Resistance and Rebellion in Gisèle Pineau's "Paroles de terre en larmes"

Gisèle Pineau's short story "Paroles de terre en larmes" (Words from the weeping earth) is her first piece of published writing, and is thus the text that launched her onto the literary scene in 1988.[1] In 1986, she entered a writing competition entitled "Écritures d'Îles" (Writing from the islands) which was organized by Guadeloupean media outlet RFO Guadeloupe, in collaboration with local libraries and supported by influential writers of the period, such as Maryse Condé, Daniel Maximin, and Simone Schwarz-Bart. 171 short stories were entered into the competition, and in October 1987, the winning twelve entries were chosen to feature in a collection.[2] Pineau won first prize for her short story "Paroles de terre en larmes," the title of which was given to the whole collection.[3] It is significant that Pineau's first published piece of writing, which was praised by some of the most well-known writers from the French Caribbean, is a story about the *Dissidence*, as the Resistance movement against the Vichy regime was known in the Caribbean. It was very dangerous to be part of the *Dissidence.* Antilleans first had to cross the Caribbean Sea to the Anglophone, non-occupied islands of Dominica and St Lucia in very small fishing boats and dinghies, and after receiving military training, they then made the longer journey across the Atlantic to Europe to fight alongside French troops. Through her writing, Pineau seeks greater recognition of the sacrifices made by all Antilleans, both men and women, in World War Two. Her focus on this crucial but underexplored aspect of French Caribbean history points towards her desire to raise awareness of the Caribbean past more broadly which is often not included in the French national narrative.

Drawing on theories of resistance sustained by Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon, this chapter argues that in "Paroles de terre en larmes" the two principal characters Maxime and Félicie engage in practices of resistance and rebellion that shed light on gendered and colonial oppression in different ways. Maxime rebels against the Vichy officials who are in

control of the Caribbean islands by joining the *Dissidence,* and thus his fight is one against Nazism. Félicie also participates in her own form of resistance from Guadeloupe, although she is more acutely aware of the unreciprocated relationship between mainland France and the Caribbean islands than her husband. Her actions can be understood as part of a growing rejection of the French colonial project, and thus her initial resistance against the Vichy regime becomes the very beginnings of an anti-colonial resistance in the Caribbean, as Martinicans and Guadeloupeans had to fend for themselves after being cut off from mainland France and from the United States. The chapter examines the textual strategies employed by Pineau to foreground the gendered nature of this budding anti-colonial resistance. Comparing Pineau's short story to other novels and texts which focus on the Vichy era in the Caribbean, I posit that Pineau goes against the grain of this tradition of Caribbean writing about World War Two by spotlighting the experiences of Antillean women during this difficult period. Following the aims of this collection which endeavors to foreground Pineau's lesser-known works which critique issues of race, gender, and traumatic histories just as powerfully as her more famous texts, and demonstrate how Pineau offers new strategies of resistance and resilience in the Caribbean, this chapter seeks to uncover forgotten voices: those of the female Antillean resistors and the women who stayed behind on the islands. Pineau adopts the form of the short story to pay tribute to the sacrifices made during the war by men but particularly by women. Until very recently, these sacrifices have been almost entirely forgotten by the French state.

"Paroles de terre en larmes": Resistance against Nazism

By setting her story in Guadeloupe during World War Two when the island was occupied by the Vichy government, Pineau anchors this story within a tradition of writing about the *Dissidence*. The text recounts the relationship between Maxime, who becomes a member of the Antillean resistance movement and joins Charles de Gaulle's "Forces françaises libres"

(Free French forces) in the fight against Nazism, and his wife Félicie, who remains behind on the island and waits patiently for him to return home. The principal narrative time of the story, however, is set after the war, in the 1960s or 70s, as Félicie looks back on World War Two as a difficult period in her life. Indeed, whereas Pineau does not locate the story in a particular year or even decade, the reader can deduce when the story is set from Félicie's explanation that she visited her husband for over fifteen years in the psychiatric hospital where he was interned following his mental breakdown.[4] Pineau's use of analepsis thus shows the significant impacts of the war on both characters, and she does not return to the narrative time of the present until the very end of the story.

The *Dissidence* is of personal importance to Pineau because her own father was in fact a *Dissident*. Indeed, it was his participation in the French military, which began with his involvement with this movement, that brought the Pineau family to mainland France, where Pineau was born in 1956. As Tina Harpin notes, Pineau's father, Barthélémy Sidonie Pineau, talks in very emotional terms about his experiences as a *Dissident* and his subsequent action in World War Two in Euzhan Palcy's documentary film *Parcours de dissidents* (The journey of the dissidents), released in 2006 and shown at the Élysée Palace in June 2014 during an official ceremony to pay tribute to the members of the Antillean resistance.[5] Pineau's personal connection to the movement is borne out in her writing. As I have argued elsewhere, Pineau examines the *Dissidence* and its effects on the Antillean population in "Paroles de terre en larmes" and in at least three additional texts: the novel *La Grande Drive des esprits*[6] (*The Drifting of Spirits*)[7] the autofictional narrative and her most famous work to date *L'Exil selon Julia*[8] (*Exile according to Julia*),[9] and the (auto)biographical text *Mes quatre femmes*[10] (My four women).[11] Pineau's fascination with this particular historical period is thus clear from the number of texts which explicitly discuss the *Dissidence*. Yet "Paroles de terre en

larmes" stands out for its striking gendered approach to life in Guadeloupe during World War Two.

