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Haitian Literature: A case study in collective trauma

“Experiencing trauma is part of being human; history is always written in blood.” These opening words of Bessel A. van der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane’s essay “The Black Hole of Trauma” resonate throughout all post-colonial nations. The histories of these communities recount the experiences of living under imperialism as well as the chaotic aftermath of having been a colonized nation. These stories are told, not just in the history, but also in the literature that reflects such communities. The stories from such countries tell of the blood stained history and the embedded colonial trauma that exists in the lives of individuals and the collective.

Post-colonial nations often experience rupture due to their traumatic beginnings. The populations within such nations suffer from a trauma in which the individual and collective identities of their people are shattered and replaced with an imposed identity from an outside imperial power. Throughout colonization the people are told that their native identities are false and they must rediscover themselves through the framework they have been given. This framework is constructed by the imperial power, reflecting the goals of the colonizer. It places the native as a “savage” torn between two possible categories: free labor that can be used to harvest the resources found in the newly colonized land or shipped abroad as slaves or as an unfortunate side effect of the resource-rich land that must be tamed to become useful. Regardless of the classification, members of the native population become defined by the imparted influence of the white man’s burden. They are forced to accept the schooling, language and religion of the colonizer in order to be deemed acceptable to “join” the empire. Franz Fanon

expressed this psychological transformation of the peoples of the colonized population in his text

Black Skin, White Masks. Fanon writes,

As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others. There is of course the moment of 'being for others,' of which Hegel speaks, but every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society... In the Weltanschauung of the colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man... The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him (Fanon, 109-110).

In this passage, Fanon speaks of the internalization of the colonizer's culture within the black man. He writes of the "two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself." From these words, one can see that the transformation is clearly forced on the native population through a manipulation of identity. By placing the black man as a dialectical opposite to the civilization of the white colonizer, the imperial power is able to convince the black man to change. In the end, it is the black man who places himself within the frame of reference, not the colonizer; thus showing the meta-cognitive shift in the consciousness of the individuals of the colonized nation from their own culture to the imposed culture. This need to re-identify oneself marks the first moment of trauma.

The moment of freedom from the imperial power serves as a second moment of trauma in which the nation is left to define itself, unable to reconcile the complex "collision of races and cultures produced"(Benítez-Rojo, p37). As Benítez-Rojo outlines in his text *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Post-modern Perspective*, colonized areas are not merely left in a middle ground between the past and present definitions of self. Rather they are faced with a multi-layered system of indigenous groups who have been eradicated by disease and violence, new slave cultures that have been brought in to serve as indentured labor, European systems of power. Both politically through the unrest of establishing a democratic nation after colonial rule

as well as culturally in deciding upon a national identity, the post colonial nation is left lost to relive its trauma and develop its own plan of treatment.

Only by acknowledging the double-consciousness of existing between distinct cultures can such a problem be solved. This process occurs in both an individual and collective sense; thus, the trauma itself is both individual and collective.

As Ron Eyerman explains in his text *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, “cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion” (Eyerman, 61). Like the African American population that Eyerman studies in his text, the post-colonial nation suffers from a loss of identity both at the moment in which the colony is established, as well as at the moment in which it is dissolved. The components of a shared identity present in the group are altered to a forced portrait with the coming of imperialism. This initial “tear” forces the group to accept a concept of identity created by the imperial power. However once the community is able to process the initial shift in identity from their self-assigned definition to that of the imperial power, they are forced to undergo a tear again when they become de-colonized. At this moment, they are once again left without a label, and must this time create for themselves a cultural identity that will bond them and help them overcome their previous traumas.

To further use Eyerman’s language, one can argue that it is these two moments that serve as the “primal scene” around which the Post-colonial nation builds a cultural identity. Eyerman argues that the traumatic event(s) serve as a bonding agent that the entire group can claim and through which they can collectively establish a shared experience or identity. This process is one that occurs regularly among Post-colonial nations. Like the African-American community that

used slavery as the moment upon which they were able to establish their new identity, neither African nor American, but instead a new hybrid of the two, post-colonial nations incorporate their multiple cultural perspectives into that which is imposed by their colonizer to form something new; something that will allow them to become a new democratic nation, aware of its past, but not limited by it. Unfortunately like the African Americans, whose collective memory contains many more instances of trauma, so does that of the post-colonial nation. During the process of establishing themselves anew, both politically and culturally, most post-colonial nations suffer added traumas of corrupt governments, civil unrest, war, and ethnic cleansing. Eyerman claims that instead of seeing those added traumas as unique experiences of a particular individual or generation, they become woven into the fabric of the collective identity. I agree with Eyerman in that the experiences of the individual become part of the collective experience of the trauma and influence the entire community. However, I believe that those experiences remain with the individual as well, serving as individual and collective simultaneously.

In her essay “Notes on Trauma”, Kai Erikson explains the distinction between individual and collective trauma. She writes in her analysis of a devastating flood in Buffalo Creek, West Virginia:

By individual trauma, I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively... [The] Buffalo Creek survivors experienced precisely that. They suffered deep shock as a result of their exposure to death and devastation, and as so often happens in catastrophes of this magnitude, they withdrew into themselves, feeling numbed, afraid, vulnerable, and very alone.

By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and insidiously into the

awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma.” But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared... “I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (Erikson, 187).

From Erikson’s definitions, one can see how individual and collective trauma can exist simultaneously. As each member of the community withdraws deeper within himself as a defense against the traumatic event, he loses his ability to participate in the communal “we.” However, the experience of this happening throughout an entire community creates a sense of collective trauma in that the individuals are experiencing effects of the same event. Therefore, this aspect of trauma creates a twofold impact on the people. It serves as a moment of individual psychological trauma in which each member of the community is impacted differently, causing a degree of division where each person must cope independently. However, the trauma of colonization and subsequent de-colonization is also collective. The same trauma that isolates the members of the community from one another also serves as a common ground on which to build a community. Erikson explains, “the estrangement becomes the basis for communality, as if persons without homes or citizenship or any other niche in the larger order of things were invited together in a quarter set aside for the disfranchised, a ghetto for the unattached” (Erikson, 186). Therefore, the same psychological manipulation that turned the black man into an “other,” can serve as the grounds to build a collective identity for a post-colonial state. This twisted logic in which the same circumstances that cause the problem can also serve as a road to solution underlines the complexity with the post-colonial psyche.

To help sustain the collective identity, such communities create cultural representations in the form of history as well as art to record and interpret the experience of the collective. One

such form is writing. Much literature written in post-colonial nations portrays a narrative of a hybridized life in which one must learn to adopt the traditions of the colonizer as well as one's reasserted native culture. These tales also tell of the chaos that follows imperialism. They tell of corrupt regimes and shifting politics as the country establishes its identity. Within these tales of turmoil, also exist personal narratives of trauma that reflect the experience of the entire nation and therefore become part of the collective memory of the trauma.

The presence of personal narrative married with the historical artifact makes literature an effective tool in the healing process of post-colonial trauma. As Bessel A. Van der Kolk and Onno Van der Hart explain in their essay, "Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma", "Traumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity" (163). Like the traumatic memory itself, the act of writing can also be solitary. Therefore, the narrative of an individual traumatic experience becomes the bridge for collective experience. Once the individual trauma is recorded, an act that can be independently therapeutic, it can be woven into the collective memory of the post-colonial nation, thus making the individual trauma communal. The introduction of language therefore allows the two-fold trauma to be exposed and possibly diffused.

While these statements about the trauma of the post-colonial nation resonate throughout the world, their relevance varies depending on the success of the country's re-establishment as an independent entity. The countries that suffer continual trauma build a collective identity that revolves around rupture rather than healing. Therefore, the longer it takes a country to reunite and re-establish its own identity, the more intense the trauma of imperialism becomes. This

can be seen, for example, in the island nation of Haiti. Haiti has a long-standing history of trauma, which to this day is still being woven.

As the first country in the Caribbean to gain its independence, Haiti has had 206 years to establish its independence and create a functioning society that revolves around a collective identity. Unfortunately as seen from even the most recent tragedy of the Earthquake in Haiti that took place in January of 2010, the country is still suffering with the struggles of a de-colonized nation. Liberated from its nearly four hundred year imperialism, controlled first by the Spanish as part of Hispaniola and then the French as Saint-Domingue, by a slave rebellion led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the early days of the black republic of Haiti seemed promising. However due to attempts to acquire the land of its neighbor, the Dominican Republic, many economic mistakes, and a long line of totalitarian rulers, Haiti did not establish a functioning democratic political system until the 1990's. Similarly the cultural development of a unified Haiti has been stifled by the complex relationships that Haiti has had with the Dominican Republic and its strong connection to the French language. As the poorest, and blackest, nation in the western hemisphere, Haiti has not been given the educational opportunity needed to establish itself as an independent identity. While the majority of Haitians speak only Kréyol or use it as their dominant tongue, the culture of Haiti, politically, academically, and artistically is still French, thus continually isolating the people from a major part their own culture.

This continual presence of the colonized power through the dominant language, French, creates a hierarchy reminiscent of the imperial era. Within Haiti, it is those with access to the tools left by the colonizer- light skin, language, education and religion- that have been granted power throughout Haitian history. Even through access to its prospering neighbor the

Dominican Republic for work, the power dynamics are directly linked to the traces of the nation's colonial past.

It is because of this extended period of limbo that I have focused my research on the post-colonial trauma of Haiti. Despite being the first in the Caribbean to gain independence on January 1, 1804, the island seems to be the last to escape the horrors of its colonization. Even though there are many cultural and historical factors that define each Caribbean's nations experience as unique, Haiti shares many economical, cultural, and social struggles with its island neighbors. These struggles are what cause Benítez-Rojo to classify the Caribbean as a "societal area," linked but also distinct simultaneously. He quotes Père Jean-Baptiste Labat's observations of this strange relationship within the region.

I have travelled everywhere in your sea of the Caribbean...from Haiti to Barbados, to Martinique and Guadeloupe, and I know what I am speaking about... You are all together in the same boat, sailing on the same uncertain sea...citizenship and race unimportant, feeble little labels compared to the message that my spirit brings to me: that of the position and predicament which History has imposed upon you...I saw it first with the dance...the merengue in Haiti, the beguine in Martinique...It is not accident that the sea which separates your lands makes no difference to the rhythms of your body (Benítez-Rojo, 35).

As Labat explains, the rhythms, both indigenous to the area and brought over by the countless African tribes enslaved on the Caribbean islands bond each nation just as much as their historical narratives do. While the specific details such as language, Imperial nation, or even name of the dance may vary, the fundamental experiences of the Caribbean bind these islands to a shared trauma. Haiti's specifics resonate only because their struggle has surpassed the duration of all of its neighbors, leaving them in the boat to navigate the sea alone.

As part of a larger island, named Hispaniola by Christopher Columbus on his inaugural docking in the “New World” in 1492, the area now known as Haiti and the Dominican Republic was originally inhabited by an indigenous people called the Taino, who were killed off by the disease and genocide. However in order to establish a successful colony the Spanish needed a new crop of workers to harvest the sugar cane. Since the Taino people did not survive the initial colonization of the island, the Spanish brought African slaves to Hispaniola to harvest the fields. By replacing the indigenous population with African slaves, the Spanish permanently altered the cultural landscape of Hispaniola.

Like other colonized countries, which navigate a middle ground between a pre-existing culture and that left behind by the Imperial power, Haiti was stripped of its aboriginal culture. It was forced to adopt the ways of the African tribes who were brought to Hispaniola as a way to temper the culture left behind by Spain and France.

Despite the constant introduction of new traumatic events that prevent Haiti from being able to heal, the country does have a collective identity. As Eyerman suggests in his definition of collective identity, the people of Haiti use literature and art as artifacts to share their trauma and move beyond it.

Unfortunately, like the African-American culture that Eyerman examines, there are few artifacts written early on to record the tragedies of Haiti’s independence as it was being established, however texts have been written after the fact that record each tear in Haiti’s history. Since the trauma in Haiti has not ceased, each text while recording the trauma of the past, also reflects the traumatic events occurring as the text was written. This can be seen in layered structures and narrators of Haitian literature used to reflect the multiplicities present in the

stories they capture. Therefore, each depiction of Haiti's traumas reflects both the collective and the individual experience. While the entire community has inherited the trauma of the previous generations, each generation is faced with its own "tear", thus making their experience both collective in memory and individual in experience. By looking at texts written about these pivotal moments, one can explore the ways in which Haiti has established a collective and individual representation of trauma simultaneously.

The primal scene for the Haitian experience occurred in 1803 when Haiti became the first country in the western hemisphere to declare independence from its colonizer. This moment marks the turning point not only for Haiti, but also for the entire afro-Caribbean region to follow. As part of the original Hispaniola where Columbus landed in 1492 when he discovered the “new world,” Haiti serves as an allegorical example for the experience of the colonized nation. Not only was Haiti the first to be conquered during the age of exploration and the first to break free, it was also colonized twice. As part of Hispaniola, Santo Domingo was under Spanish rule until 1697 and was then taken over by the French until the slave rebellion of 1803. The presence of two distinctly different colonial powers seems almost symbolic of the duality that the people of Haiti will continue to experience throughout the remainder of the country’s history.

This duality exists in many forms for the people. Having experienced the imperial influence of both France and Spain, the people of Haiti had dual imperial experiences. While Spain relied on Santo Domingo for its production of sugar, the French transformed Saint Domingue into a lavish site of production and life, making it “the richest plantation colony in the world” (Benítez-Rojo, 48). Throughout the years of sugar production the people of Haiti were also forced to adapt to two new languages. Therefore when they declared independence in 1804, the Haitian people then had the linguistic influence of two colonizers to reconcile in establishing their new identity. Thus the most commonly spoken language in their current culture, Haitian Kréyol, reflects both Spanish and French; it also reflects the dual “native” cultures present in the country.

As mentioned previously, the term native is also ambiguous when applied to the Haitian people. While Kréyol does reflect remnants of the Taino people who originally inhabited the island, it mostly patterns itself off the African tribal languages brought to Haiti with the slaves

that both the Spanish and French settlers imported to harvest sugarcane. Therefore, the duality of Haiti is not only present through the imperial influence, but also through the native influence; thus making both the collective and individual identity of its people inherently divided. This symbolism in both history and language is embedded in the psyche of the Haitian people. From the texts that record its earliest experiences, one can see a double consciousness that haunts the island nation.

This sense of duality is consistent throughout victims of trauma. As Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart explain in their essay, “The Intrusive Past” an inability to bridge life before and after a traumatic experience is common. They discuss the phenomenon in Holocaust victims, but it applies to the people of a colonized nation as well. They write,

Many traumatized persons, however, experience long periods of time in which they live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of the trauma, and the realm of their current, ordinary life. This is most eloquently described by L.L. Langer (1991) in his study on oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors who never succeeded in bridging their existence in the death camps and their lives before and after. This suggests a permanent duality, not exactly a split or a doubling but a parallel existence (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 177).

