MUSIC AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN TERRE-DE-BAS, GUADELOUPE

by

Ryan Durkopp

B.A. Music, University of Pittsburgh, 2005

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Music in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This thesis was presented

by

Ryan Durkopp

It was defended on

April 14, 2009

and approved by

Dr. Bell Yung, Professor, Music Department

Dr. Adriana Helbig, Assistant Professor, Music Department

Thesis Director: Dr. Andrew Weintraub, Associate Professor, Music Department

MUSIC AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN TERRE-DE-BAS, GUADELOUPE

Ryan Durkopp M.A.

University of Pittsburgh, 2009

This thesis explores the ways that music and language in Guadeloupe subvert ideologies of French nationalism in the negotiation of a multi-layered identity. Guadeloupe is a department of France, yet offers a case study that clearly runs counter to Herderian ideas of isomorphic identities—that French people live in France, speak French, and "have" French culture.

The negotiation of a multi-layered identity is in part based on the fact that music (compas, zouk, and gwo-ka) and language (Guadeloupean Creole) are championed as non-French cultural artifacts, carrying symbolic weight that affirmins more localized aspects of cultural and political identity.

Matters are complicated as Guadeloupeans assert a pan-Caribbean identity through common language, orthography, musical traditions, and a shared perception of sameness. Despite the wide range of cultural practices of members in the region, Guadeloupeans are able to conceptualize a community based upon cultural indexes such as music consumption and language use.

The negotiation of identity in Guadeloupe is a constant project with high stakes, as seen in the 44-day strike in January and February 2009. Institutions such as supermarkets, schools, and banks closed their doors in an attempt to resist French hegemony and demand higher pay for the lowest level of workers. After much publicity about the situation French authorities finally acquiesced, yet tensions between France and its former colony are still high. As a result of the

historical and recent socio-political movements in the region, the examination of identity politics in Guadeloupe is an extremely rich site of scholarly inquiry.

This thesis examines two musical groups on the island of Terre-de-Bas, Melody Vice and Explosion. The bands make use of several strategies that assert localized identities through the regional genre of compas—carnival and festival music that originated in Haiti but that is now consumed throughout the Caribbean. At once French, Guadeloupean, and Saintois, music producers and consumers articulate both pan-Caribbean conceptualizations of identity, as well as more localized forms of identity.

Through repertoire, language, instrumentation, and iconography community members are able to negotiate what it means to be a French citizen living in Terre-de-Bas, Guadeloupe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF PHOTOS

PREFACE

I would not have been able to complete this thesis without the help of many people. Pierette Cairo first brought me to Terre-de-Bas, and continues to be my mentor. Her unwavering patience and willingness to help with my projects will always be appreciated.

I would like to thank all of my teachers, but I owe a special debt of gratitude to my committee members Bell Yung and Adriana Helbig for their helpful comments. Andrew Weintraub served as my academic advisor and read through several drafts of this thesis, always encouraging and gently pushing me to explore areas I had not thought to address.

I would like to thank everyone in the community of Terre-de-Bas for their patience and willingness to accept me into their lives. Through the course of this study, I have formed a particularly close relationship with the Petit family. Girard, Chantal, Ophèlie, and Mathilde are my closest local friends, as we discuss both community gossip that I would not feel comfortable bringing up around other community members as well as cultural questions and local history. I am greatly indebted to the Petit family as much of my research findings have come from them or from people that I now know as a result of their introductions.

I want to thank Christophe Petit above all for his friendship, but also his willingness to share his thoughts on music, politics, and life with me. He is a wonderful person and a gifted musician.

I want to thank my family, who have supported me in all of my endeavors, and for that I am eternally grateful. Lastly, my wife Annie has been especially helpful in framing this thesis. I will always treasure our time spent together in Petites Anses.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Guadeloupe is a collection of five inhabited islands in the Lesser Antilles, an archipelago located

in the eastern Caribbean Sea. Similar to other Caribbean islands, its land and population bear the

scars of a history that includes slavery, a monoculture plantation economy, and colonization by

European powers. However, unlike many of its neighboring islands that constitute the pan-

Caribbean community, such as Haiti, Dominica, and Cuba, Guadeloupe is not an independent

nation. Following the abolition of slavery in 1848 several countries in the Caribbean region

moved towards independence. However, rather than opting for political sovereignty in the course

of decolonization, Guadeloupeans overwhelmingly voted in support of integration into the

French nation in order to preserve the inflow of French capital and material goods. As a result,

since March 19, 1946, Guadeloupe has held a status as an Overseas Department of France. In

the remainder of the thesis, I will use the abbreviation DOM (*Département d'outre-mer*) that has

become standard in the literature to refer to the territories of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French

Guiana in the Caribbean, and Réunion in the Indian Ocean.

As a DOM, one might expect to find that French nationalist ideology has pervaded every

aspect of society—especially with the historical emphasis that the French version of national

ideology places on assimilation.[1]   Granted, Guadeloupe has adopted French institutions and

---

[1] John Spencer, "Colonial Language Policies and Their Legacies" in *Current Trends in Linguistics, Vol. VII: Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. T.A. Sebeok, 537-547 (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) delineates differences and

French policy in the years following departmentalization. The islands rely on goods and subsidies from France, as it cannot grow enough crops to become self-sufficient; they rely on the political and economic infrastructure of France; they follow school curriculums established by France, and learn about European history while the history of colonization is omitted from the texts; and they have access to French television channels. However, to assume that Guadeloupe has completely assimilated to French culture would be a mistake, as Guadeloupean resistance to French hegemony is not only present, but takes many forms. Guadeloupeans have not accepted their cultural or political assimilation into the French nation passively. Rather, at times they actively assert a non-French identity, subverting the French ideals of assimilation by performing difference and contesting the imposed French culture that is a reminder of their collective history of subjugation and social stratification based upon racialized identities. In this thesis, I argue that the active performance of culture—that is, music and language—is one of the most effective forms of negotiating the multiple layers of identity of Guadeloupeans, who are ultimately French citizens.

Moreover, Guadeloupean Creole and music are active sites for not just the contestation of French national identities, but serve as active sites for the formation of localized forms of identity as well. The formation of these identities takes place on two distinct ideological levels—first, through an assertion of non-French cultural markers; and secondly, through an assertion of pan-Caribbean cultural markers that aligns Guadeloupe with the Caribbean community. Although there is not currently a strong sociopolitical movement for Guadeloupean independence from France, the forms of resistance (including music and language) to selective elements of French culture—and the collective consciousness of identities that privilege

---

similarities between British and French colonial policy. Broadly speaking, Spencer notes that British policy was more "hands-off," while French policy actively encouraged the adoption of French culture by colonial subjects.

Guadeloupean as well as pan-Caribbean cultural indexes—fit well within models of an ethnonational ideology.[2] That is, the assertion of Guadeloupean and pan-Caribbean (ethnically-based) identities respectively represent cases in which efforts to create a collective consciousness of sameness employ many of the same strategies as nationalization projects.

The first section of this thesis will provide a theoretical framework for understanding the process of creolization in the Caribbean. The following section will briefly examine pan-Caribbean resistance to French hegemony through the *Négritude*, *Créolité*, and *Antillanité* literary movements by showing that language and a pastiche approach to making music are highly charged sites for the contestation and affirmation of identity. Finally, I will draw upon scholarship that provides evidence of resistance by the formation of a pan-Caribbean identity through the use of music and language—specifically the musical genres of compass, zouk, and gwo-ka. The second chapter will provide a contextualization of the community of Petites Anses, Les Saintes before moving to examples and analyses of highly nuanced identity negotiation drawn from my own fieldwork focusing on two musical groups, Melody Vice and Explosion. The thesis will conclude with a final chapter that organizes and summarizes the main conclusions of the argument.

This study is important for several reasons. First, there have been no anthropological or musicological studies of Petites Anses or Terre-de-Bas.[3] Further, the information contained in this thesis adds to the growing literature within the sphere of Caribbean studies.   As the Caribbean is composed of a large number of small communities, studies that examine a specific

---

[2] Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of a National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004) traces the history of Guadeloupean efforts to nationalize, but was published prior to the strike in 2009 that will be discussed in a following section.

[3] Jean-Luc Bonniol, *Terre-de-Haut des Saintes: Contraintes insulaires et particularisme ethnique dans la Caraïbe* (Paris: Les Éditions Caribéennes, 1980) is an anthropological study of Les Saintes with an emphasis on Terre-de-Haut. The work examines arguments for the conceptualization of a distinct Saintois identity and a Saintois ethnicity.

community, such as this thesis, provide a more nuanced understanding of the Caribbean region as a whole.

One of the dominant forms of musical expression in Guadeloupe—and one that is attracting much attention from scholars—is gwo-ka drumming. With roots reaching as far back as plantation communities and the African continent, gwo-ka is an important genre, an understanding of which is crucial for a full appreciation of Guadeloupean life. This study is different from other musicological investigations of Guadeloupe, however, since the dominant mode of musical expression on Terre-de-Bas is compas—carnival and festival music that originated in Haiti, but is now produced and consumed throughout the Caribbean region. Moreover, the two musical groups at the center of this thesis, Melody Vice and Explosion are important because their interaction has introduced compas into the realm of carnival music in Guadeloupe. To be sure, Explosion is one of only six Guadeloupean carnival groups, all centered in or around Basse Terre, that have begun to play compas in the context of carnival celebrations.

Perhaps the most important phenomenon that this thesis addresses is the way that community members on Terre-de-Bas have found a way to express both localized forms of identity in addition to pan-Caribbean identity through the performance and consumption of a regional musical genre.

1.1   METHODOLOGY

As the director of a cultural immersion program for American teens studying French, I conducted fieldwork in Petites Anses in six-week blocks in June and July 2004, 2006-08, as well

as one-week blocks in March 2006, May 2007, and March 2009. In addition, I spent six weeks

in the community of Gourbeyre on mainland Guadeloupe in June and July 2005.

The parent organization of the program in which I was involved, Visions Service

Adventures, is located in Newport, Pennsylvania, and operates work / service immersion trips for

14-18-year-olds in several countries throughout North, South, and Central America, including

the several Caribbean sites.

As a way of thanking the local communities for welcoming us into their homes and lives,

participants work on projects that have been chosen based on discussions between program

directors and the local communities. Program participants generally work on three large-scale

projects and several smaller projects during their four-week stay.

In Guadeloupe we have completed several projects in recent years including the

construction of several picnic tables placed in key community meeting places, the construction of

a playground structure at the local soccer field, the painting of a world map near the elementary

school, and the marking and maintenance of recreational hiking trails. However, due to

Guadeloupe's wealth in relation to other program sites (such as the Dominican Republic and

Dominica) as a result of departmentalization, we are in a unique position to focus more on social

activities as work projects, such as organizing day-camps for local children, and helping renovate

public buildings following the devastating earthquake of November 22, 2004. We make it a

priority to attend most community gatherings, and spend a significant portion of each day with

people in the Terre-de-Bas community, whether that means spending time with the elderly in

their homes, discussing current events with the youth at the library, or just hanging out in the

town square with vendors. Although English classes are part of the curriculum nobody in the

community in which we stay speaks it well enough to converse well, so all interactions are in French or Guadeloupean Creole.

We have unique access to the musical groups that I discuss in this thesis—Melody Vice and Explosion—as our living space is a compound that was once the community's middle school. The compound consists of several large sheds, one of which the community has given to Melody Vice as a practice space, another of which houses Explosion's drums.