Guadeloupe and Martinique, like the rest of the Caribbean, were "not witness to either large-scale invasion or prolonged military action" but the islands did become "an area of intense and crucial naval activity" because British, American, and German forces all sought to gain control of the Caribbean Sea in order to have access to North and South America.[12] In fact, as H. Adlai Murdoch explains, Guadeloupe and Martinique "were the only Caribbean colonies—British, French, or Dutch—to undergo occupation or governmental change of any kind during the Second World War."[13] When France fell to Nazi Germany in July 1940, full parliamentary power was transferred to Maréchal Philippe Pétain, who implemented his repressive and totalitarian regime in the South of France and established the town of Vichy as the government center. The islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique also fell under his control, and they were governed locally by Admiral Georges Robert (High Commissioner for the Antilles), Constant Sorin (governor of Guadeloupe), and Henri Bressoles (governor of Martinique), who was later replaced by Yves Nicol in 1941. Day-to-day life became increasingly difficult and restrictive; curfews were imposed on the Antillean population, forbidding them from frequenting public places after 8 p.m., and protests against these laws were banned. "Paroles de terre en larmes" demonstrates how Martinicans and Guadeloupeans were mistrustful of these new authoritarian policies, which they interpreted as racist attacks on their civil liberties, and were thus forced to resist in subtle and indirect ways, such as by singing their allegiance to de Gaulle (who established a government in exile in London in 1940) rather than to Sorin.[14] Although the authorities insisted that the new regime was not negrophobic, their policies specifically targeted people of color. Éric Jennings explains that in October 1940, the local councils on the islands were dissolved and mayors of color were replaced by white politicians who were loyal to the Vichy regime.[15] In addition, universal

male suffrage was abolished, and Antillean citizens once again became subjects of the French empire. The Vichy regime was thus perceived by many Antilleans as a return to the era of slavery, as they were gradually being stripped of the rights for which they had fought so hard. Of course, slavery had only been abolished in the French territories in 1848, less than a century prior to the outbreak of World War Two. It is therefore unsurprising that Antilleans continued to be haunted by their traumatic past of slavery and incarceration. As Jennings points out, although there is no archival evidence to suggest that Vichy officials implemented measures with the purpose of explicitly evoking distressing memories of slavery, the officials "were unable to see that Pétainist political reforms could quite reasonably be interpreted by the population as markers of a more generalized return to a pre-1848 society,"[16] a society in which Black enslaved people were subjected to brutal treatment and were forced to do back-breaking work in grueling conditions.

Antilleans were also spurred to resist because of the extreme hunger from which they suffered during this period. In 1940, Britain established a naval blockade against the islands "as part of their efforts to keep the French navy from falling into German hands," and this meant that food imports from Britain were unable to reach the islands.[17] The United States was also keen to prevent a Nazi invasion of Martinique and Guadeloupe, particularly because gold from the Bank of France, which was worth approximately 12 billion francs, was being stored in Fort Desaix, a fort overlooking Fort-de-France. American troops were planning to invade Martinique in 1940 to prevent the gold from being seized by the Nazis. However, they were stopped by the implementation of the Robert-Greenslade accords, an agreement which stipulated that the US could establish a Consulate in Fort-de-France, provided that the country continued to provide food and fuel supplies to Martinique and Guadeloupe.[18] The islands relied heavily on France for imports and exports, and so even with supplies being sent from the US, the population still lacked basic necessities. Antilleans were thus forced to

become self-sufficient in order to survive, demonstrating remarkable ingenuity and resourcefulness. This is exactly this kind of lesser-known resistance on which Pineau's "Paroles de terre en larmes" sheds light. A system of exchange was established among neighbors and they had to make do with the natural resources they had at their disposition. As Kristen Stromberg Childers explains, they made shoes out of old tires, used alcohol for fuel, cooked with coconut oil, and made bread out of manioc.[19] This solidarity among neighbors is evident in "Paroles de terre en larmes" when one of Félicie's suitors brings her three soup spoons-worth of sugar wrapped up in a banana leaf.[20] While the Vichy era, then, was a period of privation and hardship, it also "represented a time of authenticity and self-reliance that has been lost in the subsequent years of assimilation to a 'French' way of life."[21]

Importantly, Guadeloupeans and Martinicans did not passively accept these repressive policies. Rather, just like in metropolitan France, they resisted against the Vichy regime in their own way. For instance, they showed their disapproval in public by taunting the police officers charged with maintaining public order, organizing illicit street protests during which drivers would beep their horn to sound out "V" in Morse code, and by crying out "Vive le goal, Vive de Gaulle" during football matches.[22] These public, everyday manifestations of dissent were mirrored by the intellectual activities of Caribbean writers and thinkers. In 1941, Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, and René Menil established the literary magazine *Tropiques*, and in their articles about Surrealist writing and culture they passed political messages to their Caribbean readers which demonstrated their clear opposition to the Vichy regime. Much of this material was censored by the authorities because of its revolutionary nature, even though the issues had already been censored by the authors themselves before publication. Although the review was finally shut down in 1945, it had a long-lasting impact on the ways in which creative production could be used for political purposes in the fight against oppressive ideologies. According to Jennings, these forms of resistance were specifically