This experience of living parallel existences is very applicable to the people of a newly independent Haiti. Faced with the experience of life before Imperialism and after colonization, the people live in two distinct worlds that are unable to be bridged, which result in irreconcilable differences. Navigating the identity of “savages” who need to be civilized and a rich history of strong tribal beliefs seems impossible for the people of a new nation. It is no wonder that the people of Haiti and other newly independent countries divide along lines of race, education, or class, physically creating the two worlds they cannot bridge.

The regional significance of Haiti’s de-colonization can be seen in the novel *The Kingdom of this World* by Alejo Carpentier. The story tells of Haiti from the perspective of a slave, recording nearly one hundred years of history from the discontent under French rule,

through the of the slave rebellion of 1803, and to the early days of “independence on the island. Interestingly, this chronicle of Haiti’s struggles as the only successful slave rebellion and first independent nation was written in 1957 by a Cuban author. Both the publication date, and the author’s nationality speak to the significance of the Haitian experience. Carpentier wrote his novel after a visit to Haiti as colonization was falling out of favor on the world stage. Similarly, Cuba was on the verge of a revolution of its own. For both its links to colonization and its themes of revolution, the Haitian slave rebellion serves as a model for the rest of the world. As Edwidge Danticat explains in her introduction to the text, “In *The Kingdom of this World*, Alejo Carpentier allows us to consider the possibility- something which his own Cuba would later grapple with- that a revolution that some consider visionary might appear to others to have failed” (Danticat, viii). It is in Danticat’s words that we see yet another significance of the Haitian experience. While the slave rebellion was considered a remarkable feat and a model for the rest of the Caribbean in that it allowed Haiti to escape the dominance of France and become its own nation, the rebellion can also be viewed as a failure. The sense of failure comes out of the struggles that Haiti has endured since the rebellion. In choosing to become independent, the nation faced struggles, politically of re-inventing itself, economically and psychologically. Unfortunately many of the struggles that Danticat alludes to and that Carpentier outlines in his text are still present for the people of Haiti, having never been able to align its parallel worlds.

Like the visionary acts of the country, *The Kingdom of this World* serves as yet another first for the region. In addition to recording this crucial event in Caribbean history, the text is also considered the first mention of magical realism. As Danticat recounts in her introduction to the novel, Carpentier spoke of his experience during a trip to Haiti in 1940 as coming in contact with what he referred to as the “lo real maravilloso” or the “real marvelous” (Danticat

Introduction, X). Carpentier wrote of this experience in the prologue to the first edition of the novel,

I was treading on the land where thousands of men anxious for freedom had believed. I had been in the Citadel of La Ferriere, a work without architectural antecedents... I had breathed the atmosphere created by Henri Christophe, a monarch of incredible exploits... At every step I encountered the marvelous in the real.” (Danticat Introduction, X)

The marvelous real that Carpentier describes captures the duality of the post-colonial experience.

The “hybrid” identity created after de-colonization that links the native culture and the remnants left by the colonizer to create something new is found in magical realism. As a genre, magical realism marries events from reality with a mysticism that tempers the horror of the past; something that Haiti as a country must do in re-establishing itself.

This magical realism, which Carpentier felt on the island of Haiti, is captured in his writing. He uses magic in his novel to soften the history of the slave rebellion and the establishment of an independent Haiti. The characters in *The Kingdom of this World* are a mixture of historical figures and fictional people. Through the combination of the two, Carpentier once again mirrors the duality of the Haitian experience. The primary characters of the text: Macandal, Toussaint L’Ouveture, Henri Christophe and Ti Noël are real, rooting the experience firmly in the historical facts of this slave rebellion. However, many of the actions and descriptions of these historical figures are fictionalized. This pairing of the historical reality with the magic of fiction reflects the experience of the Haitian community who use their stories as a way to soften the struggles of their nation’s history.

This is highlighted best in Macandal. While he was a historical leader in Haiti, responsible for the failed poison rebellion of 1751, Macandal’s presence to the characters has a mystical component. He is the force behind the slave rebellion, but he is also a spirit who changes form into animals and disappears for years at a time to escape the capture of the French

settlers who struggle to regain power. The character himself embodies that magic that tempers reality. This can be seen in the moment when he incites the rebellion.

Macandal the one-armed, now a *houngan* of the Rada rite, invested with superhuman powers as the result of his possession by the major gods on several occasions was the Lord of Poison...he had proclaimed the crusade of extermination, chosen as he was to wipe out the whites and create a great empire of free Negroes in Santo Domingo (Carpentier, 30).

Carpenter's description underlines Macandal's magic. He is given superhuman and godly powers to lead the "march of poison" against the French.

Macandal also symbolizes everything native for the slaves of Haiti. Not only does he empower the other men to act for themselves, but he is also their storyteller, connecting them to a culture that gives them a reason to fight. Carpentier writes,

With the disappearance of Macandal was also the disappearance of all that world evoked by his tales. With him had gone Kankan Muza, Adonhueso, the royal kings, and the Rainbow of Whidah. Life has lost its savor, and Ti Noël found himself bored (Carpentier, 23).

Given that an entire world disappears with Macandal, the reader can see him as a gateway for the slaves. The world he brings is a world of possibility to live beyond Sunday dances and plantations in a world of freedom. Furthermore, Macandal is the gateway to themselves. Through his tales of the royal kings of Africa, Macandal exposes the slaves to their hidden identity, the part of themselves that they brought from their native land; the part that they were forced to repress when they placed the new frame of reference on themselves.

On the other hand, the novel's protagonist, Ti Noël, represents the shattered identity of the Haitian slave. He is the one to experience the doubling of the marvelous real. From the start of the text where the rupture of the unrest begins the path to independence, Ti Noël is faced with the magical visions of the slave rebellion. Ti Noël is fostered by Macandal on the plantation and

witnesses his magical evasion of the authorities as the poison rebellion gets underway. However he is also the character who must endure the consequences of reality. Brought to Cuba by his master who wants to avoid losing his slaves to the freedom granted former slaves by the new Haitian nation, Ti Noël experiences the struggle to free himself both psychically and psychologically from the bounds of colonization. Ti Noël also reflects the inherent failures of the rebellion as he faces the cyclical hierarchy of Negroes who perpetuate the imperial system using black puppeteers.

It is only through Carpentier's use of the magical and the real that he is able to capture the experience of the Haitian slave revolution of 1803. He balances the vision of the slave rebellion with the consequences of its simultaneous success and failure. However having started with the magic of the actual poison rebellion and ended with the reality of the aftermath of revolution, it seems that Carpentier tempers the magic with reality, rather than the opposite.

This growing progress towards reality can best be seen in the structure of the novel. The text itself is broken down into four parts, which reflect the periods of struggle evoked by colonization and independence. With each part of the text is an epigraph that mirrors the struggles of the slaves at that point of their journey.

Part One starts with a dialogue between providence and the devil. The dialogue ends with the devil speaking to providence about Columbus. It reads, "Oh, blessed court, Eternal Providence! Where are you sending Columbus To renew my evil deeds? Know you not that long since I rule there" (Carpentier, 2)? The devil's words create a parallel between evil and colonization, implying that the discovery of Hispaniola was a Pandora's box for the region. This comparison introduces the section of the novel in which one sees the daily life experience of the

slaves on M. Lenormand de Mézy's plantation and their subsequent rebellion against the slave owners, marking a clear dichotomy between reality and the dream of independence.

This contrast is illustrated in Macandal's tales of the African kings. While there is no dialogue in part one of the text, indicating the slaves' inability to speak for themselves within the framework of colonization, Macandal's words are recounted through the narrator. He states,

They were kings, true kings, and not those sovereigns wigged in false hair who played at cup and ball and were gods only when they strutted the stage of their court's theaters. In Africa the king was warrior, hunter, judge, and priest; his precious seed distended hundreds of bellies with a mighty strain of heroes. In France, in Spain, the king sent his generals to fight in his stead (Carpentier 8).

The comparison of both categories of men as kings expresses the need of the slaves to rebel.

Their native identity links them to warriors who emit pride in every action. However under colonial power they are forced to worship wigged aristocrats who play gods like stage performers. It is in their unwillingness to replace the former with a lesser version that the slaves are empowered to rebel in hopes of restoring a tradition of laudable kings. They see the spirit of such kings in the magical soul of Macandal, who leads the slaves of Haiti in their initial rebellion against the imperial power.

The reader follows the protagonist Ti Noël through the chaos of the event and the eventual restoration of the slaves to order. However in these moments the narrator portrays the perspective of both the slave and his master to show how their views are no longer aligned by the influence of colonization. The text explains,

That afternoon as the slaves returned to their plantations laughing all the way. Macandal has kept his word, remaining in the Kingdom of this World. Once more the whites had been outwitted by the mighty powers of the Other Shore. And while M. Lenormand de Mézy in his nightcap commented with his devout wife on the Negroes' lack of feeling at the torture of one of their own- drawing there from a number of philosophical considerations of the inequality of the human races, which he planned to develop in a speech larded with Latin quotations- Ti Noël got one of the kitchen wenches with twins, taking her three times in a manger of the stables.

From this passage it is clear how differently the two groups view the events of the rebellion and specifically the burning of Macandal. The slaves laugh, knowing that their spiritual guide has evaded danger. They think of Macandal's promise to remain in the Kingdom of this World. Such words imply multiple meanings for the slaves. First, they refer to the divide between life and death. Since Macandal used magic to escape harm, they know that he is alive, even though the settlers do not. However the phrase imparts a deeper meaning when one considers Macandal's previous comparison between the African kings and the European aristocrats. Within this sphere, the kingdom of this world refers to the re-appropriation of Haiti for the traditions of the African kings, making the country itself, the Kingdom of this World.

Through the master M. Lenormand de Mézy, the reader is also presented with the white man's perspective. He maintains what he considers an air of moral superiority, commenting to his wife about the horrors he has witnessed. He describes the Negroes' reaction as lacking feeling in watching Macandal suffer. Such a reaction emphasizes the viewpoint of the slave as savage. His discrimination towards his slaves lies in the phrase "one of their own." Indicative of the master-slave dialectic, de Mézy does not consider "one of his own" to mean another human life. Instead it refers to another black man. Not only does this highlight his own inability to empathize with all human suffering, but it shows that he is not required to react to such torture since the slaves are of a group different from himself. However, what makes de Mézy's reaction almost comical is that his disgust is followed up with a personal reflection of "the philosophical considerations on the inequality of the human race". Such considerations place him as a hypocrite. As a slave owner and one who cannot cringe at Macandal's suffering, de Mézy supports the inequalities of the human race, and is in no position to lecture on them.

In between the extremes of Macandal and the laughing slaves and the self-righteous M. Lenormand de Mézy sits our protagonist, Ti Noël. He seems to fall into neither category. While technically he is a slave, he does not share their joy. Instead he enjoys the carnal pleasure of sex with a kitchen wench. This act alone shows his middle ground between the two groups. While he may be celebrating in his own way for the events of the day, he does so in a sensual way, placing him as both the wise native and the savage slave simultaneously.

Part Two of the text shares the continuous unrest by the slaves leading up to the revolution, and implies a long period of debate before a change from colonization to independence, once again evoking a middle ground for Haiti. This can be seen in the epigraph for the section, which quotes Madame d'Abrantes in French with an English translation to the follow. Both the use of French, the colonizer's language, and the content of the passage, which refers to the expectations of treatment for a French woman traveling to Haiti, underscore that the dream of independence is not attainable from a single day's rebellion.

However, a lack of instant success also does not imply that no change has occurred. Ti Noël once again takes us through the struggle of the colonizers to cope with the rebellion. After signs of unrest from the slaves, the white men in Haiti and France begin to speak out for freedom for the colony, and many wealthy settlers take mercy on their slaves. While the official decisions are being debated, the slave community begins a more assertive rebellion against the colonial influence, for example its religion. Taken from Bouckman's words at the ceremony of Bois Caiman upon the actual outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, for example. He states, "The white man's God orders the crime. Our gods demand vengeance from us. They will guide our arms and give us help. Destroy the image of the white man's God who thirsts for our tears; let us list to the cry of freedom within ourselves" (Carpentier, 61). Not only is the call to abandon a

Christian God for the god of Africa that Macandal would speak of significant in gauging the psychological progress of the slave, but also their ability to speak to one another shows strides. Carpentier captures this by giving the slaves dialogue in the second part of the novel. He also captures their uneasiness to abandon the culture they have been taught. Despite the progress, it is clear that the identity of the slaves is still impacted by the colonial influence in that the slave's plea to abandon a Christian God still offers reverence for such a God in that it capitalizes his name.

While some discussion by the colonizer to consider independence for the colony occurred, the majority of plantation owners remain unwilling to give up their power. Therefore, the resistance on both sides grows tense, reaching its apex in an extreme thought. As the text explains, "Total extermination of the Negroes was the order" (Carpentier, 70). From this one can see that the colonized population was not the only group forever altered by imperialism. The settlers of Haiti, losing sight of all equality among the human race, decide that it would be better to kill all of the slaves than to allow them to have independence. This desperate attempt to maintain dominance shows just how engrained the relationship created by Imperialism is.

This attempt stems from a disconnect that occurred between the colony of Haiti and its motherland of France. In the years leading up to the revolution, France did not share the same inherent racism as its colonies. In fact they had little sense of prejudice in the mainland and often accepted mulattoes and free blacks to be educated in France. Similarly there was the Negro Code of 1685, which reflected France's stance that there must be rules to govern how people were treated, even though the plantation owners drastically altered it at times.

Despite a somewhat liberal approach to race in France, little of this sentiment travelled to the island. As explained in C.L.R. James' text, *The Black Jacobins*, Saint Domingue consisted of

a complex hierarchy of race, stemming from “large whites,” who owned plantations and wielded political power to “small whites,” whose only influence came from their skin color, to mulattoes, who were considered black by their white superiors, but were given some cultural respect, all the way down to enslaved blacks. James explains, “They divided the offspring of white and black and intermediate shades into 128 divisions...But the sang-mêlé with 127 parts white and 1 black part was still a man of colour” (James, 38.) This hyperbolic example of division amongst the races shows an engrained sense of racism within all members of the colony. Whether white or black, each individual was defined by the same system and therefore victimized by the racial politics instilled by Imperialism.

While it is true that France remained distanced from these subtle distinctions of race because it did not rely on them to function, the motherland cannot be deemed blameless. The country’s decision to replace indigenous labor with slaves, which stems back to Spanish rule in 1517, can be viewed as the culprit of such race relations. By continuing to provide slave labor to the colony and let whites sit idle while they demanded even the smallest of work from the black population, the imperial power condoned the racial politics in Saint Domingue, therefore causing further trauma for the identity of the colonized.

Further evidence to support the engrained racism on the island nation can be seen in the retaliation of blacks against whites after the revolution. Whites who inhabited Haiti were willing to adjust to a system of black rule in the newly establish nation. However they were not given the option; instead they were massacred. As James explains,

Whites were banished from Haiti for generations, and the unfortunate country, ruined economically, its population lacking in social culture, had its inevitable difficulties doubled by this massacre. That the new nation survived at all is forever to its credit for all the Haitians thought that imperialism was finished with them, they were mistaken (James, 374).

