



MA in Construction and Representation of Cultural Identities

Entangled Timelines: Memory and Caribbean Diasporic Identities in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*

Claudia Martínez Ruiz

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and of English Studies

Faculty of Philology and Communication

University of Barcelona

2022-2023

Supervisor: Dr. Isabel Alonso-Breto



UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

ENTANGLED TIMELINES: MEMORY AND CARIBBEAN DIASPORIC IDENTITIES IN EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S *KRIK? KRAK!*

Abstract: This thesis will explore how different forms of memory contribute to the construction of Caribbean identity and Haitian history. It will do so, more specifically, through the reading of the literary work *Krik? Krak!* (1995) by Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat. In this short story collection, the phenomenon of memory arises from the cumulative effect of interconnected narratives, encompassing both the ancestral stories that elucidate the behaviours and the identities of present-day characters, as much those living in diaspora as those residing in the fictional setting of Ville Rose, Haiti. The diverse forms of memory in discussion will be tied together by Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, which contemplates a sense of fluidity and interculturality characteristic of Caribbean cultures. The versatility granted by this framework will be applied as dependent on two important concepts: collective memory and communicative memory, which provide answers to the silences and gaps in the postcolonial Caribbean.

Keywords: Edwidge Danticat, Multidirectional Memory, Collective Memory, Communicative Memory, Caribbean Diasporic Identities

LÍNEAS TEMPORALES ENMARAÑADAS: MEMORIA E IDENTIDADES DIASPÓRICAS CARIBEÑAS EN *KRIK? KRAK!* DE EDWIDGE DANTICAT

Resumen: Esta tesis estudiará cómo diferentes formas de memoria contribuyen a la construcción de las identidades caribeñas y la historia de Haití. Lo hará, específicamente, a través de la lectura de la obra literaria *Krik? Krak!* (1995), de la escritora haitiano-americana Edwidge Danticat. En esta colección de historias cortas, el fenómeno de la memoria surge del efecto acumulativo de narrativas interconectadas que abarcan tanto las historias ancestrales que arrojan luz sobre los comportamientos y las identidades de los personajes que viven en el presente: tanto aquellos que viven en la diáspora como los que residen en el entorno ficticio de Ville Rose, Haití. Las diversas formas de memoria en discusión serán unidas por el concepto de memoria multidireccional de Michael Rothberg, concepto que contempla la fluidez y la interculturalidad características de las culturas caribeñas. La versatilidad que proporciona este marco teórico se aplicará a dos conceptos importantes: la memoria colectiva y la memoria comunicativa, que ofrecen respuestas a los silencios y vacíos del Caribe postcolonial.

Palabras Clave: Edwidge Danticat, Memoria Multidireccional, Memoria Colectiva, Memoria Comunicativa, Identidades caribeñas diaspóricas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. Contexts.....	6
1.1 Caribbean Identities: Fluidity and Circularity.....	6
1.2 Notes on the History of Haiti.....	10
1.2.1 Saint-Domingue.....	11
1.2.2 Haiti after Independence.....	13
1.2.3 The Duvalier Regime.....	16
1.3 Reading Haiti.....	18
1.4 Edwidge Danticat: The Dangerous Job of Being a Writer.....	20
2. The Entanglements of Memory.....	22
2.1 A Brief Genealogy of Memory Studies.....	22
2.2 Rothberg’s Multidirectional Memory.....	26
2.3 Multidirectional Memory and Haiti: Interconnected Narratives.....	30
3. Memory in Edwidge Danticat’s <i>Krik? Krak!</i>	34
3.1 Storytelling as a Form of Remembrance in the Caribbean	34
3.2 Literature as a Vehicle for Memory in Haiti	37
3.3 Memory in <i>Krik? Krak!</i> : Port-au-Prince and Ville Rose	40
3.4 Memory in <i>Krik? Krak!</i> : Diasporic Identities.....	46
Conclusions.....	52

Introduction

The construction of identities and the preservation of historical narratives are pivotal endeavours in the cultural landscape of the Caribbean, where complex interplays of diverse histories, languages, and traditions have shaped the region's multifaceted identity. Within this intricate tapestry, multidirectional memory, as defined by Michael Rothberg, emerges as a critical lens through which to examine the interdependence of different forms of memory in Caribbean cultures. This thesis embarks on a journey to unravel the importance of memory for Caribbean identities, specifically Haitians living in Haiti and in diaspora. This intricate fabric will be disentangled through the analysis of five stories from Edwidge Danticat's literary masterpiece, *Krik? Krak!* (1995).

In terms of methodology this paper is divided in two blocks. It opens with a historical approach to Caribbean identities, Haitian history and memory studies, to then conclude with an analysis of how these elements appear in Edwidge Danticat's stories. At the same time, the writing of this paper tries to be faithful to the fluidity of Caribbean cultures, focusing on memory as the vehicle through which Caribbean cultures have been able to create their unique forms of identity.

After this introductory section, a brief introduction to forms of conceptualization of Caribbean identities is conducted, giving importance to Caribbean identities in diasporic contexts as well. This part of the paper draws on the work of brilliant scholars from the area such as Édouard Glissant, Antonio Benítez Rojo, and Stuart Hall. In the realm of Caribbean studies, the dynamic interplay between the region's culture and its aquatic environment has been a subject of significant scholarly inquiry. The Caribbean's historical memory is intimately tied to the sea, a theme that resonates through the works of scholars and writers alike. Antonio Benítez Rojo and Édouard Glissant have greatly

contributed to the definition and self-discovery of Caribbean cultures. Benítez-Rojo's observation that Caribbean cultures are "not terrestrial but aquatic" (1996: 11) introduces a central theme in Caribbean studies. There is an aquatic essence that engenders a sense of circularity and eternity in the Caribbean, which permeates the cultural expression of its identities. Édouard Glissant's work, singularly his *Poetics of Relation*, further underscore the significance of the Caribbean's natural landscape in shaping its identities: the sea is the origin and the repository of the region's history, establishing a framework that informs subsequent discussions. Slavery resulted in a collective sense of uprootedness among Caribbean people and, as we delve deeper into the Caribbean's narrative, we encounter a journey toward self-liberation. As articulated by Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, the acceptance of diverse cultural influences found its culmination in the concept of Creoleness.

Moving from this broader picture, the paper introduces Haitian history, giving also an insight or reflection on how Haiti has been read and written about throughout history. Haitian history is marked by a complex interplay of colonization, slavery, political upheaval, and external interventions. As the first independent black republic in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti's journey to nationhood was paved by the blood and determination of its people. In examining Haiti's history, though, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of narratives and perspective as, for centuries, outsiders have shaped and controlled the narrative of Haitian history, often eclipsing and neglecting the voices of Haitian people. This imbalance has perpetuated a colonialist discourse that fails to capture the nuances and complexities of the place. Haiti's history is not a monolithic narrative, but a tapestry of voices, experiences, and perspectives that deserve to be heard and understood in their complex and full richness. This paper delves into Haiti's historical trajectory —caring about each and every source and cultivating awareness of who and

from where they are writing—, beginning with the colonial era, through the struggle for independence, and its turbulent aftermath, leading to the Duvalier regimes and beyond.

After this historical background, Edwidge Danticat, the renowned Haitian American writer, can be understood as an embodiment of the intricate fusion of cultures and experiences that define the diasporic narrative in the United States. That is the reason why the description of Danticat's life coordinates is placed here. Danticat's own experiences as an immigrant and her enduring connection to Haiti provide a deep understanding of the feeling of straddling two worlds and two cultures, in-betweenness, which characterizes diasporic cultures at large and Caribbean and Haitian diasporas in particular. In her works, she poignantly reflects on these experiences, engaging also in a profound exploration of the moral and ethical responsibilities of artists and of transformative power of literature. She is cognizant of the role of literature in preserving memory, bearing witness to historical events, and giving voice and agency to those who have lived through such events. Storytelling is a venerated tradition in her culture and her family, a legacy passed down by her grandmother and aunt. She considers storytelling and literature to be catalysts for revolting against silence, a call to action that resonates through her writing.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for memory, and this serves as a great introduction to the brief genealogy of memory studies which appears next in this paper. At the heart of this exploration lies the phenomenon of multidirectional memory. The fluidity which characterizes this form of memory seems to fit perfectly with Caribbean cultures. In contemporary memory studies, several key concepts have emerged to elucidate how memory functions and is constructed. This paper explores the concept of multidirectional memory as a framework for understanding the interplay between different histories of victimization and the ways in which these intersect, overlap, and mutually influence each

other. Multidirectional memory is used, in this paper, to connect different forms of remembrance in the same narrative, Haitian history.

By observing how memory operates in the context of Haiti's history, it is made obvious that it shares connections with other decolonization and pan-African experiences, as explored in "Multidirectional Memory and Haiti: Interconnected Narratives". But this connection would not be possible if it were not for previous and contemporary theorizations on memory, such as the concepts of collective memory, as posed by Halbwachs, and also by Jan Assman and Aleida Assman's cultural memory and communicative memory, Alison Landsberg's prosthetic memory, Marianne Hirsch's postmemory, and Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider's cosmopolitan memory. This paper explores if it is possible to apply some of these concepts to the Haitian past and experience.

I found the concept of multidirectional memory fluid as well, ideal for my analysis as it encloses the interaction of different historical memories while recognizing that memories are not confined to a single trajectory, but they are influenced by an intercultural dynamic. Attaching this concept to Haiti's history demonstrates that multidirectional memory serves as a vigorous framework that nurtures connections and dialogues among diverse historical narratives, promoting solidarity.

Before engaging in the analysis of the stories in *Krik? Krak!* I found appropriate to reflect on the function of literature in the context of Haiti and in which forms the transmission of memory is more effective. The work of Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney on literature and memory has inspired and influenced this paper. Literature stands as a formidable social framework for memory, where literary texts serve as custodians and vehicles of memories. The essence of literature creates a timeless space for experiences, fictional or

real, and it serves as a beacon through which events can be celebrated and mourned, or simply conveyed. In this sense, literature becomes a vital form of cultural memory, with the power to disrupt and shape the narratives of remembrance. This notion of literature applied to the Caribbean works as a repository of stories that span centuries of conquest and transformation. Stories are living entities that acknowledge the wounds of the past, breathing life into the silent echoes of history, informing every moment of Caribbean life.

Finally, within this context Danticat's literature is an example of how literature can address the silences in history and give voice to those whose stories have been marginalized or forgotten. Her storytelling weaves together threads of history, navigating the realms of memory, history and intimate narratives, creating a profound understanding of the Haitian experience and diaspora. And here the analysis of *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat's first short story collection, emerges naturally. The choice of stories has been made based on how forms of remembrance are used and conveyed, as conducting an analysis of the entire collection, and Danticat's latest short story collection *Everything Inside* (2019), feels and intends to be a future project that deserves further dedication.

Therefore, I chose to divide the stories' analyses into two parts, for the purpose of the analysis. First, I conducted the analyses of three stories set in Ville Rose, the fictional village of Haiti, and Port-au-Prince, in which Danticat explores how collective memory, communicative memory and cultural memory provide sites for freedom, mourning, and celebration in Haiti: "Children of the Sea", "Nineteen Thirty-Seven", "A Wall of Fire Rising". And, finally, I discuss two stories set in a context of diaspora: "New York Day Women" and "Caroline's Wedding", which help understand the conflicting relationship between the first and second generation of migrants in terms of how communicative memory fails and succeeds.

1. Contexts

1.1 Caribbean (Diasporic) Identities: Fluidity and Circularity

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?

*Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.*

—Derek Walcott, “The Sea is History”

Caribbean cultures are, in the words of Antonio Benítez Rojo “not terrestrial but aquatic, a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar” (Benítez-Rojo, 1996: 11). When reading about the Caribbean, from the voices of Caribbean authors, their words seem to flow and exude a sense of spirituality, circularity and eternity that come from within their identity. “The Caribbean is the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity” (Benítez-Rojo, 1996: 11), and this fluidity that characterizes Caribbean cultures comes in waves. As Édouard Glissant expresses in his work *Poetics of Relation*, Caribbean identities are rooted in its landscape and surroundings; in the sea rest the origins and history of these cultures, but it is an identity born out of the contact of shared histories and different cultures, out of filiation and community (Glissant, 1997).

Caribbean identities are born out of the struggle for self-liberation. These identities share the same collective unconsciousness: slavery. A savage act of dehumanization has infused Caribbean cultures with a sense of uprootedness from the very beginning of their histories, an impossibility to reach the motherland (Glissant, 1989: 161). Moreover, slavery is one of the causes for the loss of collective memory, as Glissant mentions, in Caribbean cultures there is a sense of “the careful erasing of the past, which often makes

our calendar nothing more than a series of natural calamities, not a linear progression, and so time keeps turning around in us” (1989: 161). This notion of not having a linear progression, but rather a sense of circular temporality, is also connected to Benítez-Rojo’s idea of sinuosity, which considers that the Caribbean lives inside a repetitive cycle, connected to the unending tidalectics of sea waves (Brathwaite 1997).

Glissant’s considers slavery to be a possible cause for this sense of circular temporality. He defines slavery as: “a struggle with no witnesses from which we perhaps have acquired the taste for repeating words that recall those rasping whispers deep in our throats, in the huts of the implacably silent world of slavery” (1989: 161). Indeed, the Caribbean and its cultures have been historically enclosed and undermined: “French ways forced us to denigrate ourselves: the common condition of colonized people” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1990:280).

After centuries of silencing, to reach Caribbeanness, understood as a form of self-expression that groups the “multidimensional nature of the diverse Caribbean” (Glissant: 165), would mean to finally reach the highest level of self-expression in the Caribbean, the self-acceptance process that would culminate in Creoleness (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1990: 275). Becoming independent from the Other’s culture did not mean a complete separation, but rather an acceptance of how other cultures had influenced Creolité, which promoted a “conceptualisation of Caribbeanness as an identity based on the New World alongside the hybridity and diasporic experience of the West Indian peoples” (Roldán-Sevillano, 2021: 71).¹

¹ Creolité contested the previous Négritude nationalist movement “that defended Caribbean identity as merely derived from ancestral African origins” (Roldán-Sevillano, 2019:71). This concept was coined by Glissant and explored in depths by Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant in their work “In Praise of Creoleness”. Négritude manifested exteriority, rather than an expression of Caribbean identity, it longed for an appropriation of Mother Africa, or a mystification of Africa, while writing for others and not for the Caribbean peoples. (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, 1990:277)

Caribbean identities need to be defined, as well, considering how deeply affected by diasporic contexts they are. In the words of Stuart Hall, diaspora should be: “defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (Hall, 1990: 235). Caribbean cultures create communal identities in diaspora, communities with shared references and referents which go back and forth between their native cultures and the cultures of the country of residence. Considering that diaspora comes with uprootedness, with a “sudden loss of homeland, home, language and incalculable other markers of self and identity” (Rosales, 2017:33), the sites of remembrance are created and maintained in diaspora, deeply influenced by a sense of in-betweenness. This context provides a diverse framework of narratives and experiences that, nonetheless, form part of Caribbean cultures. This diversity which encompasses diasporic experiences and cultures is therein a crucial component of Caribbean cultures. In the words of Glissant (1989):

Diversity, which is neither chaos nor sterility, means the human spirit’s striving for a cross-cultural relationship, without universalist transcendence. Diversity needs the presence of peoples, no longer as objects to be swallowed up, but with the intention of creating a new relationship. (1989: 96)

The hybridity mentioned by Hall can be seen in the production of narratives that prove this position of being in between two cultures, Edwidge Danticat’s work being an example, or the art created by the members of the renowned Caribbean Artists Movement, a group of artists that got together to cultivate the culture of displacement.² As put by

² The Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) was founded in London in 1968 as a place or forum where Caribbean artists in diaspora could share and talk about their experiences and works. This movement was prompted by Kamau Brathwaite, John La Rose and Andrew Salkey (Lloyd, 2018).

Hall: “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall, 1990: 235). Communal identities take root in the diaspora, weaving together native roots and the influences of host countries. While uprootedness becomes a fertile ground for narratives of in-betweenness, memories cradle within the interstices of a constantly evolving tapestry. Within this mosaic of narratives, diversity flourishes as a vibrant force, reflecting the Caribbean spirit’s unyielding quest for cross-cultural relationships marked by diaspora.

The vibrant tapestry of Caribbean cultures unravels before us, a realm both fluid and eternal, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s metaphor vividly illustrates. Within this sinuous cultural landscape, time dances irregularly, defying the constraints of clocks and calendars. The words of Caribbean authors echo, weaving narratives of circularity and timelessness from the depths of their collective identity. As Édouard Glissant eloquently conveys, Caribbean identities are rooted in the land and sea, an origin story woven from shared histories and diverse cultures. These identities, though, were birthed through the crucible of struggle, as mentioned before. The harrowing experience of slavery became the collective unconsciousness. A history of inhumanity that left an indelible mark and rendered a linear progression which erased the threads of collective memory.

The reverberations of this history continue to resonate like rasping whispers from the past. The Caribbean, once a place of silencing and colonization, emerges as a complex nexus of cultural intersections. Over time, these cultures have emboldened themselves, breaking the chains of silence and dependency to embrace their own cultural uniqueness. To reach Caribbeannes is to celebrate the multidimensional mosaic of diversity that defines the region, a journey culminating in the self-acceptance that paves the way for that Creoleness which is “the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European,

African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history” (1990: 280).

Ultimately, the Caribbean stands as a testament to the resilience of human spirit, a realm where past and present intersect, where fluidity and resistance coexist, and where the legacy of struggle becomes a driving force for an ever-evolving cultural narrative.

1.2 Notes on the History of Haiti

Haiti has a tumultuous history marked by colonization, slavery, and political upheaval. As the first independent Black republic in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti gained its independence from French colonial rule through a successful slave revolt in 1804. However, the aftermath of independence was marred by economic instability, political corruption, and foreign interference, leading to a cycle of poverty and political turmoil that continues to impact the country. The Duvalier regime, led by François Duvalier ("Papa Doc"), from 1957 to 1971, and later by his son Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc"), from 1971 to 1986, was marked by repression, violence, and human rights violations. The lack of democratic institutions has resulted in waves of migration as individuals seek safety and better opportunities abroad. In addition to that, Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, grappling with high unemployment rates, limited access to education and healthcare, and widespread poverty. Economic opportunities are scarce, and many Haitians face dire conditions, prompting them to leave in search of better economic prospects for themselves and their families.

The historical development of Haiti must be introduced in order to grapple the singularity of this nation. In the previous sections of this chapter, relevant events that marked Haitian collective memory will be explored.

1.2.1 Saint-Domingue

While the history of the place is thousands of years old, this account shall begin, for practical purposes, in 1697, when Spain ceded the western part of Hispaniola to the French empire, and together with the region of Tortuga, they gave their new land a new name: Saint-Domingue.³ Under French rule, slaves were imported from Africa to produce for the metropolis, turning Saint-Domingue into “the Pearl of the Antilles”.⁴ In 1791 a slave revolt began, inspired by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and important and powerful figures from within the plantations such as Boukman, a rebellious slave who turned into the leader of the revolution.⁵ This slave revolt developed into the Haitian Revolution, the tumultuous event that would achieve the country’s independence in 1804, resulting in a “unique example of successful black revolution” (Dubois, 2004: 6).

The main protagonists of the revolution, unlike in the case of the independence of the US, were the slaves, not the slave owners (Dubois, 2004: 35). The history of the Haitian Revolution is intricate, from 1791 until 1804, Haiti did not only face the hungry claws of the French Empire; England, Spain and Portugal sought to possess the Pearl of the Antilles (Youngquist and Pierrot, 2013: XVIII), so when the British arrived in Saint-Domingue, their help was rather a declaration of interests. Toussaint Louverture, one of the most determinant leaders of the Revolution, a free black man born a slave who dedicated his life to protect and define the rights and liberty slaves had earned, tragically

³ Under Spanish rule, Nicolás de Ovando massacred a large part of the Taíno, the native inhabitants of Xaymaca, the original name of the island the Spanish colonizers later named *La Española*. Spain ceded the land by signing the Treaty of Ryswick (Youngquist and Pierrot, 2013).

⁴ It was also under Spanish rule that the first African peoples were enslaved in the island.

⁵ In 1791, Boukman Dutty conducted a voodoo ceremony in Bois Caïman, Saint Domingue, which sparked revolution (Youngquist and Pierrot, 2013). When he was found, he was “decapitated, his body burned by the French troops in view of the insurgent camps, and his head displayed on a stake in the main plaza of Le Cap” (Dubois, 2004, p.124).

failed to “construct a multiracial, egalitarian, and democratic society in Saint-Domingue” (Dubois, 2004: 173-174), but, undeniably, he defied a “complicated set of imperial conflicts and relationships that placed constraints on his social and economic policies” (Dubois, 2004: 175). By 1800, Louverture was in control of Hispaniola and, in 1801, he promulgated its constitution, in which he declared that all men born in the country were free and French. (Dubois, 2004: 243). History changed when Louverture’s mandate fell under Bonaparte’s commands and the Haitian leader was sent to prison. The fate of Saint-Domingue was, once again, in the hands of racist imperial powers.

Dessalines, a general and a former slave who had fought with Louverture during those years, fought against the French troops with the Army of Incas, or Sons of the Sun.⁶ In 1804, Dessalines’s army could officially announce their victory. Dessalines and the new government gave Saint Domingue its original name back, “Haiti”. This historical achievement served, in the words of Laurent Dubois (2004), as a countering response to the:

Negation not only of French colonialism, but of the whole history of European empire in the Americas. The new nation was to channel the centuries of suffering of those pushed to the margins by the official activity of colonialism into a new political community meant to guarantee the eternal freedom of its scarred constituency. (2004: 99)

⁶ Interestingly, Dessalines used indigenous terminology to name his army: “Army of the Incas” and “Sons of the Sun”. In the words of Laurent Dubois: “Dessalines’s use of symbols derived from indigenous peoples was an attempt to assert a legitimate claim to a land in which a majority of the nation’s inhabitants were exiles, having been brought there from Africa against their will. But it also suggested that this claim was based on resistance to, and the ultimate victory over, the brutality of colonialism, something which the enslaved shared with those wiped out by the Spanish centuries before they ever arrived” (2004, p. 299).