Antillean in nature and were reflective of both a more general "tradition locale de non-coopération" (local tradition of non-cooperation), and a more focused sense of resistance against metropolitan regimes in power.[23] In "Paroles de terre en larmes," these small-scale acts of resistance become violent at times: Guadeloupeans organize protests and throw rocks at Sorin and his officials.[24]

Maxime's participation in the *Dissidence* movement is an example of a more active form of resistance among Martinicans and Guadeloupeans. According to Richard Burton, this was, like the other methods of rebellion in which Caribbean peoples were engaged, rooted in Antillean traditions. It was considered "un équivalent contemporain du marronage" (a contemporary equivalent of marooning)—when slaves escaped from their masters towards the hills of the islands in search of safety and freedom.[25] From 1940 to 1943, between 4000 and 5000 people left Guadeloupe and Martinique for the neighboring British islands of Dominica and Saint Lucia. Both men and women undertook the dangerous journey, and they were mostly people of color. It was predominantly the young population who were involved, and their departure had a significant impact on the local economy because it meant that there were fewer workers left in key industries on the islands. Antilleans joined the *Dissidence* movement for a number of different reasons. Many were spurred on by patriotism and a love for France, and those who had assimilated into the French colonial project believed that now it was their turn to protect the country which had given them so much in return. One of the most famous *Dissidents* was Martinican theorist and psychiatrist Fanon, who left for Dominica in 1943, just before he turned 18. However, no sooner had he undergone military training there than he was sent back to Martinique because the Vichy regime had already been overthrown in the Caribbean. According to Fanon's older brother Joby Fanon, who published a biography about his younger brother in 2004, Fanon joined up for patriotic reasons: "he would say that he had to join the cleansing forces of Free France and chase the

Germans from French soil."[26] Yet it is possible that there was more at stake for Fanon than a blind love for the mother country. Indeed, some Antilleans were hoping to use their military participation to prove their worth alongside white French soldiers in order to advance claims for equal representation and better rights.[27] Given that Fanon later became one of the most vocal critics against French colonization, it is likely that he saw military participation as a tool to use in the struggle for equality after the war.

For others, there were more mundane reasons for their military engagement. Some were seeking adventure and personal glory, while others simply wanted a way out of a life of misery, unemployment, and starvation that the Antillean islands afforded them during the Vichy era. Whatever the reasons for their enlistment, it is true that they risked their lives to save France from defeat. Crossing the dangerous waters of the Caribbean Sea was perilous, particularly because they had to travel in the middle of the night, and they risked the death penalty if they were caught by the authorities. Pineau reminds us of what was at stake for the *Dissidents*; Félicie remarks that "le Gouverneur Sorin en a déjà mis en prison, des dissidents" (Governor Sorin has already sent some dissidents to prison).[28] Moreover, the journey was expensive as they had to pay the *passeurs*—fishermen who were skilled in navigating their way across the Caribbean Sea—between 500 and 1000 francs to facilitate their crossing.[29] Once they arrived on the islands of Dominica and St Lucia, they integrated the Free French forces. They were sent to the US and Canada where they received military training, and then they left for North Africa and France where they fought alongside metropolitan French troops.

"Paroles de terre en larmes": A Gendered Form of Resistance

In "Paroles de terre en larmes," Pineau brings this era to life through her rich descriptions of daily Antillean life and her powerful characterization of Félicie and Maxime. Both were profoundly affected by the roles they each played in resisting the repressive Vichy policies in

place on the islands. Moreover, her short story reveals that life in Guadeloupe during World War Two was very much conditioned by gender roles and expectations. Men were expected to do their patriotic duty and fight for France, and were admired for their physical and mental strength in leaving the islands in dangerous circumstances to come to the assistance of their "motherland." Women, meanwhile, who were complimented on their physical appearance and their child-bearing capabilities, were not often granted the same mobility, and instead had to wait on the island for their husband to return while taking care of their domestic responsibilities. The gendered, as well as racialized, contours of Guadeloupean society also manifest in the ways in which they resisted against Vichy officials, and Pineau documents these differences very clearly in her short story.

The narrative opens as Félicie thinks back to the moment when Maxime told her he was volunteering in the *Dissidence*. In simple and direct language, he explains his decision as a direct appeal by France for assistance: "Je m'en vais. La France m'appelle" (I'm leaving. France is calling me).[30] The personification of France here as a person who is in need and is calling for help reveals Maxime's conviction that he is indebted to France and that he must put his own life at risk in order to protect his country. He places his trust in General de Gaulle and he is convinced that he will not die during the war; moreover, he feels he must go and fight because "la patrie a besoin de [lui]" (the motherland needs him).[31] It is clear that Maxime subscribes to colonial rhetoric and unquestionably accepts his military engagement alongside French forces as a means of protecting his country. For him, there is no question that France is "his patrie," his motherland, and the narrative implies that he shares the ideology that underpinned France's civilizing mission. France had used imperial conquest and educational and religious strategies to "civilize" indigenous peoples in Africa and the Caribbean; these people, officials believed, needed to be modernized and Westernized. In return for becoming more "civilized," Maxime believes that now it is the turn of people from

the colonies to save France and counter the Vichy government. Pineau plays with gendered language to make this point more forcefully. Maxime attributes a maternal role to France, in an illustration of the mother-child relationship between metropolitan France and the Caribbean colonies that was embedded in the colonial project. He exclaims to Félicie that "tu es ma femme, mais la France est ma mère" (You are my wife, but France is my mother).[32] While he has ownership over his wife in the patriarchal society of Guadeloupe, he owes his "mother," that is France, protection in exchange for the protection she has given Guadeloupe, in an espousal of assimilationist values.

