979, p.405.

[37] Teillet, 1993, p.74.
[38] Private communication by Maryse Bessaguet, media PA for Francofolies.
[39] Stéphane Davet and Frank Tenaille, 1996; *La Route du Rock* review 1999.
[40] Susan Sontag, *A Barthes Reader*, 1982, p.126. And Bourdieu, *ibid*, p.305-6, and p.332.
[41] Donnat, 1998, p.108.
[42] Louis Dirn, 1998, p.41.
[43] "Le temps libre joue le rôle d'un facteur indépendant, partiellement substituable au capital économique", Bourdieu, 1979, p.336.
[44] *Ibid*, p.320.
[45] *CES* refers to a *contrat-emploi-solidarité*; *emplois-jeunes* are another form of basic employment that educated people can end up with.
[46] Bourdieu, 1979, p.306.
[47] Donnat, 1998, p.163.
[48] private communication from Maryse Bessaguet.
[49] *Développement culturel* 122, Ministère de la Culture.
[50] Louis Dirn, 1998; for *Route du Rock*, the average age was 24 in 1999.
[51] Louis Dirn, 1998. See also Le Développement Culturel n°122; Gérard Mermet, *Les pratiques culturelles des français*.
[52] Dirn, *ibid*, pp.36-7.
[53] Donnat, 1998, p.101.
[54] Conversely in Britain, the greatest 'dissident' musical movement of the late 1980s, techno music, constituted a deliberate break from the rock spirit of the 1960s. In France, perhaps because of the May 1968 events, the 1960s have often been referred to as an inspiring period for creation.
[55] See Chapter Two on the status of beginning artists.
[56] Moores, 1993, p.122.
[57] On Brigitte Fontaine: "très avant-gardiste (...), Longtemps cataloguée comme artiste underground...", G.Verlant (ed), *L'Encyclopédie du rock français*, 2000, p.63.
[58] On Radio Caroline, see John Hind and Steven Mosco, *Rebel Radio*, 1985.
[59] In Chapters One and Three we note the connections between traditional *fanfares*, their republican connotations, and the contemporary re-invention of the national identity as 'festive'. In music, the revival of fanfares as an 'alternative' culture is obvious with the featuring of such bands as Ceux qui marchent debout, Rageous Gratoons or Hurlements d'Léo in French rock music compilations.
[60] *Inrockuptibles* 290, 15/05/01, p.39.
[61] Bourdieu, 1979, p.358.
[62] "Les jeunes militants renouvellent les formes de contestation", *Télérama* 2725, 03/04/02, p.19-23.
[63] Laurence Bell, 'Democratic Socialism', 1997, p.19.
[64] See Keith Reader, *Intellectuals and the Left in France*, 1987.
[65] Negus analysed this as 'the irony of consumption', the fact that audiences and producers saw through the calculated images of 'authenticity', 1992, p.73-75.

V. The Performance of Festivity in Live Music

We saw in Chapter Four that French rock audiences did not listen to French rock music exclusively, and that they did not always perform a musical 'alternative' identity either. Moreover, some found the expression of 'authenticity' in other music genres than French rock (world music for instance). Music festivals are the perfect place where to explore these fluctuations further, for they always bring together, over several days, different music genres and different audiences. The French rock public finds itself next to other 'taste groups', as well as confronted to its own ambivalence and multiplicity of music sensibilities. How the 'alternative' discourse and identity of French rock audiences remains, and strenghtens or crumbles during the time of the festival, is the focus of this chapter.

Artists, producers, the media and the public of French rock music have all emphasized the 'natural' superiority of live performances over mediated and 'artificial' TV and radio broadcast (Chapters Two and Four). For this reason, festivals play an important part in shaping the identity of French rock music and its mentality of 'difference', as live music performances, in general, are experienced as the 'destabilization' of 'mainstream' music conventions. The location of festivals in the countryside also implies that audiences experience a 'natural' environment, contrasting with their usually domestic, and urban, consumption of music, which suits the invention of French rock music as nostalgic. The drink and drug-taking tolerance of festivals also infers a sense of rupture from usually illegal activities, which some interviewees expressed thus: "ici c'est sauvage, on peut faire ce qu'on veut" (someone in *Vieilles Charrues*)[1]. This is particularly appropriate to the expression of the apparent 'dissidence' of French rock music. Equally, the gathering of a community during the time of the festival, sharing in similar activities for a variable duration of a few days, implies a break from one's daily routine, as well as the apparent accomplishment of an ideal of fraternity. All these features are both general characteristics of pop music festivals,

and analysable as specific to the experience of French rock music. This chapter thus explores how the specific 'non-mainsteramness' of French rock music audiences articulates itself to the overall setting of pop music festivals.

A. The Heterotopia and Regulation

The pleasure that audiences encounter in music festivals, and in particular their consciousness of a 'difference from' or 'transgression of' daily life and conventional practices, is performed within the festivals' practical implantation[2]. Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, literally 'the other place', is helpful for studying the role of audiences in performing a 'special' community, and for their attribution of specific meanings to festivals (such as festivity, 'disruption' and 'authenticity'). Foucault coined the term 'heterotopia' for the purpose of analysing 'real' places with primary functions, such as cemeteries or gardens, which could endorse secondary and 'imaginary' meanings when people used them occasionally[3]. He gave the example that a garden, for instance, was firstly used for growing vegetation, but could also be perceived as 'romantic' on occasions, in contrast to the lack of apparent 'romanticism' in one's usual outdoor walk. Foucault argued that these 'imaginary' and temporary meanings needed to be understood in relation to the daily and domestic spheres of users, in contrast to what their 'normal' (everyday) dwelling space offered. As a rarely-attended place, the heterotopia then takes on a 'special' or 'extra-ordinary' identity that serves to redefine and at times contest the 'ordinary' life of the dwellers. Music festivals are, in this respect, heterotopia located in the audience's real life, and temporarily imagined as 'special', or 'authentic', by them, as they perform given acts. The invention of this 'destabilization' in festivals will be problematized in terms of time and location, in terms of realizing a community at the expense of some 'others', and in terms of physical participation, leading on to considerations of gender.

Firstly, French music festivals are 'real' events limited in time and place[4]. The fields where the *Vieilles Charrues* festival takes place, in Brittany, are 'really' located off the N164, and are 'usually' grazing, wheat or corn fields. Foucault characterizes a heterotopia by "an opening and a closing", a right and rite of penetration into the 'special' place, which French music festivals also reflect. Their entrances, for instance, are strictly controlled by security guards who check tickets and strip-search participants for potentially dangerous objects (*la fouille*). There are ways of bypassing this, from bribing bouncers to jumping over fences, but festivals are overall disciplined places. Local police forces also usually signal the sites and channel drivers into the appropriate carparks. Humanitarian organizations often supervise the safety and health of participants. Local volunteers usually pick up the litter and clean the sites afterwards, in exchange for free concerts[5]. When festivals end, roadies and technicians dismantle music structures (platforms, sound equipment), while food and drink sellers take their stalls down. Audiences unpitch their tents and walk back to their cars when the festival ends. These material considerations create a series of regulations and ensure an 'opening' and 'closing'.

Another form of regulation is apparent in the case of urban locations, when town authorities (as in La Rochelle) organize the extent to which 'disruption' may be expressed. They lift bans on late-night noise, for instance, and tolerate public drug-use and drinking[6]. In addition, a festival's commercial value places it at the heart of a tightly organized business. A festival will be cancelled if no tickets are sold, if it rains too much, or if there is a last-minute technical fault. From the artists' point of view, festivals are also part of a *'tour de chant'* for an album promotion, and do not generally constitute an exception to their own routine. They play for a fixed set of about 45 minutes, and the songs which they sing are agreed beforehand with producers for maximising the promotion of new albums. Artists are also selected very much in advance by festival organizers (Chapter Two, p.101). The commercial reality of festivals, their location at the interplay of private, state and local

interests, and their extensive technical organization, confirm the existence of a strong regulative frame[7]. This 'control' identifies festivals as "periods of sanctioned lawlessness" or, as the social thinker Mikhael Bakhtin puts it about carnivals, as 'licensed affairs' that may lose their subversive edge[8]. The audience's sentiments of 'rupture' and invention of 'authenticity' are framed by and take place within a festival' set-up. The observations and interviews reported below occurred in the music festivals mentioned in Chapter Four, places where French rock music coexisted with other music genres.

