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Introduction

The diploma thesis “Trauma and healing in Edwidge Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*” will deal with traumata in Haiti’s history that Danticat works through in this particular work of fiction. Secondly, this thesis will be concerned with the question whether the author also offers incidents of recovery in her stories. Furthermore, since most of the secondary literature, that is available on Edwidge Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!*, is only concerned with selected stories of the short story cycle, this thesis will attempt to deal with the cycle in its entirety. However, it is important to note that the focus of this work is mainly on trauma and recovery in *Krik? Krak!* and therefore, some stories will occupy more space than others.

Before this thesis digs deeper into the traumata and possible healing strategies presented in the short story cycle, the first chapter provides the reader with a definition of trauma as well as an introduction to the theoretical concepts of literary trauma theory, general characteristics of the genre of postcolonial trauma narratives and current developments in this field. Basically, there will be a comparison of the traditional approach to literary trauma theory and its aesthetics largely influenced by Cathy Caruth’s work and more recent approaches induced by Michael Rothberg and Irene Visser.

Then, there will be an introduction to the historical events that play a role in the short story cycle since this aspect is necessary to understand the allusions of the fictional texts. Although I will confine myself to the most significant events and historical figures from the past, it is important to realize that the references in *Krik? Krak!* cover a time span from the late 18th century to the end of the 20th century. This is because Danticat employs allusions to 18th century revolutionary heroes like Boukman Dutty as well as to contemporary politicians like President Aristide, who was Haiti’s head of state in the 1990s. For simplicity’s sake, the origin of mythical figures that occur in *Krik? Krak!* will also be described in the second chapter. On top of that, this thesis will also discuss in which ways Edwidge Danticat’s short story cycle is able to add to and maybe also challenge our understanding of Haiti’s history.

The third part of the thesis will be concerned with a definition of the genre of the short story cycle and why this particular genre can be used as a means to narrate trauma. Furthermore, there will be a literary analysis of the traumata in Edwidge Danticat’s short story cycle. For a better overview, the analysis will be divided into sections, which are concerned with those events which cause trauma in the short story cycle and the various types of traumata, respectively. On top of that, there will be a discussion of the different types of trauma victims in the short story cycle and the aftereffects these characters have to deal with.

One of these after-effects in traditional trauma theory is melancholia. As it is doubted that it plays a major role in postcolonial trauma literature, a section will investigate this question. At the end of the third chapter, this thesis will deal with the fact that in most cases, trauma victims have been silenced in Haiti's past. Consequently, it will be investigated on the one hand in how far silence perpetuates trauma from generation to generation and on the other hand, how self-imposed silence is a hindrance for individuals to recover.

The final chapter will deal with the aspect of recovery and healing in Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. As the chapter will be inspired by Judith Herman's work *Trauma and recovery* (2015), the various sections will try to point out links between the three stages of recovery coined by Herman and Danticat's depiction of healing from traumatic experiences. Since Judith Herman's findings are based on psychotherapy and psychotherapy is in most cases not available to Danticat's protagonists, the focus will primarily be on salient similarities and correlations.

1. Literary Trauma Theory: Definition and basic concepts

As Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* deals with the traumatising history of Haiti, it seems feasible to define this short story cycle as a trauma narrative (Collins 7) and use literary trauma theory in order to analyse this work of fiction. Consequently, before analysing the narrative as such, it is crucial to get a basic idea of the theoretical concept of literary trauma theory and this is what this section aims at. It will start with trauma theory as it was coined by Cathy Caruth et al. in the mid 1990s and show its development as it grew "to become a critical-theoretical way of attending to and addressing the representation of human suffering and 'wounding', both literal and metaphorical, both personal and communal" (Eaglestone 12).

Due to the fact that *Krik Krak* is largely based in Haiti, Danticat's work can be defined as postcolonial literature. The content of *Krik? Krak!* refers to Haiti's contemporary struggles which have its roots in the past, namely the after-effects of colonialism, the struggle to find acceptance as the first country to be founded by blacks and inner conflicts. More specifically, the stories mostly revolve around characters, who fight against political and religious persecution and poverty. It has been found during research that Caruth's approach may not be sufficient for the analysis of Danticat's work, even though Caruth's and Danticat's work were published roughly at the same time. Consequently, this section will also describe which new developments and adjustments of the traditional approach, i.e. Caruth's approach, need to be made in order to analyse postcolonial literature as appropriately as possible. Therefore, this chapter strives to work out which aspects of postcolonial trauma literature need to be included in order to obtain an approach that also serves the analysis of postcolonial trauma literature.

1.1. The traditional approach to literary trauma theory

As mentioned before, the beginning of the concept of trauma theory was largely influenced by Cathy Caruth et al.'s *Trauma: explorations in memory* (1995) and Caruth's *Unclaimed experience: trauma, narrative and history* (1996). However, critics such as Stef Craps, Gert Buelens and Irene Visser claim convincingly that the traditional approach to trauma theory, stemming from the 1990s, needs rethinking and a reconceptualisation due to the challenges that are faced in connection to its application in a global, and more specifically in a postcolonial, context.

To begin with, however, it is crucial to work out a clear definition of trauma. In this respect, Cathy Caruth offers the definition that trauma “describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrollable repetitive appearance of hallucinations, and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth 11). This quote is similar to the first definition of trauma by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) of the American Psychiatric Association, which gave trauma official recognition. Here, trauma is defined “as a serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of the self in the form of an overwhelming, sudden, and unassimilable experience” (Visser 252). As an example of such an experience, Caruth describes the situation of a soldier who “was faced with sudden and massive death around him [...] only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares” (Caruth 11). Both definitions suggest that trauma happens to the body in the first place but acknowledge that trauma is not only the experience of a catastrophic event, but also the memory of what happened. Memory is then what repetitively haunts the traumatized person later on. This reliving of the traumatic event takes on various forms, such as the above-mentioned hallucinations and nightmares. Other forms might be “thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event” (Caruth 4). These symptoms are summarized under the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This condition includes another salient phenomenon, which is hinted at in the word ‘post’-traumatic. Thus, “the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs” (Caruth 8). With this statement, Caruth refers to Freud’s notion of ‘Nachträglichkeit’ (belatedness) (Visser 273) when she further explains that “the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time” (Caruth 9).

Another characteristic of trauma is its unsayability (Visser 273), which refers to the “unknowable and inexpressible nature of traumatic wounding” (Visser 255). For instance, it seems that traumatized people either have problems talking about the traumatic event or if they do talk about it, they do not have the feeling of having said it all, of having expressed the horror in its entirety (Collins 6). Consequently, trauma seems to be an experience that cannot possibly be fully expressed in spoken or written accounts. This assumption poses manifold problems for literary analysis because if trauma somehow refuses to be described, what is the use and the aim of trauma literature? And what is more, how can a traumatized person come to terms with traumatic experiences if a description of the traumatic event seems to be out of reach?

Dominick LaCapra touched upon this struggle and in particular upon the relation between mourning and melancholia in the 1990s and posed the question whether Western societies have means to help people coming to terms with one's traumatic past even though "in extremely traumatic cases an idealized notion of full recovery may be misleading" (LaCapra 214). He continues that "in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" it seems that melancholia is ambivalently both a precondition to (or even necessary aspect of) mourning" (LaCapra 213). Consequently, melancholia could "block processes of mourning insofar as it becomes excessive or functions as an object of fixation" (LaCapra 213).

The struggle that the traditional trauma approach faced led to further discussions whether the whole concept may need rethinking. Since 2008, many theorists have come to the conclusion that the traditional approach does not seem to be able to account for the whole spectrum of traumatic experiences as well as ways of dealing with these experiences. Furthermore, it also became clear that in an increasingly globalized world, trauma theory needs to open up for new ways of looking at and dealing with trauma since non-Western cultures have shown different ways of dealing with trauma to the world. Partly, these new ways have been made available through literature. In how far the concept of trauma theory has expanded and developed since the 1990s will be the main concern of the next section.

1.2 Recent developments in literary trauma theory

This section attempts to offer solutions to the questions raised in section 1.1. as it provides an overview of the most important changes and developments of trauma theory. There will, however, be a focus on those aspects which seem to be salient with regard to the analysis of Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. The starting point for new approaches to develop was roughly in 2008, when Michael Rothberg and Roger Luckhurst published the essay *Decolonising trauma studies: A response* and the book *The trauma question*, respectively. Rothberg also initiated a "decolonization of postcolonial trauma theory" (Visser 251). Moreover, there was a special issue of *Studies in the Novel*, edited by Buelens and Craps, which called for a "reapprochement between trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies" (Visser 250).

Since 2008, there has been an ongoing debate on which features need rethinking in trauma theory. To start with, one major point of critique in the new approach to trauma theory has been, according to Rothberg, that the "turn of the millennium trauma studies has remained stuck within Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks" (Rothberg 225).

Furthermore, Irene Visser criticizes traditional trauma theory's "event-based conception of trauma" and "its too-narrow focus on Freudian psychoanalysis" (Visser 252). As mentioned above, the traditional approach refers in its definition of trauma as "an overwhelming experience" (Caruth 11) as well as a "sudden, and unassimilable experience" (DSM-III, qtd. in Visser 252). In contrast to Caruth's definition, Visser points out that colonialism, and the struggles of a post-colonial country one might add, is not a single or sudden traumatic event but a sustained, prolonged and cumulative form of trauma which is not accounted for in the traditional approach of trauma theory (Visser 252). A further extension of the definition of trauma must be made in the awareness that trauma is not only experienced individually but also collectively (Visser 276).

In addition, the concept of vicarious trauma is now included in the later definitions of trauma by the American Psychiatric Association in its fourth and fifth editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I, DSM-V). The concept of vicarious trauma, consequently, has broadened trauma's conceptualisation insofar as it also acknowledges "secondary victims, witnesses and bystanders [...], but also relatives, therapists and friends of victims" (Visser 272) as there are cases in which these groups also suffer from PTSD. Consequently, a person does not have to be directly related to the experience, but may still suffer from post-traumatic stress (Visser 272).

Closely related to the notion of vicarious trauma, trauma theorists point out that transmissibility is another important notion that needs rethinking. Transmissibility can be described as "the contagious impact of trauma" (Visser 275) and now includes "practically all situations where trauma is involved" (Visser: 275). Therefore, it might make sense to differentiate between primary victims of trauma, i.e. victims of actual historical trauma, and secondary victims of trauma (Visser 276). Furthermore, if the definition of trauma also includes those who witness the traumatic event, it stands to reason that even the perpetrators can be seen as victims of trauma (Visser 275). This, however, might be a problematic viewpoint in the new approach to trauma theory.

Apart from the definition of trauma, other characteristics have also undergone rethinking. In 1.1, I have already mentioned the highly problematic notion of melancholia that comes with experiencing a traumatic event and as such is a dominant feature of the traditional approach to trauma theory. As traditional trauma theory focuses strongly on melancholia, there is little room or awareness for the possibility of healing from trauma. Still, current developments show that authors of postcolonial trauma literature, like Danticat, include traces of recovery and resilience in their work. Therefore, as Visser rightly argues, there is a

“movement away from melancholy and “unspeakability” to resistance and recovery” (Visser 278). Indeed, Dominick LaCapra has already posed the problem of mourning and melancholia in his work *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory and Trauma* in 1994. As mentioned before, melancholia could be a hindrance to the process of mourning and in further consequence also inhibit resilience. Since there are hints of resilience in Edwidge Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!*, it seems necessary to expand the hegemonic trauma theory’s aesthetics to allow the possibility of recovery (Visser 279). A major problem in overcoming trauma, however, could be the difficulty to identify the object of mourning, especially in Western societies (LaCapra 213-214). In contrast to Western societies, it seems that postcolonial trauma literature is able to give insights into possible ways of mourning. Some examples from postcolonial literature, according to Visser (259), are rituals such as storytelling “as it connects past and present, drawing upon the ancestors and their sacred power to restore harmony and health”. As it will be discussed later on, Danticat’s short story cycle contains all of these tools and shows ways of employing them in order to heal from trauma.

Another aspect that might become an important part in a new approach to literary trauma theory is religion and spirituality since these are topics that are a vital part in postcolonial trauma literature regarding healing and recovery from trauma. Consequently, Irene Visser criticizes that since it has not been fashionable in the postmodern period to deal with religion and spirituality, “this limited perspective makes cultural theory inadequate for an engagement with indigenous literatures that situate trauma in the context of ritual and ceremony” (Visser 260). Unfortunately, Western secularism has prejudices against (non-Christian) religious belief-systems insofar as they are seen as intolerant and irrational. As Visser claims, a decolonized trauma theory has to be “sensitive to the cultural bias inherent in the secular perspective that imposes such prejudices” (Visser 260).

Finally, the aspect of the traditional approach to literary trauma theory that was most debateable was certainly its claim of trauma’s unsayability. To a certain extent, the notion that trauma is something so atrocious that it cannot be expressed in words is something that holds true. For example, in her book *Trauma and recovery*, Judith Herman describes the tension that a traumatized person experiences as he or she feels the natural urge to suppress the memory of the traumatic event which in turn, somewhat ironically, refuses to be forgotten (Herman 2015: 1). The aim of the healing process, according to Herman, is “to put the story, including its imagery, into words” (Herman 177). Being able to talk about what happened might seem impossible and painful at first, but the process of working through will lead to an integration of the traumatic event, not an exorcism, as Herman is careful to point to out

(Herman 2015: 181). The transformation of the traumatic experience is the goal, which should restore the belief in the power of truth telling. The premise is that when the truth is told, it becomes a testimony in both a personal and a public sense which enables the traumatized person to give the experience a larger dimension (Herman 181). Furthermore, Herman refers to Mollica's research when she states that if a person manages to talk about the experienced atrocities, he or she will finally be able to tell a new story, which is "no longer about shame and humiliation" but rather "about dignity and virtue" (qtd. in Herman 181). On top of that, Herman draws on Richard Mollica's experience with refugees who were able to "regain the world they have lost" (qtd. in Herman 181) by talking about their experiences in order to see them in a new light. As Herman's research shows trauma's unsayability is not lost as it seems to be a normal reaction of the traumatized person, but it is crucial to point out that it is not impossible to overcome the silence and the tension that comes from wanting to hide and tell about the traumatic past at the same time. At this point, it is also important to note that Herman is referring to her knowledge derived from her psychological work and research. It is true that this kind of psychological counselling might not be an option regarding the places in which postcolonial narratives take place, such as in Haiti. However, Herman's research shows that recovery from trauma is possible and thus, it refutes the theory that trauma victims are stuck in an endless cycle of melancholia and reliving of the traumatic event due to its unsayability. Consequently, "Caruth's focus on the impossibility of exact and "ultimate" knowing does not oppose or contradict the notion that narrative is curative, and that trauma victims may come to terms with their traumatic experiences" (Visser 255). Furthermore, Visser claims that it "is the domain of literature to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions and or complete exactitude" (Visser 255).

In how far recovery is possible through other means aside from psychotherapy, especially in which ways recovery from trauma is presented in Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, will form a major part of this thesis.

2. History: *Krik? Krak!*'s hidden protagonist

After having outlined the basic concepts of trauma theory, it is necessary to point out that while trauma theory provides the theoretical background for the literary analysis, the historical background is also important to understand the stories of the short story cycle on a deeper level. First of all, it helps to see the bigger picture behind the traumata of the characters. Secondly, Danticat hints at historical events and people as well as mythical figures in her work. Consequently, a chapter on *Krik? Krak!*'s historical background seems to be worthwhile. Therefore, this chapter will help the reader to gain knowledge about Haiti's history and the circumstances Danticat's characters live in. As the political climate in Haiti has been characterized by oppression and violence, most of Danticat's protagonists are not free to speak about their traumata. Therefore, the reader can only guess what happened in the past that is still haunting the characters in the present. Knowing about Haiti's historical background is, thus, crucial to understand the protagonists' behaviour on a deeper level. Jo Collins thinks along those lines too when she writes that in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* "[...] there is a textual politics of distancing and indirection, so a reader must work to reconstruct Haitian history" (Collins 11). Indeed, when I started reading Danticat, in particular her short story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven", I was only able to see the surface. Only when I learned more about Haitian history, it began to make sense why Danticat chose to disguise and maybe also obscure what one might call the historical truth. Consequently, this chapter will deal with the historical background that Danticat hints at and that seems to serve as the traumatic stage setting for her protagonists.

Considering that Danticat's short story cycle was published in 1995, her work was written against the backdrop of contemporary tensions in Haiti. However, it seems that in telling her stories she was also considerably interested in illustrating the struggles that happened decades (or even centuries) ago as they continue to influence her characters' lives to this day.

Starting with the first story of the short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, "Children of the Sea", it becomes evident through research that Danticat draws comparisons between recent events like the coup d'état in 1991 and the Middle Passage. The coup d'état was followed by a wave of refugees who tried to reach the USA by boat. Many of these refugees died at sea and therefore, there is a parallel to the African natives, who were forced to cross the Atlantic on slave trade ships (Penier 88). The first story, however, is not set at the times of the Middle Passage, but shortly after the coup d'état. At the beginning, a young man flees the country as

he was an activist member of Radio Six (Braziel 81) and as such he had to flee the country during the political upheavals after the “military *coup d’état* which deposed President Aristide from power in 1991” (Penier 73). As fleeing the country by boat is the only possible option for this young man, Danticat evokes numerous traumatic allusions to the Middle Passage. Her protagonist goes through a similar traumatic experience during his flight by boat since his fate is compared to that of uncountable people who suffered and died during the Middle Passage (Penier 88). Even though the Middle Passage took place in centuries before the coup d’état, the young man was also forced to leave his home country on an unseaworthy boat towards the “New World”, which in his case is Miami in the United States. Danticat’s allusion to the Middle Passage is already expressed in the title “Children of the Sea”, which refers to those people who died at sea. The young man anticipates his death and writes to his lover in Haiti:

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. (Danticat 27)

In this passage, it becomes clear by the mentioning of the “chains of slavery” that Danticat draws a connection between the suppression through slavery and the events of the Middle Passage and the bloody political persecution in Haiti in the early 1990s. The circumstances the refugee has left behind are also not obvious for readers who do not have enough knowledge about Haiti. The only hint in the story about the political events in the country are hinted at when the young man’s lover writes in a letter that “there is a rumour that the old president is coming back. there is a whole bunch of people going to the airport to meet him” (Danticat 18). A few pages later, the reader learns that the hopes of the people were destroyed since “of course the old president didn’t come. they arrested a lot of people at the airport, shot a whole bunch of them down” (Danticat 22). Although these lines provide some information about the political situation in Haiti, the whole impact is only clear when one digs deeper.

The old president, that the female protagonist in “Children of the Sea” refers to, is President Aristide who was immensely popular among the Haitian population, especially among the poor. His popularity stemmed mainly from the fact that he was a former priest and as such he was known for “his fiery sermons” (Plummer 232) in which he denounced the crimes committed in the Duvalier era, condemned the United States’ active support of the Duvaliers’ dictatorships and the ensuing repressive military regimes. Not surprisingly, Aristide won the elections in December 1990. At first, he made some progress in economic matters (Plummer 232) and achieved progress in the enforcement of human rights in Haiti

during his presidency (Plummer 235), however, various (para-)military groups, in particular the Makouts, an organisation stemming from the Duvalier era, caused chaos and destabilisation (Plummer 232). After seven months, a military junta started overthrowing Aristide's regime when soldiers attacked and killed Aristide's supporters, among them children, in urban slums. These killings as well as the threats against broadcast media were supposed to inhibit mass support for Aristide and eventually led to the president's exile in 1991 (Plummer 234).

Becoming more familiar with the main protagonist's political background, it becomes clear why he had to flee the country. Since he was a member of a youth federation's radio station (Danticat 15) supporting the former president, and as such a part of the broadcasting media that soldiers frequently attacked during and after the coup, fleeing the country gave him at least a small chance to survive as compared to those who did not want to or could not flee the country. They were shot or disappeared (Danticat 7). Even more insights on the situation in Haiti are provided by the young man's girlfriend who describes the ongoing violence committed by the soldiers in her letters: "they have this thing now that they do. if they come into a house and there is a son and mother there, they hold a gun to their heads. they make the son sleep with his mother. if it is a daughter and father, they do the same thing" (Danticat 12). The terrorism following the coup d'état depicted in this passage may also have inspired the sixth story in the cycle, namely "The Missing Peace". At the beginning of the story, the main protagonist, a young girl called Lamort, finds herself walking through "a line of skeletal houses that had been torched the night of the coup. A lot of the old regime followers died that night. Others fled to the hills or took boats to Miami" (Danticat 105).

Meanwhile, Lamort's grandmother houses the Haitian-American tourist Emilie, who tries to find her mother. As her mother was old régime and worked for a newspaper called *Libété* in Port-au-Prince, she might have been attacked or even killed by soldiers as well (Danticat 111). Furthermore, the extent of the shootings become even clearer when Emilie asks Lamort to take her to a mass burial site which Lamort knows because she has taken many journalists there (Danticat 112).

