

Tenants of Empire: Uncovering Connections Between French  
Caribbean and Acadian Archipelagos Through Nineteenth- and  
Twentieth-Century Literature

by

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## **Abstract**

This study uses literature to examine cultural histories of Acadians and Afro-descendant peoples in the French Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Literary cultures of each of these communities demonstrate the resilience of culture and history, while also speaking to struggles of settler colonialism, enslavement, and deportation. This dissertation applies the concept of “tenants of empire” to describe the different experiences of Acadians, as well as of Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as they formed communities inside the confines of French and British social, economic, and political imperial structures. Through comparing the uniqueness, similarities, and convergences in the evolution of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature by Acadian authors and by authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, this dissertation demonstrates that while these communities are distinct in terms of histories of racialization, colonial trauma, and resistance, literary histories reveal connections.

Literature demonstrates how Acadian and Afro-descendant authors from Martinique and Guadeloupe negotiated imperial relationships with France, struggled to identify a “homeland,” claimed history on their own terms, and aimed to acquire political and social autonomy in the aftermath of French and British imperial expansion. As marginalized societies under the authority of the French and British imperial powers and, later, the French and Canadian nation-states, Acadians and descendants of enslaved

Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe occupy archipelagic spaces, yet share points of connection. Connections between these societies occur as a result of shifts in literary production and historical understanding that are interwoven with political movements led by Acadians and by Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## **Dedication**

To Stephen, Carson, and all of our family for their patience, support, and encouragement.

To Dr. Elizabeth Mancke for sharing her wisdom.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction: Bound by Imperial Walls

In 2022 I received funding from the Canadian government to pursue research in Paris, France, where I spent two months exploring archives related to writers from Martinique and Guadeloupe, including in collections held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France site Richelieu. At the time of my research trip, the Richelieu Library, which partly occupies a palace built originally for Cardinal Mazarin, was difficult to access due to recent renovations. Entry to the building could only be obtained by arranging an appointment months earlier. After I arrived, a host archivist escorted me through a construction zone, into back hallways, and up an elevator to the reading room for the Département des manuscrits. Architect Jean-Louis Pascal designed and built the interior of this room from 1880-1886, with intentions to restore and to feature architectural art of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. I found myself surrounded by intricate wooden designs, raised ceilings with ornate trim, elaborate spiral staircases, and tall glass windows. I felt small inside this imposing structure, where I had a limited amount of time to examine collections of press and written materials from authors Simone and André Schwarz-Bart, Édouard Glissant, and Aimé Césaire.

I settled into my workspace and I gently opened a folder containing press reviews for Simone Schwarz-Bart's novel *Ti Jean l'horizon*, a book that received nomination for the Prix Goncourt in 1979. The number of papers in the file felt daunting, so I only briefly glanced at the first two articles announcing Schwarz-Bart's nomination for the

award. Then, as I turned to the next page, I saw the title “Antonine Maillet: la voix des Acadiens,” with a photo of Maillet, and a large section of text that announced Maillet as the winner of the award that year. In a column next to Maillet’s picture, red ink underlined the smaller title *Ti Jean l’horizon*. In that moment, I was captivated to be sitting inside the towering walls of this colossal establishment in the heart of Paris, examining an archive of personal documents collected by Guadeloupean Simone Schwarz-Bart that included an article featuring Acadian Antonine Maillet. I kept turning the pages and seeing photos, commentaries, and critiques of both women authors and their novels, all collected by Schwarz-Bart and housed inside this archival collection controlled by the French government. Logically, this makes sense considering the authors’ nomination for the Goncourt that year, but I wondered what Schwarz-Bart processed concerning Maillet as she clipped and read the news articles. This moment in the archives substantiated the existence of an intellectual and historical proximity of these women that I first began to uncover through reading their literature.

Several years prior to my trip to France, I studied at the University of Central Florida where I became acquainted with Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-Charrette* while completing a History thesis on the resettlement of Acadians in Louisiana. After completing my Master’s, I continued taking classes to finish an undergraduate degree in French language that included a class on French Caribbean literature. I vividly remember reading and re-reading Schwarz-Bart’s opening chapter for her novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*

(1972) where I was enthralled by her language of land, belonging, exile, music, and laughter. I quickly went home to pull Maillet's *Pélagie* off the shelf, and I was struck by similarities in their style, content, and language. In comparatively analyzing how these authors integrated their societies' cultural, musical, and oral traditions in these novels, I witnessed their abilities to lay claim to colonial histories that are core to Guadeloupean and Acadian identity, and that continue to have enduring consequences through to the present.

Through broadening my study of French Caribbean and Acadian literature spanning the mid- to late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I uncovered how trajectories of style and content in their prose reveal evidence of these societies sharing critical aspects of colonial and national histories. Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as well as Acadians, have formed societies that are rooted in their own histories of colonial violence and forced displacement. This study considers how these societies have evolved in distinct ways within the confines of political, social, cultural, and economic structures built and reinforced by imperial and colonial powers. I bring to the surface how critical components of these structures endure as these communities remain under the authority of the French and Canadian states that hold powerful political

constituencies still aspiring to the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural unity of an idealized nation-state.<sup>1</sup>

During colonial expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the regions of the Atlantic basin now occupied by Martinicans, Guadeloupeans, and Acadians were inhabited by Indigenous communities, including the Kalinagos in the Lesser Antilles, and the Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati in what is now Atlantic Canada. Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati continue to inhabit regions of Atlantic Canada and claim possession of lands, while Kalinagos, who primarily occupy a region of Dominica today, were displaced from Martinique and Guadeloupe through seventeenth-century colonial warfare.<sup>2</sup> The majority of those who identify as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans are descendants of enslaved Africans and Asian indentured servants; after enslaved individuals in Martinique fought for and acquired emancipation in 1848, followed soon after by its implementation in Guadeloupe, many of those formerly

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<sup>1</sup> This study acknowledges historic, social, political, and cultural distinctions that exist between Martinican and Guadeloupean societies of African descent. Martinique and Guadeloupe are locales in the Caribbean that have their own histories, and have engaged in unique ways with the French empire and the French nation. The broad term of French Caribbean is used more frequently later in this study as twentieth-century authors of African descent from Martinique and Guadeloupe produced works that aimed to gain a broader audience, and as political groups such as the Front antillo-guyanais pour l'autonomie (FAGA) formed in the 1960s. The language I employ comes through following the example of Martinican scholar Jacqueline Couiti. See Jacqueline Couiti, *Sex, Sea, and Self: Sexuality and Nationalism in French Caribbean Discourses, 1924-1948* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, vol. 1 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 83–87; Anne Pérotin-Dumon, “French, English and Dutch in the Lesser Antilles: From Privateering to Planting, c. 1550-c.1650,” in *General History of the Caribbean: New Societies: The Caribbean in the Long Sixteenth Century*, ed. Pieter C. Emmer and German Carrera Damas, vol. II (London: Unesco Publishing, 1999), 145; Philip Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 72–75, 91–93.

enslaved continued to be exploited as labourers receiving minimal pay in horrible work environments. Emancipation did not eliminate France's need for workers, particularly in the sugar industry, and planters began importing indentured labourers from Africa, India, and Asia who endured hard labour and terrible living conditions, as well as political and social exclusions.<sup>3</sup> Descendants of the enslaved in Martinique and Guadeloupe endeavor to preserve cultural traditions handed down through generations, often promoting connections to African oral, musical, and religious traditions, while also striving to preserve their Creole dialect.<sup>4</sup>

Acadians are descendants of French settlers who migrated from west-central areas of France in the early seventeenth century to establish settlements in northeastern North America. There is indication of seventeenth-century Acadian migrants engaging peacefully with the Mi'kmaq, and a few documented instances of intermarriage as settlers established communities in regions of Mi'kma'ki and Wəlastək. Acadian communities expanded, making them complicit in Indigenous land occupation as trade increased with Britain and France. These regions became critical sites of warfare between the British, French, Mi'kmaq, and Wəlastəkweyiwik in the eighteenth century. Territorial conflicts

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Heath, "Creating Rural Citizens in Guadeloupe in the Early Third French Republic," *Slavery & Abolition* 32, no. 2 (June 2011): 293; David Northrup, "Indentured Indians in the French Antilles," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 87, no. 326–327 (2000): 247; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Brenda F. Berrian, *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Songs, Music, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 208–14; Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of a National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004), 5, 79–81.

led to the Acadian Deportation (1755-1763), when the British military destroyed Acadian settlements and deported Acadian families from regions of what is now Atlantic Canada.<sup>5</sup>

Acadian society commemorates adversities their ancestors endured, and they celebrate their survival as a people, particularly through remembering their Deportation that they often refer to as the “Grand Dérangement.”

For Acadians and for Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, varying alterations to their “conditions of occupancy” of standing political, social, cultural, and economic imperial structures have been made over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These alterations appear most graphically in Martinique and Guadeloupe, specifically as the fight for abolition gained momentum following the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, many of the enslaved in the French Caribbean endured brutal labour conditions including physical violence with whipping, branding, and hanging, as well as sexual atrocities, as the enslaved were often dehumanized in order to advance pursuits of the colonial capitalist French empire. Coming out of the Haitian Revolution, when those

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<sup>5</sup> Naomi E.S. Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 10–11; Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 107; Yves Frenette, “Mémoire et historiographie acadiennes: autour de deux livres,” *Acadiensis* 46, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2017): 210–11; Travis Wysote and Erin Morton, “‘The Depth of the Plough’: White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 4 (2019): 12–13; John G. Reid, “Quelques réflexions sur l’Acadie et l’historiographie du ‘settler colonialism,’” *Repenser l’Acadie dans le monde* (blog), April 8, 2020, <https://www.repenserlacadie.com/post/l-acadie-et-l-historiographie-du-settler-colonialism-john-reid>.

enslaved in the colony of Saint Domingue succeeded in gaining emancipation and independence from France, the enslaved in Martinique and Guadeloupe increasingly participated in acts of resistance and called for emancipation.<sup>6</sup> In February 1848, revolution in France by the bourgeoisie and the working class brought to power the Second French Republic, with Republicans touting ideals of freedom and equality. Rumors of abolition circulated throughout the French empire, and in April 1848 slavery was abolished by decree in Paris. That news did not reach Martinique and Guadeloupe immediately, and in May 1848, the enslaved in Martinique led acts of resistance that caused the local government to grant emancipation. The government in Guadeloupe quickly followed suit, prior to receiving the announcement of abolition from Paris.<sup>7</sup>

Those formerly enslaved gained recognition as citizens of France and technically were no longer bound to owners as property. Following abolition, however, the economic, political, and judicial systems built on a foundation of colonial exploitation and violence continued to oppress people of African descent. Freed men and women in Martinique and Guadeloupe became exploited as labourers in a capitalist system, where

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<sup>6</sup> David Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), ix; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 165–66, 298–99; Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:288–90, 316–19, 345–48, 378–81; Silyane Larcher, *L'autre citoyen: l'idéal républicain et les Antilles après l'esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), 86–89, 93–95.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:383–84, 393–94; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 171.

laws and prejudices inhibited them from owning property and having rights as workers and voters. They were often excluded when it came to participating in political and educational systems designed and maintained by those from France.<sup>8</sup>

Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as well as Acadians whose Deportation included the destruction of homes and property, separation of families, and treatment as prisoners of war by the British, have memories of colonial violence and forced displacement that are distinct in terms of relationship to empire; this study does not seek to compare the violence of trans-Atlantic slavery directly to the violence of the Deportation. These historical circumstances have impacted Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian societies differently. Nonetheless, for each of these groups, community memories of colonial pasts contributed to pursuits of cultural validation and political autonomy. These pursuits resulted in overlapping and entwined qualities among these societies that become identified through comparatively probing the evolution and content of Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian literature. Acadian authors, as well as Martinican and Guadeloupean authors of African descent, often portray their societies as having been shaped and sustained through particular experiences of imperial

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<sup>8</sup> Jacques Dumont, *L'amère patrie: histoire des Antilles françaises au XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 69; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 149.

dispossession and exploitation. In various ways, they underscore how their societies evolved as precarious occupiers of claimed imperial lands.

In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, authors in the Acadian community and in Martinique and Guadeloupe found ways to challenge the terms upon which regional nationalists could claim political and cultural “ownership” within their respective societies, and they wrestled with applying concepts of “belonging” and “autonomy” in a national context. Through comparing their colonial histories and their literary evolution, I employ the term “tenants of empire” conceptually, metaphorically, and in some instances literally, to capture various ways in which imperial systems rendered tenuous the status of Acadians, as well as of Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as they each laboured on imperial lands and formed distinct societies inside the confines of imposed imperial structures. Though tenancy may be conventionally understood as referring to an individual exchanging currency, goods, or labour to occupy a land or a structure possessed by another, my study uses the term to draw attention to engrained perceptions of lack of land ownership, of dangers of displacement, and of struggles for autonomy among each of these societies as expressed through their late nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. Land possession has often been impossible for the enslaved and their descendants in the French Caribbean, both pre- and post-abolition. For Acadians, land possession in what is now Atlantic Canada has often been volatile, both pre- and post-Deportation.

In applying “tenants of empire” to refer to Acadians and to enslaved Africans and their descendants in Martinique and Guadeloupe, it is important to be aware of dangers of generalization that gloss over the intricacies of their pasts, including their formation as societies and their relations with France, Britain, and Canada. Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as well as Acadians, have distinct histories of grappling with colonial violence and forced displacement. They have each engaged in intricate and evolving relations with empires and nation-states, they have unique histories of labour and land possession in the Americas, as well as complexities in defining who qualifies as a member of their community. In this study, the label of “tenancy” is not applied in order to paint with the same brush the histories or identities of French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians. Instead, through literary analysis and application of Édouard Glissant’s rhizomatic theory, this study uncovers how being “tenants of empire” is a conceptual, metaphorical, and literal component of history and identity shared between these communities that results from their distinct colonial histories of violence and displacement, their relationships with empires and nation-states, and their pursuits of autonomy in self-identifying as distinct societies in the Americas.

The term “tenant,” as it is understood in today’s vernacular in referring to residents of a space who have a contract with an owner, is used in some instances in this study when discussing situations of tenant land occupancy by those formerly enslaved in Martinique and Guadeloupe after they gained emancipation in May 1848. In the context

of this study, however, “tenants of empire” is applied more broadly in comparing how Acadians and enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe wound up occupying and labouring on Indigenous lands claimed and traded by empires, where they were required to participate in various ways to the building and strengthening of colonial economic and political structures. Their forms of payment became stipulated through the financial and military motivations of the French and British empires. In occupying and labouring on these lands, they each endured or faced threats of displacement stemming from imperial power. In this colonial context, tenancy is a broad pendulum, as external circumstances forced enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe into their position as tenants of empire, in which they were granted little to no rights and were violently exploited. On the other end of the pendulum, Acadians gained certain advantages of land rights and military protection, albeit these often wavered out of their own need for survival, and as the region they occupied shifted between French and British control, ultimately leading to their Deportation.

Acadians and enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe did not hold static or equivalent “tenant” relationships to empires, but their habitation on Indigenous lands that empires claimed to possess, their extracted payments of labour, produce, money, and military service, and their pasts of forced displacement are wound throughout their historical understanding and remain prominent in their memories. The term “tenant of empire” is not applied as a means to mask the uniqueness of each of these societies and

their histories, but identifying this concept through their literature of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries enables recognition of certain entangled roots shared among these peoples whose histories of colonial violence under French and British rule have been core to their formation as societies governed under the French and Canadian nation-states.

With colonialism, European imperialists sought to acquire power through controlling resources and wealth, and a central component for control included possessing land cultivated and extracted by labourers. As imperialists claimed possession of lands, occupancy of those lands through yeoman farmers, the enslaved, and indentured servants became foundational for economic and political expansion. Enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe were considered property under chattel slavery, and not “tenants” based on how colonial officials typically used the term in defining ownership over land. Yet, in the context of this study, empires forced enslaved people in Martinique and Guadeloupe into circumstances of tenancy by making them occupants of Kalinago lands claimed by empires. In occupying these lands, enslaved people paid a tremendous price to empire with their labour, their bodies, and their lives, a payment imposed through a violent colonial system.<sup>9</sup> Concerning the enslaved in Guadeloupe’s plantation society of the eighteenth century, Laurent Dubois states that, “The lives of this majority were

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:39; Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves: De la colonisation aux abolitions, 1620-1848* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2007), 19.

governed by contracts not of their own choosing, transformed through ordered and registered sales, and administered by official policy.”<sup>10</sup> Following the abolition of slavery in 1848, first instituted on Martinique as a result of an enslaved uprising, many who were formerly enslaved remained bound to living, labouring, and paying in some fashion to occupy lands possessed by others. Tenancy, in this broad imperial context, was prolonged by a growing capitalist economy that kept descendants of the enslaved financially trapped in a system that perpetuated and secured the wealth of landowning elites. Following abolition, actual tenant farming and controlled land allotment under factory and government regulation in the French Caribbean endured well into the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Through abolition, people of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe became more actively involved in the French economic and political systems, but voting restrictions, judicial acts, and the continuance of imposed forms of labour countered having acquired supposed “freedom” and “equality.”<sup>12</sup> The majority of those formerly

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<sup>10</sup> Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 53.

<sup>11</sup> Heath, “Creating Rural Citizens in Guadeloupe,” 293, 298; Elizabeth Heath, “Citizens of the Empire? Indentured Labor, Global Capitalism, and the Limits of French Republicanism in Colonial Guadeloupe,” in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Slavery, the State, and the Rise of Global Capitalism, 1500-1945*, ed. John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2015), 176; Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 117, 120–21.

<sup>12</sup> Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1848 à 1939*, vol. 2 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996), 19–20; Dumont, *L’amère patrie*, 22; Larcher, *L’autre citoyen*, 206–7. Concerning post-emancipation meanings of “freedom,” see for example, Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt, and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 9–11.

enslaved in Martinique and Guadeloupe remained bound by enduring consequences and implications of being tenants of empire as they sought to function inside the economic, social, and political structures designed, implemented, and maintained for the benefit of imperial France.

The hierarchical nature of Atlantic World societies and the significance of land possession also existed in regions of the north Atlantic, as evidenced with the French tradition of the seigneurie, as well as documented cases of enslavement in places such as Port Royal (that became Annapolis Royal under Britain) and Louisbourg in the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> In the seventeenth century, French landowners, who began claiming possession of Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati lands on behalf of the French empire, provided a place where French settlers could live in return for their labour and payment of either money, service, or product.<sup>14</sup> For many French settlers in Acadie, “the king conceded land to lords, who, in turn, conceded land to tenants in exchange for annual dues.”<sup>15</sup> Even with Britain’s victory in gaining Port Royal in 1710, the seigneurie endured as a system of land allotment and regulation, with the British Council enforcing it “as a way of generating revenue and increasing their power over their new subjects.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale, 1713-1760,” *Acadiensis* XXV, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 16; Colby Gaudet, “Slavery and Black Labour in a St. Mary’s Bay Acadian Family, 1786-1840,” *Acadiensis* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 13–14.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?: Comparing Rural Societies in Acadie and the Loudunais, 1604-1755* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 98.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy, 97.

<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, 128–29, 146.

Acadians' land occupation, settlement, and production in many ways depended on what French lords and British officers allowed and stipulated, yet at the same time the seigneurial system brought settlers a sense of stability when it came to land occupation.<sup>17</sup> During the Seven Years War, Acadians' eviction by the British from the lands they occupied upset that sense of stability. Following the Deportation, it took decades for many Acadians who managed to either remain or return to the northeast to receive title to lands where they settled. In Nova Scotia in 1758, the governing assembly outlawed the right of Catholics to own land. The government of Cape Breton, when an autonomous colony (1784-1820), granted few land titles to Acadian and Scottish settlers. Prince Edward Island kept most Acadian settlers as tenants of absentee landowners who lived in Britain, and it took decades for many Acadians in New Brunswick and eastern Quebec to receive title to land. In the twentieth century, Acadians were once again dispossessed to create Cape Breton Highlands National Park and Kouchibouguac National Park.<sup>18</sup>

For Acadians in regions of what is now Atlantic Canada and for people of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the concept of "tenancy" symbolizes pasts

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<sup>17</sup> Kennedy, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Gorman Condon, "Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform, 1783-1800," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 199; Rusty Bittermann, *Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island: From British Colonization to the Excheat Movement* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 95-96, 148; Danny Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1867* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 40-51; Nicolas Landry and Nicole Lang, *Histoire de l'Acadie*, 2nd ed. (Québec: Septentrion, 2014), 161-62, 167.

haunted with experiences of forced displacement, as well as presents where unqualified land ownership and self-defined liberties often remain elusive. These societies' distinct experiences of colonial violence and displacement followed by protracted periods of unsecured "tenancy" have been crucial through the twentieth century when it comes to self-identifying under the authority of nation-states evolved from colonial empires, as well as in employing literary works as forms of advocacy to confront "systemic abuses of power" stemming from their colonial pasts and from the knowledge produced via colonial archives.<sup>19</sup> In the fields of imperialist and nationalist historical studies these societies have too often been regarded as mere servants for the imperial and national edifices, frequently relegated to basement and attic quarters. Yet they deserve to be recognized in the public spaces of those edifices and their active political and social contributions acknowledged within the French and Canadian nation-states.<sup>20</sup> Their experiences as "tenants of empire" reveal an endurance and a complexity in imperialism that may be influential when looking at other societies, and may result in new vocabulary and new systems for understanding societies marked by and shaped through colonialism.

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<sup>19</sup> Alana Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014), 44.

<sup>20</sup> Cynthia J. Mesh, "Empowering the Mother Tongue: The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe," in *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Consuelo López Springfield (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 18–19, 26; John G. Reid, "Écrire l'Acadie en lien avec les mondes atlantique et autochtone," in *Balises et références. Acadies, francophonies*. (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 255.

Literature by authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe and by Acadian authors bring to the foreground historic struggles of colonial violence, and of attempts at appropriating their past and their present, where literature functions as a tool of political action intended to revitalize their history. This literature, that builds on oral traditions of music, memory, and folklore, is less impeded by categorizations such as “enslaved” and “white settler” that tend to be employed in the historical academic field and can in various ways prove repressive to historical understanding. These communities’ literature is also less bound by colonial archives that have substantial vacancies concerning the histories of Martinican and Guadeloupean people of African descent, and of Acadians. As I witnessed in Paris, the Schwarz-Bart archive and the collections of other French Caribbean authors housed in Parisian colonial structures, testify to these societies’ enduring tenancy as occupants of standing imperial space controlled and regulated by the French government.

Archival research remains critical to historians’ studies of these societies, but examining archival sources alongside literature brings to the foreground the integral nature of dispossession in colonialism: literature provides evidence of the endurance of colonial violence, and the way in which it is felt intergenerationally. In examining literature as an archive, scholar Jacqueline Couiti observes how for writers of African descent in the French Caribbean, including those whose works may be often overlooked or marginalized in the popular and academic spheres, “within their texts exists a past that

lingers into the present, a past that does not pass but relentlessly shapes the present in its image.”<sup>21</sup> This study likewise posits literature as an archive that renders evident unexpected connections shared by Acadians and by Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, who used the written word to reckon with silences in their histories of colonial violence, to gain recognition for their societies, and to resist the confines of standing colonial walls in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

I incorporate Martinican intellectual Édouard Glissant’s analogy of the rhizome from *Poétique de la relation* (1990) that challenges readers to broaden their view on the complexities of identity and belonging, particularly in considering the histories and cultures spanning the Caribbean. Glissant’s theory of the rhizome is adopted from propositions by French intellectuals Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* confront the hierarchical and dominant structure represented by a tree and its roots that is commonly visualized and applied in western thought-processes. Deleuze and Guattari argue how through employing the theory of the rhizome, accepted normalcies of hierarchy are disrupted, and relativity happens through stems that grow in scattered directions under and over the surface, become intertwined, and in some instances result in plants that emerge and flourish above ground.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Brent Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 23–24.

Glissant theorizes that like a rhizome that is subterranean and spreads horizontally, Caribbean societies are built on roots and shoots that spread and intertwine, can penetrate the surface, and can be grafted.<sup>23</sup> I argue that a comparative analysis of literature by Acadian authors and by authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, combined with study of literary evolutions over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reveals critical historical parallels and points of convergence that exist between these societies that on the surface appear to have largely divergent cultures and histories. The complexity of relation, of intertwining, as well as of penetration and connection, are core to this study that reveals historical and literary interplay shared among these archipelagic communities. As will be explored more in the following chapter, the French Caribbean islands constitute a literal archipelago, with its archipelagic nature often addressed in theoretical and literary discourse. In 1983, geologists Dean Louder and Eric Wadell applied the term archipelago in connecting various Francophone communities scattered throughout North America, including Acadian communities.<sup>24</sup>

Clues to the intertwining and grafting of these archipelagic societies' roots are discovered through comparative analysis of the dawn and development of literature

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<sup>23</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>24</sup> Dean R. Louder and Eric Waddell, eds., *Du continent perdu à l'archipel retrouvé: le Québec et l'Amérique française* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983), xiv.

among Acadians and among Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent. Literature is a critical form of expression for these societies, who, as this study will show, fought to overcome obstacles of illiteracy, to identify as communities, and to pursue forms of cultural and political autonomy. Literature has been essential in Acadian, Martinican, and Guadeloupean authors' quests to disrupt colonial and national historical narratives where they were silenced, and where their language, culture, and history were either criticized, ignored, or intentionally forgotten. Their literature became crucial in shaping their communities and forming their identities, as it became employed interchangeably as a weapon and a tool for combatting silences, misinterpretations, and misrepresentations of the archives. Through bringing together oral tradition and the literary creative process, Acadian authors and authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe each imagined and preserved their societies' own histories. This study foregrounds similarities in their literature to substantiate historical intertwining and grafting caused by colonial histories of violence, displacement, and complex, changing relations as "tenants of empire." Comparative analysis of their literature exposes how Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian colonial experiences resulted in community formation, historical and literary interwovenness, and their endurance in colonial spaces. Through historical and political contextualizations of the evolution of literature, this study examines how authors wrestled with their societies' colonial pasts that have enduring legacies in the present.



Figure 1. “Guadeloupe Winter Carnival, Pointe-à- Pitre Parade,” by Mstyslav Chernov, 5 March 2011, Licensed under CC by 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guadeloupe\\_winter\\_carnival,\\_Pointe-%C3%A0-Pitre\\_parade.\\_A\\_group\\_of\\_drummers\\_during\\_carnival\\_procession%28photo\\_reportage,\\_outdoor\\_portrait%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guadeloupe_winter_carnival,_Pointe-%C3%A0-Pitre_parade._A_group_of_drummers_during_carnival_procession%28photo_reportage,_outdoor_portrait%29.jpg)



Figure 2. “Make some noise! National Acadian Day: Tintamarre displays Acadian pride through Clare,” Digby County Courier, 15 August 2017

These above images convey the nationalistic nature of the annual events of Carnival in Guadeloupe and Tintamarre in the Acadian regions of Atlantic Canada. The photos are striking, with members of these societies celebrating their culture, while publicly claiming and declaring their distinct identity. These celebratory events stem from French Catholic and West African traditions, and the vibrant colours on the drums display a nationalist motif that sets these societies apart from the nation-states of France and Canada. Acadians, as well as the descendants of enslaved Africans in Guadeloupe and Martinique, are distinct communities, yet they are in some ways intimately connected through sharing a trans-Atlantic proximity with France, as well as through their experiences of colonial violence, their marginalization, and their resistance to assimilation.

In 2003, literary scholar François Paré published a chapter entitled “L’antillanité de l’Acadie” in *La distance habitée* (2003), and applies Édouard Glissant’s theories of antillanité to bring attention to existing similarities between French Caribbean and Acadian literature. Paré observes that in North America and the Caribbean, “The history of Francophone communities throughout the continent is made up of ancient solidarities, linked to the colonial experience and continental marginalization” yet there also exists “a

reciprocal, almost fraternal experience of indifference and mutual forgetfulness.”<sup>25</sup> This study will build on Paré’s theoretical literary analysis and the disruption it brings concerning engrained distinctions held between Acadian and French Caribbean communities to reveal how despite divergences – and even “indifference and mutual forgetfulness” - there are profound commonalities in Acadian, Martinican, and Guadeloupean development as societies from the eighteenth century to the present. There are many differences, yet similarities become apparent beginning in the mid- to late nineteenth century with the dawn of print media and are intimately tied to their histories of displacement, of attachment with France, and of their complex positioning in the imperial world with implications that carry through to their persistent “tenancy” of the twentieth century.

This study brings to the forefront the critical nature of literature for these societies in defining their identity, advocating for their political rights, and reclaiming their history. I trace select moments in the evolution of Acadian and French Caribbean literature, beginning in the mid- to late 1800s when members of the Acadian, Guadeloupean, and Martinican societies first began to find self- and community-expression in emerging press, and continuing into the late twentieth century when authors

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<sup>25</sup> François Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” in *La distance habitée* (Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2003), 186. “L’histoire des collectivités francophones de l’ensemble du continent est faite au fond de solidarités anciennes, liées à l’expérience colonial et à la marginalisation continentale”; “cette expérience réciproque, presque fraternelle, de l’indifférence et de l’oubli mutuels”.

from these communities started earning accolades among the most prestigious Parisian literary circles. The chapter titles are meant to explore “tenancy” as a metaphor, as they represent various stages and rights that are dependent on the mediation of the binding contract between the lessor and the lessee, noting that for the case of enslaved Africans brought to labour in the French Caribbean, their contract was imposed by the lessor. In its metaphorical application, “tenancy” represents pursuits among Acadians, as well as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, to reckon with their colonial pasts and to navigate their relationships with nation-states by negotiating leases, occupying allotted spaces, refurbishing rooms, and pounding enduring imperial walls, as evidenced in the evolution of their literature in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter “Acadianité and Antillanité” provides a non-traditional historiography, as to my knowledge there are to date no studies anchored in the conventional historical field that prioritize a demonstration of the literal and figurative connections between these societies, and each of these forms of connection will be made evident through this study. This chapter opens with a comparative analysis of their geographical positioning in the Atlantic World, and discussion of the complexities that exist for those of African descent in the French Antilles and for Acadians when it comes to colonial authority and the forms of violence employed to guard that authority. To address these complexities, methodologies in contemporary studies by Jodi Byrd (2011), Shona Jackson (2012), Lisa Lowe (2015), and

Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) are examined and employed, as these authors consult literary sources in efforts to complicate accepted historical narratives and categorizations of subjugated peoples. This chapter draws attention to problems of historiography and evidence of “diasporic double consciousness” among French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians in order to underscore the weight of literature and its development, particularly in the twentieth century, for both societies.<sup>26</sup>

In exploring “diasporic double consciousness,” context must be provided concerning how the term “diaspora” is applied in referring to French Caribbean people of African descent, and to Acadians. The word “diaspora” originates from the Greek language and appears frequently in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Septuagint when describing Jewish dispersal and exile. This language that emphasizes geographic displacement (be it forced, voluntary, or perceived as out of necessity) and the continued connectedness of a scattered people has gained tremendous currency over the last thirty years in a broad and growing interdisciplinary field of “diaspora studies.”<sup>27</sup> This field examines forced displacement, enslavement, migration, exile, and refugee experiences

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<sup>26</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Gorham: Myers Education Press, 2018), 9; Samir Dayal, “Diaspora and Double Consciousness,” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 54. “Double consciousness” is a term defined by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. The subject of “diasporic double consciousness” is examined in more detail in the second and third chapters.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2–4; Klaus Stierstorfer and Janet Wilson, eds., *The Routledge Diaspora Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2018), xiii.

around the globe, with extensive focus on the colonial period through to the present. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy analyzes Black cultural expression across a “web of diaspora identities,” and he identifies the “Black Atlantic world” as a shared space that conjoins diverse Black communities spanning the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, and Africa as a result of slavery.<sup>28</sup> According to Gilroy, the journal *Présence Africaine*, that brought together Black writers from the Americas and Africa beginning in 1947, played a key role “in the developing awareness of the African diaspora as a transnational and intercultural multiplicity.”<sup>29</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, with the influence of Jewish Zionism, ideologies of returning to an African homeland contributed to historians’ appropriating the term “diaspora” in studies of African history and slavery.<sup>30</sup> The implications and use of the word “diaspora” have since broadened in the academy, and in addition to being applied in the field of trans-Atlantic African slavery, it has also become integrated in studies of African displacement that occurred both prior to the Atlantic trade of enslaved Africans and following its abolition.<sup>31</sup>

In this study, “African diaspora” is used when referring to the scattering of African peoples and the formation of communities spanning the Atlantic that are unbound

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 218.

<sup>29</sup> Gilroy, 195.

<sup>30</sup> Gilroy, 208.

<sup>31</sup> Michael A. Gomez, ed., *Diasporic Africa: A Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), 19; Kenny, *Diaspora*, 24–25, 27.

by imposed national borders, as a result of the brutal trade of the enslaved across the Atlantic during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. Over these centuries traders stole, sold, and scattered people from different African communities throughout the Americas. As African people arrived and laboured in the Americas, and in some cases moved throughout the Americas, including in Martinique and Guadeloupe, new societies evolved by bringing together various “traces” of African cultural traditions, by having shared memories of forced displacement and experiences of the brutalities of enslavement, and by also encountering unique colonial experiences in different locales. These societies are distinct, yet also connected by aspects of their histories, cultures, and forms of expression that are not confined by national borders, but are found throughout what Gilroy terms as the Black Atlantic.<sup>32</sup>

Concerning Acadian history, this study builds on Christopher Hodson’s work where “Acadian diaspora” refers to the Deportation that occurred over the course of the Seven Years War (1755-1763) due to rivalries between the British and French empires, as well as to Acadian migration around and across the Atlantic through the rest of the eighteenth century. Through the Deportation and migration, Acadians lived in such regions as the North American British colonies, France, the Caribbean, and the Falkland

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<sup>32</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 227–28, 235. Quotation in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 199.

Islands.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the African diaspora that has lasted centuries as a result of Atlantic slavery, and has led to the formation of new communities in the Americas, the Acadian uprooting of closely connected families came due to colonial land rivalries and warfare in the Atlantic northeast. Following the Seven Years War, many deported Acadian families, as well as those who fled from Deportation, returned to settle in other regions near where they formerly lived in what is now Atlantic Canada. They succeeded in re-establishing Acadian communities that maintained many pre-Deportation cultural and social traditions, even after experiencing tremendous disruption with the violence of their displacement and the hardships they encountered during subsequent migrations.<sup>34</sup>

After comparing the geographical positioning and considering the “diasporic double consciousness” of Acadians, as well as of Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent in the French Atlantic World, and examining the critical nature of literature in studying their history, there is an analysis of literary studies that compare and contrast these societies’ late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature. Literary scholars including Éloïse Brière (1990), François Paré (2003), Jacqueline Couti (2011), and Corina Crainic (2017) have revealed semblances in these societies’ literature that are rooted in their colonial pasts, as well as in enduring legacies interwoven with French

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3–4.

<sup>34</sup> Condon, “Loyalist Arrival,” 199; André Magord, *The Quest for Autonomy in Acadia* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 48.

education and politics. These authors acknowledge the distinctions between these societies, with the brutality of enslavement being core to French Caribbean identity, yet find similarities in their remembrances and experiences of diaspora, and their reckoning with its consequences in contemporary literature. It is in the French Caribbean where the fields of history and literature have crossed most succinctly, as a result of the social, political, and cultural impact of renowned works by writers and political activists Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant. Consequently, this historiography brings to the foreground how historians Laurent Dubois (2004, 2007) and Gary Wilder (2015), as well as Francophone studies scholars Nick Nesbitt (2003), Marlene Daut (2015), and Jacqueline Couiti (2016, 2021) underscore the critical relationship between the written word, historical understanding, and identity formation for marginalized societies, in particular in the French Caribbean. This complex and interwoven relationship of literature, history, and identity that evolved as a result of diaspora proved critical as Acadians, as well as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent wrestled with ideas of nationalism and autonomy in the twentieth century. Incorporating methodologies and theories of these literary scholars and historians enables critical aspects of the histories of these diverse communities, that appear to share little in common in terms of identity and history, to be brought under the same lens for analysis.

The third chapter, “Negotiating the Lease” compares more critically the colonial relationships held by Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, and by

Acadians, with the French and British empires, including the complexities of each of their histories of displacement across and around the Atlantic and their entanglements in the colonial labour systems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It explores how in the throes of imperial rivalry these peoples endured diverse experiences of forced displacement, engaged in complex and changing relationships with empires, and evolved to become new ethnic groups that are difficult to lock into conventional categories of colonialist study. As “tenants of empire,” they came to occupy spaces where foundations and outer walls were designed, constructed, and enforced by the shifting French and British imperial powers. French and British leaders configured and reconfigured these spaces based on the political, economic, and social aims of the empire and of themselves. These “tenants of empire” in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and in Acadie held little power in negotiating or amending the conceptual lease “contracts” that moved between different power brokers, were imposed on those enslaved and maintained for Acadians through the seigneurial system, and that defined expectations the British and French empires held for peoples who either willingly, or under force, occupied the colonial structures. In other words, the majority of those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe and of Acadians held little agency in determining their status in the colonial hierarchy, as well as their rights in concepts of freedom and equality, and in their own iterations of what constituted justice. Enveloping “walls” were firmly established and fortified via colonial violence and forms of subjugation, yet as contemporary historians have revealed,

enslaved Africans and their descendants in the French Caribbean and Acadians each used agency to try to manipulate the imperially-imposed “contracts” that went with their peoples’ occupation of these colonial structures. Acts of challenging or swaying colonial authority increased, and the language of “nation” began to enter these societies’ vocabulary, yet this chapter also considers how the brutal events of Acadian Deportation and French and Haitian Revolutions, combined with high rates of illiteracy, delayed the development of cohesiveness for Acadians, as well as for enslaved Africans and their descendants in the French Antilles.

After comparing these societies’ colonial history, this chapter moves forward to shed light on the early development of Antillean- and Acadian-controlled print culture and its importance in facilitating greater communication and interactions among these societies. In the mid-nineteenth century, Francophone and Anglophone authors from outside of these communities wrote stories of factual and fictional colonial heroes that later became embraced by these groups and brought greater solidarity, including Henry Longfellow’s *Evangeline* (1847) and Félix Longin’s *Voyage à la Guadeloupe* (1848). The following decades brought the publication of newspapers such as *Le Progrès* (Guadeloupe, beginning in 1849) and *La Liberté* (Martinique, 1850), and *Le Moniteur acadien* (1867) and *L’Évangéline* (1887) among Acadians. In these newspapers Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent and Acadians began to communicate their own ideas and sentiments, as well as to express explicitly the desire for cohesion as

a community. At the same time, their early imprints frequently sent messages urging conformity inside the social, economic, and political structures they occupy. This urge for conformity was often amplified, either due to imposed and engrained colonialist mindsets, or due to writers of the elite class tiptoeing on a narrow line and not wanting to cause conflict with those in power that might in turn upset their perceived acquiescence to the colonial power structures. In this early press, there is evidence of the dawn of Acadian and French Caribbean literature with poetry and songs that carried political implications, largely touting conformity, and in many ways further validating the terms of the contract imposed by the empires and perpetuated by France and Canada.

The fourth chapter, “Occupying the Space (1905-1960)” compares the newspapers *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L’Évangéline* from 1905-1914, with attention given to the earliest published poetry, and proceeds to provide a comparative analysis of the first publications by politician-authors Aimé Césaire and Antoine-J. Léger. This chapter reveals how the lens the “tenants of empire” were looking through began to undergo alterations, and while authors continued with much conformity to styles and content – in other words, structures - established by the empire, print culture led to published literature that revealed a growing desire among educated elites to unite these communities by claiming a geographic homeland and by constituting a shared history in which they could self-identify as the dispossessed. Aimé Césaire in *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) and Antoine-J. Léger in *Elle et lui. Tragique idylle du peuple*

*acadien* (1940) and *Une fleur d'Acadie. Un épisode du grand dérangement* (1946), for example, identify their own colonial heroes rather than adopting those designed by individuals outside of their community. They describe an imagined homeland from their people's past, and they remember their ancestors being violently ripped from their homelands and forced aboard ships that sailed the Atlantic. Césaire and Léger used literature that had started to be recognized among elites in their societies as a tool or as a weapon to fight against mentalities and sentiments of inferiority and to expose flawed histories constructed via the colonial archives. The writing and publication of this early literature may be symbolically represented as tenants applying some fresh paint or hanging some new decorations on the walls of the structure they occupied. Nonetheless, much of the language, style, and content of Césaire's and Léger's works, as well as other political writings in the early press, reflect a sense of settlement, of comfort, and in some instances of pride, in facets of the social, economic, and political structures built through colonialism.

After studying the dawn and early development of print culture among Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as well as Acadians, the fifth chapter "Refurbishing the Rooms (1960-1980)" compares how these communities, who wrestled with being educated in a system crafted and imposed by the dominant society, began using their education to write works that more blatantly challenged interiors of aging colonial structures. Their literature and their political actions became more intentionally

forceful and began to strategically modify interiors by rejecting engrained notions of history, race, and politics. Authors were essentially trying to throw out old furniture and to bring in new, with messages crafted to shape new mindsets and to gain greater power inside the constructed walls. Coming out of World War II, decolonization movements grew around the world and resistance movements against the French and Canadian governments increased throughout the Americas and Africa. Literature evolved as authors participated in calling for an increase in self-government, while also pursuing cultural, social, and political legitimation locally, nationally, and globally.

This chapter examines the incongruity of certain political exchanges shared between Charles de Gaulle and these regions in the wake of World War II, yet reveals how French Caribbean literature by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant influenced writers not only in Québec but also in Acadie. There is evidence that cultural and racial appropriation occurred as Québécois and Acadian authors began to identify as being both marginalized and colonized, as is most explicit in Québécois separatist Pierre Vallières' *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (1968) and, as this chapter will examine, as also surfaces in poetry by Acadian author Raymond Guy LeBlanc. The chapter compares early works by Édouard Glissant to poetry published by LeBlanc and by Guadeloupean Sonny Rupaire, whose writings reflect the national sovereignty movements among those desiring greater political autonomy for Acadian and Guadeloupean societies. Yet, despite more drastically altering the interior of certain colonial structures through literary

expression and political activism, the Acadian and French Caribbean societies are unable either to gain power within or to topple the enduring structures.

This inability to deconstruct standing social, political, and economic edifices of colonialism via literary and political acts led to a temporal overlap, as disillusionment began emerging in the 1970s. This disillusionment materialized as a result of failed quests in resistance movements pushing for greater autonomy, as well as contentions over the merits of national sovereignty that occurred not only due to local circumstances, but also due to outcomes of nationalist movements on the world stage. The sixth chapter “Pounding the Walls (1970-1990)” examines how authors Simone Schwarz-Bart and Antonine Maillet became disenchanted with the political discourse permeating the press, and turned their attention to reconstructing pasts rooted in colonial histories. They attempted to look at their past through a newly designed lens, rather than through a modification of the colonial lens. This new lens focused not only on claiming their past, but also digging into and reconfiguring their histories with intentions of altering their present and transforming their future. Maillet and Schwarz-Bart published works that reached a broad audience in France, Canada, and the French Caribbean, with themes of self-redemption and self-resurrection. They countered the pessimism resulting from the failures of movements for autonomy with works intending to deconstruct the colonial walls, rather than trying to gain authority over a still-standing edifice that merely perpetuates engrained economic, political, and social systems. Maillet and Schwarz-Bart

succeed in chipping away at those walls as they strive to reformulate their societies' histories by bringing epic narratives of survival and regeneration to transnational audiences. Nonetheless, their literature and their personal experiences as women authors provide evidence of the figurative durability of colonial walls that continue to endure in the late twentieth century.

Through the twentieth century, even though European empires technically lost much of their final clutches of political authority in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Basin, and the Pacific, the institutional foundations that they poured centuries before and on which they designed and constructed colonial structures endured. Those legacies are evident in examining Acadian and French Caribbean literature, where these foundations and institutions have been critical in shaping the discourse of marginalized Acadian and Antillean societies. At the same time, authors in these societies have been integral leaders in nationalist movements as they have wrestled to deconstruct and re-formulate ideologies that have been shaped through distinct experiences of survival and regeneration as "tenants of empire." Rather than resting complacent, Acadian and French Caribbean authors became participants and leaders in occupying spaces, refurbishing rooms, and pounding walls as these "tenants" navigated their occupation of enduring colonial structures in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## Chapter 2 – Acadianité and Antillanité: Connecting the Archipelagos

“... the Piroune, at that time of her life, was only looking for memories in the boats, a kind of memory-tribute to the ancestor. [...] This orphan of father and mother seemed to cling to her past, for lack of future, to her lineage all full of mystery and glorious facts that she relived there on her buoy. [...] She can even be born of an unknown father, disappeared, annihilated, this unique daughter, born of the sea and the north winds.”<sup>1</sup> – Antonine Maillet, *Les Cordes-de-bois*, 1977

“Paralleling this mass of water, the third metamorphosis of the abyss thus projects a reverse image of all that had been left behind, not to be regained for generations except - more and more threadbare - in the blue savannas of memory or imagination. [...] “Je te salue, vieil Océan!” You still preserve on your crests the silent boat of our births, your chasms are our own unconscious, furrowed with fugitive memories.”<sup>2</sup> – Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 1997 (originally published 1990)

The above quotes by Acadian author Antonine Maillet and Martinican author Édouard Glissant point to the critical nature of the ocean for Acadians and for French Caribbean people of African descent when it comes to remembering their past. It is through traversing the Atlantic that they are born and in the Acadian sense reborn. Maillet and Glissant provide allusions to members of these communities looking to the expansive sea in trying to understand a past “full of mystery” and “furrowed with fugitive memories.”<sup>3</sup> The imagery of Piroune being “born of the sea” and of those in the Antilles

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<sup>1</sup> Antonine Maillet, *Les Cordes-de-Bois* (Montréal: Leméac, 1977), 72. “... la Piroune, à cette époque de sa vie, ne cherchait dans les bateaux que des souvenirs, une sorte de mémoire-hommage à l’ancêtre. [...] Cette orpheline de père et mère semblait s’accrocher à son passé, faute d’avenir, à son lignage tout plein de mystère et de faits glorieux qu’elle revivait là sur sa bouée. [...] Elle peut même naître de père inconnu, disparu, anéanti, cette fille unique, naître de la mer et des vents du nord.”

<sup>2</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Maillet, *Les Cordes-de-Bois*, 72; Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

visioning on the ocean “the silent boat of our births,” as well as the connotations of looking to the Atlantic to find a vanished past brings implications of a connected geographical space between Acadians and French Caribbean people of African descent.<sup>4</sup>

In geographic terms, the French Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Barthélemy, and Saint-Martin are labeled as an archipelago. In 1983 a notable shift in the geographic understanding of Franco-American societies occurred as geologists Dean Louder and Eric Waddell published *Du continent perdu à l’archipel retrouvé: Le Québec et l’Amérique française*, where they applied the term “archipelago” to Francophone communities scattered across North America, in Québec, Atlantic Canada, Western Canada, and Louisiana, as well as other locales spanning the United States. In their forward, the authors state their desire for readers to “become aware of the particularities of each island of the archipelago and reflect on the place that Québec occupies in the framework of the North American French-speaking world.”<sup>5</sup> Through their mapping, intended to bring connectivity among these geographically distanced groups, Louder and Waddell situate Acadian society as occupying an archipelagic space.

In 1997 Édouard Glissant employed the vernacular of archipelago in *Traité du Tout-Monde*, where he writes that “The entire world is becoming an archipelago and

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<sup>4</sup> Maillet, *Les Cordes-de-Bois*, 72; Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Louder and Waddell, *Du continent perdu à l’archipel retrouvé*, xiv. “se sensibiliser aux particularités de chaque îlot de l’archipel et réfléchir à la place qu’occupe le Québec dans la trame de la francophonie nord-américaine.”

creolizing.”<sup>6</sup> Glissant’s implications with this statement are often debated, but in comparison to the arguments of Louder and Waddell, they certainly were less geographic and more theoretical. Glissant perceives the Caribbean as being a critical region of the world where ideas for the future can be found, particularly in considering globalization. Glissant underscores the intuition found in Caribbean society of “belonging to a particular place while sensing a relation to the entire world.”<sup>7</sup> In 2003, François Paré incorporates Glissant’s theories in the chapter “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” where Paré observes that Glissant challenges interpretations of the meaning of “archipelago” that for some regions of the world tends to represent separation and “dysfunction,” rather than inter-connection.<sup>8</sup> In building on the geographic studies of Louder and Waddell, as well as Glissant’s theoretical framework of antillanité, Paré observes that, “the metaphor of the archipelago invited us to think of French America in a different way; it brought together what had appeared disjointed.”<sup>9</sup> Paré examines how beginning in the 1980s Acadian literature fit in Glissant’s definition of antillanité, as a result of the archipelagic nature of Acadie being a “place of empowerment [autonomisation] and a place of cooperation.”<sup>10</sup> According to Paré, Acadian writers reveal a perpetuation of what Glissant

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Wiedorn, “On the Unfolding of Édouard Glissant’s Archipelagic Thought,” *Karib - Nordic Journal for Caribbean Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.16993/karib.82>.

<sup>7</sup> Wiedorn.

<sup>8</sup> Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” 185.

<sup>9</sup> Paré, 186. “la métaphore de l’archipel nous invitait à penser l’Amérique française autrement; elle mettait en rapport ce qui nous était apparu jusqu’alors disjoint.”

<sup>10</sup> Paré, 190.

defines as “retour/détour” where they want to move on from the tragedy of colonial violence, yet remembrance of tragedy is critical in terms of identity.<sup>11</sup> Paré counters a vertical tendency of classification, contending that “The representations of the archipelago allow a horizontal look at the Francophonies of America and at the places of intercultural contacts, where, often without our knowledge, incessant accommodations are made.”<sup>12</sup> This is significant in situating Franco-American societies on a non-hierarchical plane. Paré is emphasizing a connectivity between Francophone societies in the Caribbean and in North America, specifically emphasizing how Martinicans, Guadeloupeans, and Acadians have encountered being archipelagic both literally and metaphorically.

As the opening extracts from texts by Maillet and Glissant demonstrate, the Atlantic World has proven crucial to French Caribbean people of African descent and to Acadians, whose identities have been shaped through colonial experiences of displacement, dispossession, diaspora, and genocide in environments where political and economic structures were built on the institution and economy of trans-Atlantic slavery.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Paré, 190–91.

<sup>12</sup> Paré, 187. “Les représentations de l’archipel autorisent un regard horizontal sur les francophonies d’Amérique et sur les lieux de contacts interculturels, où s’opèrent, souvent à notre insu, d’incessants accommodements.”

<sup>13</sup> Regarding Acadian history, the use of the terms “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” are currently under debate. Many scholars argue that Acadians were forcibly removed from their homeland out of British intent to eliminate the French population in regions of Atlantic Canada and to gain control over their land. See Naomi E.S. Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History, 1686-1784* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 93; John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the*

The northern Acadian region did not have a plantation culture and economy, but there is evidence of Caribbean trade and of slaveholding in communities such as Port-Royal/Annapolis Royal and Louisbourg by both British and French soldiers and settlers, as well as by an Acadian family in Louisbourg. A recent study examines cases of ownership and trade of the enslaved by Acadians of the Doucet family in St. Mary's Bay in the late eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> In the French Caribbean that developed a plantation economy, some free Black elite owned enslaved people, while the majority of those who came from Africa and their descendants had pasts of brutal enslavement. Acadians and descendants of enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe hold tightly to histories of experiencing colonial violence, yet it must be acknowledged that Acadians chose to become occupants of lands claimed and traded by empires that were inhabited by the Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati in the North Atlantic region. French Caribbean people of African descent were dehumanized through the trade of the enslaved, and forced by French imperialists and colonizers to reside on and to cultivate lands of the Kalinagos.<sup>15</sup> Having become occupants of Indigenous lands in unique ways, and experiencing distinct struggles of dispossession and genocide in the throes of

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*French Acadians from Their American Homeland* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 469; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 4; Richard LeBlanc, "Unthinkable Communities, or the Categories of the Acadian Genocide" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 2022), 1–3.

<sup>14</sup> Donovan, "Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale," 16; Gaudet, "Slavery and Black Labour in a St. Mary's Bay Acadian Family," 9–10, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Wysote and Morton, "The Depth of the Plough," 489–93; Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 3.

imperial rivalry, Acadians and people of African descent in the French Antilles each face the complexity of colonial categorization and racialization resulting in historical and contemporary debates in trying to identify where their societies “belong” in historical discourse, as well as who “belongs” in their societies.

As will be expanded on in greater detail in the following chapter, Acadians’ early reliance on Mi’kmaq and Wəlastəkwewiyik trade and provisions led to critical alliances that later came undone as Acadian settlements expanded and colonial warfare increased in the early to mid-eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Acadian relations with the French and British empires shifted based on economy, and scholars including Christopher Hodson and Gregory Kennedy contend that the French empire identified these migrants as labourers whose trade in fisheries, fur, and agriculture would benefit France.<sup>17</sup> Britain took control of Port Royal in 1710, and through the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 claimed possession of much of Mi’kma’ki and Wəlastək, apart from the islands that are now Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island. In coming decades, British colonists and imperialists suspicions of Acadian allegiance to France and the desire for loyal British settlers led to the Acadian expulsion from 1755-1763. Since the British could not “relegate” Acadians to “standard imperial categories,” the British military scattered them for the purpose of assimilation,

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<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 68–70, 195.

<sup>17</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 20; Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 7.

and inflicted a devastating death toll.<sup>18</sup> This historic event is often termed as the “Grand Dérangement” or the Deportation, with several scholars, including John Mack Faragher, A.J.B. Johnson, and Richard LeBlanc, as well as Acadian descendants debating as to whether this experience of colonial violence should be described and remembered as a genocide or an ethnic cleansing.<sup>19</sup> During and following the Seven Years War, Acadians who survived wound up in various British American colonies to the south, as well as in Britain, France, and French Caribbean colonies where they endured exclusions, poverty, and exploitative labour conditions.<sup>20</sup>

This complexity of colonial categorization combined with the Acadian experience of diaspora and their lack of statehood has resulted in the definition “Acadian” being a highly debated category in the twentieth century. In this debate of “belonging” as an Acadian, some Acadian authors employed the jargon of race stemming from Québécois

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<sup>18</sup> LeBlanc, “Unthinkable Communities,” 75.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Lawlor, “The One Man Acadian Liberation Front,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, September 4, 1994; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 469–73; A.J.B. Johnston, “The Acadian Deportation in a Comparative Context: An Introduction,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 10 (2007): 122, 125, 127–28; “Génocide acadien: la Société de l’Acadie du N.-B. va créer un comité pour étudier la question,” *Radio-Canada*, June 15, 2019; Michael MacDonald, “Was the Acadian Expulsion a Genocide? Experts to Tackle Debate,” *The Canadian Press*, June 17, 2019; LeBlanc, “Unthinkable Communities,” 1, 264–65, 269–71.

<sup>20</sup> Carl A. Brasseaux, “*Scattered to the Wind*”: *Dispersal and Wanderings of the Acadians, 1755-1809* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1991), 9; Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 149; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 393–94; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 7, 62, 84, 113, 200; Jean-François Mouhot, “The Acadian Refugees in France,” in *Rethinking New Acadia: Recent Interpretations of the Acadians’ Dispersal and Arrival in Louisiana*, ed. Michael S. Martin (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019), 15–17.

radical separatist Pierre Vallières' *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (1968).<sup>21</sup> In addition to being released in Montreal, Vallières' book received publication a year later by Éditions Maspéro in Paris that also published works by Martinican/Algerian Frantz Fanon. Vallières employs racial terms to position the French-Canadian "proletariat" as being exploited and colonized due to the capitalist economic system in Canada.<sup>22</sup> In the 1970s through the 1990s authors including Raymond Guy LeBlanc, Guy Arsenault, and Gérald LeBlanc, while less overt than Vallières with their language of racialization, appropriated the language of "slave [esclave]" and "Black [Noir]" to boldly draw attention to economic and social problems experienced by Acadian society. As will be explored further through analysis of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's works in the fifth chapter, these poets underscored enduring prejudices Acadians faced in Canada due to their French language, Catholic religion, and cultural traditions.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal: Éditions Parti pris, 1968); William M. Burton, "'A Most Weird Dialectic of Inversion': Revolutionary Fraternity, Sexuality and Translation in Pierre Vallières and Eldridge Cleaver" (Master's Thesis, Montréal, Université de Montréal, 2013), 56–57, 71–73. When Vallières chose the title for his book, he already had in mind how shocking a translated title would be. He hoped to garner the attention of Black North Americans to the Québécois cause. Views of Vallières work have shifted over time, from acknowledging its importance in bringing attention to issues of discrimination for Canada's Québécois society to theories on Vallières' work actually revealing his own engrained racial prejudices.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique. Autobiographie précoce d'un "terroriste" québécois* (Paris: Maspéro, 1969), 15–16, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Guy LeBlanc, *Cri de terre: poèmes* (Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1992), 54 (originally published 1972); Guy Arsenault, *Acadie Rock* (Moncton: Les Éditions Perce-Neige, 1994), 17–19 (originally published 1973); Roswitha Zahlner Casmier, "L'appropriation de l'expérience 'noire' dans deux romans de la littérature acadienne: *Pélagie-la-Charrette* et *Moncton Mantra*," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 32, no. 2 (June 2005): 191–92.

Racialization regarding Acadian society is further complicated with Acadian claims of métissage and emerging studies of Black Acadian descendants in Louisiana. In 2016 Joseph Yvon Thériault critiqued the increasing appearance of métissage in Acadian vernacular, attributing it to post-modernist plurality.<sup>24</sup> This debate has entered the judicial sphere through deceased Acadian Jackie Vautour's claims to Métis identity and land rights in court from 2010-2017.<sup>25</sup> In his book *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (2019), Darryl Leroux examines the increasing number of *Powley* cases where an individual has claimed Indigenous constitutional rights as a Métis, and has identified with an Indigenous organization or provided a root ancestry. Leroux describes occurrences such as the Vautour case, where the root ancestry is identified as being 10-11 generations away and draws attention to issues of "race-shifting" and of exploiting indigeneity for the purpose of claiming land possession.<sup>26</sup>

Vautour's death in 2021 and actions by Vautour's remaining family renewed the media's attention to these claims, and in March 2022, Mi'kmaw chiefs issued a statement declaring that "The Mi'kmaq, the Métis National Council and the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick have all rejected the notion that 'Acadian-Métis' are a distinct

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Yvon Thériault, "Je ne suis pas Métis...Ma mère me l'aurait dit," *Astheure*, December 15, 2016, <https://astheure.com/2016/12/15/je-ne-suis-pas-metis-ma-mere-me-laurait-dit-joseph-yvon-theriault/>.

<sup>25</sup> Darryl Leroux, *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 225.

<sup>26</sup> Leroux, 225, 101; Leroux's concept of "race shifting" comes from Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2011).

Indigenous group.”<sup>27</sup> In Clint Bruce’s article responding to Thériault’s thoughts on métissage, Bruce describes an increasing “trend” with the “claim of a Métis identity by a growing number of Acadians.”<sup>28</sup> Bruce contemplates whether perhaps “In many families, the desire to hide or erase the memory of Indigenous origins is somewhat similar to the adoption of a white identity by many Louisiana Creoles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a strategy chosen because of segregation and institutional racism.”<sup>29</sup> Bruce furthers the complexities of Acadian racial diversity by recounting how an individual tracing their family lines in Texas identified ancestors who were enslaved, free Black, and Acadian.<sup>30</sup> In using François Paré’s term “acadianité” that stems from Édouard Glissant’s “antillanité,” Bruce encourages scholars to be open to applying Glissant’s theory of the “rhizome.” Like with Paré’s horizontal conception of the archipelago, Bruce promotes looking for horizontal connectivity in studying Acadian culture and identity, rather than remaining bound to a solitary “tree” with its downward roots.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Mi’kmaw Group Accuses Vautour Family of Cultural Appropriation in Claim to Parkland,” *The Canadian Press*, March 25, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Clint Bruce, “Le divers et la diversité: quelle différence pour l’Acadie et pour la francophonie nord-américaine? Réflexions autour d’un essai de Joseph Yvon Thériault,” *Francophonies d’Amérique*, no. 49 (Spring 2020): 122.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, 139.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce, 130–33.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce, 138; Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” 195; Corina Crainic, “Introduction: Entre solitudes, contraintes et aspirations: de l’Acadie, des Caraïbes et de la Louisiane,” *Francophonies d’Amérique*, no. 49 (Spring 2020): 22–23.

For French Caribbean people of African descent, colonial categorization and racialization has shown the complexity of colonial understandings of racial categories. As the French Caribbean became France's economic powerhouse through enslaved labour, the population of enslaved individuals dramatically outnumbered that of white colonists, in particular women, and resulted in a racially complex, and fluid, caste system.

Concerning race and colonialism, Lisa Lowe states that "Elaborations of racial difference were not universal or transhistorical; they did not occur all at once but were local, regional, and differential, articulated in dynamic, interlocking ways with other attributions of social difference within various spaces in an emerging world system."<sup>32</sup>

Evidence of this is explicit in studying the French Antilles, including during the French and Haitian Revolutionary period, and as France alternated between republican, monarchical, and imperial governments from 1792-1870. In a chapter entitled "Inscribing Race in the Revolutionary French Antilles," Laurent Dubois examines how emancipation from 1794-1802 in Guadeloupe resulted in an altered "meaning of race" as men of African descent in the French Caribbean became included as French citizens, yet racial language was often employed in order to identify those with certain privileges.<sup>33</sup>

According to Dubois, racial definitions changed in some ways, yet race continued to be

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<sup>32</sup> Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Laurent Dubois, "Inscribing Race in the Revolutionary French Antilles," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 96.

employed in categorizing those now deemed citizens. He recounts how in Guadeloupe, French military leader Victor Hugues “initiated a massive census project that depended on the explicit categorization of the island’s population according to race.”<sup>34</sup> Hugues employed the categories “black,” “red,” and “white,” and while who was slotted in these categories is highly ambiguous, they provide evidence of Hugues “maintaining the separation between races as a practical way of identifying, and controlling, the labor necessary for the nation.”<sup>35</sup> In 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte reimposed slavery in Martinique and Guadeloupe and revoked the citizenship of all who were formerly enslaved, once again altering where those of African descent were assigned in terms of colonial categories.

In a subsequent study, Dubois provides evidence to underscore how free Black and mixed-race individuals, as well as the enslaved, exerted rights of citizenship during the French Revolution, and he goes so far as to argue that “the actions of slaves-turned-citizens in the Caribbean transformed Europe and the Americas,” as the enslaved in Guadeloupe – who for a brief period acquired recognition as citizens - gained freedoms through their own social, political, and judicial actions.<sup>36</sup> Dubois shifts authority to those deemed by white society to be of a different race in applying their rights as citizens and

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<sup>34</sup> Dubois, 102.

<sup>35</sup> Dubois, 103–4.

<sup>36</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 2.

contributing to altering France's definitions of citizenship, universal rights, and Republicanism. Dubois' theories and evidence render it difficult to ignore how Guadeloupeans applied colonial rhetoric and colonial ideologies in ways that cohered to their own desires for rights of liberty and equality.

In terms of racialization and "belonging" on Martinique and Guadeloupe, the language of métissage that is drawing greater attention in Acadian studies is wound throughout studies and literature on the French Caribbean where "Although the constructions and categorization of racial difference was a fundamental pillar of colonial plantation society in the French Antilles, such categories became increasingly difficult for administrators to track after emancipation in 1848."<sup>37</sup> Following the 1848 February Revolution in Paris, the insurrection of enslaved men and women in Martinique led to slavery being abolished first on Martinique, and then, for a second and final time, on Guadeloupe.<sup>38</sup> Even with abolition, labour exploitation continued in the French Caribbean as sugar producers began importing indentured labourers from Asia and Africa. Métissage in the Caribbean complicated the racial categorizations used by France in justifying its authority.<sup>39</sup> On Martinique and Guadeloupe, racialization continues to stir

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<sup>37</sup> Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace: National Identity, Decolonization, and Assimilation in the French Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:381–82, 393–94.

<sup>39</sup> Heath, "Creating Rural Citizens in Guadeloupe," 290–91, 293; Heath, "Citizens of the Empire?," 164; Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 24–25; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 9, 131–32.

deep sentiments both of racial prejudice and of racial pride. In terms of enduring prejudices, Kristen Childers observes that, “In general, people in Guadeloupe are perceived as being darker-complexioned than in Martinique, which has led many Martinicans to view Guadeloupeans as ‘backward’ and more African than European.”<sup>40</sup> Jacqueline Couti describes the intricacies of racialized social stratification on these islands where shades of skin colour in some instances brought either privilege or disadvantage, but in other instances did not apply when it came to determining who belonged to a certain class. Couti explains the complexities of race among the *petite bourgeoisie* and the *grande bourgeoisie* that together comprised the mixed-race class, and included middle class and elites.<sup>41</sup> In another study, Couti raises awareness of how “slippery” and “floating” racialized language is in the French Caribbean, drawing attention to how over time African descendants have in various ways reappropriated what was formerly derogatory language of classification first imposed by white, French Creole society.<sup>42</sup> Declarations of pride in Black identity have been emphasized, from the negritude movement of the 1930s that will be examined more in the fourth chapter, through to the Black Lives Matter movement that began in the United States in 2013 and

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<sup>40</sup> Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 52–53.

<sup>42</sup> Jacqueline Couti, *Dangerous Creole Liaisons: Sexuality and Nationalism in French Caribbean Discourses from 1806 to 1897* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 10.

led to protests by activists in Guadeloupe and Martinique.<sup>43</sup> For Martinican and Guadeloupean people of African descent, their colonial histories of displacement and experiences of marginalization result in complex questions of “belonging.” Those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe have to navigate relating to those within their own communities in striving to form and preserve a shared identity, while also engaging in forms of both participation and resistance under the nation-state holding political and economic authority.

### **Peeling off the Labels**

Limitations in understanding exist due to prescribed assumptions and prejudices that stem from the hierarchical social and racial categories constructed through colonialism. In this study, which analyzes the historical development of French Caribbean and Acadian literature and brings to the forefront parallels and points of convergence, my methodology is shaped by Indigenous, Black, and Asian-American scholars Jodi A. Byrd (Chickasaw), Shona Jackson, Lisa Lowe, and Tiffany Lethabo King. These authors incorporate and examine literature in ways that expose problems of

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<sup>43</sup> Jean-Marc Party, “Minneapolis ou Martinique, une même indignation contre le racisme,” *Franceinfo*, June 2020, <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/martinique/minneapolis-martinique-meme-indignation-contre-racisme-840712.html>; Nathalie Bouchaut, “Une rue pour George Floyd! De mai 1967 à mai 2020: ces violences policières ont marqué l’histoire de la Guadeloupe,” *Archipelies*, no. 13 (June 2022), <https://www.archipelies.org/1233#>.

assigned labels grounded in historical narratives shaped by colonial archives, while also challenging the conventional colonial categories of “enslaved” and “white settler” created, and often reinforced, in studies of colonialism. These “labels” have produced perceived norms that have been perpetuated in nationalist discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and carried through to the present. Building on the studies by Byrd, Jackson, and Lowe enables me to contribute to disrupting conventional categorizations that isolate the colonial pasts of Afro-descendants of the French Caribbean and of Euro-descendant Acadians, as well as the formation and evolution of their nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. I also build on the works by Byrd, Lowe, Jackson, and King as I incorporate literature as a primary source, alongside newspapers, interviews, and archival documents, in order to reveal enduring consequences of colonial pasts for Acadians, as well as for Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent through the twentieth century. While I follow the examples of Byrd, Lowe, Jackson, and King in framing literature as an historical source that enables the disruption of categories imposed by traditional archival studies, I am oriented by theories of Édouard Glissant in exploring how literature has emerged as a critical means for these societies to self-identify and claim their history, as well as how it exposes instances of parallel and interwovenness in the historical experience and understanding of Acadians and French Caribbean people of African descent.