For Maxime, then, joining the Antillean resistance movement is less about opposing or contradicting "dominant ideologies, cultural codes, structures, or power relations, thus opposing hegemony,"[33] as resistance has often been theorized in political science. For him, it is instead a means to show his loyalty and dedication towards France by joining de Gaulle's forces. There is little textual detail to describe his journey to Dominica and his experiences there because the narrative voice of Félicie is privileged, but we do learn that he left from the beach at Bananier, on the south coast of Basse-Terre island, at night on a small fishing boat.[34] Maxime is the first of the *Dissidents* to arrive at the beach, suggesting his eagerness to do his patriotic duty. The fact that the Guadeloupeans have to look out for patrol officers on French naval ships indicates just how risky the crossing really was. This sense of danger is also demonstrated by Félicie's description of their embarkation onboard the fishing boat as "un troupeau de bœufs en route pour l'abbatoir" (a herd of cattle on route to the slaughterhouse).[35] By comparing the Antillean resisters to a herd of cattle blindly heading to be slaughtered, Félicie stresses the danger of their journey ahead and emphasizes that, like the cattle, they were heading to their deaths. While Félicie suspects their adventure is doomed to fail, Maxime believes in the importance of fighting for France.

His actual experiences of war and resistance are less than glorious, and thus confirm that Antilleans are being sacrificed in vain. He eventually returns to Guadeloupe much later than the rest of the soldiers and settles back with Félicie in her hut. At first, he seems proud of his achievements and enjoys boasting to Félicie and his old friends about the opportunities to travel, see the world, and learn new languages during the war: "Tu sais, j'ai eu le temps de voir du pays. Le New Jersey, en Amérique. Tiens, je connais des mots anglais, qu'est-ce que tu crois, écoute un peu: Yes, I want my friend, West Indies, best…" (You know, I had the time to see places. New Jersey, in America. Listen, I know some English words, what do you think, listen: Yes, I want my friend, West Indies, best…).[36] The use of English here in Maxime's French prose demonstrates a sense of translingual and transnational solidarity in which he firmly believed, and in which he situated his own project of resistance. Maxime's transnational outlook here complicates his own claims about enlisting in order to blindly defend France. It suggests that during the war, he shared affinities with people of different nationalities and ethnicities, and therefore looked to establish an African diasporic identity beyond the French Caribbean. Maxime's experiences speak to the wider phenomenon which brought communities together through the experience of war in Europe.[37] Yet Félicie is aware that the only part of America he actually saw was his training camp, and she is angry that he has invented stories about his exciting adventures to entertain his old friends. Bitterly, she questions whether fighting in France was worth it to Maxime, particularly since he lost an arm in the war. She picks up on the maternal metaphor used by Maxime earlier in the story and asks sarcastically: "La France a gagné la guerre! Et toi, qu'est-ce que tu as gagné? Tu l'as vu, ton Général? Elle t'a reconnu, ta mère?" (France has won the war! And you, what have you won? Did you see your General? Did your mother recognize you?).[38] Félicie seems more aware than Maxime that the sacrifices made by Antilleans in the war were not recognized by France, who did not see them as equal in citizenship to their metropolitan counterparts.

Pineau employs particular narrative strategies to highlight the differing attitudes of Maxime and Félicie towards resistance. The dialogues she stages between husband and wife are illustrative of Félicie's suspicion towards the French colonial project and her desire to resist French hegemony by placing value on local Creole traditions such as cock fighting, used in the text as a metaphor to describe war in France.[39] The discussions between husband and wife also demonstrate Maxime's unwavering support of France. For instance, the couple argues when Maxime tells Félicie he is going to join the *Dissidence*. Félicie sings praise to Pétain, perhaps to annoy her husband as she is angry he is abandoning her. Maxime then scolds her and openly admits his support for de Gaulle's Free France: "la vraie France, c'est la France de Gaulle, la France Libre !" (The real France is de Gaulle's France, Free France!).[40] Félicie's response is one of disdain and derision: "La France, c'est un caca de chien qui sèche au soleil de midi sur la route […] De Gaulle! C'est un mancellinier, vas-y dans son ombrage et attends voir la pluie" (France is dog shit drying in the sun in the middle of the road […] De Gaulle is a poisonous manchineel tree, shelter under it and wait to see the rain).[41] Here, Pineau employs references to Creole lexicon and flora (a "mancellinier" is an apple tree native to the Caribbean) to describe France in a bid to emphasize the gap between France and Guadeloupe and resist against French hegemony by placing value on local Caribbean language and culture. However, the fact that Pineau includes a French translation of the Creole idioms in footnotes does undermine slightly the potential for resistance here. It is also worth noting Pineau's insistence on the local Caribbean environment in these quotations. This is a theme which spans Pineau's *œuvre*, regardless of the genre in which she is writing; it emphasizes her personal connection to the Caribbean land as well as makes a political statement about how the conquest and exploitation of land is at the heart of the colonial project. Indeed, it suggests that claiming back this land is an integral part of the anti-colonial struggle.