B. Time and Space

For French rock music audiences, festivals primarily appear as the opposite of 'mainstream' consumption because live performances are usually not broadcast in the media (although there are cases of simultaneous broadcast). When the phonograph was introduced in the late nineteenth century, it was marketed as an instrument able to reproduce a song that could not otherwise be repeated existentially[9]. Since the inscription of popular music into the problematic of mechanization, the possibility to play live music (for instance during festivals) has often attracted a discourse of 'authenticity' opposing its 'pre-modern' and 'natural' identity with the mechanic reproducibility of records, and with the possibility of repeated broadcast on radio and TV[10]. Besides, over the last century, live performances have been superseded by the domestic consumption of music. A survey for the Ministry of Culture showed that, in 1998, 65% of interviewees had attended no pop-rock concert at all, while only 8% had done so twice that year[11]. Festivals thus retain a certain statistical marginality, which may comfort their perception as 'authentic' in contrast to 'mass' broadcast and record consumption. My interviewees summarized this point, remarking that "l'ambiance c'est bien, c'est pas du tout la même chose que les sentiers habituels", or "en fait, on fait pas pareil que tout le monde". They established a hierarchy between what they perceived as 'usual' and 'mainstream' (radio, TV, records), and what was not (festivals).

The settings of festivals are often experienced as 'natural' or 'pre-modern' places, supposedly contrasting with one's daily environment dependent on industrial goods. For instance, such festivals as *La Route du Rock*, *Saint Nolff*, *Vieilles Charrues* and countless others, take place in the countryside, in fields with adjacent woods which often lend themselves to the invention of a 'pastoral authenticity'. Imelda narrated going to a festival in Montaigü where the organizers had traded money for acorns, so that food and drinks on site were not paid for but bartered. She used the term '*champêtre*' to describe the (artificially) created 'natural' or 'primitive' atmosphere of that place, a term which fitted into her overall contempt for the so-called artificiality of mediatized music. Imelda however displayed an idealized outlook toward the countryside; even there, it has been a while since people used acorns for trade. When festivals take place in towns, such as the famous *Printemps* in Bourges and *Francofolies* in La Rochelle, the city centre and outskirts require temporary concert halls like tents, marquees and tubular platforms. These make the town look like the provisory set-up of circus people or gypsies. Temporary by definition, festivals echo thus the transient culture of artists or social marginals, and their bohemian flexibility. Audiences enjoy this instability and many emphasized the fact of travelling to festivals and back, by car and almost always in groups, as the anticipation and prolongation of a 'rupture'.

Jérémy's narration of the '*co-voiturage*', for instance, told the collective excitement gradually coming over him and his friends who, travelling by car, assimilated themselves to 'on-the-road' artists and travellers. They felt that they enacted the stereotype of artists as itinerant troubadours, folk singers or rock stars. Already in the 1890s, where cabarets were located on the outskirts of Paris, the public experienced the 'thrill' of journeying to far-off places, sometimes perceived as dangerous[12]. Jérémy and his friends' interpretation of the myth of borderless cultures anticipated and replicated the presumably unfixed identity of live performances, which appealed to their vision of 'authenticity' as 'natural' and 'spontaneous'. This 'thrill' was nonetheless tempered by Jérémy himself, when he listed the rational

decisions that preceded their trip: him and his friends argued over whose car to take, what material to bring, where to stop for petrol, how to divide costs. The transition from their 'normal' space/time to the 'heterotopia' (and back) was thus not radical, and their sentiments of 'extraordinariness' in travelling were balanced by the discipline of organizing schedules and financial matters. The sentiment of belonging to a border-less community was thus both real and problematised by the role of order. Audiences perform 'difference' and 'alternativity' by the very fact of attending festivals, and disrupt the rules of their 'mainstream' music consumption. Yet, they also self-regulate this 'performance' by generating new sets of limits.

One of the most revealing aspects of a festival's potential 'destabilization', or detachment from one's daily life, is camping. Camping is necessary for audiences who wish to stay over several days, and it seems to be the perfect counterpart to the artists' supposed itinerance. The prolongation of collectivity into the night can also be perceived as a transgression of the 'normal' day time[13]. Camping can emphasize the audiences' conception of 'authenticity' in producing a form of hardship (related to honesty), poverty, and dirt[14]. Camping in festivals usually involves parking away from campsites, walking back and forth to carry the tent, the sleeping bags, perhaps some food and often packs of beer. During the average attendance at a two-day festival, one must walk back and forth from campsites to music sites, back and forth to the car to get more supplies. In *Vieilles Charrues* for instance, carparks were at least 1 mile away from the campsites, and the latter another mile away from the concerts arena. In addition, one cannot wash and must use unhygienic Portaloos. If it rains, drenched clothes stick to bodies for hours on end. Local stalls usually offer dire and expensive food. If anything, music festivals look like an inverted utopia, a nightmare come true (see pictures in CD)[15].

Yet, it seems that performance of (momentary) hardship precisely produces the feeling of 'authenticity' for these audiences. Indeed, they derive extreme contentment from

the apparent difficulty of camping, with such gleeful remarks as "C'est un peu le camping sauvage, ici", which has positive connotations. In a review of the 1968 Isle of Wight festival, the same enthusiasm for deprivation transpired: "[it] was made worthwhile even by the difficulty to reach the island (ferry and long treks), the queues to the loo or overpriced hamburgers"[16]. Many of my audiences assimilated their experience of camping to the US Woodstock festival, as an interviewee from *Vieilles Charrues* enthused: "c'est l'orgie, regarde! C'est Woodstock en Bretagne!". We will comment below on the social and racial discriminations that these 'special' conditions create, but voluntary deprivation and the idealization of a bohemian and itinerant 'authenticity' is the realization of that group's conception of 'alternativity'.

In his study of audience reception, Dyer considers that, in 'pure entertainment' like Hollywood films, the audience's experience of pleasure responds to the projection, in the work of art, of a 'utopian sensibility'. This sensibility is supposed to represent the potential realization of a better, happier life than the audience's 'real' one. Dyer contends that "to be effective, the utopian sensibility has to take off from the real experiences of the audience"[17], to detach itself from their daily problems such as 'scarcity, or the lack of community'. This implies that, firstly, this audience's daily life is submerged by boredom and/or difficulty, and that 'pure' entertainment works as the momentary and imaginary (ie, utopian) resolution to these 'real' problems. Foucault developed a similar argument in the realm of 'real' experience (aside Dyer's contribution to fiction), when he noted that the imaginary meanings attributed to the heterotopia reached their "full capacity when men arrive[d] at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time"[18]. With Foucault, whether 'difficult' or not, the routine of users remains the landmark against which the 'imaginary' meanings of the heterotopia can be shaped.

As real experiences, music festivals are like 'pure' or 'mainstream' entertainment, in that they provide French rock audiences with the possibility of detaching themselves from

their everyday lives. Jérémy phrased his experience of festivals as the possibility to "se lâcher, se retourner la tête. Se lâcher ça regroupe plein de trucs, boire ou fumer [du hash], mais c'est surtout faire un break par rapport à la vie quotidienne". Jérémy derived pleasure from the particular drink and drug liberality of most festivals, and underlined the fact that a sentiment of rupture occurred (*se lâcher*), which made sense in relation to his everyday lifestyle, presumably contrived in an unspecified way. Moreover, the attraction to hardship and dirt may be understood in this context, as possibly 'resisting' the alleged glamour, comfort and luxury of 'pure entertainment' (indoor and on TV), also associated with boredom.