In *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (2011) critical theorist Jodi A. Byrd addresses problems with postcolonial theory and tactics of multiculturalism when it comes to knowing indigeneity. Byrd critiques binary tendencies in postcolonial theory largely based on differentiating race that result in hierarchical positioning of societies, and argues that her study “depends upon an act of interpretation that decenters the vertical interactions of colonizer and colonized and recenters the horizontal struggles among peoples with competing claims to historical oppressions.”<sup>44</sup> In thinking horizontally, Byrd examines how “Indigenous peoples, settlers, and arrivants [...] have functioned within and have resisted the historical project of the colonization of the “New World.”” “Arrivants” is a term borrowed from Caribbean author Kamau Brathwaite that Byrd uses to “signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe.”<sup>45</sup> Byrd challenges conventional categorizations of societies engrained through colonialist violence and discourse that have resulted in the erasure and silencing of Indigenous peoples, as well as false illusions of their sovereignty. Byrd employs literature to underscore the absence of indigeneity despite the pervasiveness of Shakespeare’s Caliban in theories of colonial history, as well as to

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<sup>44</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxxiv.

<sup>45</sup> Byrd, xix.

reveal the masking of indigeneity evident in Guyanese author Wilson Harris'

*Jonestown*.<sup>46</sup> Byrd's critique of Harris is crucial, as it reveals tendencies of those in marginalized societies, including those descended from enslavement, to conform, be it perhaps unknowingly, to various aspects of colonial economic, social, and political rhetoric. This rhetoric not only held power in the past, but still holds power in the present, as nation-states promote a form of inclusivity that continues to mask or to erase indigeneity. Byrd's methodology in using literature, in conjunction with legal cases, press, and government documents, to upset entrenched hierarchical positionings of societies still shaped by colonialism is echoed in my study.

Shona Jackson's *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (2012) underscores the complexities of racialization and the problems of "binary approaches" in studying colonial history, with a focus on indigeneity in Guyana.<sup>47</sup> Jackson examines the relations of Creoles (defined by Jackson as descendants of Black, Indian, Chinese, and Portuguese labourers) and Indigenous peoples (including the communities of Akawaio, Arawak, Arecuna, Carib, Makushi, Patamona, Waiwai, Wapishana, and Warru that are acknowledged by the Guyanese government), and argues that Creoles, shaped by the labour institutions of the colonial state, have come to self-

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<sup>46</sup> Byrd, 59–61, 67, 110–15.

<sup>47</sup> Shona Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 3.

identify as indigenous in national discourse since the 1970s, thus silencing and erasing actual Indigenous communities.<sup>48</sup> Like Byrd, Jackson reveals the entrenchment of colonialist mentalities, even among those who endured enslavement, stating that “those ethnic groups coercively brought into a territory in which Indigenous Peoples exist now hold identities through which settler colonial power works affectively: whether deliberately or unwittingly, they extend the colonial subordination of Indigenous Peoples.”<sup>49</sup> To break away from the limitations of traditional binaries, Jackson uses the term “settler” and “subaltern settler” when referring to Afro- and Indo-Guyanese who, while distinct groups in their history and culture, often perpetuated Enlightenment ideals of labour and economy, thus contributing to Indigenous communities’ marginalization through to the present.<sup>50</sup> Just as Byrd’s sources include literature and other archival documents, Jackson examines speeches, interviews, press, as well as a variety of literary sources, including Aimé Césaire’s *The Tempest*. Jackson both consults and confronts Byrd’s analysis of Caliban, and with specific focus on Césaire’s work, Jackson argues that Césaire participates in the indigenizing of Afro-Creole societies. Jackson contends that Césaire engages in anticolonial-nationalist discourse yet still provides a proletarian emphasis of the power that goes with labour.<sup>51</sup> Jackson highlights how anti-colonial

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<sup>48</sup> Jackson, 6, 211.

<sup>49</sup> Jackson, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Jackson, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Jackson, 81–82, 88.

literature often provides imagery of a Creole society's indigeneity, yet that society has been shaped by the labour paradigms of colonialism and Marxist ideologies, while carrying the need of "transforming exile into the substance of belonging."<sup>52</sup> Jackson underscores how literature in Creole societies "charts the rise of national consciousness," with themes of migration and labour, while writings on Indigenous peoples often are problematic due to erasures that are inherent in both realist and postmodern works.<sup>53</sup> Like Byrd, Jackson employs literature to reveal the continuing power of colonialist mentalities, and to challenge presumptions created through the methodological tendencies of colonial studies that are shaped by engrained racial and social hierarchical categories.

Other scholars consulting literary works in conjunction with historical sources to disrupt conventional categorizations focus more deliberately on providing evidence of points of connection between seemingly discordant societies. In *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), Lisa Lowe builds on the studies by Byrd and Jackson in consulting literature, as well as autobiography and government records, to underscore how "liberalism" has been assumed to be realized through revolution, when in fact it has been constructed and maintained through dependence on forms of subjugation. Colonial systems of labour have made liberation possible for settler colonists, while resulting in

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<sup>52</sup> Jackson, 211.

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, 218.

the “modern hierarchies of race” and consequences of colonial violence that are perpetuated in the present.<sup>54</sup> Lowe confronts contradictions of liberalism found across Europe, North America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia in order to challenge “the tyranny of world history, whose categories and frameworks have not permitted understanding of the *connections* among various peoples, differentially affected by empire.”<sup>55</sup> Lowe states that “I focus on relation across differences rather than equivalence, on the convergence of asymmetries rather than the imperatives of identity.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, Lowe extends her study around societies that while distinct, are related due to their labour that renders colonially-defined freedoms obtainable and enforceable for settler colonists. In providing this analysis of liberalism across space, time, and culture, Lowe contends that literary sources can provide valuable insights that challenge notions gleaned only from the archives, as literature played a significant role in colonial societies in both “mediating and resolving liberalism’s contradictions.”<sup>57</sup> Through consulting literary sources Lowe identifies and dissects the formulation of colonial discourse constituted through the violence imposed on societies that each have their own intricate histories and identities. In this study that comparatively examines Acadian and French Caribbean histories, literature enables racial and social categories

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<sup>54</sup> Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 36.

<sup>55</sup> Lowe, 174.

<sup>56</sup> Lowe, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Lowe, 46.

that are rooted in colonialism and that inhibit possibilities of finding cross-cultural “connections” to be challenged and disrupted.<sup>58</sup>

Most recently, in *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019), Tiffany Lethabo King employs literary sources to add layers to the narrative of settler-Black-Indigenous relations. King echoes Byrd’s emphasis on the endurance of colonization through the possession of Indigenous lands, but rather than employing the language of “arrivant,” King instead underscores how Black and Indigenous peoples together made “difficult and agonizing choices when it came to negotiating and fighting for their existence.”<sup>59</sup> King confronts in a different way the limitations imposed by conventional colonial categorizations, by underscoring how land is often associated with the Indigenous and is reflective of enduring struggles of dispossession, while the sea is associated with the enslaved and is reflective of ongoing consequences of enslaved exploitation. Where land and sea meet there is the creation of the “shoal,” a place where the ocean water is low and where land and sea engage in a way that is moving and ever-changing. According to King, the “shoal” is representative of the interacting of Black and Indigenous experience through colonization with the perpetuation of “conquest” rooted in inscribed colonial desires of genocide and

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<sup>58</sup> Lowe, 174.

<sup>59</sup> Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), xi.

enslavement.<sup>60</sup> To achieve her aim of underscoring how imperialist “conquest” continues to be manifest today, King consults literary, film, and artistic sources and determines that “By assembling, shoaling, and rubbing disparate texts against one another, unexpected openings emerge where different voices are brought into relationship.”<sup>61</sup> While King’s study differentiates from Byrd and Jackson in underscoring solidarities between Black and Indigenous peoples, King joins with Byrd, Jackson, and Lowe in consulting literary sources and employing them in ways that reveal the constraints of engrained categories constituted by colonialism, with its embedded racisms, that are perpetuated to the present.

In reflecting on the colonial experiences of genocide, dispossession, slavery, labour, and occupancy of land for Acadians and for those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the question surfaces of whether labels of settler-Black-Indigenous are restrictive for better understanding the colonial, anti-, and postcolonial identities of these Atlantic, diasporic, and Francophone societies. Casting yet another label is problematic, but rather than being confined by the power implications of the aforementioned categories, rhizomatic theory allows them to be examined as having connections as “tenants of empire.” Tenancy does not connote equivalence on a hierarchical spectrum nor unanimity on an occupational plane, but allows space for

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<sup>60</sup> King, 4.

<sup>61</sup> King, 30.

experiential similarities. Just as Byrd and Jackson challenge engrained presumptions by pointing to how descendants of enslaved Black populations have occupied former Indigenous lands and functioned within a settler colonial capitalist society, this study will explore how the same has held true for Acadian society while being manifest in unique ways. As a consequence, French Caribbean and Acadian literary evolution share points of convergence during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the societies began using print language to confront imposed histories and marginalization stemming from their colonial pasts. In building on the works by Byrd, Jackson, Lowe, and King, this study will employ literature not only to bring to the foreground problems of hierarchical categorization and colonial silencing and erasure, but will also provide evidence of convergence between these societies in wrestling with inclusion and distinction when it comes to “belonging.”

### **Cogent Convergences**

Identifying instances of historical convergence between such diverse communities as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent and Acadians may be crucial in altering our approach to studying colonial hierarchies of the French Atlantic World by broadening our perceptions of the outcomes of colonial violence and by enabling us to more vividly identify enduring legacies of colonial institutions. Through the twentieth century, authors in these Atlantic regions began to confront problems they saw in the

biases of national historiography, the faultiness of colonial archives, and the struggles their societies have encountered due to what scholar Samir Dayal has identified as “diasporic double consciousness.”<sup>62</sup>

To begin this comparative study, it is critical to acknowledge that one of the most profound similarities found between these communities is that of their historiography, as they have been marginalized in colonial and national historical narratives. Historian Laurent Dubois provides an analysis of the “dilemmas” in historiography for those in the French Caribbean, and many of his insights apply to Acadians under the umbrella of Canadian national and British colonial history as well:

And this points us to one of the central dilemmas of French Caribbean historiography: although the history it tells is in fact of profound broader significance, particularly for the history of France, within French academic institutions themselves it must still struggle against forces that marginalize it and consign it to the edges of historical inquiry. There are promising signs that this is beginning to change, but outside of the universities in the French Antilles itself, notably in Martinique, there is still a long way to go before the history of the Antilles is integrated to the extent it should be within the institutions and curriculum of French universities. [...] There is, of course, nothing unique about this problem, which the DOMs share with the rest of the Caribbean and with much of the ‘post-colonial’ world (of which it may or may not be a part); but it does exist with particular force there, because the lack of nationhood means a lack of fully autonomous educational institutions, and because the economic and juridical situation has created a context in which perhaps half of the “Antillean” population in fact lives in metropolitan France, and in which Antillean realities are profoundly shaped on a daily level by French companies and institutions

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<sup>62</sup> Dayal, “Diaspora and Double Consciousness,” 54.

(hospitals, universities, the police force) that are often staffed by metropolitan visitors.<sup>63</sup>

For Acadians, their history currently garners greater regional, national, and international attention than it did for much of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, as with the Antillean “lack of nationhood” and with the fields of history and education being in many ways dominated by Anglophone society, economy, and institutions, Acadian historiography remains on the margins of Canadian national and British colonial history.<sup>64</sup>

Added to the problems of marginalization in nation-state historical understanding, there are difficulties in knowing Acadian and French Caribbean history due to the power of the colonial archives, as well as their experiences of diasporic double consciousness. For both societies there is evidence of absences, silences, and fragmentation when it comes to their presence in the archives as a consequence of colonial authority, high rates of illiteracy, and forced displacement (for the Acadians, there is record of diminishing rates of literacy once they fell under British control from 1710 until their Deportation).<sup>65</sup>

As will be explored further in the third chapter, their early press sheds light on an existing

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<sup>63</sup> Laurent Dubois, “History’s Quarrel: The Future of the Past in the French Caribbean,” in *Beyond Fragmentation: Perspectives on Caribbean History*, ed. Juanita De Barros, Audra Diptee, and David V. Trotman (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 222.

<sup>64</sup> Reid, “Écrire l’Acadie en lien avec les mondes atlantique et autochtone,” 255.

<sup>65</sup> Gisa I. Hynes, “Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755,” *Acadiensis* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1973): 7–8, 17; Louis J. Dugas, “L’alphabétisation des Acadiens, 1700-1850” (Master’s Thesis, Ottawa, Université d’Ottawa, 1992), ii, 28–29, 67–68; Laurent Dubois, “Maroons in the Archives: The Uses of the Past in the French Caribbean,” in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 293–94.

dualism that rendered these societies' early literature, including historical narratives and poetry, subject to the power of colonialist rhetoric and discourse.

W.E.B. Du Bois's theory of "double consciousness" presented in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) emphasizes how Black Americans came to value their worth using a measurement scale set by the dominant, prejudiced white majority, as they looked at themselves through the eyes of that majority.<sup>66</sup> Paul Gilroy further broadens the term double consciousness in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), when he applies it to descendants of African diasporic populations. Gilroy argues that many societies that developed due to African diaspora have gone through three stages in pursuing political engagement. The first stage has been to overcome the enslavement that resulted in them being "forced into illiteracy and held there by terror," the second has been the pursuit of citizenship with its promised rights and liberties, and the third has been movements to acquire greater autonomy as a society.<sup>67</sup> While Du Bois's language of "double consciousness" applied strictly to Black Americans, Gilroy's incorporation of this theory has led to studies of other diasporic societies who have fought to mold (or to re-mold) themselves inside political, economic, social, and cultural structures constructed and maintained by a more dominant group.

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<sup>66</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 112, quote on 123.

Samir Dayal published an article in 1996 entitled “Diaspora and double consciousness” where after cautioning against the over-generalization of diasporic societies, argues that many diasporics tend to find themselves “neither in nor quite outside the narratives of nation in which they are interpellated and subordinated.”<sup>68</sup> In 2005, Vijay Agnew edited a collection by scholars examining various ethnic and racial groups who migrated to Canada, and Agnew asserts that “The diasporic individual often has a double consciousness” where they find themselves feeling “emotionally invested” in their former homeland at the same time that they grow as participants in what they perceive as their new homeland.<sup>69</sup> In 2020, through research on how W.E.B. Du Bois’s theory was influenced by the time he spent studying in Berlin and witnessing anti-Semitism, James Thomas contends that “For Du Bois, double consciousness is more than a theory of race or racism, it is a political theory, in that double consciousness results from minority groups’ uneven efforts to incorporate into a racialized nation-state.”<sup>70</sup> In each of these studies, there is a broadening interpretation of double consciousness to where it becomes applied to select diasporic societies who, as a result of their uprooting, struggle to self-identify. Economic hardships and social prejudices result in instances

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<sup>68</sup> Dayal, “Diaspora and Double Consciousness,” 54.

<sup>69</sup> Agnew Vijay, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>70</sup> James M. Thomas, “Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the ‘Jewish Question,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, no. 8 (January 2020): 1337.

where they gauge their own worth by looking through the eyes of the more dominant political and social class, while using systems of measurement designed to function inside the structures built and fortified by that class.

This diasporic double consciousness surfaces in articles, letters, and early poetry by writers of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as by Acadian writers in the mid- to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but a growing quest for unification in each society included beginning to self-identify and led to attempts to write their own histories. Literature that began to re-frame their history went to press courtesy of educated elites in the Caribbean and Atlantic Canada. In *The Black Jacobins* (1938), Trinidadian historian and political activist C.L.R. James took archival material and placed it in his own narrative of the Haitian Revolution with intentions to upset conventional French nationalist discourse.<sup>71</sup> James's study is cited throughout works by scholars in academic literary and historical fields including Carolyn Fick, Laurent Dubois, Philippe Girard, Charles Forsdick, and Christian Høgsbjerg, and has contributed to bringing the Haitian Revolution out of the margins of French colonial history.<sup>72</sup> In his book, James disrupts former perceptions of the power of empires by granting agency to

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<sup>71</sup> Anna Grimshaw, ed., *The C.L.R. James Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 2, 5, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 4, 239; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 2; Philippe Girard, *Toussaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 322; Charles Forsdick and Christian Høgsbjerg, *Toussaint Louverture: A Black Jacobin in the Age of Revolutions* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 2–3, 10.

the enslaved, he counters popular suppositions regarding France's history of "freedom," and he challenges French nationalist assumptions concerning the meaning of "universal" rights and to whom those rights should apply.<sup>73</sup>

Just as James led twenty-first-century historians in digging deeper in the colonial archives and in looking at those archives through a different lens to challenge engrained mindsets concerning French Caribbean history, so too did Acadian Antoine-J. Léger aim to disrupt assumptions of blame when it came to the cause of the Acadian Deportation, as well as the silencing of critical aspects of the event. He published *Elle et lui. Tragique idylle du peuple acadien* (1940) and *Une fleur d'Acadie. Un épisode du grand dérangement* (1946), with the goal of framing colonial archives in a way that would oppose arguments from Anglophone scholars who justified Britain's decisions and actions with the expulsion.<sup>74</sup> Léger, while biased based on Acadian experience, places the archives inside a narrative that emphasizes Acadian innocence in their desire to maintain neutrality, and brings to the foreground various experiences of tribulation and survival through their Deportation, exile, and in some cases, return to Atlantic Canada.<sup>75</sup> These

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<sup>73</sup> C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 25, 33, 148–50, 306 (originally published 1938).

<sup>74</sup> For examples of early works by Anglophone researchers and writers, see Thomas B. Akins, ed., *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Charles Annand, 1869), <https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromp00akingoog/page/n111/mode/2up>; Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1884).

<sup>75</sup> Leanna Thomas, "Disrupting the Archives and Loosening the *Evangeline* Knot: Finding an Undercurrent in Antoine-J. Léger's *Elle et lui* and *Une fleur d'Acadie*," *Acadiensis* 50, no. 2 (Autumn 2021): 186–87, 194, 202.

texts by James and Léger provide evidence of literature being identified among French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians as a means to bring greater understanding of pasts of diaspora and resettlement, as well as of quests for identity and autonomy. As Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian literature has developed in the twentieth century, it has served as a means for authors to confront flawed historical understandings due to absences in national historiography, as well as problems of colonial archives and the restraints of duality. As a result of these shared intentions among authors, a growing number of studies by literary scholars identify connections in the development and content of some Acadian and French Antillean literature.

In an article “L’inquiétude généalogique: tourment du Nouveau Monde” (1990), Éloïse Brière compares works by Antonine Maillet and Simone Schwarz-Bart that are inspired by the folkloric Ti-Jean character. Brière argues that Schwarz-Bart’s *Ti-Jean l’horizon* (1979) and Maillet’s *Le huitième jour* (1986) demonstrate that these societies share a similar “anxiety” over their “origins” due to their adversities of diaspora, of being silent in written histories, and of having popular identity myths fabricated by individuals outside of their communities.<sup>76</sup> The Ti-Jean stories that stem from oral tradition feature heroes who face off against death in a land where myth and reality come together, but

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<sup>76</sup> Éloïse Brière, “L’inquiétude généalogique: tourment du Nouveau Monde,” *Présence francophone*, no. 36 (1990): 57–59.

where space and time do not hold the same limitations. The heroes are reborn as they struggle to overcome the intentional silencing of their past that leaves them unacknowledged and covers up the imperial wrongs committed in the “New World.”<sup>77</sup> Brière concludes that the endings of these stories diverge as Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean is unable to find full resolution to his genealogical quest with what turns out to be a momentary return to Africa, in contrast to Maillet’s Big-as-a-Fist [Gros comme le Poing] who manages to return to his community, yet Brière’s article highlights many similarities, including the authors’ desire to use their peoples’ folklore to overcome their “collective amnesia” of aspects of their colonial pasts.<sup>78</sup>

In François Paré’s previously cited chapter “L’antillanité de l’Acadie” in *La distance habitée* (2003), Paré argues that French Antillean and French Canadian societies function in “counterpoint,” with harmonies found in their literature.<sup>79</sup> Paré contends that the “antillanité” that Glissant defines through his *Discours antillais* (1981) may be applied across other western French “archipelagos” and specifically Acadie. He explains that while French Caribbean and Acadian communities are distinct, they are tied together by histories of colonization, marginalization, diaspora, and exile.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, select Acadian literature of the 1980s fits as being “antillaise,” as a result of Acadian society

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<sup>77</sup> Brière, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Brière, 60, 64.

<sup>79</sup> François Paré, *La distance habitée* (Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2003), 14.

<sup>80</sup> Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” 187, 191.

having a history of “tragic dispossession.” This tragedy results in the “paradox” of having an obsession with returning to their pre-dispersal origins (“retour”), yet having an existence that is dependent on the very “vanishing” of those origins (“détour”).<sup>81</sup> Paré asserts that Acadian literary works reflecting “antillanité” point toward transformation, with the embrace and pursuit of *détour*, as Acadian society evolves into its own entity through experiences of both “misappropriation” and “intercultural transfers.”<sup>82</sup> According to Paré, not all Acadian authors reflect this “antillanité” as much of Acadian society remains tightly bound to past tribulations. Nonetheless, Paré maintains that Glissant’s “antillanité” is evident in contemporary Acadian poetry by Francis Daigle, Dyane Léger, Jean-Marc Dugas, and Jean Babineau.<sup>83</sup>

In a dissertation entitled “Le rôle de la femme dans le processus d’élaboration des mythes identitaires africains, cadiens, antillais: Yénnéga, Télumée et Évangéline,” (2009) Karim Simpure explores how for Cadiens (Cajuns), French Antilleans of African descent, and people in Burkina Faso, women’s roles in their societies were unconventional in the colonial sense, and became critical in these societies’ construct of collective identity.<sup>84</sup> Simpure argues that “a comparative analysis of the role of women in the perspective of a

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<sup>81</sup> Paré, 191.

<sup>82</sup> Paré, 194–95.

<sup>83</sup> Paré, 195.

<sup>84</sup> Karim Simpure, “Le rôle de la femme dans le processus d’élaboration des mythes identitaires africain, cadien, antillais: Yénnéga, Télumée et Évangéline” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Louisiana, 2009), 4.

collective identity construction of these three entities reveals disturbing coincidences that cannot be put down to a manifestation of pure chance.”<sup>85</sup> Simpore examines the heroism, symbolism, and immortalization of women through popular literature in these societies who experienced being “dominated, exploited, and relegated” by colonialism. It is important to note that Simpore acknowledges that *Evangeline* was written by American author Henry Longfellow, while drawing attention to how it was embraced and celebrated by Acadian and Cajun societies beginning in the late nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Simpore delineates how literature renders manifest the historical experiences of women in these societies who endured a “double crushing of identity from the inside and from the outside” that resulted in their need for “courage, selflessness, and endurance.”<sup>87</sup> In considering the “colonial penetrations” experienced by these societies, Simpore emphasizes how these literary works bring to the forefront that women were essential not only for their own survival, but to guard their families and to preserve their communities.<sup>88</sup>

In 2011, Jacqueline Couti published an article entitled “L’errance d’exil et le recadrage mémorial dans *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet et *Chronique des sept*

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<sup>85</sup> Simpore, 4. “Enfin, une analyse comparative du rôle de la femme dans la perspective d’une construction identitaire collective de ces trois entités nous révèle des coïncidences troublantes qui ne sauraient être mises sur le compte d’une manifestation du pur hasard.”

<sup>86</sup> Simpore, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Simpore, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Simpore, 15–16.

*misères* de Patrick Chamoiseau,” and provides a comparative analysis of how Maillet and Chamoiseau confront existing oppositions of history and memory for their societies as they employ literature in attempting “to fill the holes of History for future generations.”<sup>89</sup> Couti brings to the foreground similarities in Maillet’s and Chamoiseau’s literature, including their “oraliture” that brings orality to the printed text, their Rabelaisian style with the carnivalesque, their polyphonic narration, their implications of memory, exile, and wandering, and their metaphor of transportation (with Pélégie’s “wagon [charrette]” and Pipi’s “wheelbarrow [brouette]”).<sup>90</sup> In further dissecting each of these works, Couti underscores the complexity of each of these society’s diasporic experiences and their remembrances, emphasizing how Maillet venerates the pursuit of returning to a native land that is still remembered, while Chamoiseau underscores the folly of trying to return to an Africa that has been forgotten or erased from memory. While Maillet narrates a single story of displacement, Chamoiseau delineates three, including the African diaspora due to trans-Atlantic slavery, urban migration after abolition, and consequences of departmentalization that have perpetuated dispossession for many Antillean people.<sup>91</sup> Like Brière, who underscores how Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean is unable to fully

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<sup>89</sup> Jacqueline Couti, “L’errance d’exil et le recadrage mémoriel dans *Pélégie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet et *Chronique des sept misères* de Patrick Chamoiseau,” *Romance Studies* 29, no. 2 (April 2011): 93, quote on 95. “Tout comme Maillet, les auteurs créolistes essaient de remplir les trous de l’Histoire pour les générations futures.”

<sup>90</sup> Couti, 94–95.

<sup>91</sup> Couti, 97–98, 102.

constitute his genealogy even with his return to Africa, Couti explains that Chamoiseau describes a “truncated genealogy” as Pipi searches to bring sense to a “fragmented memory.” In comparison, Maillet emphasizes the importance of genealogy in preserving a memory that is less fragmented, but that requires constitution through communal memory with a “multiplicity of voices.”<sup>92</sup> Couti renders apparent distinctions in these novels, but also reveals the critical nature of the “mythical narrative” for these societies with histories of displacement in pursuing and shaping knowledge of their identity and their history.<sup>93</sup>

Scholar Corina Crainic, who has worked closely with François Paré and specializes in French Caribbean literature, also provides comparative analysis of renowned Caribbean and Acadian novels in recently published articles. In “Territoires perdus, terres d’élection: *Omeros* de Derek Walcott, *Les Indes* d’Édouard Glissant et *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet,” (2017) Crainic contends that these novels reveal the difficulty of having a “sense of belonging to a land” for these societies that share a desire to “reconstitute themselves” as a result of displacement, and of enslavement for those in the Caribbean.<sup>94</sup> In referencing Glissant’s theory of

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<sup>92</sup> Couti, 100, 102.

<sup>93</sup> Couti, 93.

<sup>94</sup> Corina Crainic, “Territoires perdus, terres d’élection: *Omeros* de Derek Walcott, *Les Indes* d’Édouard Glissant et *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet,” *Port Acadie: Revue interdisciplinaire en études acadiennes*, no. 32 (2017): 38.

“archipelago” and Paré’s discussion of archipelagic experiences for Martinicans, Guadeloupeans, and Acadians, Crainic emphasizes the adoption of colonialist yearnings for “a land of one’s own” where its possession “confers power” and enables existence.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, Crainic argues that these authors do not equate this possession to the formation of a nation-state, but imply the necessity of other means for the “recreation and reappropriation of the lands, and no longer the territories.”<sup>96</sup> Crainic differentiates between the colonial violence endured by Acadian and Antillean societies, but brings into dialogue their wrestling with land possession and identity formation that is rendered apparent through their literature.

In another article “Amériques, langues et espace dans *Le quatrième siècle* d’Édouard Glissant et *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet” (2018) Crainic builds more specifically on a study by Joubert Satyre (2009) that calls for French Caribbean writings to be classified among American, rather than French, literature. Through the influence of Satyre and Paré, Crainic broadens the term “américanité” to include the French Antillean and Acadian communities that share histories of “colonial violence” in the Americas.<sup>97</sup> While continuing to underscore distinctions in these societies’ colonial histories, Crainic examines how Glissant and Maillet, in narrating histories of violence,

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<sup>95</sup> Crainic, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Crainic, 49.

<sup>97</sup> Corina Crainic, “Amériques, langues et espace dans *Le quatrième siècle* d’Édouard Glissant et *Pélagie-la-Charrette* d’Antonine Maillet,” *Francophonies d’Amérique*, no. 44–45 (Spring 2018): 22, 26–27.

both confront “invented” narratives that “mask” colonial realities in the western hemisphere.<sup>98</sup> Crainic integrates Glissant’s theory of the archipelago to connect the Antillean and Acadian communities, and contends that they share the need to “reinvent themselves” in a way that “assures them the right to dignity.” Even with this connection, Crainic identifies the challenges for these societies of finding dignity, observing that “this archipelago would be both overwhelmed by the American complexity of the founding violence, and paradoxically indebted to it because it is a product of it. It would be an archipelago suffering from colonial excesses, but also born of them.”<sup>99</sup> This emphasis on “founding violence” that brings “indebtedness” echoes aforementioned theories by Byrd and Jackson that point to both the resistance and the participation of Black societies in the United States and in Guyana in perpetuating engrained colonial ideologies of politics and economics.

In 2020, Crainic edited a themed publication of *Francophonies d’Amérique* entitled *Entre solitudes, contraintes et aspirations: de l’Acadie, des Caraïbes et de la Louisiane* that featured interdisciplinary contributions from Lise Gauvin, Joubert Satyre, and Eliana Văgălău, as well as the aforementioned articles by Joseph Yvon Thériault and Clint Bruce. Crainic opens by explaining that an invitation to contributors

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<sup>98</sup> Crainic, 22–23.

<sup>99</sup> Crainic, 26. “Cet archipel serait à la fois bouleversé par la complexité américaine de la violence fondatrice et paradoxalement redevable à celle-ci puisqu’il en est issu. Il s’agirait d’un archipel souffrant des excès coloniaux, mais advenu aussi par eux.”

evolved based on identifying in the Francophone communities of these regions “a commonality, a composition, a *community* of fragility, of doubt, of disparity, of the always possible disappearance of a past where tearing, uprooting, and erasing constitute some of the common denominators.”<sup>100</sup> Crainic builds on Glissant’s theory of “Relation” to underscore both the “dissonances” and the “complicities” in Acadian, French Caribbean, and Louisiana histories that become evident through these societies’ literature.<sup>101</sup> In further enforcing a theory of *américanité*, Crainic emphasizes how conquest and violence are inscribed in the Americas as a result of war, exploitation, subjugation, enslavement, and annihilation, while also acknowledging the diversity and complexity of the histories of Indigenous communities, the enslaved, and settler colonists.<sup>102</sup> Crainic draws attention to the critical nature of language for each Francophone community, including the threat of losing the French language compared to French being imposed, and the diverse ways that each society has employed literature in confronting politics of language while also grasping at a means for expression.<sup>103</sup> This collection participates in trying to disrupt what Paré previously identified as the “reciprocal, almost fraternal experience of indifference and mutual forgetfulness”

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<sup>100</sup> Crainic, “Introduction: Entre solitudes, contraintes et aspirations,” 11. “une mise en commun, une composition, une *communauté* de la fragilité, du doute, de la disparité, de la disparition toujours possible, d’un passé où déchirement, arrachement et effacement constituent quelques-uns des dénominateurs communs.”

<sup>101</sup> Crainic, 13.

<sup>102</sup> Crainic, 15–16.

<sup>103</sup> Crainic, 17–18.

suffered by Franco-American communities in relation to metropolitan culture out of France and Britain that dominate the Caribbean, as well as the overwhelmingly Anglophone cultures of North America.<sup>104</sup>

### **Literature and Historical Understanding**

For Acadians, as well as for those of African descent in Guadeloupe and Martinique, the spheres of literature and history became not only more proximate, but also intertwined as poets, essayists, and novelists focused on the colonial struggles of their ancestors. In using print literary expression to heal from traumas of diaspora and marginalization, authors in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries diversified the forms of literature they deployed to convey their pasts to broader audiences, pasts they had maintained for centuries through orality, including storytelling and music. With the expansion of print media, the relationship between literature and history became symbiotic – and formational – within each group. This study examines the historical evolution of these societies' literature, as well as how these communities searched for political, economic, and social cohesion with print cultures that transitioned from voicing allegiance to empires, to identifying and reckoning with enduring struggles of inequality and marginalization, and to framing their own historical narratives. To date, the integration of

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<sup>104</sup> Paré, "L'antillanité de l'Acadie," 186.

literature as a primary source is surfacing more frequently in works by French Caribbean historians than by Acadian historians, yet it is approached more frequently as a source that provides clues for navigating the archives, rather than a source that provides historical evidence.

In building on the aforementioned studies of Byrd, Jackson, Lowe, and King, this study employs methodologies of literary analysts, historians, and sociologists who bring attention to the essentiality of literature for oral tradition societies who experienced colonial violence. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said devotes several chapters to the literature of communities shaped by colonization, arguing that “stories ... become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.”<sup>105</sup> Their stories, created through experience and through imaginations shaped by that experience, are a means of resistance among those who have become conscious of being “prisoners in their own land.”<sup>106</sup> For Acadian writers and for writers of African descent from Martinique and Guadeloupe, their literature often underscores this simultaneous sense of both entrapment and displacement in the land where they live and labour, resulting in their creation of imagined homelands. Said asserts that for nationalist movements in societies marginalized and displaced by colonialism, having a

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<sup>105</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), xii.

<sup>106</sup> Said, 214, 225.

national language is crucial, yet these movements prove “inert” without also having “the practice of a national culture – from slogans to pamphlets and newspapers, from folktales and heroes to epic poetry, novels, and drama.”<sup>107</sup> Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian nationalist movements in the 1960s through the 1980s include a passionate call for language rights, yet their literature indicates that their “practice of a national culture” became splintered. Their literary works diverged, with some authors searching for resolution to their tragic pasts, some calling for full political autonomy based on present issues of labour and economy, and others pursuing cultural legitimation inside the dominant political structure.

In 2013, Joseph Yvon Thériault published *Évangéline: Contes d'Amérique* intending to show how ideas (in this case, expressed through a fictional poem) can participate in “making” societies.<sup>108</sup> In an approach leaning toward intellectual history while aiming for a “conceptual history of politics” in the sociological field, Thériault contends that fictional works can play an integral role, alongside economy and politics, in the birth of societies. Thériault observes that “ideas serve in making societies,” and ideas expressed via narration can be “not only abstract, but part of historic reality.”<sup>109</sup> In

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<sup>107</sup> Said, 215.

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Évangéline: Contes d'Amérique* (Montréal: Éditions Québec-Amérique, 2013), 15.

<sup>109</sup> Thériault, 15. “Les idées servent à façonner les sociétés [...]. Elles ne sont pas seulement des choses abstraites, elles font partie du réel historique.”

arguing that past events go unknown unless they become articulated and are “given a meaning that is significant for a certain audience,” Thériault determines that knowledge of the Acadian past has happened via Longfellow’s poem and its interpretations among Americans, Acadians, and Cajuns.<sup>110</sup> Through this work, Thériault claims that “the only way to gain recognition for small cultures that have neither a powerful political system nor a powerful industry is to argue that they have suffered universal harm,” leading to the argument that the Evangeline narrative played that role in gaining recognition for Acadian society.<sup>111</sup> Thériault underscores the continuing power of Longfellow’s poem for Acadians and Cajuns, as this first popular telling of the existence of an Acadian community serves as a type of “genesis” for Acadian society.<sup>112</sup> According to Thériault, even Acadian literary works, such as Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, that appear to stand counter Evangeline in fact only “invert” the story by speaking of return and resistance.<sup>113</sup> This inversion does not cut the ties binding Acadian culture to the Evangeline narrative, but functions as a “darkroom negative,” where different aspects of

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<sup>110</sup> Thériault, 16. “Les évènements, même historiques, n’apparaissent que quand un énonciateur leur donne un sens qui est significatif pour un certain public.”

<sup>111</sup> Thériault, 364. “la seule manière d’acquérir une reconnaissance pour les petites cultures qui n’ont ni système politique puissant ni industrie culturelle puissante est de faire valoir qu’elles ont subi un tort universel.”

<sup>112</sup> Thériault, 338.

<sup>113</sup> Thériault, 238–39.

the image now grab the viewers' attention, yet core components remain the same.<sup>114</sup>

Thériault emphasizes the integral nature of this piece of literature in the creation and preservation of Acadian and Cajun societies, yet he does not give adequate credence to works by Antoine-J. Léger, Raymond Guy LeBlanc, and Antonine Maillet in impacting Acadian political and historical discourse, as well as to Maillet's role in bringing a heightened awareness of problems in historical knowledge of the Acadian colonial past, both to a broader audience of Acadians and to other Francophone and Anglophone societies around the world.

Twentieth-century scholars who study the French Caribbean tend to be more receptive to using literature as primary sources, including in studying epistemology and knowledge production through the "experience" and "violence" of colonization.<sup>115</sup> In 1981, Édouard Glissant published the renowned *Discours antillais* arguing that the French Caribbean falls under the power of a colonial "(H)istory" that is imposed, while the colonized are left on the periphery with a "non-history."<sup>116</sup> To combat the existence of this "non-history," Glissant puts equivalent values on history and literature as both are altered by space and time, and he grants agency to Caribbean literary authors in

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<sup>114</sup> For the language of "darkroom negative," but in the context of archival research, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 108.

<sup>115</sup> Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 780–81; King, *The Black Shoals*, 21.

<sup>116</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 62, 64, 75 (originally published 1981).

challenging and disrupting the colonially constructed “single (H)istory.”<sup>117</sup> Glissant sees literary expression as a means to better comprehend histories of those who experienced silencing in imperial archives and in narratives composed by European historians. Glissant’s text spawned a multitude of literary and historical studies, drastically altering methodologies and theories on Caribbean colonial and anti-colonial histories.

In 2003, Nick Nesbitt published *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature*, arguing that coming out of the First World War French Caribbean authors led a “second Antillean revolution” that did not occur through physical violence, but “via a reconstruction in human understanding and experience.” Nesbitt examines how after World War I literary forms such as poetry and literature became weapons used “to transform a Eurocentric worldview and power structure” and states that authors including Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, René Ménénil, and Édouard Glissant “initiated one of the most profound redistributions of political power in the twentieth century.”<sup>118</sup> Nesbitt reveals that these authors employed the “tools” they acquired through their studies in Paris from the 1930s to the 1950s to “undermine colonial violence and to transform the colonized subjects it had produced.”<sup>119</sup> According to Nesbitt, authors Césaire, Glissant, Daniel Maximin, Maryse Condé, and Edwidge Danticat “have

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<sup>117</sup> Glissant, 92–93.

<sup>118</sup> Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), xii–xiii.

<sup>119</sup> Nesbitt, xiii.

transformed colonial subjectivity, reconstructing an historical awareness lost amid the repressive violence of slavery, the plantation system, and the colonial control of historical discourse.”<sup>120</sup> Nesbitt reveals how these authors’ ability to “reconstruct an historical awareness” for their people has enabled these island societies to claim their history and assert their identity.

Soon after Nesbitt’s work that underscores the agency of those in the French Caribbean in shaping twentieth-century colonial history, Laurent Dubois published *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (2004). Just as Nesbitt underscores the tremendous impact of French Caribbean authors to French colonialism, decolonization, and the knowledge of Antillean history, Dubois draws focus to the centrality of the Caribbean islands in French colonial history by bringing to the forefront the agency of *gens de couleur* and the enslaved in Guadeloupe during the French Revolution. Dubois uncovers what is hidden in Guadeloupean history through an interdisciplinary approach merging the schools of “history, anthropology and literary criticism.”<sup>121</sup> Dubois largely examines colonial archives located in France and Guadeloupe, but also references Daniel Maximin’s *L’Isolé Soleil* and Alejo Carpentier’s *El siglo de las luces*, stating that these works helped him to

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<sup>120</sup> Nesbitt, xiv.

<sup>121</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 5.

“recognize” and to “transform” information found in the archives. Dubois respectfully acknowledges the importance of French Caribbean literary authors responding to Glissant’s call for them to carry the mantle of reclaiming their histories.<sup>122</sup> Concerning the relationship between history and literature, Dubois writes,

Maximin’s work, like that of the Martinican writers Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, raises the question of whether the stories of slaves can in fact ever be recovered through archival documents recorded by the masters and institutions who held them in bondage. . . . Novelists and historians have, of course, developed very different responses to the problem, and by understanding the difference between their approaches rather than conflating them we can perhaps open the way to a productive dialogue between the two genres for narrating the past.<sup>123</sup>

Dubois follows Maximin’s lead in granting the enslaved agency in gaining freedom as they demanded the rights of French citizenship, and he declares that their “demands for inclusion [...] marked a powerful blow to the system of slavery.”<sup>124</sup> Dubois does not incorporate these literary works throughout his study, remaining dependent on the archives to validate what he could see through the literature. Still, his study reveals how literary novels or poems can beneficially shape historians’ mindsets and methodologies as they research and interpret archival sources.<sup>125</sup>

Three years after publishing his book, Dubois provided a presentation and conference article that more specifically addresses the challenges of the Guadeloupean

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<sup>122</sup> Dubois, 14.

<sup>123</sup> Dubois, 14.

<sup>124</sup> Dubois, 2.

<sup>125</sup> Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 93; Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 14, 322, 425–29; See also Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 2–3, 10, 107, 130, 182.

archives and the usefulness of French Caribbean literary novels. According to Dubois, the Guadeloupean archives contain primary sources including nineteenth-century notary registers, juridical documents, property sales, marriage records, and sales or emancipations of the enslaved, but studying these documents requires “piecing together fragments and confronting many gaps.”<sup>126</sup> Dubois examines how author Daniel Maximin incorporates colonial archival documents into his narrative to construct an “invented archival document” that resituates the colonial material in a different context and brings different meanings.<sup>127</sup> Dubois contends that this is significant as Maximin is “in a sense narrating a ‘true’ past that the documents do not contain” as he deconstructs historical suppositions garnered solely through colonial archival research. With an appreciation of literature, Dubois observes, “Fiction widened the scope of my historical imagination, enabling me to make connections I had not thought of before between particular stories I encountered in the archives and the broader narrative I eventually developed.”<sup>128</sup> At the same time, Dubois cautions that some novels from the French Caribbean have “overemphasized the silences in the archives” and he encourages historians to take on the challenge of continuing to piece together fragmentary evidence through colonial archival research in France and the French Caribbean.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Dubois, “Maroons in the Archives,” 293–94.

<sup>127</sup> Dubois, 296.

<sup>128</sup> Dubois, 299.

<sup>129</sup> Dubois, 297.

More recently, Gary Wilder published the thought-provoking study *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (2015) and contends that authors and politicians Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor were ahead of their time in seeing problems of both colonialism and national independence. Wilder examines how Césaire and Senghor participated in decolonization coming out of World War II, aiming to “secure self-determination without the need for state sovereignty.”<sup>130</sup> Like Nesbitt and Dubois, who draw attention to the French Caribbean in leading the upset of twentieth-century colonial political power and the application of universal rights during revolution, Wilder underscores that rather than following behind European authors, educators, and politicians, Césaire and Senghor led in using “their work and acts to rethink, or unthink, the supposedly European parameters of modern thought” and in “challenging the assumption that the universal is European property.”<sup>131</sup> With attention to Césaire and departmentalization, Wilder weaves Césaire’s literature and poetry into the study to counter assumptions that Césaire’s literature critiquing colonialism is oppositional to his political aims with departmentalization. Wilder instead argues that, “If Césaire’s poetry was saturated by political sensibility, his political rhetoric was shaped by poetic knowledge, challenging the presuppositions of rational critical argument even

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<sup>130</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 1.

<sup>131</sup> Wilder, 9–10.

while practicing immanent critique.”<sup>132</sup> Wilder further contends that “For Césaire art was a privileged medium of true decolonization and decolonization a creative act through which Black self-determination could bring forth a new era of human history.”<sup>133</sup> In looking at current economic struggles and political conflicts, Wilder critiques the nationalism that Césaire and Senghor failed to deconstruct, and calls readers to consider how these authors’ theories may be applicable in moving forward. Like Dubois, Wilder uses Césaire’s literature as a source to influence interpretation of the archives, while also aligning with Glissant and Nesbitt who argue that literature plays a critical role in French Caribbean historical knowledge and identity formation.

In *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (2015), Marlene Daut brings to the surface “the transatlantic print culture of the Haitian Revolution” and shows how while the revolution may have become “silenced” in historical understanding as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued, it is not due to a lack of written documents that address the event. Daut underscores how a plethora of literature prior to 1865 emphasized that the Haitian Revolution was the result of those who were mixed-race desiring vengeance against white society, what she terms as a “mulatto/a vengeance narrative,” rather than being portrayed as a war for freedom

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<sup>132</sup> Wilder, 107.

<sup>133</sup> Wilder, 182.

and rights of citizenship. Daut draws attention to racial lexicon and its representation of the “popular consciousness,” where those who were not white were portrayed as “at once fascinating objects of study, desirable sexual partners, and dangerously degraded and volatile specimens of the New World to be feared, enslaved, or destroyed.”<sup>134</sup> Through the influence of Said’s contention of how studying history requires examining “representations” of what may be conceived to be “truth,” Daut identifies novels, short stories, poems, and plays as “closed artifacts” studied to understand the “system of knowledge” that evolved as “writers found the means to express what they ‘thought’ had happened, what they wished had happened, or what they hoped to convince others had happened.”<sup>135</sup> Through this literature, Daut contends that rather than the events in Saint Domingue being unimaginable by French society, Enlightenment ideologies contributed to the Haitian Revolution being “incessantly narrated in a particularly ‘racialized’ way that had the ultimate effect of subordinating the position of the Haitian Revolution to the French and American revolutions.”<sup>136</sup> Daut underscores the critical nature of literature in revealing conceptions of this historic event among societies spanning the Atlantic World.

Jacqueline Coutri’s *Dangerous Creole Liaisons: Sexuality and Nationalism in*

*French Caribbean Discourses from 1806 to 1897* (2016), followed by *Sex, Sea, and Self:*

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<sup>134</sup> Marlene L. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 7.

<sup>135</sup> Daut, 36.

<sup>136</sup> Daut, 3.

*Sexuality and Nationalism in French Caribbean Discourses, 1924-1948* (2021) each bring to the surface how literature reveals the interwoven and complex relationship between sexuality and nationalism for France and the French Caribbean islands. While *Dangerous Creole Liaisons* focuses primarily on texts by white Creole men, *Sex, Sea, and Self* turns attention to writings by men and women of African descent whose “gendered, sexualized, and racialized discourses” have been acts of “cultural and political resistance” when it comes to relating with the French metropole.<sup>137</sup> Through studying literature that has often been overlooked or disregarded, Couti underscores how as “the thread of white Creole ideology and colonial discourse remained tightly woven into the social fabric” of the French Caribbean, there were intricacies of resistance and conformity among Black and mixed-race individuals, whose works point to issues of racism and sexism instilled through French imperialism and nationalism.<sup>138</sup> Couti examines literature by Suzanne Lacascade, Paulette and Jane Nardal, Mayotte Capécia, Sully Lara, and Raphaël Tardon that reveal the critical nature of sexuality and gender when it comes to “nation-building” and perceptions of the relationship shared between the French Caribbean islands and France.<sup>139</sup> Couti identifies novels as being sources that are valuable on multiple fronts, as they are “archives of mental constructions,

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<sup>137</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 11.

<sup>138</sup> Couti, 6.

<sup>139</sup> Couti, 11.

representations, and images” while also serving as “commentaries on political activities and social unrest.”<sup>140</sup> Couti encourages seeing literature as an “expansive array of ‘historical’ documents,” meaning an archive that has often gone overlooked, and even discounted, in the field of historical study.<sup>141</sup>

Through the influence of the scholarly works described in this chapter, this comparative study of the historical evolution of French Caribbean and Acadian literature builds on studies that emphasize literature’s significance in historical understanding, and more specifically on those who acknowledge the critical nature of literature among French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians. This study offers valuable support to the works previously described by literary scholars including Éloïse Brière, François Paré, Jacqueline Couti, and Corina Crainic that begin to connect the Acadian and French Caribbean archipelagos, as I provide historical context that grounds and secures their propositions of connection.<sup>142</sup> In the opening texts of this chapter, Maillet and Glissant’s portrayal of the vastness of the sea implies the isolation of these regions, but the methodologies employed and the sources consulted in this study reveal that there

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<sup>140</sup> Couti, 20.

<sup>141</sup> Couti, 21.

<sup>142</sup> Brière, “L’inquiétude généalogique”; Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie”; Couti, “L’errance d’exil et le recadrage mémoriel”; Crainic, “Territoires perdus, terres d’élection”; Crainic, “Amériques, langues et espace”; Crainic, “Introduction: Entre solitudes, contraintes et aspirations.”

are critical historical connections between these “tenants of empire” of French Atlantic archipelagos.

### Chapter 3 – Negotiating the Lease: Genealogy and Early Press

“We have been called to France  
To take rank among the citizens  
And today the sun is milder  
We enjoy the republican right  
Ah! freedom,  
[...]  
We are the children of a country with a warm sun  
Accustomed to hard work  
Freedom has made us new men”<sup>1</sup> – Printed by A. Semac, “Souvenirs Républicains,” 1849

“Today a voice calls us  
To leave this sad and deep sleep,  
Which, for a long time, has kept us dormant,  
Toward our dear and worthy homeland.  
Since 1745 [sic], we have no more banner,  
Misfortune having assailed us from all sides,  
In our beloved and dear place,  
That has always been called Acadie.”<sup>2</sup> – Patriote, “Au Peuple Acadien,” 1867

The historical and literary connections evident among Martinican and Guadeloupean people of African descent and Acadians in the mid- to late nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted from their experiences of displacement and violence in their colonial pasts, as well as their centuries-long engagements with France. Before analyzing the dawn and development of their literature, it is critical to examine the context of their

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<sup>1</sup> “SOUVENIRS RÉPUBLICAINS (traduction)” in Nelly Schmidt, “Chansons des nouveaux libres de Guadeloupe et de Martinique, 1848-1851,” in *Chansons d’Afrique et des Antilles, Itinéraires et contacts de cultures*, vol. 8 (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1988), 118. “On nous a appelés en France / à prendre rang parmi les citoyens / et aujourd’hui, le soleil est plus doux / Nous jouissons du droit républicain / Ah! la liberté / [...] Nous sommes les enfants d’un pays au soleil chaud / Habitué au travail pénible; / La liberté nous a faits des hommes nouveaux”.

<sup>2</sup> Patriote, “AU PEUPLE ACADIEN,” *Le Moniteur acadien*, August 15, 1867. “Aujourd’hui une voix nous appelle / À sortir de ce triste et profond sommeil, / Qui, depuis longtemps, nous a tenu endormis, / Envers notre aimable et digne patrie. / Depuis 1745 [sic], nous n’avons plus d’étendard, / Le malheur nous ayant assailli de toute part, / Dans notre bette place chérie, / Qu’on a toujours appelé Acadie.”

respective seventeenth- and eighteenth-century histories that contributed to the formation of their sense of themselves as distinct communities that held the seeds of an idea of nationhood. In the seventeenth century, French migrants, who were recruited primarily by Isaac de Razilly, the governor of Acadia to relocate to North America in the 1630s, endured difficult living conditions in France before journeying across the Atlantic and forming settlements in the northeast. In the 1640s on the French Lesser Antilles, enslaved African peoples who were violently torn from their homelands and forced across the ocean laboured for others who claimed property ownership over them. The descendants of the French (who came to identify as Acadians) and of Africans (who came to identify as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent) who arrived in Atlantic coastal regions would adapt in their own ways to survive as they occupied lands that were exploited for private gain and fought over by the empires.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enslaved Africans and many freed people of colour in the French Caribbean, as well as Acadians, found themselves labouring largely for the benefit of either Britain or France's economic and political power. They occupied their American homelands as "tenants of empire," required to contribute through imposed forms of payment to the establishment and growth of the political, economic, and social structures of imperial systems. An outcome of these societies' experiences of adaptation, colonial warfare, labour exploitation, and dispossession were acts of counter-compliance toward the colonial ruling class who

claimed jurisdiction and control over the regions Acadians, as well as Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe, occupied. By the late eighteenth century, archival records reveal that members of the Afro-descendant population in the French Caribbean and Acadians were employing the self-identifying language of “nation,” providing evidence of a developing cohesiveness in pursuing securities and liberties often proclaimed in colonial rhetoric and promised to people who imperial powers recognized as colonial citizens. Enslaved Africans and their descendants in the French Caribbean, as well as Acadians, engaged in complex and changing relationships with empires, and did not rest silent or complacent as they endured the throes of imperial power. Their agency enabled a modicum of negotiation as tenants of empire, and contributed to the evolution of three distinct communities in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Atlantic Canada.

This chapter comparatively investigates seventeenth- and eighteenth-century experiences of displacement, diaspora, war, and labour in Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian colonial history, and examines how these experiences became crucial in the development of community identities. These experiences of displacement and exploitation were rendered evident through the reverence of the tragic, yet heroic narratives of Louis Delgrès and Evangeline, as well as in the inception of these societies’ nineteenth-century press, where allegiance to empire and a beginning of self-identification indicates a duality reflective of diasporic double consciousness.

## **Diaspora, Labour, and “Nation”**

In the sixteenth century, Spain and Portugal dominated colonization and trade in South America, from Mexico to Venezuela and on through to Brazil, with critical trade ports getting established at entry points to the Orinoco and Amazon rivers.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of speedier travel based on the direction of the Caribbean winds, ships tended to take a circular route, traveling up through the Greater Antilles largely controlled by Spain, often stopping at Havana to acquire materials prior to crossing back across the Atlantic. During this period, ships often bypassed the Windward islands, or the Lesser Antilles, but as British, French, and Dutch piracy and smuggling in the Caribbean increased, traders and pirates began finding passage through those islands. Indigenous societies, including the Kalinagos, sought refuge in the Lesser Antilles, but in the early seventeenth century, more Europeans began settling islands such as Saint-Christophe (St. Kitts), Martinique, and Guadeloupe, while Spain’s distractions with the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) allowed further opportunity for British and French privateers, pirates, traders, and settlers to pervade both the Greater and the Lesser Antilles.<sup>4</sup> Colonial violence and disease brought displacement and near-annihilation for Kalinagos in the Lesser Antilles.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Léo Elisabeth, *La société martiniquaise aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, 1664-1789* (Paris: Karhala, 2003), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 59.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:39; Régent, *La France et ses esclaves: De la colonisation aux abolitions, 1620-1848*, 19.

As British and French interests and access to resources in the Antilles increased, they pursued control of critical trading posts on the islands Providencia (1629), Tortuga (1640), Jamaica (1655), and Hispaniola/Saint Domingue (1697).<sup>6</sup> Along with these pursuits in the Caribbean that brought heightened animosity between the empires, Britain and France also rivalled over exploration, settlement, and fishing and fur trades further north in what became Atlantic Canada and the northeastern United States, leading to increasing settlement and growing tensions that resulted in warfare and displacement for the Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati peoples in the eighteenth century. Through much of the seventeenth century, colonial economic aims caused political contentions and warfare between Spain, Britain, and France that ultimately weakened the Spanish empire, as evidenced by the Thirty Years War, the passage of the British Navigation Acts (1651 and 1660), and the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714). During the eighteenth century, the Caribbean and North Atlantic regions developed as vital imperial hubs for trade, land possession, and war negotiations.

The signing of the Treaty of Utrecht between Britain and France in 1713 brought a period of relative stability in colonial regions of the Americas, with greater supply of

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<sup>6</sup> Dario Ranocchiari and Gloria Calabresi, "Ethnicity and Religion in the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 35, no. 4 (2016): 483–84; Jalil Sued-Badillo, "From Tainos to Africans in the Caribbean," in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, ed. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 157; Josep M. Fradera, "The Caribbean Between Empires: Colonists, Pirates, and Slaves," in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, ed. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 173.

foodstuffs and more open trade between the empires, but by the mid-eighteenth century this stability led to settlers, traders, and migrants in the Americas beginning to form their own agendas for the lands they occupied. Tensions over land claims, trade regulations, and definitions of freedom increased between settlers, the enslaved, Indigenous communities, and European governments, and resulted in the Seven Years War, as well as the American, Haitian, and French Revolutions that are critical events in French Caribbean and Acadian history. The colonization of the Lesser Antilles and Acadie brought the birth of Martinican and Guadeloupean societies of African descent, and of the Acadian people, whose experiences of displacement and of labouring for the benefit of empires in highly-contested, border regions of the Atlantic World contributed to instances of self-identifying as a “nation.”



Figure 3. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Chart of the Atlantic Ocean, with the British, French, & Spanish settlements in North America and the West Indies," Thomas Jefferys, c. 1762-1768. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed April 27, 2023. This is a portion of the map. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-eddd-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>



Figure 4. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. “Caraibische Inseln,” Paul Küssner, 1777. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-779c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

The French settlement of Martinique and Guadeloupe began in the early seventeenth century and resulted in a steady increase of an enslaved population through trade largely with Dutch merchants. The sugar trade, that later became an economic bastion for France, quickly developed on the islands, but Philip Boucher argues that in the seventeenth century the enslaved in the French Caribbean lived in a “mixed slave and free society” where “conditions for frontier-era slaves were marginally better” than in the

eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> He attributes these “marginally better conditions” to the interdependence between owners and the enslaved for survival in a very hostile frontier environment.<sup>8</sup> The living conditions of enslaved people worsened by the end of the seventeenth century, as plantation owners started identifying indentured servants as less reliable than the enslaved in sugar cultivation. France passed the *Code noir* in 1685, with the contribution of Martinique’s first intendant Jean-Baptiste Patoulet. The *Code noir* may have appeared to promise some protection for the enslaved, but in actuality it served as a means to more formally secure the authority of owners over their property.<sup>9</sup> The trade with Africa increased, resulting in a demographic shift on the islands with a growing count of enslaved plantation labourers from Africa.<sup>10</sup>

Critical historical studies bring to the foreground how the enslaved in the French Caribbean did not entirely submit to colonial power. Enslaved people made choices in relating with colonial officials and plantation owners in order to try to improve their living conditions. Evidence of strategic and organized rebellion by the enslaved on the

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<sup>7</sup> Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 158, 162.

<sup>8</sup> Boucher, 158, 162; Philip P. Boucher, “The ‘Frontier Era’ of the French Caribbean, 1620s-1690s,” in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 217.

<sup>9</sup> Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 189, 251, 286–87.

<sup>10</sup> Boucher, “The ‘Frontier Era’ of the French Caribbean,” 209; Sue Peabody, “‘A Nation Born to Slavery’: Missionaries and Racial Discourse in Seventeenth-Century French Antilles,” *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 117; Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 156; Hilary Beckles, “Servants and Slaves During the 17th-Century Sugar Revolution,” in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 209.

French islands in the seventeenth century is minimal, but scholars including Armand Nicolas, Philip Boucher, Londa Schiebinger, and James Pritchard describe various acts of resistance and examine the formation of maroon communities.<sup>11</sup> In 1656 a small group of enslaved people in Guadeloupe joined a resistance movement led by others recently arrived from Angola, and as early as 1665 Francisque Fabulé led a maroon community numbered at more than 300 individuals in a rebellion that caused a local French council to acquiesce to some of Fabulé's demands when signing a treaty in Martinique.<sup>12</sup>

Coming out of the seventeenth century and during the decades leading up to the Seven Years War and the Acadian Deportation, French Caribbean islands, including Saint Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe, became viewed as the “world's most valuable colonies.”<sup>13</sup> Sugar, cotton, and coffee became staples of European trade, and plantation owners supplied French, Dutch, Spanish, and British ships with these products in exchange for European commodities and enslaved Africans. The enslaved population

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<sup>11</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:95–96; Boucher, “The ‘Frontier Era’ of the French Caribbean,” 217; Londa Schiebinger, *Plants & Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18, 128–42; James S. Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90–91; Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 158–62.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Debien, “Le marronage aux Antilles françaises au XVIIIe siècle,” *Caribbean Studies* 6, no. 3 (October 1966): 4; Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:96; Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, 166, 297; Lynch D. Bennett, “Surreptitious Spaces: Cabarets and the French Contest for Empire in Martinique, 1680-1720” (Master's Thesis, Williamsburg, College of William and Mary, 2014), 35–36.

<sup>13</sup> Philip P. Boucher, *Les Nouvelles Frances. France in America, 1500-1815: An Imperial Perspective* (Providence: John Carter Brown Library, 1989), 69.

soon drastically outnumbered white settlers on the islands.<sup>14</sup> According Léo Elisabeth, in Martinique in 1708 there were 7 965 individuals whom he labels as white and assimilated (referring to “converted” Indigenous who became considered by law as French), while the number of enslaved people stood at 20 282. By 1730, Elisabeth documents 11 914 white and assimilated, with 43 272 enslaved, a doubling of the Martinican enslaved population with a much smaller increase of the white population.<sup>15</sup> As for Guadeloupe, James Pritchard reports that the number of the enslaved on the island “doubl[ed] during the War of the Spanish Succession to reach 12 562 by 1714” and then doubled again to reach 26 801 in 1730.<sup>16</sup> Owners began placing less value on the lives of enslaved individuals, as they became deemed as chattel that could be more easily replaced.<sup>17</sup>

France’s fears of insurrection by the enslaved on its islands mounted during the early eighteenth century and these fears were not unfounded. Instances of short and long marronage increased and in the early 1700s growing groups of maroons occupied the region of Grande Terre on Guadeloupe that French colonists had abandoned.<sup>18</sup> Archival records indicate that colonial authorities feared that the bands were “armed” and

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<sup>14</sup> Léo Elisabeth, “Slave Resistance in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in the French Colonies in America, and Chiefly the Windward Islands,” in *Abolitions of Slavery: From L.F. Sonthoux to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848*, ed. Marcel Dorigny (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 45.

<sup>15</sup> Elisabeth, *La société martiniquaise aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Pritchard, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Lucien-René Abénon, “La révolte avortée de 1736 et la répression du marronage à la Guadeloupe,” *Bulletin de la Société d’Histoire de la Guadeloupe*, no. 55 (1st trimester 1983): 53, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1043865ar>.

“organized,” however Lucien-René Abénon contends that these maroon communities had to be more preoccupied with survival than with inspiring rebellion or revolution.<sup>19</sup> In the 1720s, colonial records report that there were 525 maroons in Martinique and 600 in Guadeloupe.<sup>20</sup> The number of maroons may seem minimal considering the size of the enslaved population, but their presence heightened the fears of colonial authorities and settlers. Some of the enslaved living on plantations chose to communicate and participate with maroon communities, while other enslaved individuals countered slavery’s oppressiveness through poisonings, suicides, and abortions. Colonial officials passed more repressive laws as their fears of acts of resistance heightened.<sup>21</sup>

The British empire gained temporary control of Guadeloupe (1759-1763) and Martinique (1762-1763) during the Seven Years War. Unrestricted British trade on the islands led to another dramatic increase of slavery. Laurent Dubois writes concerning Guadeloupe that “during the four-year occupation, British slavers imported 15 215 slaves into the island, greater than the 14 003 imported directly by French slavers into Guadeloupe over the entire eighteenth century.”<sup>22</sup> Slavery now functioned as a prime component interwoven in the islands’ social, political, and economic structures built by

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<sup>19</sup> Abénon, 55, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Boucher, *Les Nouvelles Frances*, 75; Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 90–92; Schiebinger, *Plants & Empire*, 18, 128–42.

<sup>22</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 36; See also Boucher, *Les Nouvelles Frances*, 83.

the empires. From 1763-1789, the French Caribbean islands brought France tremendous success with the sugar and coffee trades. Growing criticisms among French philosophes regarding the institution of slavery surfaced, but the empire remained dependent on enslaved labour. Underlying this successful economy, tensions grew between plantation owners on the islands and the French government in Paris over issues of taxation and representation, and conflicts arose between owners of the enslaved, free Black people, mixed-race individuals, the enslaved, and abolitionists. In Guadeloupe, the maroon population grew coming out of the Seven Years War, and became “a persistent counterpoint to the regular functioning of the plantation” by escalating white society’s fears through raids.<sup>23</sup> The free Black and mixed-race populations also increased on Martinique and Guadeloupe, and while they held some liberties they remained “subject to a battery of discriminatory legislation.”<sup>24</sup> The French government often required that those formerly enslaved serve in the military or in local militias in order to secure the power of white owners and to prevent enslaved people from assembling together.<sup>25</sup>

While the government attempted to restrict gatherings, Black communities formed on the islands and found ways to communicate between plantations, thus enabling more organized acts of resistance to occur. Laurent Dubois contends that occasions of

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<sup>23</sup> Abénon, “La révolte avortée de 1736,” 73; Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 54.

<sup>25</sup> Dubois, 55–56.

gatherings, holidays, and marriages, “provided the foundation for the circulation of news and for networks that would become so important in organizing the revolts of the early 1790s.”<sup>26</sup> Debates over the meaning of freedom and equality intensified in Paris, and in 1789 an anonymous letter, attributed by David Geggus and Léo Elisabeth as having been sent by a Black individual to Martinican officials, stated concerning “nationhood” that, “The entire nation of the black slaves united together has only one wish, one desire for independence, ... This is no longer a nation that is blinded by ignorance.”<sup>27</sup> Historians Dubois and David Geggus point to ambiguities in the meaning and the use of the word “nation” in this document. Geggus argues that the word was employed in a “local particularist sense” for the enslaved to “refer to themselves,” and “says much for ethnic consciousness but not for the universalist outlook of revolutionary France.”<sup>28</sup> Dubois contends that this “naming of a ‘nation of black slaves’ represented the merging of different traditions of identification. It evoked the continuing presence of certain African nations even as it spoke for a coalition of enslaved blacks ready to fight for their freedom.”<sup>29</sup> Geggus and Dubois offer critical debate over the implications of the word

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<sup>26</sup> Dubois, 60.

<sup>27</sup> David Geggus, “The Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique during the Age of the French and Haitian Revolutions: Three Moments of Resistance,” in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 285–86; Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 86–87. Dubois cites Marie-Hélène Léotin, ed., *La Martinique au temps de la Révolution française, 1789-1794* (Fort-de-France: Archives départementales, 1989), 19–21.

<sup>28</sup> Geggus, “The Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique,” 287.

<sup>29</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 88.

“nation,” but in either sense, this language provides evidence of cohesion among the Black population taking place on Martinique for the purpose of attaining what they deemed as privileges expected to be granted by the French empire.

Insurrections by the enslaved during the French revolutionary period began in Martinique in August 1789, a few weeks prior to the arrival of news concerning the overthrow of the Bastille in July, and soon spread to Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe as rumors of freedom circulated on the islands.<sup>30</sup> Saint Domingue garners attention as under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture the island managed to gain its independence from France, yet critical events unfolded on the other islands as well. Geggus observes concerning the enslaved and marrons who protested slavery in Martinique that these demonstrators “were to demand, from a position of strength but without violence, a freedom they thought already granted by the government.”<sup>31</sup> Over the following year Martinican officials suppressed acts of resistance and insurrections, but rumors of freedom and protests by the enslaved on other islands led to continued unrest throughout the Antilles. In order to gain military advantage due to the unrest on the islands, and the threat of British occupation, France declared full emancipation on the islands a month prior to losing Martinique to Britain, who held control of the island from 1794-1802. In

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<sup>30</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:238, 246.