Like the first story which connects Haiti's colonial past to the coup d'état in the 1990s, the second story in the cycle "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" links the massacre in 1937, in which thousands of Haitians were killed by the dictator of the Dominican Republic, to the US Marine occupation of Haiti and its aftermath (1915-1934) and the Anti-superstition campaigns of 1940 to 1941 (Brazier 74-75). In the story, Défilé survives the massacre that happened between 2 October to 8 October 1937, in which the Dominican dictator Rafael

Trujillo commanded the slaughter of all Haitians living in the Northwestern border region (Turits 589), who “were mostly small farmers, many of whom had been born in the Dominican Republic (and thus were Dominican citizens according to the Dominican constitution)” (Turits 590). An estimated number of 15,000 Haitians were killed during the massacre (Turits 590) and another 6,000 to 10,000 managed to flee across the border (Turits 622). As Haiti and the Dominican Republic are divided by the so-called Massacre River, many people tried to flee to Haiti but their escape was prohibited when the army closed the official border checkpoint and bridge to Haiti (Turits 591). In his article “A world destroyed, a nation imposed: The 1937 Haitian massacre in the Dominican Republic”, Richard Turits claims that the local border community posed a threat to Trujillo’s plans of establishing a modern and civilized society (Turits 599). The country’s elite equalled Haiti with Africa, which stood for a darker skin complexion, being savage and backward and the practice of voodoo, which was seen as particularly threatening to the Dominican society (Turits 599). These prejudices against Haitians resulted in a racist movement inspired by the “racist scientific discourses [that] had been widely diffused in Europe and the Americas”, (Turits 608) which was initiated years before the massacre. The tight-knit Dominican-Haitian border community was said to be “indifferent and even hostile to urban visions of Dominican nationality” (Turits 593). Thus, Trujillo took measures to establish greater control over the people and goods that crossed the border (Turits 600), which resulted in the massacre in 1937. Turits also named voodoo as another reason why Haitians were despised by the Dominican Republic’s elite. However, not only on the other side of the border but also in Haiti itself, voodoo was persecuted. It is reported that the combined forces of the Haitian government and the Catholic Church aimed at “whitening” the country and erasing voodoo practices. These so-called Anti-superstition campaigns started in the early 19th century and reached another peak during the US Marines’ occupation in Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and in the early 1940s (Brazier 74-75).

In the story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, Danticat makes references to all of these historical events as they negatively influence her characters’ lives in many ways. For example, the main protagonist’s mother Défilé escaped the massacre in 1937, in which the main protagonist’s grandmother had died. Danticat depicts the cruel scene of the grandmother’s death in Défilé’s daughter’s narration: “My mother had escaped El Generalissimo’s soldiers, leaving her own mother behind. From the Haitian side of the river, she could still see the soldiers chopping up *her* mother’s body and throwing it into the river along with many others” (Danticat 40). Défilé survives the massacre, ironically only to be

accused of practicing voodoo and to die in prison later on, when a baby dies in her care. When her daughter Josephine, the narrator of the story, visits her mother in prison, she remarks that

[t]he yellow prison building was like a fort, as large and strong as in the days when it was used by the American marines who had built it. The Americans taught us how to build prisons. By the end of the 1915 occupation, the police in the city really knew how to hold human beings trapped in cages [...]. (Danticat 35)

Similarly, Josephine's daughter Marie, who is the main protagonist of the fifth story "Between the Pool and the Gardenias", is accused of practicing voodoo. Marie fled from the superstitions in the fictional village Ville Rose and moved to Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince. Several miscarriages led people to believe she killed the babies (Sarhou 112). Unfortunately, she is found with a dead baby by her employers' Dominican gardener who accuses her of being responsible for the baby's death because he suspects that she practices voodoo. As Marie is found out by a Dominican citizen, Brazier argues that "[t]he Dominican gardener's accusations against the Haitian maid suggest the national, racial, and linguistic differences between the two characters as well as those between the two countries that geographically share the island of Hispaniola [...]" (Brazier 87).

However, not only the Dominican gardener, but also her Haitian employers are highly suspicious of Marie's behaviour. The title "Between the Pool and the Gardenias" suggests that Marie's employers are wealthy members of the middle class. As such, these people were said to be "particularly active in the Anti-superstition campaigns" (Penier 127). It is assumed that Haitian society's elite despised "vodou as the illegitimate religion of the poor, illiterate and backward peasants who can nevertheless be potentially harmful" (Penier 127). In the Duvalier era, which lasted from the late 1950s to the mid 1980s, people were allowed to practice voodoo to a certain extent, however, the dictators misused voodoo to "incite fear in and control the Haitian masses" (Brazier 75). Danticat's character Marie emphasizes the unresolved issue of voodoo practice when she recounts what her employers think about her:

She is probably one of those *manbos*¹, they say when my back is turned. "She's probably one of those stupid people who think that they have a spell to make themselves invisible and hurt other people. Why can't none of them get a spell to make themselves rich? It's that voodoo nonsense that's holding us Haitians back. (Danticat 95)

Although Marie's employers seem to reject the idea that voodoo works and even refer to it as nonsense, Défilé's fate in "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" paints a different picture and shows that

¹ A manbo or mambo is the Haitian word for a voodoo priestess (Brazier 70).

the fear of voodoo seems to have induced terrible acts of violence. This is particularly illustrated in the story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” when the dead baby’s mother accuses Défilé of having killed her baby: “The woman we had been staying with carried her dead son by the legs. The policemen made no efforts to stop the mob that was beating my mother. “*Lougarou*², witch, criminal!” they shouted” (Danticat 39). In prison, the prisonguards also undertake certain measures to suppress the women’s supposed magical powers:

And before the women went to sleep, the guards made them throw tin cups of cold water at one another so that their bodies would not be able to muster up enough heat to grow those wings made of flames, fly away in the middle of the night, slip into the slumber of innocent children and steal their breath. (Danticat 37-38)

To show that Défilé’s case was not a singular one, her daughter explains that:

[a]ll of these women were here for the same reason. They were said to have been seen at night rising from the ground like birds on fire. A loved one, a friend, or a neighbor had accused them of causing the death of a child. A few other people agreeing with these stories was all that was needed to have them arrested. And sometimes even killed. (Danticat 38)

In this passage, it seems evident in how far voodoo incited fear in the Haitian masses and how Duvalier might have been able to control the Haitian population by granting voodoo a certain legality. By doing so, the dictator acknowledged that voodoo powers were real and at the same time, the people’s fear gave him plenty of reasons to suppress that power without attracting negative public attention.

Since history plays a major in Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, it can be argued that it is kind of a hidden protagonist since the stories “directly or indirectly involve historical events” (Davis 77). This is also true for poverty since poverty has a huge impact on Danticat’s characters. Indeed, a study conducted in 2007 claims that Haiti is “at this date the poorest country in the Western hemisphere” (Jadotte 44). That is particularly salient in stories like “A Wall of Fire Rising” and “Night Women”. Interestingly enough, the title of the third story “A Wall of Fire Rising”, refers to the burnings of the sugar cane fields in 1791. At the beginning of the revolution, the slaves destroyed the fields of their white oppressors (Chen 42), who used the slaves to make Haiti “France’s most profitable colony in the Americas” (Chen 37). In “A Wall of Fire Rising”, Danticat depicts the everyday life of a family in the mid-twentieth century (Chen 37) that struggles daily with getting work and food:

² Loup garous can be defined as witches “who have the power to change themselves into dogs, horses, trees and other animals or objects” (Simpson 219).

When things were really bad for the family, they boiled sugarcane pulp to make what Lili called her special sweet water tea. It was supposed to suppress gas and kill the vermin in the stomach that made poor children hungry. That and a pinch of salt under the tongue could usually quench hunger until Guy found a day's work or Lili could manage to buy spices on credit and then peddle them for a profit at the marketplace. (Danticat 58)

This excerpt illustrates that the family struggles with poor living conditions and it is significant that the title of the story refers to the revolution in 1791.

In the fourth story "Night Women", a prostitute depicts her work life and compares it to the other women who live in her town: "After he leaves at dawn, I sit outside and smoke a dry tobacco leaf. I watch the piece-worker women march one another to the open market half a day's walk from where they live" (Danticat 88). From this perspective, it is clear why so many people left Haiti for the USA, not only fleeing from the devastating outbursts of violence but also from the nagging poverty around them. In the ninth story "Caroline's Wedding", Danticat's cycle of narration has already moved away from Haiti to New York in the United States. Gracina, the narrator of the story, reasons that her parents left the shantytowns of Port-au-Prince because they were starving: "When I was a baby, my mother worried that I would die from colic and hunger. My father pulled heavy carts for pennies. My mother sold jugs of water from the public fountain, charcoal, and grilled peanuts to get us something to eat" (Danticat 189).

2.1. Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* – A complementation and challenge of history proper

In the first section of chapter 2, I aimed at illustrating how history and fiction are entangled in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. While doing research on the fiction's background, I realized that both history and fiction inform and complement each other. While reading, my general impression of the short story cycle was that Danticat's fiction leaves the reader wondering why her protagonists suffer through all these traumatic experiences such as being imprisoned, being threatened and being killed. Interestingly, Danticat's protagonists seldom ask themselves the question why they have to suffer. Referring to that question, Shaw suggests that the characters' lack of questioning their living conditions illustrates "the degree to which violence has been internalized" in Haiti (Shaw 3). In this respect, one might add that this holds true not only for the characters' internalisation of violence but also that of poverty.

Considering the question why there is so much suffering in Haiti, it was shown in the first section of this chapter that historiography offers many answers as it provides the

protagonists' traumata with dates, names, facts and figures, in short a context. The next step was putting together information from historiography and comparing it with Danticat's fiction. Generally speaking, there was a strong impression that the two forms of dealing with the past, i.e. the historiographic and the fictional way, complement each other in manifold ways. For instance, while historiography provides the larger frame to put Haitian history into a chronological and global context, Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* gives voice to those who are normally left out in historical accounts such as women, the poor and the ordinary life. Hence, by writing these stories, Danticat's aim is to speak "these stories, and therefore these women, into existence" (Sarhou 119).

Although historiography and fiction are able to complement each other, the characteristics of each of these text genres differ considerably. For example, important elements of the historical research paradigm are "contextualization, clarity, objectivity, footnoting, and the idea that historiography necessarily involves truth claims based on evidence" (LaCapra 5). Moreover, historical writing can be described as a "well-crafted form of prose (or conventional *beau style*)" (LaCapra 3), which is complemented with footnotes "as a referential component of research [that] is one criterion that serves to differentiate history from fiction" (LaCapra 6). Consequently, while historiography tries to create "by literary convention the illusion [...] of transparency" (LaCapra 4), Danticat's fictional work, though less clear in its narration due to a lack of contextualisation, is much more capable of creating a feel for the experiences the Haitian population has gone through so far. Indeed, Danticat's narration, apart from very few exceptions, usually does not mention dates or historically significant personalities. For example, in the first story "Children of the Sea", she refers to President Aristide only as the old president (Danticat 4). However, it is important to mention here that the narrator of the story talks to her lover who has just escaped Haiti and thus, it would not make sense to explain, who this president was. The reader, who is a witness to the narrator's writing, has to figure out herself who this president was, in order to place it within a historical context.

Although it is obvious that Danticat's writing is a fictional piece of work and Danticat does not strive to make it a work of historiography, the historian Dominick LaCapra, who addressed the relationship between trauma and historiography in *Writing history, writing trauma*, acknowledges that fictional trauma narratives can complement historical writings:

One might argue that narratives in fiction may also involve truth claims on a structural or general level by providing insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust, by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible "feel" for

experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods. (LaCapra 13)

Consequently, even though Danticat's work is clearly a work of fiction, it is certainly capable of providing the reader with a feel for the experiences of the Haitian people, in particular its traumatic events. Beyond that, one might argue that Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, though being a work of fiction, challenges historiography to a certain extent, precisely by giving a voice to women, children and the poor lower classes as well as everyday situations.

One way the author does so is, as Braziel suggests, that "[h]istorically, femmes d'Ayiti have been suppressed within national culture and historiography" (Braziel 74), mainly because their powers as voodoo priestesses were feared. Penier goes even further when she claims that Danticat "exposes Haitian nationalism as exceptionally misogynist, as it not only deprived Haitian women of their status and erased them from Haitian historiography, but also actively persecuted them in the name of the Western ideal of progress" (Penier 124). It is important to add that this Western ideal of progress was not only introduced because it was found to be superior to Haitian ways of living, but also because it seemed that "the aim of these efforts was to get recognition for Haiti as a legitimate country in order to attract foreign capital and bring the country out of its torpor" (Penier 124).

Still, this claim again alludes to the female domain of voodoo practices that were seen as counterproductive to the nation's aims. In addition, the statement points out the disturbing truth that in the past, many women were on the one hand not allowed to claim positions of power and on the other hand, it strongly indicates that women were actively excluded from the historical records.

Danticat includes one example of such a woman who was excluded from historical records in her short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. This woman, Défilé-la-folle, however, does not occur as a character in one of the stories herself, but she is mentioned as the great-great-grandmother of her namesake Défilé, the woman who survived the massacre in 1937 in the story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven". Being the ancestor of Défilé, the reader gradually finds out that almost all the women in the short story cycle are descendants of this historical female figure and therefore, she ties together not only the characters but also the stories in this particular way (Danticat 94). So, the question at this point is who Défilé-la-folle actually was and in how far she was significant so that Danticat chose to include her in the cycle. One possible reason might be precisely because Défilé-la-folle was one of the few women that have been explicitly mentioned in Haitian historiography.

Défilée-la-folle, or Dédée Bazile, which was her real name (Brazier 65), “followed the troops of Jean-Jacques Dessalines³ and gathered Dessaline’s remains after he was assassinated in 1806” (Brazier 79). Although Défilé was “barely a footnote in the larger historical record of the Haitian revolutionary period” (Brazier 62), she was obviously important enough to be mentioned. Despite this, only little is known about her life. Thus, legends flourished and Défilé became more a part of Haitian folklore than Haitian history (Brazier 2005: 63). However, what is known is that she was born as a slave and later she was part of Dessaline’s troops and served as a sutler. She was also said to be mad, which is why there is the epithet *la folle*, the madwoman. Although the reason of her madness remains unknown, it is part of the legend (Brazier 65-66).

By assigning Défilé-la-folle a crucial part in her short story cycle and making her the “foremother” of her characters (Brazier 80), “Danticat sidesteps the whole gallery of national heroes, such as: Boukman Dutty⁴, Jean Jacques Dessalines, Touissant Louverture⁵, Henri Christophe⁵ and others” (Penier 130). In this way, Danticat “offers a feminist redress to the history of her motherland, brutalized by the masculinist and Eurocentric concept of the nation state” (Penier 130). By rewriting history almost only through the eyes of her female protagonists, Danticat illustrates the violence, and poverty one might add, women are threatened with in their daily lives. One example that illustrates the brutality of the male-dominated Haiti is depicted in the sixth story “The Missing Peace”: “A round of gunshots echoed in the distance, signals from the night guards who had no other ways of speaking to one another. [...] The night air blew the smell of rotting flesh to my nose” (Danticat 116).

Furthermore, Danticat also offers sideblows to the achievements of the Western world, especially of the USA. Due to the aforementioned US occupation from 1915 to 1934, Danticat occasionally indicates criticism such as in this passage from the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”: “[t]he yellow prison building was like a fort, as large and strong as in the days when it was used by the American marines who had built it. The Americans taught us how to build

³ Jean-Jacques Dessalines was one of most influential Haitian revolutionary leaders against colonial oppression. He even declared himself Emperor of Haiti, taking Napoleon as an example. In 1806, he was brutally assassinated. (Plummer 20-21)

⁴ After the French Revolution, slaves reacted to the disorder among the white rulers, who were mostly of French origin since Haiti was a French colony. The slaves started a revolution themselves in the name of the slogan of the French Revolution: Liberty, equality and fraternity. „Under the leadership of the Vodun priest Boukman Dutty“, the slaves „seized arms, burned estates assassinated planters [...]“ (Plummer 11) Boukman died soon afterwards in combat and was followed by secular leaders such as Touissant Louverture (Plummer 11).

⁵ Henri Christophe was a black revolutionary leader who ruled the North after the assassination of Dessalines (Plummer 21).

prisons” (Danticat 35). To clarify, this is not to say that prisons had not existed before the US occupation in Haiti, but this quote might signify that the US intervention had led to a further intensification of the already brutal climate. This impression is further verified by the historian Brenda Gayle Plummer, who concludes that “[t]he United States had neither changed nor reformed Haitian politics but inadvertently strengthened and assured the survival of many of its worst features” (Plummer 120).

Furthermore, it is crucial to mention that, even if it is not stated in the story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, the reason for the massacre in the same year was rooted in the same racist mindset that had developed in the US and in Europe and which eventually led to the outbreak of World War II (Turits 593). Consequently, since it is not evident from the fictional text alone, historiography sheds light on the many ways Haiti suffered from the various attempts to whiten and modernize the country and thus, became victims of a more and more globalized way of thinking.

For that reason, it becomes even more obvious why Danticat may have wanted to counteract history in her fictional writing since she foregrounded those groups of people who have normally been left out in historiography, i.e. women and the poor. Secondly, the author infused voodoo practices in her stories, which is a spiritual practice that is deeply rooted in the Haitian past as it connects the Haitian population much more with their African ancestry than the European influence on Haiti.

Apart from providing the reader with a more authentic feel for Haitian experiences than historiography and helping to imagine Haitian history from a female perspective, Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* illustrates historical events which have not, or only scarcely, been mentioned in historical records. Thus, Danticat offers another challenge to history proper and maybe that is why her writings have been called “historic storytelling” (Brazier 88) by Jana Evans Brazier. This claim is salient in the story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. After the atrocities of 1937, one would have expected that Haiti reacted to the thousands of refugees pouring into the country. Instead, “Haiti did not respond militarily to defend or avenge its compatriots.” (Turits 622) On the contrary, the then President Vincent “prohibited public discussion of the massacre, and refused for a long time even to allow the church to perform masses for the dead” (Turits 622). Turits suggests that the president downplayed what had happened since he feared that sending the troops to the frontier would leave the president’s palace vulnerable to his opponents (Turits 622-623). Thus, the people who survived were deprived of the possibility to moan the dead publicly and up until today, there are “no memorial plaques” (Shaw 4) of the events of the massacre. Hence, Shaw argues that

“Haitians [...] must function as a medium to reconstruct history through memory. For Danticat memory is literally created that both restores and validates individual and collective experiences” (Shaw 4).

At least, in the short story cycle, the survivors’ experiences are validated in the rituals of a secret women’s society. These rituals are detailed in the story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” since the protagonist Défilé is a member of this society, but also other women, such as Caroline’s grandmother in the story “Caroline’s Wedding”, was a member in this secret women’s society (Danticat 165).

Behind all this stands another much bigger problem in the relationship between historical events and historiography, which Braziel sums up in relation to Haiti and its people:

[...] every written historiography writes into existence its own realities, and it eclipses alternative realities, a constitutive part of historiography is that in creating knowledges, historians also simultaneously create blindspots; in writing an account, historians also inadvertently write others seemingly out of existence and too often these Haitian historical blindspots have been *femmes*, *paysans* and *Kreyòl istwa* (women, rural peasants and Creole stories). (Braziel 74)

Braziel’s statement holds true to a large extent. However, in the case of the massacre in 1937, it is clear that people in positions of power in Haiti were, amongst others, mainly responsible for this blindspot in historiography and not historians alone. Consequently, it is suggested that a lot of Haitian history has not manifested in historiography yet but there is still hope that this will happen with some of the memory that is still lingering. Thus, one of the values of Danticat’s fiction lies in the fact that she tells stories that were previously “contested, incomplete and officially ignored” (Collins 45). So, “for Danticat, the predicament ‘of stealing stories’ is offset by the pressing need to excavate silenced histories” (Collins 45). Again, it seems feasible to cite Irene Visser at this point, who writes that it “is the domain of literature to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions and or complete exactitude” (Visser 255). This argument is true in many ways for this section. Despite the fact that literature does make scientific claims like historiography and its sources may not be fully retraceable, its content is still able to challenge and complement history proper.

2.2. History and memory

As it was explained in section 2.2., historiography and Haiti's past sometimes complement each other, but sometimes they even differ from each other. What contests official historiography is the memory of exactly those past events, which have been condemned to silence. Therefore, when discussing the background of Danticat's stories, it is not only history proper that should be taken into consideration but also the concept of memory and its significance for the recounting of the traumatic past.

