In a recent article in *Black Music Research Journal*, French sociologist Denis-Constant Martin proposed that Martinican writer Édouard Glissant’s concept of creolization could help reconcile jazz’s historical roots as an African American music with its recent universalization (Martin, 2008). Martin thus joined a growing group of scholars who use the concept of creolization in globalization studies in order to emphasize the fluid and unstable nature of culture. Meanwhile, scholars in postcolonial studies have embraced creolization’s potential to celebrate the creative ingenuity of ‘subaltern and deterritorialized peoples’ and its power to subvert ‘older notions of cultural dissolution and disorganization’ (Khan, 2007: 237–38). However, a number of anthropologists have expressed reservations about this trend. Arguing that the historical process of creolization in the Caribbean has been fundamentally different from contemporary processes of globalization, these scholars advocate that creolization not be divorced from its original historical and geographic contexts (see Mintz, 1996 and 1998; Palmié, 2006 and 2007; Khan, 2007 for examples). Prompted by these debates, the present chapter tests Martin’s postulate through a study of US saxophonist David Murray’s collaboration with Guadeloupean musicians. Drawing on written, ethnographic and musical sources, I compare Martin’s understanding of Glissant’s *créolisation* with the meaning of creolization for the musicians involved in the Creole Project.¹ I demonstrate that ‘creolization’ – and

¹ Throughout this chapter, I use the French ‘*créolisation*’ to refer specifically to Glissant’s theory, while its English translation refers more broadly to the various
its related terms ‘Creole’ and ‘créolité’ – continue to hold specific and disputed meanings in Guadeloupean society, thus problematizing their wider application as concepts capable of describing global processes of cultural exchange or identity formations.

**Jazz and Glissant’s Poetics of Relation**

In his thought-provoking article, Martin seeks theoretical answers to the following questions: How can we account for the spread of jazz – and other African American or Afro-Caribbean musics – throughout the world and their transformation into countless regional variants while also acknowledging the central contribution of African American musicians? What makes jazz and other forms of African American music universal? In using terms like ‘universal’ or ‘universalization’, Martin does not suggest that jazz and black musics are played and received in the same way throughout the world but rather that there are few places, if any, where black musics have not been embraced, appropriated or blended with local traditions. Although Martin’s concern with universalism echoes Glissant’s, the sociologist seems to be reaching for something more attuned to what ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino calls ‘cosmopolitanism’ (Turino, 2000: 7–11). Unlike terms such as ‘global’ or ‘universal’, which suggest the unrestricted diffusion of cultural objects and practices throughout the world and evoke fears of homogenization, cosmopolitanism admits that transnational cultural objects and practices are often adopted only by a segment of each local population and subjected to varying degrees of local interpretation and appropriation.²

In order to answer the questions outlined above, Martin proposes a theoretical shift by introducing Glissant’s concept of créolisation. Philosopher, novelist and poet, Glissant developed his theory of Relation, in which créolisation plays an important part, through a variety of literary genres. A thorough exploration of Glissant’s theory would exceed the confines of this chapter and for our purposes it is sufficient to focus on Martin’s interpretation of Glissant’s writings. Glissant consistently presented jazz as a musical embodiment of créolisation, thus justifying Martin’s introduction of the term in jazz studies. In *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant asserts that jazz and other forms of Afro-Caribbean musics are products of the plantation system. He

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² Several ethnomusicologists have followed Turino’s lead to explicate the process by which Caribbean musics participate in cosmopolitan loops. See Largey, 2006; Rommen, 2007; and Dudley, 2008.
further argues that jazz differs from other forms of black music because, unlike musics such as biguine, it transformed itself once the plantation system collapsed in the late nineteenth century. According to Glissant, as the African American community experienced urbanization, industrialization and modernization, the emergence of new jazz styles assured that the music remained relevant to the experiences of the community who created it. He concludes that ‘l’universalisation du jazz provient de ce qu’en aucun cas elle n’est une musique “en l’air”, mais l’expression d’une situation donnée’ [the universalization of jazz comes from the fact that it has never existed in a vacuum but rather is the expression of a particular situation] (Glissant, 1997: 383). Beyond the apparent contradiction, Glissant proposes that jazz’s capacity to adapt to specific situations made its universal distribution possible.