<sup>31</sup> Geggus, “The Slaves and Free Coloreds of Martinique,” 284.

gaining authority, the British removed all Black individuals from public office and deported many of them, while clamping down on resistance, revoking freedom, and securing the labour of the enslaved on the plantations.<sup>32</sup>

In Guadeloupe, slavery was abolished for a period beginning in 1794, but with Martinique's return to France in 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte re-established slavery across both islands. French General Antoine Richepanse arrived in Guadeloupe in May 1802 and quickly removed weapons from Black troops and confined them as prisoners.<sup>33</sup> Upon realizing that the French government intended to bring slavery back to the colony, several Black officers fled to Basse-Terre where they followed the direction of Martinican and free mixed-race military officer Louis Delgrès. Delgrès fought for the French Republic in battles against Britain, but now chose to fight against France for re-imposing slavery. Delgrès, along with twelve thousand compatriots valiantly stood against Richepanse's French military but they were soon overtaken by the soldiers.<sup>34</sup> At the end of the battle, Delgrès and several of his committed followers launched an explosion so to not be taken alive by the French. Richepanse secured control over Guadeloupe, and ordered that rebels be either killed or deported. In July 1802, news arrived in Guadeloupe on the signing of the Treaty of Amiens that stated that slavery would continue in Martinique once the

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<sup>32</sup> Geggus, 289.

<sup>33</sup> Auguste Lacour, *Histoire de la Guadeloupe*, vol. 3 (Basse-Terre: Imprimerie du gouvernement, 1858), 240, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56469h/.vertical>; Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 381, 389.

<sup>34</sup> Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 393–94.

island was handed back from Britain, and in September 1802, French officials in Guadeloupe received orders to revoke the rights of citizenry that had been granted to those formerly enslaved and to return them to slavery.<sup>35</sup> During the French and Haitian revolutionary period many people of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe stood together in trying to gain rights as French citizens and to upend the institution of slavery that was core to each islands' colonial foundations. They failed to overthrow Bonaparte's France to gain permanent emancipation like in Saint Domingue, but Dubois argues that in the French Caribbean, the "slave insurgents' demands for inclusion ... marked a powerful blow to the system of slavery."<sup>36</sup> These traumatic colonial experiences resulted in a growing cohesiveness among those enslaved on the French Caribbean islands, while manifestations of French and British colonial violence during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also proved formative for Acadian society.

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<sup>35</sup> Dubois, 404–8, 411.

<sup>36</sup> Dubois, 2.

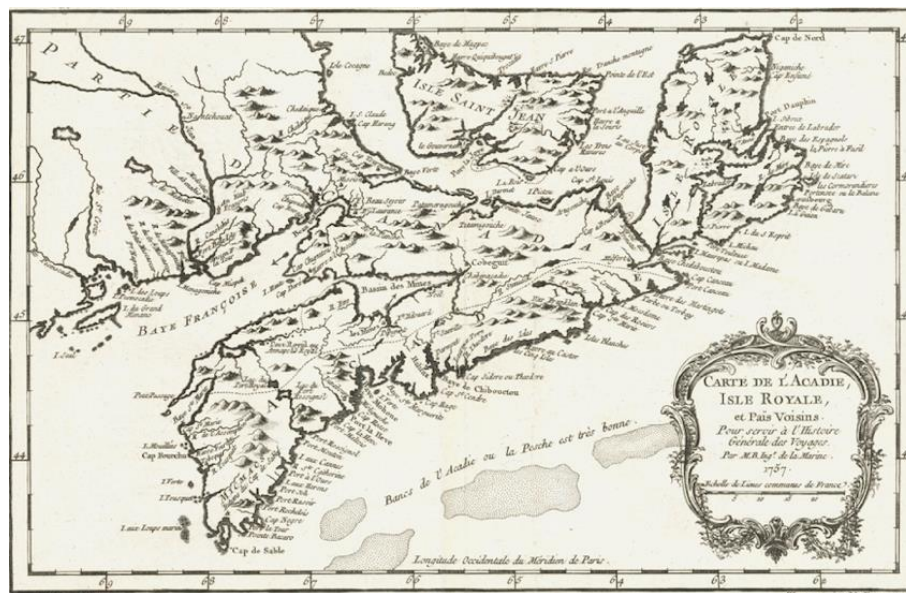


Figure 5. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. “Carte de l’Acadie, Isle Royale, et païs voisins, pour servir à l’Histoire générale des voyages,” Jacques Nicolas Bellin, 1757. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/2827252>

In the 1630s and 1640s, Isaac de Razilly and Charles de Menou d’Aulnay sponsored the earliest French settlers to migrate to the region named Acadie. There is extensive debate on the French origins of the settlers, but a study by Ronnie Gilles-LeBlanc provides evidence of them migrating from several French provinces, including Aunis, Bretagne, Ile-de-France, Poitou, Saintonge, and Touraine, with the largest number coming from Aunis and Poitou. In building on Gilles-LeBlanc’s study, as well as Charles de Menou’s description of bringing twenty families and over two hundred men across the Atlantic, Gregory Kennedy determines that while there was some diversity in the French origins of soldiers, artisans, fishermen, and farmers, “most of those twenty families were

recruited in the Loudunais” in the Poitou province of West-Central France.<sup>37</sup> Rural inhabitants in the Loudunais region struggled with property loss and poverty as a consequence of the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) and then attacks on Huguenots in the early seventeenth century.<sup>38</sup> Ongoing fears of local warfare, combined with increased taxes and periods of famine contributed to peasants on d’Aulnay’s Loudun estates becoming what Christopher Hodson describes as a “glut of dispossessed men and women” who migrated to a colony that French promoters called Acadie.<sup>39</sup>

The population of this cluster of French subjects, who increasingly saw themselves as Acadians, grew, and new settlements developed further up the Bay of Fundy in the Minas Basin, along the Isthmus of Chignecto, as well as along the Wəlastəkw|Saint John River valley in what is now New Brunswick.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, the lands around the Bay of Fundy were a volatile zone, with raids from English settlers in New England and Virginia, and near civil war between elite French claimants in the region. Acadians persevered through periods of upheaval and

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<sup>37</sup> Ronnie-Gilles LeBlanc, “Les origines françaises du peuple acadien avant 1714,” in *Le fait acadien en France: histoire et temps présent*, ed. André Magard (La Crèche: Geste éditions, 2010), 37; Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 10–11, 53–54.

<sup>38</sup> J. Russell Major, *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy: French Kings, Nobles, & Estates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 125–26; Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 181; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 24; Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 51–53.

<sup>39</sup> Boucher, *Les Nouvelles Frances*, 81–82; Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 11, 44, 49, 51–53, 206; quotation in Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> LeBlanc, “Les origines françaises du peuple acadien avant 1714,” 37–38.

regime change, forging relationships with the Mi'kmaq, Wəlastəkwewiyik, and Peskotomuhkati, and trading with whoever would buy their surpluses and sell them needed manufactured items. Over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of those traders were New England merchants, creating an economic dependency outside of imperial norms and fraught with ethnic and religious tensions.<sup>41</sup>

Leading up to the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) imperial interests in these regions waxed and waned, while the Acadian population grew, and the empires soon exploited its agricultural productivity.<sup>42</sup> Christopher Hodson argues that for either empire at this time “securing the fruits of Acadian agriculture, and preventing the enemy from doing so, became the highest priority” resulting in Acadians becoming “pigeonholed ... as laborers suited for agriculture and nothing more.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Gregory Kennedy contends that Acadians were “less integrated into a French Atlantic world and more imposed upon as pawns and potential resources” by the empires.<sup>44</sup> In John Reid’s comparative analysis of the early settlement of Acadie and Maine, he indicates how the term “métairie [tenant farm]” appears in a document written by d’Aulnay’s successors, the Le Borgnes, and Reid observes that this word “may well have been used literally, implying a form of tenure by which equipment and land were both

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<sup>41</sup> Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Kennedy, 55.

<sup>43</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 20.

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy, *Something of a Peasant Paradise?*, 7.

provided by the seigneur, in return for rents either in money or in kind, and a sharing between lessor and lessee of the products of each year's farming."<sup>45</sup> Reid references French agent Nicolas Denys, who in writing his memoirs observed how d'Aulnay was "holding [the settlers] always as slaves without letting them make any profit."<sup>46</sup> Denys' view may have been biased given the animosity he had toward d'Aulnay over trading rights, but this statement supports Reid's observation on how "promoters envisaged the holding of land by tenants on forms of tenure that carried restrictions both on the freedom of action and on the potential wealth of the tenant."<sup>47</sup> Reid's study indicates how these early French cultivators held a position on the hierarchical colonial structure where their labour was exploited for others' benefit and where land possession was uncommon. Reid contends that there was a growing pursuit of a "freer land system" among the nascent Acadian society after d'Aulnay died in 1650, as well as after Britain gained control of Port Royal in October 1710.<sup>48</sup> Port Royal fell to a combined force of British soldiers and New England militia, and a month later Acadians in the settlement wrote a letter to Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, governor of New France since July 1703, asking for

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<sup>45</sup> John G. Reid, "Environment and Colonization Styles in Early Acadia and Maine," in *Essays on Northeastern North America, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolas Denys, *La Description géographique et historique des costes de l'Amérique septentrionale avec l'histoire naturelle du pais / The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America*, trans. William Ganong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1908), 483. "les tenans toujours esclaves sans leur y laisser faire aucun profit".

<sup>47</sup> Reid, "Environment and Colonization Styles in Early Acadia and Maine," 49.

<sup>48</sup> Reid, 49.

help with relocation. They stated that Samuel Vetch, the newly appointed English governor of Nova Scotia, “treated them ‘as Negroes,’” providing indication of these settlers’ own cognizance of being viewed as labourers to be used for the benefit of the British empire.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht the French ceded Acadia to the British on the basis of the taking of Port Royal, which they renamed Annapolis Royal. The Acadians who remained in the colony stated their desire to British officials “not to take up arms” in any imperial warfare that might unfold in the future.<sup>50</sup> Many tried to hold to this position of neutrality during the first half of the eighteenth century. Initially, some British colonial officials saw Acadians’ potential value in growing grains and produce to supply its military and other provinces, as well as their capacity to serve as “buffers” in relating with the Mi’kmaq.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, as fears of enslaved insurrection mounted on the Caribbean islands, the War of Austrian Succession broke out in 1740 and by 1744-45 the British grew increasingly skeptical of Acadian commitment to their oath of neutrality.

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<sup>49</sup> Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 242; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 33. Griffiths and Hodson cite “Habitans [sic] de Port Royal à Vaudreuil,” November 13, 1710, AC, série C11D, vol. 7, Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

<sup>50</sup> Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 272.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Vetch, “Copy of Letter from Colonel Vetch to the Right Honble. The Lords of Trade, 24 November 1714,” in *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia*, ed. Thomas Akins (Halifax: Charles Annand, 1869), 5–7, <https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromp00akingoog/page/n19/mode/2up>; Paul Mascarene, “Description of Nova Scotia, 1720,” in *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia*, ed. Thomas Akins (Halifax: Charles Annand, 1869), 41, <https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromp00akingoog/page/n55/mode/2up>; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 34–36, quotation on 34.

British officials were suspicious of Acadian associations with the French and, in particular, with the Mi'kmaq. With a growing desire for loyal British settlers to colonize Acadie and increasing tensions with France, officials began exchanging letters addressing Acadian removal from the region.<sup>52</sup>

In the aftermath of the war both the British and the French built new fortifications in the north Atlantic region. The British established Halifax as the new capital of Nova Scotia and to serve as a northern base for the Royal Navy, while the French built Fort Beauséjour on the Isthmus of Chignecto. After the outbreak of fighting between the French and British in the Ohio Country in 1754, the British military officers in Nova Scotia successfully attacked Fort Beauséjour in June 1755, supported by New England militia troops, and then authorized the Deportation of the Acadians. In August 1755, British naval and New England merchant vessels began arriving in coastal harbours.<sup>53</sup> Soldiers and New England militiamen burnt Acadian homes to the ground and separated families as they crowded Acadians onto ships destined to take them to various ports along the British Atlantic coast. Certain British officials anticipated that through scattering

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<sup>52</sup> William Shirley, "William Shirley to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 June 1746," in *Correspondence of William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts and Military Commander in America, 1731-1760*, ed. Charles Henry Lincoln (New York: MacMillan Company, 1912), 327–28, <https://archive.org/details/governorofmass01shirrich/page/326/mode/2up>; Charles Lawrence, "Governor Lawrence to Col. Moncton, 31 July 1755," in *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia*, ed. Thomas Akins (Halifax: Charles Annand, 1869), 267–69, <https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromp00akingoog/page/266/mode/2up>; Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 296.

<sup>53</sup> Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 146; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 335, 338.

Acadians they may become assimilated into British society and could turn out to be “of some use as most of them are healthy strong people” who might “become profitable” subjects in the British colonies.<sup>54</sup> Some families managed to escape Deportation and fled to other regions in what later became the province of New Brunswick. These Acadians joined communities along the Wəlastəkw|Saint John River, or settled along the northern and eastern coastlines of the region, where families endured harsh winter conditions and struggled to cultivate isolated and barren lands. Many Acadians in what settlers now call New Brunswick once again experienced displacement to other regions of the province with the arrival of Loyalists after the American Revolution, and those families who survived became integral in Acadian cultural revival during the late nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Acadians scattered to British American colonies further south were often viewed with fear, as they were labeled as French-Catholic prisoners of war. In the Archives of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts, Acadian petitions to the House describe instances of forced labour, with the government proposing a law that any Acadian who

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<sup>54</sup> Charles Lawrence, “To the Honble. Arthur Dobbs, 11 August 1755,” in *Acadian Genealogy and Notes, Appendix B in Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, ed. Placide Gaudet, vol. 2 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), 15–16, quotations on 16, <https://archive.org/details/reportconcerning22publ/page/n269/mode/2up/>; Charles Lawrence, “Council Minutes, 28 July 1755,” in *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia*, ed. Thomas Akins (Halifax: Charles Annand, 1869), 266–67, <https://archive.org/details/selectionsfromp00akingoog/page/262/mode/2up>.

<sup>55</sup> J.M. Bumsted, “Resettlement and Rebellion, 1763-1783,” in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 164–65; Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 164–65; Sheila M. Andrew, *Development of Elites in Acadian New Brunswick, 1861-1881* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 12, 15–17.

went against confinement regulations be “set in stocks not exceeding three hours” and for a second offense be “whipt on the naked Back not exceeding ten strips.”<sup>56</sup> Plantation owner and colonel Edward Lloyd reluctantly took sixty Acadians to labour on his Maryland estate, as he suspected them of potentially “corrupting” those enslaved on his plantation through their French allegiance and their Catholic faith.<sup>57</sup> In Virginia, Governor Robert Dinwiddie and his government forced Acadians to remain on ships in the harbour through winter, and in the spring sent them on to ports in London. Some Acadians evidently did go ashore on occasion while in port, as Dinwiddie complained that Acadians “behav’d here very mutinously, and were tamper’g with the Negroe slaves,” thus making “our People extremely uneasy,” and resulting in denial of provisionary support for port-bound Acadians.<sup>58</sup> South Carolina’s government also feared Acadian alliance with the French and their potential provocation of a rebellious uprising

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<sup>56</sup> T. Hubbard and Thos Clarke, “An Act Relating to the Late Inhabitants of Nova Scotia, 28-30 August 1756,” in *Acadian Genealogy and Notes, Appendix E in Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, ed. Placide Gaudet, vol. 2 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), 89, <https://archive.org/details/reportconcerning22publ/page/n417/mode/2up>. See also Leanna Thomas, “A Fractured Foundation: Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803” (Master’s Thesis, Orlando, University of Central Florida, 2011), 48.

<sup>57</sup> See a letter by Lloyd in William D. Hoyt Jr., “A Contemporary View of the Acadian Arrival in Maryland, 1755,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (October 1948): 575; Christopher Hodson, “Idlers and Idolators: Acadian Exiles and the Labor Systems of British North America, 1755-1763,” in *Religious Refugees in Europe, Asia, and North America 6th- 21st Century*, ed. Susanne Lachenicht (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), 205–6.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Dinwiddie, “Governor Dinwiddie to Henry Fox, Esq’r, 10 May 1756,” in *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1751-1758, Volume 2* in Collections of the Virginia Historical Society, ed. R.A. Brock, vol. 2 (New York: AMS Press, 1884), 408; See also Clifford Millard, “The Acadians in Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 40, no. 3 (July 1932): 246, 249; Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 62.

by the enslaved, and passed laws to keep Acadians inside after dark and to require them to work as indentured servants.<sup>59</sup> In these port cities British leaders gauged Acadian value by measuring how much labour they might provide versus how much disruption they could cause, much as traders ascertained the worth of the enslaved. Acadians' struggles in these port cities often resulted in further displacement around the Atlantic world, with some sent to Britain as prisoners of war, while others returned north or moved to Louisiana or the French Caribbean.

As the Seven Years War ended in 1763, Acadian prisoners scattered in Britain and its North American colonies sought to re-establish themselves, both economically and socially. Many struggled to find labour in the British ports, and others chose to migrate with hopes of living either nearer to other Acadians, including under French jurisdiction, or in places with better economic opportunities. As some returned north to try to resettle in former French colonial regions, others traveled to Louisiana, presuming the territory to be under France's control when it had in fact been ceded to Spain. Former Acadian prisoners in Britain moved to France, where emerging physiocrats proposed new economic theories that centered on the importance of agricultural development for rebuilding the empire, but without the institution of slavery.<sup>60</sup> Many physiocrats feared

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<sup>59</sup> Marguerite B. Hamer, "The Fate of the Exiled Acadians in South Carolina," *The Journal of Southern History* 4, no. 2 (May 1938): 201, 204–5; Brasseaux, *Scattered to the Wind*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 79.

that if slavery continued to grow so exponentially, it could be a threat to France by ultimately destroying rural, farming communities.<sup>61</sup> Added to these fears were growing frustrations over exiled Acadians living off a French government dole. Physiocrats hatched ideas that resulted in several Acadian families traveling back across the Atlantic to labour in remaining French colonies, while others resettled in rural France where the empire believed they might be of some economic benefit.<sup>62</sup>

The French government expected Acadians who moved to Guiana, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), Martinique, and the Îles Malouines (Falkland Islands) to be dependable labourers who would cultivate the land and support the colonial military. Most Acadians who worked for the empire in these colonies endured starvation, disease, and forced labour. In Guiana, a local physician observed that he would rather be one of the enslaved who could at least try to “better his lot, become free, and acquire all the rights of a citizen” than an Acadian migrant forced to endure conditions of “harsh slavery.”<sup>63</sup> In Saint-Domingue, Acadian workers faced disease, poor soil conditions, and threats of going to jail should their work capacity be insufficient, and intendant René

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<sup>61</sup> Hodson, 91–92.

<sup>62</sup> Hodson, 96–97.

<sup>63</sup> Jacques-François Artur, *Histoire des colonies françaises de la Guianne*, ed. Marie Polderman (Paris: Ibis Rouge, 2002), 711. Quoted in Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 105. See also Émile Lauvrière, *La tragédie d'un peuple, histoire du peuple acadien de ses origines à nos jours*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1922), 202, <https://archive.org/details/latragdiedunpe02lauv/page/202/mode/2up>.

Magon observed that they were treated “like slaves.”<sup>64</sup> Christopher Hodson states that, “Just as Africans had for decades been captured, categorized, and used up in the service of colonial production and metropolitan consumption, these refugees became instruments of empire.”<sup>65</sup> There is evidence that some Acadians remained in the Caribbean, but most returned to France or joined Acadian families in Louisiana after struggling with sickness and poverty, as well as conflicts with colonial leaders and other settlers in the Caribbean.<sup>66</sup>

Acadian dispersal experiences often led to death, assimilation, or more migration, yet some Acadians stayed connected through family networks while interacting with the empires.<sup>67</sup> Like Dubois and Geggus, who examine the meaning of the word “nation” that appears in a letter describing the Black population in Martinique, scholar Jean-François Mouhot reveals how the language of “nation” began appearing in petitions and letters by Acadian exiles in France in the 1770s.<sup>68</sup> An Acadian community in Saint-Malo defined themselves as being set apart from French society as a “corps de nation.”<sup>69</sup> Hodson

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<sup>64</sup> René Magon, “Journal of René Magon, Intendant at Port-Au-Prince,” July 7, 1764, ANOM, AC, série C9A, vol. 121. Quoted in Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 114.

<sup>65</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 114.

<sup>66</sup> Hodson, 104, 112–13.

<sup>67</sup> Jean-François Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1758-1785: l'impossible réintégration?* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009), 233.

<sup>68</sup> Mouhot, 237.

<sup>69</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 171; Grand Clos Meslé [au nom des Acadiens de Saint-Servan] and Antoine Philippe Lemoyne, “Pétition des Acadiens de Saint-Servan (près de Saint-Malo) et commentaires de Lemoyne,” April 4, 1773, BM Bordeaux, MS 1480, Annexes, 1er dossier: mémoire et lettres de 1766 à 1774 // BM Bordeaux, MS 1480, f°307-312// f°165-67 // AN, H1 1499 2, Base documentaire sur les

argues that the Acadians in Belle-Île and Poitou were aware of how being a “corps” could work to their advantage in France since some imperial leaders wanted “a new kind of labor market” made of “cohesive groups of free white settlers.”<sup>70</sup> Hodson further contends that many Acadians in France “were bound to move and act as a single body” since the “government’s grant of corporate privileges and the nature of the imperial labor market demanded as much.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in a document recounting an engagement between colonial administrator Antoine-Philippe Lemoyne and an Acadian delegation in France, an Acadian identified himself and other leaders as “the heads of the nation.” Lemoyne responded that he only knew Acadians as “subjects of the king [...] not as a foreign nation.”<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, this sense of nationhood did not go ignored. Louis-Nicolas, marquis de Pérusse de Cars describes Acadians who “without authority... established themselves as heads or deputies of their Nation.”<sup>73</sup> Evidently these refugee Acadians realized that they would face greater destitution and poverty as individuals than they would as a cohesive and functioning community.

The language of “nation” emerged not only in documents pertaining to scattered Acadians in France. During the Seven Years War, Acadian exiles in Philadelphia

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Acadiens réfugiés en France au XVIIIe siècle (1758-1785) by Jean-François Mouhot, <https://www.septentrion.qc.ca/acadiens/documents/6>.

<sup>70</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 182. See also Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France*, 240.

<sup>71</sup> Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 183.

<sup>72</sup> Hodson, 185.

<sup>73</sup> Hodson, 192.

delivered a letter to the colonial government, presumed to have been written with the help of abolitionist Anthony Benezet, expressing their desire to “join with our Nation in some place” where they would not be “oppressed.”<sup>74</sup> When the war ended, Acadian exiles in British American colonies, including Georgia, South Carolina, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, returned north. On discovering that British colonists now claimed many of their former settlements, they moved to other rural parts of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Their new communities were distinct in some ways regarding economic and social development, yet according to André Magord, “Although it is true that the lack of recognition of the community made individual and collective autonomy difficult, Acadian society was able, simply by enduring under such conditions, to develop its own socio-cultural dynamics.”<sup>75</sup> Pre-dispersal Acadians learned ways to function together in the structures established and maintained by the empires, and this functionality carried through as post-diasporic Acadian communities took shape. Their Deportation with its death tolls due to violence and disease, as well as its tragic family separations, brought massive upheaval, but exiles often joined together to make choices for “strategic and survival purposes” as they negotiated their role as

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<sup>74</sup> “Petition of Oliver Tibaudat et al. to the Assembly of Pennsylvania,” February 8, 1757, 4510–12, Pennsylvania Archives (Harrisburg, 1838-1935), series 8, vol. 6. Quoted in Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora*, 68.

<sup>75</sup> Sally Ross and Alphonse Deveau, *The Acadians of Nova Scotia Past and Present* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1992), 76. Quotation in Magord, *The Quest for Autonomy in Acadia*, 47.

occupants not only of claimed colonial lands, but also of the political, economic, and social structures of empires maintained during and following their diaspora.<sup>76</sup>

For Acadians, as well as for enslaved Africans in Martinique, the language of “nation” and the actions taken to better their living conditions reveal early steps toward cohesiveness among each group. This growing cohesiveness is grounded in experiencing displacement and colonial warfare, and in becoming tenants of empire who laboured on lands for the economic, military, and political benefit of empires, but also for their own survival. As tenants, they learned to cope with, and to strategically pursue, aspirations for autonomy inside structural strongholds built by the empires. Social cohesion among Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, as well as among Acadians, resulted from experiences of diaspora, labour, and pursuits of autonomy, and became strengthened in the nineteenth century as critical events in their colonial past went to print, and as local newspapers began to be published.

### **Remembering the Dead: Colonial Victims to National Heroes**

In 1847 and in 1848, two stories that forever altered understandings of Guadeloupean and Acadian history appeared in print. Written by outsiders to these communities, these

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<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth Mancke, “Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World: 1450-1850*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 384.

stories feature accounts of two individuals (one fictive and one historic) who became adopted over time as iconic figures in Acadian and Guadeloupean history. In 1847, American author Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published the epic poem *Evangeline*, that centers around a fictional Acadian woman who endured Deportation from her homeland. Separated from her friends and family, she spent her life searching for her betrothed Gabriel, until she finally found him lying on his deathbed in urban Philadelphia. According to the poem, she ended her journey buried alongside Gabriel in an unmarked grave.<sup>77</sup> In May 1848, as many enslaved individuals and those opposed to the institution of slavery in Martinique launched violent protests that resulted in emancipation prior to word arriving from the metropole, French publisher Monnoyer du Mans printed a posthumous work by French abolitionist and teacher Félix Longin concerning his lived experiences in Guadeloupe from 1816-1822.<sup>78</sup> In his account, Longin describes atrocities he witnessed with the institution of slavery on the island and he recounts hearing the heroic story of mixed-race military leader Louis Delgrès. Longin recounts how Delgrès issued a manifest for freedom and justice, and then led his compatriots in a military stand to resist Bonaparte's re-institution of slavery. The story

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<sup>77</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Evangeline," in *The Song of Hiawatha and Other Poems* (Pleasantville: Reader's Digest Association Inc., 1989), 222–25.

<sup>78</sup> Gérard Lafleur, "Notes sur Félix Langin dit Longin. Auteur de *Voyage à la Guadeloupe (1816-1822)*," *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe*, no. 177 (August 2017): 53. Through archival research, Lafleur discovered that Longin's last name was actually Langin.

culminates with Delgrès and his followers choosing to commit suicide rather than being killed by French General Antoine Richepance's troops. These stories of Evangeline and Delgrès are epic and tragic, and they contributed to shaping popular narratives of Acadian and Guadeloupean history as they became featured in other print media spanning the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In their publications, Longfellow and Longin underscore the violence and tragedy that often accompany forced displacement. They draw attention to the inner emotional turmoil and psychological damage for those violently uprooted due to imperial and colonial ambitions, commercial exploitation, and revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic. Both authors describe the shattering of intimate familial ties across space (geographical separation) and time (generational separation). Longfellow recounts how with the Acadian Deportation, "Wives were torn from their husbands, and mothers, too late, saw their children / Left on the land, extending their arms with wildest entreaties."<sup>79</sup> Likewise Longin laments how traders of the enslaved "ruthlessly take away the husband from the wife, the daughter from the mother, the grieving mother from tender children who reach their arms out to her and try to hold her back through their cries."<sup>80</sup> This

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<sup>79</sup> Longfellow, "Evangeline," 197.

<sup>80</sup> Félix Longin, *Voyage à la Guadeloupe: oeuvre posthume* (Paris: Monnoyer, 1848), 183, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58377826>. "Ainsi l'on enlève impitoyablement l'époux à l'épouse, la fille à la mère, la mère éplorée à de tendres enfants qui lui tendent les bras et cherchent à la retenir par leurs cris!"

imagery of children desperately reaching for their mothers, but to no avail, epitomizes the suffering of these groups and stands as a powerful representation of colonial trauma.

Another core similarity in these works is their portrayal of dead, sacrificial heroes who through their sagas displayed endurance or resistance, but ultimately fell victim to colonial violence. Longfellow's *Evangeline* searched and searched to find her lover Gabriel from whom she had been separated during the Deportation. She continually makes self-sacrifices in her quest of navigating the American frontier to locate him, but when he suddenly appears he is laying on his deathbed unable to speak her name. This encounter brought some resolution to her "unsatisfied longing," but *Evangeline* winds up buried with Gabriel in an unmarked grave where both go "unknown and unnoticed," erased from history and far from their homeland.<sup>81</sup> Longin put into print for the very first time a proclamation credited to the now-famous Louis Delgrès, in which Delgrès eloquently accused Napoleon's France of turning against the enslaved who had been freed and had fought on the Republic's behalf against Britain. In the proclamation, Delgrès declares that "Resistance to oppression is a natural right," and Longin recounts Delgrès's ultimate act of resistance when he "preferred to blow himself up, with some friends, in his camp of Matouba, by the explosion of a powder keg" as *Richepanse* and

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<sup>81</sup> Longfellow, "Evangeline," 224–25.

his soldiers reclaimed the island.<sup>82</sup> The Evangeline and Delgrès stories conclude with tragic deaths stemming from colonial experience, one in a foreign land and one in an act of violence. Ironically, over time these individuals became icons in societies that were not destroyed by colonialism, but instead were exceptionally shaped by their colonial pasts.

Remembrances of sacrificial deaths stemming from critical eighteenth-century colonial events (e.g. the Seven Years War and the French Revolution) have been instrumental in identity formation for Acadian society, as well as for the societies of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, the earliest Acadian newspapers often featured translated or edited versions of Longfellow's poem, including the aptly-named newspaper *L'Évangéline* that for decades featured a stanza from the poem under its masthead.<sup>83</sup> Reporters and contributors repeatedly mentioned the poem in articles and speeches stemming from the Conventions nationales acadiennes in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and it is integrated into early historical narratives by authors and political figures Pascal Poirier and Abbé Casgrain.<sup>84</sup> In the early 1900s, the Evangeline

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<sup>82</sup> Longin, *Voyage à la Guadeloupe*, quotations on 194 and 191. "La résistance à l'oppression est un droit naturel" / "Ce célèbre Delgresse qui, plutôt que de rentrer dans l'esclavage, aima mieux se faire sauter, avec quelques amis, dans son camp du Matouba, par l'explosion d'un baril de poudre."

<sup>83</sup> Pamphile Le May, "Évangéline," *Le Moniteur acadien*, August 22, 1867.

<sup>84</sup> Thériault, *Évangéline*, 175, 177.

symbol became central to decisions on the memorialization and commemoration of Acadian history in Grand-Pré, Nova Scotia.<sup>85</sup> For this society that reckoned with poverty and marginalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of traumatic eighteenth-century experiences, this piece of literature proved formative in Acadians' collective remembrance of their past.

In Guadeloupe, the Delgrès story went to press again in white Guadeloupean Auguste Lacour's *Histoire de la Guadeloupe* (volume 3, published in 1858), as well as in other historical and literary works by French authors Gustave Aimard (1876) and Jean-Marie Pardon (1881). In 1921, Oruno Lara, a Guadeloupean journalist of African descent who will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter, published *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire* in which he not only recounts Delgrès's actions, but also provides foreshadow of the negritude movement.<sup>86</sup> In the 1930s, Martinican Aimé Césaire coined the term negritude as an empowering term to unite Black societies in countering colonialism and assimilation, and he emphasized a shared rootedness in Africa rather than in Europe.<sup>87</sup> Prior to Césaire, Lara describes how Guadeloupe's formerly enslaved Black population was "violently transported from Africa to America," and he

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<sup>85</sup> Barbara LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie: Grand-Pré, Evangeline & the Acadian Identity* (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2003), 127–29, 133–40; Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 186–95.

<sup>86</sup> Oruno Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire. La Guadeloupe physique, économique, agricole, commerciale, financière, politique et sociale, 1492-1900*, ed. Oruno Denis Lara (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), xxxi.

<sup>87</sup> A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 33–40.

states concerning his book that “This work is therefore the image of the painful and formidable creation of the American Continent steeped in so many African tears and blood.” In this book Lara lays claim to the Delgrès narrative for the Black population, citing Guadeloupean mixed-race political leader Alexandre Isaac who wrote that Delgrès died like a “new Leonidas ... to save the honour of the men of his race. That is a man!” Lara concludes Delgrès had “fulfilled his mission” with his heroic and sacrificial death.<sup>88</sup> In 1948 Guadeloupeans erected a plaque in honour of Delgrès in Matouba, and articles on Delgrès appeared in the newspaper *L'Étincelle* beginning in 1950.<sup>89</sup> In 1959, in the poem “Mémorial de Louis Delgrès,” Aimé Césaire boldly proclaims Delgrès’s name, describing him as an individual deserving of recognition and remembrance for his actions in leading resistance against Richepanse, the “colonialist bear” who reinstated enslavement in Guadeloupe.<sup>90</sup> Césaire’s attention to Delgrès demonstrates that while the story of Delgrès is particularly meaningful for those in Guadeloupe, it does not go unrecognized by people in Martinique. Like with the Acadians and Evangeline, the publication of the sacrificial story of Delgrès contributed in shaping collective memory,

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<sup>88</sup> Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l’histoire*, quotes on 9 and 159. “Cette œuvre est donc l’image de la douloureuse et formidable création du Continent américain pétri de tant de larmes et de sang africains.”; See also Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4; Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, 64.

<sup>89</sup> Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, 65–66.

<sup>90</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Mémorial de Louis Delgrès,” *Présence Africaine*, no. 23 (December 1958-January 1959): 69–72.

particularly in Guadeloupe, through remembering a hero who fell victim to epic tragedy through colonial violence.

These stories of sacrificial heroes that initially went to print by outsiders to these communities in the mid-nineteenth century became central in historical discourse among Acadians and Guadeloupeans of African descent by the mid-twentieth century. The popularity of these accounts has contributed to creating an over-arching sense of cohesiveness in each of these groups, paradoxically tied to stories of dissociation and death. A more in-depth study of these societies' early literature, including news articles and poetry written by intellectuals of African descent in Guadeloupe and Martinique, as well as educated Acadians, reveals that other parallel historical and literary developments among these societies demonstrate a search for cohesion in a tumultuous period of nation-building. Through their written words they battled internal opposition, faced dangers of assimilation, and began trying to write their own histories, yet also were vulnerable to a duality created and instilled through colonialism and diaspora.

### **Birth of a National Print Culture**

Acadian society and the societies formed by the enslaved and their descendants in Martinique and Guadeloupe developed as an outcome of Atlantic World colonial rivalries and in many ways evolved culturally and politically to constitute what Benedict

Anderson defines as “imagined political communities.”<sup>91</sup> While they are not nation-states in and of themselves, they have found cohesion in identifying cultural traditions, sharing memories, and pursuing forms of autonomy. According to Anderson, the greatest factor to “set the stage for the modern nation” was print-capitalism, with the printed word proving a “language of power” used to unify diverse audiences existing under the political and economic control of an eighteenth-century regime.<sup>92</sup> Over time, marginalized societies began to identify the press as a tool to create social cohesion, and for many it also evolved as a means of resistance against colonial authority.<sup>93</sup> Contemporary scholars including Partha Chatterjee, Sara Castro-Klaren, John Charles, and Raúl Coronado critique Anderson’s work, finding faults with over-generalization, as well as emphasizing orality’s importance in the advent of nationhood for certain societies, and identifying limitations his theories place on understanding national developments outside of Europe and the Americas.<sup>94</sup> Still, many historians continue to

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<sup>91</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 6 (originally published 1983).

<sup>92</sup> Anderson, 44–46.

<sup>93</sup> Anderson, 65.

<sup>94</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5–6; Sara Castro-Klaren and John Charles Chasteen, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 32–33; Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 71–72 fn 101.

acknowledge print culture's critical role in establishing and propagating nationalist discourse out of elitists' attempts to unify seemingly disparate populations.<sup>95</sup>

The diasporic colonial pasts of French Caribbean people of African descent and of Acadians, combined with high rates of illiteracy and struggles with poverty in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, contributed to delays in the formation of nationalism.<sup>96</sup> Educational opportunities in systems designed and regulated by those in political power became more accessible over the course of the nineteenth century. With a law passed in April 1833, free Black and mixed-race people on the islands gained civil and political rights as French citizens. They continued to endure discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization, yet many actively pursued having greater political agency, as well as pushing for abolition.<sup>97</sup> By mid-century in Martinique and Guadeloupe, followed not long after among Acadians, there existed a growing population of educated elites who participated as newspaper editors, contributors, and readers.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie*, 99; Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 17–22, 171; Farzin Vejdani, *Making History in Iran: Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3–5.

<sup>96</sup> Hynes, "Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal," 7–8, 17; Dugas, "L'alphabétisation des Acadiens," ii, 28–29, 67–68; Catherine A. Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory: Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 91–92.

<sup>97</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:349; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 31–32, 116–17.

<sup>98</sup> Nelly Schmidt, "Schoelcherisme et assimilation dans la politique coloniale française: de la théorie à la pratique aux Caraïbes entre 1848 et les années 1880," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 35, no. 2 (April 1988): 317–18; Schnepel, *In Search of a National Identity*, 5; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 112; Sally Ross, *Les écoles acadiennes en Nouvelle-Écosse, 1758-2000* (Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, 2001), 56, 90; Sheila Andrew, "Selling Education: The Problems of Convent Schools in Acadian New Brunswick, 1858-1886," in *Schooling in Transition: Readings in Canadian History of Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 292; Chantal Richard, "Discours identitaires

Early newspapers focused on events in Martinique and Guadeloupe included mixed-race Martinican political leader and abolitionist Cyrille Bisette's *Revue des colonies* (published in Paris, 1834-1843), later followed by Republican press *Le Progrès* (Guadeloupe, 1849-1850) and *La Liberté* (Martinique 1850-1851) that each only existed during the brief reign of the Second French Republic. Acadian newspapers had far greater longevity, with *Le Moniteur acadien* running from 1867 to the present and *L'Évangéline* from 1887-1982, with each undergoing some name alterations and instances of interruption due to changes in location or ownership. Content featured in these newspapers in the nineteenth century demonstrate intentions to unify these populations by articulating social values and creating shared memories. Authors and editors attempted to identify rights as individuals and communities living under the political and economic authority of developing nation-states, with Canada's Confederation in 1867 and the establishment of the brief Second French Republic from 1848-1852.

Print media of the mid- to late nineteenth century draws attention to how Afrodescendants in Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as Acadians, pursued greater cohesion and began employing the press as a means to self-identify. They became more aware of their positioning as marginalized people deserving the same rights as other

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véhiculés par les premiers journaux francophones en Acadie (1867-1900): Confédération ou colonisation?," *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 42, no. 1 (December 2017): 85, 87.

citizens. Even with changes in French, Caribbean, and Canadian nationhood, imperial social and political hierarchies did not go extinct. Acadians, as well as those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, heard varying promises from the governments in Canada and in France as definitions of freedom and equality became challenged and altered in political discourse over the course of the nineteenth century, but the governments often failed to deliver on those promises if pursuits for equality and particular freedoms, such as in voting rights, land ownership, and language rights, did not align with national assimilationist rhetoric and economic priorities.<sup>99</sup>

The nineteenth-century French Caribbean and Acadian press consulted in this study demonstrate continued sovereignty in the French and Canadian states born of the imperial eras of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Newspaper publishers and authors are often cautionary in criticizing the French or Canadian national governments, not wanting to make enemies of those who might enable them to better their living conditions through promises of rights and freedoms. Rather than boldly opposing political structures taking shape in France and Canada, the earliest press from these

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<sup>99</sup> Schmidt, “Schoelcherisme et assimilation,” 315–16, 339–40; Alain Philippe Blérald, *La question nationale en Guadeloupe et en Martinique: essai sur l’histoire politique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1988), 13; James R. Lehning, *To Be A Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1–3; Heath, “Citizens of the Empire?,” 163; Denis Bourque and Chantal Richard, *Les Conventions nationales acadiennes, 1900-1908* (Québec: Septentrion, 2018), 16–17; Colin Grittner, “A Tendency Towards Mobocracy? The Democratic Realities of Nineteenth-Century British North America,” in *Constant Struggle: Histories of Canadian Democratization*, ed. Julien Mauduit and Jennifer Tunnicliffe (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 205.

communities treaded a very fine line, declaring allegiances to those in power while finding ways to use proclaimed ideals of liberty and equality to justify freedoms of language, labour, education, and political participation that threatened to disrupt French and Canadian aims in assimilation rooted in colonialist ideals of conquest.<sup>100</sup>

In the Acadian community, the late nineteenth century brought increased opportunities for literacy and education, and this led to the formation of a class of educated elites in Acadian society. In Martinique and in Guadeloupe during this period, educated elites often were descendants of the *gens de couleur* who garnered privileges and influence in the domains of education and politics prior to abolition. Many of those formerly enslaved continued to endure oppression in terms of labour and marginalization in the late nineteenth century, yet this period also saw a growing middle class that gained access to further education, and became more involved in political, social, and cultural activities. Acadian elites and elites of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe participated in re-forming their societies through political messages, social announcements, and personal testimonies in the press, but this reformation also stands as a testament to struggles with duality. Their messages to fellow members of their

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<sup>100</sup> Catholics received the right to vote in Nova Scotia in 1789 and in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in 1810. In 1830 they were granted the right to serve in their province's Legislative Assembly. France granted universal suffrage rights briefly in 1848 and again as the Third Republic in 1871. See Landry and Lang, *Histoire de l'Acadie*, 165–67; Schmidt, "Schoelchérisme et assimilation," 309–11; Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire*, iv; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 112.

community include calls for a type of “progress” measured by looking at themselves through the eyes of those with political and economic power.<sup>101</sup> This duality is evidence of psychological and emotional violation grounded in the atrocities of these societies’ colonial pasts. At the same time, their desire for what they have been molded to identify as progress and equality through imperialism is essential in creating a unifying discourse among each group.

In February 1848, working class and bourgeois republicans in France revolted to overthrow monarch Louis-Philippe and to bring to power a Second French Republican government. In this time of upheaval, discussion of abolition came to the forefront in Parisian circles, both among those who opposed the institution of slavery for moral reasons, as well as among those who increasingly feared loss of Caribbean control should the same events unfold in Martinique and Guadeloupe as had occurred in Haiti.<sup>102</sup> In April, through the leadership of French politician and abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, the temporary government in Paris passed a decree for abolition, but news of the decree did not reach Martinique immediately. Tensions were rising on the island, where political and

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<sup>101</sup> The term “inferiority complex” is used by Fanon and Césaire, and is also applied in studies of Acadian society. See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 91; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (United Kingdom: Pluto Press, 1986), 18; Raphaël Confiant, *Aimé Césaire: Une traversée paradoxale du siècle* (Paris: Éditions Écriture, 2006), 126; Joel Belliveau, *Le “Moment 68” et la réinvention de l’Acadie* (Ottawa: Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 2014), 205; Bourque and Richard, *Les Conventions nationales acadiennes, 1900-1908*, 36–38.

<sup>102</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: des Arawaks à 1848*, 1:381–84.

social unrest among enslaved and free Black people against white elites became heightened following the French and Haitian Revolutions. Increasing acts of violence and resistance culminated in a mass insurrection against the white Creole elite and leaders of local government on May 22. In order to try to secure the metropole's control of the island, a Martinican municipal council voted unanimously for abolition, and the governor in Guadeloupe quickly followed suit out of fear of revolt as news arrived of the events in Martinique.<sup>103</sup> Those enslaved in Martinique and Guadeloupe gained emancipation, yet abolition did not bring full equality as exclusionary practices, particularly in voting laws, representation, and property ownership soon became employed by the leadership of the Second Empire (1852-1870) to secure political power.<sup>104</sup>

During this turbulent period, with abrupt legal and political changes that had the potential to drastically alter the French Caribbean social structure and economic system, printed press that praised emancipation and tried to define equality for its reading public emerged.<sup>105</sup> Republican supporters on the islands, including formerly enslaved, free Black, and mixed-race individuals, soon divided into two political camps: *schoelcherists*, who supported French politician Victor Schoelcher, and *bissettistes*, who supported

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<sup>103</sup> Nicolas, 1:383–84, 393–94; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 171.

<sup>104</sup> Dumont, *L'amère patrie*, 69; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 149.

<sup>105</sup> Schmidt, "Schoelchérisme et assimilation," 309, 320; Schmidt, "Chansons des nouveaux libres," 112; Léo Ursulet, "Cyrille Bissette et Victor Schoelcher," *Humanisme* 2, no. 299 (May 2010): 96–99; Sara Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 162–63.

Martinican Cyrille Bissette, a mixed-race former enslaver who became a radical abolitionist.<sup>106</sup> In 1827 Martinican authorities had exiled Bissette from the island, accusing him of circulating a document entitled *De la situation des gens de couleur libres des Antilles françaises* that emphasized how even those who were deemed to be “free” on the islands endured extreme poverty, inability to possess land, and unjust rulings in the courts and government.<sup>107</sup> Bissette went to Paris for ten years, where he published an abolitionist newspaper *Revue des colonies* (1834-1843) that reached audiences in the United States and Europe, but on his return to Martinique he went on to hold political connections with members of the white *béké* class who were trying to secure control over politics and labour post-emancipation.<sup>108</sup>

In responding to the division of *schoelcheristes* and *bissettistes* in 1848, the earliest Republican-sided newspapers published articles and letters by Black and mixed-race contributors intending to unite formerly enslaved and free Black individuals.<sup>109</sup> The newspapers *Le Progrès* and *La Liberté* called for African descendants in Guadeloupe and Martinique to join together politically rather than being staunchly divided. These

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<sup>106</sup> Schmidt, “Chansons des nouveaux libres,” 111–12; Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1848 à 1939*, 2:24–27.

<sup>107</sup> Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 109–10; Gabriel Jacques Laisné de Villevêque, *De la situation des gens de couleur libres des Antilles françaises* (Paris: L'imprimerie de J. MacCarthy, 1823), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k57423258/>.

<sup>108</sup> Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 110, 114; Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 55. The newspaper *Revue des colonies* is available online through Gallica at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32858266g/date>.

<sup>109</sup> Schmidt, “Chansons des nouveaux libres,” 108.

newspapers include entries where, in the midst of trying to claim rights granted through French allegiance, the written word is employed strategically to bring knowledge for the purpose of unifying readers locally, apart from the metropole.

In Martinique, *schoelcherists* M. Marlet and M.C. Larcher who published *La Liberté* adamantly expressed opposition to the power of French colonial officials.<sup>110</sup> In the newspaper's first publication, editor Marlet underscores the importance of having a press that is not "begging alms from the metropolitan press," nor is an "organ of the colonial aristocracy."<sup>111</sup> Marlet employs French Republican rhetoric, stating that "Fraternity and equality are the only solid and enduring principles for a candid, sincere, and loyal union of the various classes of the population."<sup>112</sup> After declaring his opposition to "royalism," as well as to "deplorable prejudices" that are "the leper of our society," Marlet boldly states that "We will fight the ideas of race supremacy, from whatever side they come, as unjust, contrary to the great principle of equality."<sup>113</sup> Marlet expresses devotion to "this dear France" that he observes those in Martinique "venerate as a tender mother," yet criticizes problems of racism that go against promises of equality.<sup>114</sup> Marlet

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<sup>110</sup> M. Marlet, "A [sic] nos concitoyens des Antilles," *La Liberté*, April 18, 1850, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1203491s>.

<sup>111</sup> Marlet.

<sup>112</sup> Marlet. "La fraternité, l'égalité sont les seules bases solides et durables de l'union franche, sincère et loyale des diverses classes de la population."

<sup>113</sup> Marlet. "Nous combattons les idées de suprématie de race, de quelque côté qu'elles viennent comme injustes, contraires au grand principe d'égalité."

<sup>114</sup> Marlet.

states his intentions for *La Liberté* to come “into the arena of political struggles to unite and not to divide,” indicating his desire to overcome the political division between *schoelcherists* and *bissettistes* so that Republican supporters might be united.<sup>115</sup>

In subsequent issues from April 1850 through November 1851, many articles and letters do not indicate how the author self-identified in terms of race, but on occasion an author clearly specifies their race in attempting to unify readers. In a letter addressed to the “people of Martinique and those who lead them,” T. Tiburce identifies as a Black man aiming to overcome the division between *schoelcherists* and *bissettistes*. He asks his “brothers” to refrain from any conflict that can “more than ever divide us.” With this emphasis on overcoming division, Tiburce directs his letter to “all those in whose veins there is African blood,” pointing to their shared past and former homeland.<sup>116</sup> Tiburce’s statement indicating intimate connections with Africa provides foreshadow of perceptions of Africa expressed by journalist Oruno Lara, as well as by Aimé Césaire in his *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) that will both be examined in more detail in the following chapter. Tiburce underscores his peoples’ shared African ancestry while employing possessive pronouns that indicate a sense of belonging in what now is their Martinican homeland. He calls for the “honest consciences of my country” to remember

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<sup>115</sup> Marlet. “La Liberté entre dans l’arène des luttes politiques pour unir et non pour diviser”.

<sup>116</sup> T. Tiburce, “Appel au Peuple de la Martinique et à ceux qui le dirigent,” *La Liberté*, May 5, 1850. “je m’adresse à tous ceux dans les veines desquels il y a du sang africain”.

what *schoelcherists* have obtained for them, and he warns that political division can ultimately “throw into desolation our unfortunate country.”<sup>117</sup> Tiburce identifies for Martinicans of African descent historic commonalities of ancestral ties to Africa and present responsibilities for caring for the land they now occupy.

In April 1848, with the passage of abolition in Paris, an individual who identifies as D. Poléma and as a free Martinican Black woman living in France, wrote a letter addressed to her community in the Caribbean. This letter received publication in a Parisian newspaper *La Réforme*, and in the letter Poléma encourages those newly freed to show their loyalty to France through continuing with their labours. The newspaper editor provides an introduction to set the context of Poléma’s letter for readers and indicates the vulnerability of abolition by encouraging readers to “compare this call for concord and forgetting, with the wishes addressed by the colonists to the provisional government for the extension of slavery.”<sup>118</sup> Poléma advises those on the islands that rather than responding to former enslavers with violence, they should devote themselves to working and voting now that they finally gained their “much desired freedom.” She declares that “Providence” wanted “us to be free,” and that France granted them liberty, thus enabling

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<sup>117</sup> Tiburce. “consciences honnêtes de mon pays”; “enfin de jeter la désolation dans notre malheureux pays”; Concerning African homeland, see Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 33–40; Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, 64.

<sup>118</sup> D. Poléma, “A [sic] MES FRÈRES D’OUTRE-MER. LES ESCLAVES NÈGRES ET MULATRES,” *La Réforme*, May 2, 1848, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k68002566>.

them to now earn enough income so that their children can be educated.<sup>119</sup> Poléma celebrates the end of slavery, while also sending a message seemingly intended to try and quash any potential upheaval in Martinique by encouraging people to continue to work. She underscores the continued necessity of organized labour for the good of France, that in turn enables its citizenry to gain benefits of freedom and education.

A little less than a year later, Poléma wrote another letter expressing her gratitude to the Republic that “has broken our chains,” while also putting responsibility on “my dear brothers” to overcome any hurdles they encounter as they pursue political and economic goals designed by those who she deems to have “signed our emancipation,” not acknowledging how emancipation actually unfolded in Martinique.<sup>120</sup> Poléma pleads to her readers in the “name of Toussaint Louverture, our brother” to be wise in their political alliances and loyal to “principle” rather than to any individual who “might deceive us.”<sup>121</sup> Poléma praises Louverture, a Black general who led in the Haitian revolution against France, as a “great man,” despite how he fought against colonial France, thus revealing a selectivity in remembrance and in French allegiance. Poléma’s praise of Louverture, as an individual who led a successful enslaved rebellion against the

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<sup>119</sup> Poléma.

<sup>120</sup> D. Poléma, “Appel à mes frères d’outremer,” February 27, 1849, [http://slavery.uga.edu/texts/works\\_color/POLEMA.pdf](http://slavery.uga.edu/texts/works_color/POLEMA.pdf). A typed copy of this source is located on the website “Francophone Slavery” ([slavery.uga.edu](http://slavery.uga.edu)) designed by Dr. Doris Kadish.

<sup>121</sup> Poléma.

First French Republic, is juxtaposed against her quest to unify a population distinct from, yet in her view needing to be allegiant to, the Second French Republic.

Poléma received criticism in the Martinican newspaper *Le Courrier de la Martinique* following this letter, both for her mention of Louverture and for the warning she issued for readers to be careful who they trusted in politics due to potential deception.<sup>122</sup> In response to the criticism, Poléma wrote to the editor of the Parisian newspaper *La Réforme* to defend herself against the accusations voiced in the *Courrier*. She claims that her intentions were to “preach harmony, union, fraternity between all classes of the colonial population.”<sup>123</sup> In her defense, she declares that her “veneration for [Louverture] who is the liberator and regenerator of my race is quite natural,” but that the “gratitude” she expresses for his actions “is no reason for him to make me his instrument.”<sup>124</sup> She expresses her support for Schoelcher with upcoming elections in Martinique and concludes that no matter what others may say, “What I did, I would do again, for I thought I was doing my country a service by enlightening it on the passions of some exalted who every day frightened me with their violent words and whom I could

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<sup>122</sup> D. Poléma, “Au Rédacteur en chef de *La Réforme*,” *Le Progrès*, June 28, 1849.

<sup>123</sup> Poléma.

<sup>124</sup> Poléma. “La vénération que je porte à l’homme qui est le libérateur et le régénérateur de ma race est bien naturelle, mais le culte de la reconnaissance que je lui ai avouée n’est pas une raison pour qu’il me fasse son instrument.”

name”.<sup>125</sup> Six months later, in another letter to the editor of *Le Progrès*, Poléma expresses her gratitude to members of a jury for an acquittal, using the language of “my country” in referring to Martinique, while also calling for “my brothers from Africa never to forget that the happiness of the country depends on those whose irons France and *the great regenerator* SCHOELCHER [sic], have broken under our holy Republic!”<sup>126</sup> Just as Tiburce referred to Martinique as his country in a possessive, communal sense and underscored his people’s shared ties to a former African homeland, so too Poléma declares that she “desires more than anything the best for my country” while bringing to the foreground her peoples’ shared African roots, as well as their desires for the freedom and equality promised by France.<sup>127</sup>

Through these letters, Poléma begins to apply an imposed colonial narrative in describing how France gifted freedom and rights to the formerly enslaved in Martinique, not acknowledging how an insurrection brought abolition on the island. She encourages her readers to meet France’s expectations of its “good citizens” by being loyal labourers, and she emphasizes how free Black people can claim the rights of citizenship, including

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<sup>125</sup> Poléma. “Ce que j’ai fait, je le ferais encore, car j’ai cru rendre un service à mon pays en l’éclairant sur les passions de quelques hommes exaltés qui chaque jour m’effrayaient par leurs violents propos et que je pourrais nommer.”

<sup>126</sup> D. Poléma, “Monsieur le Rédacteur,” *Le Progrès*, December 6, 1849. “je supplie aussi mes frères d’Afrique de ne jamais oublier que le bonheur du pays dépend de ceux dont la France et *le grand régénérateur* SCHOELCHER, ont brisé les fers sous notre sainte République!”

<sup>127</sup> Poléma. “je désire avant tout le bonheur de mon pays.”

opportunities for education.<sup>128</sup> In describing both Toussaint Louverture and Victor Schoelcher with the term “regenerator,” alluding to a reformation or rebirth of Martinican society, Poléma glosses over past faults of the empire while praising the Republic, and she underscores the necessity to participate politically in order to secure any rights and freedoms promised to loyal citizens.<sup>129</sup>

Recognition of the importance of political participation in the French system of government is evident in another entry in *Le Progrès* signed by Louis Hyppolyte. Hyppolyte recounts how faulty accusations by the police resulted in his imprisonment and in having his name removed from the voting list for his commune. Evidently frustrated by losing his voting rights, he emphasizes how he wanted to “give my vote to the citizens whom I believed in a position to represent my country with dignity.”<sup>130</sup> While he does not explicitly state his race, Hyppolyte’s closing paragraphs carry deep implications concerning race and citizenship. He writes that in any nation, “all citizens attached to the service of a flag, must, under its shadow, obtain equal protection.”<sup>131</sup> Hyppolyte emphasizes that all French citizens deserve the opportunity to express their

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<sup>128</sup> Poléma, “A [sic] MES FRÈRES D’OUTRE-MER.”

<sup>129</sup> Poléma; Poléma, “Appel à mes frères d’outremer”; Poléma, “Au Rédacteur en chef de *La Réforme*”; Poléma, “Monsieur le Rédacteur.”

<sup>130</sup> Louis Hyppolyte, “Monsieur le Rédacteur,” *Le Progrès*, July 12, 1849. “Je me disposais à prendre part au vote général du 24 juin, étant bien aise, moi aussi, de donner mon suffrage aux citoyens que je croyais en état de représenter dignement mon pays.”

<sup>131</sup> Hyppolyte. “tous les citoyens attachés au service d’un drapeau, doivent, sous son ombre, obtenir égale protection.”

concerns to the government, regardless of education or race, “without fearing the base vengeance to which the unfortunate people, who bore on their forehead the stigma of an origin other than that of the privileged, were subject to.”<sup>132</sup> Hyppolyte does not articulate what separates the unfortunate from the privileged, but gives racial implications, arguing that someone’s physical appearance should not determine their rights and that all citizens under France should be treated equally.<sup>133</sup> Hyppolyte identifies with being part of a distinct community, while contending that his community deserves Republican promises of equality given to France’s citizenry. As with the articles and letters by Marlet, Tiburce, and Poléma, France’s colonial faults are left opaque, while the French government’s promises of freedom and equality are illuminated.

In the Second Republican press in Martinique and Guadeloupe what may qualify as early French Antillean literature appears, as supporters of Schoelcher and Bissette compose and print song lyrics – a form of poetry – that express their political allegiances. According to Nelly Schmidt, these songs written in French or Creole often appeared in loose-leaf printings, including some printed by Schoelcherist supporter A. Semac, who also published *Le Progrès* in Guadeloupe.<sup>134</sup> Schmidt argues that these songs’

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<sup>132</sup> Hyppolyte. “sans craindre les bases vengeances auxquelles étaient assujettis les malheureux qui portaient sur leur front le stigmate d’une origine autre que celle des privilégiés.”

<sup>133</sup> Hyppolyte.

<sup>134</sup> Schmidt, “Chansons des nouveaux libres,” 112–13.

*schoelcherist* and *bissettiste* loyalties make them appear divergent, yet they actually convey similar social and political messages.<sup>135</sup>

In a French-translated Creole song published by Semac entitled “Souvenirs Républicains,” (1849) lyrics celebrate liberties deemed to have been granted by France and Schoelcher, rather than acquired through insurrection of the enslaved. The song expresses voting support to Schoelcher and to mixed-race military official Auguste Perrinon, remembered for delivering news of France’s emancipation decree to Martinique, and encourages cohesion among the population and connection with the Republic.<sup>136</sup> The song’s writer opens with the declaration that “We have been called in France / to take our place among the citizens.” Like Poléma, who urged Martinicans to continue to work following abolition, this song emphasizes the value of agricultural labour for the benefit of the workers and the French Republic. The writer emphasizes that their labour is essential, because when “Agriculture thrives, / Order, work reigns,” enabling sustenance and advancement.<sup>137</sup> The writer praises Schoelcher when describing how, “We are children of a country with a hot sun / Used to hard labour; / Liberty has made us new men / It is thanks to this inflexible man.”<sup>138</sup> These verses provide

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<sup>135</sup> Schmidt, 114–15.

<sup>136</sup> “SOUVENIRS RÉPUBLICAINS (traduction)” in Schmidt, 118; Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1848 à 1939*, 2:9; Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 214 fn 12.

<sup>137</sup> Schmidt, “Chansons des nouveaux libres,” 118. “On nous a appelés en France / à prendre rang parmi les citoyens / [...] L’agriculture prospère, / L’ordre, le travail règnent.”

<sup>138</sup> Schmidt, 118. “Nous sommes les enfants d’un pays au soleil chaud / Habités au travail pénible ; / La liberté nous a faits des hommes nouveaux, / C’est grâce à cet homme inflexible.”

implications of homeland, with those of African descent being born on this land they now cultivate. The verses describe how the “liberty” gained through Schoelcher has made the formerly enslaved into “new men,” as is also intimated with Poléma’s language of “regenerator” in describing Louverture and Schoelcher.<sup>139</sup> These messages have undertones of formerly enslaved individuals undergoing rebirth courtesy of Schoelcher and the Republic, when in actuality this liberty France supposedly bestowed was shaped by the empire’s dependence on this community’s labour, as well as the actions of the enslaved.

An emphasis on social and political unity appears in other songs devoted to honouring Bissette. A song entitled “Les adieux à M. Bissette” published in the *Courrier de la Martinique* describes Martinique as Bissette’s “beautiful homeland [ta belle patrie]” where “By your cares we are all brothers, / And we will live always united.”<sup>140</sup> Other songs, including “Arrivée Bissette,” echo this call to be united in trusting Bissette’s ability to be the “savior of us all,” as like Christ he has performed self-sacrifice “to pull everyone from slavery.”<sup>141</sup> A song entitled “Belair dédié aux cultivateurs” criticizes Schoelcher supporters including Poléma, and calls for the “children of the homeland” to

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<sup>139</sup> Schmidt, 118. “La liberté nous a faits des hommes nouveaux.”

<sup>140</sup> “LES ADIEUX A [sic] M. BISSETTE” in Schmidt, 132. “Par tes soins nous sommes tous frères, / Et nous vivrons toujours unis.”

<sup>141</sup> “ARRIVÉE BISSETTE” in Schmidt, 124. “Bissette sauveur nous toutes [...] Quand Jésus-Christ té mort lasus la croix / Pour li tire toute moune de l’esclavage, / Dans ces temps la moin croiè li té fè moin / Que sauveur nous Bissette li fè ban nous!”

dance and to sing in celebration of Bissette being their deputy. Political discord is evident in the *schoelcherist* and *bissettiste* songs, but they all articulate desires to be united as a people.<sup>142</sup> The songs express peoples' devotion to the Caribbean island identified as their "beautiful country," while underscoring the importance of labour on the land, and this emphasis on homeland and land cultivation also appears in early Acadian press and literature.<sup>143</sup>

In December 1852, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and his supporters re-instated imperial rule with the Second French Empire.<sup>144</sup> For French Caribbean people, newspapers such as *Le Progrès* and *La Liberté* appear to have fallen silent during the regime of Napoleon III until the 1870s with the establishment of the Third Republic. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, other newspapers connected with Black and mixed-race political leaders and their parties surfaced in the Antilles. Emerging press focused largely on issues of workers' rights and included *Les Antilles socialistes* (1899, under Guadeloupean deputy Hégésippe Légitimus) and *Le Prolétaire* (1906-1910, under Martinican deputy Joseph Lagrosillière), as well as *Le Courrier de la Guadeloupe* (1881-1907), *Le Citoyen* (1904-1914), and *Le Nouvelliste* (1909-1926, under

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<sup>142</sup> "BELAIR DÉDIÉ AUX CULTIVATEURS" in Schmidt, 126.

<sup>143</sup> "ARRIVÉE BISSETTE" in Schmidt, 125.

<sup>144</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1848 à 1939*, 2:37.

Oruno Lara's brother Hildevert-Adolphe Lara).<sup>145</sup> As printed press expanded, so too did the movement for literary works, and as will be examined in the following chapter, the periodical *Guadeloupe littéraire* went to press in 1907 under Oruno Lara's direction. Lara featured commentaries, short stories, and poetry not only from France, but also from local residents, in order to bring greater attention to what he considers significant advancements taking place in the educational system and in the development of Guadeloupean literature.<sup>146</sup>

Newspapers targeted at the Acadian population started to be published in Atlantic Canada in the mid- to late nineteenth century as well, and like Marlet and Larcher with *La Liberté*, editors reveal intentions of bringing political and social cohesion. To try to unite Acadians, the early press emphasizes the importance of the French language, as well as of religious freedoms and education, while drawing attention to Acadian history and labour experiences. As with the celebration of the French Republic in the French Caribbean press previously discussed, there is a tendency for entries to gloss over atrocities committed by the British empire in the Acadian past, while expressing hope to

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<sup>145</sup> Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 16–17; Oruno Denis Lara, "Introduction," in *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), vi, viii; Elizabeth Heath, "The Black Race's Dreyfus Affair: Hégésippe Jean Légitimus and the Dissimilation of Colonial Guadeloupe," *French Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (April 2019): 265.

<sup>146</sup> Lara, "Introduction," iv, viii.

attain equal rights as Canadian citizens through Confederation. Their press provides evidence of Acadians being selectively non-confrontational, for the purpose of improving their political and economic circumstances.<sup>147</sup> Chantal Richard observes: “The expression of their loyalty to the government that had deported them thus oscillated between a reflex of minorities wishing to maintain *bonne entente* and a negotiation to obtain their rights as Canadian citizens.”<sup>148</sup> Acadian newspapers functioned as a political tool to bring unity and “played a major role in creating a literary tradition in Acadie” through featuring serials and poems by French, Québécois, and Acadian authors.<sup>149</sup>

Israël D. Landry, an Acadian descendant who moved from Québec to the Maritimes in 1862, founded *Le Moniteur acadien* in 1867 and released the first publication immediately following Canada’s Confederation. In a letter to French historian Rameau de Saint-Père, who previously visited Canada and wrote extensively on Acadian history, Landry expressed his need for financial support for the newspaper due to the “profound ignorance of the Acadian people and their aversion to reading.”<sup>150</sup> He declared his hope that by making his newspaper freely available to Acadians early on he would

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<sup>147</sup> Belliveau, *Le “Moment 68,”* 235; Michael Poplyansky, “The Rootedness of Acadian Neo-Nationalism: The Changing Meaning of le 15 août, 1968-1982,” in *Celebrating Canada: Holidays, National Days, and the Crafting of Identities*, ed. Matthew Hayday and Raymond B. Blake (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 382; Richard, “Discours identitaires,” 106.

<sup>148</sup> Richard, “Discours identitaires,” 106.

<sup>149</sup> Richard, 86.

<sup>150</sup> Israël J. O. Landry to A.M.E. Rameau, 19 March 1867 in Naomi E.S. Griffiths, “The Founding of *Le Moniteur Acadien*,” *Acadiensis* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 80–90. “vous connaissez la profonde ignorance du peuple Acadien et son aversion à la lecture.”

entice them to learn to read, stating that his desire with the press was to “raise Acadian nationality to the level of their neighbors, both Canadian and foreign.”<sup>151</sup> Twenty years later the newspaper *L'Évangéline* went to press, also featuring articles that both emphasized Acadian nationalism and claimed Acadians' rights in the Canadian political and social system. Similar to the letters by Hyppolyte and Poléma, where they self-identify as being distinct from the French, yet “good citizens,” contributors to *Le Moniteur acadien* and *L'Évangéline* often identified themselves as Acadians holding the rights of Canadian citizenship.<sup>152</sup> They guarded against provoking any upset of the “established order” built by colonial Britain and now in many ways maintained by the Canadian government.<sup>153</sup>

In the prospectus for *Le Moniteur acadien* Landry declares that his goal is for the paper to “unite this great and generous Acadian family by the same bond.”<sup>154</sup> In the first full issue, the language of nation and “homeland” appear frequently in the opening columns. Author J.L. describes a celebration of British Queen Victoria's birthday held at the Collège Saint-Joseph in Memramcook, where “In the morning, one could see the English flag flying in the belfry of the College, this happy emblem of our rights and our

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<sup>151</sup> Griffiths, 81. “Cette entreprise, comme vous voyez, est dans le but d'élever la nationalité Acadienne au niveau de ses voisins, tant Canadienne, qu'étrangères.”