This mistake made by the Haitians refers to the continual history of repression by its various leaders, but it also refers to the embedded trauma of imperialism that existed within their psyche.

Once again, Ti Noël is stuck in the middle between the extremes of this reality. While he wants to abandon the structures imposed on him by his slave status, his owner is unwilling to let go of power and he is denied freedom. Instead, still enslaved, he is brought to Cuba as a last attempt on the part of de Mézy to maintain his power even if Haiti “falls” to the natives. Therefore, once again Ti Noël’s experience becomes symbolic of the extended limbo that a colonized population must endure.

The third part of the novel is the most significant when discussing the lasting psychological effects of imperialism on a native population. This section tells of the aftermath. It records what happens once Ti Noël returns to Haiti as a free man and finds the nation in the shambles of building its own identity as a nation. Once again, the epigraph for the section is fitting. Carpentier quotes a primary source, a witness of the sack of San Souci. It reads, “Everywhere one came upon royal crowns of gold, some of them so heavy it was an effort to pick them up” (Carpentier, 99). While Karl Ritter’s words reflect the reality of de-colonization, recording the events of the takeover of the palace of Haiti’s “first king,” they also reflect the politics of San Souci. San Souci was a palace built by Henri Christophe, a black slave who participated in the slave rebellion. With leaders like Toussaint L’Overture and Jean Jacques Dessaline imprisoned by the French, Henri Christophe rose to power, becoming Haiti’s president in 1807 and Henri I, King of Haiti in 1811. While Christophe was influential in the fight for independence, and united the nation through the “primal scene” of establishing itself as an independent entity, he also embodied many of the colonizer’s ideals as a leader. According to Carpentier’s depiction, Christophe forced the people of Haiti to build him a palace at Cap Hatien,

the sight of the victorious battle that severed Haiti from France. He called the palace Sans Souci, which means, without a care in French.

Christophe's use of a French phrase to name his palace implies his connection to the politics of the imperial power. However his actions indicate his internalization of their beliefs even more so. As Ritter states, "Everywhere one came upon royal crowns of gold." This refers to the wealth Christophe amassed, but also indicates an alliance with the philosophy of the European aristocrats. Rather than throwing out the crowns and allowing Haiti to build itself up from the ground, Christophe maintained many the values of the French system with one main difference; the ruling parties had black faces instead of white. It was this choice that "made the crowns so heavy that it was an effort to pick them up." According to Carpentier's reading, Christophe did his country a major disservice by maintaining a similar hierarchy with light skinned blacks and mulattos in power over full-blood former slaves. He made it impossible for them to lift the cultural impositions of imperialism and establish a political or cultural identity of their own. Instead they were weighted down by the "gold crowns" until they were forced to revolt again, this time against their own king. Therefore the sack of San Souci did not only symbolize the failure of Haiti's first independent government and identity, but it also marked the end of life "without a care" for the people of the island nation.

The disillusionment of the Haitian people to their newfound "Kingdom of this World" can be seen in Ti Noël's return to Haiti. Finally a free man, he returns to his native country with hopes to establish a life among his own people on his own terms. Unfortunately what Ti Noël finds is far different than what he expects. Upon returning to the country, Ti Noël initially returns to what he knows, the former plantation of M. Lenormand de Mézy. While Ti Noël is clear that the plantation has changed with the disappearance of its owner, his path indicates just

how deeply his colonial framework is embedded. With the innumerable options of freedom ahead of him, he returns first to the site of his enslavement for comfort.

When at the plantation, Ti Noël encounters several Haitian officers, his first indication that things are not quite right:

Accustomed as he was to the simple Spanish colonial uniforms, Ti Noël suddenly discovered with amazement the pomp of the Napoleonic fashion to which the men of his race have given a degree of splendor the Corsican's generals has never dreamed of (Carpentier, 106).

The adoption of Napoleon's uniforms is the first indication that Christophe and his high-ranking men have adopted the ideals of the French. At first the men seem regal and it prides Ti Noël to see men of his race in such uniforms, acting like the warriors that Macandal described from Africa. However, he explains that these men have "given a degree of splendor that the Corsican's generals had never dreamed of" to the position. By extending beyond the dreams of Napoleon's men, one can see that Christophe embraces the pedagogy of Napoleon even more than his generals had.

Christophe's alliance with the imperial system can best be seen in his palace, San Souci. As Ti Noël approaches the site with its music and splendor, he is shocked that he is immediately put to work like a slave.

Walking, walking up and down, down and up, the Negro began to think that the chamber-music orchestras of Sans Souci, the splendor of the uniforms, and the statues of naked white women soaking up the sun on their scrolled pedestals among the sculptured boxwood hedging the flowerbeds were all the product of a slavery as abominable as that he had known on the plantation of M. Lenormand de Mézy. Even worse, for there was a limitless affront being beaten by a Negro as black as oneself (Carpentier, 116).

The use of the word abominable in the passage, best described the experience felt by recently freed slaves on the island of Haiti. As the passage continues it implies that not only were conditions at Sans Souci just as bad as on the plantations, but perhaps that were worse since now blacks in Haiti were not seen as profit, but rather free labor that could be pushed to the extreme

and discarded. In such context Sans Souci becomes yet another plantation with beautiful ornamentation to shelter the leaders from the riff-raff. However, it comes to reflect the absolute worse trauma of colonization, the entitlement of light-skinned blacks and men of power to perpetuate the same imperial hierarchy and treat men- to quote M. Lenormand de Mézy- of their “own kind” like savage slaves.

The final part of the text once again tells of the aftermath of imperialism, but this time it refers to the aftermath of Henri Christophe’s reign as king. However, one might argue that this aftermath is even more significant. For a leader in the revolution against the oppression of imperialism to reclaim many of the structural values he fought against, indicates just how powerful an impact imperialism had on Haiti’s people.

Once the people of Haiti overthrew him, the country returned again to a middle ground where no development occurred. The people were too traumatized by the progress made, that they chose to remain aimless for a while. This can be seen in the quote from Calderón that introduces part four. It reads, “I had fear of these visions but since seeing these others, My fear is grown greater” (Carpentier 151). The growing fears produced by Christophe’s acceptance of the imperial system reflect the concept of individual and collective trauma discussed in Kai Erikson’s essay. The same events that bind them together as a group, having experienced the horrors, keep them separate. The native people of Haiti “withdrew into themselves, feeling numbed, afraid, vulnerable, and very alone” (Erikson, 187).

Sharing such insular feelings was Carpentier’s character, Ti Noël. After serving as a ringleader for the sack on Sans Souci, Ti Noël returns to the plantation he knew so well and created a kingdom for himself on the land he served his entire life. The text explains however that his reign differed from the past, promoting a new vision for the island. “Seated in his

armchair, his coat unbuttoned...Ti Noël issued orders to the wind. But they were edicts of a peaceable government, inasmuch as no tyranny of whites or Negroes seemed to offer a threat to his liberty” (Carpentier, 166). Once again the reader can see how our protagonist serves to symbolize the struggles of Haiti. Issuing orders to the wind indicates the impotence that the individual has to change the system. Regardless of how beneficial Ti Noël’s ideas are, he has no one to share them with because each person has retreated into his own personal struggle, rather than uniting to cure the collective wounds. Furthermore, Ti Noël’s edicts for peace and freedom indicate hope for the future of his nation, however they are given from the perspective of a king sitting in a throne issuing orders to the wind. From Ti Noël’s method of sharing his dreams, one can see that he has not moved beyond the structures taught to him by the colonizers. Just like Henri Christophe, the only way he knows to evoke change is through imposition on others, a system that contradicts everything he proposes. There in lies the struggle of the colonized people at their primal scene. They see the potential for improvement, but only have the oppressive tools of the past available to them for action.

This moment in Haitian history marks the defining moment for all subsequent events on the island. The nearly sixty year history leading up to and following the slave revolution indicates the second moment of trauma, in which the people of Haiti made a conscious decision to break away from their imperial roots. Like most things about Haiti’s colonial history, their path to independence also differs from many other post-colonial nations. Unlike many African nations that were de-colonized around the time that Carpentier wrote his book, Haiti’s independence was not an act of public relations for foreign policy, instead it was a long-term struggle to overthrow the powers in place. While one would think that an active choice on behalf of the Haitian people to break from the French would help them establish their identity as a

nation and return to their “native” culture, Haiti’s attempts have not been seamless. Even the description of the event as a slave rebellion indicates there was no native culture to re-establish, therefore complicating the identity that grounded their goals. The African slaves were able to return to the traditions of their kings, but in a foreign land. Gone were the traditions of the Taino people, and as Henri Christophe’s tenure indicates the values of the African kings were tainted by European influence.

This can be seen once again from Edwidge Danticat’s words in the introduction to the text. She writes of how an act seen as visionary by some can be a failure to others. Haiti’s independence is that act. While the bravery needed by Toussaint L’Overture and Jean Jacques Dessalines to consider freedom was visionary, the acts of men like Dessalines, who ordered the massacre of Haiti’s whites, and Henri Christophe, who could not escape the mindset of colonization, stifles their vision, preventing the progress that could have possible at the point of independence.

Ron Eyerman would mark this struggle as the initial tear in the fabric of Haitian identity. All of the corrupt leaders that follow are details added to methods Christophe borrowed from Napoleon. He would argue that each moment is just a continuation of that first day on the plantation when Macandal evaded the fire of the white settlers and disappeared into the souls of his people. Alejo Carpentier’s text supports this claim of a collective identity based on a defining moment of cultural trauma. His use of the Haitian slave rebellion to foreshadow Cuba’s communist revolution shows that not only Haiti, but the entire Afro-Caribbean world, regardless of imperial roots or language are bound by the collective experience of the trauma of slavery and the rebellion of 1803.

Like the slave rebellion of 1803, a single event occurred in the life of the Haitian people in 1937. However this event did not take place on Haitian soil; it occurred across the river in the Dominican Republic. Due to the environmental devastation caused by the American occupation of Haiti, thousands of Haitians were working in the cane fields of the Dominican Republic, once again “slaves” used to cultivate sugar cane. The migration into the Dominican Republic began in the early 1900’s after the United States occupied Haiti. Having been stripped of its natural resources, such as coffee and lumber, Haiti suffered from drastic soil erosion and could not maintain an agricultural industry large enough to feed its people; therefore Haitians lined up by the thousands for an opportunity to leave their bad luck behind them and find a way to support their families elsewhere.

By 1937 when the Haitian Massacre took place close to 50, 0000 people were working and living in the Dominican Republic, many of whom lived as migrants while others established themselves within the ranks of society. However, regardless of the number of years one spent in the Dominican Republic, one’s place of birth, or one’s role in society, the black skin and imperial language of the Haitians betrayed them again. By sight, attributable to their blackness and sound, due to their Kréyol accent, Haitian workers were rounded up by the government and murdered to ensure that the Dominican Republic remain pure and white.

While similar the other traumatic events in Haitian history, which have built upon the past in terms of identity, politics, and economics, the Haitian massacre was different. Rather than being a violent moment of Haitians against Haitians, this event was caused by the Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Like his hero Francisco Franco of Spain, Trujillo was a fascist who believed in national superiority. His eugenic dream existed of like-skinned

Dominicans with light eyes, which highlighted the pure blood of the Spanish colonizer. Trujillo, who was part black and fairly dark himself, viewed light-skinned Dominicans as superior, turning the dark-skinned Dominicans and Haitians living in the country into a pollutant that tainted the bloodline of the country. The Generalissimo, which he was often called, therefore devoted a great deal of time to creating a superior world for wealthy, light-skinned Dominican people, while leaving the rest of the country to suffer. Having been “elected” to power by false means in 1931, Trujillo quickly established himself as a dominant force in the country, changing all laws and even street signs to reflect his power.

Unfortunately El Jefe’s favoritism towards mulattos and the wealthy was not enough to purify his nation. Therefore he took matters into his own hands in October of 1937 and ordered the systematic slaughter of Haitians working in the Dominican Republic. The event, which killed between 20,000 and 30,000 Haitian civilians in five days, has come to be known as the “Parsley Massacre.” The term refers to the Spanish word for parsley, “perejil.” This word, which requires a native tongue to properly roll the R, became Trujillo’s litmus test as to whether an individual was Dominican or Haitian. Since the color of skin within the two nations runs the gamut from white to dark black, Trujillo could not rely on appearance alone to determine nationality. Thus he used the influence of the colonizers language to determine one’s fate; anyone who could roll his r lived and those who pronounced perejil with a double l sound died.

Trujillo’s actions during those five days in October forever altered the relationship between these neighboring countries. Since Trujillo’s reign continued until he was finally killed by his own people in 1961 and was followed by his son’s rule for a brief time, the role of Haitians in Dominican agriculture disappeared for nearly thirty years. While Haitians are welcome today to work the fields of their wealthy neighbor, the treatment they receive has been

forever altered by Trujillo. Most Dominican people have been raised to believe that Haitians are filthy beggars who suck up the resources of the Dominican Republic since their country can't support itself. While some of these beliefs are from a more long-term struggle in which Haiti took over the Dominican Republic immediately after the Dominican Republic declared independence from Spain, making itself a colonizing power, most of the hatred comes from the beliefs Trujillo instilled in the people.

Edwidge Danticat captures the lasting trauma caused by Rafael Leonidas Trujillo and his Parsley Massacre in the novel *The Farming of Bones*. As a Haitian writer, whose novels and short stories reflect the personal and political hardships endured by Haitian citizens throughout their history, Danticat is the writer who seems to focus most directly on the trauma of the Haitian experience. Written in 1998 by a Haitian-American living in New York, *The Farming of Bones* captures the struggles of identity caused by the massacre. Once again the publication date and location speak to the relevance of Haitian history in the lives of the people. Even though Danticat and even her parents never experienced the horrors of the massacre personally, they are impacted by the trauma and hatred that the event caused. Thus Danticat like every Haitian around the world is a victim of the Massacre of 1937 in that she must internalize the duality created along the banks of the Massacre River as part of her cultural identity. As Ron Eyerman explains in *Cultural Trauma of Collective Identity*,

Social movements reconnect individuals by and through collective representations; they present the collective and represent the individual in a double sense, forging individual into collective memory and representing the individual as part of a collective (Eyerman, 69).

It is in this idea of doubling the individual to forge the collective memory and as part of the collective memory, that Danticat writes her books about Haitian History, using characters as

examples of the individual experience of the event, while representing the experience of the collective. In *The Farming of Bones* she does so through Amabelle.

Amabelle Désir is a young Haitian woman who has spent more of her life living in the Dominican Republic than in Haiti. The only surviving member of her family, Amabelle was discovered by Papi and his daughter Valencia on the Dominican side of the Massacre River at seven years old. Having just witnessed her parents drown while trying to cross back to their native Haiti, Amabelle is too afraid to cross the river and return back to a life with no parents. Shaken by trauma, Amabelle is taken in as an unpaid servant by Papi and raised in the Dominican Republic, speaking Spanish and serving Valencia. Amabelle's background alone shows the duality that Haitians living in the Dominican Republic must face. While Amabelle has spent more of her life as a Dominican than a Haitian, her origins make it impossible for her to be seen that way.