As the summer is a season of increased activity for both of these musical groups, we are in contact with the musicians not only when we are out in the community, but during daily practice sessions as well. These daily practice sessions afford opportunities to interact with the musicians. In addition, evening strolls, community parties, and recreational activities such as soccer and volleyball games present opportunities to discuss musical and social questions with both the musicians, and the community at large.

1.2   MUSIC, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

This thesis asserts that reworkings of African-based traditions—which are manifest in contemporary societies as Caribbean traditions—and their invocation through contemporary musical expression and language, are fundamental in the creation of a multi-layered identity in Guadeloupe, of which an important aspect is a distinct non-French identity.

This idea can be traced to the work of Melville Herskovits (1895-1963), an American anthropologist who established African and African-American studies in American academia in the early 20th century. Early in his career, many scholars argued that African-Americans were cultural ciphers—that the trauma associated with the middle passage, in addition to the severing

6

of contact with African culture due to generations of dislocation, performed a complete cultural erasure.[4] Richard Rath summarizes what has come to be known as the "Herskovits-Frazier problem" by noting that some scholars "maintained that the ordeal of slavery in the United States had been so traumatic that it completely destroyed African cultural heritages in North America and that any distinctive culture African Americans developed was of necessity acquired after their arrival and derived from European and American components."[5] More specifically, people exploited racial ideologies in arguing that African-American communities did not completely assimilate to cultural practices in the American South not because they were denied access to American cultural elements, but because they were racially inferior—they could not assimilate. Herskovits refuted these claims vigorously.[6] Over the course of several decades he documented music, speech, dance, and other aspects of culture in both the Americas and West and Central Africa, finding that African-American communities are far from cultural ciphers, but are carriers of rich traditions reaching back to the African continent. His work shows that communities of African decent in the Americas did not assimilate culturally because they were not "clean slates," as it was believed, but because they practiced their own traditions and had their own worldview.

Herskovitz's ideas are relevant in the present study where cultural practices such as music and language not only highlight differences with France, thus resisting assimilation policy, but the cultural practices also underscore similarities with other populations in the region. In this case, history functions as a source of legitimacy, and place functions as a validation of identity.

---

[4] These thinkers employed the epistemological thesis of *tabula rasa* (Latin: blank slate), in which it is argued that humans are born with no innate traits. Rather, all humans begin with equal opportunity at birth and gain knowledge through everyday exposure. Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002) is one of many works that challenges this dogmatic line of thought.

[5] Richard Cullen Rath, "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition." *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (1993): 700-726.

[6] See Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1941).

Both of these phenomena are at work within the context of language use in Guadeloupe, the topic of the following section.

1.3   NATION BUILDING AND LANGUAGE: AN OVERVIEW

At all of my visits to the Mayor's office, Guadeloupean Creole was used extensively except to communicate with me. In addition, at a community meeting that I attended in June of 2008 to discuss and vote on the dispersal of community funds for activities, the director called the meeting to order by asking that all dialogue be in French so that I could follow the discussion. Although there was some slippage back to Creole, especially when things became heated, for the most part those in attendance acquiesced.

To the people with whom I have spoken, language is one of the most important markers of Guadeloupean identity. The fact that Guadeloupean Creole is not fully standardized accounts for a level of linguistic diversity in the region, as things such as diction, grammar, and accent make it possible to distinguish where speakers are from. Yet the common thing that all Guadeloupeans share is language practice, which since the birth of national ideologies has played a central role in the conception of a nation. In an effort to incorporate Guadeloupe into the French nation, political agendas have historically targeted Guadeloupean Creole. It has been stigmatized, use in some public domains has been outlawed, and use in schools has been forbidden. As a counter to language policy that has targeted Guadeloupean Creole, the performance of compas, zouk, and gwo-ka music almost exclusively in Guadeloupean Creole operates as a public refusal to assimilate linguistically.

This section will examine the history of language policy ideologies and trace the routes language varieties travel from pidgins to creole languages, stressing how language has historically held a privileged position in nationalization movements.

The construction of national identification is a relatively recent phenomenon in the course of human history—one that from the beginning has been intimately tied to language. The 18th-century philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder championed the notion that language is the genius of a people. Sociologist Anthony D. Smith explains:

> The notion that nations are really language groups, and therefore that nationalism is a linguistic movement, derives from Herder's influence.[7]

Cultural-historian Daniel W. Gade further articulates Herder's idea that language is more than a tool for communication, and represents the essence of a group. He notes that Herder was the first thinker to conceive of language as the genius of a particular people, claiming that language is a privileged and fundamental aspect of group identity. Gade continues:

> That perspective led to the view that language imparts a certain way of seeing, feeling, and even, perhaps, behaving. Tolerance of linguistic aspirations builds on that particularism and became part of the postmodernist agenda of the late twentieth century. Many issues in the geography of language are essentially an outgrowth of the Herderian perspective.[8]

Implicitly, Herder posited viewing a people, a land, and a language as isomorphic entities. That is, French people live in France and speak French. Although academics have refuted Herderian ideas, and counterexamples abound, they are difficult to displace.[9] The fact that language plays a central role in nationalization projects places language-choice in a charged arena of identity contestation in Guadeloupe. This section will examine the history of taking

---

[7] Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1971): 182.
[8] Daniel W. Gade, "Language, Identity, and the Scriptorial Landscape in Quebec and Catalonia," *The Geographical Review* 93 (2003): 430.
[9] See Jean Jackson, "Language Identity of the Colombian Vaupes Indians," in *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, ed. R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) for a particularly striking example of how language, territory, and ethnicity do not overlap.

Herder's idea for granted—that is, the process through which Herder's idea has become naturalized—and recent scholarly endeavors that deconstruct, and thus, denaturalize Herder's idea.

Fishman deconstructs Herder's idea of naturalization concerning national ideologies and language.[10] He is interested in the process of naturalization, and how political forces take advantage of naturalized ideas in the formation of ideologies. In doing so, he notes that the opposite of "natural" is "cultural" or "constructed" or "social", which means that things such as national borders and languages are not quite so natural—that they have been tailored to fit the specific agendas of groups in power.

Handler continues this line of reasoning by noting that nationalism is an ideology concerned with boundedness, continuity, and homogeneity encompassing diversity.[11] Moreover, the first two indexes have temporal and geographic dimensions. That is, nations are believed to be delimited geographic areas that have historic beginnings and endings. What is more, these aspects are believed to be traceable over a continuous time and region.

Handler challenges the logic of possessive individualism in his delineation of national ideologies—that an individual necessarily *has* a language, nation, or ethnicity. He refutes this type of flawed logic by taking a constructivist position—that conceptions of language, nation, and ethnicity are not "natural" and are not objects that can be possessed, but are ways of behaving that are enacted over time, and are subject to change. That is, the conceptualizations of language, nation and ethnicity are constructed through social differentiation processes. Groups

---

[10] Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1972).
[11] Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

with political agendas have historically exploited the logic of possessive individualism along with naturalized ideas concerning language and the nation to their advantage.

Together, these notions detail the pressures for associating and articulating language, people, and nation. Many authors, including the American linguist Einar Haugen, have taken this line of reasoning one step further by exploring the implementation of agendas by political powers. Haugen divides the process by which a language becomes associated with a people or a geographical region into three distinct, but related phases: 1) the selection of a norm, 2) the codification of a norm, and 3) the acceptance of a norm.[12]

Haugen's first phase is the selection of a norm. This is a process in which the nation-state chooses one of several varieties of a language in a linguistically heterogeneous region to champion for the purpose of national unification through the generation of a collective consciousness of "sameness." As many ethnographies and historical accounts have shown, even today there are many areas of the world that feature dialect continuums and bundles of isoglosses where speakers in neighboring areas may be mutually intelligible, but speakers at either end of the continuum are not. Thus, if the goal is to group all these speakers together in one nation with one language, a person or group must select a variety or norm to promote.

According to Haugen, the second phase, the codification of a norm, describes the process of making sure that everyone who claims to use a particular language within the context of the nation-state is following the same set of rules. This phase falls within the domain of corpus planning. In addition, the standardization of grammar, orthography, and diction by means of publishing dictionaries, encyclopedias, and grammars, are included in this phase.

---

[12] Einar Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

The final phase that Haugen describes, the acceptance of a norm, is a bit more slippery, and can fall within either status planning or acquisition planning depending how the goal of acceptance is approached. If acceptance of the norm is to occur, especially if language shift is involved, potential users must feel that using the promoted language invokes or indexes some measure of status or social capital. Among other reasons, this might occur when populations in rural areas shift to the variety of language spoken in a neighboring urban center to index a level of social or economic mobility.[13] This is evident in the early history of Guadeloupe as mulatto classes assimilated linguistically to the French population to mark a higher status within the social hierarchy.

The acceptance of a norm is related to acquisition planning as well. One of the most successful ways that a polity realizes acquisition planning is through the educational system. Many studies have shown that when speakers are forced to use a specific language variety in school, it becomes associated with education and power, and speakers begin using it in speech situations outside of school. The process of a people continuously imposing a language variety on the speech situation domain of another variety marks the beginning of language shift—the result of which could be a relatively stable diglossic situation or the eventual death of the non-prestige variety.

This process of language shift is compounded by the fact that once one variety of language is granted social status, all other varieties are found lacking in some way when users in an asymmetrical power relation compare the two varieties.

---

[13] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991) articulates Haugen's ideas in an examination of nation building by means of print capital.

This discussion is particularly salient to the history of Guadeloupe, where in addition to French people use Guadeloupean Creole.[14] Historically, Guadeloupean Creole has been suppressed by political agendas aiming to stigmatize use in both public and private domains, and only in the past several decades have Guadeloupeans celebrated their language on a global stage with pride as a way to both articulate difference from French indexes and as a way to align themselves with other French-based creole speakers in the Caribbean.

To language users in a linguistic community that has undergone the process of creolization, language use is a particularly charged site for the affirmation of identity, as the process of creolization is traumatic.

The first stage in the development of a creole language is a pidgin language. A pidgin is a contact language that features reduced grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, a pidgin has no native users. Pidgins have developed in trade and other contact situations, but in the case of most Caribbean creoles such as Guadeloupean Creole, they developed within the context of the slave trade and in plantation societies.

Once enough people use a pidgin language, and new generations of users acquire the language through informal intergenerational transmission, users repair the simplifications inherent in the pidgin as they expand the vocabularies and grammars. Scholars refer to this as the creolization process, and the cultural artifact of language can be a strong symbol of identification for a speech community that has undergone such a process.

Guadeloupe offers an example of a speech community that has moved through this complex process. It is worthwhile to note that although French is the "national" language, Creole is the "official" language and is used in the vast majority of speech situations. It is most

---

[14] It is customary to capitalize the word "Creole" when referring to a specific language such as Guadeloupean Creole or Haitian Creole, while using the lowercase version when referring to culture or language in a more general sense.

speakers' first language, and as a result of the recent push for standardization is now written and used in most every social situation—even at the highest levels of internal government. In this way Creole displaces the prestige language of French by usurping speech situations in which it has historically been the only acceptable language. Further, it is notable that artists use Guadeloupean Creole almost exclusively in the performance of compas, zouk, and gwo-ka music. However, it is important to keep in mind that the creolization process should be abstracted, and not just applied to language, as it is highly relevant to many forms of culture in the post-colonial world, including the Caribbean. The important literary movements of *Négritude*, *Créolité*, and *Antillanité* allow for a more sophisticated understanding of the use of non-French cultural markers as a form of resistance to French national ideology in Guadeloupe.