<sup>152</sup> Hyppolyte, “Monsieur le Rédacteur.”

<sup>153</sup> Richard, “Discours identitaires,” 100.

<sup>154</sup> Israël Landry, “PROSPECTUS DU MONITEUR ACADIEN,” *Le Moniteur acadien*, March 5, 1867. “Reunir [sic] cette grande et genereuse [sic] famille Acadienne par un même lien”.

liberties,” yet the focus of the article quickly shifts to celebrate “the awakening” of Acadians after “a long sleepiness.” The author describes Acadians becoming part of “the great concert of nations” and proclaims Acadian progress in trying to unite: “Yes, here it comes, we are touching it, this day when all Acadians will live the same life, breathe the same atmosphere, and feel their heart beating in unison, at the word of ‘Homeland.’” J.L. encourages Acadian readers to put their “efforts” toward “the great goal...the preservation of our nationality,” a summons that appears to stand in contrast to his description of the Acadians’ joyous commemoration of Queen Victoria.<sup>155</sup> Like with Poléma’s remembrance of revolutionary leader Louverture in the midst of her praise for the French Republic, this points to a dichotomy of calling for Acadian nationalism while praising the sovereign nationhood of Canada, under Britain. Poléma’s remembrance of Louverture and this call for Acadian nationality can be interpreted as oppositional to French and Canadian national authority, yet point to how Acadians and French Caribbean people of African descent attempted to distinguish their societies inside the framework of a broader national structure.

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<sup>155</sup> J.L., “LA FETE [sic] DE LA REINE A [sic] MEMRAMCOOK,” *Le Moniteur acadien*, July 8, 1867. “Dès le matin, on pouvait appercevoir [sic] au beffroi du Collège flotter le pavillon anglais, cet heureux emblème de nos droits et de nos libertés”; “Oui le voila [sic] arrive [sic], nous le touchons, ce jour ou [sic] tous les acadiens vont vivre d’une même vie, respirer le [sic] même atmosphère, et sentir battre leur cœur à l’unisson, au mot de “Patrie”; “le grand but où doivent tendre tous nos efforts : le maintien de notre nationalité.”

In the first edition of *L'Évangéline*, Valentin Landry, born in New Brunswick, also indicates his desire to use the press to establish Acadians as a collective community that is loyal to Britain and Canada. In an English article, an author who identifies under the pseudonym Alpha, explains that one of *L'Évangéline*'s primary purposes is to “strengthen the bonds” of its readers with the British empire “under whose Flag we all live,” while also emphasizing the importance of French language and education, as well as of the Catholic church. Alpha declares that “in union lies force” and encourages Acadians to engage with each other so that “the object of our lives may be realized the fusion of the Acadian Race into one harmonio[sic] whole”.<sup>156</sup> Landry published a letter from an individual who observes how those living in various regions of the Atlantic provinces “do not know each other intimately today,” and expresses their hope that the newspaper might help unify French communities.<sup>157</sup> A published letter from *Le Moniteur acadien* extends congratulations with the founding of *L'Évangéline*, observing that the new press will further help to “unite in a single national action the various French groups of this province.”<sup>158</sup> This statement reveals a shared ambition to unite the Acadian

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<sup>156</sup> Alpha, *L'Évangéline*, November 23, 1887.

<sup>157</sup> Ma [sic], “LETTRE DE BATHURST,” *L'Évangéline*, November 23, 1887.

<sup>158</sup> *Le Moniteur acadien*, “APPRECIATIONS [sic],” *L'Évangéline*, December 7, 1887. “réveiller ce sentiment endormi et d’unir dans une même action nationale les divers groupes français de cette province.”

people, despite these newspapers having oppositional conservative and liberal political ties.<sup>159</sup>

In 1867, the majority of Acadians voted against Canadian Confederation, but once this became a “fait accompli,” Acadian newspapers published articles expressing desires for their rights and freedoms as citizens of Canada.<sup>160</sup> With an emphasis on Acadian nationalism and identity, the newspapers contributed in some ways to opposing assimilation, yet this opposition proved constrained by Acadian duality where they tended to gauge their sense of advancement by comparing themselves to the Anglophone majority or their Québécois neighbors. In *Le Moniteur acadien* a letter to the editor emphasizes for the Acadian public the important “resurrection of their nationality” alongside the “bright future that awaits them under the auspices of Confederation.”<sup>161</sup> In another hopeful letter, an Acadian expresses his desire that through the Acadian relationship with Québec “our interests will be theirs and by defending their rights, they will defend ours.”<sup>162</sup> The author states that through the newspaper “on the one hand we will reach out to our brothers in Canada and on the other hand we will reach out to

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<sup>159</sup> Richard, “Discours identitaires,” 91, 95, 99.

<sup>160</sup> Griffiths, “The Founding of *Le Moniteur Acadien*,” 83; Chantal Richard, “Acadian Collective Identity Before and After Confederation: The Case of the New Brunswick Acadians,” *Canadian Issues* (Fall 2014): 26.

<sup>161</sup> F.X.J.M., “Mon cher Monsieur,” *Le Moniteur acadien*, July 8, 1867. “à la résurrection de leur nationalité et du brillant avenir qui les attend sous les auspices de la confédération”.

<sup>162</sup> J.L., “CORRESPONDANCES: Monsieur le Rédacteur,” *Le Moniteur acadien*, July 18, 1867. “nos intérêts seront les leurs et en défendant leurs droits, ils défendront les nôtres.”

France, over the wide sea that has separated us since we were violently torn from her bosom, and that seems to widen every day by the oblivion into which we are relegated.”<sup>163</sup> News articles of this period, rather than being overtly critical of the federal government and its Anglophone majority leadership, applauded ideals proposed by the nation-state while expressing Acadians’ desire for equal rights as a distinct, Francophone community.

In *L’Évangéline*, Alpha explains how even though Acadians experienced terrible atrocities with the Deportation by the British, including enduring “bigotry and race-hatred” during their exile, Acadians are now “eager to work alongside their English brothers” in “making this ‘Canada of ours’ one of the greatest nations of the earth ... thus finally cementing the friendship between two great peoples”.<sup>164</sup> An Acadian in Kent county wrote a letter stating how Acadians need to come together “In order to achieve our goal, to have our rights respected, and to affirm our existence as a people”.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, a reader in Prince Edward Island tells of the newspaper’s importance in protecting Acadians’ rights as defined by Canadian Confederation, as well as in promoting national interests taking shape in the Acadian communities: “Is it not [the

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<sup>163</sup> J.L. “Par son entremise, d’un côté nous toucherons de la main à nos frères du Canada et de l’autre nous tendrons les bras vers la France, au-dessus de cette mer si large, qui nous sépare depuis que nous avons été violemment arrachés de son sein, et qui chaque jour semble s’élargir d’avantage [sic] par l’oubli dans lequel nous sommes relégués.”

<sup>164</sup> Alpha, “RETURN FROM EXILE,” *L’Évangéline*, November 30, 1887.

<sup>165</sup> KENT, N.B., “SALUT A [sic] L’EVANGELINE [sic],” *L’Évangéline*, December 7, 1887. “Afin d’arriver à notre but [sic] aire respecter nos droits et affirmer notre existence comme peuple”.

newspaper] that strives to uphold our rights, to defend our national interests ...?”<sup>166</sup> As unfolds in the French Caribbean, there is a birth of Acadian nationalism inside that of Canadian nationalism, and in trying to self-identify, Acadians formulated their own expectations concerning the ideals of rights and liberties promised by the state government.

In the mid-nineteenth century, educated people of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe started identifying how the written word could be employed as a tool to bring cohesion, while through the latter part of that century, those involved in the Acadian press identified how it could also serve as a weapon to defend their community as they encountered the social, cultural, and political power of the dominant Anglophone society. Israël Landry wrote in his prospectus for *Le Moniteur acadien* that Acadians would now have a paper where they could “defend themselves against the base calumnies they are subjected to by their enemies,” yet he does not explicitly identify who those enemies are.<sup>167</sup> A few months later, in an article signed by “a young Acadian,” the author emphasizes the value of education, describing how the written word gave the Roman empire “another kind of superiority infinitely more flattering than that which comes only from weapons and conquests.” Like Poléma’s emphasis on the importance of education,

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<sup>166</sup> Bruno E. Arsena [sic], “LETTRES,” *L’Évangéline*, December 14, 1887. “N’est-ce pas lui qui s’efforce de faire prévaloir nos droits, de défendre nos intérêts nationaux...?”

<sup>167</sup> Landry, “PROSPECTUS DU MONITEUR ACADIEN.” “par les colonnes duquel ils pourront se défendre [sic] contre les basses calomnies dont ils sont sujets de la part de leurs ennemis.”

the author argues that the Acadians' "complete lack of literary institutions" are the primary factor for their "ignorance," implying the critical nature of developing reading and writing skills in order for Acadians to advance socially and politically.<sup>168</sup> In the first edition of *L'Évangéline*, Charles Thibault mentions the Deportation and refers to Acadian "enemies," yet like Landry, he does not explicitly name Britain. In writing to "this heroic race of martyrs," Thibault observes that a journal like this serves as the "precision weapon of the nineteenth century" used to garner "justice," "the triumph of principles," "the honour of a people," and "the awakening of a nation."<sup>169</sup> These entries indicate an awareness of how the written word might function as a weapon for Acadians, but largely in the context of defending themselves against "enemies" who are described in a fashion that brings implication rather than accusation.

The Acadian struggle with self-identifying while proving prey to duality is also revealed in poems and fictional stories. *Le Moniteur Acadien* and *L'Évangéline* featured French versions of Longfellow's *Evangeline* poem in their earliest editions, with sections of the poem spread across several publications. By featuring this poem, the Acadian community began understanding and defining its colonial history by looking through the eyes of an American Anglophone writer. The newspaper *L'Évangéline* featured a stanza

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<sup>168</sup> Un Jeune Acadien, "COURT TRAITE SUR L'EDUCATION [sic]," *Le Moniteur acadien*, August 3, 1867. "une autre sorte de supériorité infiniment plus flatteuse que celle qui ne vient que des armes et des conquêtes."

<sup>169</sup> Charles Thibau [sic], "FIAT LUX," *L'Évangéline*, November 23, 1887.

as its subtitle, with its description of Acadians being “scattered like dust and leaves” so that “Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.”<sup>170</sup> In the second edition of *L'Évangéline*, Francisca from Nova Scotia encourages the newspaper to “try to be the emblem” of the Evangeline Longfellow created. In an entry describing the Nova Scotian town of Saulnierville, credited as being Acadian and Catholic, the author emphasizes that many young women there are named Évangéline.<sup>171</sup> References to this poem are found throughout the early Acadian press, but the newspapers also began to feature other literature, including poems written by Acadians.

Acadians often looked through the eyes of others when shaping and gauging the value of their literary creations. In examining poetry published in *L'Évangéline* from 1887-1920, Monique Boucher observes that poems largely focused on themes of anguish and mortality, and many followed a cyclical tendency beginning with life, a form of death, and then rebirth, reflecting the significance of Catholicism.<sup>172</sup> As will be analyzed in more detail in the following chapter, Boucher explains how the majority of early poets were educated in Catholic schools that idealized the pre-Revolutionary French empire with its Catholic political ties, yet were also influenced by certain Romantic writers such

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<sup>170</sup> Valentin Landry, *L'Évangéline*, November 23, 1887.

<sup>171</sup> Francisca, “A L'EVANGELINE [sic],” *L'Évangéline*, November 30, 1887; Commis-Voyageur, “SAULNIERVILLE, BAIE STE. MARIE, N. E. [sic],” *L'Évangéline*, November 30, 1887.

<sup>172</sup> Monique Boucher, “Éros contre Thanatos: l'imaginaire acadien dans le journal *L'Évangéline* (1887-1920),” *Francophonies d'Amérique*, no. 2 (1992): 33.

as Bossuet, Lamartine, and Chateaubriand who wrote in the early nineteenth century.<sup>173</sup> Educated Acadian elites who wrote poetry were often influenced by Longfellow's poem when it came to content and by early-Romantic French literary authors when it came to style.

In *Le Moniteur acadien*, an author who signed as "Patriote" published a poem entitled "Au peuple Acadien," in which he encourages Acadians to awaken from their "deep sleep."<sup>174</sup> The poet describes an "enemy" that has "plunged" them into a "miserable quagmire" and "still threatens us" with his "sciences" and "audacity." Like in the news articles where Acadians did not bring overt accusation against the Anglophone majority, this enemy goes unnamed. Similar to the poem about Bissette that describes Martinique as "his beautiful homeland [belle patrie]" and "his dear island," this poem refers to "our nation" and "our homeland [notre patrie]" that "we have always called Acadie." The poet prompts Acadians to take action by declaring "Let us get out of this miserable quagmire / Into which we have been plunged," and encourages Acadians to "unite" while praying for "our fruitful nation."<sup>175</sup> There is an implication of autonomy, highlighting how Acadians are still a people and how they should not be complacent, yet

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<sup>173</sup> Boucher, 29–30.

<sup>174</sup> Patriote, "AU PEUPLE ACADIEN."

<sup>175</sup> Patriote. "Sortons de ce misérable bourbier / Dans lequel nous avons été plongés / [...] Unissons nous [sic], et marchons sans craindre, / [...] Offrons nos prières au Créateur du monde / Qu'il daigne rendre notre nation féconde."

the actions the poet describes are not in opposition to the Canadian nation-state, and therefore find space inside the discourse of rights and nationalism being defined by the dominant society.

Articles, letters, songs, and poems in mid- to late nineteenth-century Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian press point broadly to the complexity of nationalism during this period, where promised “freedom” in these nation-states, that were undergoing tremendous political alterations, had various interpretations for those now deemed citizens. Their press provides indication of how educated elites in these societies, who identified promises of “freedom” in politics, labour, and social engagement, have a growing expectation of a yet-to-be-defined degree of social and cultural autonomy. Acadians, as well as descendants of enslaved Africans in Martinique and Guadeloupe, followed in French, British, and Canadian footsteps by embracing political rhetoric that vaunted ideals of freedom and equality, yet their early literature reveals a developing reflection on distinctive communal experiences and identities. Their press brought greater cohesion as a collective identity started to be defined and as literary traditions began to take shape, yet many writers glossed over faults of the empires and the states, thus revealing the presence of acquiescence as these tenants of empire starting bringing more to the table in negotiating the still-binding lease composed, implemented, and first regulated by the empires.

Coming out of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, these societies remained distinct while being occupants of the structures built and established by the empires. In many ways they were bound and limited by their contract when it came to political participation, historical understanding, and social interaction, yet the poems featured at the opening to this chapter each provide foreshadow to a period of dramatic change. These poems portray those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as Acadians, both being “called” to either “take rank” or “to leave this deep sleep” as each make claims of inhabiting a distinct “country” or “homeland.” The poems provide evidence of these communities trying to gauge for themselves where they fit in relation to France and to Canada. As they negotiate their positions as occupants, the power balance in their duality starts shifting more apparently in the early twentieth century. In poetry, editorials, and printed speeches, writers will overtly articulate their society’s claim to a geographic space while also starting to self-identify as the dispossessed as a result of colonial violence.

## Chapter 4 – Occupying the Space: Early Literature, 1905-1960

“Consequently, it will not be enough to say that the Fathers of Confederation built and that their successors enlarged, embellished, and enriched the edifice; it will still be necessary for the present generation, justly proud of the past, to continue the work begun by their predecessors to make the Dominion of Canada great, rich, and prosperous”.<sup>1</sup> - Antoine-J. Léger, c. 1927

“Four colonies, having reached maturity, demand a stricter attachment to France. You will appreciate the full value of this thought, I am sure, at this moment when we hear the ominous cracking of the edifices of imperialism. [...] there must be established an active fraternity under the terms of which there will be a France that is more than ever united and diverse, multiple and harmonious, from which we are allowed to expect the greatest discoveries.”<sup>2</sup> - Aimé Césaire, 1946

In the late nineteenth century, France, Britain, and Canada continued to maintain figurative leases on Acadian and French Caribbean societies created through colonialism and the diasporas of African enslavement and Acadian Deportation. The French and British empires had set the majority of the terms of these leases, and these societies existed and evolved inside standing political and economic “edifices,” as termed in the above quotes by Martinican Aimé Césaire and Acadian Antoine-J. Léger. In the early twentieth century, many of the political, judicial, economic, and social walls of these

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<sup>1</sup> Antoine-J. Léger, “Soixante années d’initiatives,” n.d., CÉAAC, Université de Moncton, 21.6.005. “Conséquemment, il ne suffira donc pas de dire que les pères de la confédération [sic] ont édifié et que leurs successeurs ont agrandi, embelli et enrichi l’édifice; il faudra encore que la génération présente, fière a [sic] juste titre du passé, continue l’œuvre commencé par leurs devanciers de faire la Dominion du Canada grande, riche et prospère”.

<sup>2</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Débats de l’Assemblée Nationale Constituante, no. 23” (Assemblée Nationale, Journal officiel de la République Française, March 12, 1946); Translation by Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 111. “Quatre colonies, arrivées à leur majorité, demandent un rattachement plus strict à la France. Vous apprécierez cette pensée à sa juste valeur, j’en suis sûr, à cette heure où l’on entend des craquements sinistres dans les constructions de l’impérialisme. [...] il doit s’établir une fraternité agissante aux termes de laquelle il y aura une France plus que jamais unie et diverse, multiple et harmonieuse, dont il est permis d’attendre les plus hautes révélations.”

edifices remained stable. As Acadians, as well as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, occupied their allotted space in these structures in the early twentieth century, each had a growing class of educated elites who pursued many ideals of “progress” that were designed and ordained through imperialism, including in arts and education, as well as in agricultural development and trade.<sup>3</sup>

These tenants’ occupation of the space included adopting colonially-established norms of language and literature, but local social, cultural, and political expression via the written word increasingly came during the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, many Acadian writers and those of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe inhabited enduring French and British colonial structures. They tended not to pursue altering the rooms and the walls surrounding them, and in some ways, they even fortified the structures. At the same time, they brought their own presence and psyche into the space they occupied. Educated elites’ early press and poetry reveal a growing desire to possessively claim a homeland, and they started self-identifying via the written word not only as distinct communities, but as communities that endured terrible atrocities due to the motivations and actions of empires. In poems and commentaries in the newspapers *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L’Évangéline* from 1905-1914, there is evidence

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<sup>3</sup> Concerning social and racial class constructs in the French Caribbean, see Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 54–56. Couti explains how through the Third Republic (1870-1940) those of African descent of the *petite bourgeoisie* in the French Antilles gained greater opportunity for education and became more active in politics, alongside elites of the *grande bourgeoisie*.

of dualism among elites as they employed French language to write what would be deemed as a form of French literature, while at the same time to begin to claim a distinct geographic homeland. In the 1940s, this claim to a homeland and self-identification as the dispossessed due to colonial violence becomes more prominent in the published literary works of political figures Aimé Césaire and Antoine-J. Léger.

### **(French) Literature**

In the 1990s, literary scholars Jack Corzani and Hans Runte critiqued the early twentieth-century literature of French Caribbean and Acadian societies as being “bland” and as not qualifying as actual literature. The poetry featured in newspapers in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries wound up in the margins of both literary and historical analysis.<sup>4</sup>

In actuality, these societies’ early poetry is deserving of scholarly critique, with an approach that reconceptualizes what qualifies as “literature,” particularly for marginalized societies as a result of colonialism, and for those with histories of diaspora. For this study, poems and commentaries published in Guadeloupean and Acadian early press merit attention for what they reveal concerning identity formation. They provide

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<sup>4</sup> Jack Corzani, “Poetry before Negritude,” in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, ed. A. James Arnold, Julio Rodrigues-Luis, and J. Michael Dash, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 472; Hans R. Runte, *Writing Acadia: The Emergence of Acadian Literature, 1970-1990* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 7; One study that examines poetry featured in *L’Évangéline* from 1887-1920 is Boucher, “Éros contre Thanatos.”

insight into the forms of literature that influenced Acadian writers and intellectuals of African descent in Guadeloupe, while enabling comprehension of the evolving, and at times discordant, political, social, and economic desires of educated elites.

Poems and commentaries in *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* during the early twentieth century up to the beginning of World War I indicate that experiences and memories of colonial displacement and colonial violence are critical in the identity quests of Acadians and of Guadeloupean of African descent during this period. Writers featured in these newspapers attempt to produce an understanding among readers of who they are as a community, as well as who they are as citizens of France and Canada. Featured writers include educated elites, consequently those of the labouring class remain largely unheard. This class distinction is important to identify for both societies, but particularly for those in the Antilles, as elites who were not of white society often tended to be mixed-race or descendants of the “bourgeoisie of color” who had been free prior to emancipation.<sup>5</sup> These elites pursued the rights and freedoms of French citizens, while some of them echoed engrained prejudices of white society regarding the Black, labouring class on the islands.<sup>6</sup> Poetry and articles in *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* render evident elites' desire to be active citizens of France and Canada,

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<sup>5</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Corzani, *La littérature des Antilles-Guyane françaises*, vol. II (Fort-de-France: Désormeaux, 1978), 86, 89.

while also wanting to create pride and a sense of belonging in their communities by sharing with their literate public features of their peoples' own history, culture, and environment.

In *Guadeloupe littéraire*'s second year of publication, director Oruno Lara specifies that his goal with this newspaper is to contribute to the advancement of Guadeloupean society. As a member of the rising middle class who had family histories of enslavement, Lara declares his desire to accomplish this feat by bringing greater unity among Guadeloupeans through highlighting literature in his press, rather than featuring articles on divisionary politics as seen in other local newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Lara, whose father Moïse Lara obtained his freedom from enslavement in 1843, expresses pride in Guadeloupe and in the island's history as he declares that "...by reviving in our pages ... all the glories of the native country, while stimulating the present times by memories of the past, we work to build a Guadeloupe too ignored, great by its children and their works."<sup>8</sup> He calls for unity among Guadeloupeans in taking steps to improve their island, stating that "Certainly, we are far from perfection, we still need to work, we know this well. Our ideal is far from being achieved."<sup>9</sup> Given his French education, Lara looks

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<sup>7</sup> Oruno Lara, "LA REVUE LITTÉRAIRE," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, January 12, 1908; Lara, "Introduction," iv, viii; Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 223.

<sup>8</sup> Lara, "LA REVUE LITTÉRAIRE." "en faisant revivre dans nos pages [...] toutes les gloires du pays natal, tout en stimulant les temps actuels par les souvenirs des temps passés, nous travaillons à édifier une Guadeloupe trop ignorée, grande par ses enfants et leurs œuvres."

<sup>9</sup> Lara. "Certes, nous sommes loin de la perfection, nous avons encore à travailler, nous le savons bien. Notre idéal est loin d'être atteint."

through a French lens in articulating this need for progress, yet he also indicates his pride for the island that he identifies as his “pays natal.” Lara’s literary style, his language, and the French poems he features on the front page of each publication demonstrate his admiration for France and for French literature, while his messages to readers point to a budding nationalist discourse.

This sense of nationalism, alongside the influence of French education and a desire for what Guadeloupean elites deemed as “advancement” for their community also surfaces in the article “Chronique” by Arthur Désir. Désir, who worked with Lara as a leading member of the Société régionale guadeloupéenne, argues that a country’s development depends not only on agricultural and industrial production, but also on its literary and artistic achievements.<sup>10</sup> As seen in the previous chapter with the Jeune Acadien’s connection of education and the Roman empire, Désir celebrates European art and literature that he identifies as being rooted back to Rome. He urges readers to reflect on why in Guadeloupe “we have such a poor literature,” and he argues that while some people may assume it is due to apathy or lack of educational opportunities, he believes it is due to “the fear of ridicule, the fear of being criticized by our compatriots and those,

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<sup>10</sup> Oruno Lara, *La Guadeloupe physique, économique, agricole, commerciale, financière, politique et sociale. De la découverte à nos jours (1492-1900)* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie universelle, 1921), Pièces annexes, <https://issuu.com/scduag/docs/adg17086/347>.

perhaps more educated than us, which paralyzes us and prevents us from writing.”<sup>11</sup> He declares that “we need to try to get out of this situation that diminishes us and lowers us in the eyes of the European nations, for whom, we are still savages hardly civilized.” Désir encourages readers to submit writings to the newspaper, so that “thanks to our initiative, our small country will be more known, everyone can feel honoured to have contributed to its development and its richness.”<sup>12</sup> Désir recognizes how Europeans perceived his society as being inferior, and he encourages his readers to use education and literature as tools to counter that faulty perception.

On the front page of every publication, *Guadeloupe littéraire* featured poems by French poets from the romanticist, symbolist, and Parnassian movements of the nineteenth century, while also publishing writings by local Guadeloupeans that often reflected the influence of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Local poets exalt the nature and seasons of the islands, while turning a blind eye to much of the economic and social struggles of the labouring class.<sup>13</sup> In the poem “Chute de feuilles,” Florelle Réache

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<sup>11</sup> Arthur Désir, “CHRONIQUE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 10, 1907. “Je me demande pourquoi nous avons une littérature si pauvre”.

<sup>12</sup> Désir. “c’est donc la crainte du ridicule, la crainte d’être critiqués par nos compatriotes et ceux, peut-être plus instruits que nous, qui nous paralyse et nous empêche d’écrire”; “nous devons essayer de sortir de cette situation qui nous amoindrit et nous abaisse aux yeux des nations européennes, pour lesquels, nous sommes encore des sauvages à peine civilisés”; “grâce à notre initiative, notre petit pays sera plus connu, chacun pourra se faire une gloire d’avoir contribué à son développement et à sa richesse.”

<sup>13</sup> Oruno Lara’s wife Agathe Réache, who often published under the pseudonym Renervillia, provided poems describing seasons in the first issue of almost every month from 1910-1913. See, for example, Renervillia, “DÉCEMBRE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, December 4, 1910; Renervillia, “FÉVRIER,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, February 5, 1911; Renervillia, “POÈME DE JUIN,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, June 2, 1912; Renervillia, “NOVEMBRE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 17, 1913.

(married to Oruno Lara's brother-in-law Maxence) describes dead leaves falling from the palm, coconut, and banana trees, and eloquently tells how the palm trees "...deliver to the gust their immense parasol leaves that no longer adorn them."<sup>14</sup> She portrays the palm trees as being above all and majestic, and recounts lying in the grass at twilight to watch as the "dead" leaves fall over her and onto the ground. Réache's poem reflects her sense of awe of the seasonal environment in Guadeloupe, as she states that for her this process of death is "always a new spectacle" that later results in rejuvenation.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in "Une belle nuit à la boucan" René Orthez reflects on the relationship between man and nature, concluding as he admires his environment that "nature, in its imposing grandeur, cannot keep me from the realization of how we, men, we are little next to the infinite." Like Florelle's awe and praise of the island's environment, Orthez describes "the imposing mass of the volcanic chain of Guadeloupe" that he sees under the "myriad of stars" in the sky, and that to him is "ravishing."<sup>16</sup> In the poem "Si j'étais oiseau...", Léon Beauvue imagines what he might see and experience in the Guadeloupean natural world if he could fly as a bird. He writes how he would soar

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<sup>14</sup> Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire*, xi; Florelle Réache, "CHUTE DE FEUILLES," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 29, 1908. "Une à une, les palmiers secouant leurs chevelures épandues, livrent à la rafale leurs immenses feuilles en parasol qui ne les parent plus."

<sup>15</sup> Réache, "CHUTE DE FEUILLES."

<sup>16</sup> René Orthez, "UNE BELLE NUIT A [sic] LA BOUCAN," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, April 19, 1908. "la nature dans son imposante grandeur et ne pouvait m'empêcher de reconnaître combien, nous, les hommes, nous sommes peu de chose à côté de l'infini" [...] / "je voyais comme une ombre épaisse, la masse imposante de la chaîne volcanique de la Guadeloupe."

through “the beautiful sky of Karukéra,” meaning “the Island of the Beautiful Waters” as termed by Kalinagos.<sup>17</sup> He extolls Guadeloupe, saying “If I were a bird, I would constantly fly through this tropical climate of Guadeloupe, so rich in greenery.”<sup>18</sup> These poems are only a few of many that fit in the French Romantic style of exalting the natural environment, but these poets extol Guadeloupe’s flora, fauna, and climate.

Guadeloupean elites’ tendency to embrace French influence is evident in literary works describing Catholic traditions, as well as in the use of French vernacular and the adoption of French literary styles. In “Jour des Morts” Louis Tigrane portrays Guadeloupeans participating in the Catholic tradition of honouring the dead at their graveside with prayers of remembrance and supplication. He describes tears falling and petitions going to “Jeovah [sic],” with expressions of repentance and mourning.<sup>19</sup> A serial entitled “Fleur de l’âme” by mixed-race author and political leader Léon Belmont incorporates biblical imagery as he chronicles the tragedy of a soldier killed at sea. In descriptively detailing the power of the storm and the search for land, Belmont analogizes

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<sup>17</sup> Léon Beauvue, “SI J’ÉTAIS OISEAU...,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, June 28, 1908; “Présentation de la Direction des Affaires Culturelles: La Guadeloupe en bref,” Ministère de la culture: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Regions/Dac-Guadeloupe/La-DAC/La-Guadeloupe-en-bref>.

<sup>18</sup> Beauvue, “SI J’ÉTAIS OISEAU...” “Si j’étais oiseau, je voltigerais sans cesse par ce climat tropical de Guadeloupe, si riche de verdure!”

<sup>19</sup> Louis Tigrane, “POÉSIES: Jour des Morts,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 10, 1907.

the story of Moses, a scriptural narrative often incorporated in Acadian works as well.<sup>20</sup> He writes how for those on the boat, “Like Moses, they took their last breath in sight of the promised land.”<sup>21</sup> Analogies to biblical stories of exile, including the Jewish diaspora to Egypt and Babylon, will be included in Guadeloupean and Acadian literature through to the late twentieth century, as will be seen in the sixth chapter when comparing works by Simone Schwarz-Bart and Antonine Maillet.<sup>22</sup>

French imperial and racial ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries surface in the language Guadeloupean writers used. In Oruno Lara’s wife Agathe Réache’s “Beauté d’une nuit” she uses the analogy of empire in describing the Guadeloupean natural environment. As the sun sets, “The Queen of the night makes its appearance, / Bringing from the orient a fragrant breeze.” Réache depicts how this magisterial moon “Extends its alabaster scarf in a grandiose way / On the whole earth...,” with the descriptor “alabaster” often employed to signify beauty and whiteness. She describes how in covering the earth, this monarch of the sky “embellishes ... the bluish pavilion” where Réache lives, intimating that the scarf’s whiteness makes the darkness more appealing. She observes that the stars that appear with the royal moon “...offer to

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<sup>20</sup> Corzani, *La littérature des Antilles-Guyane françaises*, II:85–86. According to Jack Corzani, Belmont held prejudices against the Black labouring class while proving to “not be far from considering the African heritage as a regrettable trace of barbarity.”

<sup>21</sup> Léon Belmont, “Fleur de l’âme,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 10, 1907. “Comme Moïse, ils ont rendu le dernier soupir en vue de la terre promise.”

<sup>22</sup> Kenny, *Diaspora*, 3–4.

the nations / The eternal spectacle of their brilliant empire.”<sup>23</sup> This language of royalty and of eternity echoes a sense of the power and perpetuity of empire. Réache uses words that signify the beauty of whiteness and the greatness of empire, yet she celebrates the natural beauty of Guadeloupe.

Réache’s “Beauté d’une nuit” stands in contrast in many ways to the poem “Martiniquaise & Guadeloupéenne,” where frequent contributor Eugène Bouquin provocatively describes a woman who has “Black hair heavily combed, / Coffee eyes, sapodilla skin” and who is “From God the sweetest present / To adorn our green Antilles.”<sup>24</sup> Bouquin uses the possessive for “our Antilles” and counters the veneration of whiteness, yet the language of “sapodilla skin” does not exalt full blackness. It gives implications of softness and sweetness, like with the ripe fruit of a sapodilla tree, and of beauty being found in shades of lighter brown, reflecting European notions of the attractiveness of fair skin. The poems by Réache and Bouquin reveal evidence of duality, with worth getting measured through a colonialist gauge. For Réache, reverence is awarded based on majesty and whiteness, even when describing the beauty she witnesses in Guadeloupe. For Bouquin, women of the Antilles who are not white are given value,

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<sup>23</sup> Agathe Réache, “POÉSIES: Beauté d’une nuit,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 29, 1908. “La Reine des nuits fait son apparition, / Amenant d’orient une brise embaumée”; “La lune [...] / Étend grandiosement son écharpe d’albâtre / [...] et son éclat radieux / Embellit du beau ciel le pavillon bleuâtre”; “Ces astres [...] / Scintillant lentement, offrent aux nations / Le spectacle éternel de leur brillant empire.”

<sup>24</sup> Eugène Bouquin, “Martiniquaise & Guadeloupéenne,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, February 5, 1911. “Cheveux noirs lourdement peignés, / Yeux café, peau de sapotille; Dans tes charmes, n’est-tu pas, certes / De Dieu le présent le plus doux / Pour orner nos Antilles vertes.”

but greater worth is granted to those whose skin is not as dark as others. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Frantz Fanon underscores the existence of this concept of worth being based on the lightness of someone's complexion when he describes how French Antilleans in WWII felt superior to the Senegalese who had a darker complexion. Fanon contends that in France, Martinicans were often perceived as being more civilized than Guadeloupeans based on tending to have lighter complexions. In Kristen Childers' study of French Caribbean political and social relations with France in the late twentieth century, she describes how these racial prejudices and categorizations continue to be felt and expressed on the islands.<sup>25</sup>

In another poem by Réache entitled "L'Usine," she describes a factory in Courcelles, Sainte-Anne with a message that reveals both a sense of awe and enmity for industrialism during a period when traditional sugar plantation production changed as the number of factories increased on the island.<sup>26</sup> She praises the architecture, speed, and strength of the factory, but then recounts how "Its many machines, working ceaselessly, / Keep you ever awake with their speed, / With a dreadful noise that spreads terror." She animates the factory building as it produces through the night, when it is "even more

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<sup>25</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 26; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Dumont, *L'amère patrie*, 56.

active and more noisy, / Full of the thousand fires of electricity.”<sup>27</sup> Réache’s description of the factory stands in stark contrast to her poems on the Guadeloupean natural environment, as she points to the power of machines. She concludes that the workers are “Very happy to be able to overcome poverty here, / For the Factory is very much the foster mother... / Let the work of Labour continue without end!”<sup>28</sup> Réache depicts an animated object that brings terror, but she identifies the factory as being a mother-figure, an image often applied to the French metropole as well. This “foster mother” is essential for labourers to overcome the “poverty” they suffer. Réache’s language of “poverty” provides a foreshadow to Aimé Césaire’s renowned *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* that will soon be examined in more detail, where he too disrupts the literary tendency of venerating the island’s beauty by exposing economic and social trials people endure.<sup>29</sup> Réache is a forerunner to Césaire by underscoring negatives of this machine that “spreads terror,” while also reflecting the influence of colonialist labour ideologies by deducing that factory labour is beneficial for workers suffering economic hardships.

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<sup>27</sup> Agathe Réache, “L’Usine,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, May 31, 1908. “Ses nombreuses machines, travaillant sans cesse, / Vous tiennent toujours en éveil par leur vitesse, / Avec un bruit affreux qui répand la terreur”; “Se faire encor [sic] bien plus active et plus bruyante / Pleine des mille feux de l’électricité.”

<sup>28</sup> Réache. “Tout heureux de pouvoir vaincre ici la misère, / Car l’Usine est beaucoup la mère nourricière [...] / Que l’œuvre de Travail se poursuivre sans fin!”

<sup>29</sup> Aimé Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land, Bilingual Edition*, trans. A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 2–5, 18–19, 28–31, 50–51.

In 1910 Oruno Lara began featuring a section entitled “Notes littéraires” on the cover page of several issues of *Guadeloupe littéraire*, where he examined movements and debates concerning French language and literature. In one of the earliest entries, Lara describes disputes occurring in France over grammatical aspects of the French language. Lara determines that even though the language has faults, it is still “our language” and is a critical component of Guadeloupean “common heritage.”<sup>30</sup> In another entry under “Notes littéraires” Lara critiques a Spanish theatrical presentation, and while he expresses some admiration for the production, he proudly observes how, “French art has an expression, a poetry, and delicateness that Spanish art does not.”<sup>31</sup> Lara’s writings, the entries he published, and the absence of Creole language in his press show that Lara’s French-produced education contributed to him believing that French was a noble and elite language. This resulted in his tendency to publish articles and poems that spoke proudly of Guadeloupe, yet featured qualities of language, religion, race, and empire produced as an outcome of French colonialism with its nineteenth and early twentieth-century aims of assimilation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Oruno Lara, “Notes littéraires: LES CURIOSITÉS DU LANGAGE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, October 9, 1910.

<sup>31</sup> Oruno Lara, “Notes littéraires: L’ART AU THÉÂTRE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 12, 1911. “L’Art français a une expression, une poésie, une délicatesse que l’art espagnol n’a pas.”

<sup>32</sup> Corzani, *La littérature des Antilles-Guyane françaises*, II:94–95.

*Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* each featured works by French poets such as Fernand Gregh, François Coppée, Alfred de Musset, and Edmond Rostand, but the Acadian Romantic influence came predominantly from late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century poets such as Alphonse de Lamartine and Félicité Robert de Lamennais.<sup>33</sup> French Caribbean literary critic Jack Corzani argues that Guadeloupean poetry shows how writers were “imitators” of French authors while being “more conservative than their models,” and this conservatism tends to go to further extremes in early Acadian poetry.<sup>34</sup> As Chantal Richard observes, “Religious censorship ... was central to the many forces that shaped Acadian Renaissance literature,” and educators in the Acadian Collège Saint-Joseph banned authors like Victor Hugo and Émile Zola from reading lists.<sup>35</sup> For both societies, their published poetry reveals a time lag in comparison to the literature produced in France at the time, where by the early twentieth century romanticism is ending and surrealism is emerging. These societies’ lag would be the result of various factors, including their distance from France, limited opportunities for

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<sup>33</sup> Edmond Rostand, “SONNET A [sic] COQUELIN,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, October 9, 1910; Edmond Rostand, “LA CATHÉDRALE DE RHEIMS,” *L'Évangéline*, November 18, 1914; François Coppée, “Octobre,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, June 28, 1908; François Coppée, “LA GUITARE,” *L'Évangéline*, March 4, 1914; Fernand [sic] Gregh, “O BON SOLEIL,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 27, 1910; Fernand Gregh, “LES HEURES,” *L'Évangéline*, February 18, 1914; Alfred de Musset, “LA NUIT DE MAI,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, October 5, 1913; Alfred de Musset, “L'HORLOGE,” *L'Évangéline*, June 17, 1914.

<sup>34</sup> Corzani, *La littérature des Antilles-Guyane françaises*, II:104.

<sup>35</sup> Chantal Richard, “Emergent Acadian Nationalism, 1864-1955,” in *New Brunswick at the Crossroads: Literary Ferment and Social Change in the East*, ed. Tony Tremblay (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017), 60.

education, and high rates of illiteracy, combined with clinging to traditional French values in attempting to prove their worth, both in terms of being writers and in being French. Like Guadeloupean romantic poetry that featured descriptions of the island's natural environment, Acadians also brought their own geography and seasons into their poems.

Several Acadian poems describe the autumn season that serves as a critical period of change in Atlantic Canada. In "L'Automne" Sylvio de la Baie describes exploring along forest trails and looking across valleys that are "without greenery," as the trees have lost their leaves to the wind. Like with Florelle Réache's depiction of being surrounded by dead and falling leaves from the banana, palm, and coconut trees, de la Baie illustrates the bareness of the elm and birch that had been "Stripped by the wind, parched by the storm." Death's presence in the natural environment is underscored with the "pines" that "moaned their funeral laments," while "the frost had come to reap the flowers."<sup>36</sup> In another poem "À l'automne," an author similarly describes dying leaves that are changing colour, and that then fall to cover the roads and fields, finally being carried by "gusts of wind" to the beaches. As with Réache, rather than only lamenting over death, this poet writes of the "riches" that autumn brings. With the seasons

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<sup>36</sup> Sylvio de la Baie, "L'AUTOMNE," *L'Évangéline*, November 9, 1905. "Et les pins gémissaient leurs plaintes funèbres"; "Le givre était venu pour moissonner les fleurs".

representing stages of life from birth to death, the poet exhorts readers to “Know to gather the inheritance of the summer,” implying the value of having a cherished past.<sup>37</sup> In “Heures d’automne” another illustration of the fall season describes leaves that “put a rug under our feet” as wildflowers, daffodils, and pincushions “die in the path.” The poet recounts how the harvest has been pulled and “...the land seems weary / Of its long fertility.” With the death of the flowers and the weariness of the land, this poem concludes with the observation that for those seeing the surrounding images of mortality, “We feel something also / Die in the depths of our soul” thus following the style of literary Romanticism in tying the spirit of man to that of nature.<sup>38</sup>

Like in poetry by Guadeloupeans of African descent, Acadian poets refer to French traditions and biblical narratives. Prayers are found in the concluding stanzas of several poems, with praise often given to the Acadian patron saint, the Virgin Mary. Sylvio de la Baie exhorts Acadians to “... work nobly while praying to our Mother / She, from the heights of heaven, will hover over our hearts.”<sup>39</sup> Another poet who wrestles with the sufferings of life and the power of death places Mary alongside Christ: “Under the blessed watch of Christ and his Mother, / In the midst of the joyous choirs of angels, of

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<sup>37</sup> “A L’AUTOMNE,” *L’Évangéline*, September 21, 1910.

<sup>38</sup> “HEURES D’AUTOMNE,” *L’Évangéline*, October 19, 1910. “Et la terre semble lassée / De sa longue fécondité”; “Nous sentons quelque chose aussi / Mourir dans le fond de notre âme.”

<sup>39</sup> Sylvio de la Baie, “Soyons Fiers d’Être [sic] Acadiens,” *L’Évangéline*, June 22, 1905. “Travaillons noblement en priant notre Mère, / Elle, du haut des cieux, planera sur nos cœurs!”

the chosen, / Crowned forever, one no longer remembers / All of the sufferings on earth.”<sup>40</sup> In the poem “L’Étendard Acadien” by priest and professor Charles Birette, an imagined conversation unfolds between someone from France and an Acadian, and the Acadian asks if his people are not still regarded as “sons of France / The great nation our ancestors came from?” Birette praises France as “The country where night will never fall,” and he celebrates Acadians adopting the colours of the French flag for their own, while adding a star to represent the Virgin Mary.<sup>41</sup>

The story of Moses and the Israelites enduring exile in Egypt and trying to return to their native land appears frequently in early Acadian poetry. In a poem that recounts the Acadian history of Deportation and resettlement, the *Jeune Acadien* brings the biblical language of “exodus” into Acadian experience: “I want to celebrate their return from the exodus, / One of the greatest exploits that history has witnessed!”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Joseph-Octave Fontaine’s “Le vieillard acadien” laments over the Acadian expulsion and Fontaine provides comparison to Israel’s exiles in Egypt and later Babylon. He describes how the Acadians’ former homeland cried over their absence: “As Zion once wept, sad

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<sup>40</sup> L.C., “A SA MERE,” *L’Évangéline*, November 9, 1910. “Sous les regards bénis du Christ et de sa Mère, / Parmi les chœurs joyeux des anges, des élus, / Couronné pour jamais, on ne se souvient plus / De tous les chagrins de la terre.”

<sup>41</sup> Maurice Léger, ed., “Centenaire du drapeau acadien : un historique,” *Les Cahiers de la Société historique acadienne* 14, no. 4 (1983): 107–52; Rév. Père Birette, “L’ETENDARD ACADIEN,” *L’Évangéline*, August 20, 1908. “Quoi, ne sommes-nous plus, nous autres, fils de France, La grande nation dont vinrent nos aïeux!”; “Le pays où jamais ne tombera le soir.”

<sup>42</sup> Un *Jeune Acadien*, “LE CONGRES [sic] ACADIEN DE 1905,” *L’Évangéline*, August 31, 1905. “Que je voudrais chanter leur retour de l’exode, / Le plus grand des exploits dont l’histoire est témoin!”

and plaintive, / Her walls forsaken, her nation captive.”<sup>43</sup> Acadian poets often received inspiration through Catholicism, with biblical narratives of displacement that they deeply connected with given their own history.

Acadians’ tendency to idealize the French colonial past pre-Revolution resulted in their opposition to more contemporary French political and social developments that they deemed problematic. In February 1907, a cover page of *L’Évangéline* featured a critique of present-day France and lament over the 1905 law that altered church political power by legally separating church and state. The article entitled “La France” and subtitled “La Patrie” (referring in this instance to France) denotes a deep sense of connection with France as a mother country, and in an Introduction the author ensures readers that there are still people of Catholic faith in France. The author contends that of any “institutions that have succeeded,” Catholicism is one that “has kept the most prestige and permanence.”<sup>44</sup> In the same issue, a poem entitled “Pauvre France” praises imperial France with its former Catholic rulers but grieves over the last century. Concerning France as an empire, the author Fides writes, “Under your very Christian Kings You lived prosperously, On the sea, and on earth, everywhere You dominated.”<sup>45</sup> Fides contends

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<sup>43</sup> Feu J. O. Fontaine, “LE VIEILLARD ACADIEN,” *L’Évangéline*, November 16, 1905. “Comme autrefois Sion [sic] pleurait, triste et plaintive, / Ses murs abandonnés, sa nation captive.”

<sup>44</sup> Carolus, “LA FRANCE,” *L’Évangéline*, February 7, 1907. “Le Catholicisme, l’antique religion de l’âme française, est de toutes les institutions qui se sont succédées, celle qui a gardé le plus de prestige et le plus de permanence.” / “l’espoir que la France rentrera bientôt dans l’ordre et la paix religieuse.”

<sup>45</sup> Fides, “PAUVRE FRANCE,” *L’Évangéline*, February 7, 1907. “Sous tes Rois très chrétiens, Tu vivais prospère, / Sur mer, et sur terre, partout Tu dominais”.

that with the overthrow of sovereign rule during the French Revolution, “Everything was turned upside down; at the foot, the Cross, trampled... / Saying to the Saviour: We will live well without you...”. He concludes that in order for France to regain its former glory it will require “obedience” to the “Church of Christ.”<sup>46</sup> These entries indicate that early writers in Guadeloupean and Acadian societies shared an allegiance to France, but to different periods and styles of French government. Guadeloupean writers of African descent celebrated certain successes of pre-revolutionary France, yet were more intimately tied to the post-revolutionary French Republic that Fides criticizes for being “Weary of Royalty, dreaming of that Liberty.”<sup>47</sup> Rather ironically, given the Acadian ancestors’ migration from France in the seventeenth century, Acadian writers idealized a pre-revolutionary France where royalty and religion were tightly interwoven.

Acadian poetry reveals a sense of pride in French colonial history, language, and religious traditions, while cautionary critiques of former British captors are carefully framed by tributes to Canada and to England. In his poem “Soyons Fiers d’Etre [sic] Acadiens,” Sylvio de la Baie desires to instill a sense of pride in his readers by emphasizing their ability to overcome past tribulations. He observes how he has heard the English celebrate their own empire and the French laud their own history, while the

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<sup>46</sup> Fides. “Tout fut bouleversé; au pied, la Croix, foulée [...] / Disant au Christ-Saveur: Nous vivrons bien sans Toi”.

<sup>47</sup> Fides. “Lasse de Royauté, rêvant que Liberté”.

Acadian past has been silenced. He writes, “Acadians, we too, we have our history, / But no one has ever wanted to sing about it; / We have won our great victory, / But no one has wanted to celebrate it.”<sup>48</sup> He explains how Acadians did not pick up arms or act as vanquishers, but they nonetheless “conquered [their] humble freedom” as their ancestors “returned from exile to regain their country.” He poses the question directly to the “proud English” of why Acadians deserved to be “victims” to colonial violence, yet at the same time he closes his poem with a plea for readers to be “loyal subjects of the king of England” while taking pride in their history and being devoted to their faith.<sup>49</sup>

In Fontaine’s “Le veillard acadien,” accusations against past British actions transition to prayers for the empire’s successes. The elderly Acadian man who returned to his pre-dispersal land to die describes terrible atrocities Acadian families endured, stating boldly of the English that “you are still that murderous people / Who dragged Joan of Arc to the ignoble stake.”<sup>50</sup> Further in the poem, he shifts some responsibility for Deportation to Acadians themselves, “who to please the tyrants renounced [their] faith” resulting in their need for God’s forgiveness. In turn, he declares that “English, I forgive you, and for you towards the heavens, / Will rise from a dying man’s prayers and wishes. / Arbiters of

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<sup>48</sup> de la Baie, “Soyons Fiers d’Etre [sic] Acadiens.” “Acadiens, nous aussi, nous avons notre histoire, / Mais personne jamais n’a voulu la chanter; / Nous avons remporté notre grande victoire, / Mais personne jamais n’a voulu la fêter.”

<sup>49</sup> de la Baie. “Et nous avons conquis notre humble liberté”; “Revinrent de l’exil regagner leur pays”; “Soyons sujets loyaux du roi de l’Angleterre”.

<sup>50</sup> Fontaine, “LE VIEILLARD ACADIEN.” “Ah! vous êtes toujours ce peuple meurtrier / Qui traîna Jeanne d’Arc sur l’ignoble bûcher!”

bounties, watch over England, / And make her grow strong, happy, prosperous.”<sup>51</sup> What appears as stark contradiction between criticism of British violence versus petition for Acadian loyalty to the Crown indicates a hopefulness in Acadie’s future under British-Canadian rule, as well as caution in raising animosity toward those now holding political and economic authority in Canada.

Through this early literature, Acadian authors and Guadeloupean authors of African descent tended to provide support to the standing French and British colonial structures that surrounded them in the early twentieth century. They employed political, social, cultural, and linguistic attributes fashioned through French and British imperialism, but at the same time, this poetry indicates a growing sense of nationalism among the communities. The desire for many Guadeloupean and Acadian elites to either be tightly interwoven with France or to be loyal to the British-Canadian nation begins to be shadowed by devotion to geographic environments. Writers begin possessively claiming a homeland, while revealing through their literature a deep-rooted consciousness of displacement.

### **“Pays Natal” and Displacement**

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<sup>51</sup> Fontaine. “Qui pour plaire aux tyrans renonças à ta foi”; “Anglais, je vous pardonne, et pour vous vers les cieux, / Vont monter d’un mourant la prière et les vœux. / Arbitres des bontés, veillez sur l’Angleterre, / Et faites-la grandir, forte, heureuse, prospère.”

As will be explored further in the next two chapters, authors in the late twentieth century wrestled with the meanings and implications of the language of “pays,” “pays natal,” and “patrie.” As in various forms of anti-colonial literature, these words and expressions invoked French Caribbean and Acadian works conceptualizing the complexity of this language in relation to geography, belonging, and possession. In *Guadeloupe littéraire* and in *L'Évangéline*, these words are often employed to describe an invented homeland that Guadeloupeans of African descent and Acadians claim as their own, despite histories of displacement and the geographical space falling under the political, judicial, and economic authority of another nation.

Writings in *Guadeloupe littéraire* that venerate having Guadeloupe as a “homeland” tend to mask the near impossibility of land possession for Black individuals, as prior to and following abolition even those who acquired education often struggled with poverty and the biases of a highly prejudiced judicial system. Many of the Black population shared a desire to have their own property to cultivate independent from the rule of a master, yet they rarely succeeded in acquiring land ownership.<sup>52</sup> Legal land possession was elusive for Black society, yet implications of Guadeloupe being a homeland appear in issues of *Guadeloupe littéraire*. Lara declares concerning the newspaper and its local contributors that “Our work is not a personal work: it belongs to

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<sup>52</sup> Dumont, *L'amère patrie*, 22; Larcher, *L'autre citoyen*, 180–81.

everyone; it still and above all belongs to the dear little country that has seen us born, and for which union must happen in a shared brotherly attempt.”<sup>53</sup> Lara’s description of the small island as the birthplace for his people convokes powerful imagery of the island as a claimed and cherished place of belonging. In another entry “L’art dans la nature,” Lara provides a descriptive tableau of various regions of Guadeloupe and with language of possession, he encourages artists and youth to “devote oneself to art, to see a better ideal, to live a little with the soul, with thought, in practice, in expressions that later would honour us and our island.”<sup>54</sup> Lara announces the upcoming publication of an anthology of poems by Guadeloupean poets, and observes that the anthology “mostly needs to be placed in the hands of our students in the schools. We too often ignore all that brings honour to the native country.”<sup>55</sup> Lara challenges his readers to expand their knowledge and understanding of their island and its history, asking, “How do you want us to love Guadeloupe, to know it, to appreciate it, when we ourselves are ignorant of our native country?”<sup>56</sup> These commentaries feature Lara’s emphasis on the importance for those

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<sup>53</sup> Oruno Lara, “Oruno Lara, Directeur,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 10, 1907. “Notre œuvre n’est pas une œuvre personnelle: elle appartient à tous; elle appartient encore et avant tout au cher petit pays qui nous a vu naître, et pour lequel l’union doit se faire dans une même tentative con-fraternelle [sic].”

<sup>54</sup> Oruno Lara, “L’ART DANS LA NATURE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 29, 1908. “s’adonner à l’art, rechercher un idéal meilleur, vivre un peu avec l’âme, avec la pensée, en des essais, en des manifestations qui plus tard nous honoraient et notre île.”

<sup>55</sup> “FLEURS TROPICALES,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, April 19, 1908. “Elle devrait être mise surtout entre les mains de nos enfants des écoles. On ignore trop tout ce qui fait honneur au pays natal.”

<sup>56</sup> Oruno Lara, “NOTES LITTÉRAIRES [sic]: Les Traditions,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, June 25, 1911. “Comment voulez qu’on aime la Guadeloupe, qu’on la connaisse, qu’on l’apprécie, lorsque nous-mêmes sommes ignorants de notre pays natal?”

living in Guadeloupe to recognize the island as a place that they not only inhabit, but are responsible to improve by striving for “union” and by bringing “honour” to themselves and to their homeland.

Lara brings together the importance of history and homeland in “L’histoire locale” where he boldly states, “Let us be interested in everything related to this soil that saw us born; stop being indifferent; our island still deserves to be known and loved.... Children of Guadeloupe, above all else, in the memories of the past like in the dreams of the future, without forgetting any of our other duties, let us first be Guadeloupeans.”<sup>57</sup> With this emphasis on remembering the island’s history while looking to the future, Lara insists on the “grand and glorious” history of France, but then adds that Guadeloupean history has not received the attention it deserves. Lara proceeds to narrate aspects of the island’s colonial history, and he acknowledges the former presence of Indigenous communities while granting French colonizers the credit of bringing “civilization” to the island.<sup>58</sup>

Entries in this newspaper rarely foreground the history of enslavement, but in continuing this article “L’histoire locale,” Lara exposes the “horrors” and “cruelties”

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<sup>57</sup> Oruno Lara, “L’HISTOIRE LOCALE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, May 31, 1908. “Intéressons-nous à tout ce qui touche à ce sol qui nous a vu naître; cessons d’être indifférents; notre île mérite encore qu’on la connaisse et qu’on l’aime [...]. Enfants de la Guadeloupe, avant toute autre chose, dans les souvenirs du passé comme dans les rêves de l’avenir, sans rien oublier de nos autres devoirs, soyons d’abord des Guadeloupéens.”

<sup>58</sup> Lara. “l’histoire de notre pays, reste inconnue, voilée de mystère, dans le secret d’une éternelle nuit.”

enslaved Africans endured. He does not provide overt accusations against France, and observes how, “the French Revolution of 93, in a sublime gesture, declared free and equal all men without distinction, breaking the chains of the slaves.”<sup>59</sup> Lara praises the Revolution’s “sublime gesture,” while also acknowledging other revolutionary participants on the island. He grants agency to those who fought against Britain on France’s behalf as “a community of honour and effort which, of the martyred slaves of yesterday, of the ignorant Indigenous, makes soldiers worthy of admiration.” He declares how it was these soldiers’ actions that spared the colony from falling under British control.<sup>60</sup> Bonaparte’s 1802 reinstatement of slavery on the island is absent from Lara’s text. Instead, he shifts to emphasizing the importance of understanding local history and he encourages readers to join him in “thinking a bit of the Country” and to “be Guadeloupeans.”<sup>61</sup> Lara’s article reveals a desire to bring honour to an island deserving of the metropole’s attention, while also attempting to instill dignity in Guadeloupeans for their talents and achievements in their homeland.

Other writers who identify Guadeloupe as a homeland and who begin to make Guadeloupean history more accessible to the literate public often put to print colonially-

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<sup>59</sup> Lara. “Quand la Révolution française de 93, dans un sublime geste, déclara libres et égaux tous les hommes indistinctement, brisant les chaînes des esclaves”.

<sup>60</sup> Lara. “une communauté d’honneur et d’effort qui, des esclaves martyrisés d’hier, des indigènes ignorants, fait des soldats dignes d’admiration.”

<sup>61</sup> Lara. “pensons un peu au Pays”; “soyons d’abord des Guadeloupéens.”

constructed narratives grounded in French sources. Articles signed by S. Rosny entitled “Leçons d’histoire locale” appeared frequently, where Rosny provides a brief explanation of selected aspects of Guadeloupean history for his readers. Rosny rarely mentions slavery in the island’s history, and he depends primarily on publications by French missionaries Jean-Baptiste du Tertre and Jean-Baptiste Labat. In an entry on the founding of Basse-Terre, Rosny describes the presence of “workers” but focuses on describing the growth and development of the township without clarifying the identity of these labourers.<sup>62</sup> Another entry about the history of a law against having horses on the streets briefly mentions how “Masters were to be fined 100 pounds, slaves whipped,” but as with much of the poetry, Rosny’s entries more often laud the island’s natural environment and the supposed arrival of “civilization,” rather than grappling with the social and political tragedies and tensions of enslavement and French imperialism.<sup>63</sup>

In a poem “Les Caraïbes,” Eugène Bouquin employs European vernacular in relating a historic tale of Calinago [Kalinago] migration from Florida and the Bahamas to overtake the islands and to settle in “Caloukéra [Karukéra].” He describes the Kalinago as “courageous savages” who “will take shelter on our shores” until the later arrival of

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<sup>62</sup> S. Rosny, “LECONS [sic] D’HISTOIRE LOCALE: La Basse Terre,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, October 9, 1910.

<sup>63</sup> Quotation in S. Rosny [sic], “LEÇONS D’HISTOIRE LOCALE: Une ordonnance concernant les chevaux,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 12, 1911; See also S. Rosny, “LEÇONS D’HISTOIRE LOCALE: À Propos de la Soufrière,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, February 12, 1911.

the French who will then “Drive them out in their turn!” He concludes by observing that “the horrible legend tells / The brutal fate of the first days.”<sup>64</sup> Bouquin’s poem reveals a sense of possession of the island in referring to “our shores” as well as his knowledge of past colonial violence. At the same time, he adopts the language of savagery in describing the Kalinago community and he distances himself from this violent past that he states is now a “legend.” This writing by Bouquin, as well as those by Lara and Rosny, reveal early steps of Guadeloupeans claiming possession of their island and its history, yet it is evident that elites often peered through French-produced lenses as they began to construct regional historical narratives.

As with the majority of Rosny’s entries, enduring memories of an African past and of enslavement go hauntingly silent in *Guadeloupe littéraire*, in contrast to the late nineteenth-century newspaper articles discussed in the previous chapter that made connection to Africa. In a brief column entitled “L’esprit des lettres” Louis Gems critiques a recently published book that examines local superstition and folklore, contending that these traditions are rooted in Africa. Gems declares that by making these ties to “barbarous African customs” the book’s author “has committed an historic error. Many of our ‘popular beliefs’ are of metropolitan import, the fact has been proven,” to

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<sup>64</sup> Eugène Bouquin, “LES CARAIBES [sic],” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, April 21, 1912. “ces hardis sauvages, / [...] / Prendront gîte sur nos rivages / Jusqu’à ce que des Caravelles / Débarquant, les Français, un jour, / [...] / Les en chasseront à leur tour!”; “La légende horrible raconte / Le sort brutal des premiers jours”.

which Gems refers to French historian Jules Michelet who wrote the multi-volume *Histoire de France* (1876).<sup>65</sup> It is not until a decade later that Lara provides the first Guadeloupean history compiled and written by someone whose father was enslaved, and in his Introduction he emphasizes his people's ties to Africa, offering foreshadow to the complexity in identifying a homeland that will be more specifically addressed when examining Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*.<sup>66</sup>

Gems' critique aligns with the fact that contributors to *Guadeloupe littéraire* did not identify as exiles from an African homeland per say, but the language of exile that later permeates French Caribbean literature and serves as a critical subject in works by authors including Césaire and Édouard Glissant appears in select poetry. Added to this literature addressing the subject of displacement, there are also writings that encourage Guadeloupeans to resist the temptation to migrate, be it to urban centers or far from the island. Guadeloupeans of African descent had become occupants of a homeland where the economy was built on colonial resource extraction through slavery and indentured labour. To try to overcome the continued economic burdens of the majority of the island's population, writers promote rural settlement and agricultural development based

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<sup>65</sup> Louis Gems, "L'esprit des lettres," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, March 12, 1911. "M. André Mérovil en faisant remonter aux coutumes barbares africaines nos superstitions locales, a commis une erreur historique. Beaucoup de nos 'croyances populaires' sont d'importation métropolitaine, le fait a été prouvé."

<sup>66</sup> Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l'histoire*, 9.

on aims to improve the economy, to better peoples' living conditions, and to counter migration.

In 1908, poems by Germaine Fanchineau and Laure Émeric provide narratives with themes of wandering and separation. In "Exilée," Fanchineau imagines walking along the coastline where she sees a small boat passing in the distance with birds circling all around it and lighting on its masts. She describes the boat disappearing in the distance, and writes how at that moment "my thoughts went to the native land that I abandoned." As she imagines this "sol natal," Fanchineau lets her eyes "wander for a long time over this immensity of the blue sea."<sup>67</sup> The language in this poem of native land, abandonment, wandering, and sea become tropes that later permeate the literature of French Caribbean authors.

This language of wandering appears again a few months later when Fanchineau provides a short story entitled "Sur la plage." Like in other entries by writers of this period, she shows the influence of French Romanticism as she describes the sun setting while the ocean breeze moves in a "wandering race" dragging behind it "the dead leaves scattered on the beach."<sup>68</sup> When the stars later appear, she finds herself lost in dreams

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<sup>67</sup> Germaine Fanchineau, "ÉXILÉE," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, January 12, 1908. "A ce moment alors, ma pensée alla vers le sol natal que j'ai abandonné quatre mois à peine qui me semblent un siècle"; "je laissai longtemps mes regards errer sur cette immensité de la mer bleue".

<sup>68</sup> Germaine Fanchineau, "SUR LA PLAGE," *Guadeloupe littéraire*, June 28, 1908. "Le doux zéphir, dans sa course vagabonde traîne après lui les feuilles mortes parsemées sur la plage".

that take her to her family and her “dear commune” with its hills, trees, and lighthouse. She relates that she gets awakened suddenly from her “reverie” and at that moment she declares that “I put an end to my illusions and see myself again on the foreign beach.” Fanchineau poses the question of “How sad it is to be on a land far from those we are affectionate for, those we love?,” longingly expressing her desire to return to her homeland and her family.<sup>69</sup>

Another story of exile and of longing for home is in Laure Eméric’s “Tante...” where Eméric tells the story of a woman named Marguerite who cared for her when she was a child. The story hedges on the themes of departure and return, as the author and Marguerite go through a “long separation” before being reunited. After being absent for twelve years, Marguerite succeeds in returning to the place where she said she wanted to live when it was time for her to die.<sup>70</sup> Eméric concludes that “Faithful to her oath, she returned to her native land to peacefully complete the long journey begun in this valley of tears.”<sup>71</sup> As with Fanchineau, Eméric’s language of returning to a “native land” after enduring a “long journey” provides imagery of exiles from their homeland who long to return to a place of belonging.

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<sup>69</sup> Fanchineau. “Je me crois au milieu de mes parents, dans ma chère commune”; “Réveillée de ma révasserie [sic] [...] je mets trêve [sic] à mes illusions, et m’aperçois encore sur la plage étrangère”; “Qu’il est triste d’être sur une terre, loin de ceux que l’on affectionne, que l’on aime?”

<sup>70</sup> Laure Eméric, “TANTE...,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, July 5, 1908.

<sup>71</sup> Eméric. “Fidèle à son serment, elle est revenue au pays natal pour achever paisiblement la longue course commencée dans cette vallée des larmes.”

Other stories and articles emphasize the importance of land in order to counter migration, be it to other islands, France, or urban centers. In “Figure de femme,” René Vénééré recounts meeting up with a young woman named Bernadette who he knew as a child. He observes how Bernadette changed significantly since he last saw her, as she left her family behind and became a young “seductive” woman. He compares her to Émile Zola’s Nana (who is a prostitute) and Colette’s Claudine (who moved from a rural village to Paris). Vénééré recounts how much to his chagrin, Bernadette has left her rural home and her family and she now prefers the urban lifestyle: “In the salutary and tranquil abode of the country, she rather likes the rumors and annoyances of the city.”<sup>72</sup> This story implies for readers that the city life is problematic for young women, with the rural landscape being their home where their family is, and where they can remain safe, chaste, and pure.

Oruno’s brother H.-Adolphe Lara states in an article how neighboring Martinique’s “prosperity ... resides in the love of the native land that predominates everything.”<sup>73</sup> He declares to his Guadeloupean readers that rather than migrating to other places they should all be more aware of the “natural resources” that “should inspire us

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<sup>72</sup> René Vénééré, “FIGURE DE FEMME,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, April 19, 1908. “Au séjour salubre et tranquille de la campagne, elle aime plutôt les rumeurs et les tracasseries de la ville.”

<sup>73</sup> H.-Adolphe Lara, “OPINIONS: IMPRESSIONS SUR LA MARTINIQUE,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, November 10, 1907. “Le secret de la prospérité de la Martinique [...] réside dans l’amour du sol natal qui prédomine tout.”

with a little more love for our little corner of the earth.”<sup>74</sup> In another commentary, H.-Adolphe analyzes how other regions of the Caribbean are having greater economic success with natural resources also found in Guadeloupe. He declares that “Guadeloupe is a country with great natural wealth” and “fertile land” and states that the “future of our Colony” depends on expanding the products of agricultural labour.<sup>75</sup> H.-Adolphe and his fellow writers’ use of the plural possessive gives a sense of nationalism, with implication of those in Guadeloupe holding a responsibility to this land that they are conveyed as not only occupying, but also possessing. In actuality, Guadeloupean possession of the island was only imagined. Bouquin’s “Les Caraïbes” reveals that elites had an awareness of the island being formerly inhabited by Kalinagos, and France now held the island under its economic and political control, with conditions of poverty often resulting in migration from the island.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lara. “Nous avons ici des richesses naturelles [...] qui devraient nous inspirer un peu plus d’amour pour notre petit coin de terre”.