This division can be seen in many characters throughout the text. For example, in the town of Alegría, where Amabelle lives, there is a wealthy Haitian couple that managed to establish themselves in the country due to money. However, when it comes time for the massacre, even they are not immune, having their house ransacked and their workers taken. The double standard created around the Sabine family indicates the struggles faced by Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Like Amabelle, the couple is accepted when it suits the Dominicans to do business with them, but in the defining moment of the massacre, their class does not save them from being Haitian.

Similarly, several of the Haitian cane-cutters speak of their struggle in the Dominican Republic. A woman who is described by the narrator as a Dominican-born woman with a Dominican-born son explains,

Me, I have no paper in my palms to say where I belong. My son, this one who was born here in this land, has no papers to say where he belongs. Those who work in the cane mills, the mill owners keep their papers, so they have this as a rope around their necks. Papers are everything. You have no papers in your hands, they do with you what they want (*The Farming of Bones*, 70).

The story of the Dominican born woman with the Dominican born son speaks most clearly to the duality of the Haitian living in the Dominican Republic. As the descriptor explains, this woman and her child are Dominican. Having been born in the country, they should be seen as naturalized Dominican citizens with identity cards and the same opportunities afforded to any Dominican. However, as part of a family that came to the Dominican Republic years ago as workers, this woman and her child can never get ahead. They are denied their rights as Dominican citizens because they have Haitian blood running in their veins. Yet they have never been to Haiti and cannot identify with the country as their own, placing them on a middle ground with no national identity.

This placeless condition creates a level of trauma within Amabelle that can be seen in the structure of the novel. Danticat structures the text along the lines of the duality between Haitian and Dominican life. The first twenty-five chapters of the novel alternate between short bolded chapters and longer un-bolded chapters. The divide reflects Amabelle's middle ground between her Haitian roots and her Dominican reality. The shorter bolded chapters mirror her Haitian life. They are mostly focused on her past or her relationship with a Haitian cane-cutter named Sebastien. They have a disjointed nightmarish quality and usually provide fragmented information about Amabelle's past. The fragmentation reflected in the Haitian chapters underscores a fragmentation present in the life of a person who has left one's country to escape the horrors of famine, natural disaster, loss, etc. The un-bolded chapters represent Amabelle's Dominican self. They are longer and present the forward moving narrative

of the story. They start in the present as Amabelle is helping Señora Valencia deliver twins and tell the story leading up to and including the massacre. These chapters are able to follow a straight narrative in that they reflect the distraction that the Dominican Republic provides for Haitians escaping their past. The chapters alternate back and forth indicating that neither sense of self is dominant for Amabelle. It also shows that even if she wanted to forget her Haitian self in the narrative of her daily Dominican life, she is brought back to the reality of her double consciousness each night with her disjointed nightmares of the past.

Despite the role of the Haitian in the Dominican Republic being very complicated, the Dominican people like to view it as simply black and white. Just as Trujillo aimed for national purity, blaming the Haitians for bringing blackness to the nation, the people of the country also create a divide between Haitians and Dominicans on the lines of race. This can best be seen in the words of Señora Valencia at the beginning of the novel. Roughly the same age as Amabelle, Señora Valencia treats Amabelle as a servant rather than a peer. While they grew up playing together and are able to share fond moments in secret, they maintain a formal relationship when Valencia's husband Señor Pico is present. Upon giving birth to twins and seeing her children, a light-skinned boy and a dark girl for the first time, Señora Valencia nervously asks, "Amabelle, do you think my daughter will always be the color she is now...My poor love, what if she is mistaken for one of your people" (*The Farming of Bones*, 12). Señora Valencia's fear about her daughter's skin color emphasizes the inherent racism in the Dominican Republic. While it is clear that the girl, Rosalinda, is Dominican having been born of two Dominican parents and at the same time as her light-skinned twin brother, Señora Valencia fears she will be mistaken for Haitian because of her dark complexion. Not only does this show that there is in fact no noticeable difference between Haitians and Dominicans based on skin-color, since either group

can be dark, but it also shows that the assumptions of nationality based on skin color are imposed to maintain superiority within the Dominican Republic using the traditional views left by the colonizers.

Beyond pointing out the hypocritical nature of Dominican racial politics, Señora Valencia's twins serve an important symbolic role in the text. They once again reflect the duality present in the Haitian-Dominican relationship. Born at the same time the twins reflect the countries of Hispaniola. Rosalinda, the dark-skinned girl, represents Haiti the country of dark-skinned people, while Rafi (named by his father after the Generalissimo) represents the purity of the light-skinned Dominican Republic. Similarly, the genders of the twins reflect the power dynamics of the two nations. Upon birth, Rosalinda is a small and weak little girl. Her weakness, size and gender are designed to symbolize Haiti, which is the smaller of the two nations and most certainly the less stable country. Rafi the male child, who represents the Dominican Republic, asserts his dominance both in gender and strength over his twin from the beginning. Thus the twins, both born of the same womb and the same struggles, parallel the nations of Hispaniola, which stem from the same indigenous people, divided only by the imaginary lines imposed by their imperial past.

Furthermore, as the twins develop they continue to reflect the relationship between the Haitian and Dominican people. Upon arrival, Doctor Javier explains the disparity in size and strength of the twins. He explains that Rosalinda's weakness comes from the fact that the umbilical chord was wrapped around her neck. Doctor Javier comments:

It's as if the other one tried to strangle her...Many of us start out as twins in the belly and do away with the other...On the other hand sometimes you have two children born at the same time; one is stillborn, but the other one is alive and healthy because the dead one

gave the other a life transfusion in the womb and in essence sacrificed itself (*The Farming of Bones*, 19).

While neither circumstance described by the doctor is the same as the relationship between the two nations, the constant battle for survival and need to smother one's twin for life reflects the dynamic between the two countries. Throughout history, including in the time of Trujillo, both Haiti and the Dominican Republic thrived by taking from its neighbor. Since independence it has appeared that both nations cannot flourish simultaneously, but must feed off the other to grow. This is also the case with Señora Valencia's twins. While both survived childbirth, they go back and forth fighting for strength. At first Rafi is strong while his sister clings on to life, but in the end Rosalinda, our Indian Princess lives, while Rafael, our Dominican ideal, dies in his sleep. One may wonder what Danticat is trying to imply about the island nations by choosing this end for the twins.

It would appear at first that Haiti is on the dawn of a new phase of survival at the cost of its stronger neighbor; however history tells us this isn't true. The Dominican Republic grows steadier with time as Haiti continues to struggle. Therefore, one must read the allegory of the twins in terms of race. While the light-skinned people may be an elite with power and privilege, the blacks, both Haitian and Dominican are the majority, whose numbers in the end cannot be denied. Therefore, Rosalinda's victory reads almost like a joke on Trujillo. Adding colored blood to a white canvas goes very far, and therefore regardless of how many Haitians he kills, there will always be dark blood to color the Dominican people.

Beyond the structure and circumstances of the text, Amabelle's story reflects the trauma of her experience. Having lost her family Amabelle clings to anything around her for comfort. This once again puts her on a middle ground. In addition to Papi and Señora Valencia, who

despite their lack of interest are the only family that Amabelle has, she also seeks comfort in the village's cane cutters, placing her once again between a Haitian and a Dominican life. Among the field workers Amabelle has found love with Sebastien, a Haitian who came to the Dominican Republic with his sister after his father died in a hurricane. Sebastien and Amabelle take comfort in one another's shared experience of loss. This can be seen in the bolded Haitian chapters than capture Amabelle's past. The first chapter explains,

His name is Sebastien Onius. He comes most nights to put an end to my nightmare, the one I have all the time, of my parent's drowning. While my body is struggling against sleep, fighting itself to awaken, he whispers for me to 'lie still while I take you back...I will take you back into the cave across the river'" (*The Farming of Bones*, 1).

Amabelle's description of Sebastien as the knight who slays her nightmares shows the traumatic impact that her parent's death has had on her. Not only do the bolded chapters reflect the recurring nightmares caused by her past, but they also reflect that the only cure for her fears is to seek solace in someone who has also suffered. Having sex with Sebastien is able to transport Amabelle back to a time when she was living in Haiti with her parents because he embodies her pain in those moments. While there is no question that the couple loves one another, their bond seems to stem from shared pain more than love. It is for this reason that Amabelle cannot seek the comfort she needs from her makeshift family. Señora Valencia and her family may reflect "the closest to kin that Amabelle has," but as Sebastien points out she has him too (*The Farming of Bones*, 110).

Similarly, Amabelle provides comfort for Sebastien. She explains that he talks in his sleep and that she is the only one who can comfort him. Amabelle states,

Sebastien- who is from the north of Haiti like I am, though we did not know each other when we lived there-feels haunted by the crooning pigeons. Their cry, he says, sound like it's not meant for others to hear, but like each howling pigeon is trying to bury his head deep inside itself. He imagines the way the pigeons moan is the same way ghosts cry when they are too lonely or too sad, when they have been dead so long that they have forgotten how to speak their own names. Sebastien's father was killed in the great hurricane that struck the whole island-both Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1930. He lost his father and almost everything else. This is why he left Haiti. This is why I have him (*The Farming of Bones*, 25).

Sebastien's story reflects that of many people who left Haiti in moments of tragedy. Since he lost almost everything, he left Haiti, either to seek new opportunity or to forget the past. Either way Amabelle's reaction is that of luck. She explains that it is only because of his past that she has him. Furthermore, she describes him as something that belongs to her, as an object that she can use to make herself feel better, once again showing that their relationship stems from fear.

However her description of his reaction to the pigeons indicates a true sense of loss.

Haunted by the pigeons as if they were the memories he is trying to escape, Sebastien personifies the birds. He makes them into the ghosts who died like his father in the hurricane or like Amabelle's parents in the river; to him the birds communicate the loneliness of the dead. Therefore, it is the birds and all that they represent that forced Sebastien to leave Haiti. He is unable to stay there and hear the cries of the dead; thus he runs away to the Dominican Republic to forget the past.

The need to escape the past as well as the need to seek comfort in one who has a shared experience of loss indicates a trauma experienced by both Amabelle and Sebastien. They utilize the collective experience of loss in one another to find strength, while simultaneously retreating within one's self to avoid the pain. That is why their love can only happen at night. It is only in

their dreams that they allow the fears of the past to emerge and therefore take comfort in company.

This concept of collective trauma is present throughout the entire book. Since the text is rooted in the shared experience of the Haitian Massacre, the narrative tells of the individual experience of its characters while documenting the hardship of the group as a whole. Eyerman explains, “Here collective memory provides the individual with a cognitive map within which to orient present behavior. In this sense, collective memory is a social necessity; neither an individual nor a society can do without it” (Eyerman, 65). Whether the case of Sebastien and Amabelle, who rely on one another for cues of how to behave or the countless victims who record their stories, the Haitian people rely on the trauma of the past to center their current experiences.

This can be seen once the massacre begins. Amabelle’s town of Alegría becomes a sight for the early events of the massacre. Since the town has a large population of Haitian cane cutters, it serves as an easy place to begin the killings. However, the community’s dynamic also makes it aware of the prejudice in the country; the cane cutters have heard rumors about killings elsewhere in the country and prepare to leave. Even Dr. Javier, the sympathetic Dominican doctor, warns Amabelle to leave the Dominican Republic as quickly as possible. However, Señora Valencia’s husband, Señor Pico is a key implementer of the massacre and therefore when he sees the Haitian’s organizing, he acts swiftly rounding them up before they can run away.

Among the victims who are taken away by Señor Pico’s men are Sebastien and his sister. This once again traumatizes Amabelle, stripping her not only of her love, but also of her support system. Therefore, Amabelle must look elsewhere for solace. She finds it in Yves, Sebastien’s

best friend. Together the two set off to leave the Dominican Republic and to find Sebastien, walking from the interior of the country towards the Massacre River where they can safely cross into Haiti. As they travel they come across other survivors, both Haitian and Dominican who are looking to escape the Dominican Republic. They form a traveling collective, supporting one another through the trauma.

It is on this journey that the structure of the novel also changes. Starting with chapter twenty-six the book is no longer divided between bolded and un-bolded chapters. This change occurs to reflect the psychological change within Amabelle. Because of the massacre and the horrors she has been exposed to during the days of traveling, Amabelle is no longer stuck on middle ground. Clearly defined as Haitian because of the massacre that has killed her people and taken her lover, Amabelle doesn't need to question her identity. She no longer has any ties to Señora Valencia or the people of the Dominican Republic. Instead she is a Haitian woman called home to re-establish herself on new terms. Furthermore, she no longer has the luxury of reflecting on past trauma. The experience of her parents has been replaced by the trauma she is currently experiencing, rooting her very much in the present and hoping for a future where she can put it behind her.

The collective trauma in the novel can be seen clearly through the climax when the group reaches Dajabón, the last town before one crosses into Haiti. Having heard a rumor that the people who were taken were brought to Dajabón, Amabelle insists they go there, still hopeful that she will find Sebastien. While the group doesn't find Sebastien, they do find hatred in the Dominican people, led by the Generalissimo himself. As the last town in the Dominican Republic before reaching the safety of Haiti, Dajabón becomes the site of mass killings. Trujillo's government establishes a rally site in Dajabón to encourage the people to kill as many

Haitians as possible before they are able to cross the border. Unfortunately Amabelle and Yves walk right into the killing zone. Amabelle recalls the experience,

“Tell us what this is,” one said. “Que diga perejil”. At that moment I did believe that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked, ‘Perejil?’ of the old Dominican women and their faithful attending granddaughters at the roadside gardens and markets, even though the trill of the *r* and the precision of the *j* was sometimes too burdensome a joining for my tongue...I could have said it. But I didn’t get my chance. Yves and I were shoved down onto our knees. Our jaws were pried open and parsley stuffed into our mouths. My eyes watering, I chewed and swallowed as quickly as I could, but not nearly as fast as they were forcing handfuls into my mouth...At least they were not beating us, I thought (*The Farming of Bones*, 193).

Amabelle’s account of her experience in Dajabón serves as testimony for all Haitians who suffered during the “Parsley Massacre.” She experiences the physical and psychological torture that defines the ordeal. While certainly not every person could have shared an experience exactly like Amabelle’s, it is her extreme encounter that becomes internalized by the later generations who weave this event into the collective fabric of Haitian history. It is because Amabelle’s experience can be universally acknowledged throughout the Haitian community that her narrative becomes a tool to reflect on and possibly recover from this rupture.

The events that Amabelle experiences become further engrained in the collective consciousness of the Haitian survivors. The reader can see this in the chapters describing the rehabilitation center that Amabelle is brought to for treatment after Dajabón. While in the hospital, Amabelle is bombarded with stories of other victims. Each one shares his story to have his version recorded and weaved into the collective memory. She explains, “Taking turns, they exchanged tales quickly, the haste in their voices sometimes blurring the words, for greater than their desire to be heard was a hunger to tell” (*The Farming of Bones*, 209). This hunger to tell

emphasizes the trauma endured by the Haitian people. As Dori Laub explains in her essay “Truth and Testimony: the Process and the Struggle,” testimony is an essential part of learning to live with a trauma. She writes,

The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive. There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one’s story...One has to know one’s buried truth in order to be able to survive one’s life (Laub, 63).