Dyer also understands 'pure' entertainement as the (momentary) fulfilment of daily wishes, boredom being replaced by excitement and scarcity by abundance. Whereas their lack of glamour, 'seriousness' and audience participation, *a priori* design French rock music festivals as nothing like 'pure' entertainment, they nonetheless function like any entertainment in providing audiences with feelings of excitement and the impression that their desires are (momentarily) fulfilled. This is the effect of Anne-Marie Paquotte's remark (the *Télérama* journalist), who enthusiastically commented on the appeal of Têtes Raides 'live' thus. Following the band's claim to offer "une belle utopie, (...) un autre partage de musique et de vie" (see Chapter Three, p.133, note 33), she replied that, on stage with them, "l'utopie, on la vit"[19]. Like anyone attending the show of one's choice, like any 'mainstream' audience, she experienced an intense pleasure in feeling the enactment of a usually unattainable perfection. For her, like for the enthusiast audiences I interviewed, concerts and festivals represented the effective or true realization of community and 'difference'[20]. They were both a break from routine, as Jérémy argued above, and the enactment of their utopian dreams of fraternity.

Conversely, we saw in Chapter Four that the routine of our interviewees was neither strenuous nor commonplace. Rather, their specific 'alternative' position in daily music

consumption already achieved a form of excitement, both in attempting to differ from a perceived 'mainstream' group or practice, and in seeking 'resistance' to the apparently dominant rules of consumer society. Besides, we also stressed the audience's relative comfort as mostly (lower) middle-class and well educated individuals. In this sense, our interviewees' idealized 'resistance' to 'mainstream' consumption provides them with a form of daily confidence, satisfaction and 'pleasure'. Their experience of 'pleasure' in festivals does not seek or need to 'take off from the real', as their routine is already the realization of 'difference' and 'authenticity'. For them, festivals rather *extend* their already non-conformist routine, extend the performance of their daily lives, which defines them as something indeed different from 'pure' entertainment. Jérémy put it very clearly when, after reflection, he added: "ouais, sauf qu'en ce moment, c'est un peu tous les jours comme ça pour moi". He indicated that his daily life was about "se lâcher" anyway, that he was actually a regular drug user, and that his connections with the artistic world already made him something of a 'marginal'. In this sense, the festival time was about distinguishing himself from a perceived 'other' and 'mainstream' routine, not from his own daily life. As a result, the experience of a 'utopian sensibility' for French rock music audiences is not about escaping the everyday, but about continuing their 'non-mainstream' daily lives.

Imelda discriminated against audiences in need of a conventional routine break. She distinguished herself from 'workers' by saying that a festival was "un échappatoire pour ceux qui travaillent", a mental escape, which implied that those who needed 'escape' lived 'pathetic' everyday lives. Instead, she made a point of leading an unconventional daily life so that she appeared blasée at the festival where we met. As a student with a part-time job, Imelda imagined herself in a perfectly balanced position between disdain for regular workers, and sympathy for intellectuals and artists. Her snobbery was quite manifest, but illustrated well the inversion of the traditional 'routine' pattern and its replacement by a 'special' routine, and its extension in 'special' ('alternative') music places like festivals. A further

twist came from Julie who, humourously yet I suspect seriously, wished for more 'ordinariness' in her life: "heureusement qu'il y a la vie quotidienne pour faire une parenthèse aux festivals; c'est quand même des situations un peu extrêmes tout ça". Referring to the ongoing sound level, to the swarming crowd and heavy drug consumption, Julie thought she needed a break from the 'special place' of the festival. She inverted its function as short-lived and subversive by suggesting having too much of it, being bored with it, which in turn asserted her position as a 'truly special' person used to such 'extra-ordinariness'.

C. Community and Exclusion

The proportion of participants to festivals has greatly increased in France in the past ten years, as has the number of festivals. Despite the audience's claims that festivals are 'natural', their increasing reliance on up-to-date light and sound technology probably explains this growing attendance rate, and the festivals' appeal among middle-class circles. In 1993, in Bourges and La Rochelle, there were respectively 70,000 and 65,000 tickets sold, and **XX** and 101,000 in 2001[21]. *Vieilles Charrues*, one of the most recent music festivals, welcomed only 500 people in 1991, the year of its creation, and has become the largest national event in 2001 with nearly 200,000 participants over three days. Nonetheless, with their relatively low attendance, festivals remain places where hundreds and thousands choose to meet up, and represent the momentary enactment of fraternity and 'humanism', the foundational ideas of this music culture (Paquotte above). Various researchers have stressed the force of collective gathering in accounting for pleasure during live performances, as an "experience of simultaneity" which could allegedly overcome individuals and potentially realize a fraternal communion[22]. However, the wished-for 'universal' collectivity of these French audiences is bounded by a series of exclusions, the main one being the articulation of its paradoxical claim to marginality. Moreover, we pointed out in Chapter Four that different

music trends are represented in festivals, so that various understanding of 'marginality' and 'humanism' may overlap.

Audiences express their feelings of pleasure in festival through the recognition of a collectivity. An interviewee in *Vieilles Charrues* said: "Enfin, la musique on s'en tape un peu, finalement. J'imagine qu'il y aura forcément des trucs biens; le tout c'est d'être entre copains". This was echoed by Olivia in *La Route du Rock*, who conceded that "le festival, c'est une excuse avec de la musique pour être à plusieurs". Secondly, the expression of an enacted collectivity typically verges on universalism, as the following comments revealed: "Tout le monde se parle, c'est hyper convivial", "On est venu pour l'ambiance, tout le monde qui parle avec tout le monde, c'est cool, c'est la bonne franquette". The terms used, encompassing individual diversity in one *'tout le monde'* heading, are vague, abstract, and idealize fraternity. Similarly, the 1998 ministerial survey on concert attendance in France unproblematically emphasized the notion of *'brassage'*, celebrating the sense that "tout le monde se côtoie" across a variety of regional, social, racial and generational backgrounds[23]. Audiences considered their own crowd as "y'a de tout, c'est très varié", or "c'est ça qu'est bien dans les festivals, tu rencontres de tous les styles". For Jean-Marie Pottier, from La Ruda Salska, his band's typical audience grouped together "tous les types, des mecs branchés ska, des punks, des vieux rockers et des jeunes plus ska-reggae". An interviewee from *Vieilles Charrues* also noted that "ici y'a des punks, des rastas, des surfers, des babas-cools... franchement t'as de tout, sauf des beaufs". These remarks all denoted the enthusiasm of the interviewees in seemingly achieving, at least during the time of the festival, a form of (universal) community (*'de tout'*, *'tous les styles'*).

The only 'other' excluded from the festival's collective identity was, as for the jounalist Vandel quoted in Chapter Three (p.143 and note 61), the *beauf* or the person *'de droite'*, a narrow-minded if not racist individual, the assumed follower of conservative values (and 'mainstream' music). However, the detailed composition of that claimed

universality restrictively broke down into an overall 'rock music' audience (ska, punk, reggae), hardly distinctive for anyone not 'into' popular music. Moreover, the audience is far from being 'universal' or representative of various national, social and age groups (Chapter Four). The contradiction between the invention of an unbounded community and the practical composition of that community is particularly apparent at the level of European identities. The 'geographical identity' of festival-goers in France reveals, for instance, that the number of foreigners has increased in recent years. In the 1999 report on *La Route du Rock*, the fact that "un nombre de festivaliers étrangers sans cesse plus important" attended the event was strongly emphasized, and so was the festival's reputation which now "dépasse largement nos frontières [françaises]"[24]. This festival attracted only 5.42% of foreigners, a percentage apparently on the increase and which compared with that of Bourges' foreign participants (6%)[25]. However, there seems to be nothing remarkable about a few foreigners attending a French music festival, especially if the latter is a short(ish) drive away from home, and a holiday destination (which surveys also proved). Yet, this increasing trend was envisaged as a radical 'openness' and as the mark of an uplifting European identity, as *La Route du Rock* clamoured its "rayonnement européen". As we previously underlined, French rock's elitism ('*pointu*') contrasts with its desire for 'humanism', and the apparent performance of an unbounded community is often limited by various social and racial exclusions.