Thus, the question is in how far memory is used, at least partly, to substitute history. Melvin Dixon suggests that specific sites "have been used by many African-American writers not only to evoke a sense of place but, more importantly, to enlarge a frame of cultural reference for the depiction of black experiences by anchoring that experience in memory" (Dixon 20). Dixon further argues that this is a kind of memory "that ultimately rewrites history" (Dixon 20). His view is exceptional because he attributes memory more power than historiography, which had been the dominant power concerning the telling of the past so far. Dixon further refers to the historian Pierre Nora, who coined the term *lieux de mémoire*, which Dixon uses as a means to recover the past and he intends

[...] to show that the presence in our culture of significant *lieux de mémoire* establishes the value of cultural memory and the very kind of history or historiography that is not dependent on written analysis or criticism but rather achieves an alternative record of critical discussion through the exercise of memory. Memory becomes a tool to regain and reconstruct not just the past but history itself. What is useful in Nora's argument is his broad recognition of how *lieux de mémoire* may contribute to the process of cultural recovery. (Dixon 18-19)

Taking Dixon's arguments into consideration, it can be assumed that Danticat too employed *lieux de mémoire* in *Krik? Krak!*. Furthermore, by adopting the genre of the short story cycle, she directly refers to the traditional ritual of oral storytelling for memorising the past in Haiti. Before, significant *lieux de mémoire* are provided from Danticat's text, it is crucial to explain the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, first. Nora himself explains *lieux de mémoire* as such:

Every previous historical or scientific approach to memory, whether national or social, has concerned itself with *realia*, with things in themselves and in their immediate reality. Contrary to historical objects, however, *lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs. This is not to say that they are without content, physical presence, or history, it is to suggest that what makes them *lieux de mémoire* is precisely that by which they escape from history. In this sense, the *lieu de mémoire* is double: a site of excess closed upon

itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of its possible significations.” (Nora 23-24)

Furthermore, a crucial characteristic of lieux de mémoire is “[...] their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning [...]” (Nora 19). One example in the short story cycle of such a lieu de mémoire is the Massacre River that separates the Dominican Republic from Haiti. Before the massacre in 1937, it was only seen as the natural border between two countries. It was rather viewed as an obstacle between the countries but it did not prevent people to cross the border repeatedly. During the massacre, in Danticat’s story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, Défilé managed to swim through the river and for her, the other side of the river symbolized a safe place. In addition, in the reading of “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, Danticat depicts a ritual of mourning for the massacre in 1937 that has been practiced by a secret women’s society for years. Therefore, the whole procedure of the pilgrimages to the river, the mourning rituals at the river and the river itself (Danticat 40-41) create a new lieu de mémoire in remembrance of the victims of the massacre. Thus, this lieu de mémoire compensates for the lack of historical recognition of the horrible events that happened in 1937. Furthermore, it shows the endless potential of this lieu de mémoire as its meaning is constantly recycled during the story.

On top of that, not only places can be lieux de mémoire but also historical or folkloric figures since Nora stated that “[...] anything pertaining to the cult of the dead, anything related to the patrimony, anything administering the presence of the past within the present – it is clear that some seemingly improbable objects can be legitimately considered *lieux de mémoire* [...]” (Nora 20). Consequently, Braziel argues that Défilé-la-folle is a lieu de mémoire too alongside another important folkloric figure called Sor Rose. As well as Défilé-la-folle, Sor Rose was also a slave and raped by her French owner. According to legend, she became pregnant and gave birth to the Republic of Haiti. Those two women are stored “in the collective memory of *Ayiti* within the repositories of folklore, legend, *chante* (songs), *powvèb* (proverbs), and other oral histories of vodou” (Braziel 79). Consequently, they also became lieux de mémoire for Haitians and while Défilé-la-folle is the great-great-grandmother of Défilé in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, Sor Rose is mirrored in the dead baby that was found in the street by Défilé’s granddaughter Marie in the story “Between the Pool and the Gardenias” since Marie calls her Rose (Danticat 92). Following Braziel’s argument, “[i]n Danticat’s revisions of Sor Rose as the dead baby Rose in “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, the violence of rape breeds death at the heart of the republic” (Braziel 79). Braziel further

suggests that including Défilé-la-folle and Sor Rose in the short story cycle is a symbol for Haiti's daughters that "are searching for lost historical mothers" (Brazier 80-81).

Speaking of traumatic events such as the massacre, when Nora compares memory to history, he states that "[m]emory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past" (Nora 7). As such, the notion of memory seems to be even more appropriate to the writing of traumatic pasts than history bearing in mind that it is the memory of the traumatic event that haunts traumatized people's present and not history that does so. Therefore, it seems only feasible that Danticat predominately employed memory and various lieux de mémoire instead of history proper to conduct her short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. However, it is to say that memory and history cannot be separated either and as Brazier notes that "[h]istory and memory are entangled ideas, not separate ones with the first belonging, ostensibly to public culture and the second to individual psyche; both are interwoven in the Caribbean imaginary as it reflects on nature and remembers subterranean and submarine histories" (Brazier 73). The subterranean and submarine histories that Brazier writes about are the ones that probably are less likely to be reflected in historiography but rather in Haitian folklore. Danticat, on the other hand, includes both, history and folklore, in her fictional accounts of the past. For example, in the first story, there is a reference to the "Children of the Sea", which symbolize the slaves who died at sea when they came from Africa to Haiti on ships. In this way, the author includes submarine histories. Concerning the subterranean histories, the characters usually maintain close relationships to their deceased family members. One of these examples is Marie in the fifth story "Between the Pool and the Gardenias", in which the protagonist explains that "[t]here were many nights when I saw some old women leaning over my bed. [...] Mama had to introduce me to them, because they had all died before I was born" (Danticat 94). This way of telling stories, as it includes not only the Haitian past but also Haitian beliefs, is unique in Danticat's fiction. This and Danticat's aim of "writing down the secret hurts and violations that have accumulated, as well as the lies and are perpetuated, in the lives of Haitians and Haitian-Americans, Danticat's work formalizes the oral tradition and the unspoken histories by translating them into the written word" (Sarhou 103). For this reason, even though Danticat's work is not part of history proper, it certainly has value in the process of coming to terms with Haiti's violent and distorted past.

3. Literary Analysis of *Krik? Krak!*'s trauma aspect

Davis describes Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* as "a literary response to the Haitian situation and a feeling description of the immigration of the 1980s" (Davis 67). This chapter will investigate how trauma is approached in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* starting with a definition of the genre of the short story cycle and an explanation for the author's choice of using the short story cycle as a genre to convey her stories. Then there will be the attempt to categorize the reasons why the characters in *Krik? Krak!* are traumatized. Furthermore, it can be observed that there is a difference between sudden and prolonged forms of trauma and there will be a section that deals with examples of these forms in the short story cycle. It also seems necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary victims of trauma as both types appear in Danticat's work. Another section deals with the issue how the protagonists are affected by the post-traumatic stress disorder and other after-effects of traumatic experiences. This chapter will also be concerned with the notion of melancholia and in how far Danticat focuses on this typical feature of trauma narratives. Finally, the last section of this chapter explains why silence is a crucial aspect in the analysis of trauma narratives and it discusses how silence perpetuates the traumatic experience in the short story cycle.

3.1. The genre of the short story cycle

A definition of the genre of the short story cycle was coined by Ingram, who states that it is "a set of stories linked to each other in such a way as to maintain a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit" (qtd. in Davis 65). In Danticat's case, the short story cycle consists of nine stories and an epilogue and Danticat manages to maintain the balance between individuality and the larger unit in various ways. First of all, a salient feature that unites the stories is that in nine out of ten, the plot revolves around a female character of Haitian descent and when reading the short story cycle carefully, the reader notices by and by that the snippets provided by the individual stories are pieces of the larger unit of the history of a family as well as history of Haiti. Moreover, the relations between the women in the stories become clear when the narrator in the epilogue states that "there are nine hundred and ninety-nine women who went before you". As the episode is the tenth part in the short story cycle, it is strongly suggested that all the nine stories that were told before in the cycle were episodes in the lives of the female ancestors of the narrator. Moreover, the relations between the female protagonists are hinted at for the first time in the

fifth story “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, when the narrator Marie lists the names she wanted to give the baby girls that her “body could never hold” (Danticat 92). The names she recites, “Eveline, Josephine, Jacqueline, Hermine, Marie Magdalène, Célianne” (Danticat 92), are the names of women that occur in the stories before and after the fifth story. To illustrate this point, it is explained that the names Eveline and Josephine refer to Marie’s great-grandmother and mother (Brazier 81), respectively, and Hermine’s mother and Jacqueline are members of a secret women’s society in Ville Rose that regularly comes together to mourn the victims of the massacre in 1937 (Danticat 165). Hermine is Caroline’s mother in the story “Caroline’s Wedding” and Jacqueline helps Josephine overcome the pain of Défilé’s death in the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. Thus, it becomes apparent that the ties between the women, who seem to be loosely connected at first, become more and more interwoven and connected to each other the more often the stories are read. This is also hinted at when Gracina playfully tells her sister Caroline that “all Haitians know each other” (Danticat 169) in the ninth story “Caroline’s Wedding”.

Apart from the family relation, the protagonists are also tied together by the trauma that, in some cases, is passed on from one generation to the other. For instance, Défilé in the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” is accused of being a *lougrou*, a fate that she shares with her granddaughter Marie, who tells her story in the fifth part of the cycle “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, and says that “[m]y grandmother Défilé who died with a bald head in prison, because God had given her wings” (Danticat 94). The wings that Marie refers to symbolize Défilé’s survival of the massacre in 1937. Those wings were later misinterpreted as signs of her being a *loup garou* when an infant died in her care. *Loup garous* can be defined as witches “who have the power to change themselves into dogs, horses, trees and other animals or objects” (Simpson 219). In contrast to other countries, this belief was “usually taken very seriously” (Simpson 219) and had very serious consequences for those who were accused of being a *loup garou*. Consequently, Marie left her home in Ville Rose because she feared that she, too, would be accused of being a *loup garou* because she was not able to have a baby: “The ones my body could never hold. The ones that somehow got suffocated inside me and made my husband wonder if I was killing them on purpose” (Danticat 92).

Nevertheless, the ties and family relations are mostly far from apparent at first sight. Not only does Danticat avoid mentioning her characters’ names on many occasions, she also only provides scarce information on the ties between her characters. Consequently, the stories seem to be individual accounts of independent protagonists on the surface. This impression is emphasized by the point of view of narration since in seven out of ten episodes, the author

employs a first person limited narrator. These narrative voices usually do not bother to explain their family relations to the reader, apart from occasional snippets of memories of the past. Consequently, it is the reader's task to put together the pieces of the puzzle. In two other stories, Danticat uses a third person limited perspective. By doing so, the narrative voice keeps the distance to the story, which conveys an even stronger sense of individuality and independency from the other stories. Taking all the features of binding and separating aspects together, Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* employs a "circular disposition in which the constituent narratives are simultaneously independent and interdependent" (Davis 2001: 65-66), which is another typical feature of the short story cycle.

Another salient characteristic of this genre, according to Ingram, is the "consistency of theme and an evolution from one story to the next" (qtd in Davis 66). The consistency of theme is certainly provided by the family bonds and the traumata deriving from violence and poverty that haunt most of the protagonists whereas the evolution of the stories is mirrored mainly in the change of places. The first seven stories take place either in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, or in Ville Rose, a fictional village in Haiti. From the eighth story onwards, the characters live in New York, where they finally manage to escape Haiti's violence and grinding poverty. This evolution from Haiti to New York is already indicated in the first story "Children of the Sea", when the male protagonist is forced to leave the country due to political persecution. While the first story features an open ending, the ninth story ties up some of the loose ends when Gracina and her mother attend mass to mourn the girl called Célianne from the first story, who was also a passenger on the boat of the male protagonist. After giving birth, she drowned herself in the sea when the baby died in her arms (Danticat 167). Even though it is not mentioned explicitly that some of the people on the boat survived, the reader may suspect that at least some of them managed to survive since the Haitian community in New York received this piece of information on Célianne. Furthermore, the mass illustrates the ties not only between the first and the ninth story, but also between the Haitian community inside and outside of Haiti.

Finally, it is important to mention that the genre of the short story cycle derived from "oral traditions of narrative while embodying signs of modernity. One of its most salient features is its attempt to emulate the act of storytelling, the effort of a speaker to establish solidarity with an implied audience by recounting a series of tales [...]" (Davis 66).

To mirror the act of storytelling is a main feature of the short story cycle, as Davis claims, Danticat employs it in various ways. The title already induces the author's intention of telling stories since the question *Krik?* and the exclamation *Krak!* are part of a warm-up ritual

in the Haitian storytelling tradition (Coupeau 13). Coupeau explains that “[t]his storytelling tradition embodies a collection of stories of wisdom that have been transmitted from generation to generation” (Coupeau 13). The genre of the oral narrative also implies the participatory act of the listener. This holds true for reading too bearing in mind that it is the reader’s task to discover the connections between the family members (Davis 70). Additionally, there are at least two different ways how Danticat talks to her readers directly. The first example is rather subtle. In the first story “Children of the Sea”, the male and female protagonist exchange letters which they cannot send to each other. The girl cannot send them because of the constant threats of violence in the streets of Port-au-Prince while her boyfriend would not be able to receive them anyway because he escaped Haiti on a boat due to political persecution. Consequently, there is no way that the letters are exchanged and thus, have an audience that is available to the writer. That is why the reader is put into the position of a witness. This witnessing can be understood as a subtle way of making the reader part of the story (Shaw 2). In contrast, a more obvious way to include the reader is Danticat’s use of the second person narrator in the epilogue (Davis 79). The following excerpt illustrates that the author does not only address the reader directly, she also suggests that the reader is part of the narrative, when she writes that “[y]ou remember thinking while braiding your hair that you look a lot like your mother. Your mother, who looked a lot like your grandmother and her grandmother before her” (Danticat 224).

To conclude, Danticat’s short story cycle features many aspects that scholars view as crucial for this genre and according to Davis, this kind of narrative lends itself particularly as a vehicle for ethnic fiction (Davis 72).

After having outlined the basic characteristics of the genre of the short story cycle, this section will illustrate in how far the cycle lends itself to narrating trauma. First of all, it can be suggested that this genre, being a hybrid, mirrors the hybrid identity of the Haitian community in the US. Davis claims that the short story cycle is a hybrid because it occupies “an indeterminate place within the field of narrative, resembling the novel in its totality, yet composed of distinct stories” (Davis 72). Thus, this kind of fiction enhances “awareness of immigrant issues through renewed ethnic creativity. The ethnic short story cycle may therefore be considered the formal materialization of the trope of doubleness as the between-world condition is presented via a form that vacillates between two genres” (Davis 72).

This hybrid identity is a central topic in the eighth and ninth story as well as the epilogue in which the protagonists try to establish a new identity while still struggling with their traumatic past. According to Davis, “ethnic short story cycles may project a desire to

come to terms with a past that is both personal and collective: this type of fiction often explores the ethnic character and history of a community as a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement, and search for self and community” (Davis 73). This traumatic struggle for identity becomes particularly apparent at the beginning of the ninth story “Caroline’s Wedding”, when Gracina, who was born in Haiti, obtains her naturalisation certificate and the situation is illustrated in a battle metaphor: “As I stood on the courthouse steps, I wanted to run back to my mother’s house waving the paper like the head of an enemy rightfully conquered in battle” (157). This triumph is sharply contrasted to the situation when she has to temporarily trade in her certificate for a passport application and she “suddenly felt like unclaimed property” (158). When she finally has all her papers together, in particular her passport, she says that “[f]or the first time in my life, I felt truly secure living in America. It was like being in a war zone and finally receiving a weapon of my own, like standing on the firing line and finally getting a bullet-proof vest” (213). As these excerpts show, obtaining a legal passport is a great relief for Gracina and as the last excerpt is taken from a passage that is close to the end of the ninth story as well as the whole short story cycle as such, the passport can be seen as a ‘and they all lived happily ever after’ kind of fairy tale ending, or as the end of a “personal odyssey” (Davis 73) after all the struggles and traumata they had to face.

A second reason why the short story cycle seems to be a useful tool to narrate trauma is its characteristic of independent and interdependent stories. This feature allows a sense of fragmentation, which is characteristic for the narration of traumatic experiences. Although the stories are connected on a deeper level, it does not seem to be the case on the surface. Thus, the reader might get the impression that the sequence of the stories is arbitrary since there seems to be no chronological order or other logic behind it. However, after having a closer look, it can be argued that the sequence of the stories is based on subconscious associations. How these associations connect the stories and in how far these associations mirror trauma will be illustrated in the following since according to Collins, trauma fiction is characterized “not only in terms of its content but also through fragmented form, where temporal and narrative disjuncture and repetition reinscribe the traumatic crisis” (Collins 7).

As far as the fragmented sequence of the tales is concerned, the cycle starts with “Children of the Sea” which takes place after the coup d’état in 1991. Despite the time setting of the first story, the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” is narrated by Josephine, of whom we know that she was born in 1937 and who is only a girl in the second episode. So, apparently there is no link between these two stories. However, there is a vague connection

regarding the place where the story is set as the protagonists of the first story flee from political persecution from Port-au-Prince to Ville Rose, which is a place that is mentioned at the beginning of the second story. The link between the second and the third part of the cycle also seems to be the location because the reader is left in the dark concerning the temporal setting. As far as the location is concerned, however, Josephine's mother in the second story is brought from Ville Rose to the prison in Port-au-Prince and it seems that the third tale "A Wall of Fire Rising" is set in a shantytown of Port-au-Prince. What connects the third and the fourth story "Night Women" is neither place nor time nor family relations, but the trauma derived from grinding poverty that most of the Haitian population suffers from. Whereas the family in "A Wall of Fire Rising" struggles to earn enough money to feed the family, the woman in the next story has to work as a prostitute in order to earn a living. Even if one might say that these two forms of poverty differ from each other, it is suggested that Danticat just offers a broad spectrum of how people deal with this condition. In contrast to the third and the fourth story, which do not seem to have a strong connection, the fifth story that tells about the life of Marie, who is the daughter of Josephine and the goddaughter of Lili from the third episode, comes to the reader as an epiphany in the middle of the cycle since it ties up some of the loose ends and establishes family relations. The sixth story, "The Missing Peace", features many connections to the stories before. First of all, this episode is set in the aftermath of the coup d'état in 1991, thus correlating with the first story, and secondly, the narrator's name and that of her mother are Marie Magdalène which is a name that Marie in the previous story wanted to call one of the babies she expected. Thus, the fifth tale anticipates the sixth tale in a very subtle way. Thirdly, the sixth story also takes place in the fictional village Ville Rose, which is well known by the reader by now. The seventh part of the cycle "Seeing Things Simply" also takes place in Ville Rose, but it strongly indicates a turning point since the narrative tone becomes lighter and more hopeful. In this story, a snippet of Princesse's life is told from a third person limited perspective and it tells the tale of a girl who poses naked for the twenty-year old painter Catherine from Guadeloupe. The young woman helps the girl to lose her shame and accept her body. Moreover, the artist awakens the desire in Princesse to become an artist herself. This depiction of life in Haiti contrasts sharply with the traumatic events that were narrated in the previous stories as it depicts and treats the body in general, and the female body in particular, that was tortured and killed before, with care: "One day Catherine hoped to get Princesse to roam naked on the beach attempting to make love to the crest of an ocean wave, but for now it was enough for her to make Princesse comfortable with her nudity while safely hidden from the sight of onlookers" (Danticat 129). It is apparent that

Danticat depicts her character, though nude, in a safe environment. The theme of a safe environment is prolonged since the next episodes that do not take place in Haiti anymore, but in Brooklyn, New York. In the eighth story “New York Day Women”, the focus moves away from traumatising life events and circumstances to an illustration of how the first and second generation of Haitian immigrants in New York deal with the discrepancy of what they lived through and what their parents lived through, respectively. The eighth part seems to be closely related to the fourth one because of the titles: “Night Women” and “New York Day Women”. Both stories illustrate Haitian women’s working life inside and outside Haiti. While the first depicts the life of a prostitute, the latter shows how a middle-aged Haitian woman works as a babysitter while the child’s mother goes jogging. At first, the correlations between the titles seem to be the only feature that connects the stories to the cycle, but when it is mentioned that “[f]at and cholesterol killed your aunt Hermine” (Danticat 148), it becomes clear later on that this statement was an anticipation of the next story “Caroline’s Wedding”. In this story, Hermine is the mother of Caroline and still alive and well. Thus, chronology is again not what ties the stories together. It rather seems that the tale-teller moves from story to story by associative connections.

While I tried to find possible connections between the stories that should help to understand why Danticat put the various parts of the cycle in this specific sequence, there are scholars who point out that the fragmentation of the short story cycle can be seen as “a kind of violence perpetrated on the text itself which mediates the epistemic violence of representing trauma” (Collins 14). Collins refers in this statement to Danticat’s *The Dew Breaker*, that is a short story cycle as well. I concede that this argument certainly holds true to some extent for *Krik? Krak!* as well, but at the same time, it is feasible to argue that Danticat also emphasizes connections between the stories.

This is especially true for the epilogue, in which the tale-teller steps forward for the first time in addressing the reader directly by using the second person point of view and explains why she felt the urge to tell these stories:

You remember thinking while braiding your hair that you look a lot like your mother and her grandmother before her. It was their whispers that pushed you, their murmurs over pots sizzling in your head. A thousand women urging you to speak through the blunt tip of your pencil. [...] These women, they asked for your voice so that they could tell your mother in your place that yes, women like you do speak even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand. Even if it’s patois, dialect, Creole. (Danticat 222)

In this passage, not only the cyclic character of the genre becomes apparent due to the constant repetition of the sentence “You remember thinking while braiding your hair [...]”, but there is finally a distinct connection established between all the tales that were told. As the narrator of the epilogue states that her ancestors speak through her, it makes sense that these tales come from memories and are remembered through associative links. This impression is emphasized when the narrator is told that “[t]here are nine hundred and ninety-nine women who went before you [...]” (Danticat 222). It seems that the short story cycle with its nine proper stories and the tenth part, which contains epilogue, mirrors the generations of women in the narrator’s family and establishes her within the family. By doing so, it becomes clear that each story illustrates the individual fate of a woman in the tale-teller’s ancestral line and at the same time the cycle represents the story of the collective of these women. Consequently, the short story cycle lives up to its most salient characteristic as it, according to Ingram’s definition, oscillates between independency and interdependency (qtd. in Davis 65) and it became clear that the genre of the cycle is the perfect vehicle to achieve this effect of discrepancy. At the same time, however, especially because the narrative tone seems to become more positive, Davis suggests that

[o]n different levels, ethnic short story cycles may project a desire to come to terms with a past that is both **personal and collective**: this type of fiction often explores the ethnic character and history of a community as a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement, and search for self and community. (Davis 73)

Particularly the cyclic character of this genre implicates that the identity of the self and the community are constantly reinvented. Furthermore, after experiencing trauma, it is an important aspect of recovery to reinvent oneself and find a new identity (Herman 196). Often old identities and the women themselves die and are reborn in their children, especially in their daughters. Consequently, this genre also shows similarities to the characteristic of trauma as it conveys the notion that trauma cannot be grasped in its entirety (Collins 6). I argue that it rather takes generations of women to work through the trauma and come to terms with it in order to heal it and forge a new identity.