1.2.2 Haiti after Independence

Dessalines was assassinated in 1806 and this divided and sent the new republic into crisis: Henry Christophe ruled the north while Alexandre Pétion ruled the south. But the internal conflict was not the country's major issue. The US would not recognize Haitian independence until 1862, under the pressure of southern slave owners and exiled planters, breaking off any sort of diplomatic ties with the country up to the time of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. "The isolation of Haiti thus began at the very moment of its foundation" (Pierre-Dahomey, 2023: 165). This, of course, meant an economic crisis for the country, which needed, more than ever, a prosperous economy to grow. But, what about the former metropolis? In the case of France, the recognition took a different turn. In 1825, in order to be recognized as an independent country, Haiti had to pay an indemnity—to repay the exiled planters' losses—which amounted to millions of dollars (Dubois, 2004: 303).⁷ "Unable to pay, the Haitian government took loans from French banks, entering a cycle of debt that would last into the twentieth century" (Dubois, 2004: 303).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, while other independent nations were undergoing an enormous growth in industrialization, Haiti, as it had been excluded from international business and enclosed inside its borders, "clearly missed out on this entrance into the industrial age of the steam engine" (Pierre-Dahomey, 2023: 166). Adding up to the economic instability, the political climate in Haiti had been extremely shaky, having three different presidents in 1914 alone. (Girard, 2010: 81). Socioeconomic differences stood out significantly and, as democracy was inexistent, the prominent families in the

⁷ The compensation Haiti had to pay France was of 120 million francs, 10 times more than the amount the U.S paid for Louisiana. "The economist Thomas Piketty calculates that this was equivalent to 28 billion euros in today's currency. David Graeber, in his study *Debt: The First 500 Years*, considers it to be the most egregious debt in history." (Pierre-Dahomey, 2023: 165-166).

country and the *cacos* wielded their power to influence who would be president.⁸ Whoever did not follow their wishes, was either exiled or killed and this turbulent climate seemed to suggest the imminence of a civil war. In 1915, a year after the beginning of World War I, Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was declared president. He anticipated his destitution and took hostage people from the important families in Haiti, in this way, if there was an outbreak, his soldiers would murder those people; this was exactly how events unfolded (Girard, 2010: 81).⁹

International economic powers saw the brutal killing of the president by members of the elite as a great opportunity to occupy Haiti. “Foreign diplomats all agreed that the latest revolution had exceeded boundaries of acceptable behavior, even by the standards of early-twentieth-century Haitian politics.” (Girard, 2010: 82). The US, by using a colonialist discourse, sent the Marines to Haiti to massacre the *cacos* and other types of resistance. Haiti was a fine geopolitical and strategic point— in case the US had to participate in World War I and for economic purposes, like opening new trade routes— but it also granted the US control over the production and commercialization of products and lands, thus Haitian economy, and gave these to their multinationals. This control, instead of restabilizing Haitian politics and economy, made the country completely dependent on the US.

As a result of the US control of customs prices rose, which was not a problem for the US, but consequences of the intervention also “altered traditional kinship and gender

⁸ There was a distinction between peaceful inhabitants, *bons habitants*, and the Cacos, or *mauvais habitants*. The name “Cacos” is said to come from a small but fierce native bird, the *taco*. This group were former slaves, a sort of guerrilla who were part of Dessalines’ army. Their main objective was to protect and defend the masses. (Renda, 2001: 140)

⁹ On July 27, the presidential palace was raided by a group of revolutionaries and the president ran away. As commanded, the soldiers carried out a bloody slaughter of the 167 hostages who belonged to the most prominent families of Port-au-Prince. The next morning, after the funeral, members of the elite sought their revenge by brutally killing the president.

relations” (Caple, 2010: 53-54). Sexual violence and brutality were reinforced once again and practices from the slavery period were carried out by the newly created Gendarmerie.¹⁰ Inhumane tortures and killings, rapes and histories of violence under the first American occupation of Haiti are still told, Erica Caple names these acts “necropolitical violence”, “justified by cultural discourses about Haitian racial, intellectual and biological inferiority” (2010: 55).¹¹ Caple also mentions how the same soldiers that committed these horrific acts of violence were the mentors of the “modern Haitian armed forces” (2010: 54). The occupation forces left Haiti in 1934, trusting the mulatto elite and foreigners would maintain the alliance and deals with the US (Caple, 2010: 56). As Mary A. Renda states, “Americans helped to lay the groundwork for two Duvalier dictatorships and a series of post-Duvalier military regimes” (2001: 36).

In 1937, Rafael Trujillo, governor of the Dominican Republic and openly anti-Haitian, imagined a border between both countries, the Dajabón River, now also called the Massacre River, and so he began the *Operación Perejil* in which Haitian people living or working in D.R were persecuted. The method was horrible:

African by phenotype, the suspects were forced to sound a shibboleth: the Spanish word “perejil”. If they had difficulty with the rolling “r” embedded between two vowel sounds and upon articulation of the word produced the l-sound instead, they were lined up and shot on the spot as they were gagged with sprigs of parsley. In short, politics circumscribed the river. (Ayuso, 2011: 51)

¹⁰ The Gendarmerie was a Haitian institution created by the US forces which “reinforced this modern economy of extraction through coercive practices” (Caple, 2010: 54).

¹¹ The term necropolitics was developed by Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe. It refers to the use of political power and authority to dictate who lives and who dies, in contexts of states exerting control over populations. The governments or authorities maintain their power through manipulation of death and mortality (Mbembe, 2003).

This violent event was a genocide that killed between 1,000 and 35,000 Haitians.¹² But, moreover, it has had long-lasting effects on the community. Racist practices continue to be present nowadays, as Danticat herself has addressed. Haitians still work in the cane fields in Dominican Republic, they are still repatriated all the time to Haiti, as Danticat explained in a 2003 interview with David Barsamian, Haitian people have been even “taken off buses because they looked Haitian, [...] children born in the Dominican Republic still can’t go to school and are forced to work in sugarcane fields. [...] The massacre is something that people always fear can happen again.”

1.2.3 The Duvalier Regimes

After the US forces’ withdrawal, the governments were predominantly composed of light-skinned individuals.¹³ This issue began a revolution in 1946, which concluded with the formation of a new government. Still, this ‘color complex’ as Trouillot (1990) names it, is still very much present in Haiti. Difference in skin color also carries the weight of the Haitian revolution, which “was and remains the final symbol of the regeneration of the entire “black race” from the abyss imposed by slavery” (Trouillot, 1990: 117).

Haiti, indeed, has always been under dictatorial and authoritarian mandates, but in the 1950s something changed. François Duvalier emerged as the best candidate of the *noiriste* party. He appeared as the “most important opponent and the most likely to benefit from the “nationalist” ardor of the new middle classes” (Trouillot, 1990: 145). Haiti was constantly on the brink of civil war, and that ended with the death of freedom and democracy. Before Duvalier won the elections in 1957, his campaign had made use of

¹² This is relevant because of the inaccuracy of the numbers. This is due to the silencing and ignorance towards the massacre by the US and other states.

¹³ The term mulatto, in French *mulâtre* has extremely racist overtones, but it is relevant to know that this term was used offensively, and it is now defined as such.

military violence, repression and state violence; after the elections these acts of violence worsened. The *tonton-makout* had been trained by the US Marines and were the “paramilitary apparatus” of Duvalierism: the executioners of violence (Trouillot, 1990).¹⁴ Persecution of the followers of the ‘Old Regime’ began, as any fascist state would do: Duvalierism eliminated or centralized institutions, universities, unions, any religion that was not the official, the press, the radio station; and, thus, he was ‘President-for-Life’ (Ibid.).

The reach of state power, violence and control was beyond comparison: “the state had broken through the culturally specific limits of authoritarianism” (Trouillot, 1990: 165). Duvalierism had no limits: children and the elderly were not protected, whole families had to leave the country or were killed, there women suffered double violence, “from torture-rape to acquaintance-rape to marriage, infused the politicization of gender with violence” (Ibid.). Intellectuals were also persecuted; they were obliged to take part in the repression “either as its victims or as accomplices of the state” (Ibid.).

François Duvalier, or Papa Doc, was not well acquainted with Kennedy, but still he managed to convince the US “that a totalitarian response was the only guarantee against the rise of the left” (Trouillot, 1990: 203). When Duvalier showed support in favor of the US and declared Haiti’s administration anticommunist the US gave public support to Haiti, — granting the country with military aid—, and when Jean-Claude Duvalier, Baby Doc, was crowned, Nixon’s administration gave the blessing (Trouillot, 1990: 204).¹⁵

¹⁴ In creole, *Tonton Macoute* means ‘the bogeyman’. They were “dressed in a blue uniform, cowboy-style hat, dark glasses and a red ribbon tied around their arms” (Sadurni, 2020) (Own translation from Spanish. Retrieved from National Geographic History).

¹⁵ He was able to prove his words in 1969, when the PUCH (*Parti Unifié des Communistes Haïtiens*), tried to rise against the government, Duvalier’s administration conducted a thorough identification of all progressive intellectuals, and they were “physically eliminated, imprisoned, or forced into exile” (Trouillot, 1990: 203).

Baby Doc's mandate highlighted even more the existing socioeconomic differences. He turned his back on the agricultural population and focused on the new light-skinned bourgeoisie, fact that also troubled the traditional bourgeoisie. Jean-Claudism brought the country to the highest deficit: people could not afford their homes, electricity, or food; society was completely polarized. What moved people to the streets was the fact that Jean-Claude and his people blazoned their luxuries. As protests and riots began, repression did too, until 1986, when the US sent a National Council of Government (CNG), General Henri Namphy, who ended violence with even more violence.¹⁶ The streets were more dangerous after the end of Duvalierism: gangs and duvalierists would take the streets to gun down anyone willing to vote, which terrorized the country.

1.3 Reading Haiti

The two previous sections of the paper have intended to approach Haiti's history cautiously. It is easy to fall into topicality, so the choice of sources has been a matter of importance in the writing of this context. When reading about Haiti, it is noticeable how strangers to the country have been writing Haitian history for centuries, as has happened with other colonies. The peoples' voices have been overshadowed by imperialist and colonialist discourses and these have blindsided Haiti's national discourse and identity:

The writing and reading of Haitian historiography implies literacy and formal access to a Western—primarily French— language and culture, two prerequisites that already exclude the majority of Haitians from direct participation in its production. (Trouillot, 1995: 55)

¹⁶ The CNG's government murdered more people in one year than Jean-Claude Duvalier's government in fifteen years.

Haitian people were excluded from the writing of their own experiences, but silence cannot repress emotions, and emotions can be made transparent through art. When authority takes away your freedom of speech, art stills find its way out of the soil: stories ignite the long-known fire of the oral narrative.

In his work *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Haitian scholar Michel Rolph Trouillot stated:

The chronicler describes only events that he witnessed; the narrator can tell stories both about what he saw and what he learned to be true from others. The chronicler does not know the end of the story—indeed, there is no point to the story; the narrator knows the full story. (1995: 50)

How is this relevant nowadays? In 2010, Haiti suffered an earthquake that was covered by all news channels worldwide. It was one of the most mediatic natural disasters in history. Quickly, portrayals of Haiti started surfacing, where Haitians were portrayed through the lenses of dehumanizing narratives (Athena, 2010). On the days after the catastrophe, Haiti's history was revised by many channels, exposing how the country had always been tainted red. TV news revised how, in 1991, a military coupe d'état ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the elected president, and the country's hope for democracy, forcing thousands of people into exile. Haiti has been targeted as a social cause by powerful nations, and often this humanitarian mission to save the country follows the lines of the same colonialist discourse that saw Haiti as a mine to be exploited. After centuries, Haiti remains a geopolitical pariah whose history has been "silenced, disavowed, reconstructed, and rewritten" (Athena, 2010).