In particular, the presence of ravers in technivals next to the Saint-Nolff and *Vieilles Charrues* festivals annoyed some festival-goers. Technivals (techno-festivals) are impromptu rave parties which surround 'official' festivals and benefit from this already-gathered audience. They are free, they last all day and night unlike the festival's concerts, and their organizers usually live off the sales of class 'A' drugs. Technivals are tolerated by local authorities who leave designated areas for their gathering, but represent a form of 'hard-core' marginality which can prove unpleasant for more 'traditional' festival-goers[26]. "Si c'est trop

keupon [punk] ça part en couilles", an interviewee remarked; "le technival ça a l'air assez bizarre, y paraît qu'ils se défoncent pas mal. Je trouve ça un peu craignos quand même"; "Si ça reste comme nous, c'est cool. Ils [les ravers] feraient mieux de fumer des pétards comme nous, c'est mieux". Such comments came from the same interviewees who considered social interaction as the prime reason for their pleasure, but their fear of violence and addiction, however unjustified, excluded these 'dangerous others'. My interviewees' sense of 'shared collectivity' was only valid within their own and already defined identity, in their sense of '*comme nous*'. Indeed, a few interviewees conservatively praised their 'collective bonding' within these strict limits. Imelda considered that "ce qu'est bien, c'est les retrouvailles entre une certaine catégorie de personnes, y'a une osmose entre les gens de même génération". Another person noted that "l'année dernière, y'avait plus de monde, c'était excellent tu rencontrais des gens que tu connaissais d'ailleurs". That last interviewee was delighted to restrict her 'sense of community' to friends' friends and acquaintances from other environments who turned up, like her, at the same music event. In these cases, the 'alternative' identity closed in upon restricted elitism, but we must keep in mind that it also overlapped with more flexible evaluations. Baptiste was a raver who considered that technivals bordering rock music festivals were totally peaceful and quite boring, precisely because of their proximity with 'official' shows.

Another aspect of 'exclusion' was highlighted in Saint-Nolff where I interviewed a security guard of North African (Arab) origins. He commented on the crowd thus: "c'est des grunges, des babas-cools, tu les vois et tu penses qu'ils sont habillés pour pas grand chose; mais en fait si tu regardes le fait de venir en bagnole, les tentes, payer les concerts et tout, tu vois qu'il faut du fric". He pragmatically remarked that attending a festival involved more money than its 'marginal' style assumed. My calculations for an average participation to Saint Nolff for two days amounted to 840F, including the ticket (240F), petrol for an average distance of 200km and back (200F, or to share), food and alcohol on site (300F) and -

optional- hash (100F, or to share). Owning a tent and a car would be extra. The conclusion of that bouncer was that spending so much money on scruffy camping was firstly about putting on an act of fraternity (*baba-cool*) and careless marginality (*grunge*), and secondly was racially determined, as the audience of the festival was almost exclusively white. In his opinion, the style of rejoicing suited only the middle-class, which our analysis inferred (Chapter Four, p.182). He said: "tu vois, moi je viens d'un milieu maghrébin, j'irais jamais camper comme ça pendant trois jours, ça me dirait rien... en fait c'est un peu des snobs qui se lâchent". When participating in 'extra-ordinary' events, he would rather go clubbing, not spend two days in the mud.

Contrasting his experience of nightclubs to that of festivals, the guard remarked that "ici, même les fraudeurs c'est des riches, pourquoi ils s'amusent à jouer les rebelles? Je sais bien qu'ils ont de quoi payer. C'est pas comme en boîte où t'as d'la baston. Y'a pas de bagarre ici, c'est des gens de bonne famille". According to him, 'authentic' rebellion like fraud and fighting would be firstly located in the lower classes, would be legitimate for the 'poor'. It is thus possible to understand French rock audiences' search for hardship and 'ordinariness' in festivals as the 'performance' (*mise en scène*) of occasional illegality to acquire street credibility. Looking at American audiences of rock music in the 1950s, Lawrence Grossberg noted the same desire and qualified it as an "uncontroversial fantasy"[27]. Another interviewee (still in Saint Nolff) asserted that, indeed, 'true' rebellion implied violence, but that the festival was actually exempt from it: "le rebelle, c'est celui qui cherche des embrouilles, mais ici c'est pas du tout ça". One sure sign was the possibility of leaving one's tent open on the campsite while attending the concerts. He concluded, and his friends nodded with him, that "franchement, je pense pas du tout que c'est rebelle de venir ici", and agreed with the bouncer by analysing festival practices as devoid of any illegal attempts. From the participants' points of view, festivals enabled the realization of their utopian search for fraternal peace, their tolerance of the other (see above with Paquotte for similar

perceptions). Overall, the varying practices of these festival-goers could be understood as the struggle of the contemporary middle-class youth to blend with their 'low-class' counterparts, and as attempts to conciliate their search for fraternal peace with the enactment or rejection of socially marginal practices like petty crime or violence.

The point about generally excluding violence also relates to Bakhtin's conception of the 'carnival' as a ludic place of power reversal, where violence would end the precarious balance of festivity. For Bakhtin, the 'rebels' in (Rabelais's) carnivals principally have "no intention of obliterating the Other"; "the true rebel is the one who senses and cultivates his or her allegiance to dialogue and human solidarity"[28]. In the case of French rock music festivals, then, audiences attempt to express a similar solidarity and do not have the conscious intention to 'obliterate' anyone.

D. The Body, and Performing Gender

In our Western and Christian society where activities involving 'the mind' have been traditionally associated with the more educated classes, violence is, like most activities involving the body and physical participation, deemed a 'low-class' affair. Bourdieu, for instance, explained how people's bodies were inscribed in social problematics, and how different ways of participating to cultural events connoted different backgrounds. He qualified wrestling and football matches, in particular, as typical *'spectacles populaires'*, because the public physically participated in the events by cheering, shouting, sometimes coming down to the stage/pitch. In bourgeois circles, however, the work of art is traditionally intended to be its own end, contemplation to be the goal, and participation to be minimal[29]. Although our interviewees projected a self-identity of 'rebels', they also rejected violence as disruptive, which was analysed by the bouncer above, and by some of the interviewees themselves, as the sign of belonging to a certain 'educated' social norm. Nonetheless, they still came to 'live' performances in concerts and festivals for the primary purpose of

participating, physically, to the shows (if only in being *there*). Hence, in this music culture that boasts the importance of its lyrics and its 'serious' commitment, and yet relies on 'live' performance and participation to attain anti-commercial 'authenticity', how are the mind and the body reconciliated? Which acts or performances by artists and the audience challenge or realize the conciliation of these apparently opposite interests?

Accounting for the physical practices and feelings of pleasure of audiences during music performances is a recent trend in popular music study, and so far few studies have used both empirical observation and audience's discourse to produce analysis. For instance, researchers have looked at the links between music rhythm and dancing, often engaging into racial debates about the appropriation of 'black' music for white audiences[30]. This point is evoked below. Another trend is the theory of the 'gaze', which comes from the study of film stars. It examines the personae of artists and the image they project *as* body or face, and considers how audiences receive and respond to this image[31].