Martin breaks down Glissant’s theory of Relation into four stages: métissage, créolisation, Relation and the Tout-monde [whole world]. While there is no single English translation for métissage, Glissant used the term ‘cross-breeding’ in an address at the University of Oklahoma (Glissant, 1989: 561). In other situations, ‘cross-fertilization’ seems equally appropriate (see, e.g., Glissant, 1996: 19). Martin explains that métissage ‘created the conditions from which Relation spread, and assumes that it prevents any negative otherness’ (Martin, 2008: 108). In other words, the recognition

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3 Glissant’s assertions are problematic since the emergence of both jazz and biguine in the late nineteenth century, and their subsequent growing popularity in the twentieth, were intrinsically linked to emancipation, urbanization and industrialization.

4 This and all other translations are by the author of this chapter unless cited otherwise.
of cultures of métissage negates the existence of ‘pure’ cultures (Glissant, 1997a: 428–29) and therefore provides a safeguard against essentialism and intolerance and opens up new spaces in which Relation can grow.

Martin defines creolization as ‘unlimited métissage’, a definition Glissant proposed in Poétique de la relation. However, Glissant later drew a distinction between métissage and créolisation. In Introduction à une poétique du divers, the philosopher explained that the results of métissage can be predicted whereas créolisation introduces unpredictability in processes of synthesis (Glissant, 1996: 19). Glissant further stipulates that in order to be truly successful, créolisation must combine cultural elements ‘équivalents en valeur’ [of equivalent value], although he does not explain what this entails. In situations where creolization took place between elements of disparate value, it only took effect in a ‘mode bâtard’ and a ‘mode injuste’ [hybrid and unjust mode] (Glissant, 1996: 17). In the Western Hemisphere, where creolization is intrinsically linked with slavery, artistic movements such as négritude or the Harlem Renaissance have provided the necessary correction to put African and European culture on a more equal footing (Glissant, 1996: 17–18).

Successful créolisation puts people and cultures in Relation, a phenomenon that Glissant observes throughout the world. For Martin, Glissant’s poetic of Relation offers a system that addresses ‘both the elusive globality of a chaotic world and the “opacity” (that is to say the irreducible specificity) of the place one is from’ (Martin, 2008: 109). The world thus becomes the ‘Tout-monde’ which can be translated as both ‘whole world’ and ‘everyone’, depending on whether one chooses to focus on the French or Creole meaning.5 Glissant envisions the Tout-monde as both ‘multiple and one’, a space where specificity and universality are reconciled. Martin concludes: ‘Within this framework, there is indeed no contradiction between the permanent centrality of jazz and its universalization’ (Martin, 2008: 110). I would now like to examine this assertion within the context of David Murray’s Creole Project, as his collaboration with Antillean musicians is often referred to in the jazz press.

**Gwoka and Guadeloupean Politics**

David Murray, a longtime Paris resident, met Guadeloupean percussionist Klod Kiavué at the Banlieues Bleues festival in 1995. Within two years, the two men had organized a collaborative project which initially linked US jazz musicians with musicians from Martinique, Guadeloupe and Cape Verde. This collaboration resulted in a first album entitled simply Creole. Ultimately, this broad exploration of Creole music proved unwieldy, forcing Murray and

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5 In French Creole, ‘tout moun’ means ‘everybody’.
Kiavué to limit the scope of their project. Kiavué proposed that they record an album focused on compositions by Guadeloupean gwoka singer Guy Konket. Thus was born the group David Murray and the Gwo-Ka Masters. Konket only spent two years touring with the group, but Murray and Kiavué have since continued to look for ways to blend North American jazz with Guadeloupean gwoka.