3.2. Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* as a trauma narrative

It was mentioned that the search for identity of the self and the community is mostly induced by the trauma that happened to the characters. Indeed, Herman states that the victim's "relationships have been tested and forever changed by the trauma, now she must develop new relationships" (Herman 196). While the previous section has illustrated how the traumatic content is mirrored in the form of the short story cycle genre, this chapter will deal with the content of the short story cycle, i.e. the traumata that Danticat depicts in *Krik? Krak!*. Therefore, the following section will deal with the question how Danticat weaves trauma into the narrative.

Herman's statement shows that in coming to terms with trauma, not only the individual but also the victim's community is involved. Beyond that, it is important to acknowledge that in some cases trauma might not only affect individuals but a whole community.

Therefore, the first section of this chapter will deal with individual as well as collective traumatization. Secondly, it will be investigated whether Danticat rather depicts single traumatic events or the prolonged, sustained and cumulative form of trauma as the latter is said to be more characteristic for postcolonial trauma literature (Visser 252). The next part will be concerned with primary and secondary victims of trauma since new approaches to trauma theory claim that it is important to bear in mind both kinds of victimisation (Visser 276). Furthermore, victims do "not experience trauma as it occurs" (Caruth 273), which is a phenomenon that is called belatedness (Caruth 9). That is to say that trauma can be latent for some time (Caruth 273), but at some point it is triggered and haunts the victim "in repeated nightmares" (Caruth 11) and in the "repetitive appearance of hallucinations, and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 11). Furthermore, Visser claims that "[a]s the subject of study in trauma theory, then, 'trauma' refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage" (272). Consequently, trauma's belatedness is such an integral part of the experience of trauma victims that it will be a matter of investigation how Danticat deals with PTSD and other after-effects of traumatic events in her work. Furthermore, traditional trauma theory claims that maintaining the posttraumatic condition is "the only proper ethical response to trauma, displacing any other memorial relation to the past and situating memory entirely under the sign of post-traumatic melancholia" (Luckhurst 210). Irene Visser contradicts this statement by claiming that postcolonial trauma narratives usually move away "from melancholia and 'unspeakability' to resistance and recovery" (Visser 278).

Therefore, a section in this chapter will also deal with the notion of melancholia and whether Danticat's work includes traces of melancholia or not. Finally, it has been claimed by scholars like Sarthou that "silence perpetuates lies and prevents any movement toward psychological or social wholeness" (Sarthou 109-110). That is why this analysis will also be concerned with the question in how far silence hinders Danticat's characters from recovering from trauma.

3.2.a. Individual and collective traumatization

It was explained in the first chapter on trauma theory that a basic distinction between individual and collective traumatization can be made. It seems as if Caruth, representing the traditional approach to trauma theory, refers more to the individual experience of trauma than the collective one when she provides the example of a soldier who "was faced with sudden and massive death around him [...] only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares" (Caruth 11). What seems to be the case here is that the soldier is seen as an individual rather than a part of a collective of soldiers. Furthermore, most of the literature concerned with trauma theory does not thoroughly work out the difference between individual and collective traumatization.

However, it can be claimed that this distinction is, although not explicitly explained, visible in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. As previously explained, Danticat's choice of using the short story cycle as a vehicle to narrate trauma mirrors both individual and collective trauma as the individual stories represent individual fates and the cycle stands for the collective of traumatic Haitian experiences. As far as the content is concerned each story gives voice to another protagonist who tells his or her story. Danticat even manages to individualize the characters within a story. This becomes particularly evident in "Children of the Sea" in which the font of the female protagonist differs from that of the male one insofar as her story is written down in bold and she omits case sensitivity (Danticat 4). In "New York Day Women", Danticat uses a similar method to distinguish between the mother's and the daughter's voice since the mother's voice is written in bold (Danticat 146). Another example of how Danticat's work oscillates between individual and collective trauma is shown in the stories "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" and "Between the Pool and the Gardenias". These two stories address four women, namely Eveline, Défilé, Josephine and Marie. Eveline died in the massacre of thousands of Haitians in the Dominican Republic in 1937, Défilé was accused of being a loutageur and died in prison, and Josephine's daughter Marie is accused by a Dominican of being a loutageur. On the one hand, all of these stories illustrate individual fates of death, violence and wrong accusations. On the other hand, the fact that all of these women

are related to each other and face similar threats point in the direction of collective traumatization. Accordingly, Davis sums up that “the two principal thematic constituents of the ethnic short story cycle are the presentation of identity and community as separate entities and the notion of an identity within a community, again, a common theme of ethnic fiction” (73).

I argue that even though Danticat makes room for both, individual and collective trauma, in her short story cycle, the epilogue puts the individual stories in a larger context and thus, conveys the impression that her work is primarily interested in presenting the larger picture of collective suffering. For example, the narrator in the epilogue speaks of “nine hundred and ninety-nine women who went before you” (222). Here, apart from aligning the narrator with the protagonists of the previous stories, it is crucial to mention that Danticat uses the second person narrator in the epilogue. By doing so, the reader takes part “in the process of creating and preserving community through narrative” (Davis 79) and by including the reader into the narrative, there is again an emphasis on community and the collective rather than individuality. Therefore, the narrator’s ties to the protagonists as well as the inclusion of the reader in the narration leave the impression that the author aims at showing that we are all in this together. This assumption is emphasized by Birgit Spengler’s statement in her analysis of Danticat’s novel *The Dew Breaker*, when she argues that Danticat’s aim is for the reader to “realize the global dimensions of violence and, therefore, her own enmeshment in a violent world” (Spengler 195).

Another reason why I suggest that Danticat’s work rather focuses on collective than individual traumatization is that she avoids giving names to her protagonists in some stories. For example, in “Children of the Sea”, “Night Women” as well as “New York Day Women”, the characters remain without a name. Therefore, even though the author depicts individuals that live through a certain traumatic event or under certain traumatizing circumstances, these protagonists can be understood as representatives for the fates of many others. Davis also thinks along these lines when she refers to the women in *Krik? Krak!*, “who are woven into a collectivized interchangeability through the cycle’s juxtapositions of characters and motifs” (Davis 74).

Davis refers here to the “relational network that links grandmothers, mothers, daughters, aunts and sisters” (Davis 74). Furthermore, one of the recurring motifs is that the daughters “feel the need to complete the work their mothers had left undone” (Davis 75). For instance, Josephine was born when her grandmother died in the massacre in 1937 and her mother would say that “[a]t least you came out at the right moment to take my mother’s

place” (41). A second example is Emilie (Davis 75), who attempts to finish sewing “some old things together onto that piece of purple cloth” (114). Since those women take the place of those who came before them and pursue the same tasks, it can be argued that Danticat rather depicts collective than individual traumatization. However, it has to be mentioned that Davis’ argument is concerned with examples of protagonists that have names in the short story cycle and therefore, they are distinguishable from others which point out the characters’ individuality at the same time.

Therefore, another example should show how Danticat manages to present an individual as a representative of the collective in “Children of the Sea” in so far as that she does not assign a name for the protagonist. In this part of the cycle, it is particularly striking that both of the narrators do not have names. In the story, the male narrator escapes political persecution on an unseaworthy boat towards Miami. Although it becomes more and more obvious that the chances to survive the boat trip are low, it is made clear that in Haiti, the young man would not have had any chance to survive. For instance, the man’s girlfriend reports that some of his fellow students “got shot in front of fort dimanche prison today. they were demonstrating for the bodies of the radio six. that is what they are calling you all. The radio six. you have a name. you have a reputation. a lot of people think you are dead like the others” (Danticat 7). This excerpt is a good example of how Danticat mixes individuality with community. On the one hand, she separates his fellow students from her boyfriend, the survivor, in calling them ‘they’ at the beginning and calling the boyfriend ‘you’ in the last sentence. In the middle of the excerpt, however, the people from Radio Six, those who were resisting the regime, are depicted as a collective, which includes both, the students and the boyfriend. The only way in which the boyfriend differs from his fellow students is that he survived the political persecution due to his flight.

Another way in which Danticat refers to collective traumatization is that she includes women and the poor in her narrative. As such her stories, even though they are fictional, pose a “stark contrast to traditional history, which focusses on the lives, actions, decisions, deaths, and wars of men” (Johnson paragraph 7). Although Danticat’s work is clearly a work of fiction and not history, Johnson argues that, at least in relation to the massacre in 1937, her work may serve as testimony and in this collection of testimony, “Danticat is inscribing not only the individual stories but also the collective memory of the event, what remains in Haitian memory [...]” (Johnson paragraph 28). I further argue that by including more groups of the population and giving them a voice leads to the impression that Danticat broadens the traditional historical concept of collective memory, specifically traumatic collective memory.

Consequently, by including and placing an emphasis on collective suffering, it can be argued that on the one hand, Danticat's fiction helps to deepen our understanding of collective traumatization in general and on the other hand, she also employs many ways of how it can be represented in fictional texts. Furthermore, Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* is a remarkable example of how the author manages to oscillate between individual and collective voices in her text.

3.2.b. Danticat's depiction of violence, poverty and emigration

In *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat mainly depicts traumatization that is the result of violence connected to political and religious persecution. Furthermore, her protagonists have to deal with the traumatizing effects of poverty and emigration. This section will deal with an analysis of how Danticat narrates trauma in relation to the above-mentioned topics.

Both religious and political persecution are often accompanied with violence. In her analysis of Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*, Spengler indicates that violence "has the potential to recreate itself endlessly" (Spengler 191). Amongst others, violent political persecution is at the roots of trauma in *Krik? Krak!* as well, for instance, in "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" when Défilé has to flee the Dominican Republic due to the massacre that was directed against Haitians. The racist background of the slaughters is not mentioned in the story, but Défilé tells her daughter repeatedly about the events of the day when "[...] she could still see the soldiers chopping up *her* mother's body and throwing it into the river along with so many others" (40). As both mother and daughter are affected by violence, stemming from the dramatic events in 1937, Spengler's notion of violence's recreational power is emphasized in this passage.

Furthermore, Spengler states that Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* "seeks to enlarge the reader's understanding of violence – of the ripples it casts *and* of the difficult process of reconstruction" (Spengler 192). I argue that the same holds true for *Krik? Krak!* since it also features examples of how violence is potentiated. For instance, Défilé, after having survived the massacre in 1937, forges a new identity by claiming that she has wings of flames that helped her to survive (41). Ironically, these wings of flames may have led people to believe that she is a voodoo practitioner (38) and when an infant dies in her care, she is imprisoned. Défilé's daughter reports the events of her mother's arrest which suggests that violence is always boiling beneath the surface:

[...] I saw a group of people taking my mother away. Her face was bleeding from the pounding blows of rocks and sticks and the fists of strangers. She was being pulled

along by by two policemen, each tugging at one of her arms as she dragged her feet. The woman we had been staying with carried her dead son by the legs. The policemen made no efforts to stop the mob that way beating my mother. (39)

In this excerpt, not only the brutality of the police, but also the incredible rage of the civilians is devastating. Furthermore, the depiction of the woman and how she carried her dead infant as well as the way the policemen tug Défilé down the road comes close to predators dragging their prey. The passage shows that this “conjunction of different kinds of victims and different forms and effects of violence suggests that, once set loose, violence can be hardly limited – nor can its consequences be fathomed or controlled” (Spengler 192).

As all of these events depicted in the excerpt above can be seen as more or less related to the events in 1937, according to Spengler, Danticat’s depiction of violence is “asserting the persistent presence of the past that threatens to unmake the characters’ worlds” (Spengler 192). This statement is further emphasized by the fact that the whole story is called “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” even though on the surface it narrates the story of Défilé’s daughter, Josephine, and how she deals with her mother’s imprisonment. Thus, the title indicates that the troubles that Défilé faces in the present may have already started in 1937.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that Danticat particularl foregrounds violence against women. For example, in the sixth story, “The Missing Peace”, the Haitian-American journalist Emilie Gallant searches for her mother, who was a journalist as well. It is likely that Emilie’s mother, too, was killed by the army. That way the reader learns about a mass burial site (112) of political opponents and demonstrators (117). Thus, it is clear that trauma in this story is induced by political persecution. Another example of violence against women in connection with political persecution is also depicted in “Children of the Sea”. Célianne, who is a passenger on the boat of the male protagonist mentioned above, became pregnant when she was raped:

She was home one night with her mother and brother Lionel when some ten or twelve soldiers burst into the house. The soldiers held a gun to Lionel’s head and ordered him to lie down and become intimate with his mother. Lionel refused. Their mother told him to go ahead and obey the soldiers because she was afraid that they would kill Lionel on the spot if he put up more of a fight. Lionel did as his mother told him, crying as the soldiers laughed at him, pressing the gun barrels farther and farther into his neck. Afterwards, the soldiers tied up Lionel and their mother, and they each took turns raping Célianne. When they were done, they arrested Lionel, accusing him of moral crimes. After that night, Célianne never heard from Lionel again. The same night, Célianne cut her face with a razor so that no one would know who she was. Then as the facial scars were healing, she started throwing up and getting rashes. Next

thing she knew, she was getting big. She found out about the boat and got on. She is fifteen. (23-24)

On top of that, it is shown that women are not only the target in times of political upheaval, but also of violent acts associated with religious matters, particularly voodoo. Apart from Défilé's story, another, although less violent, act of religious persecution is portrayed in the fifth story "Between the Pool and the Gardenias", in which the main protagonist Marie finds a dead baby in the street. Since she has always wanted to have a baby, she takes it home with her. At the end of the story, she is found out by the Dominican gardener and accused of voodoo. Although there is no physical violence, the contempt of the Dominican is tangible:

"I call the gendarmes. They are coming. I smell rotten flesh. I know you kill the child and keep it with you for evil."

"You acted too soon," I said.

"You kill the child and keep it in your room."

"You know me", I said. "We've been together."

"I don't know you from a fly on a pile of cow manure," he said. "You eat little children who haven't even had time to earn their souls." (100)

All the accusations and the hate towards voodoo practitioners is put into words in this excerpt. On top of that, there is, apart from contempt, also fear that influences the man's deeds because Marie explains that "he only kept his hands on me because he was afraid I would run away and escape" (Danticat 101). So, even though they had sex with each other, it becomes apparent that there is no loyalty between these two. This is also true on a larger scale and may refer to the relationship between the two states, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is further suggested that the lack in loyalty also caused the arrest of Marie's grandmother Défilé, who also could not count on her employer and neighbor. Consequently, in her work, Danticat points out that not only the politically and religiously induced violence threatens peace, but also the knowledge about the readiness to use violence and the betrayal of people close to oneself is what weighs heavily on the minds of the traumatized.

Apart from violence, poverty is a main reason for trauma in Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*. This is particularly foregrounded in the third story, "A Wall of Fire Rising" and sometimes hinted at in memories or stories of the past in the eighth and the ninth story, which are already set in New York. Most often, poverty is mentioned in connection with not finding any work or getting enough food. Moreover, if there is work, it is mostly physically exhausting and derogatory. For instance, in the third story, Guy had to wait for six months to get a job at the sugar mill, but only to clean the latrines (Danticat 65-66). Another example is from

“Caroline’s Wedding”, in which Gracina explains that her “father pulled heavy carts for pennies” (Danticat 1995: 189) and her mother “sold jugs of water from the public fountain, charcoal, and grilled peanuts to get us something to eat” (Danticat 189). Often Gracina’s parents feared that their daughter “would die from colic and hunger” (Danticat 189), which was eventually the reason why the family emigrated to the United States.

Emigration is also a topic that is related to the traumata the characters in *Krik? Krak!* suffer from. Not only is it a topic in the first story “Children of the Sea”, but there are also other tales of suffering in the cycle in connection with migration and finding one’s place in a new country. For example, Gracina’s sister Caroline in the ninth story, “Caroline’s Wedding”,

[...] had been born without her left forearm. [...] After my mother was arrested in a sweatshop immigration raid, a prison doctor had given her a shot of a drug to keep her calm overnight. That shot, my mother believed, caused Caroline’s condition. Caroline was lucky to have come out missing only one forearm. She might not have been born at all. (159)

While this excerpt shows that even though the family had enough to eat at that moment, there are still incidents of violence in the new country that have left their scars of trauma in the family’s history. As far as the missing forearm is concerned, Danticat contradicts the Freudian notion that “*trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (Caruth 3). In her analysis of Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*, Novak argues that the protagonist’s wounds show how “[t]he physical traces of violence occupy and shape her present” (Novak 106). The same is true for Caroline, who is born with only one forearm. As such, the family’s long history of escape and immigration is not inscribed on Caroline’s mind, since Caroline was born in the USA (160), but on her body. In the story, it is stated that Caroline took her US citizenship for granted (160). However, to use Novak’s words about Amabelle in *The Farming of Bones*, “[t]his corporeal figuring reminds readers that the apparent element of latency in trauma is not because the event did not register, but because the body upon which it is written evades the narrow limits of language and representation” (Novak 103). Therefore, even though Caroline was born in the USA, the violence and trauma that her family has gone through is visible on her body and symbolises the loss they all have suffered. For example, it is described how Caroline’s and Gracina’s parents managed to emigrate to the USA circumventing the refugee boats and longish asylum procedures. It is explained that the girls’ father left his wife and Gracina behind and “[...] got a visa by taking vows in a false marriage with a widow who was leaving Haiti to come to the United States. He gave her some money and she took our last name. A few years later, my father divorced

the woman and sent for [his wife and daughter]" (190). From this excerpt, it becomes apparent to which lengths the family went in order to live a more prosperous and safer life or as Gracina would put it: "We had all paid dearly for this piece of paper, this final assurance that I belonged in the club. It had cost my parents' marriage, my mother's spirit, my sister's arm" (Danticat 214).

Another important passage in "Caroline's Wedding" is the one in which Caroline explains to her mother that she suffers from phantom limb pain due to the stress related to her marriage to the Bahamian Eric (198-199). Her mother answers that "'In that case, we all have phantom pain'" (199). The sudden pain that Caroline feels may stem from the fact that Caroline is "dismissive about her mother's Haitian customs" (Penier 79) and that "Danticat contests the idea that to form diasporic identity daughters must grow away from their mothers" (Penier 81). So, when the daughter is about to marry a man with a non-Haitian background, her body seems to rebel against that. On top of that, Caroline looks "as if she had aged several years since the last time we saw her" (199) on her wedding day and claims that "[a]ll this pain, all this pain in my arm makes it seem so impossible somehow" (200) to get married. Her mother then recalls her own wedding day and bathes her daughter until she feels better (200). According to Davis, this story shows that "the relationship will rest on the daughter's recognition of the value of the mother's establishment of community that provides them with the resources they need to survive on their own" (Davis 77). To conclude, by employing bodily images such as the missing forearm as well as actions related to the body such as being bathed, Danticat manages to express trauma, and healing in the case of the latter, not only in language but also in physical form and thus, she challenges the Freudian notion of trauma.

3.2.c. Sudden and prolonged forms of trauma

After analyzing Danticat's depiction of violence in connection with political and religious persecution as well as poverty and emigration, it becomes more and more evident that being under the constant threat of political or religious persecution is as traumatic as the sustained fear of not getting enough food. Moreover, as suggested in the previous section, even if a family moves to a safer place, like the USA, there are still threats and worries about one's legal status that haunts people's minds. Thus, trauma in Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle rather takes on the form of prolonged trauma opposed to trauma that stems from a single event (Visser 252). By doing so, it seems to corroborate Visser's hypothesis that postcolonial literature is rather concerned with the sustained form of trauma (Visser 252) than the trauma

described in Caruth's traditional approach to trauma theory. In this respect, Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* is no exception since most of her stories revolve around "repeated and cumulative stressor events" (Visser (252). However, as Michaela Borzaga rightfully adds, there are "other traumatizing factors in [...] life that cannot easily be described as 'events' – rather, as a series of *conditions* in which [...] life enfolds" (Borzaga 68).

This last statement seems to be more than true for *Krik? Krak!*. For example, Danticat usually does not explain the reasons for violence or poverty and if she does, she avoids doing so in great detail. In "Children of the Sea", the story is set against the backdrop of the coup d'état in which President Aristide was sent into exile (Penier 73) and the country was more or less kept under control by various military and para-military groups (Plummer 232, 234). However, the political background is only marginally referred to as not even Aristide, a major figure in this event, is mentioned by name in the story, but only called "the old president" (18). That is only one example amongst others that suggests that Danticat is more interested in her protagonists' everyday lives, so-to-speak the conditions under which they live, than the events themselves. Therefore, significant events in Haitian history are hardly explained, described or otherwise mentioned since the author is more concerned with the everyday lives of her protagonists.