The 'alternative' personae of French rock artists primarily differs from that of 'mainstream' artists, as they avoid displaying bodies and pretty faces for the purpose of seducing the audience. Even on stage, where they are 'displayed' for everyone to 'gaze' at them, French rock artists reject the 'mainstream' emphasis on the inapproachable and fantasizable 'star' and, instead, attempt to reduce the distance between their presumed 'aura', or charisma, and the public. This reduction of 'distance' can be read as an attempt to reconcile popular' practices to their somehow 'elitist' culture, and artists emphasize a sense of physical ordinariness for this purpose. Apart from the notably cute faces of Manu Chao from Mano Negra and Bertrand Cantat from Noir Désir, the personae of 'non-mainstream' artists are strikingly 'normal' and show physical 'flaws', so that they perform (their understanding of) 'authenticity'[32]. The now deceased singer Helno from Les Négresses Vertes was famous for his bad teeth, and caught the British imagination for his resemblance to Shane McGowan from the Pogues. The shaven-headed and largely overweight singer

Hadji-Lazaro, from Pigalle and Les Garçons Bouchers, is another notable figure from the *alternatif* period (see picture in CD). Other artists stand out for their banality or their lack of sophistication, as do the pale and skinny singers of Têtes Raides and Casse-Pipe who are casually dressed in black jeans. While they transgress the conventions of 'music for entertainment', their 'ordinariness' underlines the banality of stage shows and insists on the 'normality' of live performances. They invent their art not as special and distant (both star system and 'bourgeois' art convention), but as 'common' and as similar as possible to the lives of audiences (who themselves dress down and invent a sense of 'ordinariness', see the description of Imelda, Chapter Four, p.168). Artists deny the perception of their performances as 'special', as they are their routine. Their emphasis on banality reduces distance with the audience and challenges the 'show-off' conventions of 'mainstream' music and show-business.

For the audience, appropriating the body as 'authentic' means performing bodily acts that do not connote 'debasement', and articulating their 'serious' appreciation of the music to a form of physical participation[33]. Audience participation to French rock music thus differs from other live music practices, such as techno or the playing of chart and dance music in nightclubs. Rave parties and their techno music are crucially about dancing, and the lack of lyrics confines the genre to a purely physical activity. Whereas French rock music attempts to to articulate a disruption of mainstream music with an emphasis on 'serious' lyrics and 'commitment', techno music achieves this through bodily participation[34]. In the nightclubs where DJs play chart music, the audience also goes *to* dance, and often in couples, which differs from the dancing practices of French rock music. These are usually the addition of single dancers. In the concerts of *rock métissé* for instance, which borrows dance musics like ska, reggae and raggamuffin, people jump up and down, move, dance, more or less like any audience in front of a concert they enjoy. However, our observations suggest that dancers are rarely in a majority group. After a concert of La Ruda Salska, during which Benoît had

'pogoted', he remarked that "je préfère danser entre potes, ça fait moins mal". In the corporal 'collision' implied by dancing the pogo, on fast ska rhythms, Benoît wished he had been surrounded by friends who would have hurt him less. This anecdote reveals that even in cases of motivated dancing, physical participation is preferably restricted to contact with already-known individuals. At the same time, we must underline that this description is only valid for some concerts of French rock music, and not for all audiences of French rock music all the time. The same people may go to nightclubs or rave parties on occasion, and behave totally differently then.

The point about nightclubs is interesting for they represent, *a priori*, the exact opposite to this 'non-mainstream' music culture. (We are talking of French nightclubs here, *boîtes de nuit*, which rarely have the same 'cool' connotations as the 'club' scenes of large British cities). The audience goes there to dance, and often with the purpose of flirting, so that physical closeness may be a prelude to sexual intercourse. Successful flirting relies on the use of the body, and which couples get together in *boîtes* is dependent on which body and sexual preference is performed. In her study of feminism and identity, Judith Butler argues that gender is an act, and is produced "as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self"[35]. Gender is thus a "performative accomplishment" and an illusion, just like an 'alternative' identity may be a performance. By contrast to nightclubs, the performed body of most French rock audiences appears a-gendered, neither overly feminine nor masculine. It is not either voluntarily androginous as, say, David Bowie could have performed in the 1970s, but the bodily signs and styles they act out do not aim to constitute a precise gender. Above all, they seek to perform 'normality' here too, and thus stand for (conventional?) heterosexuality. The gendered composition of festivals is, indeed, relatively balanced. *La Route du Rock* had 63% of male attendance in 1999, but *Le Printemps* in Bourges published statistics for the mid-1990s with 51% male and 49% females[36]. Perhaps because they fit in the heterosexual norm,

and because they assume a position of ease and comfort *vis-à-vis* their own or any sexuality, the physical participation of French rock audiences to concerts, such as dancing, does not institute a particular gender. Gender does not come across as an issue. The dress code during festivals is mostly unisex, women wearing trousers for instance, although this is partly due to the camping conditions. Precisely, however, the kind of women who choose to attend these festivities are those for whom performing 'femininity' (in a dress) is not important, at least not there.

When evoking intercourse, nearly all the lyrics of French rock songs are about male and female relationships. La Tordue's male narrator, for instance, evokes in several songs the playful and 'adult' fascination for the female body, and crucially does so in an un-chauvinistic attitude to sexuality. The playful song 'Les lolos' (2000) is a long list of variously shaped breasts, in the medieval mode of the *blason*, and its chorus goes "Quand j'ose... ma main sous ta chemise". The pause in the music after 'ose' and the whispering voice of the singer establish his hesitation at touching the woman, which comes across as a rather respectful attitude in contrast to tendencies of bragging machismo in, for instance, some French rap[37]. However, the fact that our corpus is mostly composed of male artists, reflecting the dominantly male profession of French rock music, hints at the fact that the genre entails its own form of limitations in tackling sexuality and manhood or womanhood. The male artist Bénabar, for instance, sung a rather hackneyed song about a young man feeling overpowered by his girlfriend moving in, which did not cast a favourable light either on the woman or on heterosexual relationships[38].

Studying representations of masculinity and femininity in French rock music would go beyond the scope of this study, but one area of reflection would be that French rock music is a mostly 'band' music and, while there are a number of mixed or all-female bands (Les Elles), 'alternative' female artists tend to prefer the *ACI* mode of expression (Clarika, Rachel Des Bois, Marie-Laure Béraud). The female singer of the French rock band Paris Combo,

Belle du Berry, does not perform her female body in a 'feminine' way as she often wears trouser suits on stage. She performs female heterosexuality with a relatively downcast sexiness, as an aspect of her personality not worth stressing[39].

Despite apparent political correctness and reciprocal respect among males and females, some female members of the audience have felt male pressure in occasion. Imelda for instance was 'brave' enough to attend the second day of the Saint-Nolff festival on her own, her boyfriend having other commitments then. She talked about her decision to remain alone as a proof of her autonomy, saying "j'ai pas forcément besoin de quelqu'un", which could be read as a feminist statement. Later however, she argued that her musical tastes constituted "un bon point sur ma côte auprès de mon ami", subjecting her cultural identity to the expectations of her male environment. This point can be linked to the pressure that Sophie felt about her own tastes in her mostly male group of friends (Chapter Four, p.178).