Unlike many, Yves and Amabelle included, who retreat inside themselves, the people in the hospital crave collectivity. They know that only by sharing their story can they relieve the burden they carry, making it a part of the history that the entire Haitian population will bear together. Similarly, once Yves and Amabelle reach Haiti, they encounter more people looking to record their stories. The victims of the massacre would go to the justice of the peace in Haiti to have their stories documented. “They wanted a civilian face to concede that what they witnessed and lived through did truly happen,” once again indicating a drive to tell one’s story (*The Farming of Bones*, 237).

Eventually, even Amabelle feels a need to document her story. As Laub describes, she knows that only through telling can she live her life. After experiencing more trauma than she can bear and slowly coming to terms with the reality that Sebastien is lost forever, Amabelle seeks psychological comfort in Yves. They develop a psychological relationship, but unlike her intimacy with Sebastien the physical prevents Yves and Amabelle from sharing their thoughts. Therefore Amabelle seeks comfort elsewhere, in Yves’s mother, who offers to record her story. Man Rapadou, Yves mother explains to Amabelle, “You don’t need a justice of the peace...you don’t need a confessor. I, Man Rapadou, I know your tale...I asked my son why there is no love

between you and him, and he told me about Sebastien” (*The Farming of Bones*, 244). In having her story acknowledged by Man Rapadou, Amabelle is able to shed her tragedy. She is able to begin a new life that focuses on the future rather than the past. By knowing her tale, Man Rapadou unburdens her; she takes the weight of her parents drowning, the massacre, and even Sebastien from Amabelle’s shoulders. While sharing her story does not make Amabelle forget her experiences, it does allow her to cope with it properly so that she can live in the present not just the past.

Once again, it is at this point that Danticat reintroduces the bolded chapters. However this time the story of the bolded chapters recalls the past that Amabelle experienced in the Dominican Republic, not in Haiti. It reflects the struggle she had living on a middle ground with no clear identity. Chapter thirty-seven reads, “**I dream all the time of returning to give my testimony to the river, the waterfall, the justice of the peace, even to the Generalissimo himself. A border is a veil not many people can wear**” (*The Farming of Bones*, 264). It is here that the reader can see Amabelle’s progress. Not only has her trauma switched from her Haitian past to her Dominican past, but also she dreams of sharing rather than of nightmares she must hold in. In saying “a border is a veil not many people can wear,” Amabelle takes a stand, stating that she is no longer willing to wear the veil and live in the double-consciousness of a Haitian in the Dominican Republic. Instead this shows she is willing to embrace her Haitian identity and re-establish a sense of self that comforts her.

It is at the point that Amabelle is able to face her trauma and overcome it. As a result she returns to the Dominican Republic to confront Señora Valencia and say goodbye to Sebastien properly. Upon arriving in Alegría, Amabelle returns to the house of Señora Valencia. It is only there that she realizes the “family” she thought she had never cared for her and that Señora

Valencia had no apologies for her husband's actions. This realization marks a pivotal moment in Amabelle's journey. She no longer cares about Señora Valencia and instead focuses on the young Haitian servant who works in the house. By showing up, Amabelle forces Señora Valencia to face the past and the three women discuss the events of the massacre. Through this discussion, Amabelle gives Sylvie access to her Haitian history, to the events that occurred in her land, once again making her individual memory collective.

After leaving Alegría, Amabelle is cleansed. She says goodbye to Señora Valencia and the past forever and visits the waterfall to visit with Sebastien's spirit one more time. She knows that she has shed her Dominican self entirely and this will be the last time she ever visits the neighboring country. However her true peace only comes upon crossing the border back into her native Haiti, this time on her own terms. Upon leaving the Dominican Republic she asks her driver to stop a little way from the border so that she can spend time at the Massacre River, and honor her parents who brought her to the Dominican Republic in the first place. In visiting the river, Amabelle faces her last trauma and is able to heal entirely. She explains,

The day my parents drowned, I watched their faces as they bobbed up and down, in and out of the crest of the river. Together they were both trying to signal a message to me, but the force of the water would not let them. My mother, before she sank, raised her arm high, far above the pinnacle of the flood. The gesture was so desperate that it was hard to tell whether she wanted me to jump in with them or move farther away. I thought if I relived that moment often enough, the answer would become clear, that they had either wanted for us all to die together or for me to go on living, even if by myself. I also thought that if I came to the river on the right day, at the right hour, the surface would provide the answer: a clearer sense of the moment, a stronger memory. But nature has no memory. And soon, perhaps, neither will I (*The Farming of Bones*, 309).

It is in this reflection that one can see Amabelle's progress. Not only is she able to move beyond the past, but also she is able to reflect on what kept her stuck in the first place. There is no question that seeing her parents signal her and not knowing the answer of what they wanted gave Amabelle tremendous guilt. However as she explains, there is no answer. She does not reflect on losing her memory of her parent's death as a sad thing that she can't remember. Instead she views it as a step forward in that she no longer has to harp on the trauma of her past. It is for this reason that the text ends with Amabelle entering the Massacre River. She states, "I removed my dress, folding it piece by piece and laying it on a large boulder on the riverbank. Unclothed, I slipped into the current... looking for the dawn" (*The Farming of Bones*, 310). Like a baptism, Amabelle ends the novel cleansed. Having shared her story and accepted her past, she is able to move on. Absolved of her guilt for events she could not control, Amabelle searches for the dawn, for a new beginning in which she can live happily as a Haitian woman in her own country.

It is the ending of the novel that allows Danticat's text to serve two roles for the collective trauma of the Haitian people. As most of the story reflects, the novel serves like a testimony, recording the story of the "Parsley Massacre." For a country that must continue to do business with the Dominican Republic, still sending its able-bodies to work the cane fields of its wealthy neighbor, the ability to record the past gives voice to the victims and to those who still carry their deaths with them across the Massacre River for the harvest season. It allows the story to be documented for the victims and survivors to record their stories. It is in this role that one can see the text as part of the collective trauma that has plagued Haiti since its colonization. However the text also provides an individual story of one woman who suffered, but also learns to cope with her trauma. Amabelle's healing at the end of the novel allows the book itself to serve

as a coping mechanism for the single event. For those that experienced the trauma and those that inherited it as part of the collective identity of the Haitian people, Danticat's book is a sign of hope. It shows that through sharing and collective acknowledgement a trauma can serve as a tool of healing for an entire people.

As the last chapter of *The Farming of Bones* demonstrates, Danticat wrote about the Haitian massacre committed by Trujillo's dictatorship in 1937. Many of her other works discuss political turmoil and cultural hybridity through narratives of personal trauma. Danticat portrays characters whose lives have been personally affected by the traumas of the nation, and therefore they serve as testaments to the trauma of the community as a whole. They function as artifacts to record the collective memory. This can best be seen in her text, *The Dew Breaker*.

The Dew Breaker is a series of vignettes that highlight the experience of Haitian citizens who were victims of an executioner, who worked in a prison during Francois Duvalier's dictatorship. The executioner served as a member of the Tonton Macoutes, a paramilitary group of Duvalier's design, which he used to execute people that opposed the regime. By basing her characters' experiences on the events of Haitian history, one can see that Danticat is reflecting the experience of the nation in her text. However Danticat does not offer one cohesive narrative in the text, instead she offers nine vignettes that present varying impacts that the Tonton Macoutes and Duvalier's oppressive regime had on the people. By offering this individualized account of the historical event, Danticat expresses the way that trauma is simultaneously individual and collective.

Francois Duvalier, also known as "Papa Doc", was the Haitian equivalent of Rafael Trujillo. Ruling the country under a harsh dictatorship from 1957 until his death in 1971, he deemed his rule a "Presidency for Life." After his death, the country endured the rule of his son Jean-Claude, "Baby Doc," from 1971 until he was overthrown in 1986. The two men, together, wreaked havoc on the island nation from which it has not yet recovered. Elected on a Black Nationalist platform after a long series of coups d'états, Duvalier manipulated the people's

beliefs in the religion of Voudoun to intimidate them and enhance his reputation as a man aided by the Haitian loas. Posing as a candidate who would eliminate the latent struggles caused by imperialism and its aftermath, Duvalier was seen as a strong Haitian leader who could help the nation finally re-establish its native identity, a hundred and fifty years after the colonizer left; therefore making Duvalier a part of the fabric of collective trauma that stems from colonization. Duvalier's native extremism was thought to have forced many intellectuals to flee Haiti in fear that their moderate ideas would be punished, putting the country at an intellectual disadvantage, which has never been rectified. Most significant to Duvalier's reign, however, was his decision to consolidate all power into the hands of the president, creating a new Constitution that granted him absolute power without term limits.

Having misappropriated state funds for his own benefit and to train his paramilitary force, the Tonton Macoutes, Duvalier's reign led to malnutrition and starvation throughout Haiti. A much stricter divide between social classes developed and only those who supported the leader whole-heartedly survived. In fact, he took his supporters so seriously that he used the Tonton Macoute as a killing squad to eliminate anyone who spoke out against the regime. It is in this horror that Danticat weaves reality into her narrative.

Danticat's decision to present her narrative as nine connected vignettes is significant. She is careful to distinguish the events of each narrative into an individual story, rather than weave them together into a longer novel. This choice reflects the need to delineate each story as unique and individual. While the entire nation suffered the harsh actions of Duvalier, not all had the intense trauma of personally interacting with the Tonton Macoutes. Therefore, Danticat distinguishes the intensity of the trauma by separating her narratives into individualized fictional memories. However one must not ignore that these stories are interwoven. Not only are all of

her characters victims of Duvalier and his military groups, but she also chooses to make them all victims of the same executioner, the Dew Breaker. In doing so, Danticat reasserts the collectivity of the trauma, therefore honoring the individual and the collective.

As reflected in “The Black Hole of Trauma”, van der Kolk and McFarlane explain that traumas of the past can completely alter the mental and physical aspects of one’s life. They state,

Despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter a person’s psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that one particular event comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling appreciation of the present (van der Kolk and McFarlane, 488).

This description of the possible impact of a traumatic event is exactly what happens to the characters of *The Dew Breaker*. Each character, including the executioner himself, is completely changed by his traumatic event. Since all of the stories are told in the present, roughly thirty years after the creation of the Tonton Macoutes, it is clear that the events of Duvalier’s reign still haunt each individual. The fact that these events still haunt the victims thirty years later underlines the significance of the trauma. This lasting presence solidifies the role of the event as part of the collective memory of trauma recorded by the group. It also suggests an intergenerational aspect of the trauma, showing that people who didn’t live during Duvalier’s reign are still impacted by his actions.

On an individual level, the haunting effect indicates the intensity of the trauma. It also reflects the way in which trauma is processed. As Janet indicates from his case study on Irene, traumatic memory differs drastically from traditional narrative memory. Unlike narrative memory, which mixes with other memories, forming threads and connections in the brain, traumatic memory is fixed and separate. Van der Kolk and van der Hart explain in their text, “The Intrusive Past,” “In contrast to narrative memory, which is a social act, traumatic memory

is inflexible and invariable. Traumatic memory has no social component...it is a solitary act.” (van der Kolk and vane der Hart, p163). Therefore the traumatic memory remains isolated from other memories in the brain and either can't be processed and realized or is fixated on. While some are able to process their traumas and make narrative memories, others, like Irene or the executioner's victims, who are still living through their traumas thirty years later, never can and are left with fixed traumatic memories.

Despite the lasting effect of the trauma, like van der Kolk and McFarlane suggest, each character's trauma manifests itself in a different way. The two psychologists explain in their essay that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the diagnosis given to people whose complete life is altered by a specific event, presents itself in a multitude of symptoms. They suggest six facets in which Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can materialize, ranging from “persistent intrusions of memories related to the trauma” to “alterations to their psychological defense mechanisms and personal identity” (van der Kolk and McFarlane, 492). While PTSD can show itself in many forms, not all symptoms exist in all victims. Rather victims of trauma embody their experience in different ways, depending both on the severity of the incident as well as the psyche of the person.

The same can be said of Danticat's characters. She incorporates the possible psychological effects of trauma on a person into her character's narratives. Danticat's portrayal of these post-traumatic indicators reflect symptoms experienced by people of the actual trauma and therefore serve as an artifact to the trauma in a similar way to how a real life victim's psychological consult might. Furthermore, she chooses to give her characters the deficiencies that real victims might exhibit in order to further the collective memory of the trauma.

Once again, Danticat's characters exhibit the gamut of symptoms. Each of her vignettes offers not just an individualized encounter with the executioner, but also an individualized response. Thus suggesting that while a trauma can be collective in that many people are affected by the same event, it is also incredibly personal.

One character in the novel, Anne, shows her PTSD through the lens of religion. She is a woman whose entire life revolves around her traumatic event. She contrastingly exhibits both compulsive exposure to situations of the trauma and has altered her personal identity to avoid the trauma (van der Kolk and McFarlane, 492). This woman's compulsive need to expose herself to situations of trauma is reflected in so far as she is the wife of the executioner, yet she hides her husband's past as well as her own from the world, including her daughter. Her exposure to the trauma manifests itself through her piety. This can be seen in the title of her vignette. Anne's story is titled "The Book of Miracles." This alone indicates that Anne is looking for a miracle; a way to forget her past and the trauma she has experienced. Therefore it is religion, the source of miracles that becomes Anne's refuge from her past. The story tells that Anne always spoke of miracles as a way to remain hopeful for her own miracle of forgetting. Anne's miracle is that her husband, who used to hurt people in prison, has changed into a calm and patient man, but the text explains that she cannot share her miracle. It states,

That was the miracle Anne wanted to share with her daughter on this Christmas Eve night, the simple miracle of her husband's transformation, but of course she couldn't, at least not yet, so instead she told another kind of miracle (*The Dew Breaker*, 73).

One could read Anne's inability to share the miracle in many ways. It could be that this miracle of transformation has not completely occurred and while she waits for her violent husband to regain calm, it has not happened and therefore she cannot share it. It can also be seen as unwillingness to share. Perhaps her husband has transformed, however an inability to speak of it

would show that she is unable to accept the miracle and forget the past. Therefore, the miracle she is waiting for is not the transformation, but rather her ability to move on from the trauma of her past. What it is especially interesting about Anne's need for the miracle is that she prays for something that she can accomplish on her own. Moving on from a past event is not something one must look above to accomplish, but rather something one must look for internally. Anne's need for a divine intervention to forget her past highlights the severity of her trauma. Unlike most people who are able to incorporate past experiences into their memory as threads, Anne is fixed on her traumatic memory and cannot move past it.

Anne's devout nature can also be seen in the way she speaks of her husband. When talking to her daughter about him she states, "I don't know Ka... You and me, we save him. When I meet him, it made him stop hurt the people. This is how I see it. He a seed thrown in rock. You, me, we make him take root" (*The Dew Breaker*, 25). Anne's claim about the role that she and her daughter play for her husband suggests an element of the savior in her character. It is as though her piety stems from her ability to save her husband. Therefore it is clear that her sense of religion, which is also her refuge, stems from her connection to her husband, and therefore from her trauma.