In one of the few scholarly articles on Pineau's short story, Harpin posits that Félicie is a simple, naïve Black woman who is not politically engaged. For Harpin, the fact that Félicie is an uneducated woman but nevertheless understands better than her husband that the relationship between France and Guadeloupe is one of unequal subservience makes Pineau's denunciation of the French colonial regime all the more striking.[42] However, Félicie's comments in the above quotation actually grant her more agency than Harpin's analysis allows. By comparing de Gaulle to a tree which produces poisonous fruits, Félicie reveals a perceptive understanding of the unreciprocated relationship between France and Guadeloupe, despite France's insistence on equality between the islands and the mainland. She is more aware than her husband that this relationship is predicated on colonial domination; although she has not received a formal education, she is nevertheless politically astute and perceptive. Her political engagement here is reminiscent of Foucault's conceptualization of resistance, in which resistance is closely connected to power. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that "points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network," and consequently "there is a plurality of resistances."[43] For Foucault, resistance can be understood as an everyday practice against the power relations that govern all aspects of society. Unlike Maxime, Félicie does not participate in active military service, but through her ordinary, mundane activities such as the arguments she has with her husband about the futility of military action, she displays a sense of opposition to the power frameworks in place on the island which dominate and oppress the local Guadeloupean population.

Félicie's experiences of war thus reveal the importance of considering narratives of resistance from a gendered perspective. She may not have fought on the battlefields, but she too had to endure many hardships; she had to become self-sufficient and grow her own food and she had to find her own way of surviving the harsh restrictions on her own. Maxime does not seem interested in the difficulties she encountered though. She reminds him that "j'ai fait

la guerre aussi" (I've been through the war too),[44] but he dismisses her comment and dwells on his own misfortunes and adventures. He certainly does not seem to value the everyday practices of resistance in which Félicie engaged during the war; for him, the only way to demonstrate resistance is through violence. Maxime's attitude towards resistance recalls Fanon's ideas about the relationship between violence and resistance which he sustains in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). In the first chapter entitled "On Violence," Fanon argues that colonial rule is sustained by violence, repression, and destruction. Violence is the only language that the colonizers can understand, and so violence is the only vehicle through which society can be restructured and remade during the process of decolonization:

> The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities.[45]

However, Fanon is also careful to stress the futility of violence for violence's sake. He acknowledges that violence is not an end in itself, and as a doctor and psychiatrist he is highly aware of the human cost of this violence. In the second chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon stresses that without a clear plan in place, violence will simply perpetuate and reproduce the power dynamics of the colonial regime, but with the opposing force in the dominant position. Maxime has not yet reached this resolution. He still believes that violence and active military participation are the only means to achieve liberation (not national liberation from a colonial regime, as Fanon suggests, but liberation from the Nazis).

Maxime's downfall is evidence of Fanon's argument in *The Wretched of the Earth* that violence is a destructive force which must be tamed. On his return to Guadeloupe following his active service, Maxime's mental health gradually deteriorates; he begins to

drink heavily and becomes violent and aggressive, expecting Félicie to sleep with him at any time to satisfy his sexual desires. Pineau makes a comment on gender norms in the Caribbean here. Maxime's perception of Félicie as always sexually available to him demonstrates that, as Bonnie Thomas argues, "many men in the French Caribbean reacted to the injustices of plantation society by retreating into patterns of responsibility that continue to plague contemporary relations between the sexes."[46] The inequalities between Maxime and Félicie in relation to their gender are emphasized by Maxime's disability. He is now unable to do anything for himself, so she must take on even more responsibilities. Eventually he is interned in a psychiatric hospital, and Félicie visits him for fifteen years until he dies there. As I have argued, "the narrative strongly implies that Maxime's fierce temper and irrational mood swings emerge as a direct consequence of his participation in the *Dissidence*, and thus a direct legacy of the French colonial project which called on its subjects to bolster metropolitan troops" but which gave them nothing in return.[47] Far from bringing him fame and glory, then, and enabling him to counter hegemonic discourse, active involvement in the Antillean resistance movement breaks Maxime. Pineau connects his tragic fate to the French colonial project which relied on its colonial subjects but did not reciprocate these sentiments of loyalty. In this way, she comments on the subservient relationship between France and the French Caribbean colonies.

Félicie's resistance, meanwhile, is multifaceted and thus conforms to Foucault's notion of the "plurality of resistance" in which resistance is always inevitable and emerges as a response to all social relations imbued with power. Her resistance also has both personal and political resonances. Recognizing the futility of engaging in military action in support of Free France, she gets on with her life calmly and quietly in Guadeloupe. She does miss Maxime, though, and feels lonely without her husband. Her sister Irène becomes pregnant again for the seventh time, each time to a different man, and she tries to convince Félicie that

she should find another man too in order to start a family. She tells her: "tu ne le reverras pas, ton homme! Cherche-toi un autre bougre avant que ta barbe devienne blanche. Bientôt, tu seras toute décatie" (You won't see your man again! Find yourself another guy before you get old. Soon you will be all worn out).[48] Again, Pineau makes a salient point about gender norms here: Félicie's social role is limited to the domestic sphere as she is expected to be a good wife and raise several children. Félicie rebels against these patriarchal norms in a further example of her gendered resistance. She does not have any children, thereby disrupting the stereotype of the female *poto-mitan*, in which the woman is at the center of the Caribbean family unit and plays an important domestic role while upholding values of femininity.[49] Moreover, she refuses to find another man to replace her husband, despite the numerous advances she receives from other male suitors. This shows that while "Paroles de terre en larmes" is situated in a particular historical moment, the themes it treats in terms of resisting oppressive gender norms and foregrounding female agency go beyond the time period of World War Two.