1.4 Edwidge Danticat: The Dangerous Job of Being a Writer

Edwidge Danticat was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1969. When she was just four years old her parents migrated to New York and her brother and her stayed in Haiti with their aunt and uncle to join their parents in Brooklyn in 1981. The fact that she migrated to the US when she was twelve years old and that she has never stopped visiting Haiti enriches her bicultural experience, as her works prove and as she herself explains beautifully: “The past is like the hair on our head. I moved to New York when I was twelve, but you always have this feeling that wherever you come from, you physically leave it, but it doesn’t leave you” (2003).¹⁷

At present, Danticat is a highly acclaimed Haitian American author known for her works of fiction and non-fiction which mostly center around themes of Haitian culture and history, identity and the immigrant experience and diaspora in the United States. In her work *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, published in 2010, Danticat explores the role of diasporic Caribbean artists and the challenges they face in creating art that often grapples with themes of displacement, in-betweenness, nostalgia, identity and the issues and conflicts in their home country. She, indeed, has spoken out about Haiti’s tumultuous history and contemporary issues and stereotypes and discrimination against Haitian people living in the US. For instance, she has criticized the treatment of Haitian immigrants, who are seen as a threat to the US national security, and who are “criminalized for having tried to come here” (Danticat, 2003). The in-betweenness she has experienced throughout the years in the US crash with her own experiences as an

¹⁷ This information has been taken from Edwidge Danticat’s interview with Bonnie Lyons in the Summer of 2003 for *Contemporary Literature* Vol. 44, No. 2.

immigrant, as this experience has got her to connect and relate to the current immigration situation in the US.¹⁸ This feeling of in-betweenness is often reflected in her words:

Loving Haiti, you know, comes in the blood. And loving America, being grateful for what it's afforded my family, there are so many Americans now in my family. That's what also makes it sad to see what's happening now, in terms of how new immigrants are being scapegoated, to hear about children who could have been myself, dying at the border for lack of medical care. (2019)

Furthermore, she delves into the moral and ethical responsibilities of artists and the role of literature as a tool for preserving memory, bearing witness to historical events and giving voice and agency to the people that are living or lived those events. Artists, moreover, carry an enormous responsibility, “creating a revolt against silence” (Danticat, 2010:11). In her case, this necessity had always been inside her, since her grandmothers and aunts started telling her stories. She has graphically emphasized the importance of storytelling: “a lot of people in my life were not literate in a formal sense, but they were storytellers [...]. That whole interaction between the storyteller and the listeners had a very powerful influence on me” (2003).

In Danticat’s remarkable journey from her early years in Port-au-Prince to her life as a celebrated Haitian American author, her writings have presented a profound intertwining of cultures and experiences, a testament to the enduring connection between her homeland and her adopted country. Her stories are a beautiful embodiment of the idea that one’s roots never fade, even when they find themselves transplanted to a new world. Her works

¹⁸ Nowadays, Haitian people are not easily granted asylum in the States, they are repatriated or incarcerated after the long, traumatic and uncertain journey from Haiti to the US. Danticat herself has spoken about how she has never seen the US as an idyllic country. She acknowledges the complicated history between the US and Haiti, “that has always been part of my formulation of how I see America” (2019). Of course, how Haitian people are being treated nowadays makes her worry about the future of her children: “what future they will face as black children of Haitian immigrants in this country” (2019).

act as a bridge connecting her readers to the heart of the Caribbean diaspora while shedding light on the challenges faced by diasporic Caribbean artists who grapple with themes of displacement and in-betweenness.

In Danticat's narrative and ideas, a celebration of heritage and a call to action transpire, as a reminder that storytelling is a timeless art that connects communities and cultures. Through her literature, she continues to create dangerously, leaving an indelible mark on the world of literature and on the hearts of those who are fortunate to read her words. She has firmly emphasized the relevant role of the writer in the complex contexts where she was born and grew up:

Create dangerously, for people who read dangerously. This is what I've always thought it meant to be a writer. Writing, knowing in part that no matter how trivial your words may seem, someday, somewhere, someone may risk his or her life to read them. Coming from where I come from, with the history I have [...] this is what I've always seen as the unifying principle among all writers. (Danticat, 2010: 10)

2. The Entanglements of Memory

2.1 A Brief Genealogy of Memory Studies

The term collective memory was first used in 1902 by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, an Austrian writer, to describe a type of remembrance that was shared with ancestors (Olick & Robbins, 1998). As it happens, the concept of individual memory was not sufficient to give an explanation to how ancestor's memories could be assimilated into the next generations. Collective memory was later theorized by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, whose insights marked the beginning of an area which came to be known as Memory Studies. Since the beginning of the 20th century, memory studies have evolved into a broad and multidisciplinary academic field that focuses on how forms of memory

“operate as collective representations of the past, how they constitute a range of cultural resources for social and historical identities, and how they privilege particular readings of the past and subordinate others” (Keightley and Pickering, 2013: 3).

Throughout the last decades, further concepts regarding how memory functions and how it is constructed have been theorized and studied. To begin with, Halbwachs’s collective memory refers to the shared memories, representations and interpretations of a group or society. This collective memory is constructed and shaped by social interactions and is a product of the collective experiences, values, and norms of a particular group. Furthermore, Halbwachs introduced the idea that collective memory is not only a sum of individual memories, but a dynamic process in which shared narratives are constructed and sustained within social frameworks. Individuals participate in shaping and preserving collective memories through their interactions with others and their engagement with societal and cultural practices (The National Holocaust Centre and Museum).

Drawing on Halbwachs’s work, Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann divided collective memory into two categories: cultural memory and communicative memory. Cultural memory refers to the formal and institutionalized ways in which societies preserve and transmit their historical experiences and narratives. This form of memory involves official records, monuments, and established historical narratives. Cultural memory can be manifested through narratives and myths, symbolism and rituals, museums, memorials and even educational curriculums. These are also forms that play an important role in shaping and transmitting a society’s understanding of its past. In the words of Ann Rigney (2004):

History is the symbolic form in which a society takes account of its past, then it has become more and more evident in an increasingly museum-filled world that this

“accounting for” takes place not only through historiography, but also through a wide range of other activities: commemorative ceremonies, museum visits, apologies on behalf of states, meetings of reenactment societies, watching historical films and reading historical fiction, family gatherings and genealogical research. (Rigney, 2004: 363)

Communicative memory, on the other hand, focuses on the informal or everyday way in which people remember and share their experiences with one another. Thus, communicative memory encompasses the memories that are passed down through generations via storytelling, personal anecdotes or mere conversations, fluid processes of communication. This memory, though, is actively maintained and renewed through interactions within families and communities. In the words of Jan Assman (2010):

Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations. (2010: 110)

In her 2004 book, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Alison Landsberg theorized an extremely contemporary form of memory which refers to the way in which individuals form personal connections to historical events and experiences which they did not directly experience, witness or participate in. These personal connections are often made through the mediation of popular culture and media. The 20th century saw enormous rates of migration and, with

the movement of people “came the rupture of generational ties, rendering the traditional modes for the transmission of cultural, ethnic, and racial memory” (Landsberg, 2003: 146). Prosthetic memory is rooted in the ways in which mass media — films, television shows, photographs, literature and other forms of popular culture— create a sense of empathy and identification with past events, acting as prostheses that extend, until a point, a person’s memory, allowing them to emotionally engage with events outside of their personal experiences.

The concept of postmemory was coined by Marianne Hirsch’s in her work *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012). This concept refers to a form of memory that is experienced by individuals who did not directly experience a traumatic event themselves, but who have a profound emotional connection to that event through the narratives transmitted to them through the silences and traces of the past, the legacies of those who did experience it. Postmemory explores the interplay between personal and collective memory, as well as the ways in which the past shapes individual and cultural identities. In the words of Hirsch: “Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (2008: 103). Hirsch sees postmemory as “a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience” (2008: 106).

Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider introduced the notion of cosmopolitan memory in 2005, in their work *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. This form of memory goes beyond national or ethnocentric boundaries and encompasses a shared memory of historical events that hold global significance. Cosmopolitan memory highlights the idea that certain events, such as the Holocaust, have profound implications for humanity as a

whole and should be remembered by people from different cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds, not only the groups that suffered the traumatic events. Therefore, this form of memory tackles universal human concern, transcending individual and national identities. It encourages dialogue and engagement across borders transnationally and emphasizes the development of a global ethical framework that inspires individuals to confront past atrocities, fostering a commitment to prevent similar events in the future.

Finally, the concept multidirectional memory, coined by Michael Rothberg and developed in his work *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), explores the complex and dynamic ways in which memories of different historical events intersect, interact, and influence each other. Rothberg studies memory as a fluid and evolving process that is exposed to and can be shaped by multiple narratives and experiences. The fluidity accorded to this form of memory and the intersectional and intercultural characteristics emphasized by Rothberg's analysis, allow for a more detailed discussion in connection to the complex history of Haiti. It is worth, therefore, to explore multidirectional memory in more detail, which we shall do next.

2.2 Rothberg's Multidirectional Memory

Michael Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory offers a framework for understanding the interplay between different histories of victimization. Rothberg challenges conventional notions of memory and identity, recognizing that, in the contemporary world, memory is a phenomenon that is shaped by ongoing negotiation and interaction. By acknowledging the intercultural dynamics always at play, multidirectional memory opens new possibilities for solidarity and justice, allowing for the continual reconstruction of collective remembrance in a way that is both inclusive and creatively powerful.

The relationship between different social groups' histories of victimization is a complex and nuanced issue that fundamentally concerns collective memory. But interestingly, multidirectional memory also aims to reexamine the ways in which different groups establish a connection between their past experiences of victimization and their present circumstances. In major crucial historical events, intergenerational memory has served as a reminder of what cannot ever happen again, through the testimonies of members of the family, with whom a deeply strong bond is shared. Hence the importance of grandparents and their stories.

What happens, however, when different histories of victimization confront each other in the public sphere? Drawing on Rothberg and multidirectional memory, a dynamic interplay of memory and identity unfolds, challenging conventional notions of remembrance and its impact on collective consciousness. At this point, it is important to remark that the notion of memory is not a static entity but rather “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing” (Rothberg, 2009: 3). Memory is not solely a matter of winners and losers, nor does it create a direct line between the remembrance of the past and the formation of identity in the present. Instead, memory exists as a contemporary phenomenon, constantly shaped and reworked through the efforts of individuals and groups (Rothberg, 2009: 5). Memory is work—a conscious effort to remember, interpret, and make sense of the past. It is within this framework where the concept of multidirectional memory, as proposed by Michael Rothberg, comes into play.

Multidirectional memory refers to the interaction of different historical memories, recognizing that memory is not confined to a single trajectory but is influenced by an intercultural dynamic, meaning that histories and memories from different sites and moments give meaning to and help define each other. Multidirectional memory acknowledges the possibility of memories crossing boundaries and overlapping, creating

new connections and narratives. Thus, no history of victimization should be separated “from other histories of collective violence” (Rothberg, 2009:9). If histories are not only specified — in the sense of attaching them to a place, context, consequences, between other characteristics specific to any historical event — but they are made unique, not only differentiated but separated from the others, a “hierarchy of suffering (which is morally offensive) and removes that suffering from the field of historical agency (which is both morally and intellectually suspect)” (ibid.) is potentially created. This hierarchy could be “intellectually and politically dangerous” (ibid.).