Within Anne's story, the reader is presented with a foil to her experience. While at church on Christmas Eve, she and her daughter notice Emmanuel Constant, a man in exile from Haiti, who, as the wanted posters indicate, is wanted for "CRIMES AGAINST THE HAITIAN PEOPLE." (*The Dew Breaker*, 78) Upon seeing him we learn of the fear that he evokes in the Haitian American community of New York. The text explains, "that Constant had created a death squad after a military coup had sent Haiti's president into exile" (*The Dew Breaker*, 78). While Constant's crimes were committed "thirty-plus years" after her husband's, there is a clear

comparison made between the horrors of the Tonton Macoutes and those of the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti that Constant belonged to. The comparison of these two men and their crimes is seen, not only by the reader, but also by Anne. The text states of her feelings when seeing the wanted flyer,

Still, every morning and evening as her eyes wandered to the flyer on the lamppost outside her beauty salon and her husband's barber shop, Anne had to fight a strong desire to pull it down, not out of sympathy for Constant but out of fear that even though her husband's prison "work" and Constant's offenses were separated by thirty-plus years, she might arrive at her store one morning to find her husband's likeness on the lamppost rather than Constant's (*The Dew Breaker*, 80.)

This passage shows not only that Constant serves as a foil to the executioner, both through his name and actions, but also that Anne is compulsively drawn to an image reminiscent of the originary trauma. The fact that she begins and ends her day with the sight of the flyer and the constant fear that it could show her husband's face indicates that she can never escape the traumatic events of her past, despite her miracles. Furthermore, Anne shows empathy for Constant in that she thinks about tearing the flyer down. This action once again evokes the savior element of her personality. It is almost as if through tearing down the flyer she thinks she can save Constant as she once saved her husband.

Since all of the individual experiences of the story revolve around the executioner, he and his family are given several vignettes; each one dedicated to one of the family members. The first vignette of the text, "The Book of the Dead" is the story of when Ka, Anne and the executioner's daughter, learns of her parent's past. This story indicates the ways in which trauma is passed down from one generation to another. While Ka never encountered the executioner in his original state, she inherits the trauma of his deeds from her parents. Ka's inheritance can be thought of in a similar way to how Eyerman describes a collective identity

claiming the experience of an individual. While Ka's ownership of the trauma is more intense in that she has lived with parents who were traumatized and has been personally affected by their individual traumas, she also gains the trauma as one event among many that has traumatized her Haitian community.

Throughout the story she is constantly questioning the actions of her parents. Her internal thoughts are revealed in the story as she describes them. It states,

It has always amazed me how much my mother and father echo each other, in their speech, their actions, even in their businesses...they were a society of two, sharing a series of private codes and associations, a past that even if I'd been born in the country of their birth, I still wouldn't have known, couldn't have known thoroughly (*The Dew Breaker*, 25).

While Ka attributes this likeness to their marriage and a society of two as parents, the likeness that she identifies is more than a normal marriage provides. The private codes and associations that she refers to reflect their shared trauma from the past. They are alike because they have shared the same horrific experience and therefore must cope in the same ways. It is because of this trauma that she is unable to know their past regardless of her birthplace. In limiting Ka's access to her parent's past, Danticat makes a clear statement about the potential of accessing the past. While Eyerman claims that traumatic events stop being individual when they are claimed as collective memory, Danticat's statement indicates a barrier. If "regardless of birthplace," Ka is unable to know her parents past thoroughly, then the collective identity of a community can also not thoroughly know the experience of a past trauma. It is in this that one must consider the subsequent traumas that make up the quilt of the collective memory. If a community cannot entirely access a "primal scene," due to the barriers that develop through trauma then the individuals must use their own generational trauma as a lens to identify with the initial

experience. Furthermore, they must use their personal experience of trauma as a testimony to the experience of their ancestors, allowing each trauma to reconstruct the primal scene for its generation. For example, people of Ka's generation would only be able to entirely understand the horrors caused by the Tonton Macoutes by thinking of their own equivalent, the deeds of for example the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti that Constant belonged to.

However, one cannot deny that Ka can access her parent's experience in some way, either through collective memory or growing up in their household. Therefore, the secret life that her parents have created through their trauma makes Ka a victim as well. She develops a type of PTSD that has been passed to her through her parent's neurosis. As studies have shown by looking at generations of Holocaust survivors, the children, and grandchildren of victims of a trauma often inherit similar qualities to their previous generations. Eyerman would suggest that this phenomenon is caused by sharing a collective identity with the direct victims. He states,

While Halbwachs and Durkheim before him rooted memory in real communities, that is, that have face-to-face contact, recent approaches expand this notion to include the "imagined" communities... This means that the collective memory that forms the basis for the collective identity can transcend many spatial limitations when it is recorded or represented by other means (Eyerman, 69-70).

This passage shows that one does not have to see the trauma, or even be born in the country to experience its effects. Rather, by considering oneself part of a group that has been traumatized, one's collective identity causes one to suffer the repercussions of the trauma as well. However, one can infer that this trend is magnified in the children of victims. In addition to their group identity, they have been nurtured by individuals who have been altered by trauma, and therefore develop tendencies that are also influenced by the trauma.

While the core of the novel centers around the executioner and his family, there are characters whose only connection to the executioner is their trauma. One such character is Beatrice San Fort, a bridal seamstress who was a victim of the executioner and claims that he

lives on her street. Beatrice is a hermit, whose PTSD manifests itself as “intrusions of memories related to the trauma, which interfere with attending to other incoming information” (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 492). The intrusions that Beatrice experiences are hallucinations that the executioner lives on her block. When giving a reporter, who is writing a story about her retirement, a tour of the block she points to a house and simply states, “I knew him in Haiti” (*The Dew Breaker*, 128). As Aline, the journalist, continues to observe Beatrice, she learns that the woman is completely obsessed with the man across the street, and thus deems her “a little nutty.” However, Aline’s diagnosis appears to be correct as their interactions go on. When asked what she will do after she retires, Beatrice answers,

Move again, offering no reason, but rather an explanation of who her Haitian neighbor is, “We called them chouket lawoze... They’d break into your house. Mostly it was at night. But often they’d come before dawn, as the dew was settling on the leaves, and they’d take you away. He was one of them, the guard (*The Dew Breaker*, 131).

From this explanation, one can see that Beatrice feels both a need to live near the guard in that she bases her life around his proximity and a fear of being so close to him. Her response of his presence as reason for moving shows that she is fixated on her trauma as the driving force in her life, thus making it an intrusion in her ability to attend to upcoming situations. However, the real intrusion unfolds when Aline discovers that the guard does not live on the block. When leaving the house one day, she noticed the vacant quality of the “guard’s house” and asked a neighbor about who lived there. The neighbor’s response was “No one’s lived there since Dolly Rodriguez” (*The Dew Breaker*, 136). While Aline is willing to trust that the neighbor is lying, she realizes Beatrice’s hallucinations when they discuss the issue. Beatrice explains that the house is empty because the guard is using it as a hideout to avoid jail time and potentially to spy on her. She retorts

I let my girls know when I move, in case they want to bring other girls to me. That’s how he always finds me. It must be. But I am not going to send these notes out anymore. I’m

not going to make any more dresses. The next time I move, he won't find out where I am (*The Dew Breaker*, 137).

It is this statement that reveals Beatrice's psychosis to Aline. It is clear that Beatrice is unable to move beyond the past in that she indicates that this is not the first time that the guard has shared her neighborhood. This belief that the guard is still following her is a clear intrusion of her memories, especially for the reader who knows that the executioner does not live in an abandoned house, but instead with a wife and daughter.

The last character I would like to highlight is the executioner himself. Even though he is the perpetrator of the trauma, one can argue that he has also been victimized. His story "The Dew Breaker," is told circa 1967 to recount the events of his time as the executioner. It, along with the stories of his family indicates that he is not the hard character of an executioner, but rather that he too is a victim of the Duvalier regime and the Tonton Macoutes. The story has a sympathetic tone in which the executioner becomes the most tragic victim of his crimes; he is a man who must completely change his identity as a method of coping with his guilt. In "The Dew Breaker" we learn that the executioner has killed his wife's brother by accident since he fights back against the guard, and that it is this trauma that brings the couple together. This realization that their relationship is rooted in violence uncovers why Anne sees herself as his savior and why they are unwilling to share their past. As Anne's story states,

She was beginning to rethink the decision that she and her husband made not to get close to anyone who might ask too many questions about the past... Besides, soon after her husband had opened his barbershop, he'd discovered that since he'd lost eighty pounds, changed his name, and given as his place of birth a village deep in the mountains of Leôgane, no one asked about him anymore, thinking he was just a peasant who'd made it good in New York. He hadn't been a famous "dew breaker," or torturer, anyway, just one of hundreds who has done their jobs so well that their victims were never able to speak of them again (*The Dew Breaker*, 77).

This passage highlights the ways in which the executioner is traumatized by his own actions. As the quote suggests, in Anne's eyes he is not a torturer, but rather someone who did his job as a torturer well. However, his victim's inability to speak of his crimes underscores his role as a torturer; they can never speak of him again because they have been killed. While Anne's attitude is very controversial in that it doesn't hold the executioner responsible for his actions, one must consider who says it. It is true that any spouse would have a skewed perspective when viewing the faults of her partner; however Anne's need to characterize her husband as blameless is more deep-rooted. Because of her own involvement in the trauma, which as we just learned occurred within her own family, Anne cannot face the actions of her husband. Instead she must think of him as passive, or even as a victim, in order to cope with the reality of his actions. Upon careful reading however, one can see that Anne doesn't deny her husband's actions, but rather renames them. She states, "he hadn't been a famous 'dew breaker' or torturer, just one of hundreds who had done their job well." History and the collective memory of Haiti views the executioner through the labels of dew breaker and torturer, but due to her trauma, Anne can't accept those horrific titles. Instead, she admits the actions and removes the labels in order to ignore the true meaning behind his deeds.

If we accept her comment, this indicates that the job speaks nothing about his internal character. What is clearly stated, however is that the executioner feels the need to create a new identity as a way to escape his past. He alters his physical appearance, name and personal history as a way to blend in with the community. However, it seems that these changes are not enough to hide his shame because despite the fact that no one asks any questions, the family still takes the precaution of not getting close to anyone who might know his past. This drastic re-creation of identity shows the executioner's middle ground. Like any victim of trauma, he must

live in two worlds, in the past of his sins and in his present where he tried to repent through the love of his wife and daughter.

Furthermore, there is silence that evades his life. From the change in personality to his unwillingness to share his past with his daughter, one can see that his trauma is not forgotten, but merely silenced. This is best represented in his story, "The Dew Breaker". After the violent events in which he kills the brother of his future wife, we see how their relationship develops through silence. Never do they discuss what happened or even get angry, instead they watch one another and act. In fact the only words that pass between the two in the entire vignette are her pleas to be let into the room with her brother and his matter of fact response, "People who go in there don't come out...Let's go, Quickly." (*The Dew Breaker*, 232). This lack of verbal communication between the guard and Anne implies a deep understanding of the silence that will permeate the rest of their lives. The trauma itself is steeped in a silence they never escape. In fact it is only after "thirty plus years" when he is driving with his daughter to sell a sculpture that she has made of him that he is able to gain any relief. His relief comes once again through destruction of his previous self. The sculpture of him in a crouched position, showing a crack of his back that mirrors his scars, reminds him too much of the physical and emotional wounds that his past has caused. Therefore, as an attempt to further silence this past, he throws the sculpture into a river, destroying it before it can be sold. It is only through this symbolic cleansing of the river water over his wooden self that the executioner is able to break the silence and tell his daughter about the past, allowing her to share the burden of his trauma.

It is from the intensity of Danticat's vignettes that one can see the continuing struggle of the Haitian community. Unlike the other texts discussed, *The Dew Breaker* does not focus primarily on the aftermath of Imperialism, but rather on the ongoing obstacles faced by the

nation. This can be seen in the way Danticat sets Duvalier up as a primal scene of trauma for the Haitian people. His Black Nationalist politics fight against the impact of the colonizer, drawing a drastic difference from the previous struggles. However, one must see that his actions are also linked to the initial tear of imperialism. For it is only in trying so hard to escape the past that Duvalier is placed in a position of power. The constant coups that lead up to his dictatorship speak of the nation's inability to establish its own political identity. Furthermore Duvalier's extremism against the values of the colonizer reflects another lack of identity. It is because Haiti is unable to find an acceptable middle ground between his native values and that of the colonizers that the fundamentalist approach of Duvalier was entertained, creating a new type of trauma for the Haitian people.

Through this series of vignettes about the executioner and the lives he has impacted, Danticat captures the pain caused by the Tonton Macoutes. It is a pain felt by each individual as well as the collective Haitian people that Duvalier impacted. However, I don't think this text merely expressed the trauma caused by one dark event in Haitian history. While the stories are loosely related, they are in many ways autonomous, thus implying that the guard who haunts Beatrice may not be the executioner himself. Rather the executioner, who is never actually named in the text, serves as a symbol for the trauma that has happened throughout Haitian history in as little as "thirty-plus year" increments as they slowly inch towards the stability of independence that follows colonization. While each vignette recalls a personal experience of the collective trauma, they all speak to healing power of sharing. Danticat expresses that it is only through opening the secrets of these traumas, whether as the victim or the perpetrator, that one can seek individual comfort in the collective.

Just as Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* serves as an all encompassing text that captures the impact trauma has on a single generation of Haitian people while weaving a new moment into the collective identity of the culture, Marie Vieux-Chauvet accomplishes a similar goal in her novel. Entitled *Love, Anger, Madness: A Haitian Trilogy*, the title alone captures the shared Haitian experience. Implying that all life experience invokes one of three emotions: love, anger or madness, Vieux-Chauvet parallels this sentiment for the country. Driven from one internal struggle to the next, the island nation seems to exist through three types of experience: those that unite the people under a common idea, creating a sense of community; those that create power struggles, leading to conflict and violence within the community, and those that are so horrible that there is no logical explanation as how something like this could have happened, causing the community to divide into introverted individuals coping on their own.

Thus it is through these three fundamental emotions that Marie-Vieux-Chauvet structures her novel and her view of Haitian history. The text is self-designated a Haitian trilogy. In this narrative, created of three seemingly independent stories, Vieux-Chauvet offers an individual experience of a specific moment to represent each defining emotion in Haitian history. Each story also offers an individual reaction to the events of that period. Furthermore, the trilogy is clearly described as a Haitian trilogy. While this may be attributed to Vieux-Chauvet's descent or that she bases each tale loosely around a particular moment in Haitian history, the adjective seems to imply something else about these types of stories. By calling the three novellas a Haitian trilogy, the author is implying that such stories did not only take place in Haiti, but also can only take place in Haiti. She frames the narratives as unique to the island, and specific to the trauma endured by the Haitian people.