Finally, the notion of physical participation and enjoyment is linked to the music style performed, and in this sense *rock métissé* (as the most 'dancy' version of French rock music) appears as a blend of white and black music cultures. Reggae and ska are at the core of its mixity, and its seems that these genres were mostly appropriated by the French rock-*chanson* format because they were neither excessively 'dancy' (like techno for instance) nor involving couples (live *variétés*). We saw in Chapter Three that, in French rock music, a series of cultural simplifications equated Latin music with Third World countries, and allowed the audience to articulate an imaginary struggle against neo-liberalism (p.154). Commenting on the 1990s French musical fusion, Garapon wrote that "les jeunes Français cherchent dans la musique africaine, le raï ou le rap, l'expression esthétique nouvelle d'un rapport charnel et corporel au monde qu'ils ignoraient jusque là"[40]. Already in the 1950s-60s, rock music had represented an upheaval about physical liberation, and so had polka in the 1850s[41], and so had a multitude of other music styles in between and before then, which Garapon regretfully dismissed here. Garapon implied that a mind/body split was effectively true in France before

métissage, and led to the reception of French *chanson*, or any French popular music until the 1990s, as exclusively directed at 'the mind'. This vision is inaccurate in implying that black music genres have been the unique recipient of a 'carnal' activity and enjoyment. For Garapon, only through black musics genres could the French eventually access 'physical' participation in popular music. This is a neo-colonialist cliché and, although he does not use this cliché to discriminate against the music styles mentioned, he suggests the realization of an unproblematic *métissage* between French 'cerebral' music and black influences, in a generalization that Gilroy would call essentialist (Chapter Three, p.144)[42]. Black musics are, firstly, not the sole recipient of physical expression and, secondly, the use of ska in France was largely mediated through white British bands. Similarly, even when French rock music appropriates an apparently 'more' physical rhythm like ska, its mostly white, educated and (lower) middle-class audience does not necessarily perform, as Garapon says, a new carnal relationship to music. Audiences articulate their bodies to the rock music performance by mixing (a bit of) dancing to listening, visual and reflexive pleasures, and their cultural practices remain embedded in their wider social background, critical of 'pure' intellectualism but still suspicious of 'unbounded' participation.

Thus, to account for the relative lack of physical participation of French rock audiences remains a complex matter. It is hoped that further research in this area would help expand knowledge and reflections on the bodily involvement of French audiences in popular music. In particular, one needs to keep in mind that audiences of French rock music are also audiences of other music genres, and that if French rock seems to fail to challenge the mind/body separation effectively, other French music genres are currently focusing on this objective. The insertion of electronic music into French rock and *chanson* is a developing feature of French popular music, and the growing success of bands like Dyonisos and Télécran, mixing French pop-rock with electronica, shows that this is a welcome innovation[43]. Further research into the hybridization of French popular music with

electronica would cast a fascinating light on this point, and involve dealing with the issue of 'authenticity' by contrasting traditional instruments (and the tradition of 'clever' lyrics) to the assumed 'artificiality' of computerized compositions. Similarly, focusing on the reception and inclusion of electronica into French popular music would serve to evaluate the issue of national identity, as the French public has often considered electronic music to be a 'foreign' influence[44].

Globally, French rock music appears an ambivalent music culture in its participative and physical form (in festivals and concerts), as much as in its more mediated and discursive mode of consumption (in daily life and when people talk about it). The theory of narrative was thus useful to highlight the ambivalences of the audience, as we saw that they oscillated between being consumers and criticizing 'the system' (Chapter Four), between holding a 'serious' discourse and taking part in festive participation (Chapter Five), and overall between universal solidarity and elitist exclusion. This series of ambivalences, however, does not invalidate the audiences' enthusiasm and the pleasure they find in listening to French rock music. Indeed, interviewees found that this music genre provided them with useful responses to the above set of contradictory aspirations. In this sense, Jameson's remark on the formation of cultural identities as 'imaginary resolutions' applies aptly, once again, to this music culture, including the artists and the audience who contribute to shaping its identity (see Chapter Four p.180, and note 34).

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[1] I discarded the audiences who came because of the proximity of the festival ("on est venu parce que c'était pas loin", "parce qu'on habite dans le coin") and other practical answers ("pour 250F t'as 40 concerts, ça vaut vraiment le coup"). They represented a negligeable proportion and did not provide for a discourse on 'alternativity'. The social thinker Mikhail Bakhtin considered that carnivals enabled the marginals of a society to "symbolically transgress -and potentially rupture- that culture's formally instituted laws and paradigms". Imagining themselves as cultural marginals, my audiences may resemble the carnival-goers of Bakhtin's study. See below. Bakhtin, 1968, p.113.

[2] On the conventions of pleasure, see Alan Durant, 1984; Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 1985.

[3] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', 1986 [1967 for 'Des espaces autres'].

[4] In novels, Bakhtin calls the time and place combination limiting the dwelling of characters the 'chronotope'.

[5] *Vieilles Charrues* attracted 250,000 participants in 2001, becoming the largest French music festival ever; it managed to keep low prices (320F for 3 days) with the help of 1,400 volunteer helpers.

[6] The question of drugs is complex, but let us note that the commonly considered 'soft' drugs, like hashish, are widespread among French rock audiences, who also tend to use them regularly in their daily lives.
[7] It is possible that rave parties appear less controlled, especially as artists do not usually belong to a lucrative (music) business and do not receive commercial sponsor (yet). It would be interesting to study the rave phenomenon from the angle of the 'heterotopia'.
[8] Leah S.Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth,* 1986; Peter Hitchcock, *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences*, 1998, p.104-105.
[9] On the initial reception of the phonograph, see Laing, 'A Voice without a Face', 1991.
[10] There is another side to the argument. For Pascal Ory writing in the 1980s about France in the 1960s, "l'utopie rock restera un lieu d'autant plus imaginaire qu'elle a été vécue massivement hors-concert: par le disque et la radio". Ory considered that the audience's sense of enjoyment, or 'utopian sensibility', was due to a lack of live performance. He implied that live music would produce less pleasure by reducing the importance of imagination. Ory, 1983, p.211.
[11] SACEM survey.
[12] Calvet reminds that in the 1890s one would go to Montmartre's Chat Noir, Bruant's cabaret, as one would go to the countryside, 1981, p.69.
[13] Yonnet, 1985, p.164.
[14] See Fiske, 1989, pp.90-99 on dirt as disruptive of social order.
[15] This is not however a 'dystopia'. K.J. Donnelly (2000) argues that punk music achieved a 'dystopia', "a destruction or dissolution of the present world", p.171. Despite French rock music's roots in punk music, this thesis argues that the imagined, or experienced, 'hardship' of camping is an appropriate response to the 'authentic' desires of audiences, not the annihilation of the world.
[16] Brian Henton, *Nights in Wight Satin,* 1990, introduction page.
[17] Dyer, 1985, p.229.
[18] Foucault, 1986, p.26.
[19] *Télérama* 2667 and my Chapters One and Three.
[20] Dave Haslam (1999) reaches the same conclusion about the Northern Soul followers: "for them, Northern Soul wasn't simply an escape: it was more real than the rest of their weekday drudgery", p.146.
[21] D'Angelo, 1997, p.30, p.77, p.84. Maryse Bessaguet for *Francofolies*.
[22] Anderson, 1991, p.145. Anderson later speaks of the "physical realization of the imagined community" in concerts and collective singing. Similarly, Negus talks of the "shared sense of being" that overcomes audiences (p.77). Frith talks about "a real experience of what the ideal could be", 'Music and Identity', 1996.
[23] *Développement Culturel* 122.
[24] *La Route du Rock 1999.*
[25] Davet and Tenaille, 1996. No dates given for the statistics, but presumably from 1995.
[26] In *Vieilles Charrues*, the security signed the directions to the technival.
[27] Grossberg, 1992, p.146.
[28] Mayerfeld Bell, 1998, p.106-7.
[29] Bourdieu about *fête* as participatory and part of a lower-class practice: pp.36, 57-8 and 569.
[30] Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society*, 1995, p.174 and 200. He refers to Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs for their discussion of Beatlemania (1992), and to Grossberg for a discussion of dancing. See Lisa Lewis (ed): *The Adoring Audience*, 1992.
[31] See Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing,* 1994; Nightingale, 1996.
[32] The singing voice (*le chant*) is another direction where to look for 'alternative' conventions. Most singers, even female, will tend to have raucous voices in contrast to the presumably 'proper' way of singing. See Roland Barthes, 'The "Grain" of the Voice', 1990.
[33] It is interesting that the Zebda song selected as single in 1998, 'Tomber la chemise', was about physical celebration and bodily exposure (Chapter Two). It is our contention that this song was not just dismissed by 'alternative' audiences because of its 'mainstream' success, but also because of its 'non-serious' theme. Zebda are an example of just how French rock music attempts to reconcile the body (corporal celebration and dancing) with reflection.
[34] On the politics of techno music, see Philippe Birgy, 2001.
[35] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 1990, p.140.
[36] Davet et Tenaille, 1996, p.101.
[37] See the rhymes of the French rapper Lord Kossity, for instance, staging himself as a super-lover and singing over a chorus of women breathing heavily, faking orgasm: "revoilà le mec qui fait vibrer les clitos (...), je fais kiffer les dames (...) le genre à faire mouiller toutes les filles", 'Le Mack' (2001). The study of sexuality in French popular music would be fascinating to carry out, and an opportunity to bring in the usually overlooked debates of gender and feminism in this aspect of French culture. For other examples of male chauvinism or fantasized representations of women in popular music, see Robert Walser's study of heavy metal in the USA (1993).