Accordingly, Danticat's narration depicts terror that her characters experience as something common, everyday and arbitrary. Even the slightest mistake could cause trouble as it is implied in the following excerpt of the third story: "Lili and Guy passed the group, clinging to their son so that in his childhood naiveté he wouldn't accidentally glance at the wrong person and be called an insolent child" (Danticat 60). This incident can be an example of how highly charged the atmosphere generally is in Danticat's Haiti since even innocent children are accused of having ulterior motives. Still, this example is probably the least frightening one that is depicted in *Krik? Krak!*. Much more terrible are the reports of the girl in "Children of the Sea" that writes blandly in her letter about the excesses of the soldiers:

they have this thing now that they do. if they come into a house and there is a son and mother there, they hold a gun to their heads. they make the son sleep with his mother. if it is a daughter and father, they do the same thing. some nights papa sleeps at his brother's, uncle pressoir's house. uncle pressoir sleeps at our house, just in case they come. that way papa will never be forced to lie down in bed with me. instead uncle pressoir would be forced to, but that would not be so bad. we know a girl who had a child by her father that way. that is what papa does not want to happen, even if he is killed. (Danticat 12)

Even if people did not have to live through such a horror, it is clear from what is depicted by the female writer that the ubiquitous terror must bring the characters to their limits. Furthermore, it seems to be advisable to stay inside the houses and the protagonist writes about how this makes her “cross and irritable” (4): “i pass the time by chasing roaches around the house. i pound my heel on their heads. they make me so mad. everything makes me mad” (4). The short sentences, the repetition of the word ‘mad’ and the violence of what the girl does show how Danticat imagines life under such conditions: maddening and senseless.

Another example illustrates that life under such conditions is not only maddening and senseless, but it can also be devastatingly hopeless. In the case of the female protagonist’s neighbour, Danticat illustrates the senseless acts of violence that are inflicted on those who were suspected of being supporters of President Aristide:

last night they came to madan roger’s house. papa hurried inside as soon as madan roger’s screaming started. the soldiers were looking for her son. madan roger was screaming, you killed him already. we buried his head. you can’t kill him twice. they were shouting at her, do you belong to the youth federation with those youth vagabonds who were on the radio? she was yelling, do i look like a youth to you? can you identify your son’s other associates? [...] (16)

In this example, the soldiers’ questions hail down on the girl’s neighbour like a barrage of gunfire. The senselessness of the cross-examination is salient when Madan Roger makes fun of them by asking them whether she looks young enough to be a member of the youth federation. Despite her making fun of them, it is apparent that she is desperate when she screams at the soldiers that her son was indeed in the youth federation and that she hates them as much as her son hated them. This verbal liberation results in her being beaten to death. What is more, Madan Roger has no chance to escape or survive, even her neighbours, the girl’s family, do not have any means at hand to help her:

manman tells papa, you cannot let them kill somebody just because you are afraid. papa says, oh yes, you *can* let them kill somebody because you are afraid. they are the law. it is their right. we are just being good citizens, following the law of the land. it has happened before all over this country and tonight it will happen again and there is nothing we can do. (Danticat 17)

The argument between the girl’s parents not only illustrates the tremendous fear of the population in *Krik? Krak!*, but also the absolute freedom of the soldiers to do as one pleases without having to fear the consequences. That is why this is a crucial example of the devastating and lingering feeling of helplessness that is experienced during times of political

unrest by Danticat's protagonists. The incidence of violence depicted in the previous excerpt is particularly cruel. It seems, however, that even if the characters are not confronted with such a situation, there are other signs of the ongoing violence in the country. For example, it is occasionally mentioned that gunshots ring through the air, particularly in the sixth story "The Missing Peace" (Danticat 105, 116), which again emphasizes the heated atmosphere and the prolonged impact political unrest has on the Haitian people in the short story cycle. Furthermore, this example illustrates another condition under which people live in the Haiti Danticat depicts.

In addition, "[w]itnesses and victims carry the burdens of memory with them, facing the difficult task of coping with their traumatic experiences along with secondary forms of violence such as poverty [and] exile [...]" (Spengler 191). Consequently, poverty is another condition that Danticat's Haitians live in, another burden they have to bear, that prolongs trauma. For example, Lili in "A Wall of Fire Rising" reports that as far as food is concerned "[i]t was never too early to start looking around, to scrape together that night's meal" (Danticat 70). Particularly the phrase 'scrape together' suggests that the characters in this story are constantly occupied to satisfy their daily needs. Although the reader may hope for the protagonists to see a light of the end of the tunnel, Danticat destroys these hopes immediately in the case of Lili's husband, who steals a hot-air balloon. Davis suggests that this is one of "[t]hese desperate images of flight [that] attest to the need to escape from violence and oppression of the old country, another central concern of the characters" (Davis 71).

Indeed, life in Haiti as Danticat depicts it compels some of her characters to leave their homeland. In "Caroline's Wedding", Gracina explains why her parents left their native country behind: "When I was born, they felt a sense of helplessness. What if the children kept coming like the millions of flies constantly buzzing around them?" (189). As a consequence, the family decides to seek asylum in the USA and again, as mentioned above in connection with the heated political climate, there are these onerous conditions that left many of the characters feeling absolutely helpless.

It is further suggested that the impact of poverty can still be felt even if the outer circumstances are no longer present. In this way, Danticat manages to give insights into the prolonged impact of the trauma of poverty on her characters. This impact is particularly salient in the eighth story, in which the Haitian immigrants already live in the USA. Here, the narrator explains that "[t]wenty years we have been saving all kinds of things for the relatives in Haiti" (Danticat 150). This seems as if the fear of poverty is still lingering because it is

hinted that even though the family collects things in the garage, they are never sent anywhere (Danticat 150). Consequently, one might deduce from this that the poverty the family experienced in Haiti still has a prolonged impact even on those people living relatively well-off lives in the USA.

Another, yet probably more subtle, aspect of the life in Haiti that caused prolonged trauma is that of religious persecution. In the second story, “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, as well as in the fifth story, “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, religious matters are at the center of the protagonists’ traumatic experiences. Still, the fact that the threat is caused by religious and not political persecution is not apparent at first. At the beginning, Danticat only writes about a ritual: “Until we moved to the city, we went to the river every year on the first of November. The women would all dress in white. My mother would hold my hand tightly as we walked toward the water” (41). Although the women in this excerpt intend to mourn the victims of the massacre in 1937, according to Jana Evans Braziel, the white dresses show that these women are vodouisantes, i.e. voodoo witches. The pilgrimages and rituals at the river help the women “find reunion with their lost mothers and seek solace in ancestral spirits” (Braziel 81). This suggests that even though the women mourn people of a massacre that the Haitian government tried to sweep under the table, the fact that these women assembled regularly probably posed a threat to the anti-voodoo attitude of the government. As mentioned in chapter two, the Haitian government has regularly launched the so-called Anti-superstition campaigns (Braziel 74-75), which aimed at erasing voodooism. Consequently, members of this secret society had to come up with “codes and disciplines by which [they] could always know who the daughters of the river were” (Danticat 44). Therefore, in the second and in the fifth story, fear of being found out must have been a constant threat. Otherwise, the women would not have bothered to invent elaborate codes that should prevent them from being discovered (Danticat 44-45). In “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, the main character Marie leaves Ville Rose behind, which is presumably the place where also her grandmother Défilé and her mother Josephine lived, since she is suspected of being a voodoo witch because she only has stillborn babies. Thus, it can be argued that this woman was also worried about religious persecution so that she left her husband and her home behind in order to escape the people in the village who kept watching her with eagle-eyes (Danticat 92). Consequently, apart from political persecution and poverty, the prolonged fear of being accused for practicing voodoo is another threat the women in Danticat’s Haiti have to face.

To conclude, Danticat’s depiction of life in Haiti is characterised by fear of political and religious persecution as well as grinding poverty. Since the author’s narrative rarely

foregrounds the reasons and events that led to the conditions the protagonists live in, it is suggested that Danticat's writing not only contradicts the traditional approach to literary trauma theory, but also Visser's understanding of prolonged trauma. Therefore, it is feasible to argue that the characters in *Krik? Krak!* experience trauma as a condition, which is similar to Borzaga's observation of trauma. Thus, Danticat enables the reader to realize that the experience of trauma is far more complex than it is suggested by trauma theory.

3.3. Primary and secondary victims

This section will now turn to an analysis of the characters affected by trauma in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. Before that, however, it is necessary to give a short definition of various forms of trauma victims.

Basically, one can make a distinction between primary and secondary victims of trauma. Primary victims are those people who experienced and lived through trauma themselves, whereas secondary victims are defined as those people somehow related to the primary victim. This group includes witnesses, bystanders, relatives, therapists and friends of victims (Visser 272). Accordingly, this definition implies that secondary victims do not even need to be present in the traumatic event or situation, but somehow they inherit the fears and various other post-effects of the traumatic experience. This is referred to as the "the contagious impact of trauma" (Visser 275). Generally speaking, the problem about secondary trauma is that people suffer but may not understand why. Indeed, LaCapra compares secondary trauma to "phantomlike forces that haunt later generations" (14).

Danticat's depicts both types of trauma victims and Misrahi-Barak suggests, that the value of Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* lies in its ability to depict "the (in)accessibility of trauma for generations who have not lived through the trauma directly but have inherited it from the previous generations" (164).

Danticat addresses the relationship between primary and secondary victims as well as the problems that secondary victims face in *Krik? Krak!*. "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" is a good example to show how the author manages to narrate the passing on of trauma from one generation to the other. In the second story, Défilé survives the massacre in 1937 and she becomes a member of the secret women's society, which is dedicated to the memory of the women's lost relatives. However, this trauma is not to stay only with the first generation of survivors, but it is passed on to the next generation. Since Défilé's daughter Josephine was a child, her mother took her to the Massacre River in order to teach her the rituals to mourn the

dead. Consequently, it can be argued that the trauma of the mother becomes part of the identity of the daughter. Moreover, it is possible that even Marie, the daughter of Josephine and granddaughter of Défilé, is a primary and secondary victim at the same time. She could be a primary victim of trauma since she has had so many miscarriages, but the accusation of being a witch is something that runs like a golden thread through the family history. Not only was her grandmother Défilé accused of being a witch, but also her daughter Josephine was part of the secret women's society and therefore, Marie could at least have inherited a certain reputation. However, this may not be connection that is obvious to the reader at first since Défilé's and Josephine's story is the second and Marie's story is the fifth in the cycle. In this way, Danticat cleverly shows how difficult it might be for secondary victims to identify their problems in life as secondary trauma. Similar to the space that lies between the second and the fifth story in *Krik? Krak!*, there are generations between Défilé's experience and Marie's experience. As such, it can be argued that, according to Misrahi-Barak's statement, this is an example in which Danticat shows off her ability to illustrate the inaccessibility of trauma for later generations.

Another example of a secondary victim is the narrator of the eighth story whose account is deeply influenced by what her mother has kept telling her her whole life. For instance, she explains that her mother does not want to "go out to dinner with anyone" (Danticat 148). The justification reads as follows: "If they want to eat with me, let them come to my house, even if I boil water and give it to them" (Danticat 148). First of all, this excerpt indicates the mother's reluctance to leave the house, might be a result of the time when she lived in Haiti, where it was not safe to leave the house because of political unrest or other reasons depicted previously in *Krik? Krak!*. This might be a possible conclusion because the stories are interconnected and in other stories in the cycle, e.g. "Children of the Sea" and "the Missing Peace", it is explained that people should not leave their houses, especially not at night (Danticat 4, 117). Furthermore, the mentioning of the boiled water might hint at the extreme poverty the family suffered from in the past. These attitudes that the mother conveys initially do not seem to make sense and are probably not scrutinized by her children at first. However, this episode mainly revolves around the situation that the daughter coincidentally spots her mother in town where she would never have expected her for the reasons mentioned above. At this point, she starts to question her mother's statements and behaviour. Furthermore, the discrepancy of her mother's words and the actual necessity of what she wants to teach her daughter becomes apparent in this story, too. Consequently, it is suggested that the mother has ingrained certain views in her daughter that should help her to survive.

However, it might be the case that it is not clear to the mother and the daughter that the mother's advice stems from her traumatic experiences. Indeed, as Sarthou argues, "[t]oo often, both child immigrants and children of immigrants grow up cut off from any context for their own behavior and attitudes for those of their parents, and they have no possibility of communal or historical rationale for their experience" (Sarthou 118). So, generally speaking, it can be claimed that the story "New York Day Women" indicates the beginning of a process of working through since the daughter seems to notice what is behind the peculiarities of her mother.

In the ninth story, however, one can notice a development in awareness since the narrator Gracina and her sister Caroline question their mother's convictions. Still, the older sister Gracina, who was born in Haiti, feels more connected to her mother. She also seems to be the one who the mother confides in as she tells her about her past in Haiti. Gracina also accompanies her mother to the mass in which the Haitian community commemorates the victims of a refugee boat tragedy. Caroline, however, refuses to take part in that aspect of her Haitian heritage (Danticat 165).

Especially in the eighth and ninth story, which are already set in New York, the underlying topic seems to be that the trauma that the parents have lived through lingers in their memories subconsciously since the outer circumstances are not present in the US anymore. Still, there are traces left which are, at least partially, passed on to the children. However, the second generation is often not aware of the legacy of lingering trauma. Consequently, if they do not become aware of it, they keep on carrying the trauma in their subconscious. It is suggested that in the eighth story, this process of becoming aware is at its beginning and that the telling of the story induces the rethinking and re-evaluation of what the narrator takes for granted. The re-thinking and re-evaluation process is much more advanced in the ninth story in which Gracina recounts some of the stories her parents told her and comments on them that "[t]hese were our bedtime stories. Tales that haunted our parents and made them laugh at the same time. We never understood them until we were fully grown and they became our sole inheritance" (Danticat 180). This quote shows that during childhood, the kids do not know what the stories signify until they grow up. While Gracina and Caroline are conscious of their parents' traumata, they are also able to handle it differently compared to the daughter in the eighth story who is only just becoming aware of her mother's traumata. The awareness of the sisters in the ninth story is visible when, for instance, since Caroline feels free to refuse to accompany her mother to church to mourn the dead refugee woman or in her decision to marry a non-Haitian man. Gracina mostly tries to mediate between her mother

and her sister, but after the father died, both sisters secretly circumvent their mother's rule to wear red panties in order to prevent the father's spirit of coming back (Danticat 170). It can be argued that only because Gracina and Caroline are conscious of their mother's beliefs, they can make their own decisions.

In contrast to Gracina and Caroline who do not seem to suffer from secondary victimization anymore, Danticat also depicts primary victims of trauma in her short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. For example, salient protagonists in this case are the female and the male narrator in "Children of the Sea", who provide insights into the oppressive atmosphere after the coup d'état and the horror of the desperate escape by boat, respectively. Whereas the first story stands for the violent aspect in Haiti's history, the third story "A Wall of Fire Rising" depicts the poverty and the accompanying desperation the people in Haiti experience. Therefore, basically all these characters are primary victims of prolonged political persecution and sustained poverty.

To conclude, Danticat presents primary and secondary victims of trauma in *Krik? Krak!*. Not only does she provide a distinction between those two kinds of trauma victims, but she also elaborates on different causes of trauma such as political persecution and poverty. To the reader, the depictions of the primary victims' sufferings help to understand and identify traces of the same kind of suffering in secondary victims of trauma. The sequence of the stories can be seen as a kind of evolution in the level of awareness of Danticat's protagonists. For example, whereas Marie seems to be completely unaware of her inherited trauma, the protagonist in the eighth story is at the beginning of becoming aware of her own as well as her mother's traumatization. Gracina and Caroline are the protagonists that are most aware of the influence of their Haitian heritage on their lives. It seems that this process of becoming aware is another underlying topic in Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* and it is an important one because "[t]he Haitian-hyphen-American, Danticat suggests, is capable of recovering silenced cultural, family, and community narratives, but only through intimate contact with their Haitian selves" (Sarhou 101). Furthermore, "the transnational citizen [...] is able to recover memories and uncover traumatic events" (Sarhou 101) and "can mediate between the isolated and alienated present and the traumatic past" (Sarhou 101). As the process of becoming aware and working through is usually difficult (Herman 155), Danticat's work can be seen as a kind of example of how it can work and it can also inform the reader on how difficult this process is. Consequently, Danticat's work provides help in the process of working through the trauma as this "can only take place through repetition of, and listening to, to the *other* text, which may be other writers's texts [...]" (Misrahi-Barak 164).

3.4. PTSD and other aftereffects of trauma

In the sections above, it was shown that basically, the reasons for trauma are the sustained feelings of food insecurity, uncertainty regarding the future and the constant threat of falling victim to violent acts or religious persecution. This part of the thesis will investigate how Danticat makes instances of post-traumatic stress and other consequences of trauma a subject in her short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*.

According to Cathy Caruth, post-traumatic stress disorder implies hallucinations, nightmares as well as “thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event” (Caruth 4). In *Krik? Krak!*, there are some instances in which Danticat seems to depict PTSD and other repercussions of trauma. One of the most obvious depictions is when the narrator tells the reader about Célianne, a pregnant girl, who fled from Haiti after having been raped. He describes that she mostly stares into space and refuses to eat. She also seems to have nightmares (10). Furthermore, when asked about the baby’s father, she keeps telling the traumatising story over and over again with closed eyes (Danticat 23). From this example, it can be deduced that Célianne does not only suffer from the above-mentioned nightmares but also from a certain degree of numbness as she does not eat and she does not seem to be aware of what happens around her. Furthermore, the compulsion of retelling might happen due to the memory that still haunts and torments her. Close to the end of the story, she drowns herself, which shows how much she suffered from the trauma she has experienced. A second character, who also commits suicide, is Lili. In the fifth story “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, we learn that Lili, the protagonist in the third story, “killed herself in old age because her husband had jumped out of a flying balloon and her grown son left her to go to Miami” (Danticat 94).

Another example of numbing could be the behaviour of Marie at the end of the story “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”. When she is found by the Dominican gardener of her employers while burying the dead baby’s body, she seems to dissociate herself from the situation and becomes numb to the fear that might come up in such a situation. For example, Marie comments on the situation that “[w]e made a pretty picture standing there. Rose, me, and him. Between the pool and the gardenias, waiting for the law” (Danticat 100). This utterance might sound a bit sarcastic, but since she has always dreamed about a family, it seems more likely that she refers to a different interpretation of why the three of them stand there. As the reader gradually finds out that the baby was already dead when she found it, it is

suggested that she might have had hallucinations or lived in her dream world before. For example, Marie says that the baby “didn’t stir or cry” (Danticat 93), something which already indicates that the infant is not alive anymore. Still, she carries the baby around with her and hides her in her room while she is working (Danticat 95).

Furthermore, in those stories already set in the USA, there are sometimes hints that immigrants, particularly the first generation, are still haunted by the past. For example, in the eighth story, the narrator lets the reader know that her mother collects all sorts of things in order to send them to their relatives. As the garage is already full, it seems that this hoarding of goods in the garage is a behaviour that stems from the desperate poverty of the past. Although, the daughter suggests giving the things to Goodwill, her mother refuses to do so since she wants to save the clothes “for the relatives in Haiti” (Danticat 194).

On top of that, victims often experience that memory of the traumatic event is often repressed. For example, in the second story, Josephine recounts the events that led to the imprisonment of her mother. Her mother is imprisoned because she is accused of having wings of flame which enable her to slip into children’s bodies and kill them. It is striking that even though Josephine can tell about incidents from the past and the present in a very clear and logical way, she is not able to remember whether she has seen her mother transform into a loup-garou or not. Therefore, the girl is assailed by doubts whether her mother is guilty or not. Indeed, she is so troubled that she is not able to speak to her mother anymore for a long time. Whenever she visits her in prison, the daughter is totally silent and tormented by her thoughts. Indeed, the inability to speak might be one reason why she turns past events over and over in her mind. In fact, only when she confides in an old woman from the secret women’s society, the memory of what really happened and why her mother used the metaphor of the wings of flames comes back to her crystal-clear (Danticat 48-49). Consequently, it seems that the silence that is imposed on the characters inhibits the healing from the traumatic event.

To conclude, it seems to be the case that the characters in Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!* suffer from various kinds of after-effects of traumatic experiences. However, Western models of PTSD that might have helped to understand the characters’ behavior cannot be used in a satisfying manner to analyze all of Danticat’s Haitians. In fact, only the author’s depiction of Célianne shows clear signs of PTSD. Most of the other protagonists deal with after-effects of trauma that might be similar to PTSD, but the impression is that generally speaking, Danticat deals with this topic in another way. One possible explanation why Danticat may be not follow traditional models of PTSD-description is that “time for the West flows in one

direction and in a linear manner” (Borzaga 77). In contrast to that, Borzaga suggests that in a postcolonial context,

if we envisage the past, present, and future as *a unified tangle*, the repetition and re-living of traumatic experiences as well as the potential for overcoming trauma: i.e. the process of working through it, are not separate and set at two ends of the spectrum but coexist and struggle with one another in complex and unexpected ways (78).

This explanation seems to be feasible since, especially in Josephine’s case, the process of repetition and re-living is closely related to the process of working through. Hence, Danticat’s depiction of trauma, as far as the aspect of PTSD is concerned, widely refuses to submit to predominant models of PTSD because she narrates the post-traumatic stage in a much more complex, and therefore less linear, way.

3.5. Melancholia

An aspect of trauma narratives that has been prevalent in traditional trauma aesthetics is melancholia. According to the Oxford online dictionary, melancholia can be defined as “deep sadness or gloom” or “a mental condition marked by persistent depression and ill-founded fears”. Basically, it is understood as “a precondition to (or even necessary aspect of) mourning” (LaCapra 213). In contrast to that, Visser argues that melancholia does not play a role in contemporary postcolonial trauma literature. In fact, a “movement away from melancholia and ‘unspeakability’ to resistance and recovery” (Visser 278) can be observed in this genre. The same is true for Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* since there are only a few examples that may be interpreted as instances of melancholia.