1.4   *NÉGRITUDE*, *ANTILLANITÉ*, AND *CRÉOLITÉ*

The histories of the islands in the Caribbean region have drastically different histories and as a result, have diverse cultural practices. Despite this, members of the community in which I work align themselves with the pan-Caribbean community in many ways. For instance, in the 2006 FIFA World Cup community members supported Brazil over France, claiming that they were more Brazilian than French. Not until Brazil's elimination did allegiance switch to the French squad. At the community restaurant the proprietors, Tido and Muriel, are reggae fans and play Bob Marley continuously. The walls of their restaurant are covered with posters of Bob Marley and other reggae artist, and a large painting of the Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara. Muriel idolizes Guevara to such an extent that she has a tattoo of him on her upper chest.

Notably, Guevara devoted his life to addressing class struggles and asymmetric power relations similar to those that exist between Guadeloupe and France.

The conceptualization of sameness that the above examples describe is in part the result of the three literary movements of *Négritude*, *Antillanité*, and *Créolité*, which allowed for the imagination of different levels of community. This section will show how these three contributed to the conceptualization of community based upon links to Africa, Caribbean island culture, and common language and social practices, respectively.

Guadeloupe was designated as a French DOM in 1946. Departmentalization by France included the introduction of social services, most notably compulsory education—in French—which accounted for the increased spread of French ideology. As a growing number of Guadeloupeans were educated in French and inundated with Eurocentric ideas, a subversive element slowly gained momentum and people began to voice opinions about the inadequacy of a French intellectual paradigm to express a pan-Caribbean aesthetic.

The development of the concept of *Négritude* in the 1930s was monumental, as it raised awareness among communities of the African diaspora of the paradox inherent in colonial and post-colonial ideology—that the supposed altruistic concerns of Guadeloupean development were paramount to the French government. Developed by the Martinican poet Aimé César, the future Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, and the French-Guianan poet Léon-Gontran Damas, the *Négritude* movement aggressively rejected French colonialism and political hegemony by conceptualizing a common heritage and identity among emancipated slaves and their descendants.

The *Négritude* movement stressed the formation of a collective consciousness based upon African heritage. Implicit in the ideology of the movement was that all members shared a

quality of "sameness" because members could trace roots back to the African motherland. The conceptualization was profound and was extremely effective in countering political and intellectual hegemony, thus subverting the ideals of French national ideology and French-based identities.

Yet some thinkers found the *Négritude* movement inadequate in its ability to capture the true essence of an identity formed from both African elements and non-African elements. They felt that in some way, the movement discounted the cultural syncretism found in the Caribbean cultural artifacts with which they identified. In the 1960s, the Martinican writer Edouard Glissant helped develop the notion of *Antillanité*. This line of thought stressed the importance of diversity specifically within the pan-Caribbean context, and further advanced the ideology of Guadeloupe's identity as being distinct from, rather than encompassed by, that of France. According to René Ménil, West Indian culture is:

> neither African nor Chinese, nor Indian, nor even French, but ultimately West Indian. Our culture is West Indian since, in the course of history, it has brought together and combined in an original syncretism all these elements derived from the four corners of the earth, without being any one of those elements in particular.[15]

By aligning Guadeloupe's interests with the ethnically diverse pan-Caribbean community in the Lesser Antilles, intellectuals working within the framework of *Antillanité* achieved a further level of conceptual separation from France.

In the early 1980s, the Martinican writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant developed the *Créolité* literary movement as a way to further articulate the uniqueness of the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity found in the French Caribbean. This

---

[15] Richard Burton, "KI MOUN NOU YE? The Idea of Difference in Contemporary French West Indian Thought," *New West Indian Guide* 67 (1993): 14. Burton uses the encompassing term "West Indies" which includes the former Caribbean colonies of the British West Indies, the French West Indies, the Dutch West Indies, and the Spanish West Indies. This group of colonies is not to be confused with former colonies in the East Indies.

16

movement stressed that a shared African heritage was crucial to a creole identity, while simultaneously championing the uniqueness of an identity formed through *le métissage*, or mixed ethnicity. Literally, "half-breed" or "half-cast", planters referred to creole populations including, and not limited to, mulattoes as *métis* populations throughout the slave and post-abolition eras.

Writers in the *Créolité* movement aimed to de-center the notion that French culture and language functioned as markers of modernity within the Caribbean. Rather, they encouraged the use of creole languages in all social, academic, and literary contexts. The publication of their seminal work *Éloge de la créolité [In Praise of Creoleness]* in 1989 served as a proclamation of the uniqueness and beauty of a complex creole identity. The prologue to the work asserts:

> Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles. This will be for us an interior attitude—better, a vigilance, or even better, a sort of mental envelope in the middle of which our world will be built in the full consciousness of the outer world.[16]

This powerful statement acknowledges the rich cultural diversity in the Caribbean, and shows that members of the pan-Caribbean community asserted a new kind of identity—one based on an identity of *métissage* coupled with the privileging of Creole markers such as music and language.

All three of these movements had profound effects in Guadeloupe as the creole population was empowered with ammunition with which to assert its unique, non-French identity. It is within this context that the use of language in Guadeloupe is examined.

---

[16] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité [In Praise of Creoleness]*, trans. M. B. Taleb-Khyar (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 75.

1.5   LANGUAGE IN GUADELOUPE

Like other Caribbean creole languages, Guadeloupean Creole developed on the sugar plantations as a means of communication between masters and slaves, who themselves spoke numerous and diverse language varieties. Its grammar is based on a number of West African languages including Hausa, Mande, and Ebo languages, while the lexicon derives largely from French and the African languages of its first users. Guadeloupean Creole follows the phenomenon noted in other creoles whereby the grammar derives in large part from the non-prestige language (the substrate language), while the vocabulary derives in large part from the prestige language (the superstrate language).[17]   Extant examples of the creolization process include Swahili (or Kiswahili) and the Krio language of Sierra Leone. In the case of Swahili, the grammar is derived from (substrate) Bantu languages, while much of the vocabulary is derived from (superstrate) Arabic. In the case of Krio, the grammar is based upon (substrate) Twi and Yoruba, while the vocabulary is derived primarily from (superstrate) English.

Since the departmentalization of 1946 several generations have profited from the education system established in the DOM. At present, almost every child completes *lycée*,[18] and many continue their education by attending either university or a technical school.

Education is in French, although primary schools provide instruction in Creole until children gain a level of comfort with the French language. Students learn French grammar, spelling, and vocabulary at an early age, and many parents are proactive in promoting their children's French education in the home. Although these parents value the importance of Creole

---

[17] See John Victor Singler, "The Influence of African Languages on Pidgins and Creoles." in *Current Approaches to African Linguistics (vol.2)*, ed. J. Kaye et al., (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1983), 65-77.
[18] *Lycée* is the French system's equivalent of high school. Graduation occurs in the 13th year of formal education.

18

as a marker of identity, encouraging their children's acquisition of French at a young age is a pragmatic choice that may potentially open academic and professional doors in the future, both at home and abroad.

Thus, one could classify most Guadeloupeans as bilingual in French and Creole. Yet the situation is problematized by the fact that Guadeloupean Creole is a French-based language. As most speakers are also fluent in French, this situation results in a blurring of the boundaries between which elements of a speech event are actually Creole, which elements constitute code-switching between the languages, and which elements are Creolized versions of French intended as an index solely within particular speech events.[19]

This type of linguistic complexity that features borrowing between two languages that have been in prolonged contact is noted in other languages that began as pidgins, such as Tok Pisin (spoken in Papua New Guinea), among others. Guilbault refers to this linguistic relation as interlectal.[20] That is, except in extreme situations, any speech event in Guadeloupe is neither fully Creole nor fully French. Rather, specific speech events represent nodes on a continuum with idealized extremes—hypothetical "pure" French on one end and hypothetical "pure" Creole on the other.

When a Guadeloupean speaker uses Guadeloupean Creole, a multi-faceted identity is asserted—at some times and in some ways French; and at other times and in other ways not

---

[19] See Penelope Eckert, "The Paradox of National Language Movements," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 4 (1983): 289-300 for a discussion of speech events, language shift, and diglossia in France, and Schnepel (2004) for a discussion of French and Guadeloupean Creole in Guadeloupe. Code-switching refers to the phenomenon in which bilinguals use more than one language or variety of languages in a single speech event following grammatical and syntactical rules. The phenomenon of creolizing the French version of a noun might include changing the article of a masculine noun to "la" as Guadeloupean Creole does not have gendered classes of nouns. Orthography falls into the second phenomenon as well, as many choose to write French using the phonetically-based Creole writing system.

[20] Jocelyne Guilbault, "Créolité and the New Cultural Politics of Difference in Popular Music of the French West Indies," *Black Music Research Journal* 14 (1994): 161-178. The concept of interlectality will be explored in the following section.

French. Moreover, the location of the individual on the hypothetical continuum of identity is liable to change from moment to moment as the speech event continues. Matters are complicated further as Guadeloupeans assert a larger-encompassing, pan-Caribbean identity through language, orthography,[21] common musical traditions, and a shared perception of "sameness" as a result of Caribbean slavery and colonization. This collective consciousness of "sameness" is not problematized by the ethnic diversity present in Guadeloupe, and in the Caribbean, in general. Rather, among all this ethnic diversity, Guadeloupeans as a whole are able to identify as a group of ethnically displaced people based in part on a shared language—Guadeloupean Creole.

The majority of Guadeloupeans, however, are conflicted with regard to the issue of Guadeloupean independence from France. The severing of ties would result in an economic crisis as France subsidizes Guadeloupe heavily, and most of the educated classes turn to the mainland for higher education. In addition, France offers many opportunities for Guadeloupeans to increase social and economic mobility through travel and education as European Union citizens. Thus, a complete denial of French citizenship would amount to the refusal of financial opportunities afforded by alignment with France.[22]

In this sense, Guadeloupe offers a case study of how French nationalist ideology is subverted in the hidden transcripts that assert localized identity covertly. In the public transcripts, however, Guadeloupeans acquiesce by advocating a pro-French policy in specific contexts. The second chapter of this thesis explores the ways that community members on the

---

[21] Bambi B. Schieffelin and Rachel Charlier Doucet, "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics and Orthographic Choice," in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 285-316 and Schnepel (2004) examine the debates concerning orthographic representation of Haitian and Guadeloupean Creole, respectively. Currently, both varieties use similar systems.
[22] Yet there was a push for independence that began in the 1960s that failed, but is the root of the pervasive assertions of non-French identity today. Schnepel (2004) details this struggle. The crippling 44-day general strike from January 19 to March 5, 2009 demonstrated the extent to which Guadeloupe's economy relies on French capital.

Guadeloupean island of Terre-de-Bas assert a non-French identity through music and language.

However, a French identity is privileged when community members apply for professional

positions in France. An example of this is that Guadeloupeans can now take the language

section of the *baccalauréat*, the French equivalent of an American high-school diploma, in

Guadeloupean Creole. Many prefer, however, to demonstrate proficiency in a "prestige"

language such as English or Spanish, claiming that possible professional posts and academic

opportunities would not be available to them if they passed the Creole exam. In this way, and

because of the institutions currently in place, the French language is still a hegemonic force and

is perceived as a marker of modernity in the French Antilles, despite the efforts of the *Créolité*

movement.