Definitions of gwoka vary from the poetic to the specific. Ethnomusicologist Frederic Negrit writes that gwoka is ‘l’ensemble de musiques, danses et chants rythmés, d’origines guadeloupéenne, à base de percussions, orchestré par deux batteurs au minimum, œuvrant sur deux tambours de fonctions différentes’ [the ensemble of rhythmic musics, dances and songs of Guadeloupean origins, based on percussions and orchestrated by a minimum of two drummers, each with a separate function] (Negrit, 2004: 193). In contrast, instrumentalist, composer, and educator Christian Dahomay declares that gwoka is ‘ce qui reste quand on a tout oublié’ [what’s left when you have forgotten everything] (Dahomay, 1997: 18). Most commonly, but not exclusively, gwoka refers to a set of dances accompanied by an ensemble of barrel-shaped, single-headed drums, themselves called gwo ka or ka. Two boula, the lowest of the drums, play one of the several rhythmic ostinati that underpin most gwoka performances. A single, higher-pitched drum called makè improvises in coordination with the movements of the dancer in front of him, or occasionally her. Traditional gwoka is a participatory music, meaning that there is not a clear delineation between audience members and performers. For instance, singing is responsorial between a song leader and a choir composed of members of the audience. Gwoka is traditionally performed during swaré léwòz, outdoor celebrations held on Friday or Saturday nights.

Owing to its association with slavery, gwoka has historically been stigmatized in Guadeloupean society. This was especially true between the 1848 emancipation declaration and the mid-twentieth century, a period which saw the rise of quadrille and biguine, two musical genres that mixed European and Creole instruments and whose popularity cut across socio-racial divisions. During this time, the coloured middle-class in Guadeloupe and Martinique endeavoured to assert its political power against the white plantocracy, an effort that culminated in the 1946 law of départemantalisation. Unfortunately, the new political status failed to mitigate the effects of the collapsing sugar industry in the French Antilles, fuelling widespread social unrest and the growth of separatist movements on both islands.

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6 There is no standardized spelling for ‘gwoka’. The spellings ‘gwo ka’ and ‘gro ka’ are also acceptable.
7 I borrow the concept of ‘participatory music’ from Turino, 2000: 47–58.
In Guadeloupe, gwoka became strongly associated with separatist activism from the late 1960s onward. Influenced by Marxist– Maoist ideology, Guadeloupean nationalists within organizations such as the Groupe d’organisations nationales de Guadeloupe (GONG), the Association générale des etudiants guadeloupéens (AGEG) and the Union pour la libération de la Guadeloupe (UPLG) articulated a vision of Guadeloupean national identity based on the cultural practices of the island’s rural lower-class population. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, they campaigned to legitimize the Creole language and to revitalize gwoka. Guadeloupean nationalist intellectuals under the guidance of guitarist Gérard Lockel proposed to modernize gwoka by performing it onstage with European and North American instruments such as guitar, flute or drum set. This effort to bring a rural participatory music to the stage is consistent with postcolonial modernist-reformist strategies in other locations that seek to adapt local music to cosmopolitan aesthetics. As Turino points out, there is an inherent tension in nationalist movements that attempt both to participate in cosmopolitan formations and to highlight their local specificity. In Guadeloupe, Lockel’s gwoka modènn [modern gwoka] aimed to resolve this tension by dictating that instrumental gwoka should be strictly based on a set of seven rhythms commonly played in swaré léwòz and on a distinctive non-tonal scale.

Since the 1970s, the gwoka (drum) has become a marker of Guadeloupean specificity in other musical genres such as zouk, a form of popular music that emerged in the French West Indies in the 1980s (Guilbault, 1993: 32–35). Today, nationalist ideology continues to inform the discourse of many gwoka musicians, with those most closely aligned with its orthodoxy insisting that gwoka is an atonal music and viewing any attempt to incorporate elements of European tonal harmony into the music as a severe threat to its integrity.

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8 The nationalist movement’s cultural platform was outlined in Association générale des etudiants guadeloupéens, 1970. Dany Bébel-Gislert (1989) offers an alternative view of the issue of language and national identity. Ellen Schnepel (2004) explores the links between politics, identity and the Creole language in Guadeloupe. As early as the 1980s, Guadeloupean ethnographer Marie-Céline Lafontaine (1983; 1988) criticized what she saw as the nationalist movement’s excessively narrow focus on gwoka as the sole musical icon of Guadeloupean identity.