The dangers of memory come together with the silencing and othering of experiences, meaning, it is important to bear in mind whose memory it is we are reading. To dig deeper into this matter, Rothberg uses Freud’s idea of screen memory to compare how multidirectional memory and screen memory “provide access to truths, nonetheless, truths that produce insight about individual and collective processes of meaning-making” (Ibid.).¹⁹ He finds screen memory problematic, the same way he finds competitive memory problematic early on his introduction.²⁰ While the concept of screen memory seems particularly useful when focusing on biographical memory, as a specific and individual experience, it lacks, however, a necessary sense of collectiveness. Multidirectional memory, on the other hand, fills in the gaps in a disruptive manner: it contemplates the collective sphere of memory, considering the historical background, while also anchoring the collective to the individual and biographical (Ibid). Moreover, multidirectional memory does not only focus on any sugar-coated everyday life scene,

¹⁹ Screen memory is a concept introduced by Freud to describe a specific type of childhood memory that serves as a protective screen for deeper, more emotionally charged memories or experiences. On the surface it may seem benign but it is believed to conceal more disturbing memories or feelings (Freud, 1899).

²⁰ Rothberg continuously challenges conventional concepts regarding memory theory. Before putting forward the flaws of screen memory, he brings into question how competitive memory works and how it is problematic. Competitive memory works in a straight line connecting events from the past directly to the present and focuses on finding winners and losers in conflicts (Rothberg, 2009).

but it “juxtaposes two or more disturbing memories and disrupts everyday settings” (Ibid.).

Furthermore, multidirectional memory suggests that while the past partially determines who we are in the present, it does so in complex and unexpected ways. In the context of collective remembrance, both the subjects and spaces of the public sphere are continually reconstructed, as Rothberg states: “The model of multidirectional memory posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal and cultural sites,” thus, he again rejects the idea that memories are bound solely to a certain place or group of people (Rothberg, 2009: 11). Further, despite individual subjects being “imbued with frameworks common to the collectives in which they live” (Rothberg, 2009: 15), they remain the “necessary locus of the act of remembrance” (Ibid.).

Shared memory and common memory are, as a matter of course, brought into play in Rothberg’s discussion. Common memory is employed to group together the individual memories of people who lived the same event, while shared memories are more than just that. In order to have shared memories, a process of communication must be conducted: “A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode” (Ibid.). For Rothberg, collective memory is composed of shared memories; memories that have been “mediated through networks of communication, institutions of the state, and the social groupings of civil society” (Ibid.).

Rothberg states that multidirectional memory works with collective memory due to it being mediated and actively reconstructed by individuals and groups, meaning that collective memory is built through a dialogical process in which all parts are committed.

Despite working hand in hand with collective memory, Rothberg finds that multidirectional memory contrasts with the others because it focuses on the “inevitable displacements and contingencies that mark all remembrance” (Rothberg, 2009: 16). While other concepts confine memory to a specific articulation, memory may branch into more than one way. In this sense, multidirectional memory exposes memory to different possibilities.

Rothberg, as a final argument, states that multidirectional memory not only challenges traditional approaches but sheds light on the importance of political representation. He addresses issues surrounding who is entitled to justice, how and what matters should be discussed in the public sphere. He speaks about “framing”, a phenomenon that works as a border within a community, separating those who “can speak about issues of injustice affecting them” (Rothberg, 2009: 20) and those who cannot. This idea on framing is relevant to the contemporary context and lifestyle, in which everyone can appropriate discourses and histories of victimization as a result of the ignorance of feeling legitimized to speak from outside a site of remembrance. Setting these boundaries protects identities while it also helps “inspire our present and future projects to remake political space” (Rothberg, 2009: 21).

2.3 Multidirectional Memory and Haiti: Interconnected Narratives

Multidirectional memory works as a fluid framework that gives broad opportunities for analysis. This form of memory acknowledges that different historical events, such as for instance, within the scope of this paper, the Haitian Revolution and the Algerian War, or the Harlem Renaissance, can influence one another’s memory narratives. These memories intersect and create a new understanding of the past. At the same time, memory can be competitive and conflicted when different groups seek recognition for their own historical

experiences, but, interestingly, multidirectional memory considers these tensions and negotiations. This form of memory, apart from seeing memories as reciprocal influences on one another, highlights the importance of a global perspective when understanding memory, transcending borders and not confining memories to national or ethnic contexts. This global perspective opens cross-cultural dialogues and collaborations in understanding historical events, prompting individuals and groups to engage with memories that may not directly belong to their own history. These interactions of memories can lead to the creation of new narratives that challenge conventional understandings of history and identity; this is why multidirectional memory has been chosen as a central thread of this paper.

1804 marked a turning point for the colonies in the Atlantic: a place which until then had been a colony, started being governed by their natives. Haitian independence was the first successful black revolution, and no western country could accept this event, as it was feared that it could mean the end of European empires.²¹ Since then, the world turned their backs on Haiti, and the country had to pay more than unfair consequences for their freedom, as seen in the previous chapter. The 20th century was the century of decolonization, with significant events worldwide that would mark the end of empires, giving way to the era of globalization.

Despite being independent, former colonies were still subjected to a new form of colonialism, neocolonialism, defined by Kwame Nkrumah as a new form of subjugation that submits an independent country with international sovereignty to the economic system and political policy of another country (1965). The hypothesis here is that decolonized countries and their narratives share similar traits between one another, thus,

²¹ The last regions to gain independence from the former BE were Hong Kong and Macao (1997-1999).

multidirectional memory functions herein as a unifying phenomenon, connecting the histories of decolonization and pan-African experiences to the Haitian experience. As stated by Robert D. Taber (2015):

Algerian independence from France, the USA civil rights movement, and general decolonization coupled with the emergence of social history generated new interest around the Atlantic in the Haitian experience and its significance for understanding decolonization, black liberation, and structural racism. (236)

It is known that “throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Haiti was on the mind and in the imagination of many African American artists” (Thompson, 2007: 75), coinciding with the US occupation of Haiti. The history of Haiti was taken as a symbol of black liberation for the artists of the Harlem Renaissance, who were increasingly preoccupied with the shared pan-African experience. When black Americans saw reflected their system’s structural racist violence in the occupation of Haiti, they could not ignore the fact that their histories were connected, “the same political rationalizations that fueled a long history of racism in the United States governed the official logic for the occupation of Haiti—that blacks, being racially inferior, were incapable of governing themselves” (Thompson, 2007:78). Knowledge about Haiti’s past was an enormous opportunity: it meant a possibility, “the revolutionary potential of all African diasporic populations” (Thompson, 2007:79).

The resonance between the history of Haiti and the African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s and 1930s reflects a profound interweaving of narratives and shared struggles. The backdrop of the US occupation of Haiti served as a vivid canvas upon which these artists painted their perceptions of black liberation and the pan-African experience. An era marked by the awareness of interconnected black

histories, where the occupation's structural racism echoed the structural violence faced by black Americans within their home country. These artists did not merely observe the occupation of Haiti, they recognized it as a mirror to their own ongoing battles against discrimination. This poignant parallel not only highlighted the injustice faced by Haitians but also underscored the deep-seated roots of systemic racism shared across the African diaspora.

This connection is relevant to exemplify how memories and experiences from the past can influence future experiences. Haiti's past carried immense transformative potential, and understanding the struggles of Haiti served as a catalyst for envisioning the revolutionary possibilities inherent within all African diasporic populations. Haiti, marked by both resilience and resistance, held the promise of inspiring collective action and empowerment among different communities. Rothberg's multidirectional memory reflects on how different histories of victimization interact, and this connection between Haiti's past and Black liberation in the US showcases how memories and histories can be mutually illuminating, influencing each other in ways that transcend traditional boundaries.

In Rothberg's study it is made clear that no history of victimization is better than the other and there are no winners in any history; memory is not a zero-sum game where one group's memory diminishes the other's. Multidirectional memory recognizes that memories enrich each other's understanding and fostering of solidarity, as seen in the interconnections of the Haitian Revolution and the Harlem Renaissance. This example serves as a testament to the power of shared history in shaping the aspirations and identity of marginalized communities and identities. It is a reminder that by acknowledging the struggles and triumphs of others, we can forge connections that transcend borders and generations, fueling the flames of liberation and social progress.

3. Memory in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*

3.1 Storytelling as a Form of Remembrance in the Caribbean

In the heart of the Caribbean there exists a profound tradition that transcends time and space. It is the art of storytelling, an ancient practice that weaves the threads of history, culture, and memory into a rich tapestry of life. In this diverse and fluid region, storytelling is more than just a means of entertainment. It is a sacred vessel, a preserver of memory, and a vibrant force that connects generations across the sands of time (Rigney 2010, Erll 2010).

The Caribbean is a treasure trove of stories, an archipelago of memories spanning centuries of conquest, resilience, and transformation. Each island bears the marks of its unique history, shaped by creole cultures. Within this complexity, storytelling emerges as a lifeline, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Elders, wise and weathered, pass down tales of their ancestors' trials and triumphs, their voices and narratives carrying the weight of centuries. They recount the struggles of the sugar cane fields, the dances of the jamboree, and the songs of emancipation. Thus, the past becomes present, and the wisdom of the ancestors' is passed down like a torch.

The stories are not mere recollections, they are vibrant and living entities that pulse with the heartbeat of the Caribbean. Storytelling acknowledges the wounds of the past and celebrates resilience. Collective memory appears, thus, as a shimmering mosaic composed of countless fragments and hues, each reflecting the story of a people's journey through time. These cherished stories breathe life into the silent echoes of history, making it not a distant, detached concept, but a living and breathing entity that informs every moment of Caribbean life. The Middle Passage is not just a history lesson; it is a haunting elegy to the indomitable spirit of those who suffered oppression, whose spirits still

encompass their descendants. In the same way, Emancipation is not just a date, but it is a chorus of freedom that resonates through generations. These narratives serve as the mortar binding the bricks of a shared identity, creating a sense of belonging that transcends geography and time.

Storytelling emerges as a powerful and integral part of Haitian and Caribbean cultures. This act of remembrance serves as a vital and core mechanism for preserving, sharing, and interpreting memories. Haiti's complex history, marked by colonization, revolution, dictatorship, and natural disasters, has deeply influenced its collective memory, and storytelling illuminates the intricate relationship between narratives and the nation's past. In an era where the Caribbean faces the tides of modernity and globalization, storytelling remains an unyielding sentinel of collective memory. It whispers the wisdom of ages past, reminding the people of their roots and their unique cultural tapestry.

The history of the Caribbean bears the weight of a profound and unsettling silence. This represents not only gaps in the historical record but also the unspoken traumas and struggles that have shaped the lives of the people who call this region home. Danticat explains:

In order to shield our shattered collective psyche from a long history of setbacks and disillusionment, our constant roller-coaster ride between saviors and dictators, homespun oppression and foreign tyranny, we cultivate communal and historical amnesia, continually repeating cycles that we never see coming until we are reliving similar horrors. (2010: 64)

In Danticat's work, we locate an interest in how women, mother and grandmother figures, "are the purveyors of culture; the ones who pass things on from generation to generation" (2007: 165). These figures emerge from Danticat's literature as symbols of fight against

“communal and historical amnesia”, as the figures who build bridges between generations and countries. As stated by Danticat herself: “I am interested in the role of women unraveling and recounting history and culture both in the private and public realm, and that’s one of the things I try to explore in my work” (2007: 165).

Danticat’s literature serves as a luminous example of how literature can confront the silences in Caribbean history and give voice to untold stories. She meticulously stitches together the threads of history that have been frayed or lost and gives voice to stories etched in the collective memory of Haiti, giving agency to voices whose histories and stories should be heard: “for even if history is most often recounted by victors, it’s not always easy to tell who the rightful narrators should be, unless we keep redefining with each page what it means to conquer and be conquered” (2010: 102).