As mentioned above, the events of each tale are based around a particular experiences of Haitian history, however the identifying details of the event are presented cryptically through a single mention of the date or a few key words or names that center the experience around a particular moment. It seems the ambiguity of time and place is purposeful. There is no question that Marie Vieux-Chauvet is capturing the experience of three distinct moments of collective Haitian identity, but she also emphasizes that such events are so commonplace in the Haitian memory that they could in fact take place at any time in history in countless places across the island. Perhaps the duality of her text, to be both specific and vague simultaneously, speaks to her different audiences. It is clear from her hints that anyone familiar with the details of Haitian history, especially her fellow countrymen who have endured it with her, would be able to place the events at a particular moment. However as an author who was exiled due to her efforts to publish her novel in French, a language of the world, it is clear that she intends the book for a larger audience that may not be as familiar with the specific politics. While one would argue that such a desire should make the historical context more transparent, Vieux-Chauvet leaves it opaque. Not only does her latent description of the details give her a cover for the rebellion she plans to evoke with her novel, but it also implies that the historical details are not important, rather the emotions and the effects of the trauma are. Therefore she purposefully indicates that while there is something individual and unique to each moment, they all run together as a single collective trauma.

As a member of the larger audience that the author purposefully leaves in the dark, this reader must rely on the details given in Edwidge Danticat's introduction to root each story in its appropriate historical context. The first tale, "Love," which is also the most evident in terms of time period takes place in 1939, and invokes the trauma created by the American invasion and

control of Haiti. Danticat explains that Vieux-Chauvet herself was a member of the “occupation generation,” born a year after the United States invaded Haiti (Danticat, viii). Therefore her entire childhood was shaded by the presence of the United States as an imperial power on the island. This can be seen through the words Danticat borrows from WEB DuBois concerning the American invasion of Haiti. They read,

The United States is at war with Haiti...Congress has never sanctioned the war. Josephus Daniels (President Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of the Navy) has illegally and unjustly occupied a free foreign land and murdered its inhabitants by the thousands. He has deposed its officials and dispersed its legally elected representatives. He is carrying on a reign of terror, and today the island is in open rebellion (Danticat, viii).

The story of Claire Clamont and her family is meant to take place five years after the official occupation ended. While the U.S. handed over political control in 1934, their economic stronghold on the island remained until 1947. During both their political and economic reign, the U.S. government evoked several drastic changes in Haiti. For one, they invited many foreigners to establish themselves on the island, including a large Syrian population, which further complicated the racial politics of the nation. However the most significant impact of the American occupation was economic. Like the Spanish and French who colonized Haiti centuries before, the United States was interested in Haiti’s natural resources of coffee and lumber. Having depleted the resources quickly, the United States left Haiti agriculturally destitute. Due to deforestation to create space for more farms and coffee plantations, the U.S. influence caused terrible soil erosion on the rich farms of Haiti. Therefore Haitians had to look for opportunities elsewhere, sending them across the river to the Dominican Republic to farm someone else’s land, which Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* tells us eventually took the lives of thousands of Haitians.

The country has recovered from the wounds of the invasion, both physically and psychologically, however the scar left on the collective consciousness is permanent, merely added to the many others attributed to Haitian culture. Many of the systems, which DuBois discussed in his report about the invasion, have never been properly re-implemented. Therefore, the United States' invasion caused long-lasting damage to Haiti, undermining its progress of becoming a functioning democratic system to a point of no return.

While the backdrop of "Love" is the time period right after American political control where the effects of the invasion are starting to unfold and the economic impacts are still developing, the history takes a back seat to the story. Claire Clamont and her sisters are the focal point of the tale, impacted by the events going on around them, but definitely living individual lives. It is through this balance of history and fiction that Vieux-Chauvet manages to capture the individuality of a narrative while appealing to the collective identity through the historical and cultural context.

Claire Clamont, our protagonist and narrator is a middle-aged spinster, who due to circumstance was forced to grow up prematurely and therefore must live her life and experience love vicariously through her two younger sisters, whom she raised. Born to wealthy coffee farmers, Claire is considered of an elite mulatto class in her community, although she is the darkest member of her family. From her color alone, one can see Claire's role in her family and in Haitian culture. Living in a society that has perpetuated the hierarchy of its colonizer since its first King, Henri Christophe, came to power, it is clear that Claire's role as the caretaker who has missed her opportunity to marry is as much attributable to her skin color as to her circumstances. While both her skin color and her circumstances invade Claire's psyche, it is very difficult to discern which one causes her more trauma.

The impact of her skin color is presented from the very first page of the text. Claire's focus and object of affection throughout the entire tale is Jean Luze, the white French husband of her younger sister Felicia. She writes,

Since she got married, only Jean Luze exists. Gorgeous Jean Luze! Brilliant Jean Luze! The exotic mysterious foreigner who has set up his library and record collection in our house, and makes fun of our backward way of living and thinking. A flawless man, an ideal husband. Felicia's cup overfloweth with love and admiration (Vieux-Chauvet, 5).

This description is presented in the text as an explanation for Felicia's disregard for everything else, implying that because Jean Luze has entered her life nothing else matters. The description offered does not only capture Felicia's admiration for her husband, but rather the whole household's infatuation with Jean Luze. Both Claire and her youngest sister Annette are also entirely focused on the foreigner who has invaded their house. They all agree, "only Jean Luze exists." The infatuation with Jean Luze most clearly represents Claire's francophilia and her fetishism of whiteness. Jean Luze is not just white and not just foreign, but he is French. Therefore he embodies everything civilized and ideal for a Haitian upper-class woman. There is no option but to love Jean Luze, not for himself, but for the colonial past he represents. This connection between Jean Luze and the ingrained colonial past can be seen in the way Claire demeans herself in relation to him. She says that he "makes fun of our backward way of living and thinking." By taking ownership over Jean Luze's point of view towards their lifestyle, Claire accepts his critique as truth. It is no longer that in comparison to France, their ways of living are antiquated, but instead that their traditions are wrong, period. Furthermore, she writes, "Felicia's cup overfloweth with love." Once again this is a description of how Felicia feels about her situation, but it also reflects the envy that Claire has. She views Felicia not only as in love and loved by Jean Luze, but almost graced with the divine gift of love and admiration because Jean

Luze loves her. Through Claire's obsession with Jean Luze and everything he represents, it becomes clear that anything short of his perfection is his antithesis, representing all that is ugly and wrong in the world. As a dark-skinned woman who plays maid to her family, Claire falls into that category; therefore her love of Jean Luze represents a hatred for herself.

This self-hatred can also be seen in the way Claire views her sisters. Claire sees Annette and even Felicia, who have much lighter complexions than herself, as worthy of a love like Jean Luze. She states such feelings in describing her family dynamic. She writes of her sisters, "These two white-mulatto girls are my sisters. I am the surprise that mixed blood had in store for my parents, no doubt an unpleasant surprise in their day, given how they made me suffer" (Vieux-Chauvet, 6). This self-hatred instilled in her by her parents is why Claire gives up on love for herself and focuses on Felicia's marriage to Jean Luze and Annette's ability to woo him into a love affair. It is as if she experiences the affair through Annette, framing her one's sisters deception of the other as the closest she can get to Jean Luze herself. However, like any archetypal older black woman, Claire serves no threat to Jean Luze. As the only one in the house who is not a sexual object in his eyes, Claire becomes his confidant, serving the role of the loyal friend rather than the love interest. While given an opportunity to seduce Jean Luze just like her sisters due to their closeness, Claire is unable to view herself as having that power. Instead she accepts her role as the stable force in his life who can nanny his child and support him through struggles, living out her domestic fantasy as Jean Luze's wife and lover in her mind. It is in Claire's choice of fantasy rather than action that show the extent to which she has internalized the colonial view of herself as ugly due to her dark skin color.

This hatred of dark skin is not only internal for the Clamont family. As members of the mulatto elite, they look down on anyone who is of a darker shade than themselves, regardless of

wealth. This can be seen when Annette announces her marriage to Paul Trudor, who in spite of his very dark skin tone is much wealthier than the Clamont family. Despite class however, Annette's sisters look down on her choice. Upon learning the news, Felicia exclaims, "A black man! A black man in our family. And one of the lowest sort! Can you believe this?" (Vieux-Chauvet, 71). It is clear that Felicia's objection stems primarily from race. Not only does she harp on his skin color, repeating her shock that he is a black man twice, but she then says of the lowest sort. Even though Paul's wealth was attained through cooperation with Americans, they are wealthy. Therefore, the only thing that can classify him as of the "lowest sort," is the depth of his skin tone. While Felicia is very light-skinned and therefore does not share the same direct hatred towards her own shade as Claire, she still comes from the same mixed-blood origins, and therefore reflects some self-hatred for her black blood in the comments she makes about Paul.

While it is clear that Claire is scarred by her skin color in that she herself is not even that dark, but rather just darker-skinned mulatto than her sisters, it is her circumstances that shape her view of herself. Told as Claire's journal, the tale records how having followed the upper-class system put in place for her by the colonial tradition has caused her trauma. Even her self-perception is shaped by that system. Her willingness to accept the colonizer's view of white as beautiful is what allows her to view herself as ugly. Similarly from an early age, Claire was told that there are certain ways that proper young ladies are to act, causing her to maintain decorum and push her feelings and desires aside. However it was by living the life of a proper young lady that Claire became "thirty-nine years old and still a virgin," when the relationships that she counted on for marriage and stability fell through (Vieux-Chauvet, 1). Therefore it is her acceptance of the colonial standard of behavior that has caused her "unenviable fate," and lust for Jean Luze (Vieux-Chauvet, 1).

However it is not only in love that Claire's circumstances as a wealthy mulatto have impacted her life. The daughter of an ambitious father and socialite mother, Claire "felt out of place among the French crewmen, European store owners and the handpicked mulattoes, her parents associated with," creating for her a world she must admire from the outside (Vieux-Chauvet, 106). Unfortunately Claire was left to navigate this world alone when her parents died. Her father was killed by his political aspirations and the corruption that determines the presidency of Haiti, when deemed a conspirator against the government. Her mother died several months later after giving birth to the youngest daughter Annette.

Having been raised by her father as a boy who could take over if something happened to him, that is exactly what occurred. After her father's death Claire took charge of the household, running the business of the Lion Mountain coffee plantation with the guidance of the town doctor and taking care of her sister Felicia. It is during this stage of her development that Claire's life was forever altered by the American occupation. Faced with the struggles of running a shrewd business, Claire was forced to make difficult decisions that forever impacted her. Due to the American system of trade set up in Haiti, she could not just follow the traditions of her father. Since her neighbors were unwilling to regulate the price of coffee, Claire made a decision to harm them financially by selling her coffee to a wealthy American at a much lower cost than the surrounding farms, causing a drop in their profit margin. In retaliation for the loss, the neighboring plantation workers took revenge on the workers, killing many of the men that worked at Lion Mountain. In this tragic event, Claire became aware that she was responsible for their deaths. She explained,

My father's farmers paid with their lives for my brilliant idea, because about twenty planters armed with machetes descended on our land and slaughtered them. The next day, sitting stiff and straight on my horse, I saw with my own eyes the bloody bodies of our farmers, their wives and children, all hacked to pieces...No one dared openly attack

me, the daughter of a great despotic and merciless landowner, but I was responsible for everything and everyone knew it (Vieux-Chauvet, 113).

It is in this moment that one can see Claire most trapped by her upper-class roots. Forced to adapt to the system of the colonizer to survive, Claire's business decision killed many people, resulting in her life-long guilt and her instant hatred of the American system impacting her country.

This hatred that began with the incident at Lion Mountain continues throughout the entire tale. Told in reverse order, beginning in 1939 with flashbacks that explain Claire's current place in life, the reader can see how her hatred for Americans continued even after the invasion officially ended. This is best portrayed in Claire's feelings towards the character of Commandant Calédu. While Calédu is not actually American, he is symbolic of all that the American system left behind. Claire describes him as "A ferocious black man who has been terrorizing us for about eight years now. He wields the right of life or death over us, and he abuses it" (Vieux-Chauvet, 8). Calédu is a police officer that was placed in a position of power; he acts as though the Americans have granted him divine right. While Vieux-Chauvet is equally vague in explaining how Calédu received his power or what particular part of Haitian cultures he represents, there is no question that he has replaced "the disposed of officials and dispersed elected representatives" that DuBois spoke of, replacing them with a Haitian thug ready to settle years of imbalance with the light-skinned upper-class (Danticat, viii). The people of the town describe his as a savage. As Dr. Audier explains,

Calédu and the others in power do nothing to make themselves likable. One is a vulgar criminal and the others are vile upstarts ready to do anything to fill their pockets. Surely there must be men of a different caliber somewhere in this country... They have been chosen precisely because of what they represent... They have found an opportunity to take revenge, to have their turn at humiliating us (Vieux-Chauvet).

It is clear from the doctor's words that racial politics are still at play. While there are plenty of men of honor on the island, the Americans gave power to the vulgar, allowing them to enact their grudge on the entire nation; thus continuing the damage of the American occupation even after the U.S. left.

Claire's hatred for Calédu is clearly linked to his misuse of power as well as the psychical harm he has done to people like Dora Soubiran, who was raped to a point of disability by Calédu for having looked down upon him. However her real detestation comes from his link to her guilt. Calédu reminds Claire of the awful fate she caused her farmers on Lion Mountain. Not only does he mirror her crime in that he too has benefited from the presence of the Americans, but that he actually speaks to her of the incident. While forced to dance with him at her sister's birthday party, Calédu asks Claire about her past. He whispers wickedly,

I have heard Miss Clamont, that in the old days a bloody incident took place up there on your land, on Lion Mountain. So it seems you and I both have killing on our conscience. Mine doesn't bother me much. Does yours? (Vieux-Chauvet, 49).

Through Calédu's words, one can see how soulless he is. It is clear that he is countering Claire's hatred for him by inculcating her as a murderer. Worse however, is that he puts her in the same category as himself, someone with killing on her conscience. He then asserts that his conscience despite having killed is not guilty, once again aligning himself with Claire by assuming that hers would be the same. Through the way that he parallels their actions, Claire views Calédu not only as the embodiment of the crimes of the American occupation, but also of her own crime, both of which she loathes.

In the end, the community reaches its tipping point when coping with the daily trauma caused by Calédu. Jean Luze and his young poet friend Joël Marti plan a rebellion against the police and especially Calédu. However it turns out that Claire is the one to kill the corrupt

Commandant. In a fit of depression in which she plans to kill Felicia and then herself, both symbols of her self-hatred, the only victim ends up being Calédu. As Claire states, “Like an animal, he died like an animal” (Vieux-Chauvet, 155). Pushed to the point of murder once again, perhaps this time Claire is more like her victim. She does not feel guilt in her conscience for killing Calédu. If anything she feels relief for having been released of the traumatizing harassment that hung over her community for eight years and reminded her daily of her circumstances.