While some are willing to support Guadeloupean Creole and a separate national identity

in a covert manner, others are more overt in their semiotic linking of Guadeloupean Creole and

nationalist movements. Anthropological linguist Ellen Schnepel states that:

> focusing on Creole as emblem and symbol *par excellence* of the nationalist cause, as
> conduit and container of its anticolonialist ideology, Guadeloupean militants framed a
> discourse that elevated Creole while simultaneously disparaging an earlier generation in
> the 50s and 60s who were involved in the study of Creole, then still defined as a quaint
> patois.[23]

Although not all Guadeloupeans are as extreme in their views as the group that Schnepel

describes, the fact remains that by asserting cultural distinction from the French through Creole,

Guadeloupeans do perform differences and create an ideological level of separation from France.

It is within this context that Guilbault, Berrian, and Bilby examine the ways that Guadeloupeans

---

[23] Schnepel 2004: 4-5.

have used music and language to contest a French identity through the assertion of a pan-Caribbean identity as well as more localized layers of identity.[24]

1.6   MUSIC AND LANGUAGE AND INTERLECTALITY IN GUADELOUPE

Ethnomusicologist Jocelyne Guilbault introduces the notion of interlectality:

> The expression "interlectal forms" is used by Martinician linguist Jean Bernabé to refer to the specific forms of language that have emerged in Martinique and Guadeloupe from speaking both Creole and French and that are characterized by being neither French nor Creole but a mixture of the two. Depending on whether French or Creole dominates in the mixture, these forms of language are designated as "français créolisé" or "créole francisé."[25]

Bernabé introduced the notion of interlectality as a tool for understanding linguistic phenomena in Guadeloupe and Martinique, and Guilbault applies it to the musical form of zouk in the Caribbean region. She argues that the phenomenon of interlectality can be understood as a pan-Caribbean marker—especially within the context of music. The resultant syncretism between Caribbean musics that is found in zouk is precisely what the *Créolité* movement championed as symbolic of the complexity of a pan-Caribbean identity and culture. Guilbault notes that:

> Zouk is in fact the perfect example of an intricate process of *métissage* at many levels. At a musical level, the elements of zouk are varied, complex, and embody a multitude of influences.[26]

Guilbault's work documents the presence of formal musical characteristics in zouk that are linked most strongly with elements found in the music of Guadeloupe, Haiti, Dominica, and

---

[24] For a discussion of the social processes necessary for the formation of a group consciousness that the *Négritude*, *Créolité*, and *Antillanité* movements asserted see Anderson (1991).
[25] Guilbault 1994: 166.
[26] Guilbault 1994:166.

Martinique, as well as other countries. Guilbault argues further that through various forms of mass mediation, consumers use zouk to actively assert and elevate a pan-Caribbean cultural conceptualization both within the Caribbean and abroad. Thus, the consumption of zouk music is an extremely effective strategy in the negotiation of identity for those living abroad whose consumption of zouk operates within the realm of nostalgia.[27] She notes that:

> [z]ouk is an "interlectal" form par excellence, representing neither "pure" African nor European traditions. But, unlike interlectal Creole, zouk has acquired both a local status and worldwide recognition. In the focus of media attention in the Caribbean and abroad over the past decade, zouk has been, more than any other expressive form in the French West Indies, the vantage point from which Créolité has been sought, defined, and negotiated.[28]

The work of literary theorist Brenda Berrian complements these assertions. Whereas Guilbault focuses on an examination of the musical elements in zouk aided by the notion of interlectality, Berrian comes to similar conclusions through a textual analysis of lyrics in zouk music. In her work *Awakening Spaces*, Berrian identifies seven sites for the contestation of French hegemony through the formation of a pan-Caribbean identity in song and language. Berrian devotes chapters to the exploration of songs of childhood and exile: Creole in the music of Kassav'; women's subversive songs; socio-politically charged songs; mass mediation and audience reception; urban music; and rhythm and gwo-ka music.

The chapters on childhood and exile songs, the use of Creole by the band Kassav', and rhythm and gwo-ka music are particularly convincing cases. In the first of these chapters, Berrian examines the production of zouk by the Martinican group Malavoi. Through a textual analysis of lyrics, she shows that the musicians forge a pan-Caribbean identity in the minds of

[27] Brenda Berrian, *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Songs, Music, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) refers to Caribbean individuals living abroad, including those living in France, as living in exile.

[28] Guilbault 1994: 166. This line of reasoning can be extended to the current study in which musical groups in Terre-de-Bas disseminate interlectal music and help to create a sense of community that spans across the Caribbean.

Caribbean consumers in France by "nostalgically depict[ing] childhood and exile while moving in and out of the geographies of Martinique and France."[29] Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Martinique and Guadeloupe in which consumers interpreted the lyrics of several songs, Berrian shows that songs that reference the sea, palm trees, fishing, the sun, island life, and a number of other Caribbean markers, create a sense of nostalgia in consumers both within the Caribbean and abroad, which she further asserts is a form of exile or geographic and cultural dislocation. These songs index a pan-Caribbean aesthetic and help in the formation of a pan-Caribbean identity that is distinct from a French national and cultural identity. By using the group Malavoi as an example, Berrian asserts that through lyrics that index geography and childhood, Caribbean musicians and lyricists in general diminish the cultural fragmentation present in the Caribbean in the service of constructing an imagined pan-Caribbean identity.[30]

Another important aspect of Berrian's argument centers on the use of Guadeloupean Creole in the music of Kassav', the most celebrated group of performers within the highly popular genre of zouk music. In an overt display of non-French cultural markers, Kassav's use of distinctly non-French language and music asserts and empowers Caribbean consumers by elevating the status of Creole. She adds that:

> Guadeloupeans advocate Creole as a political banner. After centuries of being forbidden from speaking Creole in school, in other formal sectors, and in some "respectable" homes, French Caribbean people are now proud to speak Creole partially due to the impact of Kassav's zouk music.[31]

In this way the use of Creole in Kassav's music contributes to and helps shape the discourse asserting a pan-Caribbean identity. Further, the use of Creole as a strategy in the ideological separation from France is highly effective for two reasons; on one level, the use of

---

[29] Berrian 2000: 16.
[30] Berrian 2000: 31.
[31] Berrian 2000: 39.

Creole resists the French policy of wholesale cultural and linguistic assimilation, while on another level, the use of Creole stresses the existence of a pan-Caribbean community through the mutual intelligibility of Caribbean creoles.[32] This strategy also mobilizes the same linguistic ideology that proved fundamental in the conceptualization of France and other European nation-states—that "having" a unique language proves and justifies the existence of a separate national, ethnic, or regional identity.[33]

Berrian asserts that the explicit use of Creole is imperative in this form of resistance. By "pointing to Creole roots and identity, Kassav' and other groups—Taxikréol, Kwak, and Dissonance—empower their Guadeloupean and Martinican audiences to affirm an indigenous Caribbean cultural identity."[34]

Another strategy that Kassav' uses to challenge French hegemony is to assert the absurdity of a Eurocentric ideological paradigm within the Caribbean. Kassav' emphasizes that "community" and "nation" are arbitrary social abstractions that need not be respected. Rather, the prioritization of a pan-Caribbean aesthetic is a viable option to which music consumers should feel free to align themselves. In fact, "zouk negates the colonial acculturation that prioritizes French cultural elements, proving that *delving within* rather than outside one's own African ancestry and French Caribbean landscape provides the answer for the future."[35]

Thus, Guilbault and Berrian show that through the use of zouk music and Guadeloupean Creole Guadeloupeans subvert a French-based identity in their active alignment with others in

---

[32] To a large extent, the creoles of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica (which is a former British colony), and Haiti are all mutually intelligible.
[33] This strategy also invokes the logic of possessive individualism, thus the emphasis on the word "having" in this sentence. See Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976) for a discussion of the special role that language and language standardization played in the nationalization project in 19th and 20th century France.
[34] Berrian 2000: 41.
[35] Berrian 2000: 48, emphasis in original.

the pan-Caribbean community. Kenneth Bilby's articulation of a continuum of musical processes, in which artists move from one genre to the next, resonates with this notion of interlectality, and the formation of a pan-Caribbean aesthetic:

> Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Caribbean music is its great diversity. As with other cultural domains in the Caribbean, there is a bewildering range of forms, showing pronounced differences from region to region. This diversity challenges the very notion of presenting an all-embracing overview of Caribbean music, but I am convinced that most of these differing traditions *can* be accommodated within a general pan-Caribbean perspective, one that takes account of what they all share as well as what sets each one apart.[36]

Bilby's comments resonate with the work of Richard Handler. Notably, in the imagination of a Caribbean community, one has to account for homogeneity encompassing diversity in all cultural practices, including music.

As the following section will show, both compas music and carnival music performed and consumed in the Terre-de-Bas community represent unique sites of identity negotiation as both non-French and pan-Caribbean indexes are asserted in the negotiation and celebration of identity. Members of the community actively take part in a reversal of the power relation that has existed since colonization mediated by music exhibiting interlectal qualities.

---

[36] Kenneth M. Bilby, *The Caribbean as a Musical Region* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1985), 2, emphasis in original.

2.0 THE COMMUNITY OF PETITES ANSES, TERRE-DE-BAS

The first chapter of this thesis showed the extent to which music and language operate in the articulation of identity. Specifically, the project of shaping, standardizing, and promoting the French language both within France as well as in colonies such as Guadeloupe is one in which the French nation-state is heavily invested. The use of alternate languages such as Guadeloupean Creole amounts to an affirmation of a non-French identity and the subversion of an ideology of cultural assimilation.

The work of Guilbault and Berrian shows that music is a charged site for the contestation of French-based identity in the Caribbean. The consumption of zouk music continues to play an important role in community identity politics in the Caribbean region. Yet in the community of Terre-de-Bas the most widely consumed music is compas, a genre whose present incarnation is greatly influenced by the interlectal genre of zouk. Modern compas music is described by many of the musicians of Petites Anses as a stripped-down, sped-up version of zouk music. Thus, many of the arguments made by Guilbault and Berrian about zouk are applicable in an examination of the social work that compas performs. This chapter will draw on elements discussed in the previous chapter and examine the ways that music making on Terre-de-Bas is used in the articulation of both pan-Caribbean as well as localized forms of identity.

2.1   THE COMMUNITY

The eastern half of mainland Guadeloupe is flat as a result of tectonic action, while the western half is mountainous as a result of volcanic activity (*La Soufriére*).   The two halves of Guadeloupe are commonly referred to as "wings" due to the island's resemblance to a butterfly. The population of mainland Guadeloupe is approximately 405,000, much larger than the population of Les Saintes, which are located just to the south of the western wing of Guadeloupe. The archipelago of Les Saintes, is composed of two inhabited islands (Terre-de-Haut at 5.2 km^2 and roughly 1700 inhabitants, and Terre-de-Bas at 6.8 km^2 and roughly 1000 inhabitants) and several uninhabited islands. Photo 1.

Photo 1: Map of mainland Guadeloupe and Les Saintes. Terre-de-Bas is the large, western-most island in the archipelligo of Les Saintes.