Danticat also explores Caribbean diasporic identities, particularly in the US. Her literature also serves as a means of confronting the diasporic experience: struggles, aspirations and enduring connections that transcend geographic boundaries, bridging the gap between the homeland and the diaspora, reaffirming the importance of preserving cultural memory and heritage. In essence, Danticat’s storytelling embodies the transformative power of literature to give voice to the silences, to heal historical wounds, and to illuminate the path towards a just understanding of the Caribbean’s multifaceted identity. Through her work, she reminds the reader that storytelling is not just an art form, but a form of remembrance.

Danticat represents experiences lived by the Haitian community throughout the twentieth century while paying special attention to cultural matters, such as the link between the present and the ancestors or the connection between traumatic events and how the Haitian community responded and raised up to those events. The title *Krik? Krak!* derives from

the traditional call-and-response style of storytelling in Haiti, where the storyteller initiates with "Krik?" and the audience responds with "Klak!" to signify their engagement. The book received critical acclaim for its vivid prose, emotional depth, and its ability to illuminate the human condition within the context of Haiti's history and socio-political challenges.²² Through her writing, Danticat explores the complexities of Haitian culture, the legacy of colonization, and the enduring spirit of the Haitian people. Her works often navigate the realms of memory, history, and personal narratives to create a profound and empathetic understanding of the Haitian experience and the broader themes of displacement and identity.

3.2 Literature as a Vehicle for Memory in Haiti

When pondering upon the connection between memory and literature, Astrid Erll states: "Fictional media, such as novels and feature films, are characterized by their power to shape the collective imagination of the past in a way that is truly fascinating for the literary scholar" (2010). Indeed, the potential of literature is fascinating. Literature functions as a social framework for memory and literary texts serve as a powerful vehicle for capturing, preserving, and exploring memories. Moreover, they are capable of evoking and conveying experiences while creating lasting impressions. Literature creates a site for experiences, fictional or real, to be celebrated, mourned or just expressed. More importantly, literature transfers memories through an everlasting medium that will transmit a message across generations and borders. For this reason, literature, a form of

²² "Stepped in the myths and lore that sustained generations of Haitians, *Krik? Krak!* demonstrates the healing power of storytelling" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). "Steady-handed yet devastating... In Haiti, where politics are lethal and women are condemned to suffering and death by men who envy and fear their powers, hope does indeed seem ludicrous, but in Danticat's fiction, mind and spirit soar above the pain and horrors of life" (*Washington Post Book World*). "Movingly brings to life the history, hopes, and human experience of Haitians... Danticat's fiction is an antidote to headline abstractions, giving readers the gift of narrative through which to experience a people and a country as more than mere news" (*Kirkus Reviews*).

cultural memory, is one of the most powerful and disrupting mediums and objects of remembrance.

Literature conveys different forms of memory. It can make use of communicative memory, as a first-person narrative telling a personal account of an event, or, for instance, a stream-of-consciousness narrative, such as Virginia Woolf's, which is an expression of individual memory (Erll, 2010: 391). In any case, "stories stick. They help make particular events *memorable* by figuring the past in a structured way that engages the sympathies of the reader" (Rigney, 2010: 347). Literature navigates the interplay between individual memories and collective cultural memory. Writers have the power to draw on personal memories to create narratives that resonate with broader societal memory frameworks.

Ann Rigney and Astrid Erll refer to literature and historiography as forms of cultural memory, as it participates in the construction and transmission of memory, "historiography is, among other things, a literary practice in that it uses verbal art and discursive procedures to make sense of the past" (Rigney, 2010: 363). Literature not only shapes memory, but it also transforms memory in the process and during the years: the readers' personal memories tend to align with the memories of others as these memories circulate in the public sphere. This convergence implies that individuals who experienced certain events hold recollections influenced by how others remember the same events, which are shared via different mediums, from literature to museum expositions (Rigney, : 366).

There is a relation between the number of historical writers and works during the 20th century with the traumatic events with which society is still coming to terms with, "linked to a sense of loss permeating postmodern culture" (Rigney, 2010: 363). There is an

undeniable use of literature as a means for communicating events, which pass on from generation to generation as a source of memory. Literature also offers a means of processing difficult experiences for both authors and readers. Rigney provides a magnificent example (2004):

We all have some image of what it was like to be in the trenches of World War I, but since presumably none of us was actually there ourselves, our ideas about the trenches must be a product of various public discourses ranging from family stories to historiographical works and school textbooks to literary. (2004 : 367)

There is, indeed, a fine line between cultural memory, postmemory and other forms of memory, but this is what literature is about: coping with all the mechanisms memory works with and having them all together in the same work of art. Literature's intricate engagement with memory creates a rich tapestry of interconnected stories. Through narrative artistry, literature works a site in which memories can unravel a greater and different understanding of the past.

In conclusion, literature stands as both guardian and conduit of memory, its pages a repository for the echoes of time. The role of literature extends beyond mere narration. In the embrace of literature, memories find a sanctuary that kindles the flame of experience, illuminating memories in time that deserve to be celebrated, mourned, or simply shared. These stories, born of reality or woven from imagination, traverse generations and borders, like eternal emissaries of remembrance. They breathe life into the past, evoking the reader's empathy and understanding. In this interplay between individual recollection and cultural memory, literature wields the power to bridge the gap.

3.3 Memory in *Krik? Krak!*: Port-au-Prince and Ville Rose

The first story in the book, “Children of the Sea”, explores the complexities of memory in, both, dehumanizing and intimate spaces. The story presents a multi-layered narrative that revolves around two central characters: two lovers, a young man and a young woman. In these spaces, writing correspondence to each other appears as the only way to express the traumatic experiences they are living, fully aware that their letters may never be read. The young man is a member of the youth rebels in Haiti, part of a revolutionary radio program that openly criticizes the government. The young man needs to flee the country to save his life, to avoid being caught by the Duvalier’s regime, and thus writes from a boat in his journey to the US. In contrast, the young woman writes her letters from Haiti, describing the horrors of atrocities being committed in the country from the perspective of an insider.

Violence escalates rapidly in both settings. The young woman describes how the youth rebels are being murdered in public and how violence against women unfolds: rape, beatings and being forced to have sexual intercourse between family members. To avoid these horrors to happen to his daughter, the young woman’s father pays all their money to the Macoutes. After that they are free to leave Port-au-Prince for Ville Rose, where she finds a safe space under the banyan tree. Contrary to this, on the fragile boat the young man loses his intimacy, as he describes. The boat becomes a dehumanizing space which strips the people on board of their individuality, reducing them to a collective struggling for survival. The sea becomes a space of anonymity and imminent danger, where memories are submerged, and intimacy is replaced by the harsh reality of mortality, which the people on board cannot avoid.

Throughout the story, Danticat presents us with contrasting spaces that carry profound implications for memory and intimacy. The sea becomes a recurring motif in the story. It

is a reminder that, despite their differences and their struggle, they are all children of the sea; they all share the same roots, and their ancestors went through a similar journey, The Middle Passage. The people on board will eventually lie together in the sea, transcending their individual identities. The sea, in this sense, becomes a moving symbol of shared roots and collective memory. On the other hand, the banyan tree where the young woman and her mother share their fears and thoughts becomes a safe space amid violence. This tree turns into a sanctuary where intimacy is permitted, almost a grounding force in a world filled with turmoil. This space allows the women to preserve their memories and maintain their sense of identity.

Finally, there is a powerful and heart-breaking symbol represented by Célianne, a fifteen-year-old pregnant girl who was raped by the Macoutes and is forced to flee the country, gives birth on board. The baby's arrival could well signal the possibility of a new beginning, a fresh start unburdened by the traumas of the past. But, instead, it carries the weight of the past, born into a world where memories of violence and suffering persist. Célianne, a girl who stays silent from the beginning of the story, is unable to break with her memories. Célianne's baby girl dies on board, deceased like her mother since the day she was raped, who jumps into the sea with her. This act reminds the reader of the slaves that committed suicide during the Middle Passage, the only means of returning home to Africa.²³

“Children of the Sea” masterfully explores the complexities of memory within contexts of dehumanization and intimacy. Through the characters’ first-person experiences and a

²³ The transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history, was a highly organized and brutal system of commerce that involved the capture, transportation, and sale of African people into slavery in the Americas, the African diaspora into the Western hemisphere (Gilroy, 1993). The Middle Passage, the journey from the homeland to the colonies, could last weeks and months. The conditions on the overcrowded ships were abhorrent, and many did not survive the voyage. For more information regarding the slave trade and the Middle Passage, see Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, or Eric Williams' *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*.

narrative full of symbolism, Danticat paints a vivid picture of the enduring power of memory and its impact on identity and community, even in the most challenging and harrowing of circumstances. In his last words, the young man reflects on how his body will lie forever in the sea as a testimony of freedom:

I go to them now as though it was always meant to be, as though the very day that my mother birthed me, she had chosen me to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live. (24)²⁴

The next story set in Ville Rose is “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. Danticat explores the intricate interplay between individual and collective memories while also demonstrating how memory can be both a source of pain and means of resistance and resilience. The primary characters are a mother, Manman, and her daughter, Josephine, but the narrative moves with the trail of thought of Josephine as she reflects on her mother’s story and the questions it poses about her own story and identity. The story shows three main forms of remembrance that will be analyzed in the following paragraphs: collective memory, cultural memory and communicative memory.

The narrative unfolds within the confines of a prison built during the US occupation in Port-au-Prince, where Manman finds herself incarcerated, accused by her community of practicing witchcraft and having stolen the soul of an infant. The women accused of practicing witchcraft were incarcerated for being a *Lougawou*, women who were able to fly. The story is contextualized during the Duvalier regime, when a small suspicion was enough have someone’s head cut off. Folk tales and superstitions could be used to

²⁴ When only page number is provided, the quote refers to *Krik? Krak!* (Danticat, 1995)

“eliminate undesired subjects and potentially resistant, spiritual collectives that represent a counterforce to Duvalier’s corrupt protégés” (Celucien & Nixon, 2016: 155).

The unfair accusation is followed by power and violence abuse. Josephine witnesses her mother’s beating, their neighbors throwing rocks at her, and how she is turned into a “snake, someone with no bones left in her body” (34). Through the depiction of Manman’s ordeal within the prison system, the story unveils the inherent brutality and dehumanizing conditions prevalent in Haitian penitentiaries, effectively illustrating how Manman’s existence is marked by a psychological demise that precedes her physical deterioration. With every visit Josephine pays her, Manman’s condition seems to turn worse, until she is murdered by the guards.

The symbol of the Madonna, a small porcelain figure of Ezili is a symbol of passing on memory from generation to generation.²⁵ This figure is relevant from the beginning of the story, when Josephine sees the Madonna has shed a tear. She takes the Madonna with her every time she goes to prison to visit her mother, and it seems to give her mother joy, sometimes even more than seeing Josephine. The Madonna is the representation of the strong bond shared by mother and daughter through generations. Interestingly, the first woman that paid tribute to this figure, the ancestor of Manman and Josephine, was Défilée, Dessalines’ mistress, who was considered to be mad. The Madonna, thus, ties together women who have experienced adversity, a mark of collective memory and a form to transmit memory across generations.

Moreover, the story further delves into the historical backdrop of the 1937 Massacre, emphasizing the communal aspect of memory. During this violent and traumatic event in

²⁵ Ezili Freda is the Vodou counterpart of the Catholic Mater Dolorosa, while Ezili Dantò is the counterpart of Mater Salvatoris. Dantò is “often represented as a peasant woman and a devoted single mother who shares a special link with her daughter and who loves fried chicken” (Celucien & Nixon, 2016:155).