9 For more on modernist-reformism in music, see Turino, 2000; Largey, 2006; and Dudley, 2008.

10 Lockel’s gwoka scale is based on a succession of whole steps and minor thirds and takes nine octaves to loop upon itself. See Lockel, 1978; 1981.
David Murray and the Gwo-Ka Masters: The Problematic of Creolization

The liner notes to David Murray’s Creole Project CDs reveal that issues of ethnic, racial and cultural identities loom large over this collaboration. References to créolisation, créolité and Afrocentrism abound. For example, the liner notes to the album Creole include a short endorsement by Gérard Lockel, who appeared on two tracks from this album. In his text for Creole, and in contrast to his unremitting nationalist convictions, the guitarist defines himself as an ‘Afro-American musician’ born in a colony, a condition he equates with créolité. Echoing Glissant, he states that Caribbean musics are self-sufficient and therefore hold international appeal. But he also insists that Afro-American musicians distinguish themselves because their ‘authentic’ musics are free from the bounds of tonality that characterize ‘occidental’ music (Murray, 1998). In another example, journalist Jacques Denis wrote in his liner notes for the album Gwotet,

Ni noir, ni blanc, cette internationale créole est à l’œuvre aujourd’hui de par le monde, bande-son bien réelle de ce que Édouard Glissant nomme si justement la créolisation, processus historique qui fait surgir d’une partie de l’Atlantique Noir défini par Paul Gilroy une nouvelle identité rhizom- atique, par nature complexe et par essence irréductible aux schémas de l’historiographie classique. Un autre homme, le Brésilien Tom Zé, a trouvé un bon mot en forme de néologisme pour traduire cette transformation continue: unimultiplicité.11 (Murray, 2004: 5)

Lockel’s unorthodox definition of créolité and his rejection of hybridization with occidental music directly contradict Denis’s embrace of creolization and ‘unimultiplicity’. It is therefore important to unravel how the musicians involved in the Creole Project understand words such as ‘Creole’, ‘creolization’ and ‘créolité’. I want to make clear at this point that the musicians I interviewed often conflated all three terms to an extent that would most likely disturb Édouard Glissant and the authors of the seminal Éloge de la créolité (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1993). My goal

11 ‘Neither white nor black, the international Creole movement is extending its reach across the world today, like a soundtrack accompanying what Glissant has called “Créolisation”. This historical process is giving form to a new and necessarily complex identity, one impervious to the categories and structures of traditional historiography. This identity is in permanent flux, a flux that Brazilian Tom Zé has summed up well in his neologism unimultiplicity.’ Translation by Anna-Louise Milne.
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here is not to address the theoretical distinctions of these terms but rather to expose their meaning and relevance to a specific group of musicians.

I first contacted David Murray in December 2006. During the course of the interview, Murray expressed interest in créolité but rejected the possibility that anything like it could have emerged in the United States. The saxophonist argued that slavery in the United States had resulted in a more profound type of cultural erasure than in the Francophone Caribbean. Under these conditions, Murray concluded, it has been impossible for Creole languages to develop and therefore a concept like créolité did not really apply to North America (recorded interview, 2006). In Guadeloupe, Klod Kiavué confirmed Murray’s conclusions:

Les musiciens américains, ça ne les concerne pas. Eux, ils veulent défendre un truc, ils sont plus proches de Césaire que de Chamoiseau. [...] Ça c’est clair, de Fanon, Césaire que de Chamoiseau. Parce qu’ils voient pas l’intérêt, pour eux en tant que Noirs américains, [de] cette histoire de créolité.12 (recorded interview, 2007)

Kiavué also expressed personal reservations about the concept of créolité. Speaking of his work with Murray, he stated, ‘Le truc de la créolité, ça a toujours était un problème pour cette musique-là. Parce que tout le monde n’adhère pas [...] Moi j’adhère pas.’ He added,

Le mélange, un gars comme Lockel, il te dit aussi: ‘Si tu es tout le monde, tu n’es rien du tout.’ Tu vois un peu, l’idée c’est un peu ça, dire que, bon, nous, on est le monde. Si tu es le monde, t’es rien du tout parce que, jusqu’à maintenant, en Guadeloupe, l’ethnie noire a créé le gwoka, l’a développé et n’a jamais eu droit à la parole. Jusqu’à maintenant, dans l’histoire de la Guadeloupe, l’ethnie noire n’a jamais eu réellement droit à la parole, tu vois, à part de par la musique.13 (Recorded interview, 2007)

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12 ‘American musicians are not concerned with it. They want to defend something closer to Césaire than Chamoiseau. [...] That’s certain, closer to Fanon, Césaire than Chamoiseau. As American musicians, they fail to see anything of interest in this story of créolité.’

