

## The Restless

**Gerty Dambury**

**Judith G. Miller, Translator**

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In Gerty Dambury's *The Restless*, living and dead members of a Guadeloupe neighborhood recount the tragic aftermath of a deadly protest. The novel is inspired by real events and a shocking cover-up.

On May 24, 1967, a union strike in Pointe-à-Pitre turns bloody when police fire on demonstrators. For nine-year-old Émilienne and her eight siblings, their father's failure to come home after the tragedy and their teacher's sudden departure are destabilizing events that invite a chorus of commentators.

Despite the original count of five dead, it later emerges that more than 100 people were seriously wounded or killed. A large-scale cover-up follows. In Dambury's novel, magical realism becomes a vehicle for exploring the events.

As Émilienne sits on a bench, waiting in vain for her father, she is visited by five figures, four of them ghostly. They include two of her former neighbors, one of whom hung himself because of homophobia. Their testimonies illuminate the community's history and mores. Abrupt narrative shifts occasionally make identification awkward, yet the frequent changes give the novel its verve.

The chorus of voices includes a plural narration from Émilienne's siblings that resembles prose poetry. They choreograph the novel so that it is "told the way a caller calls out a Caribbean quadrille." That dance's traditional steps provide the novel's structure, while snatches of Creole lend the text vibrant specificity.

"The dead are never really dead in Guadeloupe," Dambury asserts. Here, she tenders poetic reflections on loss and the duties of the living.

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