<sup>75</sup> H.-Adolphe Lara, “QUESTION ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE: LE COMMERCE DES FRUITS,” *Guadeloupe littéraire*, January 12, 1908. “la Guadeloupe est un pays ayant de grandes richesses naturelles, alors que la terre, si fertile, ne demande qu’à être remuée pour produire”; “introduire chez nous de nouvelles cultures”; “par des conseils et la distribution de plants, vers l’orientation nouvelle de laquelle dépend l’avenir de notre Colonie.”

<sup>76</sup> Migration from Guadeloupe and Martinique increases significantly with two waves in the 1940s and in the 1960s-1970s, but as Lara describes, there are also studies that reveal migration stories in the early twentieth century. Michel Giraud et al., “La Guadeloupe et la Martinique dans l’histoire française des migrations en régions de 1848 à nos jours,” *Hommes & migrations: Revue française de référence sur les dynamiques migratoires* 1278 (2009): 175; Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900–1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’Études Canadiennes* 28, no. 4 (1993-1994): 140–43; Bernadette Rossignol and Philippe Rossignol, “Émigration des créoles antillais au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles: l’exemple martiniquais vers 1902,” in *Congrès de généalogie de Limoges*, 2003, 1, 4–6, <http://www.ghcaraibe.org/docu/1902-art3.pdf>.

For Acadian society, poems and commentaries during this period include similar language as found in entries by Oruno Lara, H.-Adolphe Lara, and other Guadeloupean writers in calling for a sense of national unity and claim to a homeland. In a published speech by Francois-Xavier Comeau that he delivered at an Acadian National Convention in 1905, he observes that Acadian society has made what he qualifies as significant advancements since the previous convention in 1900, and he then asks, “Have you not noticed that the feeling of nationalism has greatly increased among Acadians?” At the same time, he warns his audience that “we do not always know how to unite in order to fight against the obstacles that are placed in the development of our race.” He urges listeners that “unity is strength” and that it is through being united that Acadian society can make social and economic progress.<sup>77</sup> In a poem featured next to Comeau’s speech, the Jeune Acadien pleads for Acadian unity, as without being united, “our dear country / Would see itself fall back into horrible misfortunes!”<sup>78</sup> In celebrating his “dear Acadie” that is the “land of his ancestors” the Jeune Acadien speaks possessively of “our country” and “my country.” Sylvio de la Baie also publishes a poem in response to the convention

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<sup>77</sup> Francois-Xavier Comeau, “Cinquieme [sic] Congres [sic] National des Acadiens: DISCOURS D’OUVERTURE DE M. LE PRÉSIDENT GÉNÉRAL COMEAU,” *L’Évangéline*, August 31, 1905. “N’avez-vous pas constaté que le sentiment national s’est beaucoup accru chez les Acadiens?” / “nous ne savons pas toujours nous unir pour lutter contre les entraves que l’on met au développement de notre race.”  
<sup>78</sup> Un Jeune Acadien, “LE CONGRES [sic] ACADIEN DE 1905.” “Sans l’union Mon Dieu notre chère patrie / Se verrait retomber dans d’horribles malheurs!”

where he states that “Your people are great, glorious Acadie! / [Your people] braved the persecutions! / Noble always, in spite of perfidy / [Your people have] taken [their] place among the nations.”<sup>79</sup> Like in Guadeloupe, there is the formation of a distinct sense of community inside the political and economic structures of another state, and this community formation will continue to develop with greater cohesion, growing desires for nationalism, and increasing literary expression.

Other articles and poems express a love and devotion to pre- and post-dispersal locations in the Atlantic region that Acadians identify as being a homeland. Just as Lara recounted traveling around Guadeloupe and described the natural beauty of regions of “our island,” Marc Lescarbot published two articles celebrating the beauty of the land and the power of nature he witnessed during his travels to parts of Nova Scotia.<sup>80</sup> He gives accounts of Acadian history in regions of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and he describes his sense of joy in witnessing Acadian descendants still occupying parts of their “native land.” In traveling through Memramcook, he reflects on the Deportation and describes those in exile who “were dying of the desire to see their absent homeland again” and who upon their return had to go “deeper into the middle of the virgin forest”

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<sup>79</sup> Sylvio de la Baie, “LES ACADIENS ET LEUR CONVENTION,” *L'Évangéline*, September 14, 1905. “Ton peuple est grand, glorieuse Acadie! / Il a bravé les persécutions! / Noble toujours, malgré la perfidie / Il a pris place au rang des nations”.

<sup>80</sup> Lara, “L'ART DANS LA NATURE.”

to rebuild their community on a new geographical landscape.<sup>81</sup> In reality this “virgin forest,” a term that will also be used by Antoine-J. Léger, was not so virgin given the presence of the Mi’kmaq and Wəlastəkəkewiyik. This language of “virgin forest” or “terra nullius” is embedded in colonial narratives in justifying occupation and cultivation of lands deemed by settlers as being vacant.<sup>82</sup> For Acadians, the geographical landscape and imagery of its purity became core to the discourse of homeland, whose defining geography oscillated through pre- and post-dispersal narratives.

In a poem entitled “Commandements des Acadiens,” an unidentified author provides fifteen verses expressing actions they desire from fellow Acadians, including their involvement in education, as well as support for the organization Société Mutuelle l’Assomption. The Société was a political and social organization that brought together Acadians from the United States and Atlantic Canada with goals of maintaining French as the Acadian language and providing economic support for Acadian families. Following the first “Commandement,” that encourages Acadian children to attend school, the second and third verses emphasize Acadian duty and obligation to their homeland: “2 – For God and your homeland you will pour out / Until the last drop of your blood; 3 –

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<sup>81</sup> Marc Lescarbot, “IMPRESSIONS D’UN VOYAGE A [sic] LA NOUVELLE-ECOSSE [sic],” *L’Évangéline*, November 30, 1905. “qui mourraient du désir de revoir la patrie absente [...] s’enfoncèrent au milieu de la forêt vierge”.

<sup>82</sup> Antoine-J. Léger, *Elle et lui. Tragique idylle du peuple acadien* (Moncton: Notre-Dame de l’Assomption, 1940), 169; Wysote and Morton, “The Depth of the Plough,” 9, 11–15.

The homeland you will not abandon / for any reason.”<sup>83</sup> The author urges Acadians to prioritize education, but then to use that education for the benefit of Acadian society. In Lescarbot’s text, as well as in these “Commandements” there is evidence of Acadian elites’ desire to claim, to occupy, and to sustain a homeland.

Like in Guadeloupean Léon Belmont’s narrative of soldiers lost at sea, as well as the poems by Fanchineau and Émeric that feature themes of displacement, comparable poetry appears in *L’Évangéline*. Placide Gaudet, a renowned Acadian historian from the early twentieth century, discovered one of the first identified Acadian poems written by Frédéric Robichaud in the late 1800s, and Gaudet had the poem published in *L’Évangéline* in 1905. In this lament that opens and closes with supplication to the Virgin Mary, a commercial liner called the “Vinalia” leaves Saint Mary’s Bay, home to many Acadian families, to travel to trade in Guadeloupe.<sup>84</sup> After a successful stop in Pointe-à-Pitre, the boat returns for home, but an epidemic hits the crew resulting in the tragic loss of many lives. Throughout the poem there is the language of displacement, with description of the sea as the “tropical tomb” holding dead bodies that will never return to their homeland. Some sailors make it home through God’s grace, but in the concluding

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<sup>83</sup> “COMMANDEMENTS DES ACADIENS,” *L’Évangéline*, January 31, 1907. “2 – Pour Dieu et la Patrie tu verseras / Jusqu’à la dernière goutte de ton sang / 3 – Le pays natal tu n’abandonneras [sic] / Pour des raisons aucunement.”

<sup>84</sup> Frédéric Robichaud, “COMPLAINTE SUR LE VOYAGE DU BRICK VINALIA,” *L’Évangéline*, February 23, 1905; Marguerite Maillet, *Histoire de la littérature acadienne: de rêve en rêve* (Moncton: Éditions d’Acadie, 1983), 47–48.

verses Robichaud transitions to an image of all mankind being displaced here on earth, only able to be saved from death through Mary: “We are in the midst of the waves / Of the sea of this world, / Without you [Mary the Immaculate], all, poor sailors, / we perish in the waves.”<sup>85</sup> A month later, Sylvio de la Baie’s poem “Sur la tombe d’un matelot” also depicts a boat being tossed around on the Atlantic on a cold, autumn night, where it “wandered in the middle of the storm.”<sup>86</sup> On board the ship a young child longed to be home with his mother in France, but he was destined to remain forever lost at sea. Added to the integral nature of the ocean for Acadian economy, these poems bring to life a longing for home that can be unattainable. They provide lament for the physically and spiritually lost, while alluding to the importance of cherishing a homeland.

In contrast to the poetry and articles in *Guadeloupe littéraire* where there is rare mention of African displacement, the Acadian Deportation is explicit in Acadian poetry and in other articles during this period. In “Le vieillard acadien,” Fontaine brings to the foreground Acadian exile on an individual and community level, with the elderly Acadian who longs to be buried in the homeland of his ancestors. Fontaine depicts how the ruins of former Acadian communities “Seem to weep still on their desolate fields, / Weep over their graves, over their exiled sons” and he describes this elderly Acadian as

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<sup>85</sup> Robichaud, “COMPLAINTE SUR LE VOYAGE DU BRICK VINALIA.” “Nous sommes au milieu des flots / De la mer de ce monde, / Sans vous, tous, pauvres matelots, / Nous périssons dans l’onde.”

<sup>86</sup> Sylvio de la Baie, “SUR LA TOMBE D’UN MATELOT,” *L’Évangéline*, March 30, 1905.

one who “Wanders with a trembling step, in these funereal places.” The fictional elderly man recounts how “Alas! I returned alone; my unfortunate race, / To the pains of exile, forever condemned.”<sup>87</sup> This poem resonates with the language of exile and wandering, clearly conveying the presence of displacement in Acadian discourse.

Just as H.-Adolphe Lara emphasized the value of Guadeloupean land and cultivation to counter tendencies of migration, entries in *L'Évangéline* encourage readers to work the land and to resist any temptation to migrate to urban centers. Francis-Xavier Comeau argues that “[Agricultural] colonisation is the way to solidly establish ourselves in the country. ... What riches in our woods and rivers if we know how to exploit them! Many arms are needed to turn and re-turn this land where work will enable us to discover treasures.”<sup>88</sup> This language of land and labour is echoed in the *Jeune Acadien*'s poem published alongside Comeau's speech, where he writes how the Acadians who returned north after their exile could not reclaim their former farmlands, but they managed to recover nearby as “The climate of their soil will still make them firm.” He pleads with Acadians to not “desert our camp” but to be united, as “it takes all of our soldiers to save

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<sup>87</sup> Fontaine, “LE VIEILLARD ACADIEN.” “Semblent pleurer encor [sic] sur leurs champs désolés, / Pleurer sur leurs tombeaux, sur leurs fils exilés”; “Erre d'un pas tremblant, dans ces funèbres lieux”; “Hélas! Je reviens seul; ma race infortunée, / Aux douleurs de l'exil, à jamais condamnée”.

<sup>88</sup> Comeau, “Cinquième [sic] Congrès [sic] National des Acadiens: DISCOURS D'OUVERTURE DE M. LE PRÉSIDENT GÉNÉRAL COMEAU.” “nous ne savons pas toujours nous unir pour lutter contre les entraves que l'on met au développement de notre race”; “la colonisation est le moyen de nous établir solidement dans le pays. [...] Que de richesses dans nos bois et nos rivières si nous savons les exploiter! Des bras nombreux sont nécessaires pour tourner et retourner cette terre où le travail nous fera découvrir des trésors.”

the field!”<sup>89</sup> The *Jeune Acadien* implies how striving to protect and cultivate their land requires Acadians to share the same kind of kinship and loyalty as military soldiers who risk their lives for the benefit of their society.

In a speech by Ph. L. Belliveau, he situates contemporary Acadian migrants who traveled to the northeastern United States to labour in factories as exiles. In wanting to curb this migration, Belliveau describes how for an individual who left Acadie “every day he thinks of his dear Acadie that he would like to see again: he left with the intention of returning and he was never able to.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, as was also seen in Vénére’s story of Bernadette who left her rural environment to live in a city, an entry entitled “La Vie du Fermier” praises rural life, while criticizing the urban environment. It emphasizes how a farmer’s home brings the “comfort, ease, and calm” that city-dwellers struggle to find, and has far fewer inconveniences than are found in the city. The entry proposes that by participating in agricultural labour, many people will see that it is on the land where “man can live happily while working” and can meet all of their family’s needs.<sup>91</sup> Like H.-Adolphe Lara, these authors juxtapose cultivation (living off the land) with exile

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<sup>89</sup> Un *Jeune Acadien*, “LE CONGRES [sic] ACADIEN DE 1905.” “Ils ne tenteront pas de t’arracher leurs fermes, / Mais dans ton voisinage ils vont se rétablir: / Le climat de leur sol encore les rendra fermes: / Ils te surpasseront, te feront repentir!”; “Que jamais l’un de nous déserte notre camp! / Soyons unis comme un, soyons inséparables; / Il faut tous nos soldats pour conserver le champ!”

<sup>90</sup> Ph. L. Belliveau, “Cinquieme [sic] Congres [sic] National des Acadiens: L’EMIGRATION [sic]. Discours prononcé [sic] par M. le cure [sic] Ph. L. Belliveau, de Grand-Digue,” *L’Évangéline*, September 21, 1905. “L’Acadien se souvient – et tous les jours il pense à sa chère Acadie qu’il voudrait revoir: Il était parti avec l’intention de revenir et il n’en a jamais été capable.”

<sup>91</sup> “La Vie du Fermier,” *L’Évangéline*, June 22, 1910. “où l’homme puisse vivre heureux en travaillant.”

(removal from the land) with the aim of making this land a critical component of nationalist identity.<sup>92</sup>

For Guadeloupeans of African descent and for Acadians, the poetry and commentaries featured in *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* during the early twentieth century underscore their cultural and social connections with France, while featuring tales of displacement and providing messages to encourage unity and to strengthen nationalism. Writers tend to avoid opposing the political and economic authority of France and Canada, yet a significant development happens as the printed word becomes identified as a means to form political and social bonds. Through early press and literature, Guadeloupean and Acadian writers provide and shape knowledge as they strive to instill sentiments of pride and togetherness among members of their societies. As the twentieth century continues, select literature reveals an awareness among some individuals of how the written word might be employed as a means to strengthen nationalism, as well as to confront imposed and engrained histories crafted by members of the empires and states that held political authority.

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<sup>92</sup> Comeau used the word “colonisation” in referring to land cultivation, while Lara writes of the importance of “cultivating [...] fertile land” to improve “the future of our Colony.” See Comeau, “Cinquieme [sic] Congres [sic] National des Acadiens: DISCOURS D’OUVERTURE DE M. LE PRÉSIDENT GÉNÉRAL COMEAU”; Lara, “QUESTION ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE: LE COMMERCE DES FRUITS.”

## **Politics and Poetics: Aimé Césaire and Antoine-J. Léger**

In the 1930s and 1940s, Martinican Aimé Césaire (1913-2008) and Acadian Antoine-J. Léger (1880-1950) each participated in French and Canadian society, respectively, as authors and as politicians. Césaire emerged first as an author and then entered politics coming out of World War II, while Léger worked primarily in the domains of law and politics in New Brunswick, Canada. While serving as a politician Léger composed two fictional books, as well as a few selections of unpublished poetry. Through their literature of this period, Césaire and Léger reveal how educated elites began identifying constraints placed on their societies when it came to historical knowledge as a result of duality. During this period, Césaire and Léger often venerate France and Canada in political dialogue, but in their literature they challenge historical narratives that exalted imperial power, while tending to silence their peoples' histories. They promote their own heroes of the colonial past in fashioning new interpretations and understandings of pre- and post-dispersal homelands and experiences of displacement.

On the surface, Césaire's poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939, 1947) and Léger's narratives *Elle et lui: Tragique idylle du peuple acadien* (1940) and *Une fleur d'Acadie: Un épisode du Grand Dérangement* (1946) appear antithetical, not only given the authors' and their societies' distinctions in historical experiences and in colonial racial categorization, but also based on their works' uniqueness in structure and content. Césaire's poem is a surrealist contemplation of the twentieth-century social

conditions in Martinique created through past colonial atrocities and enduring afflictions. In contrast, rather than being poetic, Léger narrates a fictional tale of an Acadian family deported by the British empire in the late eighteenth century, with his story wrapped around colonial archival documents.

In *Cahier d'un retour*, Césaire criticizes colonialism and accuses the French empire of not only exploiting his enslaved ancestors for the empire's own economic and social benefits, but of continuing this exploitation of Black people into the twentieth century. Displaying anger against French white elites, Césaire critiques French culture and exposes faults with the Catholic religion.<sup>93</sup> In Léger's books, his accusations go against the British empire for deporting his ancestors, who he deems were undeserving of their exile due to their negotiations for neutrality. Unlike Césaire, Léger lauds his people's deep cultural ties with France, including their devotion to Catholic religious traditions. These differences in structure and content mask what can be revealed through in-depth comparison of these works. Written during the early stages of print culture for the Martinican and Acadian societies, they reveal similarities attesting to these authors' shared ambitions as the French and British empires' global authority eroded, in part, from writings like theirs.

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<sup>93</sup> Malachi McIntosh, "The 'I' as the Messiah in Césaire's First Cahier," *Research in African Literatures* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 85.

Césaire and Léger's texts are focused on providing a new understanding of the histories of dispossession, displacement, and endurance for Acadians and for Martinicans, while Césaire also intended for his work to speak more broadly for people of African descent across the French Caribbean, including in independent Haiti. He describes Guadeloupe that is "equal in poverty to us" and Haiti "where negritude rose for the first time and stated that it believed in its humanity."<sup>94</sup> Césaire's and Léger's ambitions included making readers more aware of the colonial violence their ancestors endured, and of the racial and social prejudices they now faced and needed to strive to overcome as a result of colonial oppression. Césaire and Léger presented this literature addressed primarily to their inner circles as they saw the colonial walls that still surrounded them weakening, due to economic and political setbacks Britain and France faced through World Wars I and II, as well as the Great Depression. In comparison to the articles and poetry in these communities' early press, these authors more daringly confronted the authority of those in the dominant class who defined imperial and national history. Through their writings, they emphasize the need for their peoples' eyes to be opened to what they deem as truths previously veiled by colonial histories, and they voice their desire for their people to be active participants in pursuing greater social, political, and economic autonomy.

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<sup>94</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 19.

As authors, Césaire and Léger contributed to enabling their societies to self-identify as those who suffered colonial violence and continued to endure forms of oppression by dominant societies into the early twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> Their publications echo calls from the press for French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians to discover their own history and culture. While revealing a sense of victimization, these authors' writings also underscore their peoples' capacity for resistance and endurance. Through their content and style, Césaire and Léger employ literature to counter struggles of oppression that persisted in their societies in the twentieth century. Césaire's surrealist approach is a resistant act, as he betrays conventional structural rules for poetry imposed by French academia, while Léger's resistance includes selectively pulling excerpts from colonial archives that he weaves into his text to provide a different context for Acadian history. This resistance reveals growing tensions among these societies in relating with France and Canada, but in their writings Césaire remains bound by the French language and the elitism of Black intellectuals, while Léger is dependent on the colonizers' record-keeping.<sup>96</sup> These authors aim to help their people self-identify, but this "self" still gets

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<sup>95</sup> Lara, "L'HISTOIRE LOCALE"; Landry, "PROSPECTUS DU MONITEUR ACADIEN"; Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, ed. Abiola Irele, 2nd ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 38; Léger, *Elle et lui*, 201.

<sup>96</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 62. Concerning theories of "diasporic double consciousness" see Dayal, "Diaspora and Double Consciousness"; Vijay, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity*, 14; Thomas, "Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the 'Jewish Question,'" 1337.

defined largely in the context of imperial language, records, and dominant historical narratives.

Césaire and Léger are in some ways bound by colonial legacies of language and archives, yet they draw attention to the problems of historical pasts being hidden, ignored, falsified, or misrepresented in narratives produced by the dominant class. In shedding light on these problems of historical understanding, they also bring to the surface enduring struggles of discrimination and exploitation carried into the twentieth century. Césaire brings to light connections between the French Caribbean and Africa often masked by French colonial historical discourse, while Léger accentuates faults of British Americans when it came to Acadian Deportation.<sup>97</sup> Césaire calls for his people to raise their voices to be heard over the silences of their pasts, and to take action in speaking up about colonial violence. He writes,

I would come to this land of mine and I would say to it: “Embrace me without fear ... And if all I can do is speak, it is for you I shall speak.”  
And again I would say:  
“My mouth shall be the mouth of those calamities that have no mouth, my voice the freedom of those who break down in the prison holes of despair.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Gems, “L’esprit des lettres”; Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 36; Antoine-J. Léger, “Longfellow and the Acadians,” n.d., CÉAAC, Université de Moncton, 21.6.001; Léger, *Elle et lui*, 119.

<sup>98</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 17.

So too, does Léger encourage his people to strive to be heard in the present-day, as they must overcome a “passive existence” with an “active life.”<sup>99</sup> He reminds Acadians to resist going unaccounted for or wrongly represented due to colonial sources being “lost, falsified, and destroyed by those who had an interest in hiding the truth.”<sup>100</sup> After acknowledging that outsiders may “attribute our poverty to lack of initiative” he underscores Acadian sufferings, he exalts them for their courage and heroism in the past, and he reminds them of how they have had to “fight almost alone for natural rights” and education.<sup>101</sup>

By boldly challenging accepted colonial historical narratives and by calling on their people to take action in order to improve living in the present, the works by Césaire and Léger indicate a growing consciousness of the confines of the colonial structures their societies occupy. Their writings show early steps toward members of these communities using literature to begin to challenge engrained norms of the relationship that had been largely imposed by the French and British empires. For Césaire and Léger, challenging that relationship included creating new heroes, claiming and celebrating

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<sup>99</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 201.

<sup>100</sup> Antoine-J. Léger, *Une fleur d'Acadie. Un épisode du grand dérangement* (Moncton: L'Imprimerie acadienne ltée, 1946), 128. “Mais ils n’ont pas pu préserver de contagion les sources d’où découle leur histoire qui fut perdue, falsifiée et détruite par ceux qui avaient intérêt à cacher la vérité.”

<sup>101</sup> Léger, 127; Léger, *Elle et lui*, 200–202.

homelands conceived in the present and imagined from the past, and remembering atrocities of African slavery and Acadian Deportation that occurred due to imperialism.

Césaire pursued his education in Paris in the 1930s alongside Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal and Léon Damas from Guiana, who all went on to become strong political leaders. During his time in Paris, Césaire determined that Martinicans held false impressions of equality with French society because racial prejudices that existed toward descendants of enslaved Africans in the French Caribbean were often masked.<sup>102</sup> With his growing awareness of inequalities built through the French imperial order, as well as his knowledge of poverty and social injustices in Martinique, he wrote the earliest version of his renowned poem *Cahier d'un retour* that went to press in the French journal *Volontés* in 1939.<sup>103</sup> Soon after its publication, Césaire returned to Martinique where he worked as a professor at the Lycée Schoelcher while the island fell under Vichy control beginning in 1940.<sup>104</sup> He joined with his wife Suzanne and René Ménil to found the journal *Tropiques* that they published from 1941-1945, where they featured articles exploring literature, the arts, and Martinican society, culture, and politics.<sup>105</sup> Césaire's experiences in France combined with the Vichy government's acquiescence to Germany during the war

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<sup>102</sup> Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 36.

<sup>103</sup> Abiola Irele, "Introduction," in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, ed. Abiola Irele, 2nd ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), xxxii; Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 22.

<sup>104</sup> Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 16, 32–34; David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta Books, 2000), 68.

<sup>105</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 24–29.

disrupted Césaire's engrained notions of what it meant to be "French." He continued revising *Cahier d'un retour* and published it again in 1947 in Paris and in New York (a bilingual edition).<sup>106</sup> Through the poem, Césaire immortalizes Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture, he identifies Martinique as his "native land" while underscoring French Caribbean peoples' ancestral roots in Africa, and he vividly depicts the violence of the trans-Atlantic trade of enslaved peoples.

Aimé Césaire confronts the problem of the silencing of French Caribbean events and individuals in the French national historical narrative by devoting a section of his poem to remembering and exalting Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture. Louverture led the Haitian Revolution against imperial France that culminated in Haiti's independence and slavery's abolition on the island in 1804. The Haitian Revolution has often been absent from French memory and history, as according to Michel-Rolph Trouillot "what happened in Haiti were 'unthinkable' facts in the framework of Western thought."<sup>107</sup> Robin Blackburn clarifies that while those in Haiti remembered their revolutionary past, for France that period of Haiti's history was overshadowed by critical metropolitan events including the French Revolution and its outcomes. Blackburn observes that in remembering this period of French and Haitian history, there was a tendency to "resort to

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<sup>106</sup> Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 16.

<sup>107</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 82.

a few hackneyed stereotypes that denied to Haitian history the meaning and resonance that attached to other struggles for independence and freedom.”<sup>108</sup> More recently, Marlene Daut argues that from 1789-1865 there was a plethora of literature addressing events in Haiti, but what unfolded on the island was depicted as a vengeful uprising by those of mixed-race against white elite, thus “subordinating the position of the Haitian Revolution to the French and American revolutions.”<sup>109</sup> Consequently, as is hinted at in the articles by Poléma examined in the previous chapter, Louverture often went either unmentioned or denounced in printed narratives by French authors and historians in much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>110</sup> Over the last two decades, contemporary scholars such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Laurent Dubois, David Geggus, and Marlene Daut have acknowledged the importance of the Haitian Revolution on a global scale and in the context of colonial history, yet Césaire foreshadows them, both with his description of Louverture in his poem and in the agency he credits to Haiti where, according to Césaire, “negritude rose for the first time.”<sup>111</sup> Césaire implies the critical nature of Louverture’s actions in attempting to bring to the Black population in the Antilles, as

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<sup>108</sup> Robin Blackburn, “The Force of Example,” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 393.

<sup>109</sup> Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 3–4.

<sup>110</sup> Léon-François Hoffmann, “Representations of the Haitian Revolution in French Literature,” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 340–41.

<sup>111</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 97–98; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 3, 6–7; Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution*, 247–50; Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 3–4; quotation in Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 42.

well as members of the Black community around the globe, a heightened awareness of their own agency.

Césaire illustrates Louverture's captivity in Jura, where he is confined in a small cell, surrounded by the "whiteness" of the snow and the jailer. He depicts Toussaint as "a man alone defying the white cries of a white death" and then writes: "(TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE)." Césaire is shouting for Louverture to be remembered, but the brackets indicate that as loud as he may shout Louverture's name, it remains confined or suppressed apart from the dominant discourse and unheard by the majority. Césaire describes Louverture's encounter with death, that is an active, ominous, and intimate essence that enters Louverture's prison cell where it "traces a shining circle above this man," "breathes in the ripened cane of his arms," "gallops in the prison like a white horse," and "gleams in the dark like the eyes of a cat."<sup>112</sup> Rather than exalting a sacrificial mortality, Césaire grants Louverture immortality and the ability to conquer death that becomes "a struck bird," where it "waned," "vacillates," and "expires in a white pool of silence."<sup>113</sup> With his language of "death expires," Césaire mythologizes his hero as a victor over death through remembrance. He concludes this section on Louverture by describing a new dawn, asking, "the splendour of this blood will it not

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<sup>112</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 44.

<sup>113</sup> Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, 73; Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 21.

blast forth?”<sup>114</sup> As Abiola Irele observes, Louverture’s immortality brings “a surprising turn to history” for Césaire’s people, as Césaire aims to “reverse their passive attitude in a new collective will.”<sup>115</sup> Rather than remembering Louverture with lament, Césaire portrays him as a worthy hero for French Caribbean people of African descent, who not only stood against France on behalf of Haitians, but through his actions overcame “white death” in perpetuity.<sup>116</sup>

As pointed to earlier in this chapter, another critical element for unifying those of African descent in Martinique, and more broadly in the French Caribbean, is the quest for identifying a shared homeland.<sup>117</sup> There are two meanings for “homeland” wound throughout Césaire’s poem. First, there is an imagined homeland – that of memory and of the distant past – in Africa. Second, there is his own “birth country,” meaning the island of Martinique, where he was born and educated, and where he participated in society. When Césaire left to study in France in the early 1930s, he witnessed the growing movement for Pan-Africanism, but also saw divisions between French Caribbean people of African descent and Africans given their political and historical relationships with

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<sup>114</sup> Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, 75; Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 23.

<sup>115</sup> Abiola Irele, “Commentary and Notes,” in *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, ed. Abiola Irele, 2nd ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>116</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 44.

<sup>117</sup> Irele, “Commentary and Notes,” 76.

France.<sup>118</sup> As Frantz Fanon observed, "... the positions were clear: on one side the nègre, the African; on the other side the European and the Antillean. The Antillean was a Black man, but the nègre was in Africa."<sup>119</sup> This started to change dramatically as Césaire engaged with Senghor and Damas in Paris, and they began writing works that brought attention to experiences of racism and discrimination shared between Black societies of the Americas and those of Africa. Césaire penned the term *negritude* in *L'Étudiant noir* in 1935, and expressed his desire for Black individuals around the world to join together in working toward "revolution" and in "planting our negritude like a beautiful tree, until it carries its most authentic fruit."<sup>120</sup> Césaire had a "hope to reestablish contact with his African heritage" and in an early edition of *Tropiques* he featured a chapter by German scholar Leo Frobenius entitled "What Does Africa Mean to Us" that countered assumptions of African barbarity.<sup>121</sup> With his "discovery of Africa" after meeting Senghor, and his growing desire to unite the Black population, Césaire began alluding to how they all shared a common ancestral homeland in Africa.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Gary Wilder, "Panafrikanism and the Republican Political Sphere," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 242–44.

<sup>119</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2001), 36. "les positions étaient nettes: d'un côté le nègre, l'Africain; de l'autre l'Européen et l'Antillais. L'Antillais était un noir, mais le nègre était en Afrique."

<sup>120</sup> Aimé Césaire, "Conscience raciale et révolution sociale," *L'Étudiant noir: Journal mensuel de l'Association des étudiants martiniquais en France*, June 1935, <https://letudiant-noir.webs.com/>. "planter notre négritude comme un bel arbre jusqu'à ce qu'il porte ses fruits les plus authentiques."

<sup>121</sup> Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 31, 37.

<sup>122</sup> Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, xxii–xxiii.

Césaire uses the word *negritude* in *Cahier d'un retour*, and while claiming *negritude*'s origins in Haiti where Black society upset colonial authority and altered history, another aspect that became a core part of *negritude*'s definition included identifying Black origins in Africa. In the 1930s, Césaire and Léopold Senghor led a group in Paris whose priorities “included creating a black poetry, exploring their African heritage, and analyzing their location in French imperial society.”<sup>123</sup> In *Cahier d'un retour* Césaire describes his homeland in Martinique as being situated inside “one of the two slopes of incandescence between which the Equator tightrope walks toward Africa,” providing imagery of interconnection with the African continent.<sup>124</sup> After Césaire establishes this geographic connection, he remembers his African ancestors who may have “invented neither power nor compass” nor “could harness neither steam nor electricity,” yet are those “without whom the earth would not be the earth.”<sup>125</sup> Césaire reveals prejudices of his period rooted in Euro-centric rhetoric that deemed African societies uncivilized, yet he also alludes to a dramatic awakening (“O fresh source of light”) as he is now cognizant of his own roots in Africa:

Eia for the royal Cailcedra!  
Eia for those who never invented anything  
for those who never explored anything

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<sup>123</sup> Wilder, “Panafrikanism and the Republican Political Sphere,” 246.

<sup>124</sup> Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, 69–70; Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 19.

<sup>125</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 35, 37.

for those who never conquered anything  
...  
truly the eldest sons of the world...<sup>126</sup>

Later, Césaire declares that “my country is the ‘lance of night’ of my Bambara ancestors,” revealing that he is no longer looking to Europe for his origins, but instead is finding pride in his African ancestry.<sup>127</sup> In the surrealist poem “À l’Afrique” (1946), that Césaire dedicates to Afro-Cuban artist Wilfredo Lam, Africa is inscribed as a place of genesis and recreation. Pierre Laforgue argues that since the publication of each of these poems “negritude cannot be thought of without Africa,” yet at the same time Africa proved to be an elusive, imaginary homeland that could never be possessed.<sup>128</sup>

Césaire brings to the foreground this sense of connection to Africa as an imagined ancestral homeland, while much of his inspiration comes from growing up in his “native country” of Martinique. Martinique is a more tangible, yet in some ways still elusive homeland, created over time as a result of colonial diaspora and still held under the authority of the French government. One of the most powerful stanzas in the poem is Césaire’s reflection on leaving and returning to this homeland whose “loam is part of my flesh,” providing imagery of both belonging and of possession. Césaire describes returning to “this land of mine” after “I have wandered for a long time and I am coming

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<sup>126</sup> Césaire, 37; The Cailcedra is a tree in Western Africa, see Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, 118.

<sup>127</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 49.

<sup>128</sup> Pierre Laforgue, “‘À l’Afrique’ d’Aimé Césaire: un poème dans l’histoire (variations génétiques),” *Présence Africaine*, no. 184 (2<sup>nd</sup> semestre 2011): 225.

back to the deserted hideousness of your sores.”<sup>129</sup> While his homeland has these “sores” including poverty and racism, it is not dead, but is “laid in the despair of my arms, its bones shattered and in its veins, the blood hesitating.” His homeland requires resurrection and

Suddenly now strength and life assail me like a bull and I revive Onan who entrusted his sperm to the fecund earth and the water of life circumvents the papilla of the morne, and now all the veins and veinlets are bustling with new blood...

And we are standing now, my country and I, hair in the wind, my hand puny in its enormous fist...<sup>130</sup>

Martinique is portrayed as a native land Césaire loves, and he communicates to his people their responsibility in revitalizing it as they move toward their future while re-figuring their past.

Césaire identifies that another crucial element for Afro-descendant societies in the French Caribbean is remembering and giving utterance to trials of diaspora and enslavement. In looking to the past, Césaire describes the upheaval and violence of the Middle Passage when his ancestors were violently torn from their African homes, forced aboard ships, moved across the Atlantic, and exploited as enslaved labourers. Césaire recounts how Europeans treated his forefathers as “walking compost hideously promising tender cane and silky cotton” and he describes how his people are “those who have

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<sup>129</sup> Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 16–17.

<sup>130</sup> Césaire, 47.

known voyages only through uprootings.”<sup>131</sup> He renders the reader haunted by the dreadful sounds emanating from the bowels of ships carrying the enslaved: “the death gasps of the dying ... the baying of a woman in labour ... the scraping of fingernails searching for throats ... the flouts of the whip.”<sup>132</sup> By the end of his work, however, Césaire implies that it is through this very experience of colonial violence where his people’s existence and identity are found, as the ship gets overtaken by the “ghastly tapeworm of its cargo” that “gnaws the fetid guts of the strange suckling of the sea!” and soon “the *négraille* is on its feet / [...] standing / and / free.”<sup>133</sup> It is through their violent “uprootings” that Césaire’s Martinican people exist, and he is sending his people the message that they need to know their colonial pasts, while breaking free from the folds of the ships.

The creation of new heroes, the remembrance of homelands – both imagined and elusive, and the portrayal of diasporic tragedy are found in Léger’s books as well. Léger (1880-1950) was born in Memramcook, New Brunswick, where he attended the Collège Saint-Joseph.<sup>134</sup> Léger’s works do not garner significant praise from literary critics, but

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<sup>131</sup> Césaire, 27, 35.

<sup>132</sup> Césaire, 29.

<sup>133</sup> Césaire, 52–53.

<sup>134</sup> Marguerite Maillet, Gérard LeBlanc, and Bernard Emont, eds., *Anthologie de textes littéraires acadiens, 1606-1975* (Moncton: Éditions d’Acadie, 1979), 367; Maillet, *Histoire de la littérature acadienne*, 150–51; Bourque and Richard, *Les Conventions nationales acadiennes, 1900-1908*, 11–15.

he provided two of the first published narratives of Acadian history written from an Acadian perspective and inspired by his own archival research as well as his community's oral traditions.<sup>135</sup> In his books *Elle et lui* (1940) and *Une fleur d'Acadie* (1946), Léger creates new feminine heroines that in many ways stand in contrast to Longfellow's Evangeline. He underscores his people's ties to Grand-Pré as both a true and fictive homeland, and he makes manifest the violence of the Acadian Deportation.

Léger did not write with the explicit intention to overshadow or refute, Longfellow's Evangeline, who became an accepted, indeed iconic, heroine among Acadians. In a speech Léger prepared to present to members of an Anglophone religious community, he wrote how through Evangeline "Longfellow has sympathized with and won the affection of an unfortunate people who have chosen him as their friend in adversity, as a tender and beloved father."<sup>136</sup> Léger's works reflect Longfellow's influence with his description of Grand Pré, as he quotes Longfellow to describe how "the richest was poor and the poor lived in abundance," and images of Evangeline are featured in printed copies of his books.<sup>137</sup> Certainly, like Longfellow, Léger creates a tragic narrative of Acadian loss and dislocation. A critical distinction, however, is that when recounting Acadians' struggles in exile and resettlement, Léger does not depict a

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<sup>135</sup> Maillet, LeBlanc, and Emont, *Anthologie de textes littéraires acadiens*, 367.

<sup>136</sup> Léger, "Longfellow and the Acadians."

<sup>137</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 69, 160; Léger, *Une fleur d'Acadie*, 39; Longfellow, "Evangeline," 177.

woman subject to the throes of American westward expansion who dies in an unmarked grave in urban America. Instead, Léger heroizes women characters who are empowered by God, their families, and the love of their homeland. They succeed in reuniting with loved ones and in replanting roots for the continued growth and survival of their community.

At the beginning of *Elle et lui*, Léger recounts how the father of a young Frenchman named Jean died fighting for the French empire in Acadie, and Léger describes how this left Jean and his mother to fend for themselves in France. Jean's mother raises him alone, teaches him to read, and sets the foundations she felt he might need so that when she died he could move across the Atlantic.<sup>138</sup> Once in Acadie, Jean meets and marries Jeanne and they begin a family. When the tragedy of Deportation occurs, the women surrounding Jean become his life support system. In Boston, his daughters Madeleine and Blanche find their family a place to live and figure out ways to provide for their father's needs.<sup>139</sup> In Maryland, Jean's wife and his daughter Geneviève survive on their own for a decade. Jean searches for them in vain, and it is Jeanne who finds him and knocks at his door.<sup>140</sup> When some of their family returns north to the land they call Acadie, Jeanne – much like the biblical Moses - dies having just beheld the

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<sup>138</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 10, 12–17.

<sup>139</sup> Léger, 130–34.

<sup>140</sup> Léger, 158.

“Acadian sky,” and her daughter Madeleine steps up to lead her family with a “valiant and strong nature.”<sup>141</sup> As Jean mourns his wife, Madeleine symbolically lifts her father’s head up to comfort and encourage him, just as his mother in France did when he was a child.<sup>142</sup> Their family arrives to resettle in a new region north of their former homeland, where Madeleine grabs an axe and with “great blows” takes down the first trees in the “virgin forest” (language previously addressed in the analysis of Marc Lescarbot’s 1905 article, that also ignores the Mi’kmaq and Wəlastəkəkewiyik presence on the land). In Léger’s novel, Acadians “create new homes and establish new families” through the resiliency of heroines Jeanne and Madeleine.<sup>143</sup>

In *Une fleur d’Acadie*, female protagonist Hélène rings the church bell to warn others of the British arrival, but not everyone in her community manages to escape. Hélène gets captured and separated from her fiancé, and lives as a prisoner in Fort Cumberland until the officers decide to let her go free so they can follow her back to capture other escapees. In referring to Abbé LeGuerne’s report of at least sixty women in the region who witnessed their husbands captured by the British, Léger makes Hélène representative of those women left to survive in Memramcook, Petitcodiac, and

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<sup>141</sup> Léger, 163–65. “Élevée par une mère aussi noble que chrétienne, elle a puisé, à cette source, une nature vaillante et forte.”

<sup>142</sup> Léger, 12, 165.

<sup>143</sup> Léger, 169. “Madeleine [...] saisit la hache appuyée contre un arbre et, à grands coups, fait résonner les alentours de ce bruit qui indique la décision; ce fut le premier signal de l’attaque contre la forêt vierge, en vue de se créer de nouveaux foyers et d’établir de nouvelles familles.”

Chipoudy [Shepody], granting women agency in the survival and restoration of their people.<sup>144</sup> Léger observes how a man like Paul Revere, who also warned his people of arriving British soldiers, is memorialized with monuments and glorified in poetry while Acadian women like Hélène go unmentioned.<sup>145</sup> According to literary critic Marguerite Maillet, Madeleine and Hélène “are women who, according to the author, assured the survival of the race and made ‘the Acadian great in adversity’.”<sup>146</sup> Longfellow’s poem ends with a burial that symbolizes the eternal death of the Acadian people, but like with Césaire’s portrayal of Louverture conquering death, so Léger’s depiction of Acadian women symbolizes the endurance of Acadians who overcome a form of death (diaspora) to survive as a people.

Césaire brings to the forefront how Martinique and Africa are each forms of a homeland, and this word carries multiple meanings with Léger as he describes an imagined homeland from the past while also claiming the existence of a present-day homeland labeled as Acadie.<sup>147</sup> In *Elle et lui* Léger spends much of his text describing the

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<sup>144</sup> Abbé le Guerne, “Copie d’une lettre écrite par Monsieur l’Abbé le Guerne Missionnaire des sauvages à l’Acadie, à Monsieur Prévost, Ordonnateur à l’Isle Royale, 10 March 1756,” in *Acadian Genealogy and Notes, Appendix N in Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, ed. Placide Gaudet, vol. 2 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), 349, <https://archive.org/details/reportconcerning22publ/page/n931/mode/2up/>.

<sup>145</sup> Léger, *Une fleur d’Acadie*, 33.

<sup>146</sup> Maillet, *Histoire de la littérature acadienne*, 154. “Madeleine, comme Marie-Hélène de Chipoudie, l’héroïne du second roman de Léger, est de ces femmes qui, au dire de l’auteur, ont assuré la survie de la race et ont fait ‘l’Acadien grand dans l’adversité’.”

<sup>147</sup> Irele, “Commentary and Notes,” 76.

beauty of the “dear homeland” in pre-dispersal Grand-Pré from which Acadians were violently removed.<sup>148</sup> As time passes in the story, Jean’s adoptive father expresses his anger with the British for denying Acadian settlers ownership of land that their ancestors “cleared, sowed, sprinkled with their sweat” due to not having deeds of sale.<sup>149</sup> The tensions over land culminate in the Deportation, and Jean sadly laments being dispossessed of his homeland.<sup>150</sup> In describing villagers being violently forced aboard ships and separated from their families, Léger observes that like “the leaves agitated by the wind” they “came off the trees, fluttering and dispersed to roll and die far from the trunk that had protected them”.<sup>151</sup> This tree trunk with its roots running deep into the land symbolizes the integral nature of Grand-Pré in the construct of Acadian identity. It is identified as a former homeland for the Acadian people in Longfellow’s poem and in Léger’s story of Jean, as well as through its memorialization over the twentieth century. Just as Césaire makes an African homeland that can never be repossessed a “chimera” where the “real and the imagined meet,” Grand-Pré gets imagined as Acadians’ lost possession that they could never regain despite returning to Atlantic Canada.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 69.

<sup>149</sup> Léger, 71.

<sup>150</sup> Léger, 120.

<sup>151</sup> Léger, 116. “Les feuilles agitées par le vent se détachaient, voltigeant éparées pour s’en aller rouler et mourir loin du tronc qui les avait protégées”.

<sup>152</sup> Laforgue, “‘À l’Afrique’ d’Aimé Césaire,” 226.

In Léger's narrative, Jean, Madeleine, and other Acadian families returning north after their exile are unable to reoccupy their former homeland and they have to resettle not once, but twice. After traveling further north than Grand Pré to settle near a rural, military post in what would soon be the province of New Brunswick, they divided land lots to use for cultivation, but Léger describes another British betrayal. In 1783 Nova Scotian Lieutenant-Governor John Parr promised British Loyalist refugees the lands Acadians now occupied as a "gift."<sup>153</sup> According to Léger, in 1784 new Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Carleton, of what was now New Brunswick, reclaimed much of this land and Acadians once again endured displacement with the influx of Loyalist settlers.<sup>154</sup> Many relocated north to Madawaska or south to Memramcook, where they once again "chose land and started clearing it."<sup>155</sup> By the late nineteenth century, ties to the land became a theme of Acadian conventions and contributed to bringing a growing sense of unity among a population scattered throughout the Maritime Provinces. In Acadian discourse, the language of "land" and "homeland" began to have multiple and often intertwined meanings, understood as being a source for sustenance and a place of belonging not confined to the imagined geographic boundaries of pre-dispersal Grand-Pré. As with Césaire's Africa and Martinique that either was elusive or existed under

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<sup>153</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 193. "dont le gouverneur Parr, de la Nouvelle-Écosse, venait de leur faire cadeau."

<sup>154</sup> Léger, 194; See also Condon, "Loyalist Arrival," 199.

<sup>155</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 199. "De nouveau, ils se choisissent des terres et recommencent le défrichement."

French authority, the pre-dispersal Acadian homeland could not be re-acquired and the post-dispersal Acadian homeland could not be fully possessed.

The theme of violence in *Deportation* comes to the forefront in Léger's novels with his narrative of Acadians getting captured and, like "human cargo," being forced aboard British ships.<sup>156</sup> On the night that ships arrived to deport Acadians in Grand-Pré, Jean and his family get separated onto two vessels. As the ships begin leaving the port, Léger's story reaches its climax with a storm that brought a "black fog that enveloped" the ships and a "furious sea."<sup>157</sup> Léger employs violent language in describing the night of Acadian Deportation from Grand Pré, with the "bloody" and "boiling" ocean, the lightning "flung around" by the sky, and the rain and hail that fell "with extreme violence."<sup>158</sup> On the ship, Elizabeth, Jean's ill grand-daughter perishes, and in her anguish the baby's mother Rose chooses to jump overboard. The story of Rose's suicide may appear to represent her victimization at the hands of the empire, but Léger notes that she "became an easy prey for the storm" and she chose to commit her "spirit to [God's]

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<sup>156</sup> Léger, 127; Léger, *Une fleur d'Acadie*, 60.

<sup>157</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 126. "Un brouillard noir les enveloppait. Ils montaient et descendaient sur une mer furieuse".

<sup>158</sup> Léger, 127. "[...] la mer était tellement agitée qu'elle semblait être en sang et paraissait bouillonner comme une chaudière sur un grand feu [...]. Le ciel lançait la foudre [...]. La pluie et la grêle tombaient avec une violence extrême."; Abrm (Abraham) Adams, "Capt. Abraham Adams to Col. Winslow, 8 December 1755," in *Acadian Genealogy and Notes, Appendix B in Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, ed. Placide Gaudet, vol. 2 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906), <https://archive.org/details/reportconcerning22publ/page/n311/mode/2up/>. Adams wrote, "I am afraid Several of the Fleet was lost in ye Gale."

hands.”<sup>159</sup> Léger certainly intended for Rose’s story to depict the suffering of Acadian society, yet historians’ interpretations of suicide as a form of resistance among enslaved Africans can open doors for a new analysis.<sup>160</sup> The story of the violent storm with its culmination of Rose’s suicide come together to symbolize the weaknesses of an empire that cannot control the storms nor its “useful subjects.”<sup>161</sup> In this context, Rose’s death is both the nadir and the apogee of Léger’s text, where beyond choosing how to negotiate, to escape, to forgive, or to create history, an Acadian woman chooses to entrust her life to a God she sees as more powerful than an empire.

This depiction of tragic displacement continues as Jean’s family tries to survive in the British colonies, where they face separation, poverty, and prejudice. Léger conveys how the tragedy of being forced aboard the ships in Grand Pré paled in comparison to where they arrived, where “the unloading ... surpassed in its desolating scenes all that history teaches us of civilized people. Nothing was prepared to receive them.”<sup>162</sup> For a

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<sup>159</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 127. “Sa mère était tellement exténuée de fatigue et de misère, qu’elle aussi devint une proie facile pour la tempête, et elle alla rejoindre son enfant dans les eaux profondes de l’océan, avec ces dernières paroles prononcées dans toute la ferveur d’une chrétienne: ‘Mon Dieu, je remets mon âme entre vos mains.’”

<sup>160</sup> See for example Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 120; Schiebinger, *Plants & Empire*, 131, 146; Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Terri L. Snyder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

<sup>161</sup> For “useful subjects” see Akins, *Selections from the Public Documents*, 279–80. For the descriptor “useful” see also 176, 197, 283, 584. “Subjects” is found throughout the archival documents when referring to Acadians.

<sup>162</sup> Léger, *Elle et lui*, 130. “Si l’embarquement à Grand’Prée [sic] fut tragique, le débarquement, aux endroits où il se fit, surpassa en scènes désolantes tout ce que l’histoire nous apprend des peuples civilisés.”

decade Jean and his daughters Madeleine and Blanche live in poverty in Boston, not knowing where Jeanne and their other siblings are. Léger describes how the daughters endured being forced to labour “against their will” and being treated “like wrongful beasts of burden.”<sup>163</sup> Léger claims that prior to abolition in Massachusetts prisoners were often sold into slavery, while the Acadians, after losing all they formerly had were now “given away for free, through a law that only applied to them.”<sup>164</sup> Léger’s description of forced labour, his language of “human cargo,” and the implications of being devalued, as well as his declaration that Governor Charles Lawrence’s goal in the Deportation was the “complete annihilation of the Acadian race” unveils a sense of bestial treatment, pointing to Césaire’s later language of the dehumanization of Black people in his work *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950).<sup>165</sup> At the same time, just as Césaire pulls from his message of tragedy and of scattering to bring to light the creation and endurance of his people, so too does Léger intend for Acadians to learn about their Deportation, while also realizing their own ability to persist in overcoming challenges caused through this tragedy.

Césaire’s poem and Léger’s books indicate that in the mid-twentieth century Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent and Acadians are beginning to use

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<sup>163</sup> Léger, 134. “d’engager les Acadiens contre leur gré”; “et finalement placés en servitude, comme des bêtes de somme trouvées errantes.”

<sup>164</sup> Léger, 134. “les Acadiens, dépouillés de leurs biens, furent livrés gratuitement, en vertu d’une loi exceptionnelle qui ne s’appliquait qu’à eux seuls.”

<sup>165</sup> Léger, 137, 155. “En tout ceci Lawrence ne faisait que poursuivre à outrance l’œuvre inique de sa politique: l’anéantissement complet de la race acadienne”.

print culture more overtly as a means to expand knowledge of their colonial history, to define the meaning of homeland, and to bring unity through calling their people out of quiescence. Building on the early poetry and articles of *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* that addressed subjects of displacement and homeland, Césaire and Léger identify heroes whose actions on behalf of the collective are disruptive to colonial narratives of conquest. They exalt past imagined homelands, while revealing how their peoples' present homeland exists in the abstract due to the absence of defined geographical boundaries for Acadians and the lack of full political autonomy for both. As Yarimar Bonilla observes concerning Césaire's interpretation of Africa and Europe, they "constituted impossible homelands, both intimately familiar, yet ultimately denied."<sup>166</sup> Césaire and Léger bring to the forefront the tragedies of displacement shared among their communities, with the outcomes of colonial violence still felt in the early twentieth century.

In contrast to Léger's works that have been overlooked, and even critiqued in the field of Acadian literature, being described by author Antonine Maillet as "fiction" but "not literature," Césaire's poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* has received global acclaim in the literary sphere.<sup>167</sup> It is difficult to measure the immediate impact it had in

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<sup>166</sup> Yarimar Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 50–51.

<sup>167</sup> Antonine Maillet, interview by Leanna Thomas, Phone recording, December 10, 2020.

its early publications in 1939 and 1947. In *The Convict and the Colonel* (1998), anthropologist Richard Price relates that in 1962 he asked his advisor in Harvard's Department of Romance Languages if he could complete his senior thesis on Césaire's poem. His professor denied him that opportunity, believing that the poem "was not of sufficient significance as literature to merit a senior thesis," indicating that Césaire's poem did not reach the mainstream in literary studies before the 1960s.<sup>168</sup> Just prior to that, in the late 1950s, this poem drew the attention of emerging authors in Québec such as Gaston Miron. Through the 1960s this poem, along with Césaire's other literary works, and writings by Frantz Fanon and Édouard Glissant, will influence Francophone societies searching for greater political, economic, and cultural autonomy, including in Québec and among young, educated Acadians. Emerging Québécois and Acadian authors began appropriating language of slavery, race, and colonial violence, pulling it from its Caribbean context and carefully re-framing it in ways to promote their own social and political agendas. The literary works of French Caribbean authors may not have breached the imperial, and imperious, walls of North America's elite Anglophone universities, but they were influencing a new generation of writers and literary scholars in regions of the Francophone archipelago in North America.

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<sup>168</sup> Price, *The Convict and the Colonel*, 126.

## Chapter 5 – Refurbishing the Rooms: Poets and Autonomy, 1960s-1970s

“When a hundred young people will be determined to focus their impatience and to organize themselves in secret far from the eyes, ears, and hands of those who have never stopped prostituting Guadeloupe in all of the corridors, ante-chambers, offices, and tribunals, the battle will be won.”<sup>1</sup> – Sonny Rupaire, “Message à la jeunesse guadeloupéenne,” 1966

“My life, it is an orgy of creativity in uncertain places, foggy, surrounded by walls on which one has written, “it is forbidden to say your will to be.”<sup>2</sup> – Interview with Raymond LeBlanc, 1972

In the early twentieth century, press and literature by Acadians and by Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent drew attention to constraining flaws of engrained mainstream historical discourses and writers began articulating claims to a “homeland.” World War II and its outcomes of decolonization brought greater alteration to these societies’ “tenant occupancy” of colonial structures as they began witnessing – in some instances first-hand – tremendous political, economic, and social upheavals unfolding around the world. These global, colonial events drastically impacted the structures these societies continued to occupy, and authors began to compose new theories, discourses,

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<sup>1</sup> Sonny Rupaire, “Message à la jeunesse guadeloupéenne in Bulletin no. 4 du Comité populaire et national de la jeunesse guadeloupéenne (CPNJG),” in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d’une igname Brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jator, 2013), 105. “Quand cent jeunes seront déterminés à concentrer leur impatience et à s’organiser dans le secret loin des yeux, des oreilles et des mains de ceux-là qui n’ont cessé de prostituer la Guadeloupe dans tous les couloirs, anti-chambres, bureaux et tribunes, la bataille sera gagnée.”

<sup>2</sup> “Entrevue avec Raymond LeBlanc,” *Revue de l’Université de Moncton* 5, no. 1 (January 1972): 97. “Ma vie, c’est une orgie de créativité en lieux incertains, brumeux, entourés de murs sur lesquels on a écrit: “il est interdit de dire sa volonté d’être.”

and poetics in order to dislodge and discard the patriarchal, nationalistic rhetoric protected inside these enduring colonial structures.

Through the 1960s, evidence of an increasing assertiveness and resulting empowerment in challenging the terms of their tenantry became further manifest in literature by Acadian authors, and by Martinican and Guadeloupean authors of African descent. Authors began to alter more radically the colonial interiors with their poetics that “overflowed from the containers” established through colonialism and maintained through the modern nation-state.<sup>3</sup> Inside enduring colonial structures that housed such “containers,” authors Édouard Glissant, Sonny Rupaire, and Raymond Guy LeBlanc produced literature in order to fabricate and incorporate their own furnishings, to splash new designs on the walls, and to begin to push against interior walls, thus bringing strong tremors to the French and Canadian state establishments. Rather than continuing to guard the “edifice” that politicians Césaire and Léger described in the 1930s and 1940s, Glissant, Rupaire, and LeBlanc explicitly challenged biases on the colonial structure’s utility, disrupted notions of its stability, and countered conformity to its design.

### **Transnational Connections**

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<sup>3</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 40.

As World War II ended, Aimé Césaire and Rosan Girard led Martinique and Guadeloupe in acquiring departmentalization, an aim pursued by political leaders on each island as early as 1869 (Guadeloupe) and 1874 (Martinique).<sup>4</sup> The political machine in France moved slowly as the country recovered from war, and while the French government passed legislation for departmentalization in 1946, it did not become fully implemented on the islands until 1948.<sup>5</sup> Césaire and Girard viewed departmentalization as a way to deflect calls for decolonization while enabling the islands' populations to elect their own representatives to serve in the French Parliament in Paris. Serving as representatives of their fellow "tenants of empire" in contract negotiations, Césaire and Girard hoped to acquire the same political and economic "prospects" they perceived to exist among other departments in France, but they quickly lost hope in the French government's promises for greater economic stability in the islands and for increased political authority in the French government system.<sup>6</sup> Through the 1950s, youth and labour movements voiced their opposition to departmentalization and by the 1960s cultural movements centred on preserving heritage and folklore coincided with growing economic and political frustrations with France.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dumont, *L'amère patrie*, 70.

<sup>5</sup> Couti, *Sex, Sea, and Self*, 47–48; Dumont, *L'amère patrie*, 159.

<sup>6</sup> Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 46, 57–58.

<sup>7</sup> Childers, 118; James Millette, "Decolonization, Populist Movements and the Formation of New Nations, 1945-70," in *General History of the Caribbean: The Caribbean in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Bridget Brereton, vol. V (Paris: Unesco Publishing, 2004), 222.

In Martinique and Guadeloupe, people's economic and labour struggles led to a rising desire for political autonomy, and triggered protests and strikes that had violent outcomes. In December 1959, riots triggered through an altercation between a Martinican on a scooter and a driver from the metropole broke out in Martinique, and resulted in the deaths of three young men.<sup>8</sup> In March 1961, at least three more individuals died during a sugar workers' strike on the island in the community of Lamentin.<sup>9</sup> In Guadeloupe, tensions over economy and politics led to a workers' strike and riots in May 1967 that resulted in violent repression by French officials. These workers' protests went hand-in-hand with resistance movements led by students and teachers in the 1960s. In Martinique, the Organisation de la jeunesse anti-colonialiste de la Martinique (OJAM) demanded their country's full "emancipation" from France.<sup>10</sup>

As these political and economic events occurred in Martinique and Guadeloupe, Acadians also participated more actively in political resistance, but with fewer violent incidents. Acadians faced growing generational division in the 1960s, as university

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<sup>8</sup> Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1939 à 1971*, vol. 3 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 180–82; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 147.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: de 1939 à 1971*, 3:205–6; Andrew M. Daily, "Race, Citizenship, and Antillean Student Activism in Postwar France, 1946-1968," *French Historical Studies* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 350.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Marc Party, "Il y a 55 ans, le procès des jeunes martiniquais de l'OJAM," *Franceinfo*, October 12, 2018, <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/martinique/il-y-55-ans-proces-jeunes-martiniquais-ojam-660157.html>; Millette, "Decolonization, Populist Movements and the Formation of New Nations, 1945-70," 222; Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Lettres créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature* (Paris: Hatier littérature, 1991), 130–31.

students in the city of Moncton, New Brunswick took a proactive approach to resist assimilation and to upend traditional Acadian nationalism rooted in the power and traditions of the Catholic church.<sup>11</sup> In 1966, emerging leaders in this neo-nationalist movement participated in a Ralliement de la jeunesse where they brought to the forefront frustrations over poverty and language rights. In 1968-69 Acadian students led demonstrations at the newly established Université de Moncton and in front of city and provincial government offices. They garnered national media attention in February 1968 when they denounced Moncton's city mayor by placing a pig's head on his doorstep after witnessing the condescension of the city council toward four student representatives.<sup>12</sup> The students claimed the enduring struggles of Acadians as a result of their society's history of being "defeated and colonized."<sup>13</sup> As social and political movements of political advocacy, and at times resistance, unfolded in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and New Brunswick, emerging authors wrote works depicting their societies as victims of colonial violence and capitalist exploitation, while also issuing militant calls for resistance and transformative change.

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<sup>11</sup> Catriona LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*" (Master's Thesis, Halifax, Dalhousie University, 1998), 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> Belliveau, *Le "Moment 68,"* 205–6; *Acadia Acadia!?!* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1971), [https://www.nfb.ca/film/acadia\\_acadia/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/acadia_acadia/).

<sup>13</sup> Denis Bourque, "Don l'Orignal et Les crasseux d'Antonine Maillet: victoire et échec du nationalisme acadien," *Francophonies d'Amérique*, no. 2 (1992): 50; See also LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 3–4; *Acadia Acadia!?!*

The political and social movements that transpired in the 1960s and 1970s in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and New Brunswick go in conjunction with movements for social justice and political equality that were happening on a global scale during this period. Specifically, in France, critical revolutionary events unfolded from the 1940s through the 1960s, with France's loss of the Indochina War (1946-1954) and of the Algerian War (1954-1962), as well as the crumbling of its political authority in much of Africa by 1960.<sup>14</sup> Among the Québécois and Acadians in the 1960s, there was a growing number of revolutionaries inspired by written works from Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, as they brought to the foreground atrocities committed by the French in the past through to the present. Strikingly, as evidenced through their expressions and actions, revolutionaries in the Antilles, Québec, and Acadie held complex views of France as a motherland and as a nation. Many of the Québécois and Acadian revolutionaries were proponents for establishing political ties with France in order to have backing in their search for autonomy from English Canada, yet they were inspired by revolutionary writings of authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe that indicted France for its colonial violence.

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<sup>14</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 43–54, 57; Eric T. Jennings, *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3, 253; Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference: Historical Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 114–18.

This irony is most visibly pronounced in considering Charles de Gaulle's visits to Martinique and Guadeloupe (1956, 1960, and 1964) and to Québec (1967). After becoming president in 1958, De Gaulle became the first French president to ever visit Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1960, following the dissolution of French West Africa and the violent anti-colonial uprising that occurred on Martinique in 1959.<sup>15</sup> De Gaulle returned to the Caribbean in 1964, after France's defeats in "Indochina" (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) and Algeria. In appearing before a roaring crowd in Martinique, he called for people to continue to serve as loyal representatives of France in the Caribbean, and he boldly shouted, "Mon Dieu, que vous êtes Français! [My God, you are French!]" to a cheering crowd.<sup>16</sup> Three years later De Gaulle arrived in Québec during the celebration of one hundred years of Canadian Confederation. He witnessed a huge, cheering audience waving Québécois flags, and he described the event as having "an atmosphere similar to that of the Liberation" coming out of World War

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<sup>15</sup> Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 145–48.

<sup>16</sup> Raymond Barrillon, "Le général de Gaulle souligne que la politique française en Afrique ne peut s'appliquer aux Antilles," *Le Monde*, March 24, 1964, [https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1964/03/24/le-general-de-gaulle-souligne-que-la-politique-francaise-en-afrique-ne-peut-s-appliquer-aux-antilles\\_2121319\\_1819218.html#:~:text=Il%20dit%20%3A%20%22%20Mon%20Dieu%2C,ce%20qu'on%20lui%20dit.](https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1964/03/24/le-general-de-gaulle-souligne-que-la-politique-francaise-en-afrique-ne-peut-s-appliquer-aux-antilles_2121319_1819218.html#:~:text=Il%20dit%20%3A%20%22%20Mon%20Dieu%2C,ce%20qu'on%20lui%20dit.;); Paulin Bruné, *Mon Dieu, que vous êtes Français... Essai sur la décolonisation par assimilation: Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Réunion* (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1996), 15; "De Gaulle en Martinique: une folie populaire," *La Martinique de A à Z*, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://azmartinique.com/fr/tout-savoir/faits-historiques/de-gaulle-en-martinique-une-folie-populaire#:~:text=Charles%20de%20Gaulle%20est%20le,23%20et%2024%20mars%201964.>

II.”<sup>17</sup> When he took the stage in front of an audience in Montréal, he shouted to them, “Vive le Québec libre! [Long live the free Québec!].” This event added fuel to the Québécois separatist fire that was already smoldering through literature written and promoted by intellectuals including Pierre Vallières, Gaston Miron, and Parisian editor François Maspero.<sup>18</sup>

These events in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Québec bring to the surface how France had to respond to political resistance movements in Franco-American regions that were each influenced by French Caribbean authors. On the one hand, De Gaulle venerates French national unification as he stands in opposition to these authors’ anti-colonial messages, while on the other hand, he is a proponent of a Québécois liberation movement that is in fact inspired by the works of authors such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, whose criticisms against French colonialism De Gaulle opposed.<sup>19</sup> Through various connecting factors of education, language, and intellectualism, the ripple effect of the French Caribbean and Québécois social and political movements impacted

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<sup>17</sup> Vincent Maisonneuve, “Le ‘Vive le Québec libre’ du général de Gaulle a 50 ans,” *Radio-Canada*, July 7, 2017, <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1046287/vive-quebec-libre-general-charles-de-gaulle-50-ans>; Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 65.

<sup>18</sup> Mills, *The Empire Within*, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Annabelle Auberton, “Archives d’Outre-mer: retour sur les visites du général de Gaulle,” Le portail des Outre-mer, November 8, 2020, <https://la1ere.francetvinfo.fr/archives-d-outre-mer-retour-sur-les-visites-du-general-de-gaulle-889304.html>; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism’s Embrace*, 73; Mills, *The Empire Within*, 65.

Acadie as well, and in the 1960s and 1970s emerging Acadian authors wrestled with determining their desired relationship with the nation-states of France and Canada.

In the early 1960s, the Québécois Quiet Revolution brought louder calls for language rights and greater political autonomy for the province, and souverainistes advocating for Québec's separation from Canada became more vocal. In his study *Fear of a Black Nation*, David Austin declares that "Whatever the route, the road to Quebec national consciousness passed in part, via Martinique, or at least through two of its prodigious children," meaning Césaire and Fanon.<sup>20</sup> Québécois cultural and political periodicals including *Liberté* and *Parti Pris* featured copies of writings by Césaire, Fanon, and Glissant, or articles reporting on or analyzing these individuals. According to Lise Gauvin, Fanon's writings on assimilation and on the formation of a "literature of combat" were critical in the advent and development of *Parti Pris* in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> In 1961 in *Liberté*, Québécois author Yves Préfontaine describes "the great black brother Aimé Césaire" who is "perhaps the greatest poet of French expression since the war." Préfontaine provides an excerpt from Césaire's famous letter to Maurice Thorez where Césaire explains his reasons for leaving the French Communist Party to form the Parti

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<sup>20</sup> David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013), 55; See also Ching Selao, "Les fils d'Aimé Césaire. De la Martinique au Québec," *Tangence* 98 (2012): 37.