[38] Bénabar, 'Y'a une fille qu'habite chez moi' (2001).
[39] On female rock artists and the performance of femininity such as breast-showing, see the analysis of PJ Harvey and Courtney Love by Susan McClary (2000) and by Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman*, 2000. Also Mavis Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 1998.
[40] Garapon, 1999, p.110.
[41] On the perception of polka as a physical innovation, see François Gasnault, 1986.
[42] See Gilroy's point in *The Black Atlantic* about the limitation of attributing one cultural feature exclusively to one group, leading to essentialism, p.75 (and Chapter Three).
[43] About Télécran, T.Burgel writes: "la valse des complexes inaugurée en France par le hip-hop et les musiques électroniques a enfin résolumment déteint sur le rock d'ici", *Les Inrockuptibles*, 22/01/2003, p.59.
[44] See the note above. Like rock music in the 1950s-60s, or punk in the 1970s, the presence of electronic music in France in the 1990s has seemed to challenge a certain national and inferiority complex.

VI. Conclusion

By locating French rock music at the heart of economic, political, cultural and social interests, this thesis demonstrated that the genre was informed by a series of contradictions salient in French society. These included, for instance, the question of being autonomous among competing market forces (Chapter Two), projecting a 'universal' democracy in a nationally specific frame and juxtaposing a taste for nostalgia with a concern with contemporary issues (Chapter Three). It was also found that the 'text' of French rock music (its lyrics, its music style and imagery), represented the artists' attempts to account for, and momentarily resolve, these contradictions. As a result, French rock music has tended to produce a unifying discourse revolving around its construction and perception as 'resistant', 'marginal'or 'authentic'. These terms have made sense as far as its identification as a music genre motivated by criticism and dedicated to social justice is concerned. Turning its back on 'pure entertainment', yet defending its identity as a form of musical entertainment, French rock music has attempted to generate a critical reflection about contemporary society, and to project a utopia of solidarity for its listeners. This project characterizes its approach to life as 'authentic', in the Adornian sense. Chapters Four and Five revealed that the audience responded to this 'alternative' or 'authentic' identity with both naïve enthusiasm and awareness of the limitations of that purpose. Overall, the study of French rock music has demonstrated that the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'resistance' have retained a strong resonance in French popular music and, more generally, have had great potency in contemporary France.

As a markedly left-wing culture, French rock music mirors the contradictions and hopes of the contemporary French Left. In this respect, one may wonder whether the 'resistant' endeavour of French rock music, or of other French music products, is on the wane in France or not. From the observations of this study, we know that only a few major

companies are increasingly widening their grip on small labels, as well as fighting each other for the control of more labels. For their part, French artists are struggling to get contracts and to become professionals. Yet, it seems that further capitalist concentration and social inequalities, as is the case everywhere, continue to produce responsive criticism. Moreover, it hs been agreed that the question of 'resistance' was not a 'responsive' mechanism but rather a cultural identity embedded in an intricate web of interdependencies. Pragmatically, majors rely on a fringe market for promoting ideas of 'rebellion', and this fringe zone widens and fluctuates on occasions. The band Zebda's latest album, aptly entitled *Utopie d'occase* and released in August 2002 (at the time of writing), promises to be a commercial success *and* a critical reflection on the role and power of left-wing artists in French society.

In addition, the desire to compose, play and listen to music remains crucial to deal with contemporary anxieties. It has been the contention of this research that this desire is strong and resilient, and this makes popular music a fascinating, complex and challenging study. Eventually, to answer the question of the place of 'criticism'in French society, and of its 'imaginary' tactics in the musical sphere, would require comparative research which extends the scope of the present study. In France, comparative research between French rock music and *variétés*, for example, would help to contrast practices and different elaborations of 'resistance' and 'utopia'. On an international scale, comparative research between different national practices and genres would help to understand the evolution of our 'consumer democracies' in contrast to others. For instance, the fact that a compilation of French rock music (including Têtes Raides, Lo'Jo, Mickey 3D) was published by EMI in 2002 for the Anglo-American market raises the question of this genre's success abroad, and its reception by local audiences as an 'alternative' product or not[1]. Comparative studies would serve to evaluate the international dimension of French rock music and, more broadly, enable us to understand how specific genres cross national boundaries and acquire new meanings locally. The concepts of exoticism and multiculturalism could enter into the

equation. Comparative studies would also be useful to understand how audiences of different nationalities use different music genres in order to articulate apparently similar 'anti-mainstream' preoccupations. Using audience reception theory and the concept of national identity, this possible research area adds up to those on gender and physical participation suggested in Chapter Five. All demonstrate that the academic field of French popular music is only blossoming at the moment, and it is our privilege to be witnessing its growth.

[1] *Cuisine Non Stop*, 2002, Luaka Bop/EMI. This album was produced by David Byrne of Talking Heads.

VII. Appendices

Table of Fieldwork in Concerts and Festivals (1999-2000)

Date	Event	Place	example of French rock artists	number of speakers in group interviews	example of interviewees
January 1999	domestic interview	Rouen	_	6	Sophie, Yann, Loïs, Xavier
April 1999	concert La Ruda Salska	Bolbec (Normandy)	La Ruda Salska		Benoît, Lisa
July 1999	Les Francofolies	La Rochelle (Aquitaine)	Zebda, Gnawa, Les Hurleurs	8	1 guard, Léonore
August 1999	La Route du Rock	Saint-Malo (Brittany)	Arno, Erik Arnaud	8	Olivia, Cécilia
July 2000	Saint Nolff	Saint-Nolff (Brittany)	La Tordue, Mukta	8	1 guard, Imelda, Marie
July 2000	Les Vieilles Charrues	Carhaix (Brittany)	La Ruda Salska, Louise Attaque, Sergent Garcia	15	Julie, Céline, Baptiste, Benji, Bertrand
April 2000	Spook and the Guay, concert	Le Havre (Normandy)	Spook and the Guay	1	Jibé, Manue
October 2000	Jérémy	Le Havre			Jérémy
December 2000	J-Marie Pottier (La Ruda Salska)	Paris			Jean-Marie

A Selective Table of Majors and their Sub-labels (Record Production)

Polygram < Universal 1998 < Vivendi 2000	**Sony**	**EMI** < Thorn-EMI	**BMG** (Bertelsman)	**Warner** < AOL at 55%
19-36% of market shares[1]	**19%**	**13%**	**12%**	**12%**
Polygram Polydor Phillips Phonogram Island Mercury Barclay: - licensed with Rosebud Vertigo Verve ...	Columbia/CBS Tristar Saint-Georges 15% of Trema (>Atmosphériques) Epic Small: - licensed with Squatt Yelen ...	Chrysalis Pathé-Marconi HMV shops Label Découvertes Virgin: - Hostile - Delabel - Lithium - Labels - One Little Indian - Source ...	Ariola Vogue Commando RCA ... bought Napster	Elektra Atlantic Carrère East West France Tôt ou Tard Orlando license with Rough Trade ...