Haitian history, Manman managed to survive by employing the ability to fly away, an act shared by her fellow sisters within the community. This community or sisterhood is composed of the daughters of mothers who were murdered in the River Massacre genocide. Every year, the Massacre River is celebrated by this community of women with a shared history as a site of mourning and commemoration, which has become a site of cultural memory. The women return to the river to symbolically celebrate life and commemorate those interred in the river's depths:

We came from the bottom of that river where the blood never stops flowing, where my mother's dive toward life—her swim among all those bodies slaughtered in flight—gave her those wings of flames. The river was the place where it had all begun. (35)

The magical element is herein used: flying with wings of flames. The question of whether Manman could really fly disturbs Josephine throughout the story, until her doubt is solved at the end, while she prepares to see her mother's burning and last flight. Manman did fly on the day of the massacre: she fled across the river, leaving behind her own mother. The wings of flames are the symbol of the flight towards survival, the wings of blood. And the Massacre River will forever be the tomb where mothers, fathers, and ancestors rest.

In this story, memory is used as a dynamic force that shapes the character's identities and connects generations. The community of women function as kindlers of collective memory, their annual ceremony celebrates a site of cultural memory and the act of transmitting their histories from generation to generation is a form of communicative memory. This story, thus, provides a means of resistance against oppressive forces such as patriarchy and Duvalierism, and it serves as a reminder of the enduring power of memory in preserving the past, anchoring the present to this past and creating communities that celebrate and commemorate sites of mourning.

In “A Wall of Fire Rising”, memory plays a subtle but significant role in shaping the characters’ aspirations, choices, and quest for freedom. The narrative revolves around a destitute family living in a shanty town in Ville Rose. The family consists of three members: Lili, Guy and their son, known as Little Guy. The most symbolic element in the story is an air balloon that captivates Guy’s imagination, as he becomes obsessed with the idea of making it fly, seeing this as an opportunity to escape from their context, thus breaking the cycle of generational poverty: “I’d like to sail off somewhere and keep floating until I got to a really nice place with a nice plot of land where I could be something new” (61).

The narrative begins when Little Guy is given a prominent role in a school play. He carries the weight of memory when he is chosen to incarnate a slave hero, Boukman. This figure and his lines connect him to a historical moment to which the family can relate, as they depend on the worse jobs in the village. They live in utter poverty and the only job available for his father, Guy, is to clean the latrines of the sugar mill, owned by Assad, a wealthy Arab man. When Little Guy reads his lines out loud, these evoke the memory of their family’s collective struggle and the hope for a brighter future that Guy deems impossible.

The pivotal moment of the story arrives after one night Lili and Guy speak, laying on the grass next to the sugar mill, Guy expresses the impossibility of a great future for them, and ponders about how their poverty is inherited, remembering his father as a “man I would never want to be” (163). The lines read by Little Guy echo from this moment until the end of the story, when Lili and the kid spot Guy in the air, making the air balloon fly. Guy jumps out of the balloon, falling to the ground. As he witnesses his father’s death, Little Guy recites Boukman’s lines: “I call on everyone and anyone so that we shall all let out one piercing cry that we may either live freely or we should die” (66). Guy was

aware of their impossibility to live freely. Centuries after the Haitian independence and Boukman's death, the character's voice evokes feelings of revolution within the collective memory of the community. For Guy, jumping out of the air balloon is an attempt to break free from the past of his family and a life marked by hardship and limited opportunities.

In "Children of the Sea", "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" and "A Wall of Fire Rising", which are set in Port-au-Prince and the fictional village of Ville Rose, the characters find themselves navigating a world deeply entrenched in violence and turmoil. Collectively, these narratives illuminate memory as a dynamic and omnipresent force deeply interwoven into the lives of the characters. Whether memory is used as a mechanism for bearing witness, a foundational source of cultural identity, or a form of resistance, Danticat's stories deftly underscore a profound impact on individuals and communities. Amidst the backdrop of adversity and violence in Haiti, memory serves as a potent tool for preserving the past, anchoring the present, and forging connections between generations.

7.4 Memory in *Krik? Krak!*: Diasporic Identities

In her diasporic stories, Danticat writes about mothers who had to migrate to the US from Haiti and how this migration affected the next generation. Furthermore, she even explores the difficulties in a mother-daughter relationship. Cultural barriers come in between them, as one frequently strives to preserve Haitian/Caribbean culture and the other one feels more at ease with North American culture. In "New York Day Women", the first story in the collection that explores diasporic identities, Suzette follows her mother as she walks down the streets of New York. Suzette is fully adapted to the city: she works in a company, despises the traditional clothes her mother buys her and does not seem to understand her mother's convictions. On the other hand, her mother does not belong there, her heart is a long way from home, yet she cannot go back.

As Suzette follows her, she realizes how adapted to the community her mother really is. Even if her heart belongs elsewhere, her mother can work and consume in the US society, very much to her daughter's surprise. In this story, there are three main dilemmas: the rejection of the country of residence's culture, the shame because of her mother's convictions, and the feeling of not being able to go back home. This rejection of culture can be seen almost every time the mother's voice intervenes in the story, in bold letters, as a contrast to everything Suzette says and believes in, which follows US ideals. For instance, when her mother is looking at an African print dress for her daughter, Suzette thinks to herself: "Please Ma, don't buy it. It would be just another thing that I would bury in the garage or give to Goodwill" (131) to this she imagines her mother saying: "Why should we give to Goodwill when there are so many people back home who need clothes?" (131).

This debate between the way of thinking of daughter and mother depicts a comparison of realities, and reality is formed by a person's experiences; if Suzette has never lacked clothes, she will not be able to thoroughly understand her mother. Rather than feeling ashamed for her mother, it is the mother who feels like she would embarrass her daughter, as seen at the end of the story, when Suzette confesses that her mother never went to a Parent-Teacher meeting, and her mother's answer is: "I don't want to make you ashamed of this day woman. Shame is heavier than a hundred bags of salt" (135). This suggests how being uprooted from her own culture, language and beliefs renders the mother completely vulnerable in the face of her daughter's culture, language and beliefs.

Lastly, in a very moving way, her mother expresses the impossibility for her to go back home: "Many graves to kiss when I go back. Many graves to kiss". Instead of understanding her, her daughter reads this as a lack of strength on her mother's behalf. Again, she fails to understand her mother because she has not experienced her mother's

migratory experience. This conflict recalls Friedman's question: "What happens to the human spirit between worlds, to desire and longing, as they cross and recross geographical and cultural borders, to the domains of intimacy and family in migration, dislocation, and relocation?"(2004: 190). The answer lies in the emotional burden carried by migrants, the feeling of vulnerability caused by uprootedness. Diaspora is an intricate experience not every individual is willing to exteriorize, as they grapple with their dual identities and the longing for a place they can no longer call home.

Diasporic identities need, in order to stay alive, to adapt the best way they can to a place they cannot always call home. In conclusion, in "New York Day Women," Danticat explores the clash between Suzette and her mother, highlighting the struggles faced by the second generation in understanding and appreciating their parents' cultural traditions. Suzette's rejection of her Haitian heritage and her mother's attempts to maintain their roots reflect the challenges of diaspora and the complex negotiation of identity which occur therein.

The mother's memories of Haiti, her attachment to its culture, and her desire to preserve it are a part of the collective memory of the Haitian diaspora. Collective memory is rooted in the shared experiences and traditions that have been passed down through generations. However, it also becomes a source of tension as the second generation, represented by Suzette, is not able to feel the same connection to these memories. Communicative memory is a challenge in diasporic contexts. Transmission of memories and experiences through personal communication, such as storytelling, may not be enough to bridge the cultural gap between the first and second generation of migrants. Suzette's rejection of her mother's traditions and her inability to fully understand her mother's convictions illustrate the difficulties in communicating memory across generations.

In “Caroline’s Wedding”, the longest story of the collection, Grace, the narrator, mediates between her mother and sister, Caroline, through the difficulties in their relationship due to the cultural barrier that separates their paths of life and choices. The story opens with Grace having officially become a US citizen and about to go get her passport. As her mother says: “A passport is truly what’s American” (140). On the other hand, Caroline was born in America, something her mother remarks many times throughout the story: “You think you are so American” (141). In Grace’s eyes, too, nationality is something Caroline takes for granted. The main problem of the story is that Caroline is getting married and she is leaving the nest. But what really bothers her mother is that she is getting married in an American, non-Christian method, and that raises the contradictions between mother and daughter.

Inevitably, her mother compares her experiences as a Haitian woman to her daughter’s as an American woman, and she finds it difficult to understand Caroline’s position, but so does Grace at times. For instance, when there is a Mass Sunday for a dead refugee woman, a cultural act to pay respects to someone from their community, Grace attends with her mother but not Caroline, — she voluntarily dissociates herself from the Haitian community —. And when Caroline says: “It’s not like she knows these people” (149), referring to the refugees who died on a boat, Grace answers: “Ma says all Haitians know each other”, which brings forth the idea of community in diaspora.

Their Ma used to excuse them whenever they rejected Haitian culture by saying “They are American” (186), and that covered the fact that they did not enjoy their food for Haitian Independence Day, because they celebrated the 4th of July instead. In Danticat’s words, “When parents come from another country and are living in a place where their role is so different, then they have extra barriers to this friendship because you have not only generational problems but these cultural things. Then conflicts arise” (1996: 384).

There is an omnipresent character in this story, the ghost of their father, who died of untreated prostate cancer when they were teenagers. The presence of Papa appears in the young woman's dreams and keeps them rooted to their Haitian heritage, through remembering his games and riddles and important words he spoke. In the words of Papa, Caroline is the "child of the promised land, our New York child, the child who has never known Haiti" (165), while Grace is the "misery baby, the offspring of my parents' lean years". This difference is what makes Grace the mediator between Caroline and their mother, "A lot of parents want to live the way they did back home, but the children are living in a different time. (Grace) is a bridge between Caroline, who is completely American, and the mother, who is completely Haitian" (Danticat, 1996: 384).

Their mother trusts Grace with her deepest secret, the truth about how their Papa migrated: he married a widowed woman who was moving to New York so he could get the visa, then years later they could migrate to the US with him. She saved all the letters and things they sent to each other when he moved to the US, memories she "could neither throw away nor keep in plain sight" (171). These memories carry what she used to be back in Haiti, and now remain somehow her roots. In the words of Glissant:

When identity is determined by a root, the emigrant is condemned (especially in the second generation) to being split and flattened. Usually an outcast in the place he has newly set anchor, he is forced into impossible attempts to reconcile his former and his present belonging. (1997: 143)

Ma often references her Haitian heritage and upbringing, and this stresses the importance of collective memory and community in shaping her worldview in her diasporic context. This collective memory includes her traditions, values and even expectations, such as the expectations she places on Caroline. The conflict between Caroline and Ma reflects the

challenges of communicative memory: there is a disconnection between Ma's expectations, rooted in Haitian tradition, and her daughter's American upbringing. Thus, the central conflict in the story arises from the cultural barriers that separate mother and daughters. The cultural gap between them results in a set of tensions that the shared cultural identity cannot cover.

While Grace and Ma are listening to the Haitian station on the radio, Ma says: "The past, it fades a person" (185) as the song on the radio plays: "*Beloved Haiti, there is no place like you. I had to leave you before I could understand you*". These words are a beautiful ending to this analysis, which has shown how Danticat delves into the complexities of the mother-daughter relationship between Grace, Caroline, and their Haitian mother. The story highlights the tensions arising from different cultural expectations, as Caroline fully embraces her American identity while their mother clings to their Haitian roots. Grace, positioned as a bridge between the two, grapples with her own understanding of her heritage and the influence of her father's memory.

In diasporic contexts, communicative memory, the transmission of memory and experiences between generations, is a challenge. The struggle to bridge the cultural gap between the first generation and the second generation intensifies the cultural disconnect between them, thus, the generational conflicts which would be deemed normal or common in any context, is intensified by the cultural conflict that arises within diasporic families and contexts. In the case of Caroline and Grace, the connection with Haiti is further intensified through their father's presence in their dreams and memories. Interestingly, Grace becomes the pure definition of in-betweenness, as a state of being neither fully rooted in the country of origin nor completely assimilated in the host culture. Thus, Grace is able to connect with her mother's collective memory, and that moves her towards a feeling of understanding for the events happening in Haiti.

Diaspora and memory are intimately intertwined concepts. Communities in diaspora work to preserve their cultural memory: knowledge, tradition and history of their homes. This link to their cultural heritage can be passed down across generations, providing continuity despite physical distance from their home country. In Danticat's storytelling, the poignant clash of identities, generations, and cultures is, therefore, exposed. In this intricate dance of memory and identity, Danticat writes about the tension between collective memory and individual experiences, between cultural preservation and assimilation, as a testament to the resilience of diasporic communities. As they navigate the fine line of preserving their roots and adapting to a new culture, diasporic communities carry the essence of their homeland within their hearts, in a timeless pursuit of identity and belonging.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Caribbean cultures, as explored by the works of scholars such as Antonio Benítez Rojo and Édouard Glissant, are characterized by fluidity, sinuosity, and a connection to the sea. These cultures are not confined by fixed boundaries, but are shaped by shared histories, diverse identities, and the diaspora experience. Diasporic identities are constantly evolving and are influenced by the dynamic interplay between different cultures and the need to adapt to new environments. The stories in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* provide a deep exploration of Haiti and Caribbean diasporic identities, exposing the complexities that arise from living in-between cultures. The collection serves as a compelling introduction to Edwidge Danticat's storytelling prowess and showcases her ability to weave together powerful narratives that resonate with readers and provide insights into the lives of Haitian individuals and communities.

In the heart of the Caribbean exists a profound tradition that transcends time and space. It is the art of storytelling, an ancient practice that braids the threads of history, culture and memory into a rich tapestry. Within the fluidity and sinuosity of the Caribbean, storytelling emerges as more than just a means of entertainment. It is a venerated vessel, a preserver of memory, and a force that connects generations across the sands of time. During the writing of this paper, as we journeyed through the pages of history, some important influences that have shaped the Caribbean have been acknowledged. From Glissant's poetic musings on the sea to Benítez-Rojo's notion of the Caribbean as an aquatic culture, the rooted connections between the region and its identities have been uncovered. The legacy of slavery and the pursuit of individual emancipation has found resonance in the concept of Creoleness, the process towards self-affirmation that advocates a liberated form of self-expression. This process underscores the embrace of diverse cultural and multidimensional influences as foundational elements in shaping Caribbean cultures and identities.

As we delved into the tumultuous history of Haiti, we recognized the tapestry of voices, experiences, and perspectives that define Haitian heritage. Haiti's history is not a monolithic narrative, but a chorus of stories that deserve to be understood in their full complexity. Within the confines of the Caribbean, storytelling is a lifeline, a testament to the resilience of the region and their spirits. It is a powerful and integral part of Haitian and Caribbean cultures. It is an act of remembrance that serves as a core mechanism for sharing and transforming memories and the past. Haiti's complex history, marked by colonization, revolution, dictatorship, and natural disasters, has shaped the region's collective memory. In this context, literature and storytelling illuminate the intricate relationship between narratives and past. In Danticat's work, the silences in Caribbean history are confronted. She stitches together threads of history that have been lost and

gives voice to stories etched in the collective memory of Haitian people. This is seen in the analyses of the first three stories here analyzed: “Children of the Sea”, “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, and “A Wall of Fire Rising”.

In these three stories, set in Port-au-Prince and Ville Rose, the characters find themselves navigating a world entrenched in violence and turmoil. The three stories use memory as a dynamic force that affects the lives of the characters. Memory appears as a mechanism for bearing witness, a foundational source of cultural identity, or a form of resistance, either way, amidst the backdrop of adversity and violence in Haiti, memory serves as a potent tool for preserving the past and anchoring the present, giving way to a possible brighter future.

In the diasporic stories, Danticat, in turn, further explores the mechanisms of communicative memory as it fails and succeeds to build and reinforce relationships between different generations of migrants. Moreover, memory serves as a tool for preserving cultural memory in the face of displacement. In “New York Day Women”, the narrative revolves around how Suzette rejects her Haitian identity from her fading memories of the country. Her mother clings to her roots and memories, which define her choices and her sense of selfhood. Thus, the past and the present collide in the quest for a new cultural identity. In “Caroline’s Wedding”, Grace becomes the link between Caroline and their mother, working as a mediator in between cultures. Memories of Haiti are mediated and revised by Caroline, who understands her sister’s culture and her mother’s resistance to assimilation. Danticat effectively portrays the challenges faced by individuals and communities navigating the intersections of their Caribbean roots and their experiences in the United States.

Danticat's work explores how Haitian collective memory is also present in diasporic contexts. Memories of the past, such as the Middle Passage and the 1937 Massacre continue to influence the lives of the characters in the diaspora. Indeed, memory flows in multiple directions, impacting also the diasporic community. The preservation of cultural memory and communicative memory also appear as a powerful force. The characters inherit memories from their ancestors, and this intergenerational transmission of memory is a key component of multidirectional memory, as it shows how past experiences continue to shape the present and future. At last, the stories exemplify how memories are not only confined to one geographical location, but are influenced by their diasporic existence and the global flow of ideas, traditions, and experiences. This is amplified by the fact that the stories revolve around conflicts that arise between generations, as they grapple with different cultural expectations and experiences. These conflicts further reflect the complex interplay of memory and identity in a multidirectional framework.

While communicative memory, collective memory and cultural memory seemed to have an explicit connection with the text, it is noteworthy that the other forms of memory catalogued in "A Brief Genealogy of Memory Studies" did not exhibit a comparable degree of pertinence. The collection provides a rich demonstration of multidirectional memory in action, showcasing how memories flow between cultures, histories, and social contexts, shaping identities and experiences of individuals and communities. The other forms of remembrance which have not been used in the discussion— postmemory, prosthetic memory and cosmopolitan memory— will be used in further research in relation, also, to Danticat's last short story collection *Everything Inside* (2019).

In "Children of the Sea", the young man, together with the people on the boat, sing: "*Beloved Haiti, there is no place like you. I had to leave you before I could understand you*" (8). In "Caroline's Wedding", the same song plays on the radio, "an old classic"

(185), Grace says. There is a beautiful connection tying together the stories in the collection, that is, shared memories and history, and the love for a country unable to give back. In this way, multidirectional memory connects individuals across borders, cultures and contexts. The collection serves as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of these identities, as well as the importance of preserving cultural heritage while embracing the evolving nature of diasporic life. Through her writing, which incorporates experiences both from people who have never left the island as well as those of people of Haitian people born abroad, Danticat invites readers to reflect on the complexities of identity, the significance of community, and the ongoing process of Caribbean self-discovery.

WORKS CITED

- Assmann, J. & Assman, A. (2010). "Communicative and Cultural Memory" In Erll A. & Nünning A. (Hg.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262>
- Athena, G. (2010). "Why Representations of Haiti Matter Now More Than Ever". Article for NACLA: <https://nacla.org/article/why-representations-haiti-matter-now-more-ever>
- Ayuso, M. G. (2011). "How Lucky for You That Your Tongue Can Taste the 'r' in 'Parsley': Trauma Theory and the Literature of Hispaniola." *Afro-Hispanic Review*, 30(1), 47–62. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41350920>
- Benítez-Rojo, A. (1996). "Introduction". In A. B. Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (pp. 1-29). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bernabé, J., Chamoiseau, P., Confiant, R., & Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar. (1990). "In Praise of Creoleness". *Callaloo*, 13(4), 886–909. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2931390>
- Celucien J., Nixon, C. (2016). *Vodou in Haitian Memory: The Idea and Representation of Vodou in Haitian Imagination*. Lexington Books: Lanham
- Danticat, E. (1995). *Krik? Krak!* Soho Press: New York.
- Danticat, E. (1996, Spring). "The Dangerous Job of Edwidge Danticat: An Interview". *Callaloo*, 19 (2), 382-389. (R. H. Shea, Interviewer)
- Danticat, E. (2003, October 1). "Edwidge Danticat Interview". (D. Barsamian, Interviewer). *The Progressive Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://progressive.org/magazine/edwidge-danticat-interview/>.
- Danticat E. (2010). *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*. Princeton University Press.
- Danticat, E. (2019). "Edwidge Danticat: 'Whether Or Not We Belong Is Not Defined By Us'" (S. Inskip Interviewer). *NPR*. Retrieved from: <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/30/754393771/edwidge-danticat-whether-or-not-we-belong-is-not-defined-by-us>.
- Danticat, E. (2019): *Everything Inside: Stories*. Random House Large Print: New York.
- Dubois, L. (2004). *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Harvard University Press.
- Friedman, S. S. (2004). "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 23(2), 189-212. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20455187>
- Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso: London.

- Glissant, É. (1989). *Caribbean Discourse*. University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville and London.
- Glissant, É. (1997). *Poetics of Relation*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- Hall, S. (1990). "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In J. Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Hirsch, M. (2008). "The Generation of Postmemory". *Poetics Today*. 1 March 2008; 29 (1): 103–128: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>
- Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hirs15652>
- James, E. (2010) *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti* University of California Press.
- Johnson, K. L. (2003). "Both Sides of the Massacre: Collective Memory and Narrative on Hispaniola". *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 36(2), 75–91. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44029461>
- Landsberg, A. (2003). "Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture". In P. Grainge (Ed.), *Memory and popular film* (pp. 144–161). Manchester University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jfm0.12>
- Landsberg, A. (2004). *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. Columbia University Press: New York.
- Lloyd, E. (2018, Oct 4). "Caribbean Artists Movement (1966-1972)". Retrieved from The British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/windrush/articles/caribbean-artists-movement-1966-1972>.
- Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd.: London.
- Pierre-Dahomey, N. Bell, D.F (Trans.) (2023). "Haiti Can't Breathe". *SubStance* 52(1), 165-168. doi:10.1353/sub.2023.a900549.
- Rigney, A. (2004). "Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans". *Poetics Today*, 25(2), 361–396. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-25-2-361>
- Rigney, A. (2010). "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing". In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Ed.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (pp. 345-356). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.5.345>

- Roldan-Sevillano L. (2021). Roxane Gay's *An Untamed State*: A Caribbean Rhizomatic Novel Reflecting the New Transmodern Paradigm. *Complutense Journal of English Studies*, 29, 69-79. <https://doi.org/10.5209/cjes.72968>
- Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, California.
- Thompson, K. A. (2007). "Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915-1942". *American Art*, 21(3), 74-97.
- Trouillot, M.R. (1990). *Haiti. State Against Nation. The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*. Library of Congress Cataloging-In-Publication Data. Monthly Review Press: New York.
- Trouillot, M.R. (1995) *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press: Boston.