<sup>21</sup> Lise Gauvin, "*Parti pris*" *littéraire* (Montréal: Les presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2013), 10, 149–50.

progressiste martiniquais, and where he discusses problems of “provincialism,” as well as dangers of “universalism.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1963, an issue of *Liberté* features articles addressing critical events unfolding in various French regions of the world. Editor Jean-Guy Pilon explains how this edition promotes authors with “names so prestigious as those of Aimé Césaire, Olympe Bheley-Quenum and Charles-Henri Favrod.”<sup>23</sup> Pilon provides his reading audience with Césaire’s speech given at the Premier congrès des écrivains noirs in 1956 in Paris entitled “Culture et colonisation,” where Césaire underscores how the Congress brought together a diversity of people from around the world by a “common denominator” that is “the colonial situation.”<sup>24</sup> Pilon’s publication of Césaire’s speech reveals how Québécois intellectuals appropriated messages expressed by writers from the French Caribbean, as they identified with the language and implications of being colonized.<sup>25</sup> A month later, *Liberté* published an article by poet and activist Paul Chamberland entitled “L’intellectuel québécois, intellectuel colonisé” where he incorporates several quotations from Fanon’s *Les damnés de la terre* in arguing how the Québécois are “culturally colonized” while also being marginalized when it comes to economy and politics.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Yves Préfontaine, “Engagement vs enracinement,” *Liberté* 3, no. 5 (November 1961): 721.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Guy Pilon, “Une aussi longue absence,” *Liberté* 5, no. 1 (January-February 1963): 2. Bheley-Quenum was a Beninese author and Favrod worked as journalist in Indochina and Algeria.

<sup>24</sup> Pilon, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Culture et colonisation,” *Liberté* 5, no. 1 (January-February 1963): 15.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Chamberland, “L’intellectuel québécois, intellectuel colonisé,” *Liberté* 5, no. 2 (March-April 1963): 125.

*Liberté* not only brings connection between French Antillean and Québécois intellectuals, but it also serves as a coupler connecting with Acadian literature. In 1969, the same year that New Brunswick's Acadian premier Louis Robicaud passed the *Official Languages Act* to include French as an official language in the province of New Brunswick, Pilon published an edition that brought to the foreground young scholars and writers in the Acadian community. These writers likewise shared messages focused on struggles of discrimination, as well as calls for cultural preservation and political autonomy. In his Introduction, Pilon explains how the edition is devoted to featuring Acadian articles and poems in order to "give a voice to poets, artists, young people who raise their heads and fill their lungs, alongside professors and sociologists."<sup>27</sup> Pilon expresses aims to reveal a new understanding of Acadian society by featuring Acadian literature by emerging, yet largely unknown, authors of the period including Antonine Maillet, Herménégilde Chiasson, and Raymond Guy LeBlanc.<sup>28</sup> Through the connections of Léonard Forest, an Acadian filmmaker working in Montréal, Pilon recounts traveling to visit the Acadian region where he engaged with a variety of individuals and witnessed an unawareness among the population at large of the talent of young Acadian authors.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Guy Pilon, "Acadie 1969," *Liberté* 11, no. 5 (August-October 1969): 8.

<sup>28</sup> Pilon, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Pilon, 9.

He poses the prescient question to his readers of whether they are perhaps “witnessing the birth of another French-language literature in North America.”<sup>30</sup>

The development of this literature among Acadians happened during a period of significant change for students. The Francophone Université de Moncton, which had opened its doors in 1963, welcomed Sociology professors from France and Québec in 1966, including Québécois Jean-Paul Hauteceur, who received his education at the Sorbonne. French theorists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, who were connected with French Caribbean authors including Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant, published works that influenced these professors. While teaching in Moncton, visiting professors drew attention to the existing social and economic inequalities they witnessed among Acadians, and some encouraged students to take an active stand to defend their rights.<sup>31</sup> In an interview with Adeline Vasquez-Para, former French Sociology professor Alain Even recounts his experiences teaching in Moncton. He reflects on his Marxist influence, and recounts how with his studies and his teaching, he “was more seduced by

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<sup>30</sup> Pilon, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Adeline Vasquez-Parra, “‘68 et nous’: une entrevue avec le sociologue Alain Even,” *HistoireEngagée.ca* (blog), April 17, 2012, <https://histoireengagee.ca/lactualite-en-debat-68-et-nous-une-entrevue-avec-le-sociologue-alain-even/>; Jean-Paul Hauteceur, *L’Acadie du discours* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1975), 17; Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude*, 17–18; Aliocha Wald Lasowski, *Édouard Glissant, penseur des archipels* (Paris: Pocket, 2015), 437; Emmanuelle Loyer, *Lévi-Strauss: A Biography*, trans. Ninon Vinsonneau and Jonathan Magidoff (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 318–19, 388; Marie-Noëlle Recoque Desfontaines, *Sony Rupaire dans son temps. De l’éveil à l’exil, 1940-1969* (Fonds de dotation de la Guadeloupe, 2018), 117.

Frantz Fanon, [and] the idea of colonization-domination.”<sup>32</sup> He observes that while he did not agree with certain actions taken by some of the Moncton student protestors from 1968-69, “the revolt that the students expressed I encouraged, I found it worthy, normal” in light of the economic disparity he witnessed among Acadians.<sup>33</sup>

During this period of literary, theoretical, and educational overlap between France, the French Caribbean, Québec, and Acadie, Québécois author Gaston Miron deserves particular attention. Miron lived in Paris in 1959-1961, where he witnessed French intellectual elites, including Jean-Paul Sartre and André Breton, bringing accusations against France of unjust torture and violence in Algeria.<sup>34</sup> In Paris, through connections with French poet Henri Pichette, Miron formed relationships with French communists, intellectuals, and philosophers whose works were featured in the periodical *Esprit*.<sup>35</sup> Through engaging with the left-leaning Parisian intellectual community of the period, Miron developed what became a long-lasting friendship with Martinican author Édouard Glissant.<sup>36</sup> When they met, Glissant participated as a founder and a leader of the

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<sup>32</sup> Vasquez-Parra, “‘68 et nous’: une entrevue avec le sociologue Alain Even.” “Au-delà de cela, autour du Marxisme, j’étais plus séduit par Frantz Fanon, l’idée de la colonization-domination que j’ai longuement citée dans ma these.”

<sup>33</sup> Vasquez-Parra. “Exprimer de la révolte a du sens, la révolte que les étudiants exprimaient moi je les encourageais, je la trouvais digne, normale, je n’étais simplement pas d’accord sur les formes qu’elle prenait.”

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Nepveu, *Gaston Miron: La vie d’un homme* (Montréal: Les Éditions de Boréal, 2011), 333.

<sup>35</sup> Nepveu, 142, 315, 335.

<sup>36</sup> Raphaël Lauro, “Le plus québécois des Antillais: Présences d’Édouard Glissant au Québec et en d’autres lieux du Canada,” Fonds de recherche du Québec, 2021-22, <https://frq.gouv.qc.ca/projet/le-plus-quebecois-des-antillais-presences-dedouard-glissant-au-quebec-et-en-dautres-lieux-du-canada/>.

separatist party Front antillo-guyanais pour l'autonomie (FAGA) that desired decolonization for the French Antilles and Guyana, in order to gain economic and political freedom for those regions, as well as to counter French cultural assimilation.<sup>37</sup>

After returning to the other side of the Atlantic, Miron engaged in social circles that included his friendship with Pierre Perrault, a Québécois who directed the film *L'Acadie, l'Acadie* (1971) and who also wrote a preface for *L'Acadie du discours* (1975) by fellow Québécois professor and sociologist Jean-Paul Hautecoeur who taught at the Université de Moncton.<sup>38</sup> The film documented the socialist movement of Acadian students in Moncton as they raised issues of equal rights and made statements of being “colonized,” and Hautecoeur puts to academic press through the Université Laval the argument of Acadians being colonized. Hautecoeur contends that for Acadians, “to call oneself ‘colonized’ is perhaps less to identify with the neighbor from Québec or the unknown Algerian than to identify with the ancestor of earlier times, born to live on the conquered land, but driven out by the invader and since that time humiliated, refused, degraded.”<sup>39</sup> Perrault’s preface to the book is addressed to those in power outside of the

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<sup>37</sup> Nepveu, *Gaston Miron*, 335; Nick Nesbitt, “Early Glissant: From the Destitution of the Political to Antillean Ultra-Leftism,” *Callaloo* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 934; *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l’heure de la décolonisation: Congrès des 22 et 23 avril 1961* (Paris: Éditions Louis Soutanges, 1961), 7.

<sup>38</sup> Nepveu, *Gaston Miron*, 274; Hautecoeur, *L’Acadie du discours*, ix–xxv.

<sup>39</sup> *Acadia Acadia!?!*; Hautecoeur, *L’Acadie du discours*, 238, 276, quote on 283. “Se dire ‘colonisé’, c’est moins peut-être s’identifier avec le voisin québécois ou l’Algérien inconnu que s’identifier avec l’ancêtre des premiers temps, né pour vivre sur la terre conquise, mais chassé par l’envahisseur et depuis ce temps humilié, refusé, dégradé.”

Francophone population to whom he declares that “I will therefore try to describe you as I perceive you, that is to say as a colonizer of my colonized consciousness”.<sup>40</sup> Through Gaston Miron’s amity with Glissant in Paris and his rapport with Perrault in Québec, as well as his literary influence on Raymond Guy LeBlanc that will be expounded on later in this chapter, he stands as a representative figure of the interrelations of intellectuals who were bringing to the foreground enduring atrocities of colonialism occurring among Franco-American societies in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the need for active political participation via resistance movements.

A 1973 issue of Édouard Glissant’s journal *Acoma* opens with an article by Miron entitled “Recours didactique,” where he describes the advent of his identification as the “colonized” and underscores the critical nature of language in culture, society, and politics. Miron recounts how in the mid-1950s, he first heard the words “colonized conscience” used in describing emerging Québécois poetry of the period. He remembers that “At that time, this word scandalized me, but it did not cease to obsess me thereafter. I began to look around me, and within me, with other eyes”.<sup>41</sup> Miron recounts an awakening as he recognized his “condition” as one who is colonized, and he writes how

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<sup>40</sup> Hauteceur, *L’Acadie du discours*, ix. “Je chercherai donc à vous décrire tel que je vous perçois, c’est-à-dire en tant que colonisateur de ma conscience de colonisé”.

<sup>41</sup> Gaston Miron, “Recours didactique,” *Acoma*, no. 4/5 (April 1973): 9. “À cette époque, ce mot me scandalisa, mais il ne cessa de m’obséder par la suite. Je me mis à regarder autour de moi, et en moi, avec d’autres yeux”.

he felt a sense of “humiliation,” as well as an awareness of there being “an injustice.”<sup>42</sup>

Miron underscores the importance of language as it constitutes “a man’s total presence in the world” that if “altered” or “mutilated” takes away any possibility of “compromise.”<sup>43</sup>

He surmises that “Man, here, denatured, that is to say cut off from his ecological links of rights, deculturated, that is to say alienated from his culture, is in a colonial situation: his dehumanization. The state of a language reflects all the social problems.”<sup>44</sup> For Miron, consequences of colonialism included assimilation and acculturation that threatened to annihilate the language core to Québécois culture and identity.

After identifying as the “colonized” and articulating his passion for preserving Québécois language and culture, Miron emphasizes the importance of intellectuals being political participants. He states that cultural and educational “reforms” would be futile in “restoring man to himself,” and that “only politics can return him completely to his homogeneity...[and] can guarantee the cultural integrity of the nation.”<sup>45</sup> A self-proclaimed “militant,” Miron reflects on how after returning from France, he came to desire “independence not only in terms of ontology and language, but also in terms of

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<sup>42</sup> Miron, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Miron, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Miron, 11–12. “L’homme, ici, dénaturé, c’est-à-dire coupé de ses liens écologiques de droit, déculturé, c’est-à-dire aliéné à sa culture, se trouve dans une situation coloniale: sa déshumanisation. L’état d’une langue reflète tous les problèmes sociaux.”

<sup>45</sup> Miron, 12. “Les réformes, en éducation et dans d’autres domaines, ne peuvent à elles seules restituer cet homme à lui-même, seul le politique peut le rendre complètement à son homogénéité, base d’échanges de cultures. Seul il peut garantir l’intégrité culturelle de la nation et la pratique de sa nécessité vers un plus-être.”

politics.”<sup>46</sup> He demands radicalism in countering the perpetuated “colonial problem” and he encourages anyone who “perceives himself more as a victim of the phenomenon and the system” to participate in acts of resistance.<sup>47</sup> He speaks as a member of the colonized collective in calling for “us, colonized writers” to participate in an “awakening [prise de conscience]” that amplifies “calls for a recovery [une reprise] and a future [un devenir].”<sup>48</sup> Miron concludes this article with an extract from a poem, where he draws attention to the faults of imposed remembrance that contribute to living in a conceived reality. He laments those who died unaware of the falsity of their notions of truth, and states that “but those who have seen, I see with their eyes,” alluding to the influence of anti-colonial authors, undoubtedly including those from the French Caribbean.<sup>49</sup>

This history reveals connectors between Martinique, Guadeloupe, Québec, and Acadie during the late 1950s and 1960s that developed through the written word. The social movements and literary developments in these regions were distinct, yet intertwined through press and literature that evolved in many ways as a result of French-Antillean colonial experiences, as well as each of these regions’ intimate relationships with France. In the 1960s and early 1970s, authors including Édouard Glissant, Sonny

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<sup>46</sup> Miron, 13. “je concevais maintenant l’indépendance non plus seulement sur les plans de l’ontologie et du langage, mais sur le plan politique.”

<sup>47</sup> Miron, 14. “se perçoit davantage comme une victime du phénomène et du système, et sa revendication est d’autant plus virulante.”

<sup>48</sup> Miron, 14. “Celui-là, de par sa prise de conscience, appelle une reprise et un devenir. Nous, écrivains colonisés, contribuons à cette prise de conscience.”

<sup>49</sup> Miron, 15. “mais ceux-là qui ont vu je vois par leurs yeux”.

Rupaire, and Raymond Guy LeBlanc participated alongside Miron as political activists who emphasized the necessity and value of identifying enduring consequences of colonialism, including subjugation and inequality. Miron's early acquaintance with Césaire's literature served as a foundational connector between Franco-American literary circles, yet the poetics and the political activism of Édouard Glissant are more clearly echoed in the poetry and actions of Rupaire and LeBlanc. In wrestling intellectually with the history and implications of land possession as a result of colonialism, and in acting out politically in desiring political autonomy for their "archipelago," each of these poets brought an awareness to Acadians and to Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent of their occupation of enduring colonial structures.

### **Crying Out and Acting Out: Édouard Glissant**

Coming out of Vichy rule and World War II, Glissant participated with other young, educated Martinicans in the formation of a socio-political group called "Franc Jeu." Together participants called for awakening and uprising in order to garner full rights of liberty and equality. In a speech Glissant prepared for a gathering in Lamentin, dated just a few months after the legislation of Martinique's departmentalization in 1946, he opens with the repetition of "*Stripped, vanquished*" featured in italics to identify as those who

are under the authority of what he terms as bourgeoisie.<sup>50</sup> After describing the condition of young Martinicans with words of violence and destruction, Glissant winds together language of poetry and war, and justifies acts of political resistance. He argues that, “poetry” is “our first weapon,” followed by “action” that “can only be fully pursued in the political domain” with the “regeneration of the Black race.” In identifying the necessary weaponry of poetics and politics, Glissant encourages the youth’s participation in the Martinican communist party that “offered sure food for a fixed doctrine called Marxism” while providing for the youth “an immense field of action.”<sup>51</sup> He closes his message with a call for the older generation to step aside to form “a hedge” around the youth that “rises, revolutionary and strong” in their pursuit of “justice and fraternity.”<sup>52</sup> This unpublished lecture, written a few months after Martinique became a French department, reveals that Glissant identified with the sufferings of Martinicans who he

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<sup>50</sup> Édouard Glissant, “Dépouillée, vaincue,” September 28, 1946, 93, *Premiers textes et documents annexes*, BnF Département des manuscrits. I am grateful that Mrs. Sylvie Glissant granted me permission to cite this text on December 22, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Glissant, 97. “Poésie donc, notre première arme [...]. Après la poésie, l’action. Celle-ci ne peut se poursuivre intégralement que dans la domaine politique. [...] Enfin, un troisième point sur lequel il nous faut insister est la régénérescence de la race noire.”

<sup>52</sup> Glissant, 101. “O vous, nos aînés, faites la haie des deux côtés du chemin, de ce chemin sur lequel vous n’avez pas pu vous engager, [...] Et saluez-nous comme nous vous saluons, et ce sera un véritable salut d’amis / La jeunesse monte, / révolutionnaire et forte, / et j’espère qu’elle trouvera auprès de vous la chaude sympathie et l’amour fraternel par quoi s’achèvent et se finissent, en une apothéose de joie, les œuvres de justice et de fraternité.”

demands to awaken from “the vegetal sleep of indifference and ignorance.”<sup>53</sup> He employs the language of revolution in the spheres of poetics and politics.

Glissant left Martinique to pursue further education in Paris in the 1950s, and he witnessed colonial unrest as France lost the war against Vietnam and as independence movements rose in Algeria and West Africa. In 1954, Glissant published a work of poetry entitled *La terre inquiète*, where he exposes the sufferings shared among French Caribbean people of African descent when it comes to death, silencing, and exploitation due to colonialism, while also drawing attention to self-restitution. As J. Michael Dash observes, “There is frequent reference in *La terre inquiète* to suffering a sacrifice as a precondition for knowledge.”<sup>54</sup> Dash further argues that the most striking imagery at the heart of the collection is Glissant’s description of a woman suckling a snake, as this image shows a physically and emotionally intimate form of violation and exploitation, just as imperialism and capitalism sucked Martinique’s capacity for reproduction and sustenance. Dash surmises that through this symbolism that also surfaces in the essay *Soleil de la conscience* (1956), Glissant provides an “ambiguous image of painful interdependence, of the necessity of suffering and the birth of consciousness.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, true knowledge of self and of one’s surrounding environment cannot be attained

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<sup>53</sup> Glissant, 95. “nous qui avons réveillé, dis-je, la conscience d’une ville endormie du sommeil végétal de l’indifférence et de l’ignorance”.

<sup>54</sup> J. Michael Dash, *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46.

<sup>55</sup> Dash, 44–45.

without identifying and reckoning with the most intimate experiences of trauma and grief.

In the poem “Promenoir de la mort seule [Walkway of Lonely Death],” Glissant wrestles with the history of African enslavement, the struggles of French Caribbean departmentalization, and “his own alienating otherness in Paris.”<sup>56</sup> He employs language of sadness, darkness, and turmoil, with frequent repetition of the word “cry [cri]” that gives implications of hoping to “break this shroud of silence that apparently envelops the islands”.<sup>57</sup> Glissant describes the cry of the earth longing for love and for rain, and the cry of an infertile woman, but in the midst of these cries the “people were asleep.” Despite these cries for life, “Death quickens death” and while the feminine figure of Death experiences sadness, she remains stagnant “On her lake of hatreds, strewn/Of pale dead in the thickets.”<sup>58</sup> This poem provides powerful imagery representing the lifelessness and the obscurity of descendants of enslaved Africans in the French Antilles, as while longing to cry out, they often are left unheard. Glissant’s repetition of crying out reflects a theme present in Césaire’s works, but is not “the triumphant cry of the Césairian negritude” and

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<sup>56</sup> Dash, 45.

<sup>57</sup> C. Lécrivain and Mora, L., “Approche de géométrie poétique: les premiers recueils d’Édouard Glissant,” *Horizons d’Édouard Glissant*, 1992, 119. “Il témoigne d’un ‘dire’ émotionnel ou pulsionnel qui va rompre ce lindeuil de silence qui apparemment enveloppe les îles”.

<sup>58</sup> Édouard Glissant, “La terre inquiète (1954),” in *Poèmes complets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 89–90. “La mort vivifie la mort / [...] / Sur son lac de haines, jonchée / De morts pâlis dans les halliers”.

is instead “a stifled cry ... in search of bursting.”<sup>59</sup> As will be explored further, this “stifled cry,” particularly of the land, is present in LeBlanc’s *Cri de terre*.<sup>60</sup>

In his critique of Glissant’s early poetry, J. Michael Dash argues that atrocities of suffering and silencing prove “vital to the victim’s ‘prise de conscience’” and that “a new dawn emerges as the poet identifies closely with the violated land.”<sup>61</sup> This identification with the land is critical to French Caribbean literature, and while Glissant alludes to the intimacy of Antillean societies with their land, he also conveys the ongoing elusive nature of what “land [terre]” means to those of African descent given their complex relationship to the islands and to France as a result of enslavement, colonialism, and departmentalization. Dash determines that in this collection of poems, “‘terre’ has multiple associations of earth, native land, motherland, and language itself.” In his essay *Soleil de la conscience* and in his poem *Les Indes* (1956), Glissant further analyzes this complexity of the relationship to land for those of African descent in the French Antilles, particularly with issues of possession and conquering.

In *Soleil de la conscience*, Glissant writes how “I love these fields, their order, their patience; however they are not part of me. Never having had control over my land, I

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<sup>59</sup> Selao, “Les fils d’Aimé Césaire,” 54.

<sup>60</sup> Selao, 48, 54; Glissant, “La terre inquiète (1954),” 90.

<sup>61</sup> Dash, *Edouard Glissant*, 46.

do not experience this reflex of managing the land, of organization.”<sup>62</sup> Glissant implies that no matter how deeply tied he feels to the landscape, sole possession, as it has been defined by “a culture that jealously guards private property and treasures individualism” is not attainable.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, in *Les Indes* (1956), described by Gaëton Picon as being revolutionary and Marxist in nature, Glissant upends ideologies of colonial progress with a focus on rupture, while underscoring the conquering of land.<sup>64</sup> Mildred Mortimer argues how in providing a mythical account of the post-Columbian history of discovery and trade of the enslaved, *Les Indes* reveals how Glissant “seeks to shape a future in a land marked by violent conquest.”<sup>65</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, Glissant confronts the tragedies of colonial conquest that caused violent exploitation of the land, and also resulted in his people’s unsatisfied yearning to possess the land they occupy. Glissant’s literary message of the barbarity of conquest and the void in land possession is echoed through his political activism.

Glissant desired Martinique’s political autonomy from France and he joined with Albert Béville in the 1950s to form an organization called the Front antillo-guyanais pour

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<sup>62</sup> Dash, 31. “J’aime ces champs, leur ordre, leur patience; cependant je n’en participe pas. N’ayant jamais disposé de ma terre, je n’ai point cet atavisme d’épargne du sol, d’organisation.”

<sup>63</sup> Dash, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Gaëton Picon, *Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 243.

<sup>65</sup> Mildred Mortimer, “Conquest and Resistance in Edouard Glissant’s Poetry,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 68, 71.

l'autonomie (FAGA).<sup>66</sup> The FAGA held a political congress in Paris in April 1961 that over 600 French Antilleans and Guyanese attended, as well as delegations from Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, Sénégal, and Haute Volta (now part of Burkina Faso).<sup>67</sup> Out of suspicion of Glissant's potential involvement in political revolution, the French government did not permit Glissant to leave France from 1959-1965, and passed a decree in July 1961 that forced the FAGA to disband following the congress.<sup>68</sup> In a publication that featured speeches and discourses that unfolded at the gathering, comments from Glissant clearly underscore his opposition to departmentalization and his desire for Martinican independence, while also providing clues to his ambitions being less centred on building a conventional nation-state in Martinique.<sup>69</sup>

In a published speech, Glissant declares that FAGA's aims are not for causing physical violence in order to separate from France, but he implies that a peaceful outcome depends on France itself: "As for our relations with France and the French people, we have constantly repeated that the autonomy of the Antilles can in no way be considered as an act of hostility toward the French people." He continues:

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<sup>66</sup> Chris Bongie, "Resisting Memories: Édouard Glissant and the Medusa of History," in *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 140; Celia Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation*, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory*, 2 fn 1; Marcel Manville, "Chronique de la répression," *Esprit* 305, no. 4 (April 1962): 555.

<sup>69</sup> Selao, "Les fils d'Aimé Césaire," 54.

Two or three years ago, when the supporters of autonomy said, ‘We must fight for autonomy,’ many people, well-intentioned or not, replied, ‘You’re crazy, the people are not prepared for that, it’s suicide. Now we have seen how the idea of autonomy has progressed at a dizzying pace in the West Indies, so much so that we must now be careful not to lag behind the aspirations of our people.’<sup>70</sup>

Glissant does not apply conventional nationalist rhetoric, but he articulates the need for Martinicans to “lead the struggle not only so that we run our own affairs, but so that, at the preliminary level which is ours today, we get into the habit of thinking through our problems ourselves.”<sup>71</sup> Glissant’s participation in leading the FAGA alongside political activists including Albert Béville and Marcel Manville demonstrate his call for action and for separatism from France in response to enduring economic, social, racial, and political struggles rooted in Martinique’s colonial past.

Glissant’s literature and his political action in some ways followed in Césaire’s footsteps, yet in other ways made it evident that aspects of Césaire’s literature often stood in contrast to his political pursuits on behalf of Martinican society. While Césaire continued to keep Martinique bound to France in terms of politics, economy, and culture, Glissant diverged from his former mentor in calling for Antillean and Guyanese political

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<sup>70</sup> *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l’heure de la décolonisation*, 74–75. “Quant à nos relations avec la France et le peuple français, nous n’avons cessé de répéter que l’autonomie des Antilles ne peut en aucun cas être considérée comme un acte d’hostilité vis-à-vis du peuple français. [...] Il y a deux ou trois ans, quand les partisans de l’autonomie disaient: ‘Il faut se battre pour l’autonomie’, beaucoup de gens bien ou mal intentionnés répondaient: ‘Vous êtes fous, le peuple n’est pas préparé à cela, c’est un suicide.’ Or, nous avons vu comment l’idée d’autonomie a progressé à une allure vertigineuse aux Antilles, à tel point qu’il nous faut maintenant prendre garde à n’être pas en retard sur les aspirations de nos peuples.”

<sup>71</sup> *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l’heure de la décolonisation*, 74. “nous devons mener la lutte non seulement pour que nous dirigions nos affaires nous-mêmes, mais pour que, au niveau préalable qui est le nôtre aujourd’hui, nous prenions l’habitude de penser nos problèmes nous-mêmes.”

and economic autonomy. Facets of Glissant's political activism, as well as the conquest and land motifs of his literature in the 1950s, are emulated in the actions and the writings of Guadeloupean poet Sony Rupaire and Acadian poet Raymond Guy LeBlanc.

### **“Prise de conscience”: Sony Rupaire and Raymond Guy LeBlanc**

Rupaire's *Cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale* (1971) and LeBlanc's *Cri de terre* (1972) reflected the tensions of the 1960s and contributed to the political discourse of the 1970s. Like Glissant, in their poetry these authors wrestle with “the politics and the poetics of possessiveness, domination, and conquest.”<sup>72</sup> They emphasize experiences of victimization as a result of colonialism and its enduring legacies, while bringing to the surface the need for political resistance, but with more active and practical implications than their predecessors such as Césaire and Léger. As young intellectuals, Rupaire and LeBlanc were influenced by Marxist ideologies, and they each experienced living overseas in the 1960s, Rupaire in Algeria, 1962-1967, and LeBlanc in France, 1968-69. In Guadeloupe and Acadie, they acted on behalf of workers' associations and participated in political resistance movements that unfolded in the late 1960s and the 1970s.<sup>73</sup> They

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<sup>72</sup> Dash, *Edouard Glissant*, 39.

<sup>73</sup> Raymond Guy LeBlanc, “La question nationale chez Karl Marx” (Master's Thesis, Moncton, Université de Moncton, 1973); Patrick Leech, “Raymond Guy LeBlanc,” in *New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia* (Fredericton: St. Thomas University, 2015), [http://stu-sites.ca/nble/l/leblanc\\_raymond\\_guy.html](http://stu-sites.ca/nble/l/leblanc_raymond_guy.html); Ronald Selbonne, “Sonny Rupaire,” in *Île-en-île* (New York: CUNY Graduate Center, 2017), <http://ile-en-ile.org/rupaire/>.

have each been described as writers of “militant” poetry, and the titles of their works refer to a land that is “broken” or is “crying out.”<sup>74</sup> Through their poetry, Rupaire and LeBlanc reveal a desire for healing to be found via political sovereignty within geographic boundaries defined by and for their people.

Born in Guadeloupe in 1940, Rupaire received much of his education at the Lycée Carnot in Point-à-Pitre that had been founded in the late nineteenth century by the mixed-race bourgeois, Alexandre Isaac.<sup>75</sup> One of the most influential people in Rupaire’s education was philosophy professor Yves Leborgne, a Guadeloupean who studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and then returned to teach in Guadeloupe after participating in the Association générale des étudiants guadeloupéens (AGEG). This organization formed in Paris in the 1950s with intentions of uniting Guadeloupeans to participate in anti-assimilationist and anti-colonialist activities.<sup>76</sup> In an interview, Rupaire remembers how when Leborgne returned to Guadeloupe to teach, he brought back influential books to

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<sup>74</sup> Georges-Henri Léotin, “A Summary Overview of Antillean Literature in Creole: Martinique and Guadeloupe (1960-1980),” trans. Suzanne Houyoux, *Callaloo* 15, no. 1 (1992): 193; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 7.

<sup>75</sup> Recoque Desfontaines, *Sony Rupaire dans son temps*, 32, 40–41.

<sup>76</sup> Georges Rupaire, “De mon frère, le poète...,” in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d’une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jasor, 2013), 52; Frantz Succab, “Moi, Sonny, fils inquiet d’une igname brisée,” in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d’une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jasor, 2013), 46; Recoque Desfontaines, *Sony Rupaire dans son temps*, 128.

share with students on Marxism and Marxist theory, as well as publications of *Présence Africaine* that included poetry by Césaire and Léopold Senghor.<sup>77</sup>

As France's war with Algeria intensified in the late 1950s, French government officials in Guadeloupe ordered Leborgne to return to France based on the 1960 October Ordonnance that resulted in several anti-colonialists being exiled from the islands. Leborgne returned to Paris, where he became actively involved with Glissant and other leaders of the FAGA.<sup>78</sup> Back in Guadeloupe, Rupaire received a summons to fight in Algeria. He testifies to having contact with members of the AGEG and the FAGA who opposed the war, and who impacted his decision to refuse serving for France.<sup>79</sup> In January 1962, Rupaire left for Algeria, where he followed in Frantz Fanon's footsteps by fighting for the Armée de libération nationale (ALN) that was a branch of the Front de libération nationale (FLN). At the end of the war, Rupaire stayed in Algeria to work as a teacher as the country struggled to recover from devastation.<sup>80</sup>

Rupaire kept contact with people in Guadeloupe and after learning of violent French repression on the island during a 1967 workers' uprising, Rupaire returned to the

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<sup>77</sup> Ronald Selbonne, ed., "Interview de 1986 par Fred Hermantin (Sonny Rupaire)," in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d'une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup* (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jator, 2013), 419.

<sup>78</sup> Succab, "Sonny Rupaire," 46; Selbonne, "Interview de 1986 par Fred Hermantin (Sonny Rupaire)," 423.

<sup>79</sup> Selbonne, "Interview de 1986 par Fred Hermantin (Sonny Rupaire)," 424; Recoque Desfontaines, *Sony Rupaire dans son temps*, 117.

<sup>80</sup> Succab, "Sonny Rupaire," 46; Pierre Reinette, "Notre épisode algérien," in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d'une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jator, 2013), 98; Recoque Desfontaines, *Sony Rupaire dans son temps*, 117, 129, 130.

Caribbean in 1969 via Cuba, and he went on to lived clandestinely in Guadeloupe until gaining amnesty from the French government in 1971.<sup>81</sup> During the late 1960s, publications by Rupaire reveal his desire for active resistance to enduring remnants of colonial rule. Raphaël Confiant observes how rather than celebrating France and the French language as Césaire often tended to do, Rupaire “raised high the flag of Creole culture and language” as he “produced for the first time an engaged and revolutionary poetry.”<sup>82</sup> Rupaire is remembered for being an “unconditional and exclusive defender of Creole” through his poems, and in 1971 he participated in forming a workers’ union called the Union des travailleurs agricoles de Guadeloupe.<sup>83</sup>

A few years prior to Rupaire’s return to the island from Algeria, his political desires for the island surfaced in an article published by the Comité populaire et national de la jeunesse guadeloupéenne (CPNJG) in 1966. Rupaire’s opening line boldly declares that “This message does not want peace, it claims to be a fight.”<sup>84</sup> Rupaire proceeds to explain how Guadeloupeans are a people that struggle daily due to oppression, and he underscores his peoples’ victimization while calling them to resistance, and even to “revolution.” Concerning the oppressed in Guadeloupe, he writes that, “It is he who is the

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<sup>81</sup> Selbonne, “Sonny Rupaire”; Chamoiseau and Confiant, *Lettres créoles*, 131.

<sup>82</sup> Confiant, *Aimé Césaire*, 122.

<sup>83</sup> Roger Valy-Plaisant, “Sonny Rupaire, où la fierté d’être Guadeloupéen,” in *L’héritage de Caliban*, ed. Maryse Condé (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jator, 1992), 13–14, quotation on 13; Selbonne, “Sonny Rupaire.”

<sup>84</sup> Rupaire, “Message à la jeunesse guadeloupéenne in Bulletin no. 4 du Comité populaire et national de la jeunesse guadeloupéenne (CPNJG),” 103. “Ce message ne veut pas de paix, il se réclame de combat.”

primary victim of all the injustices, of all the repressions” and he challenges young people to no longer be “victims” of “greed” and “demagoguery,” but instead to be revolutionaries, realizing that there is “no Messiah” to save them. Rupaire possessively states that “our COUNTRY cannot be freed unless it is by ourselves”.<sup>85</sup> He declares that “the Revolution is not only a matter of theoretical texts but also and above all the practice of these texts. Writing beautiful generalities on Imperialism and Colonialism brings no commitment as long as these words, these positions are not concretized in facts and in daily behavior.”<sup>86</sup> Rather than venerating theoretical discourses and the acceptance of enduring colonial circumstances, Rupaire’s witnessing of the war in Algeria results in his call for action among fellow Guadeloupeans.

In 1968 Rupaire published another article entitled “Guadeloupe: génocide culturel et colonialisme,” where he critiques colonial atrocities that cause the erasure of societies. In addressing problems of the colonial past, Rupaire describes how Indigenous communities on the island “were decimated by Spanish and French mercenaries with the blessing of the missionaries who always accompanied such expeditions.”<sup>87</sup> He recounts

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<sup>85</sup> Rupaire, 103–5. “C’est lui qui est la victime première de toutes les injustices, de toutes les repressions” / “notre PATRIE ne pourra être libérée que par nous-mêmes”.

<sup>86</sup> Rupaire, 104. “Et quand je signalais plus haut que la Révolution n’est pas seulement affaire de textes théoriques mais aussi et surtout pratique de ces textes, c’était en fonction d’une situation donnée. Écrire de belles généralités sur l’Impérialisme et Colonialisme n’engage à rien tant que ces mots, ces prises de positions ne sont pas concrétisés dans les faits et dans le comportement quotidien.”

<sup>87</sup> Sonny Rupaire, “Guadeloupe: génocide culturel et colonialisme,” in *Sonny Rupaire, fils inquiet d’une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jator, 2013),

how “masters” and “ship-owners” held a shared interest that resulted in the trade of enslaved Africans becoming an “enterprise” that functioned in a “legal and systematic manner,” with horrendous death tolls.<sup>88</sup> Rupaire accuses the Catholic church of “justifying exploitation” and of bringing Guadeloupeans of African descent a sense of “inferiority” through “violating a conscience.” Rupaire states that the actions of the church were “more disturbing than that of the armed mercenaries,” and he condemns church leaders that “ask the people to accept this misery, this exploitation because it will lead them to the kingdom of God.”<sup>89</sup> He argues that after abolition the labouring class “[fell] into an even more inhumane slavery,” and he criticizes French capitalism with its favours granted to the bourgeoisie of Guadeloupean society that masked realities of exploitation.<sup>90</sup>

In this article, Rupaire brings to the forefront the issue of language rights for Guadeloupeans. He describes the development of Creole and argues of its importance for his people as “it is still the only means used by the oppressed masses of the French colonies to express their thoughts.”<sup>91</sup> Rupaire underscores how suppression of Creole and control of the press are critical methods France and its “capitalist monopolies” employ to

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437. “Les Caraïbes, premiers habitants de l’île, furent décimés par les mercenaires espagnols et français avec la bénédiction des missionnaires qui accompagnaient toujours ce type d’expédition.”

<sup>88</sup> Rupaire, 437.

<sup>89</sup> Rupaire, 438, 444. “plus dérangeante que celle des mercenaires armés”; “Elles demandent au peuple d’accepter cette misère, cette exploitation car elles les conduiront au royaume de Dieu.”

<sup>90</sup> Rupaire, 439.

<sup>91</sup> Rupaire, 437.

hold on to authority.<sup>92</sup> He describes how France has tried to make Guadeloupean society “amnesiac” regarding much of their colonial past.<sup>93</sup> Rupaire writes how poetry and music should be used “to denounce the misery and the mystification, to become weapons, [to become] calls to the revolution of the economic, social, psychological and cultural structures imposed by the colonial power.”<sup>94</sup> Rupaire’s accusations against French government, capitalism, and the Catholic church culminate in his demand for Guadeloupeans to gain a “national consciousness [prise de conscience nationale]” that can result in revolutionary action.

Similarly, Raymond LeBlanc played an active role in his Acadian community, publishing essays that convey messages of continuing affliction for Acadians and convoke acts of resistance. While pursuing his education at the Université de Moncton, LeBlanc studied overseas in Aix-en-Provence in 1968-69, and he lived there during the violent student protests and workers’ strikes that unfolded in Paris and other parts of France.<sup>95</sup> In an interview with Robert Viau, LeBlanc reflects on being exposed to student

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<sup>92</sup> Rupaire, 441.

<sup>93</sup> Rupaire, 443. “les autorités coloniales françaises s’efforcent par tous les moyens de rendre le peuple guadeloupéen amnésique envers ce qui a été et qui est encore une partie de son patrimoine culturel.”

<sup>94</sup> Rupaire, 445. “dénoncer la misère et la mystification, pour devenir des armes, des appels à la révolution des structures économiques sociales, psychologiques et culturelles imposées par le pouvoir colonial.”

<sup>95</sup> Concerning the French strikes, see Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets : The French May Events of 1968* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Pierre Odin, “Les différents impacts de Mai 68 aux Antilles françaises: trajectoires et circulations des militants antillais au sein des gauches révolutionnaires et anticolonialistes,” 2015, <http://www.afsp.info/archives/congres/congres2015/st/st13/st13odin.pdf>; Robert Viau, “Raymond Guy LeBlanc: ‘Avant je criais aujourd’hui je parle,’” *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 25, no. 2 (June 2000): 164.

activism and police repression in Aix-en-Provence. He describes interacting with individuals of various nationalities, including an Algerian who swept the streets at night and who expressed to LeBlanc his sense of inferiority, as well as Marxist poet Attila József who wrote as a radical representative of the Hungarian working class. LeBlanc testifies to how these encounters led to him looking at Acadie from a new perspective, with a heightened awareness of “global injustice.”<sup>96</sup> Through experiencing this tumultuous time for students and workers in France, LeBlanc published a manuscript entitled “La contestation estudiante,” where he comparatively analyzes student uprisings that took place around the world during this period, not only in France, but also in the United States, Québec, and New Brunswick.

In the opening of the manuscript, LeBlanc states that his aim is not to provide an “inventory” of global events, but is to examine the “philosophical undercurrents” contributing to the resistance movements transpiring socially, culturally, and politically around the world.<sup>97</sup> In looking specifically at Atlantic Canada, he attests to the “intellectualization of the Université de Moncton” that occurred in the 1960s and led to the “formation of the new left” among Acadians, with professors who either traveled to Francophone regions outside of Acadie to pursue their education, or who came from

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<sup>96</sup> Viau, “Raymond Guy LeBlanc,” 164–65.

<sup>97</sup> Raymond Guy LeBlanc, *La contestation estudiante* (Moncton: Université de Moncton, 1968), 2, 3.

France and other locations, including Québec, to teach.<sup>98</sup> LeBlanc deduces that this “intellectualization” launched the social and political resistance movement led by Acadian students in Moncton in the late 1960s, and he determines that “The positive aspect that emerges is clearly the student’s intention to make Maritime Francophones full-fledged citizens.”<sup>99</sup> In situating in a global context actions viewed by many in the province as the extreme radicalism of a few Francophone students, LeBlanc concludes that this active resistance stemmed from “a feeling of student solidarity for a common cause” that in turn brought an increased awareness of struggles of poverty and discrimination for many in the Acadian community.<sup>100</sup>

LeBlanc concludes his study by identifying how for students in the global sense, gaining power requires collective action. He observes how students participating in global movements are “reactionary or revolutionary” as they battle against problems of social class hierarchies, while trying to counter “the alienation of the society, the conformism of the social status, the corruption of a philosophy of profit and the bourgeoisie; in other words, the power of the superstructure that must be opposed.”<sup>101</sup>

LeBlanc describes the global influence of leaders such as Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, and

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<sup>98</sup> LeBlanc, 95.

<sup>99</sup> LeBlanc, 96. “L’aspect positif qui s’y dégage c’est manifestement l’intention étudiante de faire des francophones des Maritimes, des citoyens à part entière.”

<sup>100</sup> LeBlanc, 101.

<sup>101</sup> LeBlanc, 106. “Ce qu’ils critiquent, c’est l’aliénation de la société, le conformisme du statut social, la corruption d’une philosophie de profit et la bourgeoisie; en d’autres mots, le pouvoir de la superstructure auquel il faut s’opposer”.

Martin Luther King Jr., as well as of artistic movements with Cubism and photography.<sup>102</sup> Just as Rupaire applies the term “prise de conscience” in a nationalistic sense for Guadeloupeans, LeBlanc uses the same language to describe what was occurring among Acadian students, as well as with other students on a global scale.<sup>103</sup> LeBlanc argues how through media, art, and politics, students developed a “double consciousness” of the self and of the world that “gave birth to the awakening of student action.”<sup>104</sup> LeBlanc emphasizes how students found themselves being “repressed” in the “structures” that surrounded them and that are defended out of fear of change:

Any new image is confronted with the established images, and that of the new student does not escape this law. To confront an image is to risk one’s own person, and the student of today faces repression. Society has panicked and believes that the wave of questions will lead to the collapse of its structures into the ocean of chaos. ... More concerned with securing its structures in immobility, [society] now believes it is obliged to stifle any attempt to raise questions and to impose its frameworks of reality at the risk of killing life rather than going down to meet the students, admit its mistakes, and accept dialogue.<sup>105</sup>

Through bringing these movements together on a global scale, LeBlanc draws attention to issues of silencing, as he describes how these movements get blamed on a few individuals or swept under the rug of the media, even with unjust killings and

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<sup>102</sup> LeBlanc, 108–9.

<sup>103</sup> Rupaire, “Guadeloupe: génocide culturel et colonialisme,” 445; LeBlanc, *La contestation estudiante*, 102, 109.

<sup>104</sup> LeBlanc, *La contestation estudiante*, 109.

<sup>105</sup> LeBlanc, 112. “Confronter une image c’est risquer sa propre personne et l’étudiant aujourd’hui fait face à la répression. La société a pris panique et croit que la vague de questions va entraîner l’effondrement de ses structures dans l’océan du chaos. [...] Plus préoccupée à asseoir ses structures dans l’immobilité, [la société] se croit maintenant obligée à étouffer toute tentative de remise en question et d’imposer ses cadres de la réalité au risque de tuer la vie plutôt que de descendre à la rencontre des étudiants, admettre ses erreurs et accepter le dialogue.”

incarcerations. He describes how in desiring “authenticity,” the student “demands that the masks be removed,” in order to see and to confront global atrocities of violence, alienation, and poverty.<sup>106</sup>

LeBlanc continued his studies at the Université de Moncton and completed his thesis “La question nationale chez Karl Marx” with the Department of Philosophy in 1973. In this work, LeBlanc examines the relationship between Marx’s theories of working-class exploitation and movements of national liberation, looking through the lens of how this relationship is manifest in Acadian society. LeBlanc explains that his focus on this subject “is rooted in the collective anxiety and dissatisfaction of the Acadian people in their fragile struggle to assert themselves politically.”<sup>107</sup> LeBlanc contends that select Marxist theories articulated in published texts from 1843-1848, while focused on proletariat exploitation, are also applicable in nationalist movements stemming from colonialism. LeBlanc argues that “national liberation” requires “an individual and collective feeling of belonging” as well as “political power” and control of an “economic regime.”<sup>108</sup> He contends that this liberation is critical for twentieth-century societies that struggle with poverty and marginalization in nation-states dominated by a majority

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<sup>106</sup> LeBlanc, 113.

<sup>107</sup> LeBlanc, “La question nationale chez Karl Marx,” v. “L’intérêt que nous portons à cette question a pour origine l’inquiétude et l’insatisfaction collective du peuple acadien dans sa lutte fragile pour s’affirmer politiquement.”

<sup>108</sup> LeBlanc, 6.

population whose power was established through colonialism and maintained through capitalism. To underscore the endurance of colonial violence with its outcomes of assimilation and annihilation, LeBlanc adopts Marxian discourse as he condemns the “English bourgeoisie” that in the nineteenth century “imposed its customs, its traditions, its language on the Indigenous of America and elsewhere.”<sup>109</sup> LeBlanc underscores how an imperial “national bourgeoisie” has power over production and economy that in turn “assures it of a ‘cultural’ empire,” thus connecting his study to the Acadian struggle to preserve their language and culture as they face the economic and political authority of a government structured through British colonialism.<sup>110</sup>

Moving beyond the theoretical, LeBlanc turns to the practical in underscoring the struggles of the working class and the need for liberation “from the yoke of capital.”<sup>111</sup> He determines that this liberation can only happen through political and revolutionary action, and through the unification of workers in order to re-establish a new normalcy that constitutes a “working class nation.”<sup>112</sup> Along with vilifying capitalism, LeBlanc raises issues with private property ownership, as well as with urbanization in New

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<sup>109</sup> LeBlanc, 104. “L’Angleterre, aux XIXe siècle, ou plutôt la bourgeoisie anglaise, n’a-t-elle pas imposé ses coutumes, ses traditions, sa langue aux indigènes d’Amérique et d’ailleurs?”; Other studies that address the nuances of applying Marxist theories in studies of colonialism and settler colonialism include Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 6–15; Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 4–5, 313–16.

<sup>110</sup> LeBlanc, “La question nationale chez Karl Marx,” 104.

<sup>111</sup> LeBlanc, 112.

<sup>112</sup> LeBlanc, 115–16, quotation on 116.

Brunswick that for Acadians “signifies assimilation, the death of a people and a culture.”<sup>113</sup> Like Rupaire’s emphasis on putting theories and written words into practice, in the final sentence of his thesis LeBlanc poses the question: “...why pursue philosophical questions if the questions that bother us do not bring us back to the practical problems of the real liberation of oppressed individuals and peoples?”<sup>114</sup> This language of “oppression” and “liberation” are wound throughout LeBlanc’s essays and poetry published during the early 1970s, as like Rupaire, he draws attention to issues of capitalism, the Catholic church, and the bourgeoisie.

In 1970, the Université de Moncton student newspaper *L’Embryon* devoted a section to LeBlanc where he published an article entitled “Poetry and Politics [Poésie et politique],” as well as four poems and a “Political Manifesto [Manifeste politique].”<sup>115</sup> In “Poetry and Politics,” LeBlanc devotes attention to the connection between emerging Acadian poetry and that of Gaston Miron. He describes how “Miron is closer to us, Miron is from us while we are not yet to ourselves,” underscoring how Acadian society is only beginning to see themselves through eyes like Miron’s.<sup>116</sup> LeBlanc praises the poet,

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<sup>113</sup> LeBlanc, 122.

<sup>114</sup> LeBlanc, 123. “Autrement, pourquoi la poursuite de questions philosophiques si les interrogations qui nous tracassent ne nous ramènent pas aux problèmes pratiques de la libération réelle des individus et des peuples opprimés?”

<sup>115</sup> Raymond Guy LeBlanc, “Poésie et politique: articles et poèmes de Raymond LeBlanc,” *L’Embryon*, December 1970, 17–19.

<sup>116</sup> LeBlanc, 17. “Miron est plus près de nous, Miron est de nous alors que nous sommes pas encore à nous-mêmes.”

declaring: “Miron the Magnificent, Miron, the Maïkovsky of Québec, Miron, national poet, Miron, our fellow man, salute!”<sup>117</sup> According to LeBlanc, Miron “dares to say what he is: colonized, proletarian, Québécois, living the drama of a community, expressing it”.<sup>118</sup> At the same time, LeBlanc also distinguishes between Québécois and Acadian experiences, contending that as Acadians “we have neither geography, nor economy, nor collective politics: we are a folk people and our cry is even more alienated than Miron’s; we are threatened with disappearance.”<sup>119</sup> With LeBlanc’s philosophical studies that critique colonization and capitalism through the context of Acadian social and political marginalization, as well as his perception of Acadians being a “folk people” without their own “geography,” there is a distinction from Miron’s poetry. This distinction gives prominence to why similarities and convergences in the development of Acadian and French Caribbean literature are revelatory of a unique relationship held between these societies.

In the “Political Manifesto” in this edition of *L’Embryon*, LeBlanc calls for Acadians to “liberate” themselves from “the domination of the current Anglophone

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<sup>117</sup> LeBlanc, 17. “Miron le Magnifique, Miron, le Maïkovsky du Québec, Miron, poète national, Miron, notre semblable, salue!”

<sup>118</sup> LeBlanc, 17. “Il se dit et ose se dire ce qu’il est: colonisé, prolétaire, québécois, vivant le drame d’une collectivité, l’exprimant, souhaitant pour elle un être-au-monde chez-soi, humains et politique.”

<sup>119</sup> LeBlanc, 17. “Le non-poème québécois [sic], c’est aussi le nôtre, avec cette différence; nous n’avons ni géographie, ni économie, ni politique collective: nous sommes un peuple folklorique et notre cri est plus aliéné encore que celui de Miron; nous sommes menacés de la disparition.”

system, Canadian and American” and from “the current capitalist system.”<sup>120</sup> LeBlanc expresses his desire for Acadians to constitute an independent, socialist state tied to a sovereign Québec.<sup>121</sup> He proposes the establishment of a geographic region designated as Acadie, including much of northern and eastern New Brunswick. He demands that this region have “unilingual French status,” and that a “socialist Acadian party” would be created to protect Acadian rights. He insists on the formation of “a small nation” with greater political autonomy in order to preserve Acadian traditions of culture, language, and economy.<sup>122</sup> Just as Rupaire urges Guadeloupe’s liberation from France, LeBlanc concludes: “The time for begging is over, it is time to create a country, to become men, to take our destiny in hand.”<sup>123</sup> LeBlanc’s writing is emblematic of an Acadian awakening influenced by the actions of other marginalized people in societies discovering the continued confinements of enduring imperialist structures. Rupaire and LeBlanc’s essays and manuscripts reveal a growing awareness of their societies’ marginalization and of the necessity of political action to change the establishment, and this awareness is further apparent in their published poetry of this period.

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<sup>120</sup> Raymond Guy LeBlanc, “Manifeste politique: les conditions (théoriques) de notre libération,” *L’Embryon*, December 1970, 19, <http://ceaac.umoncton.ca/ARCUM/UM/JE/EMBRYON/EMB-1970-12.pdf>.

<sup>121</sup> LeBlanc, 19; Runte, *Writing Acadia*, 78; Leech, “Raymond Guy LeBlanc.”

<sup>122</sup> LeBlanc, “Manifeste politique,” 19.

<sup>123</sup> LeBlanc, 19. “Fini le temps de quémander, il est temps de se créer un pays, de devenir des hommes, de prendre en main notre destinée.”

As a result of Rupaire's connections with the AGEG, the organization published a collection of his poems, stating that Rupaire "mobiliz[ed] poetry to serve for the great cause of the exploited, to serve for the liberation of Guadeloupe."<sup>124</sup> The book opens with a "Warning to the Reader [Avertissement au lecteur]" where Rupaire states that while art and literature are important components of a society, of greater importance is solving problems of poverty and disrupting the class structure in Guadeloupe, where there is an elitism of students, intellectuals, and "petit bourgeois."<sup>125</sup> He critiques Guadeloupean poetry and books that are "published with the blessing of French authorities," and emphasizes that this book features poems that "analyze the problems of our country with a less superficial and exotic look, with a less servile tone, with less selfish and petty feelings."<sup>126</sup> He declares that his poems are "written to be said, recited. They are addressed more to the ear and the heart than to the eye and the brain."<sup>127</sup> Rupaire encourages young writers to find their greatest inspiration through witnessing the struggles of the workers who "suffer from exploitation and poverty in our country."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Sonny Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale ou gran parade, ti cou-baton* (Paris: Éditions Parole, 1971), 7. "de mobilisation de la poésie au service de la grande cause des exploités, au service de la libération de la Guadeloupe."

<sup>125</sup> Rupaire, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Rupaire, 10. "édités avec la bénédiction des autorités françaises"; "Ils analysent des problèmes de notre pays avec un regard moins superficiel et exotique, sur un ton moins servile, avec des sentiments moins égoïstes et mesquins."

<sup>127</sup> Rupaire, 10. "Ils sont écrits pour être dits, récités. Ils s'adressent davantage à l'oreille et au cœur qu'à l'œil et au cerveau."

<sup>128</sup> Rupaire, 11. "ce qui souffrent de l'exploitation et de la misère dans notre pays."

Without providing names, Rupaire critiques French Caribbean authors who “are looking to mask their alienation” with theoretical works of the avant-garde and universalism, and he calls for authors to “evoke the problems our people face, to describe the colonial reality in all its darkness”.<sup>129</sup> Rupaire sees his poetry as a revolutionary act intended to alter the structures of colonialism.

He draws attention to issues of historical understanding by encouraging readers to write stories themselves, in order to contribute to filling “the glorious pages of the history of our people.”<sup>130</sup> He identifies literature as a weapon to resist “colonial aggression” and to battle “pretentious intellectualism.”<sup>131</sup> In some ways Rupaire’s poetry follows more the characteristics of negritude poetry than that of Glissant, with its focus on “rigid binary categories that are pervasive in Caribbean thought,” rather than examining the “contact between these categories.”<sup>132</sup> At the same time, as with Glissant’s early poetry and activism, Rupaire’s poems feature two themes that appear contradictory out of context, yet in his writings become intertwined: cries of victimization and calls for action in disrupting imposed history and in destroying the structure still binding many

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<sup>129</sup> Rupaire, 11. “évoquer les problèmes qui se posent à notre peuple, pour décrire la réalité coloniale dans toute sa noirceur”.

<sup>130</sup> Rupaire, 11.

<sup>131</sup> Rupaire, 11.

<sup>132</sup> Dash, *Edouard Glissant*, 37.

Guadeloupeans of African descent to experiences of poverty, discrimination, and marginalization.

In *Cette igname brisée* Rupaïre brings issues of colonial violation and capitalist exploitation to the surface by portraying contemporary workers' struggles of powerlessness as a continuance of their people's history of enslavement. In his poem "Grève," Rupaïre portrays the hopelessness Guadeloupeans of African descent feel due to being a marginalized minority that stands little chance of ever attaining "majority" in the French government. He blames the exploitation of Guadeloupean workers on French government officials who take advantage of their constituents to acquire their own wealth: "to you [...] / elected by the free people / who dredges our pockets / a golden-coated smile on your lips".<sup>133</sup> In continuing the theme of violation, Rupaïre provides a graphic depiction of language loss as he describes how, "It was the voices of the children / like those of the virgins. / Pure. / And they were broken in a clamor of cries of horror and suffering."<sup>134</sup> Rupaïre's description of the brokenness of children's voices symbolizes how through the power of the French, the younger Guadeloupean, Creole-speaking generations' language will become fractured and they will go unheard or misunderstood. Concerning his shift from using French to writing in Creole, Rupaïre

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<sup>133</sup> Rupaïre, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale*, 49. "à toi [...] / l' élu des peuples libres / qui nous drague les poches / un sourire aurifié sur tes lèvres".

<sup>134</sup> Rupaïre, 50. "C'était des voix d'enfants / comme des seins de vierges. / Pures. / Et elles se sont cassées dans un fracas de cris d'horreur et de souffrance".

recounts how “Creole brought me this kind of, not only curiosity, but a reunion with what was ours but that we had neglected, that we had kept aside in a kind of folkloric side in order to give it a status of language of a people.”<sup>135</sup> As an act of overt resistance, beginning in 1967 Rupaire wrote only in Creole as a “political act,” and he contends that it is only through using the everyday language of the people that political movements can occur.<sup>136</sup>

Other consequences of French oppressive power over Guadeloupean voices are addressed in “Candélabres” where Rupaire describes how workers are silenced due to the “dormancy,” “alcohol,” “anger,” “venom” and “noise” that were instilled by French colonizers and are perpetuated by the French settler ruling class. In this poem, Rupaire repeatedly states that his people have an unfulfilled desire that “the day would be what they had dreamed for” and he concludes with a hopeless depiction of Guadeloupeans being “without hunger; without breath”.<sup>137</sup> Through these words, Rupaire implies that his people have been victimized by the French to the point of being existent, but not truly alive.

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<sup>135</sup> Selbonne, “Interview de 1986 par Fred Hermantin (Sonny Rupaire),” 426. “Le créole m’apportait cette espèce de, non seulement de curiosité, mais de retrouvailles avec ce qui était nôtre mais qu’on avait délaissé, qu’on avait tenu à côté dans une espèce de côté folklorique afin de lui donner un statut de langue d’un peuple.”

<sup>136</sup> Selbonne, 425.

<sup>137</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 34. “avec l’envie que la journée soit celle dont ils ont rêvé”; “à bout de faim / à bout de souffle”.

Conversely, laced within this language of powerlessness and exploitation is Rupaire's call for Guadeloupeans to take action against the French government. In a letter to his readers, Rupaire explains that French Caribbean authors should write to "develop [...] ideas and feelings that respond to the good of the exploited majority of our people, that mobilize and unite them in the struggle against colonial oppression."<sup>138</sup>

Rupaire's poem "Matouba" aimed to unite Guadeloupeans of African descent by memorializing the sacrificial deaths of Louis Delgrès and his compatriots who committed suicide in the violent stand against Napoleon's reinstatement of slavery in the French Caribbean in 1802. Rupaire reveals his militance through his march-like repetition of the place named "Matouba." He implores that Guadeloupeans need to remember this moment of their history as a means to strengthen their community as "weak voices still / search for the strength to cry out".<sup>139</sup> Rupaire graphically depicts the violation of the Guadeloupean natural landscape during this event with the "blood in the sea and blood on the earth / Matouba / and three hundred bloods splashing in the face of your sky".<sup>140</sup>

Rupaire uses this descriptive remembrance of Delgrès' bloody sacrifice as a means to

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<sup>138</sup> Rupaire, 11. "Il nous faut écrire pour développer [...] des idées et des sentiments qui répondent au bien de la majorité exploitée de notre peuple, qui la mobilisent et l'unissent dans la lutte contre l'oppression colonial."

<sup>139</sup> Rupaire, 42. "des voix faibles encore / cherchent la force de crier".

<sup>140</sup> Rupaire, 42. "et le sang dans la mer et le sang dans la terre / Matouba / et trois cents sangs giclés vers ton ciel".

unite descendants of enslaved Africans so they might stand together in opposition to what he portrays as continuing French colonial power.

A more explicit depiction of violation and a call to action is found in Rupaïre's poem "Chyen," written in response to the 1967 violence that broke out between Guadeloupean workers and the French military. Written in Creole, this poem creates an intimacy with the Guadeloupean working class. Rupaïre sends a provocative message to his community in recounting the story of a disabled shoe repair man named Raphaël Balzinc being attacked by a dog owned by storeowner Srnsky [sic], who Rupaïre describes in another article as being "a French capitalist."<sup>141</sup> This event resulted in an uprising with protestors burning the store and other buildings in the city, and their actions led to violent police repression and over thirty arrests.<sup>142</sup> Throughout the poem, Rupaïre repeats a chorus that underscores the aggression and violence inflicted on Balzinc: "The dog attacked me! / The dog charged me / The dog attacked me / As if I was a nobody / Whitey's dog charged me!"<sup>143</sup> The word "dog" has two meanings in the poem: first, Rupaïre is referring to a literal French police dog (used to suppress protestors in 1967)

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<sup>141</sup> Sarah Mozar, "Analyse de 'Chyen,'" in *Sonny Rupaïre, fils inquiet d'une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jasor, 2013), 331; Sonny Rupaïre, "Guadeloupe 1967-1968 (Tricontinentale)," in *Sonny Rupaïre, fils inquiet d'une igname brisée: Guadeloupe, Algérie, Cuba, Gwadeloup*, ed. Ronald Selbonne, trans. Marie-Claude Tormin (Pointe-à-Pitre: Jasor, 2013), 433.

<sup>142</sup> Rupaïre, "Guadeloupe 1967-1968 (Tricontinentale)," 433.

<sup>143</sup> Rupaïre, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale*, 67–70. "Chien varé-moin! / Chien foré-moin! / Chien varé-moin / kon ninpote ki gen fêrê-d'chien. / Chien a zóreil-la foré-moin!". I am grateful to Dr. Akosua Fadhili Afrika for providing me a French translation of Rupaïre's *Chyen*.

and second, “dog” serves as a figurative representation of white society that has power over his people’s history, their present, and their future.<sup>144</sup> Rupaire attributes the Guadeloupean proletariat’s continuing economic and social struggles to “politicians, priests” and those “with money and the military.”<sup>145</sup> In a critique of the poem Sarah Mozar observes how Rupaire constructs a narrator who in many ways represents Guadeloupean society at large, as he “is not a man to seek a quarrel,” but he becomes “the victim of a gratuitous aggression which will shake his life.”<sup>146</sup> This victimhood of an innocent, marginalized individual, resonates deeply as representative of injustice.

Rather than resting in this message of victimization and injustice, Rupaire issues a call for readers to confront those imposing repression by venerating those who participated in protest as “The city of Basse Terre felt the heat of the flames.”<sup>147</sup> As Mozar argues, through this poem, Rupaire calls for a “common fight” to enable his people to “reappropriate together a dignity and a pride of which the fire becomes a powerful symbol.”<sup>148</sup> Rupaire connects his people’s experiences with those of African Americans participating in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and he shifts to a communal sense of struggle in his final stanza where he uses the collective in the

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<sup>144</sup> Mozar, “Sonny Rupaire,” 328.

<sup>145</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 68, 69. “Toute politicien, monseingnê [...] / moune-a-sou / et larmé.”

<sup>146</sup> Mozar, “Sonny Rupaire,” 325. “Le narrateur n’est pas homme à chercher querelle pourtant il sera la victime d’une agression gratuite qui va ébranler sa vie.”

<sup>147</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 68. “Vil Basse-Tê mété-i ka chofé.”

<sup>148</sup> Mozar, “Sonny Rupaire,” 331.

chorus as representative of all who are oppressed by white society: “The dog attacked us! The dog charged us!”<sup>149</sup> Through his political activism and his poetry, Rupaire sends anti-colonial messages that encourage his people to participate in resisting systemic methods of assimilation employed by the French government while pursuing “national liberation” for Guadeloupe.<sup>150</sup>

Between LeBlanc’s completion of “La contestation estudiante” and “La question nationale chez Karl Marx,” his poetry went to press through the newly founded Éditions d’Acadie in 1972.<sup>151</sup> As previously mentioned, leading up to its publication, Jean-Guy Pilon featured a section devoted to LeBlanc’s poetry in *Liberté* in 1969. In Pilon’s Introduction to the journal, he writes how in LeBlanc’s poetry there are “cries which come to us from the large,” and this theme of crying aloud that is found in Glissant’s early poetry is emphasized in the title of LeBlanc’s collection *Cri de terre*.<sup>152</sup> As LeBlanc declares in a later interview, he felt at the time that a “A cry signifies that one has something urgent to say” and his poetry serves as his means to cry out about issues of marginalization and identity loss among Acadian society, in hopes of making his own people more aware of present injustices stemming from their colonial past.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 70. “Chien varé-nou! Chien foré-nou!”

<sup>150</sup> Rupaire, “Guadeloupe 1967-1968 (Tricontinentale),” 436.

<sup>151</sup> Denis LeBrun, “Les Éditions d’Acadie,” *Nuit Blanche, Magazine Littéraire*, no. 12 (1984): 70–71.

<sup>152</sup> Pilon, “Acadie 1969,” 9.

<sup>153</sup> Viau, “Raymond Guy LeBlanc,” 161.

Hans Runte, a scholar of Acadian literature, observes that the poetry by LeBlanc and other Acadian writers who followed in his footsteps was “born *of* an absent country and is *about* that very absence.”<sup>154</sup> Like Glissant and Rupaire, LeBlanc’s work is laced with the language of “misery,” “hopelessness,” and “powerlessness” due to the lack of full political autonomy in the geographic space that their society occupies as a result of colonial dispossession. As in Rupaire’s works, LeBlanc’s poems also reflect “militance” toward vanquishing Acadian elites and the Anglophones in power.<sup>155</sup> LeBlanc sends the message that the exploitation and subjugation of Acadian society and Acadian land continues to occur in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that the only viable recourse is political resistance in pursuit of independence.<sup>156</sup> Scholar Robert Viau observes that LeBlanc’s *Cri de terre* reflects the desire many people had to “revolutionize the world,” while the collection of poems is also “profoundly anchored in the Acadian and even Monctonian reality.”<sup>157</sup> Just as Rupaire’s experiences in Algeria ignited his passion for autonomy and separatism in Guadeloupe, LeBlanc’s witnessing of critical global events from Aix-en-Provence heightened his perception of Acadie’s economic, social, and political struggles as a result of British imperialism and Canadian nationalism.

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<sup>154</sup> Runte, *Writing Acadia*, 100.

<sup>155</sup> Runte, 87, 101; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 7.

<sup>156</sup> Hautecoeur, *L’Acadie du discours*, 295.

<sup>157</sup> Robert Viau, “‘Les poètes n’ont pas le droit de se taire’: l’œuvre de Raymond Guy LeBlanc,” *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 26, no. 1 (2001): 46.

In the opening section of *Cri de terre* entitled “Silences,” LeBlanc’s poems underscore struggles of survival for himself and for Acadians, with the haunting presence of death that inspires fear and causes silencing. This section includes the poem “Réveil” where, like Rupaire in the poem “Chyen,” LeBlanc boldly criticizes individuals in political and economic power, while emphasizing the need for acts of resistance. In “Chyen” Rupaire contrasts authorities in major cities of the world against those who are racially marginalized and who live in poverty. He writes: “New York’s SWAT team, Pointe-à-Pitre’s SWAT team, / they all look alike. / Rich people in New York, rich people in Paris, / they all look alike. / Harlem’s Black and a Black from down here / Are as unfortunate as each other. / They’re the same”.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, in LeBlanc’s “Réveil,” that he first wrote while in France, he identifies those in power in different parts of the world: “a businessman on Wall Street,” “Bureaucrats” in Moscow, Francisco Franco in Spain, De Gaulle in Paris. Like Rupaire, he calls for people to awaken to the racial and economic struggles around the world: “Tonight in France I hear the cry of a black child / Whose belly is big and hands are tied.”<sup>159</sup> Rupaire and LeBlanc are looking through a

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<sup>158</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 69–70. “Gendabe Nou-Yók, gendabe La-Pointe, / gaille gen yo ka sem’. / Mousé-a-sou Nou-Yók, moune-a-sou a Paris, / yo ka sem’/ Nêg Harlêm et nêg Badibou / ka sem’ kon / maléré. / Cé meim’ gen-la”.