Félicie's agency can be seen in her resourceful and astute behavior when faced with the harsh food restrictions and rationing measures in place due to the lack of produce reaching the islands. In this way, she demonstrates another level of resistance in response to unfair treatment and difficult living conditions, and her actions illustrate Childers's point about self-reliance very clearly. In an emotive scene, Félicie tries to work out what she will be able to eat over the subsequent few days, and she comes to the realization that soon she will have no food left:

> Il y a la guerre en Guadeloupe. Aujourd'hui, j'ai mis trois poyos à cuire dans un canari d'eau de mer. Trois poyos à manger, comme ça, sans huile, sans chair ! Demain, je vais manger des patates rôties sous la cendre. Et après-demain, je ne sais

pas encore… Les mangues ne mûrissent plus, on les mange vertes. Les fruits à pain, on les mange bleus.

(War is waging in Guadeloupe. Today, I put three green bananas to cook in a pot of sea water. Three bananas to eat, just like that, without oil, without meat! Tomorrow, I'm going to eat potatoes roasted under the ash. And the day after, I'm not sure yet… The mangoes are no longer ripe, we eat them green. Breadfruit, we eat that blue.)[50]

Here, it is clear that Félicie is forced to rely on natural produce that she can grow herself, such as "poyos," or green Guadeloupean bananas as Pineau explains in French in a footnote. The ellipsis following the foreboding phrase "et après-demain, je ne sais pas encore…" is indicative of Félicie's worry that soon she will not be able to sustain herself, while the repetition of the adverb "sans" emphasizes the lack of nutritional food available. Yet this quotation also demonstrates Félicie's resourcefulness and ingenuity. She has to think creatively about how to sustain herself, growing her own food and using her own resources. This self-reliance is representative of a growing sense of autonomy among Guadeloupeans and Martinicans who sought the right to control their own affairs themselves rather than being dominated by France. Even though it might not be on the world scale, Félicie is nonetheless constantly involved in small acts of resistance against the regime in power.

Moreover, the text demonstrates how she supports the Free French forces in her own way, which also points readers to a growing anti-colonial consciousness. Following the passage quoted above, the narrative time moves to June 1943, when Sorin's regime is overthrown. Félicie explains that "il a quitté la Guadeloupe, chassé par les Français Libres" (he left Guadeloupe, chased by the Free French).[51] It thus becomes apparent that those who were left behind on the island were also fighting to remove the Vichy officials, albeit in different ways to those who left for Dominica and Saint Lucia. Although Félicie's own role in this revolt is unclear, she joins her fellow Guadeloupeans at rejoicing at his departure. In the

short, emphatic phrase "Guadeloupe est Libre" (Guadeloupe is free),[52] Pineau capitalizes the adjective "libre" to foreground Félicie's relief for freedom. Guadeloupeans no longer sing allegiance to Pétain but to de Gaulle, and they are particularly thankful that with Sorin gone, the Americans will soon return and with them, access to food supplies. The local authorities regain control of the island and any place names that referenced Pétain and his supporters are changed back to their original name—"Place du Maréchal Pétain" becomes "Place de la Victoire" again.[53] These resistance practices can be considered as the offshoots of an emerging anti-colonial resistance on the islands, as islanders were becoming more convinced of the need for self-determination.[54] The actions of Félicie and her fellow Guadeloupeans were thus important in beginning to challenge relations between colonizer and colonized.

Finally, Félicie's resistance occurs on a discursive level, and her agency is particularly apparent in the use of the first person. Pineau gives Félicie the narrative voice throughout the story which means that everything is narrated from her perspective, and we only learn about Maxime's involvement in the *Dissidence* through her. In addition, by employing the first person, Pineau makes Félicie an active participant of resistance rather than a passive bystander. She is able to tell her own story about how she rebelled against the Vichy officials, and how she considered the French colonial project with mistrust and suspicion. Furthermore, the structure of "Paroles de terre en larmes" is significant, as it reveals her disillusionment with France and French colonialism and her understanding that resistance has not improved her daily life. Her insights on the failure of this resistance to grant her political and economic emancipation are particularly apparent in her reflections on old age which bookend the story. She remarks that she misses Maxime and the sexual pleasure he gave her, and she realizes that she is now only "une vieille négresse solitaire, un vieux bois sec et noir et tordu qui fait semblant de vivre" (an old lonely Black woman, an old dry and twisted piece of black wood that is pretending to live).[55] The story closes in a similarly melancholic fashion, as Félicie

recalls that whenever she closes her eyes she sees her skirt drifting down the river, in an allusion to the day Maxime told her he was leaving her to join the *Dissidence,* distracting her from her daily chores. She recognizes the huge negative impact that his military engagement has had on her own life. She realizes that rebelling against the Vichy officials through direct military action or indirect means has not made a significant difference to the quality of her life, and that her resistance has been futile. Although Félicie appears to be resigned and cynical, she seems more critical than ever of the French colonial project which anchored the Antilles in a position of subordination.

Pineau's short story shows World War Two as a turning point in Antillean attitudes towards France. Indeed, it was after World War Two that Antilleans gained full French citizenship rights through departmentalization, but they soon turned away from France as they realized that departmentalization did not secure them political equality nor economic security. World War Two also brought into sharp relief questions about occupation, resistance, and rebellion. As Childers notes, Antilleans were faced with "how to survive physically under maritime blockade, how to resist against an authoritarian racist regime, and how to position oneself in a dramatically changing neo-colonial world order."[56] As "Paroles de terre en larmes" demonstrates clearly, Antillean women were particularly attuned to these overlapping difficulties. Remaining on the islands to raise their families, they witnessed first-hand France's lack of concern for events in the Caribbean, and they had to create their own strategies of resistance, both against Vichy officials and the French colonial regime more broadly.