Within Les Saintes, many community members perceive the community of Petites Anses on Terre-de-Bas as the carrier of some of the most "authentic" cultural traditions. Terre-de-Bas is a small island south of the mainland, and although it has had a history of European contact, the level and prolonged nature of contact was minor compared to the mainland. This is in part due to the mountainous nature of the island, and the relative difficulty one faced growing sugarcane or bananas on the steep slopes. In addition, the small size of the island would have made the large-scale cultivation of any crop impossible. Slaves were used on a smaller scale on Terre-de-Bas, most notably on the southern tip of the island where to this day one can explore the site on which large clay pots used in the purification of sugar were manufactured. In addition, slaves were used, as on mainland Guadeloupe, to cultivate bananas and sugarcane on the eastern part of the island. Community members report that slavery on Terre-de-Bas was very different than on large plantations. White planters and slaves reached a high degree of social interaction very early, intermarriage between groups was common, and a mulatto class emerged.

Terre-de-Bas has been known for centuries, as it is now, as a fishing village. With little external economy, French and Asian businesspersons have preferred to settle on the mainland or, more recently, on neighboring Terre-de-Haut. For these reasons, one finds fewer African cultural retentions on Les Saintes with respect to mainland Guadeloupe.

Within Les Saintes, members of Terre-de-Bas and Terre-de-Haut have a complex relationship with one another. As members of the two inhabited islands of Les Saintes, the communities identify with one another as Saintois. Yet their recent economic histories are quite different. Like many phenomena in world history, this is in part due to geography, as Terre-de-Haut's highest point features a peak from which an unobstructed 360-degree view of the surrounding sea and neighboring islands. The French built a lookout tower named *Le*

Chameau[37] on this spot, and a large military structure, Fort Napoleon, on the eastern portion of the island. Because of the longer exposure to the French, and the sheer number of French people who have called and continue to call Terre-de-Haut home, Terre-de-Haut has assimilated much more to French cultural indexes in relation to Terre-de-Bas. Moreover, Terre-de-Haut has embraced the tourism industry, while Terre-de-Bas has for the most part rejected tourism, opting instead to remain an island of fishermen. As a result, the communities on Terre-de-Bas occupy a sensitive space. At once they are stigmatized by mainland Guadeloupe owing to their French heritage, while they are stigmatized by Terre-de-Haut because of their African heritage.

The two islands in Les Saintes must work together in matters of political representation on mainland Guadeloupe, as a single official represents both islands. Because of this political structure, relations between residents of the two islands became heated following the most recent election in which a member of Terre-de-Bas prevailed over the incumbent, a member of Terre-de-Haut. As a result of the conflicts, several festivals which rotate annually between Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas that are venues for the consumption of music have been canceled or largely boycotted by members of the opposing communities on Terre-de-Bas and Terre-de-Haut.

Life on Terre-de-Bas is in large part dictated by the sun and the sea. Most community members are up before the sun rises so they can get the majority of their daily work done while it is still relatively cool. Fishermen are especially early risers, and usually work from 4 AM until 11 AM or longer. The rest of the day is used cleaning the catch of the day and maintaining fishing equipment. Even community members who have other jobs as their primary source of income, such as *Service Technique* workers, masons, carpenters, or ferry crewmen, often have small boats and supplement their earnings and their dinner tables with fishing.

---

[37] Literally, "the camel," due to its topographical resemblance to a camel's hump.

Most of the women on Terre-de-Bas are housewives and do odd jobs in the community. They vend homemade coco sorbet, make bottles of rum with fresh fruit, sew, or help care for the elderly. There are a few professional women on the island, however, who work in the Mayor's office in the school system.

There are three schools on Terre-de-Bas, a maternal school, an elementary school, and a middle school. Children attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and have a half day on Saturdays. Children must go to Terre-de-Haut or mainland Guadeloupe for high school, university, or education in a technical program.

During the heat of the afternoon the community of Petites Anses shuts down, and not a single person can be found wandering the streets. At this time people rest after the morning's work and prepare for the evening. In the late afternoon and early evening the community comes back to life and people gather at the town square, at the soccer field, at one of the local markets, or at Tido's, the bar and grill.

On the weekends and on holidays people make their way to l'Anse à Dos, the popular picnic area bordering the ocean. Radios blare, couples dance, kids jump off the pier, rum and beer flow freely, and the smell of grilled chicken and fried plantains lingers in the air. It is on these occasions that Melody Vice will frequently be found playing for the community, generally from noon until well after the sun has set, stopping only to eat and so community members can make announcements on the microphone.

Although live music is a common context for music consumption on Terre-de-Bas, such as performances at the town square and at l'Anse à Dos, community members also have access to music in other ways. I would like to briefly address mass mediation of recorded music in

Terre-de-Bas, as this is the way that community members consume music in much of their daily lives, and is the an important vector through which musicians are exposed to compas.

2.1.1 Mass Mediation of Music on Terre-de-Bas

Although the community of Terre-de-Bas has access to a number of Caribbean musical genres including biguine, zouk, merengue, and gwo-ka, among others, one of the most popular genres of music on the island is compas. Compas is a style of music that first appeared in Haiti to accompany festivals and Carnival celebrations, but is now consumed throughout the Caribbean and in larger cities in America, Canada, Europe, and Africa that are home to large Caribbean populations. The first generation of compas musicians drew heavily on Cuban music, adding a strong conga beat to a horn section and Haitian rhythms. This version of compas reached its peak in the 1960s. Modern compas features the electric guitar and bass, draws heavily from zouk, is played at a higher tempo, and features extended synthesizer solos, typically over a harmonic structure that alternates between tonic and subdominant harmonies. Production and consumption of this music is valued on Terre-de-Bas for two main reasons: it is fast dance music suitable for parties, and it affirms a connection to Haiti. Many community members have told me that they admire Haiti, another former French colony, and the site of the bloodiest and first successful revolution against the French in the Caribbean.

Carnival celebrations on Terre-de-Bas stress a pan-Caribbean identity by the similarity of music within carnival contexts (such as the music that Explosion plays in the current study) to music consumed in the everyday lives of the community. For the sake of the clarification of this point it is useful to know that community members on Terre-de-Bas acquire music in a number

of ways, the most common means is the radio. The community has access to several stations, the majority of which play music from a selection of Caribbean artists.

Another way of getting music is by buying compact discs on mainland Guadeloupe, which, at over twenty euros per disc, falls outside the means of most community members.

In the past several years the internet has been available on Terre-de-Bas. The youth gather several evenings per week at the internet café for the most part to play video games on the five terminals. However, several have become comfortable with file sharing programs and get a portion of their music from the internet. When I spoke to these adolescents and asked what they download, they responded that they like to download Haitian music. This interaction helps show the dominance of compas in the region.

Many community members also watch compas videos of their favorite artists on Youtube. In fact, this is the most common vector by which community musicians find new material to cover.

Another means of consuming music on Terre-de-Bas is through live performances by local artists, Melody Vice and Explosion.

Although the above strategies for acquiring music are diverse, the common feature is that the type of music being consumed is pan-Caribbean. That is, all the above music is of a pan-Caribbean musical style: it is fast, danceable, is synthesizer oriented (features similar synthesizer timbers and extended synthesizer solos), and lyrics are sung in local creoles but are for the most part mutually intelligible throughout the French-speaking Caribbean.

In the following sections, I will discuss two musical groups that subvert the French ideology of cultural assimilation through the performance of pan-Caribbean music in the community of Petites Anses on Terre-de-Bas. Particular importance will be placed upon the use

of Guadeloupean Creole in performance and various strategies that allow for localized forms of identity to be expressed through the performance of a regional musical genre. The musical ensembles follow: Melody Vice, a cover-band that plays radio hits for live audiences in Les Saintes and on mainland Guadeloupe; and Explosion, the community musicians that play for Carnival celebrations.

2.2   MELODY VICE

The most significant musical group in Petites Anses is Melody Vice, a band that specializes in the performance of popular music hits heard on the radio, but that specialized is the genre of compas. Within a local context, they are a highly successful cover band and perform at every local festival in Les Saintes. During periods of increased musical activity, including the summer and the carnival period, Melody Vice performs on a weekly basis, and sometimes more frequently.

Part of their success stems from their skillful reproduction of the dance hits that consumers hear on the radio—but in a live context. Although Melody Vice plays songs in the genres of zouk, reggae, and biguine, 90 percent of their repertory is drawn from the genre of compas, music that originated in Haiti, but is currently popular in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Dominica, among other areas. In this sense, Melody Vice serves as a vector through which pan-Caribbean music is disseminated and consumed, and a pan-Caribbean identity is affirmed. As a result, performances of Melody Vice represent a politics of cover songs, as a move towards a pan-Caribbean identity is favored within the smaller context of this island community. That is, the choice of which songs to incorporate into the band's repertoire constitutes a site in which

identity is articulated by choosing with whom the band and community members align themselves in a greater discourse. However, Melody Vice performances are also charged with symbolism that works to assert a more localized form of identity that privileges Terre-de-Bas. In this way, multiple layers of identity are negotiated within the context of Melody Vice performances.

2.2.1   Personnel

Melody Vice consists of three brothers, Christophe, Olivier, and Benji Petit. Christophe and Benji are the lead synthesizer players. Christophe, 27, is employed at the mayor's office in Petites Anses as the accountant. Christophe is the first brother to show an interest in music, and began playing the synthesizer at a young age, learning from a former member of Explosion, the community carnival band that this thesis will discuss in the following section. Christophe plays lead synthesizer and sings backup vocals. Benji, 19, recently graduated *lycée* in France and is currently studying business on mainland Guadeloupe, but returns to Petites Anses on weekends, for festivals, and during vacations. Benji is the primary lead vocalist for Melody Vice. Olivier, 24, works at the post office in Petites Anses. He plays all instruments but as of 2008 he had moved from the bass to the drum set to fill in for José Guillaume, a group member that recently quit the band. In other incarnations (and in practice sessions in which some group members are not present) Olivier has also played synthesizer. The brothers' parents are Saintois, and lived for many years in France while maintaining a home in Petites Anses. When they were younger, Christophe, Olivier, and Benji would spend the school year in France and return to Petites Anses during vacations. After having completed *lycée*, each brother in turn has returned to Petites

Anses rather than staying in France, as they all feel that Terre-de-Bas is their true home. Their parents retired in 2009 and now reside permanently in Petites Anses.

Bass guitar is played by the son of a *Service Technique* worker who joined the band in 2008 when the vacancy appeared that moved Olivier from bass to drums. Jordy Petit is 16, and in previous years he could be found hanging around the rehearsal space during practice sessions. Olivier mentioned to me that Jordy had shown interest in the band for several years and that when the bass-player position opened up the band asked if he wanted to join the group. Jordy does well in music classes at school, and is learning the Melody Vice repertory at a rapid rate thanks in part to Olivier's tutelage. During my visit in July 2008 I witnessed daily one-on-one practice sessions with Olivier and Jordy as the two tried to get the bass parts to songs right before the rest of the band would show up for the afternoon practice sessions.

Alain Cyril, 40, plays guitar for Melody Vice. He is from Terre-de-Bas, but currently lives on mainland Guadeloupe where he is employed by the post office. Like many Saintois who work and live on mainland Guadeloupe, Alain returns to Terre-de-Bas on the weekends, for festivals, and during vacations.

Alain's girlfriend is Caroline Ezelin, 40. Caroline is one of the vocalists for Melody Vice, and like Alain, she is employed by the post office on mainland Guadeloupe. She is Saintois and returns to Petites Anses on weekends, for festivals, and during vacations.