These instances can be mainly found in connection with the third story “A Wall of Fire Rising”. Sometimes, it seems that the character of Guy is gloomy, because he is torn between his dreams and his daily life, which is characterized by poor working and living conditions. Once he urges his wife to listen to him and “[p]retend that this is the time of miracles and we believed in them” (Danticat 67), it becomes clear that he is aware of the distance between reality and his dreams. Another example of how emotional Guy is about the topic is given when his son recites another passage from the play about Boukman Dutty, a revolutionary leader at the end of the 18th century, and Guy leaves the house with tears in his eyes. When the boy asks his mother why his father reacted like that, his mother answers “His heart hurts” (Danticat 71). The story ends in Guy’s attempt to steal a hot-air balloon and fly away with it. Although he manages to get hold of the balloon and fly, he loses control of it

and dies after jumping out of the balloon. Thus, it can be argued that Guy's anticipated fate fuel the story with gloom. Furthermore, the reader learns in the fifth story "Between the Pool and the Gardenias" that Guy's wife Lili "killed herself in old age because her husband had jumped out of a flying balloon and her grown son left her to go to Miami" (Danticat 94). It can be assumed that Lili must have suffered from melancholia or another depression-like condition, otherwise she would not have committed suicide. Furthermore, the story of the crash of the flying balloon can also be understood as a metaphor. The balloon may represent the high ambitions of revolutionary leaders, such as Boukman Dutty, and the crash might symbolize the fact that Haiti is still one of the poorest countries in the world (Jadotte 44).

Generally speaking, however, clear instances of melancholia are few and far between. There are certainly characters that can be described as gloomy or as being resigned like Marie at the end of "Between the Pool and the Gardenias". Still, there is the strong impression that most of the characters do not stay in that condition of melancholia. Therefore, Danticat's protagonists contradict LaCapra's description of melancholia's role in traditional trauma narratives since in them, melancholia is said to "block processes of mourning insofar as it becomes excessive or functions as an object of fixation" (LaCapra 213). On the contrary, it is usually drowned out by the protagonists' strong will to recover, resist and maintain a positive general outlook on life. Salient examples of such characters are Défilé in "Nineteen Thirty-Seven", Lamort and Emilie Gallant in "The Missing Peace" and the nameless narrator in "Night Women". These instances emphasize that for the analysis of Danticat's work, new approaches to literary trauma theory need to be applied.

3.6. Silencing traumatic experiences – Perpetuating the trauma

It was already hinted at in previous sections that silence prevents, or at least retards, the possibility of healing from trauma. In fact, one main reason why most of Danticat's characters still suffer is the fact that they have been silenced.

According to Sarthou, "[p]olitical terror campaigns instigate chaos and insecurity, and impose silence on victims [...]" (107) and what is even worse, too often "Haitian families internalize and regularize that silence, perpetuating it as tradition and shutting off the possibility for individuals to mediate the traumatic consequences" (Sarthou 107). One might add that older generations impose silence on their children as a way to help them survive in their cruel world. However, there are certainly some drawbacks to that intent.

In this short story cycle, Danticat presents various instances in which families impose silence on the next generation. The first instance that might serve as an example here is from

“Children of the Sea”. When the neighbour of the narrator is beaten up by soldiers, the father forces the family to hide and refuses to help her. He argues that “they are the law. It is their right. we are just being good citizens, following the law of the land. it has happened before all over this country and tonight it will happen again and there is nothing we can do” (Danticat 17). In this excerpt, it becomes clear that “[a]t the whim of authorities, any speech and any action can be construed as wrong and criminal” (Sarhou 110). This is exactly what makes it so difficult for the protagonists to break the silence, as it seems that basically everything they do can be used as a threat against them. Indeed, the young girl in “Children of the Sea” is in love with a member of the activist group of Radio Six: “just associating with him is enough to become a target, let alone being found in possession of tapes of his voice” (Sarhou 110). Furthermore, Sarhou argues that not only people in Haiti are silenced, but also those who leave the country might not be able to break that silence. For example, the young lover is “silenced not only by his absence, but also by his possible death at sea” (110).

Another example that illustrates how political persecution silences people in Danticat’s Haiti is given in the sixth story, “The Missing Peace”. Here, it is also the older generation, i.e. the grandmother, who teaches the young generation, i.e. her granddaughter, what she has to say in order to be safe from political persecution after the coup d’état. Furthermore, she warns not only her granddaughter, but also the US journalist Emilie Gallant, who temporarily stays with them, to say, “The only regime I believe in is God’s regime” (Danticat 110) in order to avoid conflict with the soldiers.

Apart from the silence that the families have internalised, the story also features examples of how people are silenced by the authorities, e.g. by the soldiers. For instance, when the American journalist Emilie and the granddaughter, called Lamort, are at the cemetery to look for Emilie’s mother, they are discovered by a soldier and while they are talking, two other soldiers are passing by and carrying the body of a man who obviously was a supporter of the old regime. When Emilie wants to have a closer look, the soldier says “You see nothing” (Danticat 117). This is a clear warning that exemplifies how easily the crimes of the political regime are glossed over and how easily people can be silenced. On top of that, a soldier threatens Emilie with a rifle, when she refuses to leave (Danticat 119). Sarhou has already suggested that another story of the cycle, “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, “illustrates the invisibility of Haitian women’s histories, the terrible vulnerability of women in the world of Danticat’s Haitians, and the grim silence that is imposed on them as witnesses of violence” (Sarhou 110-111). As this might be true for “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, it can be argued that this description perfectly fits to the story “The Missing Peace” as well. The invisibility of

Haitian women is illustrated by the fact that Emilie Gallant's mother, who was a journalist, has been missing since the coup d'état. Thus, it can be deduced that she might have wanted to break the silence and report on the brutal procedures of the new régime. Therefore, she is silenced and there is reason to fear that she was left somewhere at the mass burial site that Emilie and Lamort visited. Now, Emilie and Lamort are witnesses and are silenced as well. Of course, the terrible vulnerability of women is a feasible reason why women like Lamort's grandmother have chosen to be silent of what is going on in the country. Moreover, even if Lamort and Emilie know that there is a mass burial site of opponents of the new régime, they will hardly be able to speak to anybody about it or even do anything about it. At least, this is not possible within the Haiti Danticat describes. In fact, in the epilogue of the cycle, it is made clear once again what is done to people, especially writers, who speak up:

Writers don't leave any mark in the world. Not the world where we are from. In our world, writers are tortured and killed if they are men. Called lying whores, then raped and killed, if they are women. In our world, if you write, you are a politician, and we know what happens to politicians. They end up in a prison dungeon where their bodies are covered in scalding tar before they are forced to eat their own waste. (Danticat 221)

From this excerpt, it becomes obvious that overcoming silence is practically impossible in Haiti and what is more that any attempt of writing and speaking the truth is a political act and thus, extremely dangerous. From the president to the common people, Danticat shows that nobody is safe from political persecution in Haiti and thus, it is no surprise that the people keep silent.

Although overcoming silence is proved to be nearly impossible in Haiti, Danticat also shows that silence is not easily overcome in the US, too. Generally speaking, "[o]ne problem for Haitian immigrants is that they must not only translate *krèyol* and English, but also must translate their culture of origin and their new culture" (Sarthou 114). In *Krik? Krak!*, it is shown that this task poses problems, particularly for the first generation of immigrants of which Danticat provides several examples. The characters, who are mainly portrayed as struggling with this problem, are the mothers in "New York Day Women" and "Caroline's Wedding". In the former, the daughter reports that her mother had never participated in any of her Parent-Teacher Association meetings because she always says to her daughter that "You're so good anyway. What are they going to tell me? I don't want to make you ashamed of this day woman. Shame is heavier than a hundred bags of salt" (Danticat 154). Indeed, shame is the main factor why the mothers in "New York Day Women" and "Caroline's

Wedding” keep silent. In the latter, it is shown that Mrs. Azile is ashamed of her poor command of the English language. When Gracina and her mother plan the bridal shower for Caroline, they “invited none of Ma’s friends from Saint Agnès because [...] she would be ashamed to have them ask her the name of her daughter’s fiancé and have her tongue trip, being unable to pronounce it” (186). This self-imposed silence isolates the mothers from their daughters and “reinforces this distance” (Sarhou 118) between them. Sarhou also explains that “[s]ome immigrants gloss over their memories and romanticize the Haiti they leave behind, which further distances both the immigrant and the immigrant’s child” (Sarhou 118). This issue is a salient topic in “Caroline’s Wedding” since Caroline wants to marry not a Haitian man, but a man from the Bahamas. Consequently, Caroline’s mother notices the discrepancy of the traditional ways of proposing and getting married in Haiti and the way her daughter, who was already born in the United States, approaches this important event. The older daughter, Gracina, then listens to her mother who tells her about her father’s proposal, which was accomplished according to Haitian customs (Danticat 162-163). In this passage, it seems that the mother romanticizes her Haitian past. Consequently, even though she is aware of the horrors she left behind, it is still possible for her to miss her country and its traditions.

The most crucial example of silence that derived from being traumatized in Danticat short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, however, is perhaps found in the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. In this episode, Josephine witnesses how her mother is beaten up by the crowd and brought to prison in Port-au-Prince by the soldiers. She gathers that her mother was imprisoned because a baby died in her care which seems to be evidence that she is a *lougrou*. This experience and what is told about her mother induces a struggle in Josephine who is not able to separate what she knows about her mother and what she is told about her. Therefore, she is highly confused and worries whether her mother really is a practitioner of voodoo or not. Josephine is then worried and ashamed of herself at the same time and stays mute whenever she visits her mother: “I said nothing. Ever since the morning of her arrest, I had not been able to say anything to her. It was as though I became mute the moment I stepped into the prison yard. Sometimes I wanted to speak, yet I was not able to open my mouth or raise my tongue. I wondered if she saw the struggle in my eyes” (36).

To conclude, silence occurs in many shapes in Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!* and thus, it can be argued that it is an important topic in this work of fiction. First of all, it seems to be worth mentioning that silence does not occur as a consequence of a traumatic event in most cases in the short story cycle. Indeed, it is rather the case that the characters in *Krik? Krak!* try to break the silence even though they are presented with various kinds of obstacles. These

obstacles can be threats of violence by the authorities, e.g. soldiers, or rules within the family. Both of these kinds of obstacles are prominent in “The Missing Peace”. In contrast, there is only one salient example of silence that is different since it is directly linked to a traumatic event and this example is Josephine in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. Therefore, it can be argued that Danticat is not that interested in silence when it occurs as a consequence of a traumatic event, but rather with the struggle of her characters to break the silence. Accordingly, Misrahi-Barak suggests that “[t]he whole point of Danticat’s stories is to voice those words that have been bottled up for too long [...]” (157). Indeed, Shaw states that “[m]any Danticat scholars agree on this one point” (2) that “[o]ne way of expressing resistance that cannot be taken from Danticat’s characters, both male and female, is their willingness to talk about past atrocities” (2). This willingness to talk seems to be contradictory to what modern psychotherapy knows about trauma victims since it is not their willingness that hinders trauma victims to talk about past atrocities, but their inability to do so (Herman 175). Therefore, it seems that Danticat’s focus is not on depicting the struggles of trauma victims with their traumatic memories, but rather how difficult it is in the Haiti she describes to overcome the silence that is imposed on her characters. More precisely, Danticat focuses predominately on how difficult it is especially for women to overcome the silence that is imposed on them. Similarly, Penier claims that “Danticat challenges through her writing this trope of invisibility and silence of Haitian women. Writing is a way for women like Danticat to speak back to the normative, masculinist ideology of Haitian nation state” (130). Indeed, the characters’ willingness to talk about traumatic events can be mainly attributed to the fact that Danticat “ [...] resists the masculinist and nationalist domination and male versions of female agency” (Penier 130) with the help of her art as she “puts herself in the role of feminist historiographer and revisionist” (130).

Penier’s claim, that Danticat can be seen as a feminist historiographer, might be true for those stories in the cycle that are set in Haiti since they, at least partly, deal with Haitian history. However, I argue that as far as the stories set in the US are concerned, Danticat’s aim is to encourage her readers, if possible, to speak up and break the silence. In the epilogue, the author explains that it is impossible for Haitians to speak freely in Haiti. This is different for those of her Haitians who managed to come to the US: “Although this silence is not always broken when her Haitians leave Haiti, Danticat intimates that it can be, if those emigrants become fully functioning hybrid citizens” (Sarhou 99).

4. Healing from Trauma in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*

Generally speaking, this chapter will investigate how Danticat deals with recovery from trauma in her short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* since it was claimed that new approaches in literary trauma theory try to move away “from melancholia and ‘unspeakability’ to resistance and recovery” (Visser 278). Therefore, this chapter will also present an attempt to show how Danticat’s work may add to our understanding of recovery from trauma in a postcolonial context.

Healing from trauma is a topic that Judith Herman deals with in her groundbreaking work *Trauma and recovery* (2015) in which she writes about the various stages of recovery. Although her work is most influential in modern Western psychotherapy, it cannot be assumed that it is very likely that the Haitians Danticat describes have access to this kind of help. Accordingly, this chapter will attempt to find out whether Danticat’s work suggests similar or other means to enable and enhance recovery. However, Herman’s three stages of recovery will serve as a general framework.

4.1. Herman’s stages of recovery in Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*

In Herman’s work, the first step of recovery is overcoming disempowerment and disconnection from others. “Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections” (134). She adds that the first stage consists mainly of the establishment of safety (156). However, it seems that the first stage of establishing safety often rests on unsound footing in Edwidge Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!* because most of the protagonists quickly enter the second stage, in which the trauma victims are already able to talk about past atrocities (Herman 175). This is to say that the safe environment that Herman probably had in mind when she wrote her book is probably different to what Danticat’s characters experience as a safe environment in Haiti. For example, Célianne, from the first story “Children of the Sea”, starts talking about her rape on her escape on a boat towards Miami when she is asked about it by another passenger. Secondly, Défilé in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” is a member of a secret women’s society, which is dedicated to mourn the victims of the massacre in 1937. Her safe environment is the women’s society and her daughter, whom she also tells about the trauma. These notions of safe environments are far from the secure surroundings of psychotherapy. It is rather the case that the prolonged pressure that is put on Danticat’s characters leads them to talk or write about their pain. It is therefore suggested that in Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*,

empowerment does not only come through a safe environment, but rather through the very act of talking and writing, about the past, which is part of the second stage. Therefore, it seems that the first and the second stage of recovery melt into one in Danticat. Indeed, “many Danticat scholars agree on this point” (Shaw 2) that “[o]ne way of expressing resistance that cannot be taken from Danticat’s characters, both male and female, is their willingness to talk about past atrocities (Shaw 2). Furthermore, it is observable that a safe environment does not automatically lead to the ability to talk about traumatic experiences, as the stories “New York Day Women” and “Caroline’s Wedding”, which are set in the US and not in Haiti, show.

It seems that while Danticat is not particularly interested in (establishing) safe environments for her characters, it is clear that she focuses on the healing effect that lies in the process of writing and talking. In this process the characters in *Krik? Krak!* sometimes establish new connections. To be more precise, this is to say that the act of talking or writing usually implies an audience, which establishes the new connections that Herman mentioned. At this point, it may seem odd that writing implies an audience since most writing processes are done on one’s own. However, it is suggested that as for example in the case of the first story, the trauma victims are able to imagine an audience, i.e. her boyfriend who escaped Haiti on a boat and his girlfriend at home, respectively.

After the trauma victim is able to talk about the past, usually the next part of the second stage of recovery sets in, which includes a phase of mourning (Herman 188). Mourning will be discussed in one of the following sections and I will also deal with the means that Danticat’s protagonists employ in order to mourn their losses. It also becomes apparent, as far as mourning is concerned, that Herman’s framework and Danticat’s depiction differ from each other at this stage. For example, Herman’s work suggests that there usually is a lot of resistance to mourning. This resistance expresses itself in thoughts of revenge, forgiveness and compensation (Herman 189). It does not seem to be the case that Danticat’s characters show any of these types of resistance. This indicates that Danticat’s Haitians show different ways of coping with trauma which typically include traditional religious ways. These, however, are excluded in Herman’s work since she claims that “[s]ince so many losses are invisible or unrecognized, the customary rituals of mourning provide little consolation” (Herman 188). Herman’s exclusion of religious ways of mourning touches upon a claim that Visser makes in reference to spirituality and religion in postcolonial literature. Namely, Visser criticizes that since it has not been fashionable in postmodern literary criticism to deal with religion and spirituality, “this limited perspective makes cultural theory inadequate for an engagement with indigenous literatures that situate trauma in the context of ritual and

ceremony” (Visser 260). Unfortunately, Western secularism has prejudices against (non-Christian) religious belief-systems insofar as they are seen as intolerant and irrational. As Visser claims, a decolonized trauma theory has to be “sensitive to the cultural bias inherent in the secular perspective that imposes such prejudices” (Visser 260). Consequently, one of the following sections will show in how far Danticat’s protagonists successfully employ religious practices in order to mourn their losses in a way that enhances recovery.

After the mourning phase, the trauma victim usually enters the third stage, the reconnection stage, in which the victim concentrates on building a new life. The goal at this level is a new self since “[t]he old beliefs that gave meaning to her life have been challenged; now she must find anew a sustaining faith” (Herman 196). Herman further describes that “[s]urvivors whose personality has been shaped in the traumatic environment often feel [...] as though they are refugees entering a new country” (Herman 196). Indeed, this is literally true for most of Danticat’s characters since there are numerous examples of protagonists who move from one place to another. For example, in “Children of the Sea”, the male character escapes towards Miami and his girlfriend flees from the city to the countryside after the coup d’état. Défilé, in the second story, survives the massacre in 1937 and is forced to move from the Dominican Republic to Haiti. Marie, the protagonist of the fifth story “Between the Pool and the Gardenias”, flees from her past from the village Ville Rose to Haiti’s capital Port-au-Prince. Finally, the eighth story “New York Day Women” and the ninth story “Caroline’s Wedding” deal with moving from Haiti to the United States. The movement is symbolic for the task of the third stage, i.e. a reconciliation with the self and a search for a new identity (Herman 202). A feasible example for this may be Défilé in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” since she is the character who strives most to build a new identity after having survived the massacre in 1937. By creating the wings of flames, she claims her power to fly and escape the violence and oppression she fled from (Davis 7). Another feature of the third recovery stage is finding a survivor mission. Again, Défilé may serve as an example here as it seems that through her being part of the secret women’s society, her survivor mission is to be a living testimony of the cruelties that happened in 1937. However, as well as LaCapra, Herman explains that “[r]esolution of the trauma is never final; recovery is never complete” (Herman 11). Often when Danticat’s characters, especially those who stayed behind in Haiti, have overcome a traumatic experience, another one seems to be waiting for them. This is clearly shown in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, when Défilé admittedly survives the massacre, but then dies in prison. Another case is her granddaughter Marie, who flees from her husband and her superstitious neighbours in the countryside because her babies are usually stillborn. In the

city, she finds a dead baby's body, adopts it as her own and is finally found out by a Dominican gardener, who accuses her of being a witch.

Generally speaking, Danticat's protagonists want to recover but they struggle to do so, because it seems to be "an impossible task inside Haiti" (Sarhou 119). Therefore, Sarhou suggests that "it is up to the Haitians of the Tenth Department, the Dyaspora, to speak for all Haitians and do so through the strength of their hyphenated hybrid identity – perhaps through the hyphenated Danticat's text" (119). With this claim, Sarhou emphasizes Danticat's focus on the healing effect of talking and writing about trauma and establishes the author's work as a help in the recovery process.

4.1.a. Overcoming silence

The first stage, according to Herman, includes establishing a safe environment for the trauma victims so that they can express themselves freely. However, it seems that a safe environment is not always needed for Danticat's protagonists to talk about the events or conditions that have a traumatizing effect on them. Indeed, it is suggested that many of the characters feel the urge to get rid of the trauma and thus, are willing to talk even if they are not provided with a safe environment that can be compared to that of a psychotherapeutical setting. Dori Laub explains this phenomenon as such: "There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life" (63).

Therefore, it can be observed that the first stage is often skipped or at least that the characters content themselves with a less-than-safe environment. Consequently, this section deals with the first step of the second stage which concerns itself with breaking the silence and enabling the trauma victims to speak about their painful past.

Reading *Krik? Krak!* makes the reader aware that although traumatic events have oppressed the characters, the cycle provides a couple of instances which illustrate how the protagonists refuse to accept being silenced and thus resist the repercussions of trauma. Since traditional literary trauma theory aesthetics would suggest melancholia at this point, it is proposed that in analyzing a work of postcolonial content, this analysis must go beyond the limitations of this approach. It is shown that the short story cycle presents more attempts to overcome trauma, break the silence and resist oppression than to surrender to melancholia. In fact, there are only two examples in which melancholia seems to take over. First of all, this is the case when the reader learns that the protagonist Lili of "A Wall of Fire Rising" surrenders to melancholia after her husband died and her son left to emigrate to Miami. In the fifth story,

the narrator Marie reports that Lili committed suicide after these drawbacks. Indeed, it is also Marie who has a notion of melancholia when she notices that she cannot keep the baby she found in the streets of Port-au-Prince since it starts to decay. Generally speaking, however, the protagonists try not to look back and move on with their lives. Therefore, the reader is able to identify a “movement away from melancholia and “unspeakability” to resistance and recovery” (Visser 278) in *Krik? Krak!*, which is also a crucial feature of postcolonial trauma literature (Sarhou 99).

In Judith Herman’s work, the second step to healing trauma includes overcoming the silence by talking or writing about it (Herman 177). At this stage, Herman points out that the ultimate goal of overcoming trauma is not to exorcize the experience but to integrate it (Herman 181), which is the ultimate goal of the speaking and writing process. Integration is a necessary part of the recovery phase because usually the trauma victims are faced with the feeling that the traumatic experience was too atrocious and repugnant to be dealt with.

Danticat, however, presents at least one powerful example of such an integration of a traumatic experience in her short story cycle in the second episode “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”. In this story, Défilé survives the slaughter of Haitians in the Dominican Republic by diving through a river in order to escape the soldiers that had already killed her mother (Danticat 40). Years later, she repeatedly takes part in pilgrimages with her daughter and other members of a secret women’s society in order to mourn the victims of the massacre. At the river, Défilé tells her daughter about the events in 1937, but she does not do so with plain words but with a powerful imagery which overwrites the helplessness and terror she must have felt at the time of the massacre, as the ritual is held repeatedly and the story is told often:

We were all daughters of that river, which had taken our mothers from us. Our mothers were the ashes and we were the light. Our mothers were the embers and we were the sparks. Our mothers were the flames and we were blaze. 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. (Danticat 41)

Indeed, the imagery of diving through a river and the river as “the place where it had all begun” (Danticat 41) is a vigorous metaphor for giving birth. Thus, the “dive toward life” (41) is like a rebirth for Défilé, who escaped the massacre. Instead of surrendering to melancholia because of the loss of her home and her mother, the experience is transformed into a kind of rebirth and an incident of survival and empowerment. In fact, by transforming her trauma narrative into a source of empowerment, Défilé already enters the third stage of

recovery which deals with creating a new life and a new identity (Herman 196). Another striking aspect of this story is that Défilé does not tell her daughter anything about her life in the Dominican Republic, i.e. where she lived before the massacre. Therefore, Défilé does not simply integrate the massacre into her identity and the story of her life, she rather uses it as the starting point of her new life.

On top of that, it can be argued that by telling the story Défilé's traumatic experience is transformed into a testimony which has "both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is political and judicial" (Herman 181). Precisely because Défilé refuses to talk about these events, her memory and the memories and rituals of the secret women's society in Ville Rose are a testimony to the massacre which was downplayed by the Haitian government at the time (Turits 622). Thus, the secret women society does not only fulfil the need to develop a new identity which integrates the trauma in a restorative way, but it also puts the experience in the frame of a larger dimension as a testimony to the cruel events in 1937 (Herman 181). Consequently, in telling the story Défilé already enters again the third stage of recovery by identifying a survivor mission (Herman 207).

Apart from Défilé, other protagonists chose to break the silence and speak up, as for instance Lamort in "The Missing Peace". She is often warned by her grandmother that she should not talk too freely to other people because "[t]hings you say, thoughts you have, will decide how people treat you" (Danticat 107). Her warning implies that Lamort does not only have to watch her words but also her thoughts which suggests that the authority of the state is omnipresent and omniscient. Lamort, however, declares that if she is asked questions by a journalist, she is "going to answer them" (Danticat 108). In the course of the story, the journalist Emilie Gallant and Lamort face serious threats from a group of soldiers because Emilie refuses to overlook the mass burial site stemming from the coup d'état. The girl and the woman are lucky to leave the place unharmed because Lamort manages to mediate between Emilie and the soldiers (Danticat 119). On top of that, she is able to comfort Emilie, whom Lamort secretly admires, by staying at her house that night (Danticat 121). Afterwards, Emilie suggests that Lamort is not the right name for her since the name stems from the fact that Lamort's mother died when giving birth to her. Thus, Lamort decides at the end of the story that she will be called Marie Magdalène after her mother from now on even though her grandmother, the person she looks up to, warns her:

"Today, I want you to call me by another name," I said.
"Haughty girls don't get far," she said, rising from the chair.

“I want you to call me by her name,” I said.
She looked pained as she watched me moving closer to her.
“Marie Magdalène?”
“Yes, Marie Magdalène,” I said. “I want you to call me Marie Magdalène.” I liked the sound of that. (Danticat 122)

This excerpt shows how Lamort resists her grandmother’s authority by taking her mother’s name. In that way, she forges a new identity for herself, which empowers her and frees her from being determined by the circumstances of her mother’s death and the subsequent guilt that her grandmother tried to impose on her.

Although Défilé and Lamort/Marie Magdalène are courageous and strong enough to build a new identity, the situation in Haiti does not permit success in Défilé’s case. For example, since Défilé claims that she is able to fly, the superstitious people in the village believe that she is a *lougrou* and when a baby dies in her care, the mob does not need more evidence than that to beat her up and let the police take her to prison (Danticat 38-39). Défilé’s fate illustrates that “speaking can have dangerous consequences” (Sarhou 112) inside Haiti and it seems as if the only possibility to speak freely is leaving the country since in the US, “the freedom to speak is guaranteed” (Sarhou 112). An example for free speech in the US is provided in “Caroline’s Wedding”, when Gracina, Caroline’s sister, remembers a joke that her father often told the sisters when they were children, a joke that would probably have been forbidden in Haiti. The joke is about a meeting of presidents of the Earth in Heaven. For all of the presidents, God gets up from this throne to greet them, but not for the Haitian “President for Life Papa Doc Duvalier” (Danticat 180). When God is asked why he does not treat the Haitian president with the same cordiality as the other presidents, God answers that he did not get up because he was afraid that the Haitian president would take the throne and never return it (Danticat 179-180). Gracina comments on that joke by saying that this was one of the tales that “haunted our parents and made them laugh at the same time” (Danticat 180). Gracina’s remark suggests that even relatively harmless jokes were forbidden, particularly in the era of the dictatorships of the Duvalier family. Consequently, Sarhou emphasizes that Danticat’s work proposes that only a “transnational hyphenated and hybridized citizen who tells their stories, speaks up, and speaks the truth [...] may provide a way for Haitians to see Haiti clearly, speak about Haiti freely, and is perhaps the only way to ‘save’ Haiti” (Sarhou 99). Thus, only people who emigrated to the United States and have worked through their traumata are able to heal themselves and Haiti. Probably, Gracina’s and Caroline’s father is not such a fully “transnational and hybridized citizen” who worked through his traumatic experiences, because Gracina mentions that the joke was part of their

bedtime stories and “we never understood them until we were fully grown and they became our sole inheritance” (Danticat 180). This quote suggests that the parents probably told their children of Haiti, but they may not have mediated their importance and what they implied on a deeper level to them. This apparently only became clearer when the girls were grown up.

Still, Danticat does provide examples of transnational and hybridized citizens in *Krik? Krak!*. For example, the journalist Emilie Gallant, who searches for her mother in “The Missing Peace” is an American citizen and serves as a good example. She speaks a little Creole, has roots in Haiti since her mother worked there and she has an American passport. Theoretically, this is a good start, but she returns to Haiti shortly after the coup when the country was still shaken by political upheavals and she cannot survive on her own in Haiti without Lamort. As a consequence, one might claim that Emilie and Lamort represent the two sides of a transnational and hybridized citizen, a citizen who embodies both sides. Interestingly enough, a point in which both women fail is the language: Lamort is not able to “read American” (Danticat 111) and Emilie’s Creole is described as “brazen” (Danticat 118) since she does not stick to the rules of speaking carefully that Lamort’s grandmother told her about. Thus,

[a]s Danticat repeatedly illustrates, literacy and language competency can make the life of the immigrant especially difficult. On the other hand, she warns that a too successful assimilation can isolate the next generation from communities, families, and cultures. The Americanized Haitian is then incapable of recovering their common histories. (Sarhou 113)

What Sarhou stresses here is that it is important for Haitian-American citizens to deal with their roots. This is also emphasized metaphorically by Danticat in the story “Caroline’s Wedding”. Shortly before Caroline wants to marry a Bahamian she feels awful. Only the care of her Haitian mother can restore her. Before that, Caroline says that she wants to “stay with us” (Danticat 201), i.e. with her mother and her sister. Caroline’s sickness may indicate that she feels that she has strayed too far from her roots, i.e. her family. Indeed, Caroline has often refused to attend the Haitian Mass with her mother and her sister and take part in other Haitian rituals which showed disinterest in her Haitian roots.

In contrast to Caroline, Gracina, the narrator of the ninth story “Caroline’s Wedding”, may be the one who comes closest to the idea of a transnational and hybridized citizen. She was born in Haiti and only immigrated to the US when she was a child. Therefore, she has some memories about Haiti. Furthermore, she is willing to listen to her parents’ stories but she also reflects on them and only accepts those parts of their identity that seem feasible to

her. On top of that, in contrast to her sister Caroline, Gracina is familiar with the struggle of her parents to gain American citizenship and the feeling of insecurity that accompanied her when she was still a Haitian citizen. Since Gracina shares some of the fears of her parents, but is nonetheless able to reflect on them, it is suggested that she might be closest to what Sarthou calls a transnational and hybridized citizen.

It is further suggested that the painter Catherine from Guadeloupe, who resides in Ville Rose, in Haiti, is a feasible example of a transnational and hybridized citizen. Even though she does not have relatives in Haiti, it is her role in the story to help Princesse see Haiti through the eyes of a painter, an artist, and look for the beautiful things in her world. Thus, Catherine mediates another part of Haiti to Princesse and the reader, which is far from prevalent in the short story cycle in general.

To conclude, as neither of the protagonists seems to be fully transnational and hybridized Haitian-American citizens, it is proposed that all of these protagonists represent pieces of a such a citizen. Maybe this was even Danticat's intent to show various ways how such a type of citizen can be approached because if such a citizen is needed, one will not be enough anyway, bearing in mind how much trauma is still lingering. What these characters have in common, however, is that they obviously need to live abroad in order to be able to break the silence. This is particularly evident in the epilogue "Women Like Us" in which the narrator explains that it was important to tell these stories because back in Haiti, those who raised their voices, particularly writers, were usually silenced:

Writers don't leave a mark in the world. Not the world where we are from. In our world, writers are tortured and killed if they are men. Called lying whores, then raped and killed, if they are women. In our world, if you write, you are a politician, and we know what happens to politicians. They end up in a prison dungeon where their bodies are covered in scalding tar before they are forced to eat their own waste. (Danticat 221).

As it seems that it is impossible to speak freely for the people staying in Haiti, those who live in exile must do so for them. This presumption is even mirrored in the composition of the short story cycle: As Haiti has nine departments, the Haitian community in the US is often called Haiti's Tenth Department. These departments are reflected in the ten episodes of the cycle, which means that there are nine stories for the nine departments in Haiti and the epilogue stands for the tenth department in the United States. According to Sarthou, only the Haitians of the Tenth department have "the strength of their hyphenated hybrid identity [...]" (Sarthou 119) to speak up and break the silence.

As far as the stages of recovery are concerned, maybe the US can be vaguely compared to the safe place which Judith Herman wrote about in *Trauma and recovery*. At least, the protagonists “can speak their minds openly and freely” (Sarhou 107) in the US since they do not have to fear Haitian political persecution. It is further indicated that the discourse on the transnational and hybridized American-Haitian seems feasible since this could be the only way of truly recovering from trauma. It is also proposed that Danticat often depicts hopeless fates of those people who stay in Haiti because the living conditions there do not allow for a sustained process of recovery for many reasons.

As it was already shown in the quote above, it is crucial to point out that breaking the silence also includes writing about the traumatic events. The process of writing probably has the same cleansing and healing effect on the writer as talking about it. However, one might argue that writing one’s trauma down can be important on a larger scale as it can be even more understood as a testimony than only talking about it. In Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, some of the protagonists choose to write about their traumatic experiences: For example, in the first story “Children of the Sea”, the two lovers write letters to each other in which they reflect on the current situation in Haiti and the flight by boat, respectively. The letters cannot be sent, but the overwhelming need to tell someone about what happened urges the protagonists to put their stories down. Particularly in the case of the girl, this is potentially dangerous since after the coup d’état, houses were searched and people were questioned. If anybody had found out about the letters and that the girl had a connection to an activist member of Radio Six, the girl may have been imprisoned or killed. Therefore, the letters are hidden, which, as Sarhou suggests, makes the reader “a witness for these silenced people” (Sarhou 110) as there is no one else who will read them. It is further stated that “[e]ven the construction of this tale as a series of undeliverable letters emphasizes the overwhelming odds against even lovers being able to speak freely inside Haiti” (Sarhou 110). Still, the two lovers choose to write to each other and it is proposed that they do so in order to get rid of the weight of the horror around them that puts extreme pressure on them.

The impression that writing helps to release the pressure of traumatic events is emphasized in the epilogue “Women Like Us”, in which the narrator reports that writing things down is better than keeping the silence. Precisely, she explains that “[s]ilence terrifies you more than the pounding of a million pieces of steel chopping away at your flesh” (Danticat 223). With this, Danticat again utilizes a strong picture to emphasize the anxiety, the terror and the overwhelming pressure that the protagonists have to deal with and it

becomes clear why the protagonists in “Children of the Sea” feel the urge to write everything down.

Moreover, the narrator of the epilogue explains that it is often not only one’s own story that needs to be told, but also those of others. For example, in “Children of the Sea”, the male narrator also writes about Célianne, who was raped by soldiers and became pregnant. In the case of the narrator of the epilogue, however, the urge to write was actually induced by the calling of her ancestors: “These women, they asked for your voice so that they could tell your mother in your place that yes, women like you do speak, even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand. Even if it’s patois, dialect, Creole” (Danticat 222). In this excerpt, the urge to speak about trauma is salient. It is also crucial to mention that the narrator addresses women in particular to break the silence, but the text also speaks to the older female generation not to silence their daughters anymore in order to let them empower themselves and speak freely. Moreover, it encourages women to talk about trauma no matter in which language they do so. Therefore, the narrator of the epilogue gives the Haitian women in exile the permission and the conviction that it is necessary for them to speak confidently and freely in whatever language is available to them. It can also be claimed that the written account is even more of a testimony than the oral version of it would be. As it becomes a testimony, the trauma can be placed into a larger dimension, as Judith Herman (181) found in her research. This larger dimension, however, can only be achieved when more and more people speak up and Danticat clearly implies that more and more women should do so. Sarthou also thinks along the lines of a larger dimension of Danticat’s work when she writes that “if the violent pathology of her [i.e. Danticat’s] Haiti is to be remediated, it can only be achieved by individuals who are empowered to write and to speak” (Sarthou 100-101). The narrator of the epilogue also thinks of her stories as a testimony in the following excerpt:

[...] she would ask you to name each braid after those nine hundred and ninety-nine women who were boiling in your blood, and since you had written them down and memorized them, the names would come rolling off your tongue. And this was your testament to the way that these women lived and died and lived again. (Danticat 224).

This part of the text can be read in such a way that trauma was passed on from generation to generation because she writes that those women “were boiling in your blood” (Danticat 224). This metaphor may also imply that the trauma was either there subconsciously or like something one has to learn by heart at school. That is to say that one knows something in a rather mechanical way, but only when one speaks or writes about the underlying trauma, one reflects on it and thus, it becomes possible to become aware of the pain that has been there for

a long time. Taking this route of writing and speaking may lead to a conscious integration of what is boiling beneath the surface, which may ultimately have a healing effect.

Furthermore, it is suggested that although the idea of talking or writing about trauma might be abhorred by trauma victims at first, it could be the case that telling the stories of Haitian traumata is not as alien as it seems to be in the first place. In fact, the title of the short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*, which refers to the Haitian oral story telling tradition, manages to put the trauma narratives in a familiar context. Moreover, Danticat's work constitutes one way of finding words for what seems to be impossible to be talked about. Indeed, Sarthou identifies Danticat as a "self-proclaimed storyteller" (103) and that her project is "the reclamation of Haitian history" (103) and the writing down of "the secret hurts and violations that have accumulated, as well as the lies that are perpetuated, in the lives of Haitians and Haitian-Americans" (103). In Sarthou's opinion "Danticat's work formalizes the oral tradition and the unspoken histories by translating them into the written word" (Sarthou 103). In her fictional writing, Danticat certainly found a more sustainable medium than the oral story telling for the trauma that has been held back by Haitians and Haitian-Americans for generations. As such, *Krik? Krak!* becomes a valuable testimony to the cruelties and prolonged terror that Haitians have had to endure.

To conclude, Danticat's approach to the recovery from trauma often does not separate the three stages of healing. The three rather merge and depend on each other. As such, writing or talking about trauma, belonging to the second stage, is often a testimony and includes a survivor mission, which actually belongs to the third stage, at the same time. Of course, it can be argued at this point that Danticat's depiction of trauma differs from Herman's model of recovery from trauma. However, Visser claims that it "is the domain of literature to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions and or complete exactitude" (Visser 255).

4.1.b. Mourning

This section will deal with the ways of mourning that are presented in Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. Basically, Herman states that once the silence is broken and the victim is able to talk or write about what that happened to her/him, enters the second stage of recovery. Since it is possible at this stage to put the trauma into words, the traumatized person becomes more and more aware of what happened. According to Herman, "[t]he telling of the trauma story thus inevitably plunges the survivor into profound grief" (Herman 188). She also explains that "[t]he descent into mourning is at once the most necessary and the most dreaded

task of this stage of recovery. Patients often fear that the task is insurmountable, that once they allow themselves to start grieving, they will never stop” (188).

In Danticat’s short story cycle, the reader also finds rituals of mourning. However, Danticat’s depiction differs considerably from Herman’s description insofar as the psychotherapist excludes traditional ways of mourning in her work when she states that “[s]ince so many of the losses are invisible or unrecognized, the customary rituals of mourning provide little consolation” (Herman 188). This can be true for the context of a Western and modernized world. However, this is not the case for Danticat’s characters in *Krik? Krak!*. Indeed, most of the mourning in the short story cycle is highly influenced by religious and spiritual customs and beliefs. Therefore, Irene Visser criticizes that religion and spirituality are only rarely addressed in the postmodern period and that “this limited perspective makes cultural theory inadequate for an engagement with indigenous literatures that situate trauma in the context of ritual and ceremony” (Visser 260). Consequently, a work of postcolonial fiction can only be analyzed fully when despised fields such as religion and spirituality find their place in the analysis. Thus, some of the examples of religious and spiritual ways of mourning will be analyzed in this section.

The first example stems from the first story “Children of the Sea”. In this episode, the family of a young girl has to bear witness to an incident in which their neighbour is killed by soldiers. Since the father does not want to endanger his family, he forces them to stay in the house instead of helping their neighbor who is beaten up by soldiers. The situation is filled with extreme feelings of helplessness and impuissance. Still, the mother finds a way to express her grief and mourn their neighbour on their escape to the country. It is recounted that “we stopped at an open market on the way. manman got some black cloth for herself and for me. she cut the cloth in two pieces and we wrapped them around our heads to mourn madan roger” (Danticat 19). This passage shows that despite the helplessness they felt during the attack of the soldiers, the ritual of the black cloth seems to bring some relief to the woman and her daughter as they are at least able to do something to mourn her even though they could not help her. The significance of this custom is indicated as there more are stories in the cycle that take up the custom of wrapping oneself in black clothes. For example, Jacqueline in the second story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” “took a long piece of black cloth out of her bundle and wrapped it around her belly” (Danticat 48) in order to mourn Josephine’s mother Défilé. Also, those protagonists already living in the USA employ this technique of mourning. For instance, Caroline’s and Gracina’s mother “tightened a leather belt around her belly, the way some old Haitian women tightened rags around their middles when grieving” (Danticat 168).

Generally speaking, the Mass provides a safe environment and a community in which the women are able to grieve. In the case of this example, the people mourn the victims of a boat tragedy that is very likely to be identical with the refugees from the first story “Children of the Sea”. By having a community in which one is able to share one’s grief, one is provided with “a sustaining source of emotional support” (Herman 221) which can be “extremely productive once that the survivor reaches the second stage” (221). Consequently, this shows that religious customs may support people in overcoming trauma as well.

Back in Haiti, the equivalent for the Mass might be the secret women’s society since its members also meet regularly to mourn their losses. However, the spiritual background is somewhat different since the women are strongly associated with voodoo. At least, Défilé’s daughter reports that her mother and the other women “would all dress in white” (Danticat 41), the traditional colour of voodoo priestesses (Brazier 81). Furthermore, Josephine’s description of the ritual resembles the *desouven* which is a Haitian funeral rite (Brazier 81): “My mother would hold my hand tightly as we walked toward the water” (Danticat 41). According to Brazier, the reason for this ritual is that “[i]f the *desouven* rites are not held for the deceased, the spirit will roam the world restlessly and without peace, and the body may haunt the earth as a *zonbi*” (Brazier 82). Since these women practice voodoo, it becomes clear why the society is kept a secret bearing in mind the numerous Anti-superstition campaigns of the Haitian government. Therefore, one might argue that again the first stage of recovery, i.e. a really safe place, is missing, however, it is certainly true that these women support each other. For example, Jacqueline helps Josephine in overcoming Défilé’s death by accompanying her to prison (46). On top of that, the pilgrimages to the river also help the women to “find reunion with their lost mothers and seek solace in ancestral spirits” (Brazier 81).

Indeed, many women in the cycle find consolation through dialogues with their deceased ancestors. For instance, Marie in “Between the Pool and the Gardenias” tells the reader that

I have always said my mother’s prayers at dawn. I welcomed the years that were slowly bringing me closer to her. For not matter how much distance death tried to put between us, my mother would often come to visit me. Sometimes in the short sighs and whispers of somebody else’s voice. Sometimes in somebody else’s face. Other times in brief moments in my dreams. (Danticat 94)

This text passage illustrates that Marie finds consolation in the thought her mother accompanies her even after death. On top of that, it is important to mention that Josephine is

closer to her mother after her mother's death. Since she was very much intimidated by the powers her mother supposedly had, she could hardly speak with her when she was alive: "In the prison yard, I held the Madonna tightly against my chest, so close that I could smell my mother's scent on the statue. When Jacqueline and I stepped out into the yard to wait for the burning, I raised my head toward the sun thinking, One day I may just see my mother there" (Danticat 49).

Some other characters experience closeness with their relatives during their dreams. For instance, Gracina and Caroline often dream of their deceased father: "For a few months after Papa died, Caroline and I dreamt of him every other night. It was as though he were taking turns visiting us in our sleep. We would each have the same dream [...]" (170). Referring to excerpts like these, Jana Evans Braziel writes that "generations are linked in dreams, even as genealogical lines are severed through death" (Braziel 83). This is also true for Marie in "Between the Pool and the Gardenias", as she explains that "[t]here were many nights when I saw some old women leaning over my bed. 'That there is Marie,' my mother would say. 'She is now the last one of us left.' Mama had to introduce me to them, because they had all died before I was born" (Danticat 94).

Generally speaking, it can thus be argued that religion and spirituality play a vital part in the recovery from trauma in Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* even if it is not acknowledged in Judith Herman's *Trauma and recovery*. At this point, it is also crucial to point out that the two main religions, voodoo and Christianity, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they both seem to inform the belief system of Danticat's protagonists and play a vital role in their recovery from trauma, or at least they serve as a form of consolation. For example, in the story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven", Défilé is consoled by her figure of the Madonna when she is in prison: "She pointed at the Madonna in my hands, opening her arms to receive it. I quickly handed her the statue. She smiled. Her teeth were a dark red, as though caked with blood from the initial beating during her arrest. At times, she seemed happier to see the Madonna than she was to see me" (Danticat 37). This excerpt shows that despite being a voodoo priestess, Défilé finds consolation in the Christian statue of the Madonna. Indeed, the reader learns that the figure has a lot more meaning since the statue is a family heirloom, as Josephine explains that "[...] the small statue [...] had been owned by my family ever since it was given to my great-great-great-grandmother Défilé by a French man who kept her as a slave" (Danticat 34). It is suggested in this passage that Défilé and her daughter are direct descendants of the revolutionary figure Défilé-la-folle since the tale of the origin of the statue

not only resembles Défilé-la-folle's story, but it can be argued that Défilé was named after her famous ancestor.

Another salient feature not only of how ancestral lines are depicted in Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* but also as far as the groups of remembrance and mourning are described, is that women are almost always foregrounded as men are typically left out. Generally, women support each other in the stories, also outside of religious matters. For example, when Défilé died in prison, her fellow prisoners made an arrangement of sand and pebbles in the shape of a cross for Josephine's mother. Each woman was either wearing or holding something that had belonged to her (Danticat 47), which again indicates the support for the deceased woman and that the women's support system even outreaches death.

Indeed, these examples of solidarity among the women in the short story cycle mirror what Judith Herman also describes in her work as one of the most healing tools, namely commonality: "The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging" (Herman 214). Indeed, it is again the case that Danticat connects various stages of recovery in one story. That is to say that these groups of women combine not only a safe environment (apart from the fact that these groups were persecuted by the police as they were suspected to be vodouisantes), but they also create the space for trauma victims to talk about their experiences and connect with others. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, these groups, especially the secret women's society, also fulfil another function, which can be assigned to an aspect of Herman's third stage of recovery, namely finding a survivor mission.

4.1.c. The survivor mission and individual and collective resistance

Most survivors seek the resolution of their traumatic experience within the confines of their personal lives. But a significant minority, as a result of the trauma, feel called upon to engage in a wider world. These survivors recognize a political or religious dimension in their misfortune and discover that they can transform the meaning of their personal tragedy by making it the basis of social action. (Herman 207)

It can be argued that the secret women's society combines both, a political and a religious dimension, that helps the women on a personal as well as on a public level to overcome trauma. Indeed, since they are all survivors of trauma, they can all be seen as witnesses of atrocities and as such their society is a testimony for those who died due the crimes that were committed. Consequently, not only does the value of these groups lie in their consolation but

also in their resistance against violence. Simply because they survived, they are witnesses to terrible events, which were often hushed up. Therefore, the survivor mission of these women is being a living testimony of the crimes that have been committed in Haiti in general and in the year 1937 in particular.

Adopting a survivor mission can be regarded as a movement towards “resistance and recovery” (Visser 278), which Irene Visser perceives as a salient part of postcolonial trauma literature. Indeed, it is important to mention here that resistance forms a vital part of Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* as it provides numerous examples of individual and collective resistance to the prevalent oppression in Haiti.

It can be observed that there are two forms of resistance in this story, namely individual and collective resistance. For instance, in the first story “Children of the Sea”, the male narrator is an activist for Radio Six, a circumstance which ultimately leads to his escape. Being part of this activist group makes him part of the collective resistance against the opponents of President Aristide during the times of the coup d’état. On the other hand, the female narrator shows individual resistance when she insists on keeping her boyfriend’s tapes in her house even though supporters of the activists are likely to be killed (Danticat 11). Furthermore, the girl’s neighbour offers resistance to the soldiers when they want to question her about her son, who was also a member of Radio Six (Danticat 15-16).

The second story features the main protagonist’s namesake Défilé-la-folle, a prominent figure of the slave revolution in Haiti in the late 18th century. In legend, she became famous when she, being a part of the entourage of the revolutionary leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines (Brazier 79), gathered his body parts when he was dismembered by his opponents. This action shows that she may have been a voodoo priestess, because Haitians believe that when a dead person is not buried it may be reanimated and become a zombie (Brazier 70). That is to say Défilé-la-folle’s function as a voodoo priestess is important to be mentioned here since these women have been persecuted for centuries. By making her an important character, or lieux de mémoire (Brazier 76), in the short story cycle, Danticat resists the common superstitions against those women. And indeed, just by naming one of her characters after a revolutionary figure, Danticat indicates resistance.

Another reference to the slave revolution, which ultimately led to the independence of Haiti in 1804 (Menzel 26) is presented in the third story, “A Wall of Fire Rising”. In this story, Danticat connects a contemporary setting with the revolutionary background of modern-day Haiti since this country was the first to experience a successful slave revolution. The ongoing upheavals since 1791 were led by black revolutionaries, among them Boukman

Dutty, who fought for independence of their white owners and French colonialism (Menzel 26). This historical background is connected the background of the third story, which is set in the 20th century, since the story revolves around Lili and Guy's son, who was chosen to play Boukman Dutty in a school play. At home, the boy recites the following lines: *"There is so much sadness in the faces of my people. I have called on their gods, now I call our gods. I call on our young, I call on our old. I call on our mighty and the weak. 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"* (Danticat 80).

As the family often faces unemployment and hunger, this part of Dutty's speech still speaks to people today. For example, when Little Guy recites the speech, his father "wiped a tear away, walked over to the chair, and took the boy in his arms" (Danticat 71). Indeed, the father strives to improve his family's life and dreams of flying with the sugar mill owner's hot-air balloon one day. According to Davis, the image of flying represents "the need to escape from the violence and oppression of the old country [...]" (Davis 71). Sadly, even though Guy eventually steals the balloon, he loses control and has to jump out of it and dies. Although it can be argued that the crash is symbolic of the Haitian people's striving for freedom, the man's actions may as well be read in such a way that by stealing the balloon, he resisted the prevalent belief that it is not worth following one's dreams since they are too far from being realistic. The fact that he managed to get hold of the balloon and fly in it may bring hope and encourage more resistance.

Other examples of individual resistance are illustrated in the sixth story "The Missing Peace". First of all, there is Lamort, who shows resistance against being silenced by her grandmother and bear the burden of guilt that was imposed on her because her mother died after giving birth to her. At the end of the story, she sheds her previous name and adopts the name of her mother, i.e. Marie Magdalène (Danticat 122). While this resistance represents an individual liberation, Emilie Gallant, a journalist and guest of Lamort's grandmother, shows resistance on a larger scale. The Haitian-American woman lost her mother during the coup d'état and visits Ville Rose in order to search for her. When Lamort takes the journalist to a mass burial site, Emilie refuses to be silenced by the soldiers and thus, resists the soldiers:

"You see nothing", Toto said again, grabbing her face. She raised her arm as if to strike him. He seized her wrist in midair and whisked her hand behind her back. "You see nothing", he said, his voice hissing between his teeth. "Repeat after me. You see nothing." "I see nothing," I repeated in her place. "The lady does not understand." "I see you", she said in Creole. "How can that be nothing?" (Danticat 118)

With the last question “How can that be nothing?”, Emilie Gallant resists the threats of the soldiers and makes clear that as long as she lives, she will remember what she saw that night. By doing so, she also reflects the secret women’s society’s belief that as witnesses, they have power and a survivor mission. Indeed, the power of the society becomes clearer and clearer in the short story cycle since it is mentioned in several stories. Furthermore, it seems that this organisation is bigger than first expected as most of the women in the stories are somehow interconnected not only by being related to each other on the mother’s side but also because they are all members of the secret women’s society. For example, women in the second, the third, the fifth and the ninth story are clearly named as being part of this organisation and thus, indicating their hidden power as being witnesses to past atrocities.

Conclusion

The first chapter is concerned with the main concepts in trauma theory since this thesis reads Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* as a trauma narrative. I claim that even though Caruth's extremely influential work on trauma theory and Danticat's fictional short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* were both published in the mid 1990s, the way trauma and its after-effects are understood, described and represented differ in many aspects from each other. Consequently, it is debatable whether the traditional approach to trauma provides useful tools to analyze postcolonial trauma narratives like *Krik? Krak!*. Therefore, not only Caruth's work influences the analysis of this short story cycle, but also more recent research on literary trauma theory. I state that these recent developments, induced by Michael Rothberg and represented by Irene Visser and other scholars, are much more suitable in the analysis of Danticat's work since they take the specifics of postcolonial trauma literature into account. Some of these specifics are the prolonged form of trauma, secondary victims, spirituality, resistance and recovery. However, as I argue in chapter three, in some cases Danticat's narrative presents much more complex representations of trauma so that not even recent developments in trauma theory provide productive tools for the analysis of all aspects of trauma in *Krik? Krak!*. For some of these aspects, such as PTSD and the prolonged form of trauma, it seems that Borzaga's approach provides feasible means even though her work is concerned with the analysis of South African trauma literature. Furthermore, I want to point out in this thesis that some aspects of trauma, among them the notion of melancholia, may be redundant in the analysis of postcolonial narratives such as Danticat's short story cycle since in contrast to the traditional understanding of trauma, melancholia is neither a precondition nor a necessary aspect of mourning (LaCapra 213) in *Krik? Krak!*. Therefore, a crucial proposition of this thesis is that Western models of trauma can only be used in a critical way and must be constantly scrutinized when analysing this short story cycle.

Accordingly, it is also important to mention that attempts to decolonize trauma theory imply the idea that the dominant paradigm is in need of expansion and should incorporate "other experiences and texts as objects of trauma theory analysis. However, such an expansive movement also points at a colonial power dynamic that should be critically attended to, namely that between a center of theoretical definition and its margins, which may end up being reinforced rather than questioned" (Martinez-Falquina 839). This is not to say that the decolonizing project is not useful but "cultural imperialism" may be a trap in that approach that should be avoided (Martinez-Falquina 839).

The second chapter is concerned with the question whether Danticat's short story cycle *Krik? Krak!* can be a valuable addition in the understanding of Haiti's history. For example, Dominick LaCapra conceded that fictional literature can help to gain deeper insights into history since such narratives may provide "at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods" (LaCapra 13). However, in the case of Haiti's history, especially in reference to the massacre in 1937, it is strongly suggested that sometimes, fictional stories may be the only accessible narrative that is able to serve as a testimony of the past. This is particularly the case when such events do not seem to have happened, at least from an official historical point of view (Turits 622). Therefore, *Krik? Krak!* could even exceed LaCapra's valuation of fictional narratives. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the massacre in 1937 is only one aspect of the trauma that the author describes in the short story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven". A much more detailed account of the massacre in 1937 can be found in Danticat's historical novel *The Farming of Bones* (1998). Danticat says about this novel that it is not a work of history but "a memory and a tribute" (Collins 45) since it is not the case that "these stories cannot be or have not been spoken but that they are contested, incomplete and officially ignored" (Collins 45). The same is true for the stories that Danticat tells in *Krik? Krak!* in which it seems that it is the author's aim not only to tell these stories but at the same time, through certain means, e.g. employing a second person narrator in the epilogue, she also creates an audience that listens to the testimonies of her characters. Moreover, Martinez-Falquina states that in dealing with postcolonial trauma literature "previously silenced or forgotten traumas are given further visibility on a global scale [which] is very positive indeed" (840). Therefore, I argue that *Krik? Krak!*'s value lies precisely in its ability to make parts of Haiti's trauma visible in the stories of its characters and in employing the reader as an audience that is willing to listen to their testimonies.

The fourth chapter of this thesis deals with healing and recovery in *Krik? Krak!*, as these two aspects seem to be crucial features of postcolonial trauma narratives:

The questioning of an excessive emphasis on the post-traumatic condition – with a focus on the shattering experience of trauma, the disorder and destitution resulting from it – is also present in some critiques of mainstream trauma theory, which underscore the possibility of healing that is obvious in postcolonial literatures [...]. (Martinez-Falquina 837)

Indeed, Danticat's characters strive to escape traumatic events as well as traumatic living conditions even in the most desperate situations. This is shown in the manifold images of

flight, which are presented in the short story cycle as the metaphor of flying “can be linked to broader notions of ascension, elevation and escape” (Chen 36). Salient examples of the image of flying in *Krik? Krak!* are represented by Défilé in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, who invents the wings of flames which enable her not only to escape the massacre. They also seem to play a part in her ascension because after her body is burned in the prison yard, her daughter says “Let her flight be joyful” (Danticat 1995: 49). The wings and the image of flying in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” represent Défilé’s new and powerful identity. Indeed, Défilé does mention anything about her life before the massacre happened, which, from my point of view, creates the impression that she forged a completely new identity that has its starting point in 1937. This iconic story and the many similes that add details to Défilé’s account come close to the way legends and tales are narrated. Thus, it is also not surprising that Défilé’s namesake Défilé-la-folle is a legendary revolutionary figure. Unfortunately, Danticat’s Haiti does not allow the characters to rise above the pain, which is not only made clear in Défilé’s death, but also the death of Guy who jumps out of a stolen hot-air balloon in “A Wall of Fire Rising”.

Although, the images of flight and the subsequent fall from heights may suggest that it is impossible for the protagonists to escape from trauma, I argue that the cyclic character of not only the genre but also the metaphors of life and death that Danticat employs, point into the direction that trauma and recovery are not presented in a melancholic way as the traditional trauma aesthetics would suggest (Visser 278). On the contrary, in “Nineteen Thirty-Seven” Jacqueline identifies the cyclic character of life as something empowering: “‘Sister’, she said, ‘life is never lost, another one always comes up to replace the last. [...]’” (Danticat 48). Therefore, I claim that despite the recurring traumata, Danticat’s characters generally focus on resistance. Indeed, it seems that the whole short story cycle works towards the recovery from trauma. For example, the seventh story “Seeing Things Simply” is completely unlike the other stories in the cycle. This story can be seen as a transition from the previous six stories, which are more trauma-filled and set in Haiti, to the stories that are already placed in the United States and that mainly deal with overcoming trauma, recovery and building a new identity of a hybridized citizen.

In “Seeing Things Simply”, the story revolves around Princesse who poses without clothes for the painter Catherine, who was born in Guadeloupe and educated in Paris. Catherine helps Princesse to discover the beauties of the landscape of Haiti and she also educates her in seeing the good in the people around her and in her country. On top of that, the painter makes Princesse aware of the beauty of her body, which is significant because the body is frequently hurt, harassed and killed in *Krik? Krak!*. This positive picture of Haiti

comes close to Irene Visser's understanding of how postcolonial literature deals with trauma as she argues that "trauma calls for a turn to life" (Visser 255). Furthermore, Judith Herman expresses an opinion similar to Visser's:

The survivor who has accomplished her recovery faces life with few illusions but often with gratitude. Her view of life may be tragic, but for that very reason she has learned to cherish laughter. She has a clear sense of what is important and what is not. Having encountered evil, she knows how to cling to what is good. Having encountered the fear of death, she knows how to celebrate life. (Herman 213)

The main character of the cycle's seventh story may not be at that point yet, but she is able to see beyond the troubles of her home country Haiti and the difficulties of her daily life:

Princesse carried the conch shell in her hand as she strolled. She dug the sharp tip of the shell into her index finger and drew a few drops of blood. The blood dripped in front of her white undershirt, making small blots that sank into the cloth, leaving uneven circles. Princesse sat on the cooling sand on the beach staring at the spots on her otherwise immaculate undershirt, seeing in the blank spaces all kinds of possibilities. (Danticat 138)

It is suggested that Princesse embodies the consciousness that is aware of both the blood and the purity of Haiti. Thus, even though this thesis reads *Krik? Krak!* as a trauma narrative, it is necessary to see the whole picture of Danticat's work which also includes positive views and tools, such as humour, to describe a world that is normally distorted by traumatizing events and living conditions. I argue that it is precisely the strength of this short story cycle that the author presents trauma not in a black-and-white way that is highly influenced by the depiction of victims and perpetrators, melancholia and suffering, but that her approach to trauma is much more complex (and more colourful) so that it exceeds the dominant theories of trauma and how trauma should be represented in literature.

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Abstract

The diploma thesis “Trauma and healing in Edwidge Danticat’s short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*” reads Danticat’s piece of work as a trauma narrative. I argue that traditional approaches to trauma theory, which are highly influenced by Freudian notions of trauma and Cathy Caruth’s work, are not fully productive anymore regarding the analysis of postcolonial trauma literature in general and Danticat’s *Krik? Krak!* in particular. Since 2008, there has been a movement towards a decolonization of trauma theory, which was induced by Michael Rothberg and is largely represented by Irene Visser’s work in this thesis. It is further understood that not all readers of Danticat’s work will be familiar with Haiti’s history, which is crucial to understand the traumata that the author represents. Therefore, one chapter of this thesis is devoted to the historical background of the short story cycle and the general relationship between historiographical and fictional writing. In order to be able to discuss Danticat’s work in a way that covers as many aspects of trauma and recovery as possible, it is further suggested in this thesis to take not only Haiti’s folkloric tradition into account, but also the notion of memory. The main part of this thesis is concerned with the analysis of the cyclic character of both the genre and the process of working through traumatic suffering. While I employed a range of scholars to inform the analysis of trauma in *Krik? Krak!*, the chapter on healing and recovery is largely based on Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Recovery*. Finally, another value of this thesis lies in its focus on the whole short story cycle since other research in this field usually only deals with individual stories.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit interpretiert Edwidge Danticats Kurzgeschichtenzyklus *Krik? Krak!* als Traumaerzählung. Ausgangspunkt meiner Argumentation ist, dass die traditionelle Traumatheorie, welche stark von den Theorien Freuds und Cathy Caruths Arbeit beeinflusst wird, nur noch zum Teil ein fruchtbarer Ansatz in der Analyse postkolonialer Traumaliteratur im Allgemeinen und Danticats *Krik? Krak!* im Besonderen zu sein scheint. Seit 2008 entwickelte sich eine Bewegung, welche die Entkolonisierung der Traumatheorie zum Ziel hat. Diese Bewegung wurde von Michael Rothberg ins Leben gerufen, wird jedoch in dieser Arbeit hauptsächlich durch Irene Visser repräsentiert. Weiters berücksichtigt diese Arbeit, dass die LeserInnen womöglich nicht mit der Geschichte Haitis vertraut sind, welche aber ein wichtiger Aspekt des Kurzgeschichtenzyklus ist. Daher beschäftigt sich ein Kapitel mit dem historischen Hintergrund dieses Kurzgeschichtenzyklus und der Beziehung zwischen historiographischem und fiktionalem Schreiben. Um so viele Aspekte von Danticats Arbeit zu erfassen ist es außerdem notwendig folkloristische Traditionen Haitis sowie das Konzept des Gedächtnisses miteinzubeziehen. Der Hauptteil dieser Arbeit konzentriert sich auf den zyklischen Charakter des Genres einerseits und des Aufarbeitungsprozesses von Traumata andererseits. Für die Analyse des Traumaaspekts in *Krik? Krak!* bezog ich mich auf verschiedene Quellen, das Kapitel über den Heilungsaspekt basiert hauptsächlich auf der Forschung Judith Hermans, welche ihre Erkenntnisse in *Trauma and Recovery* zusammengefasst hat. Schlussendlich muss noch betont werden, dass der Fokus dieser Arbeit auf dem gesamten Kurzgeschichtenzyklus liegt, wodurch sie sich von anderer Forschung auf diesem Gebiet abhebt, welche sich zumeist nur mit einzelnen Kurzgeschichten aus dem Zyklus beschäftigt.