Claire Clamont’s story is no question a direct link to the American occupation of Haiti and its aftermath; however the story’s ambiguity gives it a malleable quality to represent many moments in Haitian history. In fact the text, which was written in 1967 and caused the author’s exile, is designed to comment directly on the contemporary dictatorship as well. As Danticat explains in the introduction,

Even though this section of the trilogy is mostly set in 1939, five years after the end of the American occupation, it is obvious that it is meant to evoke 1967, the year the book was written, a time when what would end up as a thirty-year dictatorship run by François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and Jean-Claude “Baby-Doc” Duvalier was becoming more severe... (Danticat, ix).

Therefore from Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s use of the trauma of her childhood as a member of the “occupation generation” to comment on Duvalier’s reign of terror, she is able to add two moments to the collective identity of the Haitian people. The tale serves as a written record of the trauma caused by the Americans and a verbal recognition of Duvalier’s damage. For both events Vieux-Chauvet creates a narrative that records the pain, educating the people while sharing the stories of the victims.

“Anger,” the second novella of the text doesn’t seem to call on any particular historical moment. Instead it conveys the overall malaise that exists in the aftermath of constant trauma on

the island of Haiti. The texts convey the period between events, in which the remnants of the previous trauma mix with the foundation of the pending struggle, creating a permanent state of uneasiness for the people on the island. With no hints given as to which limbo period Vieux-Chauvet is trying to evoke in this story, the discomfort of the Normil family truly becomes universal, calling forth experiences that can be shared by all Haitians in relation to their individual trauma.

Specifically the text weaves a tale of a family, once again upper class, that prides itself on a large farm that was procured a generation before. The Normil family is being stripped of its wealth and its history when they wake up one morning to find “men in black” placing stakes around their home. Systematically being separated from their land, each member of the family sets off to right the wrong using whatever power he has. Louis Normil seeks help from his mistress to pay the corrupt lawyer who claims to restore the land for the right fee, while his wife drowns her sorrows in alcohol, unable to cope with the way her family is being torn apart. Louis’ children Rose and Paul also get involved, trying to save one another from the terrible fate linked to the corruption that is taking their land. Ironically in trying to help one another, each sibling endures the struggle that his sibling is fighting to save him from.

Paul’s option to save the family’s land and the virtue of his sister was to join the men in black. He could only save his own family by helping these men torture someone else’s. Thankfully due to Rose’s actions and the efforts of his father, Paul’s plan never went beyond feigning interest.

For Rose, she is destined to play the “martyr,” having sex with one of the “men in black” for a month. She must sacrifice her purity and any chance at marriage in the future to save her

family's land. While the experience is horribly traumatic, she approaches her role as duty to her family. She explains,

My cooperation knows no bounds. I have come to tolerate the horrible things without which he can't feel like a man... What do I care! I am dead... Once this torture is over, I'll have even more innocence and chastity to offer. The soul not the flesh, is the true seat of virginity, so I don't know what lovemaking feels like. I have erected a wall between my body and my soul, a granite wall. When our property is returned, Paul will be out of danger. As for me, I no longer fear danger (Vieux-Chauvet, 245-246).

From Rose's description of her torture it is clear that she has retreated deep inside herself as a coping mechanism. Not only has she built up a wall to shield herself from the pain caused by the Gorilla, but she has also created a wall that has made it impossible for her to feel any emotion or experience any human interaction. Therefore she also becomes shut off from the family she is trying to save. Unable to face them, she cannot seek solace in the trauma of losing land that they are all experiencing together. Instead she endures the shame of martyrdom on her own.

Eventually the struggle becomes too much for Rose. Despite the success of her efforts, in the end Rose cannot enjoy her victory. The last line of the novella reads, "Worn out, they've worn her out as well. He [Paul] rushed and caught her on his shoulder. Then he put her in bed and sat by her side to wait for her to wake up. Dawn came and only then did he learn that Rose was dead" (Vieux-Chauvet, 285). In the end Rose sacrificed herself for her family, but instead of alleviating their pain, it deepened their trauma significantly in that the taking of their land was now also linked to her death.

It is through the tragic death of Rose that the reader can see how "Anger" embodies the experience of individual and collective trauma simultaneously. The story of the Normil family is unique in the ways that the lives of its members were shattered, but also universal in the struggles they faced to hold on to their land and legacy. Even the experience of the characters

themselves reflects the duality of trauma. While each member of the family is struggling with a solution to the same problem, each must attempt to solve the problem in his own way, keeping the consequences to himself. Just as Kai Erikson states in her essay, “Notes of Trauma and Community,” “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care is numbed” (Erikson, 186). The Normil family shared all of these commonalities: family, background, and trauma, but their inability to look at the fundamental shared experience behind their trauma isolated them further when they could have used their struggles to join them together; thus making their trauma both individual and collective.

In “Madness,” the final part of the trilogy, Marie Vieux-Chauvet captures the individual breakdown that occurs in moments of trauma. Similar to “Anger” in that the story does not reflect a particular moment, and that it reflects a group of people who are all together, but struggling individually, “Madness” focuses heavily on the psychological effects of a traumatic moment. As Danticat explains,

It is in *Madness*, however, the final novella of the trilogy, that we come closest to Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s own dilemma as a writer living and writing under a brutal authoritarian regime. Depicting four persecuted poets living in a shack, Marie Vieux-Chauvet echoes her own membership in *Les Araignées due soir* (Spiders in the Night), a small group of poets and novelists who met weekly at her house to discuss literature and one another’s work (Danticat, xi).

The author’s final tale does mirror her own, following four men who end up starved and drunk together in the same shack reflecting on their lives as poor Haitian men and the role their writing plays in coping with their oppressive government. While it is clear that Vieux-Chauvet is once again trying to reflect Duvalier as the oppressive authoritarian regime in this third

narrative, it is unclear what regime the men actually endure. One's only clue is a single line that mentions the year as 1940. Therefore the reader can infer that "Madness" is designed to serve as a parallel to "Love," depicting the same post-American period that Claire experiences. This time however, the story is told from the perspective of poor men, rather than wealthy women, indicating that no stratum of society is spared. In fact in "Love," there is a reference to the plight of poets in Haiti. Jean Luze states "Look! Calédu is rounding up the poets. They dared pay their respects to an executed suspect and he's using the occasion to get these so-called conspirators" (Vieux-Chauvet, 44). From Jean Luze's statement and the events of the final novella, there is no question that Vieux-Chauvet paints these men as honorable people who fell victim to the regime for expressing their ideas.

The question of whether to write and share one's feelings in such an unfriendly environment sits at the center of the text. While it is clear that Jacques, Simon, Renée and André have made the decision to write since they are in hiding from the authorities, they debate whether they made the right decision. Starving with nothing but liquor and the syrup they intend as an offering to loas, the voodoo gods, the creative minds of these men are getting the better of them as they sink into a madness of what could happen to them if found. In this madness they view writing as their only outlet to cope with their situation and yet they hesitate since writing is what has gotten them there in the first place. André explains to Jacques when he threatens to scream, "Don't scream, I'm begging you, you're going to sit down in that corner like a good boy and keep quiet. There you are, some paper, a pencil, write us a nice poem" (Vieux-Chauvet, 317). From André's suggestion, one can see that writing seems to be the only solace the men have. When Jacques responds that he will write a poem about the devils, meaning a political poem about the corrupt officials, André retorts, "Write about something else, forget the devils. You're

safe here” (Vieux-Chauvet, 318). Once again André’s response tells us about their uncertainty towards writing. Even though writing will help Jacques calm down, his thought to write a political poem can only lead to further problems, thus André’s suggestion to write something more tame. Here one can see the fine line that these men walk with their craft. They must use their gift to speak out and yet they must be subtle enough that they don’t get persecuted as “conspirators.”

In the end when the men are caught, the reader once again sees the double-sidedness of poetry. We learn that it is René’s poetry that brings him closer to his love Cecile when she tells him that she still has the poem he wrote her and he understands that she views him more than “just a beggar” (Vieux-Chauvet, 362). However, it is the same poetry that causes their separation and their trauma. Cecile and René are both killed for conspiracy due to the poetry. Therefore making the same writing that draws them together the poison that ruins them.

Throughout the three novellas Vieux-Chauvet creates a series of dualities that reflect the Haitian experience of trauma. She reflects events that are both distinct and vague. She weaves narratives that are both individual and collective, as well as stories that reflect victims and bystanders. In all of these dualities, Marie Vieux-Chauvet captures the experience that defines the Haitian identity, something that each person must endure individually as a group. In her second story, “Anger” Louis Normil states,

Maybe for too long we lived tranquil and carefree lives in the midst of other’s tears and lamentations. To accept crime even if you don’t participate in it is still criminal...Now I am being punished for thinking that because the flames of hell didn’t reach me, I could warm my hands over them. I looked at others writhing and twisting their faces in pain without losing my peace of mind, and today, here I am deep in the midst of the flames along with all those I love!” (Vieux-Chauvet, 270).

While Normil is clearly reflecting on his personal struggle over the land, his realization is one that Vieux-Chauvet purposefully weaves through her text. The people of Haiti are now all in the midst of the flames. Whether they were lucky people who stood silently and watched others become victims or writhed and twisted in pain themselves, they are now all one. Through the collective identity of being Haitian, each member of the community experiences the struggles of his ancestors as well as those to come. They mourn the past together, but they also heal together with all those they love!

In the 206 years that Haiti has been an independent nation, it has faced more struggles perhaps than it did as a colony. Occupying about 30% of its original landmass as Hispaniola, Haiti seems to have only shrunk on the world stage as well. While there were times when the island country held nothing but promise, those days seem to have faded away into a routine of poverty and despair.

Even though Haiti served as a model for many of its island neighbors in being the first country to stage a slave revolution and declare independence, it too has fallen behind most of those countries in terms of wealth, development, and infrastructure. The question one must ask then is how a nation with so much potential has experienced so much failure. In looking at the history and the literary artifacts, one must attribute Haiti's hardships to identity. Despite their strong desire to break away from the confines of French imperialism, the Haitian people have never been able to free their consciousness from the structures implemented during colonialism. Still heavily reliant on the French systems of language, education, and religion introduced during imperialism, the Haitians have never been able to find the middle ground in which they fuse their own identity with the positive aspects of colonialism to create a new nation. What is most stifling perhaps is that many Haitians still view themselves as savages, who must rely on the structures of the white man to become civilized. This can be seen as early as the rule of Henri Christophe. Despite his original intentions to create a free place for blacks alongside the heroes of the rebellion Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessaline, Christophe's implementation failed in many ways. This inability to love one's identity at the moment of inception is what establishes a complex for the generations to come. From Christophe to Duvalier, each struggle of power became a choice of identity. While many mistakes were made in an effort to improve

the state of the nation, those mistakes were often impacted by the cultural or economic traditions of imperialism. From the palace of Sans Souci to the acceptance of the American invasion to the thirty year dictatorship of Pap Doc, each leader brought with him a choice: rely on the imperial system, favoring light skinned Haitians or fight against it punishing them for their history of superiority. Regardless of the choice, at no time was there a discussion to favor Haitian identity over racial politics. This inability to create a unified population of Haitian people regardless of skin color is what has prevented a united Haitian culture from taking root.

This constant need to be aware of one's identity in relation to the imperial model is what has caused the heavily tainted fabric of Haitian history. By looking carefully at the texts presented in this paper, one can see that each moment of rupture was related to race, and a decision of whether to support or break away from the colonial tradition. Therefore, one can see that Ron Eyerman's concept of collective trauma as additions to the primal scene is correct. Each invasion, dictatorship, or scandal seems to be a continuation of the slave rebellion of 1803 in which the Haitian people are fighting against themselves for freedom from identity politics.

Even the most recent tragedy of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that decimated the poorly built infrastructure of Port au Prince and the subsequent cholera outbreak which resulted from an ability to re-settle the storm's refugees over a year later can be seen as a continuation of the same collective trauma. Having never been able to unite under a common identity, the people of Haiti are still segregated heavily by both class and skin color. With the majority of people living in poverty in poorly cared for areas, the sheer force of the earth leveled them once again to where society has always told them they belonged, living in tent cities like savages who must rob and rape one another to survive. The current Haitian President René Préval took over a week to make a statement about the devastation in his country. Instead he remained in his literal ivory tower

securing his safety and that of other upper class people before worrying about the well being of his nation. Even now he sits like Henri Christophe at Sans Souci watching while others rebuild his kingdom while the Haitian people await the upcoming election as yet another chance to overcome the past.

However what is remarkable about the Haitian people in moments of tragedy, whether it is the horrible events of the past or the current trauma they are experiencing, is the way they respond. Unwilling to pity themselves for the misfortunes they've been dealt, the people of Haiti find means of coping. They learn to take comfort in the inexplicable, using their trauma as the only unifying force on which to build an identity. Having never established a uniquely Haitian character, it is the hardships and the collective response to each hardship that has molded the Haitian culture. This can best be seen in a comment titled "A Little While" that Edwidge Danticat wrote for *The New Yorker* in the weeks following the earthquake in her homeland. Danticat shares her experience of learning of the death of her cousin Maxo and his son and the struggles of her family in Haiti. She explains that despite her guilt for not being there, her family accepted their fate. She writes,

Everyone sounded eerily calm on the phone. No one was screaming. No one was crying. No one said "Why me?" or "We're cursed." Even as the aftershocks kept coming, they'd say, "The ground is shaking again," as though it had become a normal occurrence. They inquired about family members outside Haiti: an elderly relative, my baby, and my one-year-old daughter. I cried and apologized. "I am sorry I can't be with you," I said. My nearly six-foot-tall twenty-two-year-old cousin- the beauty queen we nicknamed Naomi Campbell- who says that she is hungry and has been sleeping in bushes with dead bodies nearby, stops me. "Don't cry," she says. "That's life"... "That's what it is. And life, like death, lasts only *yon ti moman*." Only a little while ("A Little While", 20).

Danticat's account of her family speaks to the strength of the Haitian identity. The strength and understanding present in her relative's response to the horrors of the earthquake define what it means to be Haitian. While the sense of identity may not come from a specific language, skin

color, or government system, it comes from an internal glow that these people share. Regardless of the horrors that a Haitian may face, he or she seems prepared to adjust. Woven into the fabric of the collective identity along with the moments of rupture is a calm sense of rationality that life, like death only lasts a little while.

While the constant trauma that has plagued the people of Haiti has been devastating, preventing the country from forming a foundation that can help them recover in times of struggle, the trauma has also been therapeutic. For it is through those moments of collective trauma that the people have banded together forming a community where it seemed impossible to do so. Rather than viewing these moments of tragedy as isolating incidents that cut of an individual or even a generation from the larger community, it is those same moments that define the larger community. Once again as Kai Erikson states,

The human chemistry at work here is an odd one, but it has been noted many times before: estrangement becomes the basis for communality, as if persons without homes or citizenship or any other niche in the larger order of things were invited to gather in a quarter set aside for the disfranchised, a ghetto for the unattached (Erikson, 186).

To use Erikson's words, Haiti is that quarter set aside for the disfranchised. It is a ghetto for those who experience trauma, however I would disagree that they are unattached. In fact, it is that disfranchisement that makes them attached to one another through the collective trauma of Haitian history.

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