"Paroles de terre en larmes" is rich in historical detail and helps to fill the gaps about an important but understudied episode of francophone Caribbean history which requires further analysis, memorialization, and commemoration. Local people are also contributing to commemorative practices which praise the heroic deeds of their ancestors. For instance, in

June 2021, an exhibition was curated by photographer Sylvain Demange and historian Sylvie Meslin, and photographs and historical accounts of the period were placed on the railings outside the office of the Prefecture in Fort-de-France.[57] Such community-led projects help to fill the commemorative gap left by official French discourses which fail to fully recognize the fact that Martinicans and Guadeloupeans gave their life for France in World War Two. There is currently no official memorial to the *Dissidents,* except a small stele in Les Trois-Îlets on Martinique which was erected in 2010 and a plaque in the courtyard of Les Invalides in Paris which was inaugurated by President François Hollande on June 2, 2014.[58] However, neither of these small monuments do justice to the sacrifices the Antilleans made during the war.

Pineau's unique contribution to our understanding of what life was like in the Caribbean during World War Two is all the more invaluable given this lack of official recognition about the Caribbean Resistance movement. And yet, Pineau also employs a range of literary techniques to ensure that it is not only a documentary text about the *Dissidence,* but also a story about agency and resistance, about identity and belonging, and about loyalty and disillusionment. It is not the only literary text written in recent years about the *Dissidence*. Strikingly, the most well-known writings about this crucial historical moment are written by male authors–examples include the novels *Le Nègre et l'Amiral* (The negro and the admiral)[59] and *La Dissidence* (The dissidence)[60] by Martinican writer Confiant and the short story "Dissidences" (Dissidences) by Guadeloupean novelist and poet Daniel Maximin.[61] Other forgotten narratives by Caribbean writers about the *Dissidence* are also coming to the fore, but these too are written by men—Joseph Zobel's short story "Bo-bo-bo-o" (Up yours, Hitler!) is one such example.[62] What these texts all have in common, in addition to the sex of their creators, is the fact that they focus their attention on young male characters who bravely join the Antillean resistance to fight for France, demonstrating great loyalty to the French nation. What Pineau's writing does so effectively—and this is also

mirrored in works by other female Caribbean writers such as Alice Delpech—is to offer a female perspective on resistance in World War Two which showcases what life was like for women during this period. “Paroles de terre en larmes” thus deserves to be considered a key text in Pineau’s *œuvre*, and a significant piece of Caribbean literature more broadly, for its exploration of Caribbean history, gender issues, and female empowerment.

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2016, edited by Félix Germain and Silyane Larcher, 149–66. Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

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Notes

[1] Gisèle Pineau, “Paroles de terre en larmes,” in *Paroles de terre en larmes: nouvelles*, ed. Centre d’action culturelle de la Guadeloupe (Paris; Montéran, Guadeloupe: Éditions Hatier, 1988), 5–20. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[2] Michèle Montantin, “Écritures d’îles,” in *Paroles de terre en larmes: nouvelles*, ed. Centre d’action culturelle de la Guadeloupe (Paris; Montéran, Guadeloupe: Éditions Hatier, 1988), 3–4.

[3] Her other stories “Ombres créoles” [Creole shadows] and “Léna” [Léna] were also selected to appear in the book.

[4] Pineau, “Paroles,” 18.

[5] Tina Harpin, “Menteries sur la patrie, violence et exils: la guerre selon les narratrices de Gisèle Pineau dans ‘Paroles de terre en larmes’ (1987) et *L’Exil selon Julia* (1996),” *Études littéraires africaines* 40 (2015): 108. Pineau’s father died in June 2014, but his heroic deeds were recognized by the Overseas Minister at the time, George Pau-Langevin, during his funeral ceremony in Capesterre-Belle-Eau.

[6] Gisèle Pineau, *La Grande Drive des espirts* (Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 1993).

[7] Gisèle Pineau, *The Drifting of Spirits*, trans. J. Michael Dash (London: Quartet Books, 2003).

[8] Gisèle Pineau, *L’Exil selon Julia* (Paris: Stock, 1996).

[9] Gisèle Pineau, *Exile according to Julia*, trans. Betty Wilson (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia Press, 2003).

[10] Gisèle Pineau, *Mes quatre femmes* (Paris: Phillippe Rey, 2007).

[11] Antonia Wimbush, “La Dissidence in Gisèle Pineau’s Œuvre,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 20, no. 1 (2020).

[12] H. Adlai Murdoch, “The Language(s) of Martinican Identity: Resistance to Vichy in the Novels of Raphaël Confiant,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 1 (2007): 70.

[13] Murdoch, “The Language(s) of Martinican Identity,” 69.

[14] Pineau, “Paroles,” p. 12.

[15] Éric Jennings, “La Dissidence aux Antilles (1940-1943),” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire* 68 (2000): 56.

[16] Éric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain’s National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe and Indochina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 120.

[17] Kristen Stromberg Childers, “The Second World War as a Watershed in French Caribbean History,” *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 4 (2012): 415.