13 ‘This thing of créolité, it has always been a problem for this music. Because not everybody embraces the concept. [...] I don’t embrace it. Someone like Lockel would tell you: “If you are the world, you are nothing at all.” You see, the idea is a little bit like saying that we are the world. If you are the world, you are nothing at all because, up until now, in Guadeloupe, the black ethnicity has created gwoka. They developed it but they were never given the right to speak out. Up until now, in the history of Guadeloupe, the black ethnicity never really had the right to speak out, you see, except through music.’
Here, Kiavué looks with some suspicion at what the authors of *Éloge de la créolité* have referred to as their ‘spécificité ouverte’ [open specificity] (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1993: 28). Far from welcoming *créolité* as a potential resolution of the tension between the universal and the specific, Kiavué rejects this unstable and inclusive identity in favour of a more specific identity based on race and nationality, an attitude that reflects the influence of the Guadeloupean nationalist movement of the 1970s. As Richard Burton has explained, Antillean intellectuals from Césaire to Chamoiseau have struggled to ‘affirm their difference in the face of […] the reductive universalism of the whole Jacobin-Republican tradition in France’ (Burton, 1995: 141). For this reason, Guadeloupean nationalist thinkers remain suspicious of any universalist claim – including those of Antillean writers such as Glissant – to which they oppose a discourse promoting the specificity of each island’s culture.

Not only do many Guadeloupean gwoka musicians reject *créolité*, they also regard the term ‘Creole’ with suspicion. Alain Jean – a radio personality, nationalist activist and longtime advocate for gwoka music – explained to me that he refuses to use the term ‘Creole’ to define a person, preferring to limit the use of the noun to refer to the language. People, he argued, should be referred to as Guadeloupean, Martinican or Caribbean, but not Creole or Antillean (recorded interview, 2009). These terms express a conceptualization of the Caribbean as a group of separate nations, each with its own specific culture. The term ‘Caribbean’ is preferred over ‘Antillean’, whose use remains strongly tainted by French colonialism. Likewise, Jean expressed his distrust for the word ‘creolization’, which he perceived as often emphasizing the primacy of European over African culture. During the course of my research in Guadeloupe, many musicians echoed this attitude, including Kiavué, who once told me, dictionary in hand, that he could not consider himself Creole since the *Petit Robert* (2006) French dictionary still defined ‘créole’ as ‘personne de race blanche, née dans les colonies intertropicales, notamment les Antilles’ [a person of white race born in the tropical colonies, especially in the Antilles].

More than creolization, it is the legacy of the Middle Passage and slavery that generates what Paul Gilroy calls ‘diasporic intimacy’ (Gilroy, 1992: 193) between the members of the Creole Project. Kiavué stressed the common ground he and Murray found between their respective musical traditions:

En discutant, on se rend compte que le gwoka et le jazz ont les mêmes fondations. Ce sont des musiques, on connaît l’histoire, des musiques de descendants d’esclaves. La seule différence, c’est comme on aime dire, une
ça a fait le blues du coton, nous on a le blues de la canne. Donc, c’est deux branches différentes.\textsuperscript{14} (recorded interview, 2007)

Later, he elaborated on this idea:

On s’est mis d’accord sur deux choses: c’est que c’est deux musiques rebelles, c’est deux musiques qui ont été créées pour combattre l’esclavage, pour combattre les blancs et c’est des musiques d’improvisation. Donc ça, c’est les deux caractères fondamentaux pour nous où ces musiques-là se rejoignent: deux musiques de revendication et deux musiques d’improvisation. C’est ça qui a été le socle des discussions.\textsuperscript{15} (recorded interview, 2007)

Even if Murray and Kiavué question terms such as ‘Creole’ or ‘créolité’, it is conceivable that, beyond their own awareness, something like créolisation is at work in their musical collaboration. On the surface, this seems entirely possible. Murray professes a vision for a new music that goes beyond a superficial juxtaposition of jazz and gwoka. He explained, ‘I’m trying to mix jazz with gwoka music, Creole lyrics – but at the source of it, the bottom of it, so that it grows out together’ (recorded interview, 2008). For Kiavué, the band is trying to develop a new idiom that is neither jazz nor gwoka and which he sees captured in the neologism ‘gwotet’, which Murray coined to designate his new musical group, but which also means ‘big head’ in Creole, as Kiavué humorously pointed out.

The conditions seem poised for what Glissant has imagined as a meeting of cultures of equivalent value. However, in his study of the ‘world music’ phenomenon, musicologist Timothy Taylor explains that collaborations between Western and non-Western musicians often replicate subordinating structures inherited from colonialism. While Taylor warns us that these hegemonic practices inform even the output of musicians who try to work around them, he leaves some room for more egalitarian collaborations (Taylor, 1997: 39–68, 173–96). It is easy to imagine that the work of Murray and the Gwo-Ka Masters falls into this latter category. David Murray is a versatile musician who has successfully promoted himself in a great variety

\textsuperscript{14} ‘As we were talking, we realized that gwoka and jazz had the same foundation. They are both music, we all know the story, they are music that descends from slaves. The only difference, as we like to say, is that one sings the blues of cotton and we have the blues of the sugar cane. So they are two different branches.’

\textsuperscript{15} ‘We agreed on two things: that they are rebellious musics, two musics created to fight slavery, to fight the whites and that they are improvised musics. So those are the two fundamental characteristics where these musics meet: two protest musics and two improvised musics. This provided the entire basis for our discussions.’
of musical contexts. While this collaboration adds to his reputation for eclecticism, it offers little in terms of market visibility or financial reward that he could not achieve with his other projects. On the other hand, percussionists Klod Kiavué and François Ladrezeau claim to have benefited from the collaboration. Through their tours with the Gwo-Ka Masters, they have been able to meet festival organizers, promoters and journalists around the world, and thus bring more attention to their own music. However, these connections have yet to bear concrete professional rewards, and neither Kiavué nor Ladrezeau has gained access to the international touring circuit outside of Murray’s outfit.

Murray himself seems to have noble goals for this music. In 2008, the saxophonist explained to me that his goal was to bring greater recognition to gwoka. He stated, ‘I told Klod that I’m trying to give gwoka wider recognition so that we can get gwoka to the Grammys. [...] I got a Grammy here for some work I did with McCoy Tyner, but gwoka needs its own Grammy’ (recorded interview, 2008). In a 2005 interview with Guadeloupean jazz critic Luc Michaux Vignes, Kiavué explained the value of working with a musician who is invested in developing a financially successful project. For Murray as for Kiavué, the Creole project’s success should translate into the sales of concert tickets and albums. And because the band does sell, the Creole Project has managed to raise awareness about Guadeloupean music in Europe and, to a lesser degree, in the United States. But at what price?

Semiotician Jean-Jacques Nattiez points out that musical works are polysemic and that their meanings very much depend on the socio-historical context in which these works are produced and received (quoted in Martin, 2008: 117). For Guadeloupean musicians, as for a large portion of the Guadeloupean population, gwoka remains a national and nationalist symbol, a meaning best encapsulated in the phrase ‘gwoka sé potomitan a mizik an nou’ [gwoka is the central pillar of our music]. While Murray respects the gwoka tradition, he is not limited by this particular historical heritage. He, for example, can ignore the debates which have surrounded Lockel’s concept of gwoka modènn. This frees him to transform the music as he sees fit in order to increase its market appeal. For many gwoka musicians in Guadeloupe, this leads to a ‘bastardized’ form of music, and the musicians who collaborate with Murray are sometimes accused of ‘prostituting’ the music. Both Kiavué and Ladrezeau have acknowledged this difficult situation during interviews and private conversations.

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16 Saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart’s recordings (2006; 2008) blending jazz and gwoka have also done much to bring attention to Guadeloupean music in recent years.
Finally, it seems that no matter how much Murray and the Gwo-Ka Masters would like this to be a collaboration of equals, it simply cannot be. Citing ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, Taylor warns that ‘no matter how collaborative and syncretic a musical style sounds, we should always remember the musicians’ relationship to the means of production’ (Taylor, 1997: 173). In this case, Murray controls every aspect of the recording process and, more importantly, makes all the decisions during mixing and editing. This gives the saxophonist complete control over the band’s recorded output.

Over time, the aesthetic of the Creole Project has evolved in revealing ways. The album with Guy Konket (Murray, 2002) was entirely sung in Creole. An educated listener could fairly easily identify the basic gwoka rhythmic patterns in the mix. In addition, Murray based many of his arrangements on previous Konket recordings. The group’s latest album offers a disturbing contrast. The musicians recorded in Guadeloupe in 2008 and invited local quadrille accordionist Négoce to join them. Mixing took close to two years. During this time, Murray decided to get rid of the tracks laid down by Négoce. Instead, he solicited blues singer Taj Mahal and US singer Sista Kee to overdub English lyrics based on poems by Ishmael Reed on half the tracks. The result is an album sung almost entirely in English and in which a heavy funk influence masks most of the distinctive Guadeloupean elements. If this collaboration initially augured some of the unpredictable creative results promised by Glissant, it has since come dangerously close to illustrating globalization’s homogenizing effects.

**Conclusion: Music and Relation as Ideological Processes**

From these observations it seems that Glissant’s créolisation has little value in analysing the collaboration of musicians who, at least on the surface, claim a Creole connection. Créolisation and the broader concept of Relation grew out of the particular politico-cultural situation of Martinique, as the opening of Glissant’s *Le Discours antillais* (1997a) makes evident. As such, it does not necessarily map well onto the Guadeloupean experience. Here I partially concur with Richard Burton who believes this difference results from two factors: the strength of Guadeloupean nationalist ideology and the comparatively weak influence of Aimé Césaire on that island’s cultural and political history (Burton, 1995: 149–50). While it is true that Césaire’s personality does not loom over Guadeloupean politics as it does in Martinique, it is a mistake to ignore the influence of nègritude on Guadeloupean nationalist thinking. In fact, the AEGG developed its political and cultural stance in response to Césaire and departmentalization. Its 1970 cultural report – a key document
for the study of Guadeloupean cultural nationalism – acknowledges the importance of négritude as cultural resistance but criticizes Césaire and Senghor for conceiving anti-colonialism as a racial rather than a class struggle. Furthermore, the report denounces négritude for privileging racial solidarity within the African diaspora and failing to recognize the existence of essentially different national cultures in the Caribbean (Association générale des étudiants guadeloupéens, 1970: 33). Glissant in turn responded both to departmentalization and to the sort of nationalism espoused by pro-independence parties in Guadeloupe and Martinique by emphasizing the fluidity of culture and undermining pretences of racial or national essentialism. Yet, since the 1970s, the impact of nationalist ideology in Guadeloupe has been strong enough to limit the penetration of Glissant’s ideas among Guadeloupean intellectuals.

Nevertheless, if I may borrow from anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), I do believe that even if the Tout-monde does not necessarily offer a model of global cultural exchanges, it does provide an attractive model for what these exchanges should be. Saying this acknowledges the utopian quality of some of Glissant’s writings without denying his contribution to postcolonial theory. It is undeniable that Glissant brings a new perspective to the study of cultural interactions and power relations within the Caribbean and elsewhere, as Celia Britton (1999) demonstrates. Yet, the militancy of his recent publications, such Quand les murs tombent (Glissant and Chamoiseau, 2007; co-authored with Patrick Chamoiseau), reveals that the Tout-monde remains an unachieved dream – to paraphrase J. Michael Dash (Dash, 1995: 149). Glissant’s oeuvre is best understood as participating in an ideological process, an ongoing debate about Antillean identity shaped by the French overseas departments’ peculiar political status. Abstracting Glissant’s poetics of Relation from its particular geopolitical context in order to extend it to disciplines beyond the field of postcolonial studies, as Martin did, is problematic. As the present chapter reveals, it is not only unsuited to explain collaborations such as Murray’s Creole Project, but there is also a risk that it masks some of the inequalities that underlie them.

Works Cited


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Jazz, Gwoka and the Poetics of Relation


Discography