Caroline's brother, Richard Ezelin is a percussionist and vocalist for Melody Vice. Richard, 50, lives and works in Petites Anses, and is also the leader of the community carnival group, Explosion.

Mickel Celinen, 29, rounds out Melody Vice's percussion section and sings backup vocals. Mickel is a carpenter and mason and works and lives in Petites Anses.

The last member of Melody Vice is Frederick Vala, 40. Frederick maintains a house on mainland Guadeloupe, but is from Petites Anses and works in Petites Anses. Frederick manages Melody Vice, books gigs, takes care of logistics when the band travels, and operates the soundboard for during performances.

2.2.2 Rehearsal Space

Melody Vice's practice space is located at one end of Petites Anses in a community owned building. The community pays for the electricity that Melody Vice uses during practice sessions and during performances. Melody Vice is granted the practice space and use of electricity rent-free, which is extremely rare in Guadeloupe. Bands normally have to rent space from the community and pay the bills for electricity, but the community on Terre-de-Bas covers these costs in return for free concerts that Melody Vice offers throughout the year. In addition, the community is responsible for setting up and taking down the scaffolding stage on which Melody Vice performs during large festivals. The band is truly an emblem of the community as all community members are invested in performances.

2.2.3 Performance of Compas

At a performance that I attended on July 20, 2008, (Photo 2) Melody Vice played a number of songs including the ones listed in Table 1. Note that all of the bands that Melody Vice covered are of Haitian origin, although not all are currently based in Haiti.

The phenomenon whereby musicians live abroad yet still actively contribute to the discourse of Haitian music both within the Caribbean, as well as outside of the Caribbean speaks to the importance of compas as a pan-Caribbean symbol.

Photo 2: Melody Vice performance at l'Anse à Dos on July 20, 2008.

Carimi is a compas group currently based in New York. Krezi Mizik is a Haitian compas group that includes David Dupoux, co-founder of another renowned compas group, Konpa Kreyol. Ti-Kabzy is a compas group based in Montreal. Kreyol La is a compas group based in Haiti. Finally, T-Vice is a Haitian compas group based in Miami.

In addition to the songs listed in Table 1, songs in Melody Vice's repertoire include several other compas compositions. It is also noteworthy that the band's favorite artist is the Haitian compas group Djakout Mizik in part because of their music, but also because the

members of Djakout Mizik still live in Haiti, while most compas groups leave Haiti for the United States and Canada once they become famous.

Table 1: Melody Vice set list of July 20, 2008 performance.

Original Artist	Song Title
Carimi	Ayiti Bang-Bang
Krezi Mizik	Negosye
Ti-Kabzy	Relax
T-Vice	Tafia
T-Vice	Kompa Direct
T-Kabzy	Shaking Dadazz
T-Vice	Pedale Kompa
Kreyol La	Viktwa
Krezi Mizik	Patcheke

The following section will show how Melody Vice effectively operates within the regional musical genre of compass, cementing inter-Caribbean exchange to assert both localized as well as regional forms of identity.

2.2.4   Language and Local Forms of Identity in Performance

As the first chapter of this thesis demonstrated, the use of language in the context of performance is an important means by which identity is articulated. Through Melody Vice's performances, the loyalty to Guadeloupean Creole over the national language of French is asserted. Moreover, the overt celebration of Creole as an identity index subverts the language hierarchy in which French is the prestige language.

As noted by Berrian, the use of Creole as a strategy in the ideological separation from France is highly effective for two reasons; on one level, the use of Creole resists the French policy of wholesale cultural and linguistic assimilation, while on another level, the use of Creole stresses the existence of a pan-Caribbean community through the mutual intelligibility of Caribbean French-based creoles. What is more, in an interesting turn, this strategy mobilizes the same linguistic ideology of possessive individualism that proved fundamental in the conceptualization of France—that "having" a unique language proves and justifies the existence of a separate national, ethnic, or regional identity. In fact, within modern nationalization movements, the championing of a distinct language has been one of the most effective ways that a group can demonstrate difference publicly. In the context of musical performance, Melody Vice's concerts affirm non-French language use and assert a similarity with other Creole users in the Caribbean.

In conversations many community members have spoken of the strong link between compas and Creole. Perhaps emphasizing this point most strongly, Christophe has noted that compas with French lyrics would not work, and it certainly would not sound right. The fact that Melody Vice relies heavily on Creole in the performance of compas is underlined by the strategies taken to deal with lyrics in Haitian Creole. As noted earlier, Haitian Creole and Guadeloupean Creole are mutually intelligible to a large extent. There are certain phrases in songs that Melody vice covers, however, that they do not understand. In these cases they will usually sing the words as in the original recording, not understanding their meaning. Alternatively, they will substitute lyrics in Guadeloupean Creole that maintain the general sense of the song for the unintelligible phrases. In either case, Melody Vice affirms the strong connection between compas and Caribbean creole languages.

Berrian's elucidation of the importance of nostalgic markers in zouk music is applicable in this context as well, and it is noteworthy that the songs in the Melody Vice's repertory address the same nostalgic markers and landscapes that Berrian mentions. Symbols such as the sea, palm trees, fishing, dancing, and rum are crucial in the formation of a pan-Caribbean identity within the localized context of Terre-de-Bas. One example of this is Melody Vice's choice to cover the T-Vice song "Tafia." Tafia is a spirit made from second-rate sugar cane to which molasses is added to increase the content of fermentable sugars. This cheap rum is made throughout the West Indies and harkens back to the days of plantation-driven economies. Within this context, Tafia is understood as a cultural marker that is common throughout the Caribbean. Indexes such as this provide another level of sameness in the maintenance of a collective consciousness of a pan-Caribbean community and are recognized and sought by consumers both in the community of Petites Anses, and in the larger Caribbean community—as well as community members in exile (to use Berrian's term for those living abroad).

Another noteworthy move by the band is their alignment with other Caribbean musicians through the choice of band names. One of the most celebrated compas groups is T-Vice, a Haitian band based in Miami that revolutionized the compas music scene. It is generally accepted that T-Vice are the founders of "new" compas. Two sons of Robert Martino, the renowned Haitian guitarist and member of the classic compas band Top Vice, together founded T-Vice. Thus, in addition to covering several of these two bands' songs, Melody Vice has aligned itself with the Caribbean community both at home and abroad by the choice of their name, a link of which their fans are quite aware.

The idea that a band's name is a site of identity is seen in several of the bands that Melody Vice covers. The band name Konpa Kreyol translates as "Compas Creole," further

aligning the genre with Creole. Another example is the band Kreyol La, which translates as "The Creole." It is noteworthy that Melody Vice followed suit and used the site of band name to assert a similarity with other compas groups.

Photo 3: Crowd at July 20, 2008 Melody Vice performance at l'Anse à Dos.

Yet Melody Vice performs the social work of community-building on a local level as well. Photo 3. One example of localization is the addition of lyrics during the bridge section of their rendition of the T-Vice song "Pedale Kompa." In this instance the group sings "Melody Vice," "Terre-de-Bas," and repeats the name of the genre, "compas," as a way of appropriating the music and placing themselves, as members of the Petites Anses community, within the larger discourse of Caribbean compas music (Musical Example 1). At another point in the song the group repeats the names of individual group members as a further way of appropriating the song.

The lyrics include the names "Olivier," "Christophe," "Alain," "Caroline," "Mickel," "Jordy," "Richard," and "Frederick" (Musical Example 2).

In addition to asserting a localized identity through the inclusion of lyrics specific to Terre-de-Bas, Melody Vice's performance of the song "Pedale Kompa" asserts recognition of a larger Caribbean community. Lyrics champion that in addition to Terre-de-Bas, compas music is consumed in Miami, New York City, Paris, New Jersey, Canada, and Côte d'Ivoire (Musical Example 3). The lyrics include the line "Pedale kompa pou nou monté plus haut," which translates as "playing compas takes us higher," signifying the Melody Vice's engagement with the discourse relating to compas music.

In another example, while performing the T-Vice song "Tafia," the group makes modifications as a way to appropriate the song as a form of local cultural identity. During this section Benji, the lead singer, again injects the names of band members as well as the names of friends who are dancing in front of the stage. Included are the names "Christophe," "Alain," "Jean-Bordé," "Caroline," "Mickel," "Richard," "Thierry," and the group name "Melody Vice," as well as the phrase "tourné aux Saintes" (a visit of Les Saintes). Again, through the invocation of local cultural signifiers, Melody Vice articulates and maintains a localized form of identity within the broader sphere of pan-Caribbean compas (Musical Example 4).

An important aspect of shared a Caribbean tradition in which Melody Vice operates is the phenomenon whereby performers blur the boundary between music consumers and producers. In his summary of pan-Caribbean musical characteristics, Bilby addresses the phenomenon of participation by noting that:

> one of the most salient features of Caribbean musical life is the collective nature of most music and dance performances. In most traditional settings, there is no division of participants into passive audience and active performers. To be sure, there are

specialized roles…but all participants have the opportunity to contribute in some capacity.[38]

The participatory aspect of Melody Vice performances is noteworthy. Christophe has mentioned that the crowd listens for directions in songs, telling them to dance, clap, raise their hands, and jump, among other verbal cues.

Photo 4: Community barbeque at the town square on June 24, 2007. At this informal concert Melody Vice played for several hours and audience members took turns singing particular songs. Pictured are community members Aubin, Girard, and Serge.

Moreover, Melody Vice encourages audience members to sing along at all their performances, and they have an unusually liberal "open-microphone" policy while covering popular songs at smaller gatherings. Photo 4.

---

[38] Bilby, 1985: 21.

It is noteworthy that in the construction of a pan-Caribbean identity, the use of compas is effective because of its interlectal nature. The genre emerged as a result of influences from zouk, meringue, reggae, rumba, and rock, seamlessly woven together to fabricate a genre capable of representing the region as a whole.

2.3   EXPLOSION

There is a fair amount of overlap between the core personnel of Explosion and Melody Vice, but the context of the performances makes a distinction between the two groups clear. Photo5.

Photo 5: Explosion performance on July 18, 2008. The drummer in the center is Mikael, percussionist for Melody Vice.

In addition to the synthesizer players (Christophe and Benji), the bass player (Jordy), and the drummers (Olivier, Richard, and Mickel) of Melody Vice, the group Explosion is composed of 15 to 45 community members who play large drums slung across their shoulders at Carnival celebrations, in addition to several snare drums. The leader of Explosion, Richard, plays a snare drum and cymbal.

Membership has traditionally been exclusively male. The exception to this is Jerika Bocage, a 20-year-old woman who has been participating in the group since she was 11. Community members note that there is no strict rule regarding gender roles—that men play instruments and women dance—and do not regard Jerika's inversion of the usual gender roles as problematic. However, it is noteworthy that although gender roles within the performance of carnival music are up for contestation, carnival groups on mainland Guadeloupe usually consist of male musicians and female dancers.

The membership of Explosion rotates as people move in and out of the community, and fluctuates between 15 and 45 drummers.[39] Boys that show an interest in music begin participating in practice sessions at or around the age of ten, or even younger. Photo 6.

Celebration parades typically last several hours, in which a slow moving flatbed truck equipped with a PA (public address) system and carrying the group of core musicians moves throughout the community (sometimes the musicians prefer to walk behind the truck with their synthesizers resting on the truck bed). The drummers follow on foot and are followed by a group of female dancers. Photo 7. The rest of the community follows this parade, singing and either dancing or walking. Just as Melody Vice gatherings are phenomena that bring the whole

---

[39] The leader, or *Chef d'orchestre*, of Explosion is Richard, who is a percussionist for Melody Vice.

community together, Explosion performances collect community members to participate as the parade passes through the streets in front of peoples' homes.

Photo 6: Regis Ezelen, 6, with a toy drum at the July 18, 2008 Explosion performance. His parents purchased a full-sized snare drum for him in 2009. Olivier, drummer for Melody Vice, plays the bass.

Community members are invested in Explosion performances as the community purchases synthesizers for the group to use. Moreover, the community pays for the gas that is used in the truck used to carry musicians, instruments, the PA system, and the electric generator during the parade. In this way, much like Melody Vice, Explosion is truly emblematic of the community.

Photo 7: Explosion performance on July 18, 2008 in which the PA, generator, soundboard, and synthesizers are loaded on a moving truck. Performers include Benji (synthesizer, holding microphone), Christophe (synthesizer), and Jordy (bass).

In a line of thought that resonates with Berrian's notion of populations "in exile," Guilbault notes that Caribbean populations living outside of the Caribbean maintain a sense of identity partially through the consumption of Carnival music and by participating in Carnival celebrations:

> In the face of adversities such as racial discrimination and ethnic ghettoization, visible diasporic minorities have felt pressed to reinforce their collective identities so that they can fight for political spaces. For Caribbean population groups abroad, and for Trinidadians especially, the means of reinforcing this sense of collective identity has been through Carnival.[40]

In this sense, Carnival celebrations in Terre-de-Bas represent an assertion of localized identity as well as recognition of the way that they fit in with the larger pan-Caribbean

---

[40] Jocelyne Guilbault, *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Musics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 198.

community.   Participation in Carnival celebrations is such an important part of community members' lives, in fact, that many community members who work in France schedule their holiday vacations to coincide with the Carnival season.

Carnival celebrations in Petites Anses, and the concomitant Explosion performances assert a pan-Caribbean identity.   Even though the origins of Carnival celebrations lie in Europe, as the tradition is tied to the Catholic Church, the way that Carnival is celebrated in Guadeloupe is pan-Caribbean in nature.   The lyrics of songs deal with Caribbean subject matter, and the music played is heavily influenced by compas—one of the most celebrated pan-Caribbean signifiers.[41]   Moreover, the repertory of Explosion consists of songs sung in the unique Creole / French best understood through Guilbault's notion of linguistic interlectality.

Although Explosion performances help in the imagination of a pan-Caribbean community, their performances are special, as the band is one only of six carnival groups in all of Guadeloupe to base their performances on compas music.   The other Guadeloupean carnival groups whose repertories are based on compas are all based in and around the city of Basse Terre on mainland Guadeloupe.   In addition, like Melody Vice, Explosion is an emblem of the community as they are financially responsible for performances.

An example of the overlapping of repertory of Melody Vice and Explosion is heard in the following sound clips. Musical Example 5 is taken from the Melody Vice performance on July 20, 2008, while Musical Example 6 is taken from the Explosion performance on July 18, 2008. Note that the context of performance of Example 5 is a compas concert, while the context of performance of Example 6 is a carnival celebration, yet the songs are identical. In conversations Christophe has mentioned several times that the two groups draw from each other's repertory.

---

[41] See Guilbault (2007) for an analysis of the role of calypso in the carnival celebrations of Trinidad.

He notes that Explosion performances are essentially accelerated versions of snippets of compas songs strung together. Likewise, during Melody vice performances the band will routinely insert an Explosion song into the set list to keep the show "hot" for the audience. These examples show that the boundary between the repertories of Melody Vice and Explosion is liminal, that compas informs the repertory of carnival songs on Terre-de-Bas, and that multiple layers of identity are negotiated during Explosion performances.

Note that in Example 5 Benji engages the audience by directing the crowd at various moments to jump, raise their hands, scream, and sing. In this way, the boundary between performers and the audience is minimized. The synthesizer driven performance is typical of both Explosion performances as well as other Melody Vice breaks during compas songs. The song is essentially an alternation between the harmonies of F major and B-flat major, or the tonic and subdominant in the key of F major, and the framework consists of an alternation between synthesizer solos and sung dialogue.

Christophe introduces the framework for the main riff and his improvised solos at 0:02 and expands on the melodic ideas by adding pitch material until 1:12. At this point Benji's vocals are foregrounded as he engages the crowd by directing them to jump (sautez, 1:12) and to scream (criez, 1:24). At 1:30 Christophe takes a second solo, which begins with a flurry of sixteenth notes. Again Benji comes in with vocals and directs the crowd to sing along (tout moun chanté, 1:48). Christophe enters for a third solo break at 1:58 with a new counter melody that compliments his earlier solos. At 2:18 Christophe returns to material first heard in his initial solo and the band directs the crowd to raise their hands (levez les mains). Christophe returns to the fore at 2:34 for another solo exploring new areas, but relying on melodic ideas already

introduced. Benji's vocals return for the last time at 3:00, and Christophe enters with an outro solo at 3:15, again with a flurry of sixteenth notes.

Musical Example 5, essentially lifted from the Explosion repertoire, affirms a localized identity as community members and musicians celebrate the act of coming together as a community. The song harkens to previous performances in the context of carnival celebrations in the streets of the community, and is a public display of togetherness as the entire community dances, sings, jumps, and screams together, led by the group of musicians, many of whom are either family or neighbors to those in attendance.

Another instance of the assertion of localized identity during Explosion performance is heard in Musical Example 7. The lyrics follow:

Créole (C): Maman, Je veux ceux-ci
English (E): Mama, I want these

C: Maman, Je veux ceux-la
E: Mama, I want those

C: Fo pa mal livé
E: Don't have bad manners

C: Lolé, lolé, c'est Explosion
E: Dance, dance, it's Explosion!

C: Explosion ki pou fé nou dansé
E: Explosion makes us dance

C: Explosion ki pou fé nou crié
E: Explosion makes us shout

In this example, audience members and performers are interpellated as members of the Terre-de-Bas community through participation in Explosion's carnival celebration, and both localized forms of identity as well as a pan-Caribbean identity is affirmed.

51

A further example of identity negotiation at work during carnival celebrations is the song named "En Gwadada," one of the most popular carnival songs in Guadeloupe, whose lyrics follow:

Créole (C): En Gwadada c'est la bitin la cho
English (E): In Guadeloupe things are hot

C: En Gwadada c'est la bitin la haut
E: In Guadeloupe things are high

C: En Gwadada es zot paré pou nou mété pression
E: In Guadeloupe are you ready to get things going?

C: En Gwadada es zot paré pou nous fé zot tremblé
E: In Guadeloupe are you ready for us to make you shake?

C: En Gwadada si zot paré toute moune lévé len main
E: In Guadeloupe if you are ready everyone raise your hands

C: En Gwadada toute moune crié crié crié
E: In Guadeloupe everyone shout, shout, shout

This song is one of many Guadeloupean carnival songs written by the celebrated musician and cultural advocate and activist, Jean-Marc Ferdinand. "Gwadada" is a colloquialization referring to Guadeloupe, and in Explosion's rendition of the song, the phrase "En Terre-de-Bas" has replaced Ferdinand's original lyrics of "En Gwadada." Thus, Explosion's rendition of the song caries the connotations of celebrating Guadeloupe as a community, in addition to the assertion of a more localized Terre-de-Bas-based identity (Musical Example 8).

With respect to relational differences in identity formation and maintenance, the above musical example carries another level of meaning. "En Terre-de-Bas c'est la biten la haut" can be understood as an articulation of a distinct Saintois identity through word play that stresses Terre-de-Bas as different (and better, because it is where things are hot) than a Saintois identity

52

in which Terre-de-Haut is the home island. That is, if Terre-de-Bas is the location of the high

life, the implication is that Terre-de-Haut is the low life. This example of tongue-in-cheek banter

between members of Terre-de-Bas and Terre-de-Haut represents a form of social work in which

Saintois identities are formed and maintained; in this case the Terre-de-Bas-based layer of the

musicians' and participants' identities is stressed. The social space that Explosion constructs

through music and dance provides an avenue for voicing these ideas, and identities are formed in

a relational way as a collective consciousness of sameness permeates through the community.

Photo 8: Explosion drum with band name, a map of Les Saintes, and the words "Terre de Bas." Terre-de-bas is the island on the right, while Terre-de-Haut is the J-shaped island on the right.

When Explosion travels to mainland Guadeloupe to participate in group competitions, a large segment of the community attends to offer support and enjoy the spectacle of Guadeloupean celebration. Iconographically, Terre-de-Bas is asserted through the painted drums that are the most striking aspect of the performance because of their deep, driving rhythm. The drums are painted bright red with large white depictions in the shape of the island Terre-de-Bas, in addition to the words "Terre-de-Bas" on the front for all to see. Photo 8. Performance in these contexts constitutes a further space in which both localized forms of identity as well as Guadeloupean identity are stressed through the participation in Guadeloupean-based competitions.

Within the context of the Caribbean, Terre-de-Bas offers another example of a community in which it is impossible to divorce music from dance. In fact, the main quality in the evaluation of a song is its danceability. Carnival celebrations offer a space for the consumption and celebration of music and dance. Throughout a celebration every able-bodied individual follows the progressing mass of dancing bodies through the community, dancing in rhythm with everyone else. Guilbault and others have described carnival scenes and the concomitant dancing as a prime marker of Caribbeanness.

Explosion's performances offer community members another avenue for the consumption of pan-Caribbean music as pieces fall within the genre of compas. Explosion performances offer a further layer of conceptual separation from France, however, since the drum occupies a central role. In the same way that gwo-ka music is understood as resistance to European powers, the drum in Explosion performances is understood as an articulation of non-Frenchness. Thus, Explosion performances negotiate identity in all the ways that compas music

is seen to function, in addition to the rich significance of the carnival drum, which can be traced directly to gwo-ka.

2.3.1   Gwo-ka

Bilby notes that musical traditions of the Caribbean can be placed on a continuum according to relative amount of African and European influence.[42]   For example, Brazilian candomblé and Haitian vodou are heavily skewed towards the African end of the continuum. A brief overview of some musical characteristics of gwo-ka will prove fruitful in showing that resistance occurs in this largely African-derived tradition.

Guadeloupean gwo-ka is a dancing / drumming / singing manifestation that stems from African traditions, which has developed over the last 500 years. Interest in the musical practice waned the early part of the 20th-century, but the genre experienced a huge revival stemming from the nationalist-ethnic movement that was inspired by *Négritude* thinkers in the Caribbean.

Gwo-ka ensembles usually consist of from two to five lower pitched *boula* drums and one higher pitched *makyé* drum that acts as the leader by playing lead lines and giving aural cues to the rest of the ensemble. In addition, ensembles usually feature one or more gourd shakers. The seven principle rhythms are *léwòz*, *graj*, *woulé*, *toumblak*, *padjanbèl*, *menndé*, and *kaladja*, each corresponding to a fixed dance, although within the context of performance, the fixed dances act as a foundation for much improvised movement. Songs are call-and-response, in Creole, and address topical matters of the community in which the celebration occurs.

---

[42] Bilby (1985).

Scholars have noted that when discussing Guadeloupean identity with respect to music, gwo-ka is a rich cultural signifier.[43] Some have argued that Guadeloupeans on the mainland actively reject the pan-Caribbean genre of compas in favor of gwo-ka as a way to privilege an African-based Guadeloupean identity and separate themselves from the pan-Caribbean grouping. However, the tensions between gwo-ka and compas music on mainland Guadeloupe are not found in the community of Petites Anses, where both forms are used, but to celebrate different layers of identity.

There are several individuals on Terre-de-Bas who have familiarity with the seven gwo-ka rhythms, but there is no gwo-ka group on the island. To be sure, in the course of my fieldwork I have witnessed three *lewoz* celebrations. These traditional dancing and drumming celebrations that take place in Guadeloupe and Martinique have ties to the plantation, and are a main site for the production and consumption of gwo-ka music. However, it is noteworthy that in all three cases the troupe of gwo-ka musicians and dancers were brought into the community from the mainland.[44]

The focus on compas music in the present study is not an attempt to discount the importance of gwo-ka in the maintenance of Guadeloupean identity. Rather, it is an examination of the music that community members themselves produce and consume. As gwo-ka is consumed in a live context on Terre-de-Bas only when brought in from outside, this study

---

[43] Guilbault (1993), Berrian (2000), Schnepel (2004), and Peter Manual, *Caribbean Currents: From Rumba to Reggae* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). The etymology of gwo-ka stems from the Creolized orthography and pronunciation of the French "gros cas" for "large drum." Drums were largely forbidden in plantation communities, so the playing of gwo-ka is a way of publicly inverting the hierarchy of power.
[44] I have been told by some community members on Terre-de-Bas that it is a shame that gwo-ka music is not as appreciated in Petites Anses as on mainland Guadeloupe, showing that identity negotiation with respect to music is a heterogeneous phenomenon even within the localized context of Petites Anses. To remedy this situation, a few individuals started offering gwo-ka lessons at the community center in 2008.

privileges the music that is heard at daily practice sessions, weekend parties, and Carnival celebrations—that is, music that is created by community members for community members.

3.0   CONCLUSION

Although community members of Terre-de-Bas signify and articulate multiple layers of identity through the performance and consumption of music, it should be noted that the localized layer signified in musical production is privileged. In musical performances on Terre-de-Bas music works in conjunction with conceptualizations of identity in a complex process of negotiation.

When I first became acquainted with the community, I was tripped up several times when people would speak of Guadeloupe as another place. "But we are in Guadeloupe," I would respond, as I considered the entire collection of islands, including Terre-de-Bas, as Guadeloupe. "No," they would counter, "this is Terre-de-Bas. Guadeloupe is over there," pointing to the mainland. Within a larger dialogue community members do consider themselves pan-Caribbean, Guadeloupean, or even Saintois. Yet even as they identify with pan-Caribbean symbols, community members assert the localized aspect of their identity most strongly.

An example of Terre-de-Bas community members acting counter to mainland Guadeloupeans is seen in the events of January-March 2009. Mainland Guadeloupe was the site of several strikes and riots, as citizens protested the low wages France paid civil servants. Prices for goods in Guadeloupe are significantly higher than in France, while wages are lower, in addition to the 20% unemployment rate. Several people were injured in the riots and at least one union leader, Jacques Bino, was shot dead. As a result of the turmoil Carnival celebrations were canceled.

Yet on Terre-de-Bas relatively little had changed. In a small insular community where most everyone is a relative or acquaintance, the *Service Technique* (the local facilities management organization) did not allow garbage to pile up, as was the case on mainland Guadeloupe. The community did observe three days of the general strike to show support for the cause, but were not fully invested in the strike as was seen on mainland Guadeloupe. Moreover, Terre-de-Bas did not cancel Carnival celebrations. Rather, Explosion performed and the community celebrated as usual, despite the unrest on the mainland. These events show that while the community of Terre-de-Bas does assert a regional pan-Caribbean identity by use and valuation of the pan-Caribbean signifiers, they also stress the importance of Terre-de-Bas based identity, using music and language to perform the work of community building on a local level.

The two musical traditions in Petites Anses described in this thesis share several common features. One is the fact that the music of these manifestations is embedded within a larger socio-cultural process. The music of Explosion is consumed during designated festive periods according to the annual calendar such as Christmas, weeks leading up to Lent (Mardi Gras), and the beginning of summer. Melody Vice plays at the numerous island festivals, such as birthdays, island parties, and fishermen festivals, among others.

Guilbault's application of interlectality is fruitful within the Terre-de-Bas context. The music that Melody Vice and Explosion perform stresses common cultural practices—the consumption of compas music and the participation in Carnival celebrations.

The use of language is an important assertion of difference in Terre-de-Bas. The privileging of Creole over the prestige language represents a subversion of the power structure that places French in the dominant position. In addition, lyrics that refer to pan-Caribbean

symbols such as the sun, sea, fishing, and island life in general work to authenticate and articulate the category of "pan-Caribbean" and a Caribbean sensibility.

In these ways, the community of Petites Anses offers a localized perspective of the ways that Guadeloupeans negotiate multiple layers of identity by asserting both pan-Caribbean identities, as well as localized identities through music and language.

This thesis contributes to the field of ethnomusicology in several ways. First, the community of Petites Anses has never been researched. It is easy to lump the community together with other studies of Guadeloupe, but this thesis shows that in fact, members of Petites Anses often distinguish themselves from the population living on the mainland. This thesis also adds to the growing body of work that documents the complexity of the Caribbean, providing a more nuanced understanding of the region as a whole. In addition, this thesis provides another account of the ways that identity politics are negotiated via musical expression. There are groups in Les Saintes and on mainland Guadeloupe that advocate independence from France, while other groups assert that as an independent nation Guadeloupe could not be self sufficient. Much like other geographic areas in which there exists an asymmetrical power relation, this thesis describes a community that is economically dependant on outside subsidizations and is trying to negotiate an "in between" space in which localized and national identity coexist. Due to the unique positioning of Terre-de-Bas with respect to both France and mainland Guadeloupe, this thesis contributes to post-colonial discourse.

In this thesis, I have shown that the negotiation and celebration of non-French cultural markers in both music and language inform an understanding of the complex identity politics at play in Petites Anses. Sometimes a French identity is asserted—especially when it comes to economic subsidization and social mobility through access to education and other resources. The

music of Melody Vice and Explosion, however, offer spaces in which pan-Caribbean-,
Guadeloupean-, Saintois-, and Terre-de-Bas-based identities are articulated, negotiated,
accommodated, resisted, and celebrated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abenon, Lucien-René. *Petit histoire de la Guadeloupe*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy." *Public Culture* 2 (1990): 1-24.

Averill, George. *A Day For the Hunter A Day For the Prey: Popular Music in Haiti*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Banard, E. M. *Herder on Nationality, Humanity and History*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.

Bebel-Gisler, Dany. *La langue créole force jugulée: Étude socio-linguistic des rapports de force entre le créole et le français aux Antilles*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1981.

Bernabé, Jean, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. *Éloge de la créolité [In Praise of Creoleness]*, trans. M. B. Taleb-Khyar. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

Berrian, Brenda F. *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Song, Music, and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Bilby, Kenneth M. *The Caribbean as a Musical Region*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1985.

Bonniol, Jean-Luc. *Terre-de-Haut des Saintes: Contraintes insulaures et particularisme ethnique dans la Caraïbe*. Paris: Les Èditions Caribéennes, 1980.

Braflan-Trobo, Patricia. *Conflicts sociaux en Guadeloupe: Histoire, identité et culture dans les grèves en Guadeloupe*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007.

Burton, Richard. "KI MOUN NOU YE? The Idea of Difference in Contemporary French West Indian Thought." *New West Indian Guide* 67 (1993): 5-32.

Cérol, Marie-Josée. "What History Tells Us About the Development of Creole in Guadeloupe." *New West Indian Guide* 66 (1992): 61-76.

Des Hôtels et des Îles. http://www.deshotelsetdesiles.com/images/interface/us/guadeloupe-map.jpg (accessed April 16, 2009).

Eckert, Penelope. "The Paradox of National Language Movements." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 4 (1983): 289-300.

Edwards, John. *Language, Society, and Identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.

Erlmann, Veit. "The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s." *Public Culture* 8 (1996): 467-487.

Fishman, Joshua A. *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1972.

Fox, Aaron A. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Gade, Daniel W. "Language, Identity, and the Scriptorial Landscape in Quebec and Catalonia." *The Geographical Review* 93 (2003): 429-448.

Glissant, Édouard and Patrick Chamoiseau. *Quand les murs tombent: L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* Paris: Éditions Galaade, 2007.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Goeffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

Grenier, Line and Jocelyne Guilbault. "Créolité and Francophonie in Music: Socio-Musical Repositioning Where it Matters." *Cultural Studies* 11 (1997): 207-234.

Guilbault, Jocelyne. "Créolité and the New Cultural Politics of Difference in Popular Music of the French West-Indies." *Black Music Research Journal* 14 (1994): 164-178.

_____. *Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics of Trinidad's Carnival Musics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

_____. *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Handler, Richard. *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Haugen, Einar. *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Hearn, Lafcadio. *Gombo Zhèbes: Petite dictionnaire des proverbs créoles*. Le Gosier, Guadeloupe: Caret, 1998.

Herskovits, Melville. *The Myth of the Negro Past*. New York: Harper Brothers, 1941.

Jackson, Jean. "Language Identity of the Colombian Vaupes Indians," In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, edited by R. Bauman and J. Sherzer, 50-64. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Manuel, Peter. *Caribbean Currents: From Rumba to Reggae*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Maurer, Bill. "Fact and Fetish in Creolization Studies: Herskovits and the Problem of Induction, or, Guinea Coast, 1593." *New West Indian Guide* 76 (2002): 5-22.

Meintjes, Louise. *Sound of Africa! Making Music in a South African Studio*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Morrison, Anthea. "'Americanité' or 'Antillanité'? Changing Perspectives on Identity in Post Négritude Francophone Caribbean Poetry." *New West Indian Guide* 67 (1993): 33-45.

Negrit, Frédéric. *Musique et immigration dans la société Antillaise*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007.

Peron, Patrick. *Petit histoire de Terre de Haut: Ile française d'Amérique*. Paris: Synchro Production, 2003.

Pinker, Steven. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature.* New York: Viking, 2002.

Prudent, Lambert-Félix. *Des baragouins à la langue antillaise*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1999.

Rath, Richard Cullen. "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (1993): 700-726.

Schieffelin, Bambi B. and Rachel Charlier Doucet. "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics and Orthographic Choice." In *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, edited by Bambi B. Schieffelin et al., 285-316. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Schnepel, Ellen, M. *In Search of a National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004.

Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Singler, John Victor. "The Influence of African Languages on Pidgins and Creoles." In *Current Approaches to African Linguistics (vol.2)*, edited by J. Kaye et al., 65-77. Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1983.

Slobin, Mark. "Micromusics of the West: A Comparative Approach." *Ethnomusicology* 36 (1992): 1-87.

Smith, Anthony D. *Theories of Nationalism*. London: Duckworth, 1971.

Spencer, John. "Colonial Language Policies and Their Legacies." In *Current Trends in Linguistics, Vol. VII: Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by T.A. Sebeok, 537-547. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

Sutton, Paul. "Caribbean Development: An Overview." *New West Indian Guide* 80 (2006): 45-62.

Tourneux, Henry and Maurice Barbotin. *Dictionnaire pratique du créole de Guadeloupe*. Paris: Karthala-ACCT, 1990.

Weber, Eugene. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976.