[18] Childers, “The Second World War as a Watershed,” 415.

[19] Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace: National Identity, Decolonization and Assimilation in the French Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.
[20] This young man does have an ulterior motive for wanting to help her, though, as he is trying (without success) to seduce her with Maxime gone to war. Pineau, "Paroles," 12.
[21] Childers, *Seeking Imperialism's Embrace*, 44.
[22] Jennings, "La Dissidence aux Antilles," 58.
[23] Jennings, "La Dissidence aux Antilles," 58.
[24] Pineau, "Paroles," p. 12.
[25] Richard Burton, "Vichysme et vichystes à la Martinique," *Les Cahiers du CERAG* 34 (1978): 2–3.
[26] Joby Fanon, *Frantz Fanon: de la Martinique à l'Algérie* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2004); *Frantz Fanon, My Brother: Doctor, Playwright, Revolutionary,* trans. Daniel Nethery (Lanham, MD; London: Lexington Books, 2014), 22.
[27] Ruth Ginio, *The French Army and its African Soldiers: The Years of Decolonization* (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 6–7.
[28] Pineau, "Paroles," p. 9.
[29] Jennings, "La Dissidence aux Antilles," 64.
[30] Pineau, "Paroles," 6.
[31] Pineau, "Paroles," 6.
[32] Pineau, "Paroles," 6.
[33] Dani Flic, "Is Resistance always Counter-Hegemonic?," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 26, no. 1 (2021): 24.
[34] Pineau, "Paroles," 7.
[35] Pineau, "Paroles," 8.
[36] Pineau, "Paroles," 16.
[37] For more on the creation of African diasporic communities in France during and after the war, see Emmanuelle Sibeud, Sylvain Pattieu, Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Black Populations of France: Histories from Metropole to Colony* (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).
[38] Pineau, "Paroles," 16.
[39] Pineau, "Paroles," 9.
[40] Pineau, "Paroles," 9.
[41] Pineau, "Paroles," 9.
[42] Harpin, "Menteries sur la patrie," 98.
[43] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 95–6.
[44] Pineau, "Paroles," 15.
[45] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 5–6.
[46] Bonnie Thomas, "Identity at the Crossroads: An Exploration of French Caribbean Gender Identity," *Caribbean Studies*, 32, no. 2 (2004): 48.
[47] Wimbush, "La Dissidence in Gisèle Pineau's *Œuvre,*" 173.
[48] Pineau, "Paroles," p. 10.
[49] See Stéphanie Mulot and Nadine Lefaucheur, "Between Respectability and Resistance: French Caribbean Women Confronted by Masculine Domination during the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," in *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality, 1848–2016*, eds. Félix Germain and Silyane Larcher (Lincoln, NA: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 149–66.
[50] Pineau, "Paroles," 11.
[51] Pineau, "Paroles," 12.

[52] Pineau, "Paroles," 12.
[53] Pineau, "Paroles," 12.
[54] This self-determination never actually occurred, because in 1946 Antilleans voted for departmentalization, convinced by local politicians such as the Martinican député Césaire that departmentalization would improve living conditions on the islands and would grant Guadeloupeans and Martinicans full citizenship rights, enabling them to be considered in equal terms to their metropolitan counterparts. Many Guadeloupeans and Martinicans believed that independence was not a possible outcome because the islands lacked the necessary capital and infrastructure, and so departmentalization was their only realistic option. Yet they became aware very quickly of the limitations of the departmentalization framework, particularly because of escalating social and economic inequalities, and the 1950s and 60s saw an increase in Antillean activism as they asserted their rights for sovereignty. Yarima Bonilla argues that contemporary labor movements in Guadeloupe and Martinique (such as the general strikes which occurred in 2009) are very much grounded in the failure of postcolonial sovereignty offered by departmentalization to guarantee economic stability and political equality. See Yarima Bonilla, *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
[55] Pineau, "Paroles," 6.
[56] Childers, "The Second World War as a Watershed," 410.
[57] Céline Guiral, "Dissidence et résistance: face(s) sensible(s)," *France Antilles Martinique*, June 25, 2021, accessed November 8 2021, https://www.martinique.franceantilles.fr/actualite/culture/dissidence-et-resistance_face-s-sensible-s-581835.php.
[58] Nina Wardleworth, "The Documentary as a Site of Commemoration: Filming the Free French Dissidents from the French Antilles," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 25, no. 2 (2018): 385.
[59] Raphaël Confiant, *Le Nègre et l'Amiral: roman* (Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1988).
[60] Raphaël Confiant, *La Dissidence* (Paris: Éditions Écriture, 2002).
[61] Daniel Maximin, "Dissidences," in *The Caribbean Writer as Warrior of the Imaginary/L'Écrivain caribéen, Guerrier de l'imaginaire*, ed. Kathleen Gyssels and Bénédicte Ledent (Amsterdam; New York: Éditions Rodopi, 2008).
[62] The short story appeared in the first edition of his collection *Laghia de la mort* which was first published with a private Martinican press in 1946. The volume was later republished with Présence africaine in 1978, but it did not include the short story, meaning that the story was lost. In her analysis, Louise Hardwick explains that the story was "the earliest and only fictional account to have been written contemporaneously with events." Louise Hardwick, "Discovery of Zobel's Lost Wartime Short Story: 'Bo-Bo-Bo-o' Or 'Up Yours, Hitler!,'" *French Studies Bulletin* 42, no. 158 (2021): 8.