

**Martin Munro & Celia Britton (eds.)**

*American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012. viii + 256 pp. (Cloth US\$95.00)

In the introduction to their compelling new collection of essays, Martin Munro and Celia Britton credit a variety of factors for loosening definitive parameters of postcolonial cultural study. As their subtitle indicates, they take advantage of changes in geographical focus in postcolonial studies to consider anew multiplicitous linkages between regions that fall within what they term the “circum-Caribbean.”

Avoiding claims of exhaustive analysis on any front, they suggest that their work is part of a “process of productive reinvigoration” (p. 2), and their approach aptly suits the subject. Just as Munro and Britton take care to subtly distance the work from an outmoded métropole-centered approach to French Caribbean studies, they similarly challenge the essentialism of the *créolité* movement. Their attitudes are echoed in numerous essays. In its expansiveness on multiple planes—*beyond* colonial and postcolonial time frames and scopes and *toward* new relational paradigms including both literal and generic geographies not previously sufficiently explored—*American Creoles* recalls Édouard Glissant’s rhizomatic conceptualizations of creolizing development. Indeed, heavily referenced throughout five of the work’s first nine essays, Glissant is featured as the central figure of the final three. Each of the book’s three sections features a handful of essays exploring in some depth a narrow aspect of an overarching topic. Not surprisingly, this rather conventional framework serves to emphasize several compatible or overlapping facets of the subject within each set of essays.

Mary Gallagher’s illuminating piece on nineteenth-century internationalist Lafcadio Hearn succeeds brilliantly as the opening of the first section (“Creolizations”) and indeed the entire volume. Gallagher argues convincingly that Hearn’s far-reaching sense of a “Creole continuum” (p. 38) exceeded the paradigmatic limits Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant had in mind when they praised Hearn. Essays by Typhaine Leservot and Angel Adams Parham observe first the assemblage, and next the ongoing implications of Creole identities in New Orleans from different angles. Leservot’s study of the Auguste Lussan play *La Famille créole* (1837) offers neat insights into underlying social and political forces affecting formative Louisiana cultural narratives as well as the role of theater in these formations. Based on firsthand sociological fieldwork, Parham’s interviews reveal real-life legacies of those collective constructions as well as the manner in which race and ethnicity, largely erased or invisible in Lussan’s dramatic world, continue to play complex relational roles. Valérie

Loichot's fascinating observations of the media's various depictions of Barack Obama in the United States, France, and Martinique, shifts attention to the exceedingly unstable implications of race in each of those locales. Effectively serving as the section's bookend essay, Christina Kullberg's chapter reviews the work of contemporary anthropologist Richard Price. In discussing Price's composite use of multiple genres in his nonfiction *The Convict and the Colonel* (1998), Kullberg credits him with using an exceptionally appropriate vehicle for conveying the nature of the Martinican world he explores, past and present. Kullberg acknowledges philosophical parallels between her subject and those she terms "the signatories to the manifesto of *créolité*" (p. 108). However, like Gallagher, she suggests a natural resistance to the *créolistes'* own tendencies toward fixity and declares that Price's narrative "exposes the dangers of monumentalizing the past by divorcing it from the present" (p. 108).

The next section focuses on music, especially jazz. In "Fightin' the Future': Rhythm and Creolization in the Circum-Caribbean" Munro features condensed material from his 2010 book, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* and suggests that "rhythm in the region is one of the most durable and adaptable markers of creolization" (p. 116). Dynamic processes of creolization, which have shaped much of this region and are exemplified in the diverse types of rhythm examined here, are ongoing, influenced but not imprisoned by the past. Jeremy Lane astutely mines Frantz Fanon's brief but rich allusions to modern jazz aesthetics to effectively argue that Fanon's references serve to defy *négritude's* fundamental notion of identity as racially, ethnically, geographically, or linguistically bounded. Musicologists Jean-Luc Tamby and Jerome Camal follow with studies of correlations between developments in jazz and Glissant's theories of Relation. Tamby's essay goes to some lengths to find meaningful links between the "styles" and "strategies of resistance" (pp. 147–148) of Miles Davis and Glissant. Camal's provocative piece articulates distinct threads in recent debates concerning the place of creolization in globalization *versus* postcolonial studies. Through his tracing of the musically collaborative Creole Project, Camal deftly illustrates significant tensions between diverse stakeholders as well as more conflicting forms of identity politics. In so doing, he problematizes the applicability of Glissantian ideological constructs when "removed from a particular geopolitical context" (p. 177).

The volume's final section, "Intertextualities: Faulkner, Glissant, and Condé," develops incisive trains of thought regarding Glissant-Faulkner relationships. (Despite the reference in the section's title, Maryse Condé appears only in the last portion of Celia Britton's final chapter.) As with Camal's piece, all three offer cogent analyses of Glissant's ideas but also note inconsistencies in Glissant's sometimes controversial positions. Michael Wiedorn capably traces

Glissant's "rehabilitation of Faulkner as an anti-racist, white Southern novelist" (p. 185) in *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1996). While Wiedorn evenly notes the public opposition that Glissant encountered and summarizes Glissant's considered responses, he also points out Glissant's "wont ... to bend ... Faulkner's thought to meet with his own philosophy and poetics" (p. 186). In the next essay, Hugues Azéradt carries the conversation further, but shifts the focus to Faulkner's modernism and highlights different facets of opacity in his work. Britton's essay depicts yet another perspective on Faulkner's opacity, one which makes this an especially effective conclusion to the volume's discussions. In analyzing the motif of "Ancestral Crime" in Faulkner's novels, Britton argues that guilt over slavery is repressed by characters and author alike. In contrast, with no similar deep-seated psychological shame in the backgrounds of Glissant and Condé, long-buried secrets function much differently, as consciously structural components of their narratives.

Finally, a small remark concerning the book's concluding chapter by Yanick Lahens, "An American Story." While it is a potentially interesting short story, it might have been more effective if analysis or commentary had been included.

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