<sup>159</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 30; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 53. “Ce soir en France j’entends le cri d’un enfant noir / Qui a le ventre gros et les mains liées”.

similar lens in contemplating atrocities of the world that are tied to enduring hierarchical structures, whether social, economic, or political, stemming from colonialism.

In these poems, Rupaire and LeBlanc feature the imagery of fire to represent the contention existing between authoritarian figures and common folk. Rupaire recounts how Basse Terre “felt the heat of the flames” as rioting unfolded out of resistance to police and military authorities.<sup>160</sup> In a more figurative sense, LeBlanc attests to how at the same time as the Harlem chief of police smokes a fat cigar in New York, “Tonight I watch the smoke of my cigarette / Draw fires in the air,” and he reflects on the May 1968 uprising in France that “still flaps like a flag in the wind.”<sup>161</sup> LeBlanc describes how fog and darkness cover the earth, resulting in inaction, and he calls for people to awaken and to stand up as active participants in changing the world: “I continue to believe / That the earth sleeps in the night of men / That a man must remain standing / And not fall asleep until the sun rises”.<sup>162</sup> This political consciousness that LeBlanc garnered through his experiences in France resulted in themes of victimization in his poetry, as well as calls for resistance for Acadians.

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<sup>160</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale*, 68. “mété-i ka chofé”.

<sup>161</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 30; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 53. This translation uses the word “floats” for “flotte,” but I have chosen the word “flaps.” “Ce soir je regarde la fumée de ma cigarette / Dessiner dans l’air des incendies”; “Ce soir devant la table je pense au mois de mai / Qui flotte encore comme un drapeau au vent”.

<sup>162</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 30. “Moi je continue de croire / Que la terre dort de la nuit des hommes / Qu’un homme doit rester debout / Et ne s’endormir qu’au soleil levant”. The English in the text is my translation of the French.

In the section of LeBlanc's book entitled "Paroles," victimization is blamed on a history of political and cultural violation (rooted historically in the Acadian diaspora), as well as continuing capitalist exploitation under the Anglophone majority government. LeBlanc opens this section of his book with the poem "Acadie," in which he describes his Acadian community as "People of my imagined country without borders without futures [...] Men without faces women without breasts / Children without language."<sup>163</sup> In these opening lines, LeBlanc calls attention to how not having a territorial state threatens the very existence of the Acadian people. With a "country" that is only seen through people's imaginations and is unrecognizable by those of the dominant Anglophone society, this country's existence is void and identity is lost. LeBlanc's blunt description of the non-existence of language for the next generation corresponds with Rupaire's illustration of children's "voices" being "broken."<sup>164</sup> In continuing the poem, LeBlanc challenges Acadian elites who built their nationalist ideals on the idyllic *Evangeline* martyr narrative when he implores, "People of my country do not hate me / I ponder your illusions and your stifled dreams."<sup>165</sup> Through these verses, LeBlanc shifts attention to struggles not only in overcoming a history of exploitation by the Anglophone society, but

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<sup>163</sup> LeBlanc, 53; LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 71. "Gens de mon pays chimère sans frontières et sans avenir [...] Hommes sans visages femmes sans seins / Enfants sans langage".

<sup>164</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale*, 50.

<sup>165</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 53; LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 71. "Gens de mon pays ne m'en voulez pas / Je songe à vos illusions et à vos rêves qu'on étouffe".

also in deconstructing popular memories within Acadian society. Just as Rupaire ends “Candélabres” by describing his people as being “without hunger, without breath,” so too LeBlanc concludes “Acadie” with his lament of Acadians being “without identity and without life.”<sup>166</sup> Both authors convey the message that an “imagined country” has nothing to provide its citizenry beyond emptiness and death.

The theme of violation moves further to the forefront in LeBlanc’s poem “Complainte,” in which he portrays his community “Shivering from so many echoes of chains on our pavement” and his final statement implores them to “Tell / If you know / Are we nothing more than slaves”.<sup>167</sup> In using the language of “slaves,” LeBlanc follows in Miron’s steps in applying language found throughout French Caribbean discourse to dramatically draw attention to Acadian marginalization, while the imagery of the “pavement” symbolizes Acadian communities’ struggles with urbanization - living in a concrete world - as a consequence of capitalist power in the agricultural and fisheries sectors of New Brunswick. Like Rupaire’s descriptions of silencing and slavery, LeBlanc depicts Acadians as “shivering” – implying fear and paralysis - due to the remnant “echoes” of their “chains.” As much as LeBlanc tries to look toward the future,

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<sup>166</sup> Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu’est ma terre natale*, 34; LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 53; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 71.

<sup>167</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 54; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 72. “Frémissant de tant d’échos de chaînes sur nos pavé / [...] / Dis / Si tu sais / Ne sommes-nous rien d’autre que des esclaves”.

he cannot fully separate himself from these “echoes” that originate in the past, under the power of British imperialism. In LeBlanc’s final Epilogue entry entitled “Je suis Acadien,” he concludes for his readers that “I am Acadian / Which means / Multifarious shafted dispersed bought alienated sold rebellious / A man torn up to the future”.<sup>168</sup>

These final words that define Acadians as a people who have been exploited and who have an uncertain future circle back to the opening line of “Acadie” where LeBlanc laments that he “find[s] it hard to see” his people on his “reeling horizon.”<sup>169</sup> In countering popular depictions of Acadian capacity to resist and to overcome their sufferings, LeBlanc upsets Acadian elitist discourse by arguing that they have blinded themselves to the fact that they continue to be subject to the power and exploitation of the Anglophone-dominated capitalist economy.

LeBlanc’s intentions in his work are not only to make Acadian society aware that they have been subject to both the Catholic church and the Anglophone Canadians, but to also encourage them to rise up against those with greater economic and political power. In other words, after situating Acadians as victims, he calls for his people to respond by working together to gain their own land and government. He shows militancy in his

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<sup>168</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 65; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 82. “Je suis acadien / Ce qui signifie / Multiplié fourré disperse acheté aliéné vendu révolté / Homme déchiré vers l’avenir”. For other translations of these lines of poetry, see Fred Cogswell and Joanne Elder, *Unfinished Dreams: Contemporary Poetry of Acadie* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1990), 121; Runte, *Writing Acadia*, 80–81.

<sup>169</sup> LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 71.

poems “Plan for a Country (Acadie-Québec)” and “Petitcodiac.” In “Plan for a Country” LeBlanc reveals his nationalist desires for Acadian separation from New Brunswick and for Québec’s separation from the rest of Canada. He sees enlightenment happening within his generation and he instructs Acadians to “march toward the future” and to “scale the wall of our fears.” He cries for action with the verbs “reclaim,” “transform,” and “change.” He concludes by stating that “Now is the hour of willed history / To change the slaves’ misery / Into the reality of the new and the free ... Henceforth this hour is our own”.<sup>170</sup> Through this poem that has been described as a “poetico-political manifesto,” LeBlanc calls for the participation of the Acadian people in claiming control over not only their language and their country, but also over the invaluable commodities of time and history (like Rupaire also aims to do through his remembrance of Delgrès).<sup>171</sup> In “Petitcodiac,” LeBlanc again implores Acadians to be proactive as he intertwines symbolic representations of the Catholic church and the capitalist powers that he wants Acadians to upset: “The steeples of Memramcook slice their spectres / Amidst the smoke of the CNR”.<sup>172</sup> Just as Rupaire laments the blood that poured into Guadeloupe’s natural environment due to the violence at Matouba, LeBlanc describes the ruination of his

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<sup>170</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 57; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 75. “Voici l’heure de l’histoire voulue / Pour changer la misère des esclaves / Dans la réalité des hommes nouveaux et libres / Cette heure désormais nous appartient”.

<sup>171</sup> Runte, *Writing Acadia*, 82.

<sup>172</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 58; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 76. “Les clochers de Memramcook découpent leur chimère / Dans la fumée du C.N.R.”

people's natural resources with the covering of "Albion concrete," the power of "phantomatic trawlers" and "forests" that become "anglize[d]." <sup>173</sup> After describing this assault on the land his people occupy, LeBlanc boldly states "Here / I express my refusal." <sup>174</sup> In continuing the poem he repeats this statement, including refusing to be "yoke[d]" to the former movement of Acadian nationalism that clung to Catholic tradition and was often commodified by Acadian elites and sanctioned by the English. <sup>175</sup> As he states in an interview, Acadian complaisance in response to issues of poverty and political silencing was compounded by "religious nationalism" that engrained the belief that "we had our right to suffering." <sup>176</sup> Here we see parallels with Rupaire's expressed frustrations with the power of the Catholic church, the French government, and a predominantly wealthier French society. In the poem LeBlanc threatens to "Québeckicize" if change in Acadia does not occur while "The hour of revolutionning / Crystallizes". <sup>177</sup> LeBlanc's message puts blame on others for exploiting Acadian society, while also trying to trigger Acadian resistance to a majority Anglophone presence in order that Acadians might secure power over their land, their language, and their economy.

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<sup>173</sup> LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 77; Rupaire, .....*cette igname brisée qu'est ma terre natale*, 42.

<sup>174</sup> LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 78.

<sup>175</sup> LeBlanc, 78.

<sup>176</sup> "Entrevue avec Raymond LeBlanc," 97.

<sup>177</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 62; LeBlanc, "A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc's *Cri de Terre*," 78–79. "L'heure du révolutionnement / Se cristallise".

As political activists, Rupaire and LeBlanc's poetic works describe victims of continuing repercussions of colonial histories, but reflection on their writings and their political participation reveals that the message of victimization was not intended to gain sympathetic ears. As is seen in their language and their poems (that include Creole and Acadian idioms and dialect), they wrote for their own people. They wanted their societies to wrestle against histories imposed by others and to become participants in freeing their communities from economic and social power systems still rooted in colonial pasts. Like Rupaire's desire for Guadeloupeans to take action against colonial oppression, LeBlanc calls for Acadian resistance to what he deems to be social, cultural and economic exploitation.<sup>178</sup> In his analysis of LeBlanc's poetry, Robert Viau observes how for LeBlanc "it is about excommunicating, about putting to the index this prehistoric being, this dinosaur, "the exploiterhinoceros (l'exploytérinoscéros)," dominated by the Church, the State, and multinationals such as Irving," and Rupaire identified distinct, yet strikingly similar, enemies.<sup>179</sup> Viau further contends that through LeBlanc's poetry in *Cri de terre* he "stigmatizes the fear and the silence that prevented Acadians from liberating themselves."<sup>180</sup> Through their involvement in student and labour movements, and their published writings in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rupaire and LeBlanc participated in

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<sup>178</sup> Viau, "Les poètes n'ont pas le droit de se taire," 53.

<sup>179</sup> Viau, 52. "Il s'agit d'excommunier, de mettre à l'index cet être préhistorique, ce dinosaure, 'l'exploytérinoscéros,' dominé par l'Église, l'État et les multinationales comme Irving."

<sup>180</sup> Viau, 53. "il stigmatise la peur et le silence qui empêchent les Acadiens de se libérer."

and contributed to the growing strength of political movements in Guadeloupe and New Brunswick that pursued implementing re-formulated ideologies surrounding rights and equality. LeBlanc encouraged young, educated Acadians to work toward deconstructing the revered nationalism established by Acadian elites in the late 1800s that venerated memories of Acadian Deportation and “Renaissance”. He felt the memorialization and commodification of a romanticized past clouded over Acadians’ continued struggles with poverty and language rights.

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, Guadeloupeans’ desire for sovereignty resulted in the formation of separatist political organizations including the previously mentioned Groupe d’organisation nationale de la Guadeloupe (GONG) and the Union populaire pour la libération de la Guadeloupe (UPLG). Despite the active involvement of individuals like Rupaire, the movement for independence started losing political momentum toward the end of the 1970s. By the early to mid-1980s, these political organizations faced fragmentation as many participants grew disillusioned with political nationalism.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, in the Acadian region, the New Brunswick socialist “Parti Acadien” formed in 1972 and voiced concerns over poverty and assimilation that culminated in a separatist movement. The separatists petitioned for an Acadian province

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<sup>181</sup> Yarimar Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 34–36; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism’s Embrace*, 187; Millette, “Decolonization, Populist Movements and the Formation of New Nations, 1945-70,” 222.

that would remain under the Canadian federal government, but would gain greater provincial autonomy apart from Anglophone New Brunswick.<sup>182</sup> After their most successful election in 1978, where the party's candidates received on average 12% of the votes in their ridings, the Parti Acadien collapsed.<sup>183</sup> Much like in Guadeloupean politics, the Parti Acadien's supporters grew divided over the issue of separatism.<sup>184</sup> Acadian and French Caribbean societies in the 1970s through the 1980s struggled to resolve issues of autonomy as they faced generational and urban differences that made local political alliances tenuous.

In Gaston Miron's "Recours didactique" that opened Édouard Glissant's *Acoma* in April 1973, Miron calls for the participation of colonized writers in political resistance movements, and this epitomizes the roles Sonny Rupaire and Raymond Guy LeBlanc played as authors. At the same time, Miron also observes how those who are "the alienated colonized" and who endure oppression often tend to respond with mimicry. Certainly, this has held true in the evolution of French Caribbean literature, as authors have wrestled with the power of French language and publication opportunities that have often resulted in tendencies to conform in the literary sphere.<sup>185</sup> For the Québécois,

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<sup>182</sup> Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, 62, 214.

<sup>183</sup> Monique Gauvin and Lizette Jalbert, "The Rise and Fall of the Parti Acadien," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 15.

<sup>184</sup> Gauvin and Jalbert, 15–17.

<sup>185</sup> Selao, "Les fils d'Aimé Césaire," 39.

mimicry has a double-meaning in their literature of this period, with not only the issues of literary conformity in Canada, but also the major influence of French Caribbean authors. For the Acadians, it extends to a triple-meaning. In Vasquez-Para's interview with professor Alain Even, Even attests to the influence events on Québécois and American campuses had on the students in Acadie, that resulted in actions that Vasquez-Parra terms as "mimetic." This layering of mimicry reveals the problematics in these societies desiring to be freed from confining structures. While the actions and poetry of Rupaire and LeBlanc appear powerful and oppositional to these structures, they only begin altering the appearance of the interior. In reality, as is evidenced by these societies' failed political movements for independence, colonial walls stayed standing through the 1960s and 1970s.

Édouard Glissant's literature and his political activism of the late 1950s and early 1960s forged a path for political-poets like Rupaire and LeBlanc, yet there is evidence that while Glissant wanted the Antilles' independence from France, he did not want a government structured according to the nation-state formation that evolved through colonialism.<sup>186</sup> As his literature evolved, Glissant began to recognize potential pitfalls that could come in either reinforcing the structure French Caribbean people of African descent already occupied or in merely rebuilding a duplicate structure. In several regions

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<sup>186</sup> Selao, 39.

of the world, decolonization became equated with gaining economic and political authority over a nation-state that often maintained enduring economic, social, and political systems established by colonialism. Glissant's questioning of nationalism as an entity that is imperially-constructed, and his insightfulness of the dangers of perpetuating its methods and systems of power, will continue to percolate in the 1970s and his works will wrestle against the enduring power of colonial political and social rhetoric. As the 1970s unfold, disappointment with failed pursuits of autonomy and growing skepticism of the nationalism rooted in colonial traditions will result in works by women authors Simone Schwarz-Bart and Antonine Maillet that go beyond trying to change the appearance of the structural interiors of the buildings that their Acadian and French Caribbean societies occupy, to instead searching for other ways to become unbound by confining colonial walls.

## Chapter 6 – Pounding the Walls: Claiming History and Legitimizing

### Culture, 1970s-1980s

“But it seemed to me the balance was in favor of the men, and that even in their fall there was still something of victory. They broke bones and wombs, then they left their own flesh and blood in misery as a crab leaves his pincers between your fingers. At this point in my reflections Elie would always say gravely:

‘Man has strength, woman has cunning, but however cunning she may be her womb is there to betray her. It is her ruin.’<sup>1</sup> – Simone Schwarz Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Têlummée Miracle*, 1972

“[...] women had to defend themselves in an indirect way, they were symbolic of Acadia, much more than the men because the Acadians had to defend themselves with cunning, that is to say as foxes, not wolves.”<sup>2</sup> – Interview with Antonine Maillet, 2020

Through the 1970s and 1980s, French Caribbean and Acadian movements for greater political autonomy began to lose momentum. Separatist political organizations in Guadeloupe faced fragmentation as many participants grew disillusioned with political nationalism that touted independence over departmentalization. In New Brunswick, the socialist Parti Acadien suddenly collapsed after its most successful provincial election in

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<sup>1</sup> Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Têlummée Miracle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 74; Translation from Simone Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, trans. Barbara Bray (London: Heinemann, 1982), 44–45. In this chapter I provide the French titles of Schwarz-Bart’s and Maillet’s books, but references and quotations come from translated versions of their novels.

<sup>2</sup> Maillet, interview. “les femmes devaient se défendre d’une façon indirecte, elles étaient symbolique de l’Acadie, beaucoup plus que les hommes parce que les Acadiens devaient se défendre avec la ruse, c’étaient des renards, pas des loups.”

1978.<sup>3</sup> Acadian and French Caribbean societies struggled internally to resolve conflicts over what they expected to gain with greater autonomy, and they encountered generational and urban differences that made local political alliances tenuous. With the dissolution or weakening of separatist political parties and the deepening discord among their societies, Guadeloupean author Simone Schwarz-Bart and Acadian author Antonine Maillet explored using literature to creatively reconfigure colonial pasts, as well as to contribute to strengthening their communities' cohesiveness. With the growing desire among many writers in societies born, shaped, or marginalized by colonial pasts to "rewrit[e] a truncated history," Schwarz-Bart and Maillet confronted inadequacies of engrained historical discourses and contributed to a growing movement focused on preserving cultural identity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures*, 34–36; Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 187; Millette, "Decolonization, Populist Movements and the Formation of New Nations, 1945-70," 222; Gauvin and Jalbert, "The Rise and Fall of the Parti Acadien," 15.

<sup>4</sup> Anthea M. Morrison, "New Voices," in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean - Hispanic and Francophone Regions*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 494.

*Il y a déjà eu des prix Goncourt féminins (1952, Béatrice Beck; 1954, Simone de Beauvoir; 1962, Anna Langfus; 1966, Edmonde Charles-Roux). Mais rarement autant de femmes s'étaient trouvées en posture de décrocher la plus célèbre distinction littéraire française qui sera décernée demain à 13 heures : trois pour un homme.*

# Demain le GONCOURT

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## SIMONE La parleuse

**L'auteur.** — Simone Schwarz-Bart, 41 ans dans quelques jours. Née à la Guadeloupe, elle y a fait des études, poursuivies à Paris et à Dakar. C'est en 1959, l'année où il obtient le Goncourt pour « le Dernier des Justes » qu'elle rencontre et épouse André Schwarz-Bart. Tous deux entament alors la publication d'un cycle romanesque « la Mulâtresse Solitude » dont seul le premier volume, « Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes », a paru. En 1972, Simone Schwarz-Bart publie « Pluie et Vent sur Tâmeée Miracle » qui obtient l'année suivante le Grand

**Prix des Lectrices** de « Elle » et sera traduit en douze langues.

**L'éditeur.** — Le Seuil, comme toute l'œuvre de S. Schwarz-Bart.

**Le titre.** — « Ti Jean l'Horizon ».

**Le sujet.** — Ti Jean l'Horizon est le héros traditionnel des contes créoles. À la fois Chat botté et Mandraka, justicier populaire, il erre sur les chemins de la Guadeloupe et revient en Afrique. Quête amoureuse et mythologique.

**La première phrase.** — « Les paroles du nègre n'entament pas sa langue, elles n'usent, elles ne font saigner que son cœur. »

**Notre opinion.** — Il n'est bien sûr pas question ici d'exotisme, de pittoresque. Cette quête des origines à laquelle se livre Ti Jean nous place d'emblée au cœur des grands mythes et ce sont eux qui sont offerts à notre imagination, eux qui viennent féconder l'imaginaire occidental. En plongeant dans ses racines dans la tradition orale, l'écriture se fortifie et trouve un rythme propre, la langue se met à faire des étincelles.



*Réa SUTHERLAND*

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## ANTONINE L'Acadienne

**L'auteur.** — Antonine Maillet est née en 1933, à Bouctouche, dans la province du Nouveau-Brunswick. C'est au cours de la dernière décennie qu'elle va s'affirmer comme romancière et abandonner l'université pour se consacrer à ses écrits. La première œuvre d'Antonine Maillet, publiée en France, est, en 1975, « Mariage(s) ». Suivent en 1976, une pièce de théâtre, « la Sagouine », et, en 1977, un autre roman, « les Cordes de bois », avec lequel elle faillit avoir le Goncourt. Au moment de l'ultime vote, elle recueillait cinq suffrages et Didier Docoïn cinq également. Mais ce dernier bénéficiait de la voix du président

Hervé Bazin prépondérante en cas d'égalité. C'est ainsi que « John l'enfer » l'emporta. Un souvenir qui pesera lourd dans le scrutin de demain.

**L'éditeur.** — Grasset, dont elle est l'un des « poulaillers ».

**Le titre.** — « Pélagie la Charrette ».

**Le sujet.** — L'histoire de l'émigration acadienne au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, « le grand débrangement » va à travers Pélagie et sa charrette, sorte de Moïse de la déportation acadienne, mère Courage du « grand débrangement » sur fond de guerre d'indépendance.

**La première phrase.** — « Au dire du vieux Louis à Bélonie lui-même, ce rejeton des Bélonie, né comme moi de la charrette, seuls ont survécu au massacre des saints innocents, les innocents qui ont su se faire. »

**Notre opinion.** — Mode francophone ? Non, mieux que cela. Passant de la chronique à l'épopée, Antonine Maillet montre qu'elle n'est pas un « raconteur », qu'un écrivain seulement riche de folklore. Nous qui avons du mal à résister à l'engallement du français, trouvons finalement dans les expressions les archaïsmes qu'elle emploie (et que nous avons parfois du mal à décrypter), quelque chose qui nous rassure.



Figure 6. Sud Ouest, “Demain le Goncourt,” 18 November 1979

In 1979, a sketch of Schwarz-Bart (“La parleuse”) and a photo of Maillet (“L’Acadienne”) appeared together in a French newspaper as the authors entered the final round for the Prix Goncourt with their novels *Pélagie-la-Charrette* and *Ti Jean l’horizon*. Alongside the article’s title “Demain le Goncourt,” the journalist highlights how since the award’s inception in 1903 only four women had won the prize, but this year was unique with three women nominated in a single year. Under the title it states that “rarely have so many women found themselves in a position to win the most famous French literary

distinction that will be awarded tomorrow at 1pm: three women to one man.”<sup>5</sup> In the end, Maillet became the first non-French-national winner of the prize as her novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* obtained French accolades. This newspaper article addressing the unusual nomination of these women among the French literary circles reveals enduring colonial legacies of gender inequality that will be explored in this chapter, but this is not the sole connector between Maillet and Schwarz-Bart and their works. Analysis of their novels reveals profound commonalities between their narratives including the use of tragedy, where protagonists endure the hauntings of enslavement, entrapment, and death, yet ultimately are capable of self-redemption and self-resurrection.

In Schwarz-Bart’s *Pluie et vent* (1972) and *Ti Jean l’horizon* (1979) and Maillet’s *Pélagie* (1979) and *Le huitième jour* (1986) the authors seek to claim their histories by exploring complexities of their peoples’ changing relationships with former colonial empires and the subsequent nation-states of France and Canada. Like authors in the 1960s, such as Rupaire and LeBlanc, they continue to question the qualification of liberal notions of “freedom,” including ideals of rights and equality, for societies that have different colonial pasts, yet are each rooted in histories of diaspora and subjugation.

These authors shift their narratives away from cries of victimization and calls for political

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<sup>5</sup> “Demain le Goncourt,” *Sud Ouest*, November 18, 1979, sec. Lettres. “Mais rarement autant de femmes s’étaient trouvées en posture de décrocher la plus célèbre distinction littéraire française qui sera décernée demain à 13 heures: trois pour un homme.”

militancy by shedding light on the oppressive erasures of their peoples' histories. They invent imagined pasts that are built on oral tradition, music, and cultural traditions that they argue can reveal more historical realities than the narratives produced in imperialist and nationalist history books.

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet employ literature to confront problems they see in historical understandings of their societies, both among their own people and for those outside of their communities, while also experiencing enduring confines of colonialism in their personal lives. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialist gender norms continue to dominate in the sphere of acclaimed literature, thus resulting in Schwarz-Bart and Maillet being marginalized in the French literary domain. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet succeed in infiltrating the dominant discourses in France and Canada, but their literary works and their life experiences indicate that social, cultural, and political remnants of imperial structures remain strong during the late twentieth century, particularly for women in these societies.

### **Culture, Language, and Gender**

Schwarz-Bart's and Maillet's personal experiences and their novels provide evidence that while resistance to colonial legacies might have been more politically and socially manifest through the writings and actions of the 1970s and 1980s, women authors battled against powerful language and gender institutions established through nineteenth- and

twentieth-century imperialism. Both women, while experiencing tremendous opportunities and proving themselves acclaimed authors, often were limited by the colonial walls they were trying to deconstruct. The presence of this enduring colonial structure surfaces in looking at the prejudices they encountered as women from marginalized communities, as well as the challenges they faced in trying to validate their Creole language and Acadian dialect.

As will be detailed later in this chapter, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet reveal through their novels a shared desire to disrupt engrained and faulty understandings of their societies' colonial pasts. These understandings stem from problems of archival silencing, high rates of illiteracy, absences in national and colonial narratives, bias and selectivity in the interpretation of archival documents, as well as in the production of literary and historical works by those outside of their community (for example, the *Evangeline* and *Louis Delgrès* narratives explored in the third chapter). To actively confront these problems of archival erasures and imposed histories, as well as to preserve cultural traditions, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet weave together oral history, folklore, music, and memories that have been handed down over generations in their communities.

Schwarz-Bart testifies that she began writing in order to fill the vacancies of a history and a memory that are fragmented, as well as to acquire deeper knowledge of

herself and her ancestry that she could reveal on her own terms.<sup>6</sup> Schwarz-Bart observes how in most European societies, the imaginary and the real have been extremely separated, yet for Guadeloupeans of African descent they “know very well that the imaginary is part of the real. What is real? Nothing is real.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly Antonine Maillet observes how in the arts, “we create an image of reality, we can do that with painting, we can do that with music, we can do that with language, in literature we give a different vision of what is reality to better define reality.”<sup>8</sup> Maillet testifies to her belief that “the novel often renders more accurately the reality of a century, an era, or a place than the simple transcription of the History.”<sup>9</sup> In contributing to the creation of this imagined reality with the intention to counter engrained historical narratives that deny their peoples’ agency or underscore their victimhood, both authors confront subjects often obscure or absent in the archives and in adopted narratives, including oral traditions and women’s roles.

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<sup>6</sup> Gladys M. Francis, “Entretien avec Simone Schwarz-Bart: ‘Vivre à Tout-Monde,’” in *Amour, sexe, genre et trauma dans la Caraïbe francophone* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 203.

<sup>7</sup> Isabelle Constant, “Entretien sur le rêve avec Simone Schwarz-Bart,” *Nouvelles études francophones* XVII, no. 1 (2002): 108.

<sup>8</sup> Maillet, interview. “Bon, alors on crée l’image de la réalité, ça on peut faire en peinture, on peut faire en musique, on peut faire avec la langue, en littérature on donne une vision différente que ce qu’est la réalité pour mieux définir la réalité.”

<sup>9</sup> Lise Gauvin, “Retrouver l’origine: Antonine Maillet,” in *L’écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues: Entretiens* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1997), 107. “Aussi je crois que le roman très souvent rend plus fidèlement une réalité d’un siècle, d’une époque ou d’un lieu que la simple transcription de l’Histoire.”

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet each acknowledge the influence of American author William Faulkner, and articles and interviews by scholars Danielle Lefort and Gladys Francis underscore congruencies between their works and his. Like Faulkner, Schwarz-Bart's and Maillet's novels often include stories of a return to a native land, while attempting to challenge a "reductive myth" that enshrouds their societies. They focus on seasons, geographical surroundings and the power of the natural environment, as well as the broadening of a regional narrative to provide lessons for humanity.<sup>10</sup> Local dialect and women's agency are two other core elements of Faulkner's work that are evident in Schwarz-Bart's and Maillet's novels.<sup>11</sup> Faulkner garnered great acclaim by the mid-twentieth century for his literature and won the Nobel Prize in 1950, yet Schwarz-Bart and Maillet encountered criticism and hindrances as they confronted colonial legacies of language and gender in their literature and in their own life experiences.

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet took new steps in calling for the validation of their people's language and dialect, and there are ties between their linguistic origins. Maillet traces Acadian dialect to seventeenth-century French regions such as Touraine and

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<sup>10</sup> Danielle Lefort, "L'influence de W. Faulkner sur Antonine Maillet," *Études canadiennes/Canadian Studies* 37 (1994): 298–302; Damien Dauphin, "Antonine Maillet: 'J'ai fait passer de l'oral à l'écrit l'histoire d'une langue et d'un peuple,'" *Acadie Nouvelle*, July 4, 2014; Francis, "Entretien avec Simone Schwarz-Bart," 199.

<sup>11</sup> Mark W. Lencho, "Dialect Variation in *The Sound and the Fury*: A Study of Faulkner's Use of Black English," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 410; Deborah Clarke, *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 14–15; Lefort, "L'influence de W. Faulkner sur Antonine Maillet," 300.

Poitou, while Raphaël Confiant also argues that 90% of Creole language comes from the “dialectal French” found in regions of Normandy, Poitou, Picardy, and the Vendée prior to the publication of Malherbe’s formal French dictionary. In an interview where Confiant speaks highly of Maillet, he connects the origins of Creole with that of Acadian dialects, but contrasts how Creole evolved uniquely on the islands that were greater hubs for international trade than pre-dispersal Acadian communities.<sup>12</sup>

Schwarz-Bart recalls hearing Creole spoken by the people surrounding her as a child, but her mother who was an educator did not allow her to speak the language. Schwarz-Bart states that it “was difficult at that time to consider Creole as a means for social advancement; French was absolutely necessary.”<sup>13</sup> In her novel *Pluie et vent*, Schwarz-Bart weaves Guadeloupean Creole inside a French narrative and forms a language labeled as “le téluméen.” She recounts that she did this weaving of languages out of “respect, as I could not create the people and the world I wanted to create without the language that is theirs.”<sup>14</sup> According to Raphaël Confiant, Schwarz-Bart “has expanded the confines of French and has created a thoroughly creole ambiance,” yet like many other French Caribbean authors her use of Creole stays limited out of wanting to

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<sup>12</sup> Raphaël Confiant, *Origins and Future of Creole Language and Culture*, interview by Jacqueline Couti, May 27, 2003, <https://www.potomitan.info/divers/origins.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Lise Gauvin, “La Belle au bois dormant: Simone Schwarz-Bart,” in *L’écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues: entretiens* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1997), 120. “C’était difficile à cette époque-là de considérer la langue créole comme un moteur d’ascension sociale; il fallait absolument en passer par le français.”

<sup>14</sup> Gauvin, 121; Francis, “Entretien avec Simone Schwarz-Bart,” 198–99.

have a broad reading audience that spans France and other Francophone societies.<sup>15</sup>

Confiant, who tries to write in Creole, observes that, “Unless [the reader] has knowledge of Creole, he can only understand fragments of our text. This is serious for us; if Creole disappears, that means our texts will only be partially understood, even by our compatriots.”<sup>16</sup> Schwarz-Bart, who wrote prior to the movement for créolité led by Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Jean Bernabé in the 1980s, may “penetrate the French text” and “infuse within it creole patterns and rhythms which alter the original” but she still faces the power of the French language as “French is syntactically preserved” in her novels.<sup>17</sup>

Maillet testifies to how in the 1950s and 1960s, as Acadians began to realize that they were a unique people, there was a growing awareness that “they were responsible to save a language that was in the process of being lost.”<sup>18</sup> The Acadian dialects faced adversaries on two fronts, with English being the dominant language in Canada and post-Malherbe French being the dominant language in France. Similar to Schwarz-Bart, who learned Creole by listening to those in her surrounding community, Maillet explains that her knowledge of Acadian dialects also came from listening to those outside of her

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<sup>15</sup> Karen Smyley Wallace, “Créolité and the Feminine Text in Simone Schwarz-Bart,” *The French Review* 70, no. 4 (1997): 560; Confiant, *Origins and Future of Creole Language and Culture*.

<sup>16</sup> Confiant, *Origins and Future of Creole Language and Culture*.

<sup>17</sup> Wallace, “Créolité and the Feminine Text,” 554, 557.

<sup>18</sup> Maillet, interview. “en 50, 60, c’est à ce moment-là que les Acadien ont pris conscience qu’ils étaient un peuple à part, qu’ils étaient responsables de sauvegarder un langue qui était en train de se perdre”.

home.<sup>19</sup> Like in Guadeloupe, where knowing Creole did not allow as much opportunity as knowing French, Maillet describes how in her hometown “English was the language of power and of money, and us, French, we were “the others.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, she began her education in English until opportunities arose for a French education once she reached secondary school, and she later went to university in Québec. Maillet attests to her writing being “a form of resistance” to “defend the French language” among Acadians and to counter the “English adversary.”<sup>21</sup> Confiant expresses his fear of how Creole may get lost as “French relentlessly encroaches on its territory,” while Maillet laments the influence of English on Acadian dialects that has led to what she once termed as the “bastard language” of Chiac.<sup>22</sup>

Added to Maillet’s concern over anglicization is her awareness of the precarious future of Acadian dialects against official French. Maillet focused on tracing Acadian vernacular to its French origins when she worked on her thesis at the Université Laval in Québec. Following in the footsteps of Acadian historian and politician Pascal Poirier, who pursued the legitimation of Acadian French, Maillet argues that many words in the Acadian dialect are first found in Rabelais’ written works, but that these words disappeared from the official French language documented by Malherbe in the

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<sup>19</sup> Gauvin, “Retrouver l’origine,” 103.

<sup>20</sup> Gauvin, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Gauvin, 99, 101.

<sup>22</sup> Gauvin, 106; Confiant, *Origins and Future of Creole Language and Culture*.

seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, they only exist by being handed down in Acadian oral tradition. In 1970, Maillet began writing stories of a poor Acadian cleaning lady known as La Sagouine, yet she had apprehensions as to whether the stories would get published due to the oral nature of the piece. Much to Maillet's surprise her earliest stories of La Sagouine went to press, yet Maillet recalls how her works raised debate even among Acadians themselves over language: "– This language, is this what we want to teach our children? – After generations of trying to speak properly?"<sup>24</sup> Maillet's La Sagouine stories became popular, and she started allowing herself greater autonomy with orality in her subsequent publications. She revealed a growing confidence that rather than being "behind the times" in a condescending way with their language, Acadians could take pride in their linguistic "origins" of ancient France.<sup>25</sup> In coming years, critiques of her use of language continued, however, and in 1977 when she lost the Prix Goncourt for *Les Cordes-de-bois*, the president of the jury reportedly stated that the prize "could not be given for a work written in a language from before Malherbe," a comment that reflects the prejudices of the French nation-state to those seen as outsiders, even toward a

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<sup>23</sup> Annette Boudreau and Émilie Urbain, "La presse comme tribune d'un discours d'autorité sur la langue : représentations et idéologies linguistiques dans la presse acadienne, de la fondation du *Moniteur acadien* aux Conventions nationales," *Francophonies d'Amérique*, no. 35 (Spring 2013): 36–38; Maillet, interview.

<sup>24</sup> Antonine Maillet, *Clin d'oeil au Temps qui passe* (Ottawa: Leméac, 2019), 82. "—Cette langue, c'est celle-là qu'on veut enseigner à nos enfants? – Après les générations d'effort pour parler comme du monde".

<sup>25</sup> Gauvin, "Retrouver l'origine," 98.

community that originated from colonial France.<sup>26</sup> When Maillet won the Prix Goncourt in 1979, she chose to speak French at a reception in Ottawa, but said, “there was nothing political intended. It was to emphasize that Acadian culture has won world recognition ‘on our own ticket.’”<sup>27</sup> Like with Schwarz-Bart’s “téluméen,” Maillet “almost had to invent a writing to transcribe an orality” leading to the creation of what has been termed as “mailletien.”<sup>28</sup> Through their lexical inventions Schwarz-Bart and Maillet pushed against strong walls of linguistic constraints established through former imperial powers and often still supported in France and Canada in the late twentieth century.

Another lasting legacy of colonialism that these women authors encountered is that of gender bias that marginalized them in the field of literature. In the histories of Acadians and of Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent, pasts of colonial diaspora caused the disruption of gender roles through family separations and experiences of poverty that in many instances resulted in women acting as providers for their families.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, in Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian societies in the

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<sup>26</sup> Dauphin, “J’ai fait passer de l’oral.” “Il a dit une phrase qu’il a regrettée par la suite, car les journalistes l’ont relevée: on ne peut pas donner le Prix Goncourt à une œuvre écrite dans la langue d’avant Malherbe.”

<sup>27</sup> “Maillet Tells Reception: Acadian Culture Winning Recognition ... Finally,” *The Telegraph Journal*, December 7, 1979.

<sup>28</sup> Gauvin, “Retrouver l’origine,” 104; Renato Venâncio Henriques De Sousa, “Histoire et histoires dans *Pélagie-la-Charrette*: le récit oral comme sauvegarde de la mémoire collective,” in *Lire Antonine Maillet à travers le temps et l’espace*, ed. Marie-Linda Lord (Moncton: Institut d’études acadiennes, 2010), 130.

<sup>29</sup> Angelita Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures: Postcolonial Representations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 11; Le Guerne, “Copie d’une lettre écrite par Monsieur L’Abbé le Guerne,” 346–56.

twentieth century, delineations of women's roles and presumed abilities reflected paternalistic gender hierarchies constructed and instilled through nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism. The Canadian and French political orders maintained many gender biases that socially and politically marginalized women, and this permeated the spheres of art and literature. The enduring power of gender bias is evident in the newspaper announcement for the Goncourt mentioned in the opening to this chapter, where the journalist highlights the unprecedented event of three women authors being finalists for the Goncourt in 1979.<sup>30</sup>

The history of gender hierarchy in Acadian society, as well as among French Caribbean people of African descent, has recently been brought to the foreground via two compilations: *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848-2016* (2018) and *Paroles et regards de femmes en Acadie* (2020). The editors of these compilations emphasize how Black French women's and Acadian women's contributions to their communities, that include pursuits of freedom, rights, education, and the preservation of cultural heritage have been vastly overlooked. Concerning the Antilles, Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel draws attention to how Black women such as lawyer and politician Gerty Archimède fought for voting rights, economic reform, and political freedom, yet her

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<sup>30</sup> "Demain le Goncourt."

actions have gone largely unacknowledged in French colonial studies.<sup>31</sup> Pertaining to women literary authors, Jacqueline Couti examines how Suzanne Lacascade and Paulette and Jane Nardal used their French education to address issues of oppression in their literature, yet their novels reveal many of the “roadblocks that feminism from the French Caribbean had to overcome”.<sup>32</sup> In *Paroles et regards de femmes en Acadie* the editors build on a scattering of previous studies to raise awareness of women’s contribution to Acadian ways of thinking when it comes to culture, society, and politics. The editors reference Monika Boehringer’s collection “Auteurs acadiennes: création et critique” that brings attention to how works by women authors existed “on the margins of the great identity canons of Acadian poetry - written by men.”<sup>33</sup> Contributor Benoit Doyon-Gosselin describes the poor reception of the majority of Acadian women’s writings in their own community and at large. He argues that it is not due to differences between men and women’s writings in style or content, but with Acadian literature “the critical and scientific reception dominated by men has not considered the works written by

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<sup>31</sup> Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, “Gerty Archimède and the Struggle for Decolonial Citizenship in the French Antilles, 1946-51,” in *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848-2016*, ed. Félix Germain and Silyane Larcher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 90.

<sup>32</sup> Jacqueline Couti, “Am I My Sister’s Keeper? The Politics of Propriety and the Fight for Equality in the Works of French Antillean Women Writers, 1920s-40s,” in *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848-2016*, ed. Félix Germain and Silyane Larcher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 144.

<sup>33</sup> Jimmy Thibeault et al., “Introduction,” in *Paroles et regards de femmes en Acadie* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2020), 7.

women at their true value.”<sup>34</sup> Through their lived experiences and their literature, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet reckon with these enduring colonial gender norms that compound on the prejudices they have experienced as members of marginalized societies.

In her novel *Télumée* and in a series entitled *Hommage à la Femme Noire* (1988), Schwarz-Bart stands against both colonial and anti-colonial works that feature “gender stereotyping” by granting men greater authority and agency than women.<sup>35</sup> Bonnie Thomas states that Schwarz-Bart’s novel *Pluie et vent* “is not laced with radical feminist judgement,” yet at the same time Schwarz-Bart “acknowledges that the absence of the father figure is a constant thread in her narrative, reflecting the reality of many French Caribbean women.”<sup>36</sup> She is very direct in her call for women’s validation as she observes “for women... How can they not be strong? They had no choice! And the women of the Black diaspora, they really had no choice. They inherited a man who was completely ruined, a man who could never fill his obligation as a father, husband, protector”.<sup>37</sup> Schwarz-Bart underscores the importance of women as mothers and testifies

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<sup>34</sup> Benoit Doyon-Gosselin, “*La conversation entre hommes. La première prise de parole poétique au féminin en Acadie*,” in *Paroles et regards de femmes en Acadie*, ed. Jimmy Thibeault et al. (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2020), 263. “la réception critique et scientifique dominée par les hommes n’a pas considéré les oeuvres écrites par des femmes à leur juste valeur.”

<sup>35</sup> Bonnie Thomas, *Breadfruit or Chestnut? Gender Construction in the French Caribbean Novel* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 25, 29; Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures*, 123–24.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas, *Breadfruit or Chestnut?*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Francis, “Entretien avec Simone Schwarz-Bart,” 199. “Bien entendu, pour les femmes... Comment ne pas être fortes? Elles n’avaient pas le choix! Et les femmes de la diaspora noire, elles n’avaient vraiment pas le choix. Elles héritaient d’un homme complètement dépouillé, un homme qui ne pouvait absolument pas remplir ses obligations de père, de mari, de protecteur, de quoi que ce soit.”

to the power of women over life and legacy, as women have the “extraordinary power” to “create” life and to enable their children to survive on their own.<sup>38</sup>

Schwarz-Bart explains needing to confront a fragmented history and memory as a Black woman in order to better know and respect herself. She observes that “We need to know our ancestors, to know that we had people before us like ourselves who accomplished all kinds of beautiful things that bring us into the human lineage from above. [...] We must be proud of ourselves.”<sup>39</sup> According to Maryse Condé in her theories of the evolution of French Caribbean literature, leading up to Schwarz-Bart’s works “we have been fed upon triumphant portrayals of messianic heroes coming back to revolutionize their societies .... In *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Simone Schwarz-Bart was the first to dare to shatter this myth and place West Indian women where they belong – at the forefront of the daily battle for survival.” Condé then testifies that because Schwarz-Bart’s novel was seen as “transgressing the image of the male” it received criticism even in Guadeloupe, and only later received recognition when it was described as a feminine version of Jacques Roumain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée*.<sup>40</sup> Scholars Richard and Sally Price testify to how women in Martinique are “den[ied] entry into such areas of

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<sup>38</sup> Francis, 199–200.

<sup>39</sup> Francis, 203. “Il faut que nous connaissions nos ancêtres, que nous sachions que nous avons eu avant nous des personnes qui étaient nous et qui ont accompli toutes sortes de choses si belles qui nous font rentrer dans la lignée humaine par le haut. [...] Il faut être fier de soi.”

<sup>40</sup> Maryse Condé, “Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 97 (2000): 133–34; See also Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 55.

authority as historical knowledge, political power, cultural interpretation, or public literary creativity”.<sup>41</sup> According to the Prices, the literary movement of *créolité* tends “to erase women as active agents of cultural production” and “to deal with living female writers and critics by simply silencing them.” They recount how in 1993 a Martinican newspaper article entitled “Femmes, les écrivains vous aiment!” lauded fictional women characters created by six Caribbean male authors including Simone’s husband André, but made no mention of Simone.<sup>42</sup>

In Acadian society, nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial gender constructs exist as well, and consequently there is a noted absence of women and their stories even in contemporary Acadian studies. Scholar Isabelle LeBlanc recently wrote that “we are still at the stage of identifying the material and documentary heritage of women with the direct consequence that a large part of women’s lives remain unknown, forgotten, or left behind.”<sup>43</sup> Antonine Maillet does not claim to be primarily inspired by feminist ideologies, pointedly stating in an interview that “I am in agreement that women need to be given a place, but that is not what motivated me.” She then continues, “What

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Price and Sally Price, “Shadowboxing in the Mangrove,” *Cultural Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (1997): 17.

<sup>42</sup> Price and Price, 16, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Isabelle LeBlanc, “Où sont les femmes dans la mémoire collective acadienne?,” June 16, 2020, [https://www.acfas.ca/publications/magazine/2020/06/sont-femmes-memoire-collective-acadienne#:~:text=De%20gauche%20%C3%A0%20droite%20%3A%20Clint,l'Universit%C3%A9%20de%20Moncton](https://www.acfas.ca/publications/magazine/2020/06/sont-femmes-memoire-collective-acadienne#:~:text=De%20gauche%20%C3%A0%20droite%20%3A%20Clint,l'Universit%C3%A9%20de%20Moncton.). “Dans le domaine des études acadiennes, nous en sommes encore aujourd’hui à l’étape d’identifier le patrimoine matériel et documentaire des femmes avec comme conséquence directe qu’une grande part de la vie des femmes demeure inconnue, oubliée ou laissée-pour-compte.”

motivated me is that the characters that I created were inspired by women, in other words, women had to defend themselves in a way that was indirect, they symbolized Acadia, much more than men because the Acadians needed to defend themselves with cunning, that is to say as foxes, not wolves.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, Maillet argues that it is women who best personify Acadia, with its methods of survival as a people. Similar to Schwarz-Bart, Maillet observes that it is women, particularly mothers, who hold the ability and responsibility to “advance humanity” and in *Pélagie*, “the women characters have decided to give birth without the help of their men. [...] the female characters in *Pélagie* unite in a fierce rebirthing of Acadie that the men can only witness but not participate in.”<sup>45</sup> Maillet testifies to women’s “cunning,” “skillfulness,” and their ability to “outmaneuver,” and her literature reveals both her sympathies for women and her pride in their abilities in a world where they have faced discrimination.<sup>46</sup> In the Prologue to *Le huitième jour*, Maillet imagines her own created world, “in which girls are also boys;

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<sup>44</sup> Maillet, interview. “puis je suis d’accord qu’il faut donner la place aux femmes mais ce n’est pas ça qui m’a motivé. Ce qui m’a motivé c’est que les personnages que j’ai créé m’ont été inspirés par des femmes, en d’autres mots, les femmes devaient se défendre d’une façon indirecte, elles étaient symbolique de l’Acadie, beaucoup plus que les hommes parce que les Acadiens devaient se défendre avec la ruse, c’étaient des renards, pas des loups.”

<sup>45</sup> Éloïse Brière, “Antonine Maillet and the Construction of Acadian Identity,” in *Postcolonial Subjects: Francophone Women Writers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 13.

<sup>46</sup> Maillet, interview. “Donc, ça, ça me plaisait énormément, c’est un thème familial, les femmes rusées, les femmes habiles, les femmes qui déjouaient, pour pouvoir arriver à leurs fins, puis leurs fins c’était pas d’être supérieures, c’était de se défendre, c’était d’avoir des enfants qu’elles pouvaient...c’était défendre les droits essentiels, en fait, et les femmes ont plus fait pour faire progresser, d’après-moi, là, faire progresser l’humanité à un moment donné quand elles ont acquis de l’indépendance et des pouvoirs, parce qu’elles ont donné à l’humanité la moitié des forces qui étaient là pour faire grandir l’humanité”.

where children are both children and grown ups at the same time; where everything is both itself and something else – everything else – and is always able to start life anew.”<sup>47</sup>

In her autobiography *Clin d’oeil au temps qui passe*, in a chapter that tells of her mother’s death, Maillet writes:

That day I felt running down my cheeks true women’s tears, of all women, mothers who buried their children before they saw their eyes open, who saw their son leave for war, a husband fishing on days with the worst weather, who come from exile in a cart, who hide in the woods during a hundred years, then who finally come out of their front door to cry to their neighbors that it will be beautiful tomorrow, all the women, those of my race, of the race of others [...].<sup>48</sup>

Maillet’s lament reveals her deep sentiments for all women who face tremendous challenges, loss, and sorrow.

In other sections of her autobiography Maillet testifies to circumstances where in hindsight she saw that as a woman she was marginalized in her career. She recounts how when she taught at Laval, she met with a department director to express her desire to teach a course in French literature, but she learned that the course had been given to a male professor from France. She acknowledges her acceptance of this decision at the time, as she knew that she was “Acadienne” – neither French, nor a man.<sup>49</sup> In an

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<sup>47</sup> Antonine Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, trans. Wayne Grady (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2006), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Maillet, *Clin d’oeil au Temps qui passe*, 52. “Ce jour-là j’ai senti sur mes joues couler des vraies larmes de femme, de toutes les femmes, les mères qui enterrent des enfants avant d’avoir vu leurs yeux ouverts, qui voient partir un fils à la guerre, un mari à la pêche les jours de mauvais temps, qui rentrent d’exil en charrette, qui se cachent dans les bois durant cent ans, puis qui sortent enfin sur leur devant de porte pour crier aux voisines qu’il fera beau temps demain, toutes les femmes, celles de ma race, de la race des autres”.

<sup>49</sup> Maillet, 74.

interview at McGill she sensed the condescension of another director due to her interest in oral literature, and after applying for a position at Brébeuf she “was told that it was necessary to give precedence to male breadwinners.”<sup>50</sup> She describes being on the sixteen member jury for the Monaco literary prize in the 1980s, where she was the only female jurist. At a large gathering for the jury and their invitees, Maillet recalls a moment where the men and women split company and each went to two different rooms. Maillet opted to accompany the women, but in the men’s room next door a photographer took a picture of the jury. In counting heads, the photographer discovered that Maillet was absent, and called Maillet to join the men so the photo could be taken again. While Maillet does not explicitly critique the implications of this scenario, she emphasizes how in coming years more and more women began to participate on the jury panel for this award.<sup>51</sup> Maillet’s lack of explicitness prompts the question as to why she has not been more brazen in the realm of feminism. Maillet reveals a profound cognizance that by speaking through fictional characters including La Sagouine and Pélagie - that she portrays as having “a fox’s cunning” - Maillet herself acts with careful calculation that has enabled her to garner a broad and receptive audience.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Maillet, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Maillet, 107–9.

<sup>52</sup> Maillet, interview.

As Guadeloupean and Acadian women, Schwarz-Bart's and Maillet's personal experiences of marginalization reveal the enduring power of the colonial structures their societies occupy. At the same time, rather than trying to perpetuate movements for Antillean and Acadian nationalism launched in the 1950s and 1960s that called for separatist political action, these authors employ their literature to celebrate and preserve their culture and history, as well as to liberate themselves and their societies from imposed historical narratives. As their societies were experiencing the collapse or disintegration of movements for autonomy, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet acknowledge their communities' struggles while providing messages of redemption and resurrection. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet adopt new approaches in attempting to tear down the enduring colonial walls binding their societies.

### **Self-Redemption in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* and *Pélagie-la-Charrette***

Through their novels *Pluie et vent* (1972) and *Pélagie* (1979), Schwarz-Bart and Maillet counter dominant historical narratives that silence, distort, or falsify the histories of Acadians and of French Caribbean people of African descent. The leading protagonists Télumée Miracle and Pélagie are each unique in terms of ancestry, exile, and cultural traditions, but comparison of these novels uncovers common traits in colonial experience, remembrance, and pursuit of cultural validation for Acadians and for descendants of enslaved Africans in the French Antilles. The stories of matriarchs Télumée and Pélagie

include themes of diaspora, enslavement, and self-redemption as Schwarz-Bart and Maillet aim to shape their societies' knowledge of the past and prevent their cultures from vanishing.

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet put into print oral traditions of folklore and song as they bring to the forefront the threat of cultural extinction for their societies as a result of their colonial encounters. In facing this threat, leading protagonists Télumée and Pélagie search to find both “a common and individual reconciliation” with pasts of forced displacement, while not sacrificing cultural traditions and memories that constitute their identity.<sup>53</sup> Through Télumée’s search for “common reconciliation” Schwarz-Bart describes how many Guadeloupeans held on to traditions rooted in their African past, while also emphasizing the importance of acknowledging Guadeloupe as their new homeland. This does not mean an abandonment of the past, and Télumée discovers that reconciling her people’s tragedies of diaspora requires guarding the echoes of African traditions present in the evolved culture of her collective Guadeloupean family. A grafting of “Africanité” and of the “new world” is found in the Creole language, music, proverbs, and storytelling in the text, as Télumée strives to protect and nurture this joining of tissues that has created new roots and new shoots.<sup>54</sup> Schwarz-Bart portrays

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<sup>53</sup> Catherine John, *Clear Word and Third Sight: Folk Groundings and Diasporic Consciousness in African Caribbean Writing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 114.

<sup>54</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 2; John, *Clear Word and Third Sight*, 115.

Télumée's capacity to perform this integration through preserving cultural traditions and through her quest for reconciliation with her societies' diasporic past.<sup>55</sup>

Télumée also reckons with displacement in an individual sense, as she becomes uprooted from her grandmother's garden where she found security and sustenance as a child.<sup>56</sup> As she grew up and got married, Télumée left to build a home with her husband where they planted their own garden, but what appeared to be a happy marriage soon fell apart. Télumée's world becomes upset when she experiences the drunken brutality of her husband and she is forced from their home. She suffers a personal exile with a journey through what may be interpreted as infertile lands. Télumée's home and her property were two possessions previously core to her personal identity, and she finds herself in circumstances where she is a foreigner, living among "the Brotherhood of the Displaced."<sup>57</sup> Over the course of her exile and the dangers that she faces, Télumée never loses her hope of returning to a place where she might find provision and protection, and can resume growing as an individual. By the end of the story, Télumée succeeds in surviving her displacement as she once again gains possession of a garden, and in nearing death she proclaims, "But I shall die here, where I am, standing in my little garden. What happiness!"<sup>58</sup> Télumée returns to having a personal sanctuary that is distinct from her

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas, *Breadfruit or Chestnut?*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 27–29.

<sup>57</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 91, 100, 112–13, 127–28.

<sup>58</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 173.

grandmother's garden as a result of her journey and the passing of time, yet like her surrounding Guadeloupean community, she becomes safely replanted rather than being destroyed by exile.<sup>59</sup>

In Maillet's novel, Pélagie pursues communal reconciliation to the Acadian diasporic past as she leads Acadians scattered in British American colonies on a quest for reunion on their former homeland. For Pélagie, it is this reunification of a scattered people that is necessary for reconciliation to occur. After picking cotton in Georgia for fifteen years, Pélagie saves enough money to purchase "a cart and three teams of oxen" to try to return to the north.<sup>60</sup> She desires to save her people from the power of Anglophone culture and language, as Acadians face being assimilated due to British intentions with the Deportation. In order to overcome the tragedy of the Grand Dérangement, Pélagie determinedly leads any family and friends who will join her back to their homeland.<sup>61</sup> Along the way, however, there is a growing realization that reconciliation could not be based on acquired geography, but instead on cultural preservation. Similar to the grafting Schwarz-Bart does with "Africanité" and the "new world" to find communal

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<sup>59</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 172–73; Evelyne Bisailon, "Pluie et vent sur *Téluée Miracle*: Comment la terre antillaise et l'évolution des personnages féminins principaux s'entre-influencent à travers l'imaginaire culturel local," ed. Rachel Bouvet, *Paysages, parcours, cartes, habitations*, l'Observatoire de l'imaginaire contemporain, April 5, 2019, para. 12, <http://oic.uqam.ca/fr/carnets/paysages-parcours-cartes-habitations/pluie-et-vent-sur-telume-miracle-comment-la-terre>.

<sup>60</sup> Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, trans. Philip Stratford (London: John Calder Publishers Ltd., 1982), 7.

<sup>61</sup> Maillet, 232.

reconciliation, Maillet's work grafts together pre- and post-dispersal Acadian societies through the narrative of survivors who aim to sustain their identity by preserving cultural traditions, while also undergoing transformation as a result of their experiences of displacement.<sup>62</sup>

Pélagie's personal exile is intertwined with her community's displacement since she is violently forced from her home and separated from many of her family and friends. In working alongside the enslaved, she resolves to escape such constraints to return to the north. She finds longing and comfort in her memories of her "promised land," where she believes her soul will be at ease.<sup>63</sup> She embarks on a journey over hostile territories with companions who are not always loyal to her aims. Just as Télumée finally arrives in a new garden after her perilous voyage, Pélagie succeeds in returning to the north, but discovers new occupants of her former homeland. Pélagie accepts that her body can be buried in the land she came from, and after she is buried her surviving companions journey further north to another region. In this new territory they re-plant Acadian roots that now include a newly grafted branch through the "transcultural contacts" of their Deportation experiences."<sup>64</sup> In these stories Pélagie and Télumée pursue reconciliation to

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<sup>62</sup> Brigitta Brown, "Transculturation in Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette*," in *Lire Antonine Maillet à travers le temps et l'espace*, ed. Marie-Linda Lord (Moncton: Institut d'études acadiennes, 2010), 118.

<sup>63</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, 121.

<sup>64</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, 241–45; Quotation in Brown, "Transculturation in Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-Charrette*," 115.

diasporic pasts through physical and spiritual returns to longed-for sanctuaries, each with “strength and resilience” that “will pass on from this life, only to be reborn in others.”<sup>65</sup>

While there is some sense of resolution through these quests, their deaths imply that “death is only another beginning, not a final departure,” and enduring apprehensions of uprootedness cannot be fully vanquished for Guadeloupean and Acadian societies.<sup>66</sup>

These apprehensions are part of the grafting that has occurred and are now core to their communities’ substance.

Through these individual and communal displacements, the heroines each encounter the powerful and enduring effects of enslavement in the Atlantic World. In her book *The Intimacies of Four Continents* literary scholar Lisa Lowe examines how today’s “social inequalities” are rooted in the colonial quest for “liberalism” that ironically depended on the subjugation of others. Lowe builds on literary sources and works by other scholars that have contributed to altering methodologies in fields of colonial studies such as Judith Butler, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Saidya Hartman, and Ann Laura Stoler, to contend that with Britain’s pronounced ending of the trade of the enslaved in the nineteenth century, new forms of exploitation surfaced in labouring societies under the capitalist economic power of empires.<sup>67</sup> Given the prominence of scholarly studies over

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<sup>65</sup> Wallace, “Créolité and the Feminine Text,” 560.

<sup>66</sup> Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures*, 132.

<sup>67</sup> Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 10, 26–27.

the last thirty years that challenge the supposition that ending colonial enslavement resulted in freedom for all, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet place themselves at the forefront of wrestling with assumptions of who qualifies as a bearer of “freedom” in the modern, liberal world.<sup>68</sup> Rather than using the language of enslavement symbolically to connect the experiences of those who are marginalized in the twentieth century to those who experienced enslavement (as seen in poems by Rupaire and LeBlanc), Schwarz-Bart and Maillet reflect on the intricacies of the histories of their peoples who have deep roots in colonial Atlantic economy and trade. Schwarz-Bart explores how despite Guadeloupeans of African descent gaining supposed “freedom” under the French government since emancipation, consequences of enslavement continue to haunt Guadeloupean society. In *Pélagie*, Maillet brings implications of Acadian oppression into the narrative of what would conventionally be defined as a “free” white society.

Throughout *Pluie et vent*, Schwarz-Bart questions the true finality of enslavement in Guadeloupe given how its consequences endure into the twentieth century. Schwarz-Bart places Télumée post-emancipation, but in an environment still dominated by the white French-elitist class. In reflecting on her ancestors’ history, Télumée observes how

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<sup>68</sup> Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*; Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830--1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Demetrius Eudell, *The Political Language of Emancipation in the British Caribbean and the U.S. South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xxiii.

her own social circle often resigns itself to the belief that “we’re only a pack of Negroes all in the same boat, without any fathers and mothers before God.”<sup>69</sup> In describing her family’s experiences, Télumée recounts how her great-grandparents’ economic successes provoked jealousy among their neighbors who asked, “Who do they take themselves for, these wealthy Negroes? [...] do they think all these things make them white?”<sup>70</sup> For Télumée, these memories denote the fact that the social ladder that exists in Guadeloupe is not only constructed and reinforced by white society, but is often accepted by Black people themselves. Schwarz-Bart alludes to how many in Guadeloupe’s Black society have stayed immobile in a position dictated by others, unless they opt to abandon their own cultural roots. This quest for “whiteness” becomes apparent when Télumée encounters her mother Victoire and her step-sister Régina after a long separation. Victoire proudly explains how Régina was now “sleeping in a bed, eating apples from France, wearing a dress with puff sleeves, and going to school” and rather than only marking her identity with “a cross” could sign her own name.<sup>71</sup> Victoire implies that abandonment of Black traditions are necessary to have an identity deemed to be valid in the social and political environment constructed through colonialism. A few years later, Télumée encounters Régina again, and Régina extends “a gloved hand” that hides her

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<sup>69</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 11.

<sup>71</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 40–41.

true identity from white society, as well as from herself and her own family.<sup>72</sup> After this interaction Télumée never sees her step-sister again, implying how Régina becomes lost in white society through hiding her true self.

As Télumée journeys outside of her garden she continues to become more conscious of the social and cultural effects of enslavement. In working for a white family she discovers that she needs to protect herself against two forms of power, one psychological and the other physical. Télumée is under the manipulative control of Madame Desaragne who, in response to someone commenting on Télumée's beauty, "coldly" observes that "A Negro's a Negro, but since the music of the whip is no longer in their ears they take themselves for civilized."<sup>73</sup> Madame Desaragne tries to damage Télumée's perception of herself in order to guard control of the environment they shared. In terms of physical power, Télumée faces the dangers of being sexually violated by Monsieur Desaragne, where on one occasion he tries to put his hands under her skirt and possessively claims, "I need a little singing Negress more lively than lightning, a little blue-black Negress, that's what I like."<sup>74</sup> With these psychological and physical violations, Télumée attests to continuing ramifications of enslavement that reside "perhaps in the air I was breathing."<sup>75</sup> Enslavement may be abolished according to the

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<sup>72</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 41.

<sup>73</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 71.

<sup>74</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 72.

<sup>75</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 39.

law, but its effects – while perhaps either concealed or selectively remembered - permeate each individual, each family, and each community, and determine Télumée’s place outside of her garden.

Maillet describes how Acadian families endured exile to regions of the Americas economically dependent on enslaved labour.<sup>76</sup> She exposes struggles of subjugation that Acadians underwent when labouring alongside enslaved people and when facing harsh government war restrictions, and these are experiences that few people outside of the Acadian community would have been aware of when her book was published.<sup>77</sup> Maillet’s story opens with a depiction of Pélagie labouring alongside the enslaved in Georgia for almost a generation “under [...] the boot of a brutal cotton planter who swung his whip with the same contempt on his black slaves and the poor whites.”<sup>78</sup> Forcibly dislocated from her homeland where she knew “independence” in cultivating her own land, Pélagie now labours under the imposed authority of another.<sup>79</sup> Maillet makes a distinction from enslaved society, however, as after being “harnessed to the plough of slavery” for almost a generation, Pélagie succeeds in saving enough money to acquire a wagon and oxen to carry herself and her exiled compatriots north.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hodson, “Idlers and Idolators,” 205–6; Hubbard and Clarke, “An Act Relating to the Late Inhabitants,” 89.

<sup>77</sup> Magord, *The Quest for Autonomy in Acadia*, 107.

<sup>78</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 7; Casmier, “L’appropriation de l’expérience ‘noire,’” 189.

<sup>79</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 7.

<sup>80</sup> Maillet, 7.

Pélagie and her companions stop to search for a runaway orphan named Catoune on their journey through downtown Charleston, and find her standing on an auction block alongside enslaved people. In trying to free Catoune, Pélagie and her companions are captured and put into prison where they discover that Catoune is in fact chained to a Black man. The Acadians manage to escape the prison, and in doing so, they grant the enslaved man freedom to choose whether he would join them on their journey north.<sup>81</sup> Maillet's depiction of Catoune bound to a Black man on an auction block represents the drastic hierarchical upheaval of Acadian society. Through their war-time Deportation they lost their homeland and experienced forms of subjugation.

As explained in the previous chapter, Acadian poet Raymond Guy LeBlanc was influenced by Québécois authors Gaston Miron and Paul Vallières who, in turn, were influenced by the works of Aimé Césaire and Édouard Glissant. This resulted in LeBlanc applying the language of enslavement to describe Acadians, as in poems that stated “Are we nothing more than slaves,” and that called for action in order to “change the slaves’ misery,” meaning for Acadians to combat issues of poverty, unemployment, prejudice, and marginalization.<sup>82</sup> Maillet's stories of Pélagie labouring on land she did not possess, and of Catoune standing on the auction block in South Carolina, emphasize the

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<sup>81</sup> Maillet, 7, 52–53; See Robert Viau, “L’odyssée acadienne: *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1986),” in *Antonine Maillet: 50 ans d’écriture* (Ottawa: Les Éditions David, 2008), 181, 189.

<sup>82</sup> LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 54; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 72; LeBlanc, *Cri de terre*, 57; LeBlanc, “A Translation of Raymond Guy LeBlanc’s *Cri de Terre*,” 75.

difficulties Acadians endured as prisoners of war who went on to labour in the British colonies, but Maillet does not equate the experiences of displaced Acadians in the colonies with the struggles of the enslaved, who in some instances, they worked alongside. With a carnivalesque depiction of the events at the auction, Maillet implies the absurdity of Catoune being on the auction block, while also underscoring Acadians' agency in breaking free from "chains" that were holding them back, both literally and figuratively. Maillet also grants Pélagie and her fellow Acadians agency in freeing the enslaved man chained to Catoune. Nonetheless, undoubtedly influenced by the works of French Caribbean and Québécois authors in the 1960s and 1970s, she draws attention to extended consequences of racialization as a result of colonialism, while also challenging common assumptions that "whiteness" automatically garners liberal freedoms.<sup>83</sup>

Through their exile, Acadian society faced labour, economic, and political consequences of being prisoners of war, occupying a lower stratum of the social hierarchy existing in the imperial Atlantic world.