< bought by X
> which distributes X

B.Lebrun 2002, with Lefeuvre (1998), *L'Expansion* 01/03/01, *L'Année du Disque* (1999), *Télérama* 2175 (23/01/02).

[1] Vast fluctuations of % of market shares from year to year, and from source to source.

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'Les jeunes militants renouvellent les formes de contestation', *Télérama* 2725, 03/04/02, p.19-24.

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EDJ, 15/04/1999, 61-65 for interview of Zebda by François Aubel.

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Les Inrockuptibles 225, janvier 2000.

Les Inrockuptibles 251, juillet 2000.

Les Inrockuptibles 290, 15/05/2001.

Les Inrockuptibles 373, 22/01/2003.

Libération 06/04/1998.

Libération 18/01/2000.

Libération 25/05/2000.

Télérama 2548, 07/10/98, interview of Magyd Cherfi, p.15.

Télérama 2580, 23/06/1999.

Télérama 2616, 01/03/2000.

Télérama 2653, 15/11/2000.

Télérama 2681, 30/05/2001.

IX. Discography

This discography includes all the French artists or bands whose songs or albums were quoted in the thesis. Alphabetical order by artist or band, date, song/album, production and distribution (when known).

Au P'tit Bonheur, DATE, titre, Polydor >> Sophie

Aux Suivants! (1998), various artists, cover versions of Jacques Brel, Barclay.

Bénabar, *Bénabar* (2001), Zomba Records France, Jive.

Béranger, François (1989), *Intégrale*.

Bérurier Noir (1985), *Concerto pour Détraqués*, Bondage, New Rose (vinyl).

Blankass (1998), *L'ère de rien*, Universal.

Carte de Séjour (1988), *Ramsa*, Piranha.

Casse-Pipe (1994), *Tome 1,* Kerig, Help Kane.

Chansons du bord de Zinc (1999), Inca.

Chansons du bord de Zinc, II (2001), Inca, EMI.

Chao, Manu (1998), *Clandestino*, Virgin, EMI.

Chao, Manu (2001), *Proxima estación: Esperanza*, Virgin, EMI.

Cuisine Non-Stop (2002), Introduction to the French *nouvelle* generation, Luaka Bop, EMI.

Destination France Rock (2001), various artists, Warner.

Escrocs (Les) (1997), *C'est dimanche*, Virgin, EMI.

Fabulous Trobadors (1992), *Era pas de Faire*, Bondage, Wagram.

Garage Rigaud (1998), *Eponyme*, Lucie Production, Mélodie.

Garçons Bouchers (1990), *La saga des Garcons Bouchers*, Boucherie Production.

Général Alcazar (1998), *La position du tirailleur*, Verdier production, MSI distribution.

Gnawa (Gnawa Diffusion) (1997), *Algeria*, Colors Music, Mélodie distribution.

Hurlements d'Léo (1999), *Le café des jours heureux*, Madame Léo production, PIAS.

Hurleurs (Les) (2000), *Ciel d'Encre*, Barclay.

Illégal (2001), various artists, cover versions of Mano Negra, Big Mama Records, Tripsichord distribution.

Jack O'Lanternes (1998), *Mines de Rien*, Kerig, MSAI, Arcade Music Company.

Java (2001), *Hawaï*, Small Records, Sony.

Jolie Môme (1999), *Rouge Horizon*, autoproduction.

L'Alternative (1999), various artists, Polygram, Universal.

La Tordue (1995), *Les Choses de Rien*, Moby Dick, Média 7 distribution.

La Tordue (1998), *T'es fou!*, Moby Dick, Delabel distribution.

La Tordue (2000), *Le vent t'invite*, Next.

Liberté de Circulation (1999), various artists, Naïve.

Lo'Jo (Lo'Jo Triban) (1998), *Mojo Radio*, Emma Production, Night & Day.

Lord Kossity, 'Le Mack' (2002), in *French Urban Music*, Sony, for French Music Bureau.

Louise Attaque (1997), *Louise Attaque*, Atmosphériques, Warner.

Mano Negra (1988), *Mala Vida*, Boucherie Production.

Mano Negra (1989), *Puta's Fever*, Virgin.

Marcel et son Orchestre (1998), *Crâne pas t'es chauve*, Big Mama Production, Wagram.

Massilia Sound System (1997), *Aïollywood,* Mercury, EMI.

Matmatah (1998), *La ouache*, Trema.

Mickey 3D (2000), *Mistrigri Torture*, Le Zouave, Virgin.

Motivés (1997), *Motivés!*, La Brêche/LCR.

Négresses Vertes (1991), *Famille Nombreuse*, Delabel, Virgin.

Noir Désir (2001), *Des visages, des figures*, Barclay, Universal.

Nonnes Troppo (1994 [1988]), *La Mission*, Bond Age distribution.

Nougaro, Claude (1990): *Toulouse* (compilation), Phillips Classic.

Ogres de Barback (1997), *Rue du Temps*, autoproduction, PIAS distribution.

Ogres de Barback (2000?), *Fausses Notes/Repris de justesse*, autoproduit (?).

P18 (1999), *Urban Cuban*, VIF production.

Paradis, Vanessa (2000), *Bliss*, Barclay, Universal.

Paris Combo (1999), *Living Room*, Boucherie Production, Polydor/Universal.

Pierpoljak (1999), *Pierpoljak*, Barclay, Universal.

Pigalle (1990), *Regards affligés sur la morne et pitoyable existence de Benjamin Tremblay*, Boucherie Production.

Pigalle (1993), *Rire et pleurer*, Boucherie Production.

Radical Mestizo (1998), various artists, Fonomusic production and distribution.

Rageous Gratoons (2001), *Rageous Gratoons*, Small Axe, Tripsichord.

Ramsès (1999), *La Tête en bas*, Miz'ampli, PIAS.

Ruda Salska (1996), *Le prix du silence*, autoproduction, Tripsichord distribution.

Ruda Salska (1999), *L'art de la joie*, Yelen, Sony.

Rue de la Muette (2001), *Après la fête*, Le loup du faubourg production, Mélodie.

Rue Kétanou (2001), *En attendant les caravanes*, Yelen, Sony.

Sergent Garcia (1999), *Un poquito quema'o*, Labels, Virgin.

Sinsémilia (1998), *Résistances*, Double T Music.

Solo, Mano (1993), *La Marmaille Nue*, Carrère, Warner.

Spook and the Guay, *Ochos Rios*, Spook Production, Virgin.

Têtes Raides (1989), *Not Dead but Bien Raides*, Tôt ou Tard, Warner.

Têtes Raides (1992), *Les Oiseaux*, Tôt ou Tard, Warner.

Têtes Raides (1998), *Chamboultou*, Tôt ou Tard, Warner.

Têtes Raides (2000), *Gratte-Poil*, Tôt ou Tard, Warner.

Tiersen, Yann (1998), *Le Phare*, Ici d'ailleurs production, Labels.

Trenet, Charles (2001), *Je chante,* compilation, Laserlight.

VRP (Les) (1990), *Retire les nains de tes poches*, Mercury, Universal.

Zebda (1995), *Le Bruit et l'odeur*, Barclay, Universal.

Zebda (1999), *Essence Ordinaire*, Barclay, Universal.

Zen Zila (1999), *Le Mélange sans appel*, Eva Luna, Naïve.