Schwarz-Bart brings to the surface entrenched issues of assimilation, exclusion, and exploitation for Guadeloupeans of African descent as a result of their forced displacement from Africa and their pasts of enslavement. In a similar fashion, Maillet

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<sup>83</sup> Concerning the changing meanings of race and of rights as subjects and citizens in the context of colonialism, see Dubois, "Inscribing Race in the Revolutionary French Antilles," 96; Peabody, "A Nation Born to Slavery," 113, 121.

draws attention to challenges Acadians endured in trying to survive, regroup, and endure as a people following their scattering by the British to various colonies further south, where they endured labouring in the British imperial system as prisoners of war. Both authors question the implied meaning of “freedom” for diasporic and marginalized populations in their works, but also challenge the idea that resolution to such histories can be found by gaining political power. Rather than advocating for political separatism, like in poetic works by LeBlanc and Rupaire, Maillet and Schwarz-Bart use the literary milieu as a platform for securing cultural, social, and political legitimation among their own people, within their nation, and internationally. Their desire to gain cultural autonomy for their communities is evident through their preservation of oral tradition and folklore, as well as the presence of local dialect, music, and laughter in their works. These cultural traditions equip Télumée and Pélagie (who serve as symbolic representatives of Guadeloupean and Acadian societies) to redeem themselves from their exile, as well as to grow, flourish, and find self-worth.

As discussed previously in addressing Schwarz-Bart’s and Maillet’s motivations to incorporate aspects of local languages in printed text, French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians face similar challenges in trying to validate and preserve their Creole and Acadian dialects. During the early to mid-twentieth century, both communities struggled with issues of poverty and unemployment tied to language differences and illiteracy, and the latter part of the century saw a growing fear of losing

Creole and Acadian dialects. In the early 1950s Martinican intellectual Frantz Fanon lamented the racialization associated with language: “the Black Antillean would be more white, that is to say would be closer to being a real man, if he made the French language his own.”<sup>84</sup> Schwarz-Bart is conscious of this dehumanization of her people because of their dialect and in her work she follows the example set by Rupaire in trying to show that the Guadeloupean Creole language is a human language that deserves preservation. Her book is not entirely written in Guadeloupean Creole in order to have audiences in the Caribbean and in the metropole, but she “chooses to use creolisms to express the Antillean world.”<sup>85</sup> Schwarz-Bart tells how Télumée does not abandon her Creole language to become assimilated into white society, in contrast to other Guadeloupeans including her mother and her half-sister. A striking moment happens when Madame Desaragne watches Télumée work and observes, “Look at yourself, as you are, I talk to you and you don’t even answer, you keep your tongue [votre langue] in your pocket.”<sup>86</sup> The French word “la langue” can be translated as either tongue or language, and can hold two meanings here: as an expression, Télumée silences herself as a means of protection

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<sup>84</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995), 14. “le Noir Antillais sera d’autant plus blanc, c’est-à-dire se rapprochera d’autant plus du véritable homme, qu’il aura fait sienne la langue française.”

<sup>85</sup> Theresita Hernández, “L’importance de l’expression orale dans *Ti-Jean l’horizon* et *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*,” *Revue francophone/Conseil international d’études francophones* 8, no. 2 (1993): 88. “choisit donc d’utiliser des créolismes pour exprimer le monde antillais.”

<sup>86</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 62; Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent*, 97. “Regardez vous-même, comme vous êtes, je vous parle et vous ne répondez pas, vous gardez votre langue dans votre poche.”

against Madame Desaragne. In a symbolic sense, Télumée chooses to keep her language in a safe and intimate place rather than to risk losing this part of her identity. Her capacity to choose how to use “her tongue” gives evidence of her humanity and her agency, as well as her responsibility in guarding her culture’s language.

Like Schwarz-Bart’s incorporation of Guadeloupean Creole language, Maillet employs “lexical regionalisms” in her work to contribute to the preservation of Acadian dialects.<sup>87</sup> Just as Schwarz-Bart shows the significance of the tongue (“la langue”), Maillet tells of Pélagie’s interaction with a fellow Acadian, who after deciding to head south to Louisiana, asks her, “Have you forgotten Pélagie of Grand-Pré, that the tongue they jabber in Louisiana is the same we brought out from France a century ago? And that in the century to come maybe it will be only there in Louisiana that we’ll hear it spoken anywhere in the land of America?”<sup>88</sup> Pélagie chooses to continue on her trek north, and nearing death she symbolically puts everything precious into her apron, including “a stock of words, ancient words sprung naked from her grandsires’ gullets, words she wouldn’t leave as a heritage for foreign throats; and in it she stuffed all those legends and tales, marvelous, terrifying or prankish, that her line had been passing on since the

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<sup>87</sup> Wendy Ayres-Bennet, *A History of the French Language through Texts* (London: Routledge, 1996), 273; Lorin Donald Card, “Antonine Maillet et la traduction littéraire: analyse critique et mise en pratique” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Queen’s University, 1997), 29.

<sup>88</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 101.

beginning of time.”<sup>89</sup> After discovering in the end that her geographic homeland will never be fully repossessed she states, “It’s men who make the land and not the land makes men.”<sup>90</sup> In these conversations, Maillet sends the message that cultural traits such as language, rather than geographic borders, are critical for enabling Acadians to identify themselves as a people.

Added to Schwarz-Bart’s and Maillet’s efforts to put local dialects and oral traditions to print, it is through songs, stories, and laughter that Télumée, Pélagie, and their companions help construct (and reconstruct) the histories and cultural foundations of their peoples. The majority of people in these communities were illiterate prior to the late twentieth century, and music was a powerful tradition that contributed to their cultural survival.<sup>91</sup> Through songs Télumée often finds a sense of comfort that enables her to endure in the midst of her sufferings. Finding strength through music is a tradition handed down by her ancestors (with the “old slave songs”), through to her grandmother, her mother, and to herself.<sup>92</sup> When Télumée is young, her mother works as a cleaning woman and “All the time she was washing, drying, starching, and ironing she would go on singing” in order to never be paralyzed by the struggles she faced each day.<sup>93</sup> Later,

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<sup>89</sup> Maillet, 242.

<sup>90</sup> Maillet, 243.

<sup>91</sup> George Rawlyk, “Cod, Louisbourg, and the Acadians, 1720-1744,” in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip Buckner and John Reid (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994), 118–19; Mesh, “Empowering the Mother Tongue,” 25–26, 33.

<sup>92</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 16.

when Télumée begins working for the Desaragnes she follows her mother's example in observing that "when I sang I diluted my pain, chopped it in pieces, and it flowed into the song".<sup>94</sup> Throughout the novel Télumée is comforted by the spiritual presence of her grandmother who taught her songs, and music helped strengthen her to resist the power of assimilation.

For Pélagie and her companions, they frequently sing the children's song *Alouette* as they travel north to Acadie. With the rhythm of the cart's wheels, this song that had been handed down from one generation to the next functions as a fuel so that they are able to continue their journey. Each time that the cart's wheels turn to the north and the exiles sing "je lui plumerai la queue," another feather gets plucked from the British empire, with the now added refrain "and shit to His British Majesty / Who declared his war on you and me!"<sup>95</sup> As Pélagie and her companions arrive in the north and the wheels stop turning "all Acadie was coming home in song."<sup>96</sup> Like with Télumée, for Pélagie and her companions their music is a source of hope and solidarity for those who are part of their family and community. For both women, songs provide sustenance as they search for resolution to outcomes of diaspora without losing their history and identity. Music is a

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<sup>94</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 214.

<sup>96</sup> Maillet, 241.

survival strategy that protects memories and contributes to the endurance of these peoples by reminding them of their own worth.

Folklore and proverbs bring endurance to Télumée and Pélagie as they endeavour to traverse hostile terrains. The authors share similar objectives with making archives of memories and stories, to confront the problem described by Schwarz-Bart that, “when the old people die, a library disappears.”<sup>97</sup> Angelita Reyes attributes Schwarz-Bart with aiming to “keep the “archives” active, to keep them read and well-attended through the handing down of the folk’s narrative lore.”<sup>98</sup> A proverb that gives power to Télumée throughout her life comes from her grandmother who said “if you ever get on a horse, keep good hold of the reins so that it’s not the horse that rides you.”<sup>99</sup> During her personal exile when she endures working for the Desaragnes and recovers from being abused and abandoned by Élie, Télumée recognizes that as is implied in this proverb, she has the capacity to change her own destiny. It is with this understanding that she finds the hope she needs to resist the threat of assimilation and to endure through her difficult experiences.<sup>100</sup> In a similar fashion, Maillet incorporates folklore surrounding death to reveal the endurance of Pélagie and her companions despite their tribulations. In the

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<sup>97</sup> Héliane Toumson and Roger Toumson, “Interview avec Simone et André Schwarz-Bart: Sur les pas de Fanotte,” *Textes, études et documents*, no. 2 (1979): 15; cited in Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures*, 127.

<sup>98</sup> Reyes, *Mothering Across Cultures*, 127.

<sup>99</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 50.

<sup>100</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 60, 62, 115.

beginning of their travels to the north “creaking in the very ruts of Pélagie’s cart came the invisible wheels of the Wagon of Death.” The storyteller of the group, Bélonie, recounts the tale of Death driving a cart with creaking wheels “to warn the living to clear out of the way, for it only came for the dead, the dying, and those marked by fate.”<sup>101</sup> Like Télumée who had to ride and lead a horse, Pélagie finds that she must “[take] her whip to the oxen” to always keep ahead of Death’s cart.<sup>102</sup> During their journey the cart’s presence haunts Pélagie’s spirit, but she remains determined that in order to save her people’s destiny she cannot abandon her quest. This fable that recurs throughout the novel, like with Schwarz-Bart’s proverb of riding the horse, emphasizes for readers the power of these marginalized peoples to endure when facing giants that threaten their very existence.

Another critical form of orality for Télumée and Pélagie is the universal language of laughter, and in each novel laughter often points to what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as “a struggle for agency, an imbalance of power, and a need, a desire for release.”<sup>103</sup> Schwarz-Bart and Maillet use laughter in a way that upsets the conventional “norm” and enables Télumée and Pélagie to confront what they see as absurd obstacles in the world

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<sup>101</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Maillet, 9.

<sup>103</sup> Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein, eds., *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 9.

that has been built around them. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet reflect the influence of Bakhtin and his theory that

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it.<sup>104</sup>

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet use laughter in reversing social hierarchies, with tremors that rattle the social structures designed and imposed by the colonial hierarchy. Laughter brings to light the absurdity of the circumstances these women have to face and gives them an incredible capacity (but never one that is superhuman) to face their adversities and their adversaries. For Télumée and Pélagie, laughter is an essential mode of expression and communication that brings fortitude.

When Télumée is very young, she notices that other women who washed their laundry by the river laughed “in a particular way, just with their mouths and teeth, as if they were coughing.”<sup>105</sup> In this moment, Télumée begins to discover that laughter is a two-faceted means of communication. On one side, laughter points to insanities resulting from imperial dominance and exploitation. On the other side, laughter functions as a way to guard mental reasoning in the midst of absurd and unjustifiable circumstances imposed

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<sup>104</sup> M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 23.

<sup>105</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 29.

by others in authority. This preservation of mental reasoning is evident when Télumée's grandmother observes that with béchamel, a traditional seasoning sauce used by white society, "I tasted it once, and you can take it from me: there's nothing good about it." Schwarz-Bart continues: "And she'd season her joke with a free Negress's fine deep-throated laugh" to which Télumée asserts that in hearing this joke and her grandmother's laughter, "I'd be a human being again and not a maker of béchamel sauce."<sup>106</sup> Rather than accepting being disparaged as something less than human by the exclusionism of French society, this laughter allows Télumée to know and to feel her own humanity. Later, while experiencing a troubling laugh whose source she struggled to identify, Télumée chooses to apply this laughter to caring for her loved ones. She explains that:

It all began for me with a laugh that would come upon me any time, anywhere, for no reason that I could discover. When my mind was troubled over it, I'd cheat it with the thought that I was laughing for Grandmother, Elie, Adriana, or someone else who might happen at that moment to need my laughter.<sup>107</sup>

It is with laughter that Télumée guards her reasoning and her personal freedom. She deduces that "[...] this laughter [...] helped to lift me back in the saddle, to hold my horse's bridle with a firm grip."<sup>108</sup> Télumée illustrates how she and her people need to share in laughter in order to not be fearful and to not become lost to themselves through another society's authority.

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<sup>106</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 67.

<sup>107</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 71.

<sup>108</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 115.

Pélagie and her companions' laughter in prison after they upset the auction block in Charleston demonstrates the absurdity of colonial hierarchies. In discovering the young woman Catoune chained to an enslaved Black man "The Basques' peal of laughter was so contagious soon the whole jail was shaking with it. The poor exiles had acquired a slave in the skirmish!"<sup>109</sup> The Acadians laughed in response to the irrationality of their position in exile: this white, free people found themselves chained to an enslaved Black man. Maillet makes the distinction that this enslaved man had been "acquired" by the Acadians, even though the chains had been put on by others, thus acknowledging the existing racial hierarchy and the distinction between these societies, yet at the same time underscoring the upset of Acadian society when it came to the class constructs of the colonial world. That night in prison the Acadians employed their traditions of "smithery," medicine, and storytelling to gain their freedom for themselves and for the enslaved man too. In this story there is a carnivalization of the North American social structure as these Acadians who now found themselves in the inferior ranks of British colonial society gained their own liberty. Later, as Pélagie and her companions continue their journey they meet up with Acadian seaman Beausoleil-Broussard, and the narrator describes how laughter is a key attribute that enables Acadians to identify each other

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<sup>109</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 53.

without ever having met before by certain small signs: a hoarseness in the voice, the smell of salt under the skin, the hollow blue eyes that look in as well as out, and last but not least the laugh that comes from so far away it seems to have tumbled down from some seventh heaven.<sup>110</sup>

For the Acadians who are on the quest to save their people, their laughter shows their capacity to still identify each other, despite the loss of geographical borders.<sup>111</sup>

Maillet and Schwarz-Bart's awareness of continuing ramifications of colonialism is most pronounced in the stories of Télumée and Pélagie. For Télumée, who lives out her life in her garden, and Pélagie, who dies and is buried back in the north, there are consequences of colonialism that can never be fully resolved. At the end of her story, Télumée concludes that, "As I struggled others will struggle, and for a long time yet people will know the same sun and moon; they will look at the same stars, and, like us, see in them the eyes of the dead."<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Pélagie learns at the end of her travels that with the Anglophone incursion on former Acadian lands "Acadie didn't exist any more [sic], that henceforth there would never be more than Acadians."<sup>113</sup> With these conclusions, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet point to how colonial consequences endure for each of these groups. They reveal how Acadians and descendants of enslaved Africans in the French Antilles continue to survive as tenant occupants living in nation-states

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<sup>110</sup> Maillet, 61.

<sup>111</sup> Ulrike Erichsen, "Smiling in the Face of Adversity: How to Use Humour to Defuse Cultural Conflict," in *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial*, ed. Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 31.

<sup>112</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 172–73; See also Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*, 59, 64.

<sup>113</sup> Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charette*, 243.

descended from colonial empires. Still, Maillet and Schwarz-Bart call for self-redemption to come through cultural validation as evidenced in their use of language, folklore, and laughter. They raise questions over the definition of “freedom” assumed to have been granted to their societies, yet also challenge their communities to assume power over the legitimization of their cultures and the claim to their histories. Both authors seemingly share in Schwarz-Bart’s declared desire “not to let escape once more a piece of our history.”<sup>114</sup> Maillet and Schwarz-Bart create self-redemptive heroines out of women of marginalized societies. Through these novels they declare to their communities, and to the outside world on behalf of their communities, that Acadians and those of African descent in Guadeloupe have agency, they have history, and they have worth.

### **Self-Resurrection in *Ti Jean l’horizon* and *Le huitième jour***

*Pluie et vent* and *Pélagie* became translated into several languages and distributed around the world. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet each garnered a following and became more confident in incorporating oral tradition and folklore into their writings. Their novels *Ti Jean l’horizon* (1979) and *Le huitième jour* (1986) are very distinct stories, yet they also share critical convergences. In addition to Rabelaisian influence, these novels reflect aims

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<sup>114</sup> Toumson and Toumson, “Interview avec Simone et André Schwarz-Bart,” 18; Thomas, *Breadfruit or Chestnut?*, 30.

to “rework” oral tradition in order to “offer a continuity” that cannot be created solely via folklore.<sup>115</sup> Folkloric Ti Jean tales, that Evelyne Voldeng believes originated in Brittany and whose influence, according to Antonine Maillet, is evident in the Rabelaisian tale of *Gargantua and Pentagruel*, are the inspiration for each of these literary works.<sup>116</sup> These works feature unconventional births, supernatural quests into places unbound by this world’s constraints of time and space, battles against death, and self-resurrection with heroes returning victoriously to this world. Like in the stories of matriarchs Télumée and Pélagie, the theme of displacement carries throughout these novels, but there is a subtle shift in these works to focusing on death and self-resurrection. The authors transition from searching for reconciliation in confronting tragic pasts to calling Guadeloupeans of African descent and Acadians to each see themselves as a living community. They encourage finding innovative ways to preserve their societies in moving to the future.

With Rabelaisian-style chapter titles that tell of the adventures their heroes will face as they journey through this world and another universe, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet each turn Ti Jean folkloric tales into a literary epic. Most documented French Caribbean versions of the Ti Jean story carry themes of an unlikely hero who is on a redemptive

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<sup>115</sup> Fanta Toureh, “Le Conte: forme et fonction,” in *L’imaginaire dans l’oeuvre de Simone Schwarz-Bart: approche d’une mythologie antillaise* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1986), 188; Maillet, interview.

<sup>116</sup> Evelyne Voldeng, “Le cycle de Ti-Jean dans les contes populaires en Bretagne, au Canada français et aux Antilles,” *Espace Caraïbe*, no. 1 (1993): 114–15, 121; Lynn Drapeau and Magali Lachapelle, “European Folktales in Betsiamites Innu,” ed. J. Randolph Valentine and Monica Macaulay, *Paper of the Forty-Second Algonquian Conference* 42 (2010): 104; Antonine Maillet, *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1971), 29–31.

mission and is resourceful in attempting to subvert a “repressive order.”<sup>117</sup> Joëlle Laurent and Ina Césaire’s *Contes de mort et de vie aux Antilles* (1976) includes three documented versions of a Ti Jean tale, with Ti Jean attempting to use his clever ruse to overthrow his béké master and to acquire his wealth. The master desires to kill Ti Jean by drowning him on the horizon (representing the world of the dead), but Ti Jean manages to escape. Ti Jean then drowns the béké and claims all of his possessions.<sup>118</sup> These stories are of overcoming trial and hardship, and Laurent and Césaire describe how in one narrative the hero faces three hurdles that often surface in other Ti Jean tales: the death of his mother, hunger and misery, and facing off against “the Seven-headed Beast.” The Ti Jean stories from the French Caribbean often feature a hero who is an illegitimate child, and who is in search of his “origins.”<sup>119</sup>

In her doctoral thesis entitled *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie* (1971), Maillet describes how in many of the Acadian Ti Jean tales, there is a type of supernatural birth of an unlikely hero who later leaves his father’s home either out of necessity or in search of adventure. Like in the French Caribbean tales, in some stories Ti-Jean finds himself working as a “domestic” for a master, but in the Acadian tales this master is typically either a farmer or a miller.<sup>120</sup> In the Acadian stories, Ti-Jean has a

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<sup>117</sup> Toureh, “Le Conte: forme et fonction,” 180.

<sup>118</sup> Toureh, 180.

<sup>119</sup> Toureh, 181.

<sup>120</sup> Maillet, *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie*, 31.

small stature, but he manages to nearly ruin his master due to his appetite or his ruse. Ti-Jean often escapes from a form of imprisonment, be it where his master has him confined or from a supernatural world where he faces the obstacles of giants, armies, the devil, or like in the French Caribbean tales, the Seven-Headed Beast.<sup>121</sup> These Ti Jean tales that have made their way to Acadie and the French Caribbean have evolved among these societies, proving relatable in light of their themes of displacement, death and self-resurrection. In Schwarz-Bart's and Maillet's novels, their Ti Jean characters travel between reality and fantasy, and the stories are cyclical from their creation (via atypical births into the real world) to their experiences in a world beyond the real (with supernatural quests, battles against death, struggles as exiles), and their rebirth into reality as victors over their adversities. The authors imply that their societies need to find new ways to overcome obstacles in the world that they now find themselves in, rather than conforming to the memories and methods of dominant societies. According to Éloïse Brière in her comparative study of these two texts, "stripped, lacking solid ties to American land, the two heroes set off in search of lost time in order to acquire a story."<sup>122</sup> Their endurance depends on using their own "ruse" to preserve their culture while facing obstacles that threaten its extinction.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Maillet, 31, 36.

<sup>122</sup> Brière, "L'inquiétude généalogique," 64.

<sup>123</sup> Kathleen Gyssels, "'Adieu foulards, adieu madras': doublures de Soi/e dans l'oeuvre réversible schwarz-bartienne," *Nouvelles études francophones* 26, no. 1 (2011): 113; Maillet, interview.

The Ti-Jean characters' unconventional births point to the genesis of unique heroes and symbolize the unusual beginnings of the Acadian and French Caribbean peoples. Schwarz-Bart recounts how Ti Jean's mother Awa came from a region known as En Haut, where she was born to a man named Wademba (the Immortal One) and a mother named Aboomeki. This region of En Haut was occupied by descendants of maroon slaves who stayed isolated from the En Bas communities that underwent changes in technology and urbanization. Those En Haut represent an Antillean past and its traditions that faced extinction through modernity.<sup>124</sup> It is worth noting that in several of her works, Maillet also uses the language of "en Haut" and "en Bas," with this Rabelaisian concept of power reversal, in referring to classes that evolved among Acadians. In Maillet's novel *Les Cordes-de-Bois*, nominated for the Prix Goncourt in 1978, she portrays the socially outcast Mercenaire family who lived En haut, and looked down on the village elite En Bas, including Anglophone businessman Frank MacFarlane.<sup>125</sup> Maillet writes "However, it is the Cordes-de-Bois who have the most beautiful view of the country [...] which does not prevent these Cordes, from the top of

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<sup>124</sup> Kathleen Gyssels, *Le folklore et la littérature orale créole dans l'oeuvre de Simone Schwarz-Bart (Guadeloupe)* (Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences D'Outre-Mer, 1997), 16; Corina Crainic, *Martinique, Guadeloupe, Amériques: Des marrons, du gouffre et de la Relation* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2019), 18.

<sup>125</sup> Myra Hogue, "Les Cordes-de-Bois d'Antonine Maillet, ou La vraie vitalité acadienne," *Francophonies d'Amérique*, no. 44–45 (Autumn 2017-Spring 2018): 46–51.

their hill, to dominate the sea, the bridge, and the village crouched at their feet.”<sup>126</sup>

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet underscore the class differences in their societies caused by social stratifications of colonialism. They poke holes in the fabricated hierarchy by validating those who were not formally educated but who “had memory, who knew their history”.<sup>127</sup> As Aboomeki witnessed from afar the changes of modernization happening “En Bas,” she chose to leave her surroundings and she abandoned her daughter Awa who stayed with Wademba. As Awa gets older she has a chance encounter with Jean l’Horizon who lives En Bas, and like her mother before her, Awa leaves her father and her community in order to marry Jean.

Awa’s former identity becomes lost, as she is baptized in her new community and given the name Eloise. She and Jean hope to have a family, but they struggle to get pregnant. They suspect that it is likely due to curses from Wademba as a consequence of Eloise’s choice to abandon him and her community En Haut. Their fears of Wademba culminate in Jean’s death at the very moment that Eloise gets impregnated by “an invisible body.” She identifies this “body” or spirit as Wademba, and she later bears a child closely resembling him. Following an unusual impregnation and childbirth, Eloise

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<sup>126</sup> Maillet, *Les Cordes-de-Bois*, 12–13. “Pourtant ce sont les Cordes-de-Bois qui ont la plus belle vue sur le pays [...] ce qui n’empêche pas ces cordes, du haut de leur butte, de dominer la mer, le pont, et le village accroupi à leurs pieds.”

<sup>127</sup> Maillet, interview. See also Anne M. François, *Rewriting the Return to Africa: Voices of Francophone Caribbean Women Writers* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 52.

travels En Haut in search of Wademba to name the child. When she asks for a name he replies that “There is no name for this child because his name is waiting for him, his name is somewhere in front of him, and when the time comes it will come and alight on his head.”<sup>128</sup> At his baptism the child inherits his own father Jean’s name, but his mother only calls him “Hey, hi, and Psst” until someone suggests calling him Ti (Little) Jean. Schwarz-Bart describes how rather than coming into the world in a traditional way and inheriting a name of high esteem, “it was under his modest appellation that our hero made his entry into the world – he who was one day to overturn the sun and the planets.”<sup>129</sup> During his childhood Ti Jean proves awkward yet determined, with “his fist always clenched tight as in his mother’s womb.” He carries the resemblance of Wademba, but those in the En Bas community welcome and accept him.<sup>130</sup>

In Maillet’s novel the characters Goodman and Goodwife, like Jean and Eloise, struggle for a long time to have a child.<sup>131</sup> They each keep to their own chores of making bread and crafting wood, and it is finally in this making and crafting that the two heroes Big-as-a-Fist (the Ti Jean of this story) and John-Bear come into the world. Goodwife carefully crafts bread dough in the kitchen, and one morning Goodman heads out the door to go to work and inadvertently leaves the stove on. As the stove gets hot it begins

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<sup>128</sup> Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, trans. Barbara Bray (Oxford: Heinemann, 1992), 16.

<sup>129</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 17.

<sup>130</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 17.

<sup>131</sup> Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 17–18.

to tremble, and “There went our little doughboy no bigger than a fist: down he tumbled, landing on his head, rolling over, banging into the table leg – and waking up.” A housefly and spider observe these events and note how bizarre this arrival is, and they concur that “No one chooses his origins, not even a dinner roll.”<sup>132</sup> After the unusual arrival of Big-as-a-Fist he shows resilience, in “clenching his fists” like Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean, he leaves his kitchen to enter the world, also “ready to conquer the earth and all its planets.”<sup>133</sup> This “hero” is not alone in his quest and one of his allies is his very large brother John-Bear, who is carved from a tree.

Big-as-a-Fist makes his way into life, and he soon discovers that like Ti Jean, he too has no name and so he soon named himself. As Éloïse Brière argues, “the fundamental act of naming...responds to a basic need in a new culture,” and this is evident through each of these Ti Jean epics.<sup>134</sup> Their unconventional births and namings reveal an “anxiety about origins,” symbolizing how Ti Jean’s Guadeloupean society and Big-as-a-Fist’s Acadian people each evolved in various ways through disruptive experiences of displacement that contributed to uncertainties regarding their origins, rather than having an unaltered rootedness.<sup>135</sup> Consequently, they each harbor a unique identity that in many ways they continue to shape of their own accord. These non-

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<sup>132</sup> Maillet, 21.

<sup>133</sup> Maillet, 22.

<sup>134</sup> Brière, “Antonine Maillet and the Construction of Acadian Identity,” 13–14.

<sup>135</sup> Brière, “L’inquiétude généalogique,” 57.

conventional heroes that carry names implying their minuteness both clench their fists as they prepare to take on challenges not only of a world beyond this one, but also to “overturn” or to “conquer” our known universe. This is a powerful representation of Maillet and Schwarz-Bart’s messages to their people that while they may often go unaccounted for in historical narratives and in present-day politics, they remain resilient and have the potential of breaking barriers established by colonialism and perpetuated by the nation-state in order to change this world for the better.

Ti-Jean and Big-as-a-Fist grow inside the known world, where they encounter conflicts and fateful circumstances that lead to their displacement. There is a shift from their genesis to their exodus as they find themselves wandering in another world, that while appearing to be far from reality often holds more truths than the “real” world. At the beginning of Schwarz-Bart’s novel, Ti Jean encounters the folkloric Seven-headed Beast that is attempting to swallow Guadeloupe and destroy his people. He makes a supernatural return to the Africa of his ancestors where there is some sense of familiarity, yet in contrast to literature by earlier Negritude authors, much of the environment feels very strange. For Ti Jean, his search led to a realization that Africa, while an important part of his past, was not as flawless nor static as it may appear in his imagination.<sup>136</sup> Even in pre-colonial times Africa included human struggles of rivalries and wars later

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<sup>136</sup> Crainic, *Martinique, Guadeloupe, Amériques*, 17.

experienced in Guadeloupe's colonial past, thus proving for Ti Jean a "disappointing father figure."<sup>137</sup> Ti Jean turns to look to the future as he undertakes a supernatural quest to conquer the Beast and to save his people by not only reconciling Guadeloupeans' pasts of diaspora and enslavement, but by also becoming aware of his role in the battle between good and evil among mankind.<sup>138</sup> Through his journey Ti Jean becomes more cognizant of the value and significance of his own society's past, as well as their responsibility for the present and the future.

Like Ti-Jean's travels into history, Maillet's Big-as-a-Fist and John-Bear follow a creek that is their "only remaining link with their memories of the distant past."<sup>139</sup> They enter a supernatural land where they encounter two other beings who become their companions, René Renaissance (or Figure-Head, representing the past) and Extra Day (or Out-of-Time, representing the future). Over the course of their journey they discover, much like Ti Jean in his mythical Africa, that this alternate universe is not the ideal. As they wander through different parts of this strange world Big-as-a-Fist and his companions find themselves in a place where in contrast to their own reality "everything went downside up, upside down, and against the grain."<sup>140</sup> They discover that they are witnessing an alternate and inverted society with more people at the top of the "social

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<sup>137</sup> Toureh, "Le Conte: forme et fonction," 169; Quotation in François, *Rewriting the Return to Africa*, xxiii.

<sup>138</sup> Crainic, *Martinique, Guadeloupe, Amériques*, 31, 43–44.

<sup>139</sup> Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 41.

<sup>140</sup> Maillet, 104.

pyramid” than at the bottom, yet social issues of class, poverty, and political corruption are even more pronounced, and the structure is teetering on collapse.<sup>141</sup> Like Ti-Jean, who ultimately pursues escape from his imagined Africa, the travelers bolt from “Topsy-Turvydom,” more aware of the potential value of their own society in the world, even with struggles of social inequalities and political flaws.<sup>142</sup>

Similar to Télumée and Pélagie who undertook journeys often haunted by death, two particular threats that need to be overcome by the Ti Jeans of these books, and that go hand-in-hand with a communal fear of no longer existing as a people, are errantry and death. For these populations who have no national borders, their quest for distinction as a society rather than acceptance of social assimilation and cultural annihilation has been critical, as has their writers’ tendencies to wrestle with implications of exile versus errantry. According to Édouard Glissant, “Whereas exile may erode one’s sense of identity, the thought of errantry – the thought of that which relates – usually reinforces this sense of identity.” He continues, “It seems possible...that the persecuted errantry, the wandering of the Jews, may have reinforced their sense of identity far more than their present settling in the land of Palestine.”<sup>143</sup> In each of their careers, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet have incorporated the symbolism of the “Juif errant” in their works, implying

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<sup>141</sup> Maillet, 105–7.

<sup>142</sup> François, *Rewriting the Return to Africa*, 69.

<sup>143</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 20.

their societies' connectivity with this society that identifies as the chosen people of God and whose self-identification is rooted in their histories of displacement that began with their biblical exodus out of Egypt.<sup>144</sup> During Ti Jean's travels across space and time, he "is left to wander and in doing so, to contemplate questions of identity."<sup>145</sup> Schwarz-Bart describes Ti Jean as an "exile" who longed for what he perceived as his home in Africa, rather than in Guadeloupe where "there were some days when one had the heartrending sensation of being in exile in one's own country."<sup>146</sup> Even upon finding Africa and those with his shared ancestry, Ti Jean remains a "foreigner" and is told to return to where he came from in order to be with those who are truly his people.<sup>147</sup>

In trying to return to Guadeloupe Ti Jean endures the haunting presence of death, and part of his exodus includes journeying through "the Kingdom of the Dead." As he travels through this Kingdom he is surrounded by restless souls, and Ti Jean connects most intimately with "the Wanderers, who like him had died far from the house where

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<sup>144</sup> Schwarz-Bart was greatly influenced by her Jewish husband André, and they often wrote together. In an interview Schwarz-Bart observes how Jews and Antilleans are two peoples who were born of exile and enslavement. Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Simone Schwarz-Bart ou le devoir d'amour*, Épisode 3, October 18, 2017, 11:00, <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/series/simone-schwartz-bart-ou-le-devoir-damour>; See also Gyssels, "Adieu foulards, adieu madras," 112–14; Ernest Pépin and Simone Schwarz-Bart, André Schwarz-Bart, le Juif et les Antillais, interview by Francine Kaufmann, April 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4000/coma.6738>; Lefort, "L'influence de W. Faulkner sur Antonine Maillet," 302; Antonine Maillet, *Chronique d'une sorcière de vent* (Montréal: Leméac, 1999), 11, 120–21, 182; Antonine Maillet, *Pierre Bleu* (Montréal: Leméac, 2006), 15–16, 46, 252–53.

<sup>145</sup> Julie Huntington, "Rethinking Rootedness in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Ti Jean L'horizon*," *The French Review* 80, no. 3 (2007): 599.

<sup>146</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, 91.

<sup>147</sup> François, *Rewriting the Return to Africa*, 44.

they were born and who tried to find its trace or echo or path under the stony sky of the Kingdom.”<sup>148</sup> These Wanderers never stayed still for long, as

Many had been carried off in wars, taken away in the baggage of the invaders; others were the victims of spells, others again were sorcerers and swallows, drinkers of souls whose heads had rolled to the bottom of the sea. Yet others were dreamers in faraway countries who had been suddenly woken and left to solitude and exile. There were some, too, who had come back from the Coast, wild-eyed and bearing strange rumours about the whites which made even the most hardened shudder. ...But those who had returned from the Coast did not linger: a few monosyllables and they were off, harassed by the need to transmit the message, there beyond this greyness, to the sleeping heads in their native land.<sup>149</sup>

Ti Jean feels a sense of belonging with these wandering strangers, but he chooses not to give in to Death and never stops moving as he searches to escape from Its kingdom. With his escape Ti Jean experiences being both dead and living, and senses that “he belonged to both worlds yet was to both a stranger” thus figuratively representing his relationship to Africa and to Guadeloupe.<sup>150</sup> Upon his escape, Ti Jean finds himself for a brief time in France, where he still experiences death’s haunting presence: “Probably it had never left him since he left the Kingdom; only given him a bit more rope, that’s all.”<sup>151</sup> As he finally passes through another door and sees the “mirage” of Guadeloupe, Ti Jean’s journey culminates in an epic battle against Death that he is told has “settled in the hollow of your seed.”<sup>152</sup> Ti Jean vanquishes the enemy that was eating away at him

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<sup>148</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, 147.

<sup>149</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 148.

<sup>150</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 167.

<sup>151</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 170.

<sup>152</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 174.

internally, thus saving himself so that his existence and identity could be perpetuated through his future descendants.

During Big-as-a-Fist's quest Death is often nearby, and while first introduced in a comical Rabelaisian fashion, proves a threat to their survival. Death, portrayed as "the hangman," comically stumbles in to make his first appearance, and the heroes who are tricked into laughter pay no heed to Figure-Head's warning not to "toy with Death."<sup>153</sup> In an ensuing epic encounter with "the hangman," Figure-Head sacrificially tries to keep Death distracted so Big-as-a-Fist, John-Bear, and Extra-Day can escape. Maillet alludes to Death's power in terms of both life and memories, as Figure-Head discovers that in trying to overcome his enemy "Nothing worked: logic, science, charm, seduction, haggling, promises, brute force."<sup>154</sup> Figure-Head's compatriots do not leave him, however, and Extra-Day manages to use a trick of time to perplex Death and to enable the four companions to escape Death's swinging axe. Death continues to haunt them on their journey, and through an encounter with a violent storm Big-as-a-Fist confronts Death once again. He gets separated from his companions and swallowed into a drop of water where he discovers that the world is "much richer, much vaster, and much more complex than anyone has yet imagined."<sup>155</sup> In a figurative representation of the biblical

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<sup>153</sup> Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 70.

<sup>154</sup> Maillet, 72.

<sup>155</sup> Maillet, 84.

resurrection of Christ, Big-as-a-Fist reappears after three days. In listening to his story and surveying his facial features, Big-as-a-Fist's compatriots acknowledge that indeed "their brother had returned from a long journey" and Big-as-a-Fist tries to convince them that rather than merely escaping Death, he has in actuality been resurrected from the "land of the dead."<sup>156</sup> Like with Ti Jean, Death is a "mortal enemy," whose presence haunts them, yet they manage to overcome, to be resurrected, and to find an eternal life through their lineage.<sup>157</sup>

The companions regroup after Big-as-a-Fist's experiences with Death and continue to move, but they begin to have a longing for home. This quest for "home" means different things for each of them, as Figure-Head desires to pursue a "distant future" while the brothers "were pining for a distant past."<sup>158</sup> They conclude that to continue to travel together they might need to come full circle in time, and just as Schwarz-Bart's Ti Jean stays mobile in the Kingdom of the Dead, these heroes' movement gets underscored as Maillet repeats a single sentence set apart from the rest of the text: "And they walked. And walked. And walked."<sup>159</sup> As they continue on their journey, they witness a war between people on two islands that causes them to argue over

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<sup>156</sup> Maillet, 83–85.

<sup>157</sup> Maillet, 74, 272; Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, 208, 212; Robert Viau, *Antonine Maillet: 50 ans d'écriture* (Ottawa: Les Éditions David, 2008), 225.

<sup>158</sup> Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 89.

<sup>159</sup> Maillet, 90, 103.

whether to participate or to be “neutrals” (a political stance declared by some Acadians leading up to the Seven Years’ War). In witnessing the war, they learn of the islanders’ pasts of exile, when their land was stolen and “Ever since, they had wandered the world, trailing their roots behind them like seaweed, searching for solid ground in which to transplant themselves.”<sup>160</sup> In connecting deeply with this story, as it is in essence their own, Big-as-a-Fist prompts intervention to try to resolve the war by merely rotating the islands, but he discovers such attempts are futile and cause further problems. The war continues unabated, now amplified with the islanders’ longing for the location of their former home. The four companions learn that in any exile experience, roots that are “trailing behind” are hard to replant. In looking at their own history they also discover, like Ti Jean, that “if one were to cut [the tree] and stuck it in the ground, it would send out its roots in the end” and would “produce its own unique flora.”<sup>161</sup> This results in a community to protect that cannot be defined either as new or as old, but as both – just as Ti Jean discovers with his return to Guadeloupe.

In each of these stories, there is a re-entry for the victors that follows in the biblical themes of genesis, exodus, and resurrection. The heroes are “reborn after having looked death in the face” and through enduring an exile that leaves them called to task

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<sup>160</sup> Maillet, 183.

<sup>161</sup> François, *Rewriting the Return to Africa*, 47; Huntington, “Rethinking Rootedness,” 603.

with “resolving the imbalance born of the collapse of the New World project.”<sup>162</sup> Effects of the heroes’ experiences in the other dimension are not entirely absent with their self-resurrection. Ti Jean carefully opens the belly of the dead Beast for the reincarnation of his people, and when he looks in the surrounding water he sees his own reflection with “a face like new, and eyes that were wondering and childlike despite the two or three whiskers adorning his chin.”<sup>163</sup> The final chapter of the novel entitled “The End and the Beginning” features a quote from Jacques Romain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée* that says, “Lower, lower your voice / For the night is mild / And the day will soon break / Lower, lower your voice.”<sup>164</sup> This sense of beginning, of birth, and of daybreak culminates in Ti Jean’s sentiment that while “he still had an old man’s heart inside the smooth and swelling chest of a young one” he no longer saw his return to Fond-Zombi “as an end.” He walks through the settlement, still haunted and pushed by his fears, but he tries to slow down to look around his community. He sees “that this end would be only a beginning” among his people who “quietly told each other their stories, and dreamed, and already eagerly invented life anew by the light of torches stuck in the earth.”<sup>165</sup> In a fashion that is both cyclical and biblical, this novel culminates with a rebirth out of the

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<sup>162</sup> Brière, “L’inquiétude généalogique,” 62.

<sup>163</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, 207–8.

<sup>164</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 209.

<sup>165</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 211–12.

darkness and into the light, thus representing a hopefulness in how what might be perceived by some as destruction can in actuality lead to re-creation.

Schwarz-Bart concludes with implications of the cyclical nature of life, death, and re-birth in her chapter entitled “The End and The Beginning,” and Maillet does the same with her closing title: “If the earth is round, then where is the end of the world?” For Big-as-a-Fist and John-Bear they experience losing their companions into the realms of “folklore and legend, into the folds of history and time,” yet the following day they head toward the horizon where they see the sun rising.<sup>166</sup> Suddenly they discover a stream they knew from their home, yet the stream looks significantly smaller to them now. They realize they finally arrived home after many profound and new experiences, and Big-as-a-Fist climbs up John-Bear and looks out to see “the village on the horizon.”<sup>167</sup> The boys scurry to rejoin their family, who like with Ti-Jean’s friends and family are unaware of the journey they have just been on outside of this world. Maillet begins her epilogue with the simple, yet meaningful statement that Big-as-a-Fist and John-Bear “lived with their mother and father ever after, and had many children.”<sup>168</sup> This statement implies the intimacy of family, and the continuance of generations.

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<sup>166</sup> Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 269.

<sup>167</sup> Maillet, 270.

<sup>168</sup> Maillet, 272.

In closing, the narrator of *Big-as-a-Fist*'s epic story walks through her community's downtown where she observes the "beehive of people" made up of "many more generations than had been there in my father's day."<sup>169</sup> Like Ti Jean, who tried to "slow down" as he walked through his torch-lit village where people "told each other their stories, and dreamed," the narrator questions why she finds herself hurrying through her town and up into a lighthouse.<sup>170</sup> She presumes that her longing to slow down is because she does not want to leave "Paradise" and she hopes that through writing stories there might be a "ninth day" with other endless possibilities. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet conclude their works by underscoring the importance of storytelling for these societies, emphasizing how it can serve as a source of light for the existence and preservation of these communities. Schwarz-Bart and Maillet declare on behalf of their people that they have agency and they have history, but the chorus has shifted. They are claiming the worth of Guadeloupeans of African descent and of Acadians in the past, declaring that they are alive in the present, and revealing that this must be recognized by others and acted upon by themselves in looking to the future.

**"Nous avons lutté pour naître, et nous avons lutté pour renaître"**

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<sup>169</sup> Maillet, 272.

<sup>170</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *Between Two Worlds*, 212; Maillet, *On the Eighth Day*, 274–75.

Schwarz-Bart reflects on the tragedy of her people's past at the end of Télumée's journey in *Pluie et vent*, but observes that "It may well be that all suffering, even the prickles in the canefields, are part of the glory of man."<sup>171</sup> Télumée contemplates the suffering endured by her ancestors with consequences carried into her own life experiences, yet she states that "I shine my light into every dark corner, I go all over this strange market, and I see that heaven's gift to us is that we should have our head thrust into, held down in, the murky water of scorn, cruelty, pettiness, and treachery. But I also see that we are not drowned in it. We have struggled to be born and we have struggled to be born again".<sup>172</sup> The English translation of the novel uses "struggled" where the original French says "nous avons lutté," and it seems that the literal translation of "fought" is more applicable here. Violence is not often associated as being part of childbirth in remembering such an intimate experience of mother and child, yet that is indeed part of its nature and these authors make this association in a revolutionary and cyclical way. In their first two novels they celebrate that for their people there have been experiences of birth and of re-birth, but in the second novels they allude to the need for yet another renaissance. Rather than situating that renaissance around political participation inside the established structures or underscoring victimization due to their colonial pasts, they challenge their people to find

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<sup>171</sup> Schwarz-Bart, *The Bridge of Beyond*, 169.

<sup>172</sup> Schwarz-Bart, 169–70.

ways to use their own resources to have a rebirth centered around cultural preservation. This sounds passive, yet in reflecting on this language of “lutter” they are not calling for passivity among their people. Maillet’s and Schwarz-Bart’s works depicting stories of exile, enslavement, death, and self-redemption and self-resurrection came at a critical time for Francophone societies in the western hemisphere with the decline of movements for autonomy. These authors participated in shifting Acadian and French Caribbean communities’ focus to legitimizing their cultures on a transnational scale.

Schwarz-Bart and Maillet pull themselves out of the grasp of time in a way that historians cannot fully do in order to weave together messages of the past and messages for the future. They reveal how through colonialism new societies were born, yet they also dream of a re-birth less hindered by enduring social, cultural, and political orders established via colonial systems. Through their literature, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet each succeed in garnering international acclaim, but their personal experiences as women authors of marginalized communities indicate that in the late twentieth century their societies still existed as occupants of structures erected by colonial powers and maintained in France and Canada.

## Conclusion: Step On Out

In July 1945, Aimé Césaire presented a lecture to a group composed largely of women at a gathering held to honour individuals who worked in French boarding schools. In his speech, Césaire included himself and the French nation in the conversation, as he issued an invocation for bettering the world. Césaire boldly stated to the audience that collectively “we have on our hands a civilization to remake.”<sup>1</sup> Césaire described atrocities in the world, with war and starvation, while also commemorating French intellectuals of the past, including Montaigne, Pascal, and Voltaire, for their contributions to bettering humanity. He gave the noble challenge to France to “save the world from despair and disintegration,” while calling humankind to undertake a new building project.<sup>2</sup> Césaire declared:

So I say we have to remake the world.

The architect must rebuild the house. The citizen must rebuild the city, the politician must rebuild the State. Neither the hand must be weary, nor the thought must stop providing. Block upon block, rubble upon rubble, a new edifice must be raised from the ground and launched into the air to bear witness to humanity.

I say that we must remake the world.

When I say remake, do not think that it is a question, in a work of patient archaeology, of clearing the rubble, of collecting the debris, of re-cementing the structures, of exhuming and respecting the Plans of the past.

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<sup>1</sup> Aimé Césaire, “Discours de M. Aimé Césaire à la distribution des prix du Pensionnat colonial (juillet 1945),” in *Aimé Césaire: une traversée paradoxale du siècle*, by Raphaël Confiant (Paris: Écriture, 2006), 349. “nous avons sur les bras une civilisation à refaire.”

<sup>2</sup> Césaire, 351.

No, what we need, it is with a single superstition (that of the life which continues certainly but never repeats), what we need is to look for and to discover the cornerstone never chosen to erect the human residence always dreamed.<sup>3</sup>

Césaire compared the remaking of the world to the rebuilding of a structure that includes a home, a city, and a state, but with a new and unique cornerstone that has never before been chosen to serve in that role. That cornerstone must be put in place after the destruction of a previous structure. The imagery is powerful, as it depicts the collapse of the edifice of colonialism that endured through Césaire's day, but at the same time, there is still a sense of repetition in his message as he calls for the rebuilding of yet another "edifice." This is emblematic of Césaire's political stance of the 1940s and 1950s, where he called for new understandings and interpretations of colonial history and Antillean identity, but also expressed an allegiance to the French nation built on the edifice of imperialism.

Similar language concerning this colonial "edifice" appears a year later in Édouard Glissant's unpublished speech *Dépouillée, vaincue...*, where the opening lines describe Martinican society as being, "*Stripped, defeated, / And what remains of*

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<sup>3</sup> Césaire, 352. "Alors je dis qu'il faut refaire le monde. Il faut que l'architecte rebâtisse la maison. Il faut que le citoyen rebâtisse la cité, il faut que l'homme politique rebâtisse l'État. Ni la main ne doit être lasse, ni la pensée ne doit s'arrêter de fourmir. Bloc sur bloc, moellon sur moellon, il faut faire jaillir du sol et lancer dans les airs un nouvel édifice qui témoigne pour l'humanité. Je dis qu'il faut refaire le monde. Quand je dis refaire, n'allez pas croire qu'il s'agit, en une oeuvre de patiente archéologie, de déblayer les décombres, de ramasser les débris, de recimenter des ensembles, d'exhumer et de respecter les Plans du passé. Non, ce qu'il nous faut, c'est avec une seule superstition (celle de la vie qui continue certes mais ne répète jamais), ce qu'il nous faut, c'est de chercher et découvrir la pierre d'angle jamais choisie pour ériger la demeure humaine toujours rêvée."

grimaces and knees pressed against the wall.”<sup>4</sup> Following this lament for his society that he sees as having floundered in pushing against “the wall” built through colonialism, Glissant petitions young people to participate in creating revolutionary poetry and in engaging in acts of resistance to counter enduring confines of colonialism. In coming years, Glissant’s desire for the destruction of the colonial walls surrounding his society is evidenced through his participation in political resistance movements in the 1950s and 1960s, including the Front Antillo-guyanais pour l’autonomie. Glissant desired Martinican autonomy, yet his writings of the period reveal his recognition of the potential danger of Martinique’s political independence resulting merely in a perpetuation of the standing walls of colonial economy and politics.

By the 1980s and 1990s, Glissant’s thought-provoking works *Discours antillais* (1981) and *Poétique de la relation* (1990) impacted postcolonial theory, including scholars in the fields of literature and history. With these works, rather than resting bound in recurrent attempts to destroy, alter, or rebuild the colonial structure, Glissant desires to step outside the walls to see from new angles as he considers the continuing dominance of the “imperialist world view.”<sup>5</sup> Glissant considers subjects of identity, politics, and history through the theory of “Relation,” with Relation being “a fluid and unsystematic

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<sup>4</sup> Glissant, “Dépouillée, vaincue.” “Dépouillée, vaincue, Et ce qu’il lui reste de grimaces et de genoux pressés contre la muraille”.

<sup>5</sup> Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory*, 12.

system whose elements are engaged in a radically nonhierarchical free play of interrelatedness.”<sup>6</sup> According to Celia Britton, “Rather than a structure, [Relation] is [...] a dynamic *process* governed by principles that are themselves always being changed by the elements they govern.”<sup>7</sup> Glissant’s attempt to move beyond structural confines enabled the development of his theories of the “diverse,” “errantry,” and the “rhizome.”

A rhizomatic connectivity below the surface may not always be apparent to the observer, but can be discovered through creative exploration, as the “principle of connection” allows one to “experiment with new connections not predicated on hierarchy.”<sup>8</sup> In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant boldly observes how with trees that have roots (much like colonial structures with their foundations), “the root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it.” In contrast, the rootedness of the rhizome is not “totalitarian,” but is instead “an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air.”<sup>9</sup> Glissant builds on this theory, contending that “each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.” He observes that there is multiplicity stemming from that relationship, with “errantry” often being a shared experience that contributes to the expansion and intertwining of the rhizome.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Britton, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Britton, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Glissant, 11, 16, 18.

According to Glissant, the Caribbean is a region where this theory of the rhizome is evident. He describes how in the Antilles prior to colonialism, the true possessors were the Lokonos and Kalinagos. The arrival and exploitation of the empires resulted in these societies' tragic death toll and uprooting, and "Antillean soil could not become a territory but, rather, a rhizomed land" that "does not belong as a rooted absolute either to the descendants of deported Africans or to the *békés* or to the Hindus or to the [mixed race]."<sup>11</sup> This theory of a "rhizomed land" can be integrated and applied in studies throughout the Americas, including in lands occupied by Acadians in Atlantic Canada and Louisiana, and Glissant's conjectures of the diverse, errantry, relation, and the rhizome are appearing more frequently in Acadian studies.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, in 2003 François Paré argued for the connection between French Caribbean and Acadian literature as a result of their colonial experiences and their archipelagic nature. Paré built specifically on *Discours antillais* (1989) by employing Glissant's theories of "retour" (a people obsessively trying to find their origin) and "détour" (being forever separated from their origin).<sup>12</sup> Most recently, Glissant's theories are referenced in several articles compiled in a *Francophonies d'Amérique* journal edition directed by Corina Crainic, entitled *Entre*

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<sup>11</sup> Glissant, 146–47.

<sup>12</sup> Paré, "L'antillanité de l'Acadie," 191.

*solitudes, contraintes et aspirations: de l'Acadie, des Caraïbes et de la Louisiane*.<sup>13</sup> In this journal's Introduction, Crainic observes how in the epic poem *Les Indes*, Glissant is confronting the significance of colonial conquest not only of the Caribbean, but of the Americas as a whole. Crainic writes that this subject of conquest of the Americas is

a common element, to which Glissant adds the inescapable violence. Inflicted and suffered through wars, enslavement, the loss of goods, means of subsistence and loved ones, forced displacements, the African slave trade, the Great Upheaval and the terrible fate reserved for the Amerindian nations, *it is structural* (italics mine).<sup>14</sup>

Crainic emphasizes how Glissant brings to the forefront that the colonial conquest and violence endured by societies of the Americas, including Africans, Acadians, and Indigenous communities functioned as the core factor in the arrangement and configuration of the colonial structures these “tenant” and “homeless” societies wrestle to deconstruct.<sup>15</sup>

This collection includes Clint Bruce's article briefly mentioned in the Introduction, where Bruce challenges scholar Joseph Yvon Thériault's concerns over Acadians' increasing embrace of diversity that Thériault warns poses as a threat to their society's existence. Bruce employs Glissant's theories of multiplicity and the rhizome,

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<sup>13</sup> Crainic, “Introduction: Entre solitudes, contraintes et aspirations,” 11–24.

<sup>14</sup> Crainic, 15. “Il s'agit néanmoins d'un élément commun auquel Glissant ajoute la violence incontournable. Infligée et subie au gré des guerres, des asservissements, de la perte de biens, de moyens de subsistance et d'êtres chers, des déplacements forcés, de la traite des esclaves africains, du Grand Déangement et du sort terrible réservé aux nations amérindiennes, celle-ci est structurante.”

<sup>15</sup> For the language of “homeless” in relation to Indigenous societies, see Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 3–4.

arguing for the necessity of acknowledging the diversity of the Acadian people as a result of their complex colonial history of diaspora and resettlement, and he prompts looking through a poetic lens. Bruce brings to the surface “the distinction [Glissant] draws between diversity as an instrument of management of multicultural democracy and the “Divers” as a poetic principle and ethical imperative.”<sup>16</sup> In exploring the complexities of racial identity and its evolution in Louisiana, Bruce recounts his personal engagement with Alex Da’Paul Lee, a man in Texas who is identified as Black, yet through tracing his lineage has discovered Acadian genealogy.<sup>17</sup> Bruce wrestles through the intricacies of how the “Divers” is a difficult theory to apply when it comes to political and economic tensions, as well as concerns over guarding identity, but he determines that this theory, including the concept of the rhizome, should be applied in Acadian studies.

Referring to Glissant’s propositions, Bruce states that “any political project requires a poetic, that is to say a way of imagining the world, of imagining oneself in the world and of creating the world through the imaginary.”<sup>18</sup> He argues that Acadie “needs a poetics of the Divers” and states that “In order to achieve this, historical research can contribute to the construction of the edifice.” He proceeds to emphasize that there is a

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<sup>16</sup> Bruce, “Le divers et la diversité.” “en considérant notamment la distinction qu’il trace entre la diversité comme instrument de gestion de la démocratie multiculturelle et le ‘Divers’, principe poétique et impératif éthique.”

<sup>17</sup> Bruce, 132.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce, 145.

need for “a true ‘mise en Relation’ between Acadie and the ‘black world,’ namely Africa and the Afro-Americas.”<sup>19</sup> As is clearly evidenced in this dissertation, I concur with the challenge Bruce offers, but I suggest that rather than focusing historical research on building another edifice, it can instead contribute to the discovery, as well as the growth and strengthening, of underlying stems connecting Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian societies.

Bruce wisely cautions of the challenges of the language of “diversity,” where diversity can be promoted as a manipulative playing card in securing the dominant society’s political authority, or it can be seen as a threat to a marginalized society’s cultural distinctiveness. At the same time, he also warns how without “Divers” in the poetic sense – that includes recognition of the poetic’s presence in the politic - new and challenging questions concerning history and society may go unposed or unaddressed, and knowledge may be lost. An understanding of this study requires openness to the “Divers” and recognition of the cruciality of the rhizome that allows opportunities for confines of conventional historical methodologies to be identified and challenged. In turn, this study contributes to strengthening stems of the rhizome by providing evidence of entwinement between French Caribbean people of African descent and Acadians that

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<sup>19</sup> Bruce, 146. “Dans l’espace restreint du présent texte, je me limiterai à considérer l’exigence d’une véritable mise en Relation entre l’Acadie et le ‘monde noir,’ à savoir l’Afrique et les Afro-Amériques.”

are not only conceptual, but are also empirical based on the interwovenness of their literary developments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This study comparatively examines the colonial experiences and the literary evolution that unfolded among Acadian authors and authors of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and renders the connectivity described in recent scholarship less superficial. The births of these distinct societies came through imperial economic and political rivalries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that resulted in peoples' dispossession. Martinicans and Guadeloupeans of African descent suffered colonial violence with enslavement, as they were dehumanized and as they laboured for the benefit of the French empire. Acadians endured forced displacement, poverty, and marginalization as a result of the British quest for control of the northern Atlantic region. Over time, each of these groups of people formed distinct societies with nationalist aspirations and vibrant cultures. As "tenants of empire," their literary evolution reveals how they have struggled through the quandary of dependency on social, economic, and political structures that in some ways have afforded them protection and security, while in others ways have limited their autonomy and threatened their existence as they have engaged with surrounding colonial and state institutions.

These societies' movements for cultural and political autonomy beginning in the late nineteenth century depended extensively on the print culture that emerged among both societies. Their early press, founded and published by educated elites, expressed

goals for bringing social solidarity among their communities. In desiring cohesion, the press features articles that underscore the distinction of these societies in terms of their history, as well as in their occupation of a locale they deem as their homeland, yet writers also call for the principles of equality promised to the French and Canadian citizenry. In the late nineteenth century, press and poetry by writers of African descent in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and by Acadians, reveal a tendency of adoption of French literary styles as a result of colonial systems of education, yet there is evidence of identifying as distinct communities with goals of uniting in order to gain greater social, political, and economic authority.

In the early twentieth century, an in-depth comparative critique of the poetry and of select articles in the newspapers *Guadeloupe littéraire* and *L'Évangéline* further reveals the presence of a duality, or what has been termed as a “diasporic double consciousness.”<sup>20</sup> Writers tend to venerate France, Britain, and Canada, while conforming to the literary expression of French writers. At the same time, the language of “homeland” emerges more often in reference to the geographic regions these societies occupy, and they begin to acknowledge and to articulate for themselves the struggles their ancestors endured as a result of colonialism. In the 1940s and 1950s, the earliest

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<sup>20</sup> Dayal, “Diaspora and Double Consciousness,” 54; Vijay, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity*, 14; Thomas, “Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the ‘Jewish Question,’” 1337.

published literature by politicians Aimé Césaire and Antoine-J. Léger reveal that there is a growing awareness of fault lines found in engrained notions of their societies' history. These authors invent historical works that focus on the story of their people's violent dispossession. Their writings feature heroes and memories of an imagined homeland that they create and identify for themselves, where they are not tenants of a space possessed by others. These authors draw attention to enduring struggles of their societies in economics and politics, and in striving to overcome perceptions of inferiority as a result of colonial violence and language, yet as is also evidenced in the Césaire quotation featured above, these authors maintained a sense of pride in the nation-states where they acted as political leaders.

In the 1950s and 1960s, critical movements for independence that unfolded in Vietnam, Algeria, and French West Africa impacted Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian societies. Emerging French Caribbean literature by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant brought greater accusations against the French empire for atrocities of colonialism, and their works influenced writers in Québec who began to identify as being colonized. Québécois author Miron Gaston and Édouard Glissant formed a personal friendship, each desiring greater political autonomy for the Antilles and Québec, and the literary and political influence of these authors surfaces in the essays, poetry, and activism of Guadeloupean Sonny Rupaire and Acadian Raymond Guy LeBlanc. Glissant, Rupaire, and LeBlanc promote political activism with aims of separatism, while

identifying for their readers how their societies continue to reckon with problems of poverty, unemployment, and cultural eradication as a consequence of colonialism and its persisting effects.

In the 1970s and 1980s separatist movements crumbled as discord grew over the benefits and the dangers of political autonomy. During this period, women authors Simone Schwarz-Bart and Antonine Maillet reckoned with marginalization resulting from enduring colonial confines of language and gender. They endured criticism for the regional dialects they wove throughout their novels, as well as discrimination in the French literary field that was dominated by male authors. In contrast to poets such as Rupaire and LeBlanc, who encouraged political revolution, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet composed epic works to make literature a means to counter problems of French Caribbean and Acadian historical understanding, as well as threats of cultural annihilation. Through their novels of this period, they bring to the foreground the substance of cultural knowledge and preservation, while featuring stories of self-redemption and self-resurrection that are not achieved by replicating a pre-formulated political order. They confront the forgetting and the erasure of their societies' pasts with their narratives and inscribe oral tradition with new written dialect identified as "téluméen" and "mailletien." Schwarz-Bart and Maillet succeed in bringing their societies' history to a global audience, while aiming to fortify Guadeloupean and Acadian connections to their cultural traditions.

I intend for this study to be disruptive of what François Paré describes as the “fraternal experience of mutual indifference and oblivion” that has existed between these French Caribbean and Acadian societies.<sup>21</sup> Through identifying enduring edifices and adopting the imagery of the rhizome, I anticipate that other stems running between French Caribbean and Acadian literature and history may be identified and nourished. There is study required on the critical nature of “tenancy” in the colonial sense for each of these societies, as they laboured on lands they occupied for the economic, political, and military benefits of others. Further analysis can explore how tenancy was employed as a means of securing the labour of the formerly enslaved in the French Caribbean post-emancipation, as well as of Acadians in Atlantic Canada post-Deportation. There is scholarly attention provided to writers including Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, and Sonny Rupaire, who rose to prominence as political activists in the French Caribbean, but to date there is a tremendous void in analysis of Acadian authors’ political ideals compared to their literary expression. As leading women authors, Schwarz-Bart and Maillet did not hold political offices, but that does not negate their agency in participating in political discourse and in engaging internationally as representatives of their societies, and their social and political participation deserves greater attention. Other authors and

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<sup>21</sup> Paré, “L’antillanité de l’Acadie,” 186.

political figures, including Daniel Maximin and Herménégilde Chiasson also require extended comparative analysis.

As is evidenced in this work, these societies' tragedies of colonial violence and experiences of upheaval have been core to their formation as communities in the Americas. Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Acadian authors examined in this study have resisted narratives that do not allow their societies agency in enduring tragedy and in reckoning with grief. Writers including Aimé Césaire and Antoine-J. Léger, Sonny Rupaire and Raymond Guy LeBlanc, and Simone Schwarz-Bart and Antonine Maillet confronted colonial pasts of exile that were silenced in dominant historical narratives. They drew attention to the problems of marginalization inside nation-states that promised ideals of freedom and equality, and they participated in acts of political and cultural resistance. To enable their communities to know themselves and their history, these authors composed their own stories of the past and the present, culminating in works by Schwarz-Bart and Maillet that encourage Guadeloupeans and Acadians to do what Glissant has attempted to do: to step outside the structure they have occupied in order to discover new surroundings and new relationships, as they move toward a future they must strive to create.

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## Curriculum Vitae

**Candidate's Full Name:** Leanna Thomas

**Universities Attended (with dates and degrees obtained):**

University of New Brunswick, PhD in History, May 2024

University of Central Florida, BA in French, 2012

University of Central Florida, MA in History, 2011

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**Publications:**

““Nous avons lutté pour naître, et nous avons lutté pour renaître...”: les contributions de Simone Schwarz-Bart et Antonine Maillet dans la légitimation culturelle de leurs peuples, 1970-1990,” in *Inventivité, transversalité et marges au prisme des littératures de l'Amérique septentrionale francophone*, eds. Cécilia W. Francis and Robert Viau (Ottawa: Les Éditions David, 2023).

“Daniel Maximin’s *Lone Sun*: Disrupting the Tides of History and Memory” *Small Axe* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 26-84.

Review of *Rethinking New Acadia: Recent Interpretations of the Acadians' Dispersal and Arrival in Louisiana*, by Michael S. Martin. *Nouvelles Études Francophones* 37, no. 1 (2022): 211-214.

“Disrupting an Archival War and Loosening the *Evangeline* Knot: Finding an Undercurrent in Antoine-J. Léger’s *Elle et lui* and *Une Fleur d'Acadie*,” *Acadiensis* 50, no. 2 (Autumn 2021): 184-206.

“The Development and Influence of Acadia’s *La Petite Cendrillouse*: A Journey Across the Atlantic and into Acadian Literature,” in *Creation, Re-creation and Entertainment: Early Modernity and Postmodernity: Selected Essays from the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the North American Society for Seventeenth Century French Literature*, eds. Benjamin Balak and Charlotte Trinquet du Lys (Tubingen: Narr Verlag, 2019), 215-226.

“A Fractured Foundation: Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement in Louisiana, 1755-1803,” *Louisiana History* LV, no. 2 (2014).

**Conference Presentations:**

“Creating a Homeland: The Presence of “pays natal” in Guadeloupean and Acadian Press, 1905-1914,” 2022 Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 25-28 May 2022.

“Fighting to Fill the Gaps: Acadian Antoine-J. Léger’s Reckoning with Duality and Diaspora, 1933-1950,” 21<sup>st</sup> annual UMaine-UNB Conference, Digital Conference, 26-27 March 2022.

“ ‘Nous avons lutté pour naître, et nous avons lutté pour renaître...’: les contributions de Simone Schwarz-Bart et Antonine Maillet dans la légitimation culturelle de leurs peuples, 1970-1990,” APLAQA Colloque international: Voix subalterns et créa(c)tives. Explorer l’inventivité de la marge francophone. 21-24 October 2021.

“We see ourselves as renters”: Transversing Colonial Tragedies of Diaspora through Antonine Maillet’s *Pélagie-la-Charrette* and Daniel Maximin’s *L’Isolé Soleil*,” 18<sup>th</sup> annual McGill-Queen’s Graduate Conference in History, Digital Conference, 11-12 March 2021.

“Renaissance Through Remembrance: Atlantic World Francophone Communities and Memories of Diaspora, 1860-1950,” Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Orono, Maine, 14-16 May 2020 (canceled due to Covid).

“Overcoming being ‘Without’: Acadian and French Caribbean Poetry and the Shaping of New Nationalisms, 1960-1980,” 20<sup>th</sup> annual UMaine-UNB Conference, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 18-20 October 2019.

“Fruits from replanted roots: Acadian and French Caribbean authors’ roles in claiming their histories, 1960-2000,” 21<sup>st</sup> annual “History Across the Disciplines” conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1-3 March 2019.

“Redeeming the Displaced: Antonine Maillet’s “Cinderella Story” of the Acadian People,” 46<sup>th</sup> international conference of the North American Society of Seventeenth Century French Literature, Winter Park, Florida, June 2016.

“Changing Acadian Identity: Exile and Resettlement, 1755-1800,” 38<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Western Society for French History, Lafayette, Louisiana, 22-24 October 2010.

### **Academic Awards:**

2022 O’Brien Foundation Fellowship

2022 Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement

2020 NBIF Graduate Tri-Council Scholarship

2020 Board of Governors Merit Awards for Graduate Studies

2019 SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship