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The Body and the Parent-Daughter Bond: Negotiating Haitian Filial Relationships in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*

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Résumé de synthèse

The Body and the Parent-Daughter Bond: Negotiating Filial Relationships in Edwidge Danticat's ***Breath, Eyes, Memory*** *and* ***The Dew Breaker*** est une étude sur les différentes façons dont le corps déséquilibré, torturé et traumatisé influence la relation parent-fille. Cette thèse examine l'impact du pouvoir et de la violence sur le corps aussi bien des parents que celui des filles et les différentes manières dont ces corps deviennent déséquilibrés. Cette thèse porte sur la construction et la négociation de chacune des conditions de parents et de filles sous l'angle du corps sexué traumatisé.

Le premier chapitre traite la littérature précédemment écrite sur le corps en premier lieu, et sur les liens de filiation dans les deux œuvres en second lieu. J'ai introduit ma contribution au domaine et les différents aspects de la relation parent-fille qui ne sont pas pris en considération et que ma thèse essaye de démontrer. Ce chapitre contextualise ces deux œuvres pendant l'ère de la dictature des deux Duvaliers, père et fils, en exposant et discutant l'impacte néfaste de cette dictature sur les familles. Ce chapitre conceptualise et définit le corps, qui est une construction culturelle et un site d'interaction entre le pouvoir et la violence, par rapport aux relations filiales.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, l'accent est mis sur la relation de Martine et Sophie par rapport à la pratique rituelle du test de la virginité. Dans ce chapitre, j'ai soulevé des questions sur le pouvoir de Martine de discipliner et contrôler l'attitude et le corps de Sophie et la manière avec laquelle la fille peut réagir au contrôle et à la subjugation de sa mère. J'ai examiné le conflit intergénérationnel qui est intensifié par le désordre corporel. J'ai essayé de démontrer comment Sophie souhaite rejeter et se séparer du corps de sa mère et son incapacité à le faire.

Dans le troisième chapitre, j'ai étudié la relation de M. Bienaimé avec sa fille Ka qui est perturbée à la fois par le corps de son père et l'identité antérieure de ce dernier en tant qu'ancien Tonton Macoute. La question soulevée dans ce chapitre concerne le corps du père comme un agent de violence politique et comme une source d'inspiration artistique pour sa fille. L'identification de Ka avec et plus tard sa séparation du corps de son père est au cœur de mon étude, car c'est ce corps là qui modifie cette relation filiale particulière, qui résulte en un traumatisme transgénérationnel.

Mots-clés: corps, relation parent-fille, pouvoir, violence, Edwidge Danticat

Abstract

The Body and the Parent-Daughter Bond: Negotiating Filial Relationships in Edwidge Danticat's ***Breath, Eyes, Memory*** *and* ***The Dew Breaker*** is an investigation of the different ways the disordered, tortured and traumatised body alters the parent-daughter relationship. It explores the mechanisms of power and violence on the bodies of both parents and daughters and the ways these bodies become as disordered as the psyche. This thesis will deal with the construction and negotiation of both parenthood and daughterhood from the angle of the gendered traumatised body.

The first chapter deals with the scholarship that has been written on either the body or the filial relationships in both works. I have introduced my own contributions to the field in addition to the different overlooked aspects of the parent-daughter bond that my thesis tries to demonstrate. This chapter contextualizes both fictions with the era of Duvalier's dictatorship and conceptualizes and defines the body in relation to filial relationships as a cultural construction and a site of the interplay of power and violence.

The second chapter focuses on Martine-Sophie's bond in relation to the ritual practice of virginity testing. In this chapter, I raise questions about the extent of Martine's power to discipline and control Sophie's body and behaviour and how the daughter reacts to her mother's empowerment. I examine the intergenerational conflict that is intensified by body dysmorphia. I also demonstrate how Sophie wishes to separate herself from her mother's body and why she fails to do so.

In the third chapter, I study Mr. Bienaimé-Ka's relationship that is disturbed by both the father's body and his past identity as a former Tonton Macoute. The question raised in this chapter concerns the father's body as an agent of political violence and his daughter's source of her artistic inspiration. Ka's identification and later separation from

her father's body is at the heart of my study because it is this body that alters this particular filial relationship, resulting in transgenerational trauma.

Key words: body, parent-daughter bond, power, violence, Edwidge Danticat

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for my mother, my father and my brother.

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Introduction

Breath, Eyes, Memory and *The Dew Breaker* are Edwidge Danticat's most popular works, written respectively in 1994 and 2004. Compared to *The Dew Breaker*, Danticat's first novel won considerable critical attention and was selected as an Oprah Book Club in 1998. Both works shed light on the ways the issue of diasporic Haitian family ties problematize the question of tense filial relationships—particularly between Haitian parents and their Americanized daughters—within a framework of centrality of the body in the negotiation of these bonds. Hence, my thesis, "The Body and the Parent-Daughter Bond: Negotiating Filial Relationships in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*," undertakes the analysis of both parenthood and daughterhood in relation to the body. My exploration of Danticat's fictions is grounded in an examination of the parent-daughter bond, but I place equal attention on the impact of the disordered bodies on these relationships. I analyze the body both as a locus of trauma and a means of social control, violence and resistance. Central to my thesis is an exploration of the ways the traumatized body delineates the parent-daughter relationship, with focus on the ways social power and political violence affect these bodies.

Haitian history has always been Danticat's major preoccupation. In her works, the author turns to Haitian memory, stories and folklore to write and challenge official history. In an interview with Nancy Raquel Mirabel, "Dyasporic Appetites and Longings," Danticat says:

> I'm not a historian but I'm fascinated by history and especially the way that it manifests itself in the present [...] especially in the case of Haitian history. Often when you meet Haitians they're very mindful of one huge event, such as the Haitian Revolution that happened 200 years ago. But if you hear people talk about it, it's almost as if it happened last year. (35)

It constitutes an essential component in the writings of Caribbean authors, notably in Danticat's. Going back over some historical events that have marked Haiti, Danticat

seeks to expose the suffering of the Haitian people. Accordingly, Danticat's preoccupation with such a history is prominent in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*. In these two works, Danticat represents dictatorship under the Duvaliers by including scenes of state terrorism in order to demonstrate that the past bears the imprint of Papa Doc and Baby Doc's dictatorial rule and that Haitians— even outside of Haiti — are still haunted by the demons of the Duvalier years.

Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker* are framed within a specific political context, the era of domination by the Duvaliers who were, in turn, politically enabled by the terror of the Tontons Macoutes. Growing up in Haiti until the age of twelve, Danticat was aware of the social and political tensions during the Duvaliers' dictatorships. As she states in an interview with Martin Munro:

> I think a lot of creative work springs out of some place deeper in us, a place that maybe even the writer does not have access to until he or she begins writing. I grew up under a dictatorship. Maybe that's a bigger scar than even I realized when I was a child, or even know. Maybe I'll understand it finally when I am an old woman. I saw a lot of people go away, a lot of people arrested, a lot of people "disappeared." I thought when I was younger that I was "used to it." It seemed like a sad, but kind of normal part of life. I thought it was like that everywhere, but maybe I was shell shocked by all this. Maybe I was traumatized and that trauma is now surfacing in this way. (*Exile and Post-1964,* 238)

In her writings, Danticat focuses on dictatorship in Haiti and its legacy. Her works bring to the fore the atrocities of the 29 years of dictatorship under the Duvaliers, father and son. François Duvalier, known as "Papa Doc," (1957-1971) and Jean-Claude Duvalier, "Baby Doc," (1971-1986) turned Haiti into a police state that traumatized its population. Proclaiming himself a black nationalist who would challenge the mulatto elite, and thus improve black Haitians' economic and political situation, François Duvalier gained the confidence of Haitian voters and was therefore elected in September 1957. After his

election, attempts to overthrow him multiplied. His response was the creation of the paramilitary group, the Tonton Macoutes, which was ultimately responsible for eliminating any political threat and silencing any opposition. In 1964, Duvalier proclaimed himself Haiti's "President for Life." In his book, *Haiti's Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy*, Robert Fatton scrutinizes the tactics François Duvalier deployed in order to become president. Commenting on the *noiriste* strategy in politics, Fatton cites Etzer Charles who argues that:

> If, in principle, noiriste philosophy can be summarized as wanting to give power to the black, that means giving power to its defenders—that is, to a few of the upper black bourgeoisie and a significant part of the petty black bourgeoisie—and defending their class interests or personal ambitions. That petty bourgeoisie, by its situation in the fields of social activity, is simply dreaming of power and opulence. The color question then becomes a political-ideological weapon used by [Duvalier] with the goal of garnering the support of the dominated classes (black in majority). (56)

Before his death, François Duvalier appointed his son Jean-Claude Duvalier to become his successor as the president for life. During the regimes of Papa Doc and Baby Doc, Haiti became an authoritarian police state where political opposition was suppressed by means of intimidation, threats, terror and torture. The Tonton Macoutes were a Haitian militia and a secret police created by François Duvalier. In exposing and remapping one of the most violent periods in Haitian history in both fictions, the present thesis demonstrates how dictatorship, embodied in the figures of the father, Duvalier, and his sons, his militiamen, affects the "citizens' bodies" but also their familial relationships.

Accordingly, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker* provide a propitious ground when it comes to the exploration of the body and the parent-daughter bonds. In historically bringing back Duvalier's dictatorship in her writings by either storytelling and memory or actual events and history, Danticat seems to demonstrate the impact of

Duvalier's dictatorship on familial relationships. In both works, the body seems to be present on the physical but also metaphysical and textual levels. The body is central to the present thesis because it is the ultimate target of both dictatorship and parenting. Danticat seems to argue that the dysfunctional nature of filial relationships is but an extension of dysfunctional political regimes, regimes which engender disordered and tortured bodies. Thus, the analysis of the traumatized body and its impact on filial relationships is not exclusively specific to both fictions for it is significant to human relationships living under totalitarian regimes. Both works serve as a source and a starting point to examine the bodily experiences of both parents and daughters under such regimes; in doing so, both novels acknowledge how daughters' bodies become a battleground within the parent-daughter bond.

A close and careful reading of Danticat's works offers scholars an opportunity to analyze both fictions within a paradigm introduced by power relations. My readings of the novels are explored through the theoretical focus on power. My approach to power is informed by Michel Foucault's works. Foucauldian power cannot be possessed; it rather exists within a network of relations. For Foucault, power has to be analyzed in relation, rather then over, something. What results from this is the interference of knowledge in the construction of power relations. Foucault's theory of the power-knowledge nexus is illuminating when it comes to unfolding the construction of power. Still according to him, there is a strong correlation between power and knowledge. Foucauldian power produces knowledge. The actual production of such knowledge requires power to take place. The knowledge produced results in a certain type of power, which is the ability to personify truth and make it pass as absolute.

I conceptualize the body as a site of power interplay where it is defined and redefined according to specific power relations. Within the Foucauldian power-knowledge network, the body is central for it interferes in power relations. The body stands for the main target of such a power network. Power has its impact on the body. Accordingly, my perspective on power in both novels is different from preceding critiques which consider it as only and exclusively oppressive. Through his conceptualization of power, Foucault argues that it is both prohibitive and productive. According to him, power can not only be disciplinary when it regulates and disciplines the subject and their bodies, but also productive when it creates knowledge and transmits "truth" through that body. On the one hand, my present thesis will investigate the mechanisms of the exertion of disciplinary power on bodies and the subjection of these individuals and the docility of their bodies as the immediate result of such power. On the other hand, the focus of this study will also be on the ability of the subjects' bodies not only to resist such coercion physically, but also to produce knowledge and therefore a personified truth that is mediated through discourse. This theorization allows the interpretation of power in relation to the body both as disciplinary and productive but also as capable of resisting.

The first chapter, "The Body, Haitian History and the Parent-Daughter Bond," represents an overview of the literature that has been written on the body or the parent-daughter relationships in these two novels. The literature review will introduce my contributions to the field by allowing me to map the overlooked parent-daughter bond that my research then addresses. To provide the historical framework of the present thesis, this chapter will also contextualize both works by discussing Duvalier's dictatorship and its impact on families and parenting. This chapter will also deal with my

perspective on the body that is deeply marked by the dysfunctional regime in Haiti, and my conceptualization of such a body in relation to the parent-daughter bond, which is both a cultural construction and a site for the interplay of power and violence.

The second chapter of the present thesis, "Negotiating the Mother-Daughter/Daughter-Mother Bond in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: A Question of the Nurtured or Tortured Body?" deals with the interrelations of power, subjection and Foucault's notion of the docile body. I shall analyze testing as a mode of subjection by examining the bond between Sophie and her mother. The daughter's body becomes a site of simultaneous oppression and resistance, first through testing, then through self-mutilation, while the mother embodies the power to which her daughter is subjected. This intergenerational conflict is made visible by bodily disorders. My examination of the intersection between power and the body will be illuminated by Luce Irigaray and Nancy Chodorow's theory on mothering. Using a psychoanalytical approach, I will discuss and examine Sophie's identity and body negotiations through her vain wish to reject her mother and ultimate failure to do so.

The third chapter, "The Body and Violence: The Construction of the Father-Daughter Bond in *The Dew Breaker,*" scrutinizes the father-daughter relationship that is altered by the father's past and his marked body. The argument begins with Foucault's notions of power, knowledge, discourse and truth, in order to explore Mr. Bienaimé's body as Ka's source of artistic inspiration and the cause of her wish to separate herself from her father. Elaine Scarry contributes to my analysis through my grafting her conceptualization of the body, torture and pain on to the Dew Breaker's identity as a former Tonton Macoute. The father's body stands for the agent of political violence, but more importantly, it also becomes an omnipresent torturer. My analysis of the way Ka's

father seeks to escape his past by leaving Haiti, trying to reinvent a new life, and dissociate himself from his own body will be based on Victor Turner's notion of liminality, Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Derrida's theory of differing meaning. With reference to Marianne Hirsh's theory of postmemory, I finally analyze the way Mr. Bienaimé's disordered body alters the father daughter-relationship and the way Ka becomes transgenerationally traumatized.

Chapter One:

The Body, Haitian History, and the Parent-Daughter Bond

The space Danticat chooses for her characters to inhabit is the family. This space, the family sphere, allows the fictional characters to not only develop and discover their history but also exercise power, resist and sometimes wear certain "masks" and hide themselves behind it. Within this particular sphere, women are identified as aunts, grandmothers, wives, mothers or daughters and men as uncles, fathers and "Papa". In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*, Danticat questions the construction and problematizes the nature of these roles, for she represents in each a facet of the complex nature of the father/mother-daughter bonds. The mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships constitute the interest of the present thesis. The body is central to the present thesis because it is the ultimate target of both dictatorship and parenting. Accordingly, I establish an analogy between the Haitian body and the filial relationship to investigate the centrality of the body in the negotiation and construction of both parenthood and daughterhood in Danticat's writings. I read and analyze the relationship between the black Haitian body and the family using a guiding metaphor of the body as a nation and a paradigm of the nation as a family. Offering progressively a sketch of the literature review that has been written on the body or the parent-daughter bonds in these two works, the present thesis hopes to broaden the literary discussion by giving serious attention to and attempting to scrutinize the neglected aspects of the parent-daughter bond. In what follows, I examine the ways dictatorship shapes (1) the lives of Danticat's fictional characters, particularly Sophie and Ka, (2) their bodies, (3) and their parenting styles and family ideologies.

Haiti: a Historical Overview

Haiti, under Dessalines in 1804, was the first republic in the Western hemisphere to win its independence from a European colony. In 1791, Slave revolts shook the former French colony of Saint-Domingue as slaves started their fight for freedom. The slave rebellion escalated into what is known as the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Thanks to the revolution that they launched, the Haitian people abolished slavery and seized their independence from France. Haitians took pride in their revolution and their great accomplishment, for their country became the first to gain independence from a colonizing power. The Haitian Revolution, the struggle for freedom, became not only a Caribbean but also a global story. Despite the revolution's legacies, the post-revolutionary Haitian era was critical. The revolution destroyed most of the plantations, after the tropical storms that had already hit the country. The plantation system was no longer operable since the former slaves and landowners migrated to the towns looking for better job opportunities. Along with these problems, political instability marked the period. After the assassination of Dessalines, Henri Christophe took office, after proclaiming himself Haiti's first King. What further precipitated difficulties was the national debt of about 150 million francs, reduced to 60 million in 1838, imposed by a defeated France as indemnity for the French loss[1]. Rod Prince writes that what resulted from this was a total absence of any investment in the economy, as "80 per cent of revenue was going on debt repayments" (18). In 1915, the United States used Haiti's debt as a pretext to occupy the country for almost twenty years. As a result, the United States seized US$ 500,000 in gold from the Haitian banks, as part of the loan, and took

[1] In their works, *Papa Doc and The Tonton Macoutes* and *Haiti : Family Business*, both Bernard Diederich and Rod Prince argue that such a debt became a burden for the Haitian economy and that the imposed indemnity was not repaid until 1922.

control over Haiti's economy until 1934. Haiti's situation deteriorated as "the country suffered almost constant tyranny and disorder. Revolutions shook Haiti as twenty-two dictators came and went. The masses, as always, bore the brunt of their misrule" (27), as Bernard Diederich observes it.

Duvalier as a Tyrannical Father; Haiti as a Dysfunctional Nation

While dictatorship has always characterized Haiti's history, the Duvalier reign was particularly brutal, marked by violence and state-sponsored network of terror. Diederich asserts that:

> Nine years after he [François Duvalier] took over, Haitians knew that Papa Doc was only different from his predecessors in the volume of his brutality and greed. Under him Haiti became the horror of hemisphere, and a land where, in human terms, conditions were far worse than under the more widely publicized and condemned Communist regime of Fidel Castro. (21)

As a regime of a totalitarian nature, Duvalierism embodied state-sponsored violence. Myriam Chancy remarks that "[as] historians unanimously agree", Duvalierism created "a vast, intricate, unprecedented network of violence in Haiti" (145). In a similar manner, commenting on the violent regime of Duvalier in his book *Haiti*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot points out that:

> Duvalierist violence certainly knew no limits with respect to codes that had traditionally restrained authoritarian regimes in Haiti, but it was far from illogical. Its logic lay precisely in the fact that it had a symbolic value far beyond the immediate usefulness of eliminating genuine opponents. Violence became potentially "total", a daily sign of the omnipotence of a state that obeyed no logic besides its own. But because it reminded everyone of the state's omnipotence, that violence became a daily deterrent that kept political agitators at bay—an even more effective means of protecting the state than the traditional violence it replaced. (169)

Accordingly, Duvalier's creation of his secret militia to enforce his power became the basis of his regime. Rod Prince writes that estimates about how many Haitians were

killed under Papa Doc go as high as 50,000 (36). The question that one must ask is how such a dysfunctional regime and nation influenced familial relationships. What is the significance of being a father within this chaotic regime? What is at stake as far as motherhood is concerned? How is daughterhood constructed around Duvalier's dictatorship? The present thesis addresses this problematic. While chapter two explores the construction of both daughterhood and motherhood within such a patriarchal society, chapter three analyzes how the daughter negotiates her father's legacy.

What characterized François Duvalier's presidency was his involvement in the rituals of voodoo. He became not only the most tyrannical president but also the "Father" of the nation. In Haitian folklore, voodoo is considered as a religion that is orally transmitted from one generation to another. Voodoo incorporates not only religious beliefs but also magic. Such beliefs deal with the world, ethics, spirits, life and death. Historians argue that the president received priests in his palace. His public speeches to the nation reveal that he considered himself as immortal and immaterial, for he believed himself to be in contact with voodoo gods. In his book, *Papa Doc and the Tonton Macoutes*, Bernard Diederich pinpoints that François Duvalier "has another asset, which he exploits to enhance his stature, particularly among the lower classes: voudou" (345). Relying on the religious ideology of voodoo, François Duvalier proclaimed himself as not only the President for life, but also a familial and spiritual "father" of Haiti.

In her nonfiction work, *After the Dance: A Walk through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*, Danticat argues that:

> A 1964 Life magazine article quotes Duvalier as saying, "When they [Haitians] ask me, 'Who is our Mother?' I tell them, 'The Virgin.' But when

> they ask, 'Who is our Father?' then I must answer, 'No one-you have only me.' " (30)

As a matter of fact, Duvalier considered himself the God Father of the Haitian nation. Filial appropriation by Duvalier is at the heart of his strategy. Duvalier's paternal discourse was aimed at making Haitians believe that he was their father. Part of Duvalier's schema was to render all Haitian men his obedient sons in accordance with what he did with the Tonton Macoutes. Thus, his resort to and reliance on voodoo can be read as both his wish to spread fear and obedience among Haitians and to enhance his position as the "Father" of the nation and particularly of his Tonton Macoutes, his spiritual sons. Originally used by parents as an imaginary figure in Haitian myths, a *Mètminw* or Tonton Macoute, was a bogeyman, a tall man, who, as the legend goes, frightened and kidnapped rebellious children at midnight. Although hated by Haitian people, Tonton Macoutes were so faithful to Duvalier that they considered Papa Doc their God, a father figure. What is striking about these mythical figures is that they embody his wish to instill fear around the country. Duvalier's paternal discourse and conception of fatherhood was just one of the arms he used to eradicate any opponent and to control his men through indoctrination so as to firmly maintain order within the state. Accordingly, under the rule of François Duvalier, Haiti became an embodiment of a dysfunctional nation, and therefore a dysfunctional family, Duvalier being one of the most tyrannical dictators as "Father" figures. Thus, I would agree that Haitian filial relationships became as dysfunctional as the nation.

Most critics of Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* have analyzed the book from the torture-tortured dichotomy. These scholars have studied the character of Mr. Bienaimé as a former Tonton Macoute. Few of them have tackled the title character as a father and

studied his relationship with his daughter Ka. The scope of the studies that investigate fatherhood as profoundly shaped by dictatorship in *The Dew Breaker* is often limited. An exception to such oversight is Joan Conwell's "Papa Masks: Roles of the Father in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*." Conwell has been one of the few critics to have focused on the figures of the father in *The Dew Breaker*. As she remarks it, the figure of the father stands as the novel's dominant metaphor for the depiction of the relationship between the state and its citizens, "the powerful and the powerless" (221). Her analysis scrutinizes two father figures, Duvalier and the Dew Breaker.

Conwell argues that the father in Danticat's work can be depicted as "dictatorial, sadistic and self-deifying"; "neutrally distant, elusive and absent"; or "strong, committed and self-reflective" (221). Such adjectives reveal the different masks the father can put on. Conwell's analysis suggests that the father does not have a particular role, but instead wears "a myriad of masks" (221). Conwell focuses on the Dew Breaker's moments of personality and the different roles he slips into, while she studies Duvalier as a Divine Father playing Dictator-God. However, she emphasizes that there is a symbolic transfer of power from Duvalier to the Dew Breaker. In so doing, she draws an allegorical connection between the Dew Breaker and Duvalier. According to the critic, both of them possess the following qualities: power over life and death, a connection to the miraculous, and omnipresence (226). Following from this, the particular connection between the president and the Tonton Macoutes suggests that there is a correlation between power and oppression as exemplified in the character of the Dew Breaker. The guises that both "fathers" take represent the mask of an oppressive, almost dictatorial father who needs power to survive and to control everything.

Conwell's critique focuses on the interrelation between the Dew Breaker and Duvalier, therefore between fatherhood and Duvalier dictatorship. Although, her review offers an account of the reality of dictatorship, with its deep effects on Haitian fatherhood, she nevertheless overlooks the ways the body becomes involved in this paradigm. The present thesis deals with the dysfunctional body of the father that is not only influenced by dictatorship but also accomplice in deteriorating the father-daughter bond.

Dysfunctional Filial Relationships within the Duvalier Regime

In their works, African-American and Caribbean women writers speak rarely about black fatherhood. Although the figure of the father seems to be implicitly present in their works, especially in the coming-of-age writings, their representations of familial relationships are almost exclusively about motherhood and only rarely solely dedicated to fathers. Believing in the centrality of the father and his vital role in a daughter's life and development, Danticat dedicates some of her writings to the retelling of Haitian fathers' stories and lives. Yet in her writings, Danticat's construction of fatherhood is ultimately disturbed by the Duvalier regime. In her memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying*, Danticat honors the paternal presence of her father and her uncle Joseph, whose lives were threatened by the political turmoil and US interventionism in Haiti. Although the "forgotten" history of fathers can be justified by fatherlessness, this absence is firmly maintained by Duvalier's dictatorship.

In the Caribbean context, being a fatherless daughter or son is a common experience shared by a significant percentage of the population. On the one hand, in *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* Sophie Caco illustrates the status of a fatherless child, all that she

knows about her father is that he raped her mother and that she was the "fruit" of such a rape. On the other hand, in *The Dew Breaker*, Ka Bienaimé discovers her father's past and realizes that "father" is just an illusion. Similarly, in "Monkey Tails," one of the short stories in *The Dew Breaker*, Claude, Dany and Michel consider themselves as part of a "generation of mostly fatherless boys" (141). Commenting on the status of fathers in Haiti, Michel confesses that:

> I was twelve years old, and, according to my mother, three months before my birth, I had lost my father to something my mother would only vaguely describe as "political", making me part of a generation of mostly fatherless boys, through some of our fathers were still living, even if somewhere else – in the provinces, in another country, or across the alley not acknowledging us. A great many of our fathers had also died in the dictatorship's prisons, and others had abandoned us altogether to serve the regime. (41)

This passage reveals the impact of Duvalier's regime on families. The reality of absent fathers embodies a displacement that is due to the regime, which can be interpreted as a paradox between Duvalier's discourse on fatherhood and his dictatorial paternity. Not only are Sophie and Ka disillusioned as far as their fathers are concerned, but both are also the daughters of Tonton Macoutes. While Sophie's adolescent mother was raped by an anonymous Macoute, Ka's loving father – in a previous life – is ultimately revealed to have been a Macoute, a particularly notorious enforcer of the regime. In *The Dew Breaker*, the escape of Ka's father to the United States completely metamorphoses him but his past as a former Tonton Macoute severs his bond with his daughter. Therefore, Duvalier's role as the Father of the nation grants him the ability to monitor and control Haitian men and fathers. Thus, Danticat's representation of fatherhood reveals the extent to which the nature of fathering is especially complex during the Duvalier era.

Women's writings about motherhood saw a boom starting from the late twentieth century. Feminist critics extensively theorized mothering and motherhood. Adrienne

Rich is among these theorists. In her work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Rich defines motherhood as a "relationship of any woman to her power of reproduction— and to children" (13) but also as "institutional [...] which aims at ensuring that that potential — shall remain under male control" (13). Her definition suggests the double meaning of motherhood and reveals that it is socially constructed within a patriarchal society. Representations of the mother figure and motherhood by contemporary Caribbean women writers is perhaps the most prominent figure and theme in their works. However, little critical attention has been paid to the analysis of motherhood in Caribbean women's writings and especially to the mother-daughter bond. In her work, *Voix/es Libres: Maternité et Identité Féminine dans la Littérature Antillaise*, Florence Ramond Jurney argues that :

> La maternité se trouve ainsi rabaissée à un niveau anecdotique et elle n'est qu'une excuse pour pouvoir introduire un nouveau personnage tandis que l'histoire de la jeune femme en train de devenir mère, l'histoire de la maternité qui s'exprime au féminin, cette histoire reste la grande absente. (1)
>
> Motherhood is thus degraded to a secondary level, and it is only an excuse to find a way for the introduction of a new character, while the history of the young woman who is becoming a mother, the history of motherhood that expresses itself in a feminine way, this history remains invisible (1; translation mine)

According to Jurney, the Caribbean mother-daughter story is still "unwritten" and "absent" from contemporary literary studies. This critical neglect can be perhaps due to the predominance of Caribbean men's writings and the marginalization of Caribbean women's works.

The experiences of mothering in an African-American context can be helpful when it comes to the understanding of Caribbean motherhood, for both experiences share commonalities. Legacies of slavery affect these representations. Class, sexual and

racial discourses intervene and intersect in the construction of black motherhood and the negotiation of the daughters' subjection. In *Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families*, Patricia Hill Collins theorizes black motherhood when she firmly criticizes white feminist theories of mothering. According to her, motherhood "occurs in specific historical contexts framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender" (56). Collins argues that black mothering cannot be fully grasped and analyzed within the context of white mothers since class, race, and gender affect not only the situations of women but also their mothering. In a similar manner, based on Patricia Hill Collins's theorization of oppression, feminists such as Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill suggest that:

> Class, race, gender, and sexuality are components of social structure and social interaction. Women and men are differently embedded in locations created by these cross-cutting hierarchies. As a result, women and men throughout the social order experience different forms of privilege and subordination, depending on their race, class, gender, and sexuality… intersecting forms of domination produce both oppression and opportunity. (325)

This passage highlights the fact that domination has to be analyzed from the parameters listed above, depending on those who experience them. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, mothering is very much influenced and altered by what Collins refers to as a system of "intersecting oppressions." As a poor Haitian woman, Martine Caco leaves her motherland and her daughter in order to look for a job. Her decision to leave can be read in part as her only means of providing financial stability for her family. Her mothering is therefore challenged by her economic instability.

The black mother-daughter relationship is among the most intricate of relations. The complexity of black women's lives highlights the diverse nature of black motherhood. As Collins further asserts black motherhood is a "fundamentally

contradictory institution. [...] Black mothers' ability to cope with race, class, and gender oppression should not be confused with transcending these conditions" (133). Martine's escape to the United States is, as Collins suggests, an attempt to cope with these oppressions by trying to affirm herself and her identity as a single Haitian mother. Yet, while according to Collins, mothers should always acknowledge their racial, class and gender "conditions", Martine Caco seems to separate herself from black mothers' way of being. Her wishes to lose weight, to lighten her black skin and to get rid of her Haitian accent exemplify her desperate attempts to fully dissociate herself from her racial identity and economic disfranchisement. Her desire to do so reveals her refusal to identify with the socioeconomic marginalization of her origins in the black Haitian peasantry. Such attempts, which can be read as acts of assimilation within American society, influence her identity and behaviour as a mother. Accordingly, Martine wants her daughter to embrace such an attitude by expecting Sophie to behave in the same way. My analysis of fatherhood and motherhood does not rely on class, gender and race as factors having an impact on these relationships. The present thesis rather examines the dysfunctional parent-daughter bond as physically and emotionally altered by the raped and violated body and the role their traumatized bodies play in the negotiation of their filial relationship.

Breath, Eyes, Memory has been read and reread within a diasporic and postcolonial context. Within the diaspora context, critics have been interested in exploring the mother-daughter relationship that is intensified by migration. They have studied these bonds in relation to the heritage of migration at the familial as well as the national level. Set within a transnational context, Heather Hewett's "Mothering Across Borders: Narratives of Immigrant Mothers in the United States," explores the

experiences of transnational and immigrant mothers in the United States. Her study discusses the impact of transnational mothering on not only children but also mothers themselves. Hewett starts by arguing that transnational mothering is most common among single mothers. She remarks that transnational motherhood, "in which the immigrant mother is neither all good nor all bad," is complex (2). According to her, the complexity lies, in part, in the fact that the single immigrant mother becomes not only the unique child care provider but also the only breadwinner.

Her analysis examines the mother-daughter relationship in Danticat's first novel, discussing the effects of Martine's migration on her mother-daughter bond. Arguing that Martine's motive behind leaving her motherland and her daughter is to enhance her financial situation, Hewett suggests that the mother becomes the only provider for her family. Hewett adds that Martine's migration to the United States is what complicates her relationship with Sophie. In fact, Sophie is left with her aunt, Atie, and her grandmother, Ifé. The scholar argues that both Sophie's aunt and grandmother become the daughter's "othermothers." Hewett incorporates Isa María Soto's conceptualization of the surrogate mother suggesting that: "child fostering can be considered an integral and vital part of [the] circular movement that works to maintain an historical and cultural continuity between the migrants and the communities that send them forth" (121). The critic maintains that both migration and othermothering contribute to the daughter's disillusionment about the presence of the one and only mother in her life. As a result of this separation and the presence of different mother figures, Sophie finds herself not only confused but also unable to grasp the motives of her "unnatural" separation from Martine, her biological mother. Hewett remarks that:

> Despite the fact that Atie and Ifé explain the separation as natural and inevitable, Sophie's own attempts to grapple with this impending change are characterized by fear: she has nightmares about her mother during which her mother chases her and tries to drag her into the frame of a photograph, at which point she dreams that her aunt tries to save her. (5)

Hewett points to the fact that Martine's escape to the United States, while leaving her daughter in Haiti, contributes to Sophie's sense of confusion and fear. Sophie has never identified with her biological mother. Thus, in her dreams, she subconsciously demonizes Martine. For Sophie, her aunt is her primary caretaker, a mother figure who has nurtured and guided her. Hewett notices that such a state of confusion and disillusionment results in trying to imagine one's ideal mother. Accordingly, the figure of Erzulie is interpreted as Sophie's desperate attempt to imagine and appropriate a powerful and wealthy mother for herself. In her portrayal of Erzulie, Sophie idealizes the former, a figure who "contains power to set women free from the gendered ideologies and practices that confine them" (Hewett 6). The idealization of the mother figure intensifies Sophie's alienation from Martine. Thus, as Hewett puts it, motherhood and family ties are complicated by displacement and migration. Hewett has studied the ambiguity of the migratory experience of the characters, Martine and Sophie, by investigating how migration affects their identities, destabilizes their well-being and influences the mother-daughter bond. She nonetheless ignores the importance of the body within such a bond. The present thesis investigates how the body affects both parenthood and daughterhood especially within dictatorial regimes.

Dictatorship and patriarchy deeply affect Haitian womanhood and motherhood. The brutality of the regime did not even spare those who were not actively engaged in political activities against the president, as his violence targeted not only political opponents but also innocent women and children. In *Haiti*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot

writes that "all those who died had by definition been in the wrong" (166). Thus, during the Duvalier regime, Haitian women were subjected to gendered violence. Rape was the Tonton Macoutes' weapon to oppress and to enforce patriarchy and maintain men's power over women. Thus, the Duvalier regime was equally arbitrary and violent, aimed at creating a mood of terror and fear among Haitians. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Martine Caco exemplifies the way dictatorship destroys Haitian women's lives for she was raped by one of the Duvalier's militia men at the age of sixteen. What results from her rape is sexual trauma, which manifests itself in the form of nightmares. Sophie, Martine's daughter, recounts one of these episodes:

> I know the intensity of her pain through her nightmares. I had seen her curled up in a ball in the middle of the night sweating and shaking as she hollered for the images of the past to leave her alone. Sometimes the fright woke her up, but most of the time, I had to shake her awake before she bit her fingers off, ripped her nightgown, or threw herself out of a window. (193)

Despite her migration to the United States, Martine's rape still haunts her everyday life and trauma accompanies her wherever she goes. Martine's rape is an example of the many of Haitian women that were raped during Duvalier dictatorship. The sexual trauma that these women undergo becomes national in scope. In his *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Ron Eyerman defines national trauma as:

> [E]vents "which cannot be easily dismissed, which will be played over again and again in individual consciousness," becoming "ingrained in collective memory." In this account, a national trauma must be understood, explained, and made coherent through public reflections and discourse. Here, mass-mediated representations play a decisive role. (2)

Within this context, rape and therefore the sexual and national trauma that result from that experience pervade Haitian women's conceptualization of and actual mothering. In

Breath, Eyes, Memory, Martine's motherhood illustrates how her rape, and therefore her trauma have a hold upon the relationship with her daughter, Sophie.

In the cultural context of Haiti, daughterhood has been regulated both by culture and family. By establishing strict roles for wives, mothers, and women to fulfill, Haitian patriarchal society has silenced daughters, monitoring their identity construction and their bodies by compelling them to be submissive to oppressive socio-cultural expectations. Daughterhood is therefore defined within a patriarchal society and male-dominated families. Danticat's works, however, depict the subversive attitudes of female offspring against patriarchal norms and against their bonds with either the father or the mother. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and "The Book of The Dead," the first short story in *The Dew Breaker*, are written in the first person, both as a reconstruction of daughterhood and an act of the self-articulation of their stories. Regimes of control are coming out not only from patriarchy, therefore the family, but also from dictatorship itself. Being respectively the daughters of Martine Caco and Mr. Bienaimé, Sophie Caco and Ka Bienaimé, navigate the space of daughterhood and dictatorship in which they negotiate their own understanding of the position of daughter and the expected cultural and social roles they should perform. Sophie and Ka, navigate a complex network of identity formation. While Sophie tries to come to terms with her fatherless status and her mother's empowerment, Ka realizes the father figure is just an illusion. The present thesis redefines daughterhood and family within dictatorship in relation to the dysfunctional bodies of either the parent or the daughter.

Bodies that Matter

The dysfunctional nature of the father-daughter and mother-daughter bonds in Danticat's fictions is not only emotional and psychological, but it is also physical. This estrangement is felt at the bodily level but is also nurtured by this disordered and tortured body. Therefore, the body becomes both the container and expression of the deterioration of familial relationships as well as an active participant in severing filiations. The study of the body is not restricted to the fields of Caribbean and African American literature. Scholars from all fields have become increasingly aware of the importance of scrutinizing the body and our corporeality. However, the body is often analyzed in relation to violence, and therefore exclusively central to it as such. Tackling it from this perspective makes it possible to identify the bodily disorders resulting from such violence. Yet, being the object of scrutiny in the present thesis, the body is conceptualized differently, as it becomes a construction that has an immediate impact on the parent-daughter bond.

The body, as a concept, has always been Danticat's preoccupation. In her works, the body stands for a crucial defining element and an enactment of Haitian culture and identity, marked by the suffering of the Haitian people and by their painful history. Therefore, it becomes the locus of subjectivity, identity and past experiences. As Katharine Young puts it, in "Whose Body? An introduction to Bodylore," "the self is inserted in the body. The world adumbrates itself around the body so that the body anchors the self's experience" (3). In a similar manner, Julia Kristeva argues that "The body conquers the invisible territory of the soul" (9). Her words reveal that the body is an incarnation of subjectivity and corporeality (9). In her afterword, Deborah E. McDowell conceptualizes the body as important in "perceiv[ing] the reciprocal relation

between exterior and interior, between visible and invisible 'matter,' between the outside and the inside body" (309). These theories establish a clear connection between the body and the subject, and therefore reject the traditional mind/body split and dualism. Being capable of resisting and becoming an active participant in our perception of self and world, the body becomes perceived as a lived experience.

Despite the existing commonalities among these theorists, they tend to emphasize one aspect over the other. As a matter of fact, it seems impossible to sketch the various theories on the body since the approaches and interests vary from one theoretical work to another. In attempting to study the relationship between subjectivity and the body, Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco identify three major theoretical approaches to the body. In *The Body: A Reader*, they write that the body has been looked at as "something we *have* (the body as object), as something we *are* (the body as subject), and as something we *become* (the body as process and performativity)" (original emphasis; 4). My conceptualization of the body seems to combine these three approaches, since it considers the body as an object, subject but also a performance, underlying as such its fluidity and its multiplicities. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, and *The Dew Breaker*, the body is hauntingly present in each and every page. The integrity of the body is always challenged and questioned. Anxieties are often marked on the body, physically and emotionally manifested.

Accordingly, scholars have devoted a considerable amount of energy to analyzing the body in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker*. Stressing the political as well as the social violence that characterizes Haiti's history, these critics, such as Donette A. Francis and Kristen E. Pitt, have focused on the disordered and traumatized body of the persecutor and the victim alike, by examining the bodily

violence inflicted on the characters, both parents and daughters. Both Francis and Pitt study the political violence that targets the Haitian body. They focus on the bodies of Danticat's fictional characters that are affected by state-sponsored violence such as terror, rape, torture and disappearance. While Francis analyzes the black female body in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as sexually violated and raped, Pitt focuses on the body of the Dew Breaker used by the regime of François Duvalier as an agent of political violence.

Francis's "Silences Too Horrific to Disturb: Writing Sexual Histories in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory,*" links sexual violence of Haitian women to the prevailing political corruption of the Duvalier regime. Her article is an attempt to explore the different forms of violence that are inflicted upon the female body. In exploring the violence inflicted upon the bodies of both Martine and Sophie, Francis theoretically frames her analysis within Saidiya Hartman's conception of a "scene of subjection", which according to the latter's definition is a particular site of subjugation and of subject formation. In doing so, the critic identifies five scenes of subjection: the cane fields, testing, the pestle, red death and the return to the cane fields. According to Francis, these scenes become not only the characters' but also Danticat's site to speak of and write about Haitian history of sexual violence. The critic argues that in each of these scenes, the characters' bodies endure violence and sexual harassment. Therefore, the female body becomes a site of oppression. By exposing the rape that these women went through, Francis's goal is to render such sexual assault as visible as possible. Commenting on the cane field scene of subjection, Francis remarks that "Danticat [...] opens the novel locating the cane fields as a principle place of sexual violation [...].History suggests, and Martine knows, that reporting this crime would yield no tangible result" (80). Francis' analysis of the cane field suggests that such a space

becomes associated with Martine's trauma and nightmares. She also suggests that the cane field is the ultimate space where Martine's disordered and raped body is trapped. Arguing that the externalization of such a trauma is impossible for Martine, Francis suggests that the latter's disordered body becomes her own torturer.

Following such an analysis of the female corporeality, the scholar analyzes the novel as an enactment and a testimony of sexual violence rather than as "moments of resistance". Francis argues that the subjection of the characters' bodies within such scenes involves not only individual but also state forms of violence. In so doing, she draws a dialectical relationship between individual, self-inflicted and state-sponsored violence that is exercised against women. By examining this dialectical relationship, Francis explains that the violated bodies are framed within a much larger "violent operational logic," including both cultural and political institutions, that seeks to enforce but also dissemble the "realness" of sexual violence. According to Francis, subjection to sexual violence frames the lives of these women and affects their own corporeality and subjectivities. Although Francis undertakes the analysis of the female body as a site of oppression, her investigation and account of the body, however, excludes the roles of such bodily disorder in the construction of the mother-daughter bond.

In "Tortured Citizens: Terror and Dissidence in Luise Valenzuela and Edwidge Danticat," Pitt examines the body in relation to concepts such as citizenship and national identity. Pitt argues that the body is both a means and a target of political abuse. She argues that the title character's body is used by the regime of François Duvalier as an agent of political violence. She studies the impact of state violence that is unleashed on the characters' bodies by the Duvalier regime and Tonton Macoutes, including the Dew Breaker. In her analysis of the former Tonton Macoute's victims, Pitt examines each

instance of violence and torture inflicted by the title character on the bodies of Haitian victims. In so doing, she connects the body of the citizens to the state. According to her, the representation of the body as such makes of it a recipient, a vulnerable and fragile target under the tight grip of the dictatorial regime of Duvalier. Whereas Francis focuses solely on the oppression of black female bodies, Pitt investigates the ways Haitian bodies navigate the space of resistance to or withdrawal from torture and violence. Arguing that transnationalism can be the ultimate escape from violence, Pitt examines the role of border crossing and diasporic space, as a space of potential refuge from the atrocities of the regime in Haiti. Pitt remarks that:

> [...] Danticat's characters struggle to reposition their bodies and retell their narratives from within the Haitian diaspora. The characters' new geographical and political contexts do not lead to a miraculous liberation of their bodies from discursive restrictions [...] The characters in *The Dew Breaker* recognize their continued vulnerabilities, but they search for alternative discourses of the body, [...] The cosmopolitan space of Brooklyn and the transnational identity of Haitian and Haitian-American subjects who move between the United States and Haiti provide an opening within *The Dew Breaker* in which communities not bound exclusively by either political ideology or geographical territory might form and in which the physical and psychological scars of nationalist terror and violence might begin to heal. And yet, Brooklyn is far from a utopian space for the exiled Haitians of Danticat's narrative. The characters continue to be both marginalized from the national narrative and targeted by violent authorities who [are] murdering and brutalizing the bodies of citizens and refugees. (157-58)

Pitt argues that Haitian characters escape the physical violence of their political regime by migrating to the United States. The title character exemplifies this dynamic. Fearing "torture or punishment at the hands of the regime himself" (166), the Dew Breaker escapes Haiti to the United States. Ideally, Brooklyn offers him a space of liberation. To some extent, this escape makes his rebirth possible. Yet, the nightmares that he experiences and, more importantly, the physical scar on his cheek-- the material trace of his own guilt and the past that he seeks to obliterate by all means-- prevent the title

character from finding relief in oblivion. Thus, Pitt suggests that the characters' struggle to escape and to build new lives represents a form of resistance to the dictatorship of the Haitian regime, but further remarks that their disordered bodies remain their own torturer that still haunt their lives and memories.

By examining the body as an agent of social power and a target of political oppression, Pitt attempts to study the body of citizens in relation to the state exercise of power. According to her, the focus on the characters' bodies is an essential approach to analyze Danticat's works since these bodies are rendered fragile and are also still haunting the lives of characters. Despite the fact that Pitt investigates the body as both tortured and as agent of torture in *The Dew Breaker*, her exploration of the body disregards the impact of the disordered body on the father-daughter relationship. My thesis investigates both parents' disordered bodies and the impact of such violence on the daughters' identities. My analysis of the body is framed by the parent-daughter relationship.

Despite the ubiquity of the exploration of the parent-daughter bonds in literary scholarship on Danticat's works, scholars often tend to explore parenthood and daughterhood within the postcolonial framework while excluding the strong influence of the traumatized body on this relationship. Other critics study the disordered body without linking its impact to the parent-daughter bond. The analysis of Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in the present thesis is not interested in the investigation of the body for the sake of analyzing the bodily disorders, nor is it exclusively interested in examining the parent-daughter relationship from the angle of migratory and diasporic experiences of second generation daughters. It rather investigates the correlation between the characters' bodies and the parent-daughter bond

and, by extension, to the nation-state. My approach to filial relationships or the body in Danticat's works differs from that of the scholars mentioned above since the present thesis establishes a strong correlation and interdependence between both the body and familial ties. It examines the parent-daughter relationship in relation to the disordered, violated and alienated body of parents and daughters, a construction which has not yet been investigated in depth. The following chapters do not examine either the body or the parent-daughter bond independently, as critics often tend to do. Instead, my approach tends to unify rather than dissociate the body and the filial relationships. In doing so, I scrutinize the predominant and substantial role of the Haitian body in negotiating and constructing familial bonds.

The body, and especially the black female body, represents a site of past or present historical and colonial heritage, social and political alienation, and economic as well as familial oppression. McDowell argues that "the body is a 'stubbornly local phenomenon' (70) marked by its specific history, bound to its particular time and place" (298). Being an essential part of one's corporeality, the body becomes the surface on which legacies can be inscribed and events can be marked. Following such logic, the body in both fictions navigate the space of dictatorship. As I have argued above, dictatorship complicates parenting relationships. It also affects the parents' and to some extent daughters' bodies. As a matter of fact, negative filial relationships are altered by these dysfunctional bodies and vice-versa.

Duvalier's dictatorship, as one might expect, is manifested in terms of the body. As already stated above, violence is the key instrument of this regime. Violence is not only emotionally but also physically exercised. In both works, the bodies of Haitian characters become the playground on which Duvalier exercised his absolute power.

These bodies are raped, tortured, silenced, and murdered. Martine's and Beatrice's raped bodies, the preacher's tortured body, and the murder of Dany's father exemplify how bodies are subject to the abuses of dictatorial regimes. The following two chapters, particularly the third chapter, are dedicated to the exploration of torture and violence inflicted by Duvalier on Danticat's fictional characters. My exploration of the body as a site of social control, traumatic experiences, hence the place of one's past and resistance, offers a new understanding of how the parent-daughter bond is constructed around power and violence mediated through the body. The disordered body becomes the characters' torturer. Following this framework, the parent-daughter relationship in both works is disturbed by the bodily disorders and vice-versa. My thesis interrogates the construction of the body that is involved in the exercise of power and violence and how such a construction alters familial relationships.

Both Martine Caco and Mr Bienaimé, Sophie's mother and Ka's father, are traumatized by the Duvalier regime. In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman considers rape and military commitment as examples of sexual and military trauma (33). In her work, she attempts to draw parallels and intersections between the trauma of rape and war, arguing that the worlds of the private and the public, the worlds of women and men, emerge in one. Herman writes that "rape and combat might thus be considered complementary social rites of initiation into the coercive violence at the foundation of adult society. They are the paradigmatic forms of trauma for women and men respectively" (61). According to her, such experiences occur in one's late adolescence and early adulthood. Her work also traces the recognition of the syndrome of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Survivors of rape develop the same syndrome seen in survivors of war. Danticat presents and delves into this syndrome in

her works, where characters internalize and try to forget about their trauma. Herman studies the outcome of this internal conflict and puts it in the following terms:

> The damage to relational life is not a secondary effect of trauma, as originally thought. Traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community. (51)

In fact, the traumatic experience that both parents undergo has an impact on their parenting. Regardless of their status as either a victim or a perpetrator of violence, both parents manifest signs of this trauma. Herman further argues that "an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history" (2). Yet, the rediscovering of this traumatic history manifests itself only when both parents retell the story of their past to their daughters. Catharsis is never fully attained by either Martine or by Mr. Bienaimé. Rather both of their offspring become engaged in this process.

Being the twin Marassas of their parents, Sophie and Ka bear the scars of their history, a history of violence, oppression but also of resistance. In his article "Notes on the Phantom," Nicholas Abraham writes that "what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others" (287). In their psychoanalytic work, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, Maria Torok and Nicholas Abraham introduce the concept of the "transgenerational haunting" of trauma. By "transgenerational haunting," they mean the psychological and physiological display of trauma on second-generation children. In a similar manner, Sophie and Ka are haunted by their parents' consciousness, through an identification with or a separation from their parents' bodies. Torok and Abraham's work provides a fruitful framework that can help conceptualize dictatorship as a "phantom" inherited transgenerationally, haunting the psyche and the bodies of daughters. In Danticat's works, each of the daughters carries the weight of

parental trauma on both a psychological and a physical level. Through education, discipline, storytelling, and sculpturing, Sophie and Ka's bodies are reconnected to their parents' bodies. Therefore, the bodies of both daughters become an extension and the result of their parents' history of dictatorship, since these bodies equally experience the parents' trauma. The following two chapters analyze how daughters are bound to their parents' bodily trauma and attempt to transcend these psychological and physical boundaries.

Accordingly, I offer an analysis of the characters' negotiation of their bodies and their filial relationships. My analysis contributes to the understanding of how Haitian-American daughters negotiate their relationship with their parents through forms of corporeal identification and resistance. The present thesis aims at re-inscribing the disordered body and redefining the parent-daughter bond. Such an approach provides a reconfiguration of the characters' relationships to their bodies and to their filial relationships. Thus, exploring the role of the body in the construction of specific familial intersections in Edwidge Danticat's works can give insights into the complexity of both her characters' identities and the representation of political struggle in her fictional texts.

Chapter Two:

Negotiating the Mother-Daughter/Daughter-Mother Bond in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: A Question of the Nurtured or Tortured Body?

> We began to realize that raising a daughter is an extremely political act in this culture. Mothers have been placed in a no-win situation with their daughters: if they teach their daughters simply how to get along in a world that has been shaped by men and male desires, then they betray their daughter's potential. But, if they do not, they leave their daughters adrift in a hostile world without survival strategies.
>
> Elizabeth Debold, *From Betrayal To Power : Mother Daughter Revolution* xv

> The body... is a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body.
>
> Susan Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity" 13

The concepts of motherhood and daughterhood may be said to vary from one cultural framework to another. Culture shapes both constructions and the way women consider these roles in their life according to parameters mostly determined by power relationships within a given society, as suggested in the first epigraph above. More to the point, the construction of the mother-daughter and daughter-mother bond is influenced and disturbed by the female body. The female body is a constant reminder of a woman's identity and its ultimate manifestation. It is within this context that *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) can be considered. In this chapter, I will explore the role of the female body in the construction of mother-daughter and daughter-mother relationships, and I will demonstrate how these constructions are influenced by intersecting power relations. As my theoretical basis and for more insight into this topic, I will begin by defining relevant terms, like power. Then, I will refer to the Foucauldian power relations as well as the notion of the "docile body" that are both explored in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975), in order to problematize Martine's exercise of her maternal power on her

daughter's body. I will investigate the daughter's desire to separate herself from her mother, which results in her bodily resistance to the physical violation embodied in the virginity tests. Demonstrating the impact of such a resistance on her own body, I will explain how Sophie manages to negotiate her identity and her relationship with her daughter. With reference to Nancy Chodorow's and Luce Irigaray's theories on the mother-daughter relationship, I will explore the Martine-Sophie bond. In doing so, I will consider the way their disordered bodies affect this bond, manifest disordered psyches and resist bodily violence.

Power and Mothering

The conceptualization of power is one of the most difficult tasks that one can undertake. Tensions about defining it are still present today. Power in relation to women's lives and mothering is seen as productive or repressive, synonymous either with domination or empowerment. The difficulty in trying to define the term in a clear way stems from the existence of multiple angles from which the concept can be considered, as well as a variety of contexts in which the practice of power can take place. On the one hand, if one interprets it only as a site of domination, this would suggest that one is restricted by it and is therefore unable to resist it. This category includes feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and Carole Pateman, who conceive of power as a source of domination and submission. According to these feminists, power exercised on women is a means of controlling their lives. On the other hand, another interpretation of power suggests that it is productive in the sense that it empowers the subject, making her capable of positively transforming her life and the lives of others. Yet, this same empowered person may intentionally or unintentionally

use power to subdue other people. She may exercise power by dominating them, which blinds her from seeing its effects on others. The second category embraces feminists such as Sara Ruddick and Virginia Held who are concerned with the practice of mothering and see it as a source of power rather than subordination.

Power is often defined as a one-sided notion. Conceptualizing it as either repressive, which suggests the impossibility of resistance, or productive, which refuses to see its potentially harming impact, would lead one to neglect the multifaceted and complex aspects of power relations. Because one can be both dominated and empowered, this one-sided conception would overlook this fact. Consequently, it is more practical to consider power both as productive and repressive especially when it comes to women, their identities and their relationships with their children—particularly their daughters. Within this framework, Foucauldian power as exemplified in *Discipline and Punish,* can be interpreted both as productive and repressive. This Foucauldian double aspect of power is evident in his conception of "subjection." According to Foucault, power both subjects individuals to social control and regulation, making them "docile bodies," and at the same time it enables them to become subjects in the sense that they can act and react, resist and protest. Foucauldian power enables one to analyze power relations, their effects on various daughters, and the daughters' reactions to this power. Within this theoretical context, mothers can be seen oppressive and liberating while daughters can be perceived not only as subjected but also able to react and resist. What follows is an attempt to investigate the power of Martine on her daughter's life and body and Sophie's counter-reaction, her attempts to resist her mother's physical and emotional coercion.

Martine's bond with her daughter seems to be characterized by a vertical power relationship. Not only does she try to control her daughter's life but she also attempts to project her dreams upon her daughter. Martine seems to perceive her daughter as a continuation of herself. She imposes her own dreams upon her daughter, expecting the latter to fulfill these often narcissistic fantasies. When Marc, Martine's boyfriend, questions the teenaged Sophie about her professional goals while the three dine in a neighborhood restaurant, and Martine responds for her daughter, Martine's interruption demonstrates that the latter does not care about her child's ambition as much as she cares about her own.

In a similar manner, Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, investigates the mother-daughter relationship and discusses how the daughter negotiates her relationship with her mother. In Chodorow's preface to the second edition of her book, she reveals that one of her primary objectives in her book is to examine "the mother-daughter relationship and how women create and recreate this relationship internally" (vii). According to Chodorow, the mother often sees her daughter as "an extension of herself" (82). This can be perceived in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, when Martine addresses her daughter in a commanding tone:

> You are going to work hard here [...] No one is going to break your heart because you cannot read and write. You have a chance to become the kind of woman Atie and I have always wanted to be. If you make something of yourself in life, we will all succeed. You can raise our heads. (44)

Martine's exchange with her daughter reveals not only her inability to achieve her own dream of becoming a doctor. It seems that the success of the Caco's family depends on Sophie's professional success. This suggests that in Martine's eyes, Sophie represents

the ultimate solution to improve the family's financial situation and above all their social status in both Haiti and New York.

Disciplinary power can be considered as a means to regulate and control children's behaviour. The regulatory power is most in evidence in its impact on the body. Therefore, the body becomes the recipient of cultural values and the central site in which domination is exercised and violence is inflicted. Accordingly, the body becomes the means of disciplining the soul. Taken from this perspective, the body functions not only as a cultural construct but also as a site of social control. In this novel, the mother-daughter relationship is intensified by the domination that is manifested in Martine's use of virginity tests to contain and repress Sophie's sexuality. Martine's eventual desire to control Sophie's body is foreshadowed in one of her daughter's dreams. Sophie recollects a past memory, saying:

> I sometimes saw my mother in my dreams. She would chase me through a field of wildflowers as tall as the sky. When she caught me, she would try to squeeze me into the small frame so I could be in the picture with her. I would scream and scream until my voice gave out, then Tante Atie would come and save me from her grasp. (8)

In this passage, Martine's chasing Sophie threatens her daughter's body, which risks being trapped, immobilized, and commodified. The reference to the picture makes it clear that the mother wishes to objectify her daughter's body by forcing her to remain within the frame of the photo. The same passage reveals Sophie's love for her aunt, Atie, her "othermother"[2] who takes care of the daughter when Martine flees to New York.

[2] In her book, *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins introduces the term "othermother" and writes that "aunts, grandmothers, and others who had time to supervise children served as othermothers" (122). The Othermother is considered as a tradition among many African-American families and sometimes even "a foundation for Black women's political activism" (129).

Thus, the daughter's nightmare reveals her unconscious and supressed fear of her biological mother.

Both in Martine's as well as in the Haitian view, the body holds an important place in the lives of black women, whether mothers or daughters. It is the vehicle that leads to becoming a "perfect" daughter, wife and mother. It is this body that becomes the embodiment of their own worthiness, their purity and therefore their identity. The black female body, and particularly Sophie's body, is therefore seen as a vehicle on which power and control are exercised. Her supervised and controlled body results in Sophie's submission. It is this power that both regulates and also produces the subject, a decent woman. The body stands for "the house of the Soul" (*Discipline and Punish*, 30). It functions as the mediator between social discipline and an individual's self-control. Therefore, bodies and minds are regulated by the exercise of power. Consequently, the soul becomes the target of such power relations and regulations. Introducing Foucault's notions of power in relation to the body is fruitful and helpful for several reasons. First, it allows a better understanding of power mechanisms in relation to the body as an abstraction. Second, in the black female immigrant milieu, it provides a means of differently interpreting motherhood in relation to the bodies of both mother and daughter. The daughter negotiates her relationship with her mother through identifying with or trying to separate herself from the mother's body. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault holds that power is exercised through a complex network. In order to have an ordered society, there should be a power that is exercised through and on the body. He suggests that:

> The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invent it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. (25)

Thus, the body becomes invested with power relations. It transcends its materialistic meaning and becomes docile, in Foucault's word, in order to more efficiently produce disciplined subjects and souls.

Foucault argues that "discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (170). He argues that the body is a site of disciplinary power. In other words, power is exercised on the subject's body subjugating her in order to effectively produce a disciplinary individual. Using Foucault's theory of power and body, one can see Haitian mothers as the holders of power over their daughters who attempt to make them become homemakers, exemplary wives and mothers. Their power over their daughters seems to be the basis of their relationship. Accordingly, Martine is depicted as a controlling mother when it comes to her relationship with her daughter. From the moment Martine discovers that Sophie has been dating Joseph, her daughter's body and sexual identity come under her mother's supervision. Accordingly, she tries to discipline Sophie by exercising a rigorous watch over her daughter's body. She expects her daughter to become the "perfect" daughter who will be a "pure" wife on her wedding night. For this sake, Martine regulates her daughter's sexual identity and chastity through testing her virginity. Sophie recalls:

> The next night, after seeing Joseph, I came to find my mother sitting in the living room. [...] she took my hand [...] and led me upstairs to my bedroom. There she made me lie on my bed and she tested me. She would test me every week to make sure that I was still *whole*. (84-86) (original emphasis)

This confession reveals Martine's gaining control over her daughter's body, which signals the realization of Sophie's most feared feelings of being trapped. The adjective *whole* here suggests the mother's intention to control her daughter's body by testing her on a regular basis.

In order to gain social and familial recognition from Haitian society, Martine must discipline as well as monitor her daughters' sexuality, in other words her "sexual purity." Maintaining and supporting the "virginity cult" is what matters most to the larger social system and, by extension, the mothers. Sophie's virginity and her body stand for her mother's worthiness. Testing, which is the constant surveillance of the girl's virginity, becomes the means to such an end. It is a ritual, a traditional practice that has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Grandma Ifé was tested and tests both of her daughters, Martine and Atie. Martine's daughter, Sophie, is then tested by Martine. Because Martine is tested, she does the same to her daughter. Therefore, the testing of Sophie's chastity is what intensifies Martine's wish for and even obsession with full identification with her daughter. While testing her, Martine tries to distract her daughter by telling her the story of the Marassas:

> The Marassas were two inseparable lovers. They were the same person, duplicated in two. They looked the same, talked the same, walked the same. When they laughed, they even laughed the same and when they cried, their tears were identical. When one went to the stream, the other rushed under the water to get a better look. When one looked in the mirror, the other walked behind the glass to mimic her. What vain lovers they were, those Marassas. [...] The love between a mother and a daughter is deeper than the sea. [...] You would leave me for an old man. [...] You and I we would be like Marassas. You are giving up a lifetime with me. (84-85)

This talk about the Marassas occurs when she starts testing her daughter's virginity after discovering that Sophie has a much older boyfriend who is a musician,

someone for whom Martine feels little respect. This frightens her for she thinks that her daughter may leave her. In the Vodou belief and tradition, the Marassas represent important mythical figures who symbolize the closeness of two individuals. Following the story of the Marassas, Mireille Rosello interprets Martine's use of the pronoun "I" as an illusory act, for it does not indicate an independent self, but rather becomes an "I" which depends on the "you" to take place. The "I" can only be if both Martine and Sophie wish to become the Marassas (120). Given such an interpretation, Martine's story about the Marassas suggests her inability to separate herself from her daughter, her desire to become Sophie's Marassa as well as her unwillingness to recognize the physical and the emotional boundaries between herself and her daughter. In a similar way, Nancy Gerber suggests, in "Binding the Narrative Thread," that "Martine's invocation of the Marassas […] signifies her inability to distinguish the boundaries between herself and Sophie and inscribes her fear that Sophie will abandon her for Joseph" (194). These instances show that by projecting her own dreams onto Sophie and by refusing to differentiate herself from her daughter, Martine fails to separate herself from the younger woman. Thus, the testing becomes her only means of not only preserving Sophie's virginity but also maintaining the relationship she has with her daughter, as her twin Marassa. A relationship based on physical restraint and emotional coercion, it relies on guilt and intimidation to preserve itself.

Taken from the Foucauldian perspective, testing can be seen as a disciplinary strategy involving an agent, a mother, who exercises power over a subjected body, a daughter. Therefore, subjugating the girl's body is the means to discipline her. In doing so, testing becomes the instrument of normalization vis-à-vis the latter's sexuality. In her

book *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (994), Elizabeth Grosz suggests: "Rituals and practices designed to cleanse or purify the body may serve as metaphors for processes of cultural homogeneity" (193). Hence, testing, as a Haitian ritual practice, stands as a metaphor for enforcing cultural normalization of woman's sexuality and social control of her body and virginity. The cultural normalization and homogeneity embodied in the testing practice results in perceiving the sexual body as either virgin, if the female body is still untouched, or whore, if the woman behaves differently. Thus, as explained, the results of testing reflect a girl's purity or impurity, "wholeness" or incompleteness.

The woman's subjectivity is strongly linked to the chastity of the female body. The regulatory practice that requires the physical surveillance of virginity and chastity reveals not only the internalization of such a practice by Haitian mothers but also the reasons for it. In perpetuating the tradition and observing tight control over the young girl's body purity, Martine and the other Haitian mothers in the novel reinforce the ideology sustaining the ritual of testing that constitutes and shapes their sexuality and gendered identity, because a family's reputation, acceptance and respect among the neighbors depends solely on the daughters' purity. Through the concept of surveillance, the Panoptican metaphor, Foucault elaborates on the subject's internalization of regulatory practices and power which produce and act on bodies while maintaining the societal structures and norms. In this context, Martine becomes both the subjugated body on which power is exercised and the agent of power. Power acts on her body and mind in order to shape her behaviour as a mother, making her trained, disciplined and docile.

In "Two Lectures," Foucault suggests that this stage happens at "the level of the continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures,

dictate our behaviours" (97). Power is first exercised by Haitian men and the Haitian patriarchal society. These men are in control of women's body and behaviour. In fact, virginity cults originate from male concerns. Sophie tells the story of a husband who, discovering the impurity of his wife, voluntarily mutilates her vaginal part until she bleeds to death. The story reveals the extent to which Haitian men are obsessed with their wives' chastity. Because patriarchy sees the female body as lustful and oversexed, it requests the mother's constant supervision of her daughter's sexuality and virginity until conjugal consummation. Otherwise, the daughter and her family would be relegated a dishonoured status in Haitian society. By expecting and requiring Haitian women to be virgins until their marriage, patriarchy stresses virginity as a woman's sacred virtue. Given this cultural construction of women's sexuality and chastity, Martine's desire to control Sophie's body and sexuality emanates from the Haitian patriarchal ideology that supervises the female body, regulates woman's sexual behaviour and limits her sexual freedom. Thus, testing becomes both transgenerational and culturally imposed, and power transmitted and passed on from one subject to another. In effect, cultural obsession with female virginity contributes to the repression of women and the regulation of their sexuality and bodies.

Sophie's Bodily Resistance

Sophie's sexuality and virginity trigger clashes between her and her mother because both women long for power in the relationship. Consequently, the struggle for power intensifies when the mother starts to test Sophie on a regular basis. Sophie, through the mediation of her body, reacts through her attempts at resistance. For her, testing is a rape, a violation of her body. Sophie narrates the unbearable pain, saying that

her body was "quivering," her legs were "limp," and that she "ached so hard that [she] could barely move" (88). Accordingly, Sophie tries to resist the pain. In order to cope with and overcome the painful and degrading experience of the testing, Sophie tries to double. Doubling is a voodoo practice during which the traumatized individual splits body from mind as a manner of enduring otherwise unbearable pain. She says:

> In my mind, I tried to relive all the pleasant memories I remembered from my life. My special moments with Tante Atie and with Joseph and even with my mother. [...] I could understand why she [her mother] had screamed while her mother had tested her. (84-85)

This passage suggests Sophie's desire to project her mind elsewhere. Thinking that doubling, the dissociative process, would allow her to gain control over the situation through the assertion of a subversive resistance and strength, she tries to invent a private space of her own where she can recollect all the joyful memories of her life in order to forget about the pain she undergoes while being tested. The mother-daughter relationship deteriorates to the extent that communication becomes totally absent. Ironically, the testing becomes Martine's only moment of union with her daughter, Sophie's body her only tool and her daughter's virginity her unique preoccupation. Accordingly, Martine-Sophie's relationship becomes not only vertical but also conflictual. Her mother "rarely spoke to [her] since [she] began the tests" (87). She says: "I was feeling alone and lost, like there was no longer any reason for me to live" (87). Given such circumstances, the very act of doubling has a deeper psychological impact on Sophie. Instead of freeing her from the trauma she lives, Sophie's experience of doubling alienates her more and more from reality. Since her act of resistance takes the form of withdrawal from reality and drifting away in her own world, this tool of resistance contributes to her isolation and solitude. Thus, by doubling, Sophie

dissociates her body from consciousness and fails to achieve a satisfactory resolution of her crisis.

Sophie's rebellion and resistance grows stronger when Martine's exercise of power escalates. Because Sophie's first sign of resistance and struggle through doubling turns out to be but illusory, she decides to radically end these tests. Convinced of her right to claim her body, the protagonist confronts her mother's physical violence. It is through her assertion of ownership over her body that Sophie resists her mother and, in a more general sense, Haitian societal expectations. Sophie's body reacts and becomes a battlefield: it is a past site of oppression and domination and a present site of struggle and resistance, a mediator through which she affirms her identity and gains control of her self. In the same context, Elizabeth Grosz argues that "Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, unpredictable" (xi). Sophie tries to subvert the power exercised on her body by using the same body for protest and reaction. Opting for breaking her hymen with her mother's pestle suggests Sophie's struggle for power as well as her rebellion against Martine's wish for full control over her own body. She recalls:

> My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed. I took the pestle and the bloody sheet and stuffed them into a bag. It was gone, the veil that always held my mother's finger back every time she tested me. (88)

Sophie's symbolic use of the word "veil" suggests a conception of the hymen different from her mother's. Sophie's own belief reveals that she sees it as a veil, a kind of curtain and a disguise that hides what is beneath. For Sophie, the hymen that veils her sexuality and sexual parts seems to be a synonym of the pain and trauma that are inflicted on her by the testing ordeal. The pestle usually symbolizes the connection and identification

with one's mother. As a matter of fact, the particular use of her mother's pestle to break her hymen symbolizes Sophie's wish to dissociate herself from her mother by using the same object that used to connect them both. Therefore, the act of self-mutilation demonstrates not only Sophie's ability to understand such a painful experience but also her reluctance to be subjected to such a ritual practice, which is testing. The particular use of her mother's pestle symbolizes her

Sophie's act of self-mutilation constitutes a desperate attempt to voice her rebellion and claim her ownership of her body, a body which has been desecrated and treated improperly. In her article "Bearing Witness to Self-Harm," Jane Kilby makes a similar point when referring to self-harmers. She argues that "the cut-skin testimony of self-harm is a bloody means of seeking the affirmation of an existence denied" (124). Accordingly, by asserting that "*Finally I* failed the test" (88; emphasis added), Sophie puts an end to the traumatic experience that she has been forced to undergo. The term "finally" reveals her intention when deflowering herself and suggests her unwillingness to suffer the incestuous experience. Accordingly, Sophie explains that her act of self-mutilation "was like breaking manacles, an act of freedom"(130), from the violation of her body and "the giant goose bumps [her] mother's testing used to leave on [her] flesh" (112). Sophie's explanation reveals her attitude toward the testing. For Sophie, the testing is harmful because it is a form of sexual assault and emotional violation; however, on its owns, it cannot preserve a girl's virginity. Likewise, commenting on the testing practices, Jennifer Rossi further explains that:

> [Testing] can neither prevent consensual sex from occurring, nor protect the daughter from rape…it does not bring marriage…Additionally, when the mother conducts purity testing, she herself is violating her daughter's purity, by committing sexual abuse. (208)

Thus, in the case of the three daughters that have been tested, testing fails at different levels. In Martine's case, testing doesn't protect her from rape. As far as Atie is concerned, despite the fact that she is still virgin, she is not married. In Sophie's situation, testing does not prevent her from breaking her hymen. Thus, the daughter's act reveals her opinion about the testing but also allows her body to subvert the power which has been exercised upon it: the oppressed, impotent body turns into a powerful entity. This entails the transgression not only of the powerful-powerless hierarchy but of the mother-daughter relationship, which bonds the two women.

The very act of stopping the tests also suggests Sophie's refusal to allow herself to be constructed as Martine's Marassa, her symbolic twin. In rejecting her mother's narcissism, Sophie instead asserts her desire for independence. Mireille Rosello makes a similar point when she remarks that:

> Like her female ancestors, Sophie must suffer the incestuous indignity of being penetrated by her own mother. But unlike them, she chooses to put an end to the experience . [...]Sophie says "I" to describe the result of her rebellion: that is, the fact that she can emerge as a separate self who has understood the story of the Marassas, refused that model, and refused, as well, to let the tale distract her. (128)

Rosello's remark suggests that Sophie's rebellion is unusual for she stops the vicious circle of the tests by deciding not to endorse the role of the Marassas. By stopping the testing, Sophie challenges, differentiates and separates herself from her mother. Her refusal of becoming her mother's twin symbolizes her resistance to the role that her mother prescribed for her, to be a virgin girl, a decent wife and her mother's "inseparable" Marassa, "a person duplicated in two" (84-85).

Sophie's refusal to endorse the Marassas alludes to her wish to liberate herself psychologically from her mother and from the blurred boundaries of the initial paradigm. Both Nancy Chodorow and Luce Irigaray suggest that a daughter needs to liberate herself from her "devouring phallic mother," to use Irigaray's words. Chodorow argues that "the central issue for the girl [during this stage] is a two-person issue − a struggle for psychological liberation from her mother" (136). Within this psychoanalytic framework, one can interpret that, in order for a girl to become an independent woman, she needs to separate herself from her mother. In Chodorow's view, psychological issues related to being a woman may help the daughter confront her mother (136). In a similar manner, Sophie tries to free herself from her mother's disciplinary practices. In "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood", Patricia Hill Collins underscores black mothers' portrayal "as strong disciplinarians and overly protective; yet these same women manage to raise daughters who are self-reliant and assertive" (125). Still it is this overprotection and these disciplinary approaches, particularly the testing, that lead Sophie both to refuse any identification with Martine and to rebel against her. While according to Martine virginity tests represent disciplinary practices, Sophie constructs testing as a form of sexual abuse. At this stage, Sophie seems to finally reach not only the freedom of her own body and her sexuality but also independence from her mother.

Unachieved Freedom and Liberation from the Mother

Ironically, Sophie's freedom, ownership of her body and separation from her mother will prove to be but illusory. Even though she escapes her terrible past, gets married and has a child, her body is not fully purged from the traumatic experience she

has gone through, nor is her mind. In fact, the very act of rupturing herself is painful to the point that she "had spent two days in the hospital and four weeks with stitches between [her] legs" (130). In using her body as a site of resistance but also a site of self-harm, Sophie damages the body that Haitian women, including her mother, simultaneously cherish and abhor. Commenting on the act of hurting one's body, Babiker and Arnold suggest that "in injuring her own body a woman spoils the thing which society both values and despises" (40). Accordingly, Sophie's self-mutilation has met a limited success for her mutilated and violated body haunts her both psychologically and physically. Or, as Donette Francis suggests, "This act of resistance signifies an incomplete victory for Sophie since it later haunts her" (87). Consequently, she experiences psychological and physical troubles. In *Development: The Feeding Experience and the Body* (1994), Bloom and Kogel argue that the body is the site of possible psychic manifestations:

> The body as internal object relationship (exciting, rejecting); the body as false body; the body as sexual object; the body as undeveloped expression of needs and feelings (i.e., a vehicle for separation, independence, autonomy, power, differentiation); the body as hated self; the body as container of memory; and the body as manic defense. (55)

Sophie's body manifests some of these potential effects. On her wedding night, she reveals that "[e]ven though it occurred weeks later, our wedding night was painful. It was like the tearing all over again; the ache and soreness had still not disappeared" (130). Her confession makes it clear that she is still haunted by the trauma that the tests inflicted upon both her body and her soul. Although, she succeeds in stopping the testing, she nevertheless fails in overcoming its physically and psychologically damaging effects.

Sophie's traumatized past leads to devastating consequences. After giving birth, she starts perceiving her body as so ugly that she becomes ashamed of it. She says: "I almost refused to let Joseph take pictures of me with her. I was too ashamed of the stitches on my stomach and the flabs of fat all over my body" (129). Sophie's self-mutilation causes her pain during sexual intercourse; she subsequently develops a sexual phobia. As she confesses:

> Joseph asked me several times if I really wanted to go through with it. [...] I felt it was my duty as a wife. Something I owed to him, now that he was the only person in the world watching over me. That first very painful time gave us the child. (130)

Sophie's confession reveals that Joseph becomes her surrogate protector, in a way her "othermother" − which explains her conjugal sense of duty towards her husband. Each time she experiences physical intimacy with her husband, she *doubles* in the same manner that she did when she was tested by her mother: "After my marriage, whenever Joseph and I were together, I doubled. [...] When my husband is with me now, it gives me such nightmares that I have to bite my tongue to do it again" (156). Sophie's mind and body still experience the doubling and cannot reunite for they are still tormented. Her physical disconnection from her husband emanates from Joseph's lack of understanding Sophie's traumatic situation. In fact, in one of their conversations, Joseph admits that "if their skins touch [...] [he] won't be able to resist" (197). Joseph's declaration reveals his failure to seize that Sophie is still unprepared for a sexual intercourse. Thus, Sophie's sexual relationship with her husband accentuates her alienation.

Sophie's traumatized and self-mutilated body embodies her emotional devastation. Her unwished for sexual intercourse with Joseph contributes to her

psychological trouble and to the development of bulimia. She confesses, "After I got married, I found out that I had something called bulimia" (179). For Sophie, bulimia becomes a symbolic manner of purging her body of the uncleanness that results from the "disgusting" sexual intercourse. This eating disorder, or to use Sophie's word, this "bingeing," is directly linked to her psychological instability. Her body expresses its traumatic pain through forcing her not to "eat at all and then eat a whole lot" (179). Her bulimia reveals Sophie's unstable state of mind and her failure to come to terms with both her traumatized body and sexual identity. It can also be perceived as another coping mechanism to overcome the pain she undergoes. Her "bingeing" explains Sophie's corporeal debility and her mind's inability to survive her trauma. Consequently, her body becomes as disordered as her psyche.

Sophie's Confrontation with Her Mother

Sophie's failure to transcend her crisis stems from her total separation from her mother and her motherland. Deciding to return to Haiti, Sophie's flight back home can be considered as a need to escape her present life. Her return is a symbolic return to her origins and roots and a need to reconnect with her mother figures, including her own mother. Her decision points out her simultaneous inability to reject her mother and desire to reconnect with her mother. In "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother" (1980), Luce Irigaray suggests that the total separation between mother and daughter can lead to lasting, negative effects on a woman. She argues that "Neither the little girl nor the woman needs to give up the love for her mother. To do so is to sever women from the roots of their identity and their subjectivity" (20). While in Haiti, her nightmarish memories and past resurface as she hears stories of rape and testing. She recalls her

relationship with Martine, her mother. The testing damages her physically and emotionally. For Sophie, her return home is the only way to come to terms with this heritage and therefore with her history and crisis.

Sophie's return home, and subsequent confrontation with her grandmother can be interpreted as an attempt to investigate the unresolved questions that haunt her. In one of the conversations with her grandmother, Sophie announces that her mother "never answered my letters. When I called her, she slammed the phone down on me. She has not seen my daughter. We have not spoken since I left home" (103). Such a statement foreshadows Sophie's recollection of her painful tie with Martine. Later in the novel, while having her bath, Sophie reveals that:

> Even though so much time had passed since I'd given birth, I still felt extremely fat. I peeled off Joseph's shirt and scrubbed my flesh with the leaves in the water. The stems left tiny marks on my skin, which reminded me of the giant goose bumps my mother's testing used to leave on my flesh. (112)

The daughter's statement highlights her ongoing discomfort with the violation of her body, a violation that her mother starts through the testing and that she continues through her act of self-mutilation. Not only does the testing trouble the relationship with her mother but also torments both her body and psyche for it isolates her from her mother and even from herself. Her act of self-mutilation is the manifestation of such a schism. Thus, her rebellion in Haiti is a form of capitulation and an act of disobedience as well as the partial destruction of her identity and body. In an attempt to understand her predicament, Sophie decides to talk to her grandmother about her sexual phobia and her being deprived of erotic desire. The testing issue is brought up in the discussion. Sophie's reaction is that she "call[s] it humiliation. I hate my body. I am ashamed to show it to anybody, including my husband. Sometimes I feel like I should be off

somewhere by myself. That is why I am here" (123). Angry at her mother, Sophie asks: "The testing? Why do the mothers do that? I hate the tests. [...] It is the most horrible thing that ever happened to me" (156). Grandma Ifé's confession is one of the most revealing answers that Sophie can get:

> If your child is disgraced, you are disgraced. [...] From the time a girl begins to menstruate to the time you turn her over to her husband, the mother is responsible for her purity. If I give a soiled daughter to her husband, he can shame my family, speak evil of me, even bring her back to me. [...] You must know that everything a mother does, she does for her child's own good. You cannot always carry the pain. You must liberate yourself. (157)

Hearing such an explanation, Sophie starts to realize that the testing is a Haitian practice. The confession ends with her grandmother's apology: "My heart, it weeps like a river [...] for the pain we have caused you" (157). Sophie's discussion with her grandmother is seen as one of the most illuminating conversations for she now knows the reasons of the bodily violation. Yet she is not fully convinced. Thus, the talk with her grandmother proves to be unsuccessful. Even though she gets the long-awaited answers, Sophie seems to be unable to grasp the motives behind the testing.

Martine's coming back home to Haiti, her motherland, foreshadows a potential confrontation between the mother and her daughter. Martine tells her daughter: "*Manman* asked me to come here and make things better between us. It's not right for a mother and a daughter to be enemies" (162). In an attempt to understand the predicament in a better way, Sophie confronts not only her grandmother but also her mother. This would suggest that the daughter fails to fully separate herself from Martine. The reunion with her mother symbolizes the return to the mother-womb, her origins, and her mother's source of depression. In her book, *The Undead Mother*, Christina Wieland

comments that "Chodorow argues that the girl never separates completely from the mother and that this incomplete separation characterises the feminine psyche" (108). Accordingly, Sophie confronts her mother and listens to her reconstruction of her own history, which makes her identify more easily with the horrible over-powered mother. Martine confesses:

> I did it [...] because my mother had done it to me. I have no greater excuse. I realize standing here that the two greatest pains of my life are very much related. The one good thing about my being raped was that it made the *testing* stop. The testing and the rape. I live both every day. (170)

This statement reveals Martine's painful past. This very crucial confrontation in the novel makes Sophie realize the amount of pain her mother went through. Like Sophie, Martine was tested by her mother before she was raped by one of the Tonton Macoutes. Sophie is the result of that violation. Therefore, Sophie discovers that both of them share a common history. In fact, Martine's and Sophie's bodies have been tested and violated, each in its own way. Their disordered bodies are at the origin of their disordered psyches. It is the damage done to their bodies that troubles the mother-daughter relationship.

The rape and Sophie's birth are Martine's motives to escape to New York and the reasons for her nightmares and her separation from her daughter. Sophie declares that she "knew the intensity of [Martine's] nightmares. [...] I had to shake her awake before she bit her finger off" (193). The statement points to Martine's psychological instability and reveals the implication of Sophie's witnessing such a scene. Sophie's intervention to wake up her mother suggests her sense of responsibility towards her. This indicates that, in a way, Sophie internalizes her mother's trauma and nightmares,

which are best exemplified in her declaration. She announces that her mother's nightmares become her own, "so much so that I would wake up some mornings wondering if we hadn't both spent the night dreaming about the same thing: a man with no face, pounding a life into a helpless young girl" (193). Sophie's confession reveals her identification with her mother through the nightmares. One can interpret that, through testing her daughter, Martine seeks to make Sophie become her double, her twin Marassa, and the heiress of her trauma, rape, and nightmares. Martine's desperate attempt to have her daughter as a Marassa suggests her wish to recreate and project herself onto her daughter. Thus, in the voodoo tradition, doubling stands for not only a duality of identities but also an attempt to conciliate and reunite two opposing entities or individuals. In a way, Sophie becomes her mother's Marassa by sharing her mother's nightmares. Commenting on Martine's nightmares, Rosello remarks that:

> [Her nightmares] are a dimension where the distinction between Martine's body and herself disappears, which reduces her to an ambiguous human state where present and past are fused, destructively. [...] Her body inflicts on itself the violence that it endured without being able to fight back. [...] The woman is left in a state of perpetual aphasia while her body takes over, becoming her own torturer.

Rosello's interpretation suggests that the mother's nightmares represent Martine's inability to distinguish between her past and present, between her body and herself. Consequently, Martine's tortured body turns into her torturer, leading to her psychological and emotional instability.

Sophie's Reconnection with Her Mother

Both daughter and mother struggle to overcome their individual histories of sexual and emotional violence, each in her own way. Because the mother's womb stands for the source of life, the female body becomes one of the mediators through which a woman identifies with or tries to separate from her mother. It is through the Marassas and the doubling, the associative and dissociative Haitian practice, that such identification with and separation from a mother can take place. In order to overcome such a dilemma, both daughter and mother struggle. Sophie joins a sexual phobia group, sees a psychotherapist, returns to her motherland and reconnects with her mother, while Martine tries hard to escape her traumatic past by leaving Haiti in a desperate attempt to forget. As she initially moves to the United States, Martine starts losing weight and using lotions to lighten her skin; she also tries to get rid of her Haitian accent by imitating both a precise French and an American dialect. Her form of assimilation into the American lifestyle and society signifies Martine's wish to bury her traumatic past.

What precipitates Martine's crisis is her new pregnancy with Marc, which intensifies her psychological disintegration. In fact, her unborn child starts calling her name "You tintin, malpròpe. [...] filthy whore" (217). Hearing such horrible things suggests that Martine considers her child with Marc as an extension of the man that raped her, revealing her unwillingness to confront her past. It is during her therapy that Sophie realizes her mother's need to have an exorcism, a "release ritual" (219). Yet, Martine's crisis culminates in her suicide by stabbing her stomach seventeen times. This act demonstrates Martine's bodily pathological resistance. Rosello argues that:

> [Martine's rape] is not in the past− it belongs to the immediate present since it is re-enacted, re-presented every night, in Martine's dreams: "It's like getting raped every night" (190). Martine has lost the ability to make a distinction

> between past and present. [...] Not being able to separate herself from the moment of the rape, the mother will never distinguish between nightmares and reality, between herself and her daughter, between violence and life. (121)

Martine's pregnancy is strongly linked to her rape for it makes her relive her horrific past and present. Therefore, the inability to overcome the rape and the inability to distinguish between violence and life is what causes Martine's death. This final act, though tragic, frees Martine not only from her trauma and nightmares but also from the child she is carrying. Commenting on her mother's death, Sophie reveals, "My mother was as brave as stars at dawn [...] My mother was like that woman who could never bleed and then could never stop bleeding, the one who gave in to her pain, to live as a butterfly" (234). The reference to the butterfly symbolizes the Caco bird, when a rush of blood that rises to its neck and wings (150). Recognizing the significance of her mother's death, Sophie chooses to dress her in red. Sophie states:

> [The red] is too loud a color for burial [...] She would look like a Jezebel, hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped them, and killed them. She was the only woman with that power. (227)

Sophie's choice of red symbolizes the Mother Goddess Erzulie, the most powerful spiritual deity. In Haitian voodoo, Erzulie stands for the strongest, most independent woman. In identifying her mother with Erzulie, Sophie attempts to claim in Martine's death the power that she was deprived of when alive. Thus, Sophie acknowledges that her mother manages to survive in her own way.

Coming to terms with these facts in her therapy sessions, Sophie's suffering from Martine's disordered psyche empowers her consciousness and her body. It is through suffering and resistance that Sophie acknowledges that she cannot reject her mother. The act of writing the name of her mother, her abuser, and burning it signifies a step

further to her liberation. This very act makes her easily identify with her mother and realize that the separation from her mother "is not a separation but a kind of union" (Winnicott 98). Therefore, Sophie finally acknowledges that a total separation from the mother is impossible. As Chodorow puts it in her work:

> The mother is very important in the daughter's psyche and sense of self, such that core psychological and interpersonal experiences for women can be understood in terms of internal mother-daughter lineage. (vii)

In a similar manner, Sophie understands the importance of a mother in a daughter's life and starts associating herself with Martine. In fact, both mothers, Martine and Sophie, fear the same abandonment by their daughters. By identifying with Martine as a daughter and as a mother, Sophie begins to comprehend her mother's suffering and pain. The latter can re-create herself, and therefore claim ownership of her body, in an attempt to heal from her traumatic past.

As a result of her interactions with an assortment of mother figures, including her own mother, and her therapy sessions, Sophie realizes that testing is "something that was essentially Haitian" (230). Sophie's recognition of her Haitian and African heritage allows her to re-integrate and unify her fragmented self, but also reunite with her mother. Acknowledging the violent legacy of Haitian history and the impact of such a heritage on her mother's life, Sophie manages to see the complex dyadic characteristics of a mother and "the fused and confused" relationship between mother and daughter. In her book, *Philosophy and the Maternal Body*, Michelle Boulous Walker declares that Irigaray argues that "the daughter experiences the mother as both oppressive and liberating. The mother is at once the space of her confinement and of her release" (170). Sophie's reconciliation with her mother evolves and informs Sophie's own national,

sexual and cultural identity. Sophie's last act in the cane field symbolizes her final attempt to gain control over her body and her life. She reveals:

> I…began to beat a cane stalk. I pounded it until it began to lean over. I pushed over the cane stalk. It snapped back, striking at my shoulder. I pulled at it, yanking it from the ground. My palm was bleeding. (233)

Encouraged by her therapist, Sophie attacks the site where her mother was raped. By exteriorizing the rage and the painful feelings about her mother's rape, Sophie's act results in her gaining control and ownership of her body and her sexuality leading to the subversion of the power exercised on her body. Sophie is finally able to call Haiti "home" (195). Sophie's attack on the cane field represents a confrontation not only with her inner self, but also with her cultural and social heritage. Commenting on this, Donette Francis argues that Sophie's act is not an action or a reaction but rather a confrontation with "the violence that is enacted on the cane fields rather than on her own physical body" (80). Thus, Sophie's first step toward liberation starts with her redemption from a horrible past, a state of mind that she tries to reach through a challenging confrontation with this past's violent practices.

Accordingly, the mother-daughter relationship in *Breath, Eyes Memory* is not only influenced but also disturbed by the power enacted on the female body. This body holds a crucial place in the lives of these women. The female body in this novel is a site of power. Violence is exercised by and towards these bodies. For Sophie, testing is a symbolic rape, a violation of her body. Her bond with her mother is intensified by this bodily violation, the testing. Yet, her body resists and it is through this resistance that Sophie acknowledges that she cannot completely reject her mother. Within the

framework of this inner struggle, Sophie negotiates her disordered body and the ensuing confusion ultimately marks her sense of identity.

Chapter Three:

The Body and Violence: The Construction of the Father-Daughter Bond in *The Dew Breaker*

> All Such things of the war, I tried to put out from my mind once for all.... until you rebuild me all this from your question.
>
> Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A survivor's Tale* 98

> The family is an image we seek so desperately.
>
> Marianne Hirsh quoting E Miller, *Family Frames* 41

The concepts of fatherhood and daughterhood are constructions which are disturbed by the father's identity and sometimes his past. As suggested in the two epigraphs above, the past and trauma influences the familial relationship and especially the father-daughter bond. This chapter explores the filial relationship that is influenced by the father's past and his own body. I analyze Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* in relation to power, discourse and violence. In doing so, I refer to Foucault's conceptualisation of power, knowledge, discourse and truth to study the father's body both as a source of his artist daughter's admiration and inspiration and the motif of her subsequent separation from his body. I will analyze the Dew Breaker's traumatic experience as torturer and oppressor. I will investigate how the body of the father, as an agent of political and social violence, becomes not only the locus of his misdeeds and a testimony of the violence he inflicted upon his victims but also his omnipresent ghost, his own torturer. With reference to Victor Turner's concept of liminality and its stages (rejection, liminal stage and reassimilation), to Homi Bhabha's notion of hybirdity, and finally to Derrida's theory of "differing meaning," I will explore Ka's father's attempt to escape his past as well as invention of a new life by dissociating himself from his former identity, motherland and, most importantly, from his body, the constant reminder of his past. My

analysis will be informed by Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory so as to analyze the daughter's reaction and to elaborate on the way the Dew Breaker's disordered body disturbs the father-daughter relationship and the growth of his trauma into a transgenerational effect.

The Father's Body as His Daughter's Artistic Source of Inspiration

Foucauldian power, as already stated in the previous chapter, operates always within a network of relations. In my second chapter on *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, I attempted to investigate power exercised for disciplinary practices and its effects on the female body. For Foucault, power is never static. As discussed earlier, Foucauldian power cannot and should not be analyzed as only repressive, but as also productive. Foucault then seems to liberate the concept of power from the negativity and coercion that have always come to define it. Foucault's analysis of power as productive and constructive can be located in his investigation of knowledge and discourse. As he puts it: "Power relations traversing and producing things, inducing pleasures, constructing knowledge, forming discourses and creating truths" ("Truth and Power", 118-119). For him, power can not only regulate and discipline subjects but also can create discourse and, therefore, engender knowledge as well as truth. But then, how are truth formulated and knowledge produced? What is the medium through which truth and knowledge circulate?

Foucault writes that "Nothing has any meaning outside of discourse" (*The Archeology of Knowledge*, 32). He argues that discourse is the medium through which knowledge is produced. Based on Foucauldian discourse, Stuart Hall suggests that discourse is:

> A group of statements which provide a language or talking about — a way of representing the knowledge about — a particular topic at a particular moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But [...] since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do — our conduct — all practices have a discursive aspect. (*Representations*, 44)

Accordingly, discourse is about language and the practice of that particular language. Discourse produces the subject and object of knowledge. It is worth noting that Foucault's discourse is what constructs and produces knowledge. Meaning is therefore constructed within discourse. Foucauldian discourse, as one might expect, operates within power relations, where power circulates. In fact, the knowledge which is formulated through discourse produces power, that is to say, those who produce knowledge have the power to pass this knowledge for truth. In *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*, C.G. Prado argues that what is important for Foucault is"[...] that power-produced truth is sustained in discourse" (125).

Taken from this perspective, Foucault analyzes knowledge in relation to power. According to him, power and knowledge are deeply interconnected and strongly interdependent. On the one hand, power produces knowledge. As Foucault puts it, "the production of knowledge is always bound up with historically specific regimes of power" (McNay 25). In fact, the production of knowledge requires power to take place, and therefore, can be considered as an effect of power. On the other hand, the actual production of knowledge produces in fact a certain type of power. In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault writes:

> [...] Power produces knowledge... [...] power and knowledge directly imply one another... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (*Discipline and Punish*, 27)

Consequently, this analysis suggests that knowledge cannot operate without power, but also confirms Foucault's stance that power alone does not exist, but it is rather exercised and actively produces, and to do so, it systematically needs to be "*in relation with"* other elements, being knowledge in this case. What types of knowledge does the exercise of power produce? And what forms of power does knowledge generate?

The power that stems from the production of knowledge consists in the capacity to pass on to the audience, the knowledge produced, in the form of statements, as the absolute "truth," whether this "truth" is real or illusive. Those who produce knowledge may make the statement appear true, even if it is not, by appropriating it and making it serve their objects. This suggests that power, rather than the facts about this truth, has a considerable weight in making a statement pass for true (*Representations*, 44). C.G Prado argues that "whoever has the power to shape or 'formulate' truth also has the power 'to express it as he wishes'" (135). According to Foucault's uses, conception, and definition of truth, truth is a very relative notion. Foucault suggests that we should take into consideration the fact that there are "different truths and different ways of saying it" (*Truth and Method*, 314). This suggests that Foucault does not theorize truth but rather gives a pluralistic vision of it, relating it to power production. He argues that there is a close relation between truth and power. Consequently, truth seems to be the product of power interplay.

Foucault's analysis of power-knowledge-discourse nexus offers a better understanding of how power operates in the production of knowledge through discourse. His theoretical framework is illuminating in analysing the exertion of power and its impact on the father-daughter relationship in Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. The

Dew Breaker's paternal identity and relationship with his daughter are built upon his attempts to shape a positive image of himself in order to win his daughter's love and admiration and be the object of her pride. Language and discourse are the means through which the father is able to construct a "sublime" and positive image of himself. He tells her about his "glorious" participation in the politics of Haiti and pretends that he is a "victim" in his homeland. He tells her about his own history as a prisoner, a prey of the political turmoil in Haiti. He even goes on to confess that the scar on his face was made by those who captured him. Accordingly, the father seeks to construct a particular image of his past life and identity. The Dew Breaker, therefore, utilizes his authority and power to tell his story. Consequently, this "discursive construct" produces a particular type of knowledge to the daughter, which consists in the portrayal of the victimized father's past in Haiti. As Foucault puts it, the confession and the production of such knowledge need power. This allows the father to convey it to Ka as the only truth.

Such knowledge has considerable effects on Ka and on the father-daughter relationship. In fact, the daughter feels compassion for her father's painful past and can finally understand the motives that led the family to leave Haiti and start a new life in Brooklyn. The version of the father's past that he recounts makes the daughter identify more with the body of Mr. Bienaimé, a body marked by painful memories. The body, in Foucault's works, is the main target of the power-knowledge relations that are mediated through discourse. Accordingly, the body becomes invested with a particular kind of power and introduced into the "regimes of truth" through power and knowledge. Foucault writes:

> To analyse the political investment of the body and the micro-physics of power presupposes, therefore, that one abandons—where power is concerned—the violence ideology opposition, the metaphor of property, the

> model of the contract or of conquest [...] one would be concerned with "the body politics", as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies [...] by turning them into objects of knowledge. (*Discipline and Punish*, 28)

Foucault argues that the body is invested with power relations. Power has its effects on bodies. He suggests that, "It is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" ("Two Lectures", 214). Therefore, the body does not evade power mechanisms but also does not exist outside discourse. Consequently, the body is constantly identified and defined according to the power-knowledge network, which is mediated through discourse.

In accordance with this analysis, the Dew Breaker's body becomes an "object of knowledge." In fact, the story that the father tells his daughter about his painful past and about his scarred body inspires his daughter. As an object of knowledge, the father's body becomes the subject of her artistry. The daughter seems to be so proud of her father that she takes him and his body as an inspiring model for her artistic hobby, sculpture. Such an inspiration reveals that the daughter not only cherishes and respects but also admires her father to the point that he becomes her subject of art. She declares in the "Book of The Dead": "I'm more of an obsessive wood-carver with a single subject thus far— my father" (4). In doing so, she turns to this knowledge about her father in order to represent him as a political prisoner, a victim of the policies of the Duvalier regime. Ka, thus, perceives her father's previous life in Haiti as one which has been marked by political resistance to this authoritarian regime and its reign of terror. She affirms that:

> My whole adult life, I have struggled to find the proper manner of sculpting my father, a quiet and distant man who only came alive while standing with me most of the Saturday mornings of my childhood. (13)

The sculptures she makes of her father symbolize her identification with not only his painful past but also his marked body. Accordingly, the latter's body is depicted as a target of repressive violence. Such a portrait reveals the vulnerability of the father's body, a man who undergoes the brutality of the Duvalier politics. In doing so, the sculpture becomes a kind of representation, through visual art, of the discipline inflicted upon the father's body.

Escaping the Inescapable

The book opens with the Dew Breaker who has left Haiti and settled in the United States. In "Liminality and Communitas" from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*,Victor Turner argues that "*liminality* represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions" (Turner 95). [3] He then suggests that the "liminal" character undergoes three different stages which are the following: rejection or separation (from a present situation), liminal period (that is to say the in-between period), and reassimilation. In this respect, the Dew Breaker seems to fit well in this identitarian framework for he transgresses his already established identity and separates himself from his motherland, Haiti. By moving to the United States, he attempts to build a new identity, live freely, and make the best of his life.

[3] Liminality was first introduced by Arnold Van Gennep in his work *The Rites of Passage*, when he studies individuals in transition. He discovered that these individuals go through different stages that he calls "rites of transition." According to him, these rites of transition "[...] enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (3).

Mr. Bienaimé— the Dew Breaker— is a Haitian man who lives in Brooklyn, New York. As he tells his daughter and everyone surrounding him, his past as a prisoner and a prey under the Duvalier regime leads him to leave his country: "Knowing that his life is in danger, [...] he used most of the money he was keeping in his mattress to procure them [the Dew Breaker and his wife, Anna] passage on a Pan American flight to New York" (240). By leaving Haiti, his motherland, and escaping to the United States, he "rejects" his past and denies his roots. He therefore "separates" himself from the violence he claims to undergo, just as he seeks to lose touch with Haiti. In his eyes, the United States is the "Land of Opportunity" that he hopes will enable him to rebuild another self.

At the beginning of the book, in the first short story "The Book of the Dead," Mr. Bienaimé is introduced by his daughter as a Haitian man, an immigrant, who has settled in the United States, specifically in New York City, and who works as a barber. The Dew Breaker succeeds in forging another self, one that is totally different from his past. In fact, he seems to lead a happy life with his wife, Anna, and his daughter, Ka. The man is depicted as a lovable and caring father and husband, and a brave and noble patriot whose resistance against Haitian dictatorship defines his character. As Ka tells us in the first short story, he used to read to her before she slept. The father says, "Ka... When I read to you... from 'The Book of the Dead,' do you remember how I made you read some chapters to me too?" Therefore, Mr. Bienaimé seems to be "re-assimilated" into the American culture and his family seems to be fully integrated into American society despite being in a host country thousands of miles away from their native country.

The Father's Body as the Active Agent of Torture and the Constant Reminder of His Notorious Past

The Dew Breaker's escape from his past and his former identity proves to be illusory. Accordingly, the Dew Breaker's body intervenes in his inability to fully forget about the past since his wounded body still haunts his present life. As Victor Turner suggests, such individuals or the "initiates," to use his words, live in an in-between space, they are neither fully detached from their previous life nor fully integrated into their new situation. Turner argues that the initiates are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" ("Liminality and Communitas", 95). Living in an in-between space marks these individuals and their stability. As Aguirre further argues, the liminal individual or the "threshold" is "First, […] characterized by a potential for disorder; second by asymmetry; third by instability" (*The Dynamics of the Threshold*, 31). In a similar manner, the Dew Breaker, like the liminal character, goes through the "temporal" liminal period (the "transitory" phase) before reaching the so-called "total re-assimilation." In fact, he is "betwixt and in between." The nightmares about prison that Mr. Bienaimé has are signs of this "in-betweeness." These nightmares reflect his anxiety, feelings of insecurity and an unstable identity, one which is vacillating between his past and present, as well as between Haiti and the United States. Not only is he emotionally and psychologically disturbed and unbalanced, but he also suffers from a physical handicap. The scar on his face is made by the preacher, his last victim. As the last short story reveals, the scar is a constant reminder of the Dew Breaker's notorious past:

> [The preacher] grabbed the piece of wood and aimed. He wanted to strike the fat man's eyes, but instead the spiked stub ended up in the fat man's right cheek and sank in an inch or so [...] The wound on the fat man's face wasn't what he [the preacher] had hoped, but at least he'd left a mark on him, a brand that he would carry for the rest of his life. Every time he looked in the mirror, he would have to comfort this mark and remember him. Whenever people asked what happened to his face, he would have to lie, a lie that would further remind him of the truth. (226-28)

The Dew Breaker's body becomes marked with a violent history. As Foucault argues, the body, which is as an object of knowledge, is constantly involved and determined in power relations via discourse. The body of the Tonton Macoute can be considered in a similar manner. When asked about the scar on his face, the former Tonton Macoute always produces a certain type of discourse and therefore a personalized version of knowledge and truth. The production of such knowledge acquires power in order to actualize itself. This is achieved through the lie that he utters each time he is asked about his wounded face. Such power provides him with the possibility to evade not only any potential identification with his marked body but also his notorious past. Through the scar that marks him and the nightmares that he experiences, the Dew Breaker's body becomes his constant reminder of his past identity, when he was one of the notorious Tonton Maccoutes.

Working as a Tonton Macoute, the Dew Breaker becomes an agent of political violence, because his body becomes invested with power. During the Duvalier regime, the use of torture had been legitimized in order to discredit and eliminate all opponents of the regime. In her work, *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry analyses the impact of torture on both torturer and tortured and the perspective of both sides on such a form of intimidation. Scarry defines and structures torture as the following:

> Torture is in its largest outlines the invariable and simultaneous occurrence of three phenomena which, if isolated into separate and sequential steps, would occur in the following order. First, pain is inflicted on a person in ever-intensifying ways. Second, the pain, continually amplified within the person's body, is also amplified in the sense that it is objectified, made visible to those outside the person's body. Third, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency. The working of these three phenomena will very gradually emerge during the following description of the place of body and voice in torture. (28)

According to Scarry, torture has three phases, each important and interrelated with the other: the infliction of pain, the objectification of the subjective attributes of pain and the translation of the objectified attributes of pain into the insignia of power (51). This suggests that torture is about hurting the other, making his or her pain as objective as possible by not identifying with the latter's physical suffering. The torturer is thus empowered through the pain imposed upon the object of his or her brutality. The body and voice play an important role in the process of torture.

Scarry's analysis is helpful and illuminating as to the interpretation of the Dew Breaker's crimes and motives behind torturing his victims. Scarry suggests that "it is [...] precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable; the regime so unstable, that torture is being used" (27). Accordingly, during the Duvalier regime, opponents are seen as a threat to the stability of the state. In order to eliminate this threat, torture and intimidation are exercised against the politically active. In fact, Scarry argues that the tortured body both becomes the target of domination and the only means through which such subjection can occur. Consequently, torture is legitimized and institutionalized. In Haiti, the Tonton Maccoutes are seen as those torturers recruited by the Duvalier system having one and only objective: eliminating any potential threat to the regime. It is a process through which the agent of power, the torturer's body,

becomes invested with more and more power in order to inflict pain on the tortured body to make him disappear. Following this analysis, the Dew Breaker's body becomes his only medium and the agent of such exertion of violence.

Both Foucault's historicized account and Elaine Scarry's theory of torture are helpful when analyzing the Dew Breaker's recourse to violence. Foucault argues that, within an episode of torture, the body becomes a means of acquiring information and truth as well as a site of punishment and torture. He suggests that:

> The body interrogated in torture constituted the point of application of the punishment and the locus of extortion of truth. [...] [T]he regulated pain involved in [...] torture was a means of both punishment and of investigation (*Discipline and Punish*, 42).

According to Foucault, the body of the tortured is the means through which the torturer can gather information and the site of the infliction of pain. The production of knowledge, and therefore of truth, through questioning and torturing, is a consequence of the exertion of power. Foucault suggests that "[...] the establishment of truth was the absolute right and the exclusive power of the sovereign" (35). Thus, the question and the infliction of pain can be seen as the torturer's embodied power to generate information.

In a similar manner, Elaine Scarry argues that torture is composed of two interconnected complementary acts, the first is the physical infliction of pain, and the second is the verbal interrogation (29). For Scarry, both acts rarely occur without each other. Although Scarry argues with the same structure of torture that Foucault provides, she nevertheless thinks that question and answer, during the interrogation phase, do not really matter. She remarks that:

> But as the content and context of the torturer's questions make clear, the fact that something is asked as *if* the content of the answer matters does not mean that it matters. It is crucial to see that the interrogation does not stand outside

> an episode of torture as its motive or justification: it is internal to the structure of torture, exists there because of its intimate connections to and interactions with the physical pain. (29)

This passage suggests that what makes the question so important to the torturer and the answer so important to the tortured is that the first legitimizes the former's physical brutality and psychological intimidation and the second endangers and defames the latter. Thus, the question then becomes a motive for torture and the answer the cause of such torture. It is also about power, since the interrogation is empowering for the torturer and degrading for the tortured.

The Dew Breaker seems to apply the same strategy of torture as outlined in Foucault and Scarry. Valia, one of his prisoners at Casernes, reports the following:

> "He used to call me by my name. He'd lean close to my ears to tell me, 'Valia, I truly hate to unwoman you. Valia, don't let me unwoman you. Valia, tell me where your husband is and I won't cut out your' ... I can't even say it the way he said it [...] He'd wound you, then try to soothe you with words, then he'd wound you again. He thought he was God." (199)

This passage reveals that the Dew Breaker deploys torture in order to get information. Valia's confession, then, suggests that the question he asks represents the Dew Breaker's motive for inflicting pain on her body. On the one hand, and as Scarry suggests it, the question, thus, seems to become a kind of manipulation and a justification for torture, because, whether she answers correctly or not, the woman is going to be wounded again and again. Accordingly, the Dew Breaker's interrogation represents a medium of abuse and Valia's response stands for the cause of the pain she may feel. The question legitimizes the former's extreme violence through the infliction of bodily pain but also by making Valia believe that the answer to the question *is* the cause of her pain. Thus,

Valia's body becomes the target of torture and pain, causing her intense pain that escalates into the self.

On the other hand, the verbal interrogation can be interpreted within Foucauldian theory on power-discourse. As mentioned above, Foucault argues that power relations are imprinted in discourse. Power relations intervene therefore in the production of discourse. In *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby interpret Foucauldian discourse as "[...] a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance" (185). In *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Chris Weedon interprets Foucault's power as:

> [...] a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects. (113)

Accordingly, Foucauldian discourse constructs as well as regulates power relations. It can either liberate or dominate the subjects and their relationships with each other. Within this framework, the Dew Breaker's voice becomes a means of intimidation. The question that he asks can be read as an enactment of power through discourse. Thus, the former Tonton Macoutes's voice is empowered through the interrogation which legitimizes the recourse to violence and the infliction of pain that accompanies it. Such acquisition of power embodies the torturer's ability to decide whether Valia has the right to live or to die. As Scarry suggests, "[torture] allows one person's physical pain to be understood as another person's power" (37).

The preacher, one of the Dew Breaker's numerous victims, is depicted as a politically active man. He opposes the Duvalier regime. Through his numerous sermons in the Baptist Church and his interventions in the radio show, he encourages the people listening to him to resist the system. He even dares to publically insult Duvalier by saying that "when we talk about a beast we mean Satan, the Devil" (186). Such a description of Duvalier suggests that the preacher's political line is characterized by active and direct resistance to the atrocities of the current regime. Accordingly, the preacher seems to be portrayed as a courageous man, seeking relief for his country and not fearing the violence of the State. As a result of his militancy, he is targeted by the regime of François Duvalier. His political activism brings the State's attention, since "[r]umours of the preacher's imminent encounter with the forces in power started" (184). As one of the Duvalier's militia men, the Dew Breaker is determined and committed to make the preacher give up his activism.

The final short story, "The Dew Breaker," depicts both characters. The Dew Breaker and the preacher are portrayed as opposites. The preacher's body is the locus of violence. Scarry suggests that making the body present by destroying it and the voice absent by silencing it is the goal of the torturer (49). Still according to her, this combination makes the experience of torture so painful and beyond expression (49). Likewise, Foucault suggests that the body is no longer the target of any punitive system: "The body [...] serves as an instrument or intermediary [...] The body and pain are not the ultimate objects of its punitive action" (*Discipline and Punish*, 11). Therefore, the body becomes the means through which the soul can be reached and targeted within an "economy of suspended rights" (11).

Accordingly, a .38 gun in his hand, the Dew Breaker, while arresting the preacher, grabs the latter's neck and wraps his fingers around his Adam's apple, preventing him from speaking (210-211). These actions reveal that the fat man makes the preacher's body more and more present by inflicting pain on it, while silencing him and therefore stifling his voice. Due to the pain he undergoes, the preacher loses not only himself but also his voice. He is, in effect, deprived of protest, that which became the ultimate embodiment of his form of agency and political resistance. This analogy between body and voice, consisting in the destruction of the body of the condemned by making it present and his voice by making it absent, represents a strategy in the process of torture. In so doing, the torturer gains control and power over the prisoner's body and voice, so as to silence him.

The Dew Breaker plays different tricks to torture the preacher. While in detention, the preacher experiences extreme forms of psychological torture and corporeal pain. As the following episode of torture suggests:

> The preacher was thrown in the back of a truck. [...] He raised his feet close to his chest as they shoved him from side to side, pounding rifle butts on random parts of his body. His face was now pressed against the metal undulations of the truck bed, boot soles and heels raining down on him, cigarette butts being put out in his hair, which sizzled and popped like tiny grains of rock salt in an open fire. He was hit with jolts of shock from what felt like portable electric devices pressed against the heels of his now bare feet. (211-212)

This passage enumerates the various forms of torture that the preacher's body undergoes. Consequently, his body is not only hurt but is in extreme pain. He starts "wincing in pain," losing "track of his own movements, his body cringing at every strike" (212), feeling "the agonizing sensation of many hands grabbing him at once..." (219). Physical pain seems to be present to the preacher and absent to the Dew Breaker.

Scarry claims that the body of the tortured becomes "the agent of his agony" (47). In this respect, the body in pain results in the twofold awareness that "my body hurts" and that "my body hurts me," hence causing the subject intense pain (47). Accordingly, the preacher's body stands for the cause of his pain. As Scarry further claims,

> Torture, it is in part the obsessive display of agency that permits one person's body to be translated into another person's voice, that allows real human pain to be converted into a regime's fiction of power (18).

The preacher is not only infantilized but also reduced to a condition during which he is unable to resist and cannot think beyond the bodily pain he endures. The intense pain that the Dew Breaker inflicts upon the preacher's body causes the destruction of the latter's world.

Analyzing the corporeal pain that prisoners and the tortured persons experience, Scarry remarks that it is this pain that destroys both these people and their worlds. On the spatial level, their universe is altered by their aching body. It either results in "the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe" (35). Accordingly, the preacher's pain directs the latter's attention to his aching body, a body which becomes his "universe":

> [...] Someone dragged him by the legs, pulled him forward, removing his jacket, and then he felt himself falling from the back of the truck onto the concrete. [...] With each yank forward, a little bit of him was bruised, peeled away. He felt as though he was shedding skin, shedding voice, shedding sight, shedding everything he'd tried so hard to make himself into, a well-dressed man, a well-spoken man, a well-read man. He was leaving all that behind now with bits of his flesh in the ground, morsel by morsel being scrapped off by pebbles, rocks, tiny bottle shards, and cracks in the concrete. (213)

This passage depicts the preacher's body, a body which is alarmed by its hurt. As his body falls apart, it is increasingly perceived as the only and unique object of attention,

replacing all other objects including the world, his family, friends, and past, his self-perception and identity. The preacher's fear is what finally breaks him. This world-destruction and self-denial reflect the Dew Breaker's intentions in torturing the preacher.

At no moment does the Dew Breaker regret the torture he is inflicting upon his victims. While the prisoner is feeling intense physical pain, the Dew Breaker feels no pain, since the recipient of the action of torture is another man's body. The Dew Breaker experiences his own body and voice differently from and opposite to the ways in which his victims experience theirs. According to the Dew Breaker, his work as a Tonton Macoute is entertaining as it allows him enjoyment:

> The way he acted at the inquisitions in his own private cell at Casernes eventually earned him a lofty reputation among his peers. He was the one who came up with the most physically and psychologically taxing trials for the prisoners in his block [...] He liked questioning the prisoners, teaching them to play zo and bezik, stapling clothespins to their ears as they lost and removing them as he let them win, convincing them that their false victories would save their lives. He liked to paddle them with braided cowhide, stand on their cracking backs and jump up and down like a drunk on a trampoline, pound on the protruding bone behind their earlobes until they couldn't hear the orders he was shouting at them, tie blocks of concrete to the end of sisal ropes and balance them off their testicles if they were men or their breasts if they were women. (197-198)

This passage exemplifies the way the Dew Breaker considers his victims' bodies merely as toys. Cruelty is what characterizes his murderous actions. His strategies of torture and dehumanization reveal that beyond performing the requirements of his job, he seeks and feels pleasure in trying these different sadistic experiences with his subjugated victims. The more he annihilates them, the more powerful he feels. Accordingly, the absence of any empathy and any identification with the pain the victim endures exposes the presence of a psychopath, whose only preoccupation is self-affirmation through gaining

more power. Thus, the more pain the victims feel, the more powerful the Dew Breaker becomes.

The Dew Breaker's attempt to gain power through his work as a torturer is an extension of his quest for upward social mobility. As a child he was deprived of economic and social stability. The Dew Breaker's parents were "landowning peasants," who had lost their land when President Duvalier came to power (191). Due to such loss, his father becomes mad and his mother disappears. Coming from a poor background, the Dew Breaker decides to join the Volunteers for National Security to improve his economic as well as social situation. Working as a torturer makes him more powerful. As Scarry argues "[...] what is taking place in terms of pain take[s] place in terms of power" (36). What follows from this is that the Dew Breaker:

> [...] enjoyed watching his body grow wider and meatier just as his sense of power did. [...] Bourgeois married women slept with him on the cash-filled mattress in his bedroom floor. Virgins of all castes came and went as well. And the people who had looked down on him and his family in the past, well, now they came all the way from Léogâne to ask him for favors. (196)

This passage suggests that the Dew Breaker's work as a Tonton Macoutes allows him to gain not only social respectability and status but also material well-being. Thus, torture becomes an enactment of social stratification and power.

The Dew Breaker's work as a torturer can be considered as an enforcement of the sovereign power of the president. In monarchical law, Foucault argues that torture had been legitimized when it was executed in the name of revenge, "it [...] requires that the king take revenge for an affront to his very person. The right to punish [...] is an aspect of the sovereign's right to make war on his enemies" (48). According to Foucault, this power is delegated to the realm of sovereignty. For him, sovereign power appears to

exclusively possess the right to torture and declare war on one's enemies. Accordingly, those who dared to resist or violate the Duvaliers' regime have been brutalized. The Dew Breaker identifies well with the structure of the regime. As a Tonton Macoute, he represents the embodied power of this extended regime. His use of torture during the Duvalier era can be interpreted as an act of reaffirming Duvalier's authority and power, and therefore re-establishing sovereign power. For him, torture reaffirms "the physical presence of the sovereign and of his power" (130). Thus, torture becomes an enactment of not only political control but also reassertion of the Duvalier's "absolute power."

The Dew Breaker as Hybrid Living in a Third Space

The Dew Breaker's violent past and his misdeeds represent obstacles to the stage of "re-assimilation." This "re-assimilation," and therefore his new identity prove to be but illusory and fake. The territorial persona, living in the United States as a hyphenated American, cannot fully forget his notorious past. What symbolizes the failure of his reintegration is what he does with the sculpture of himself made by his daughter in the opening short story, "The Book of the Dead." He refuses it, throws it in the lake and admits that his disreputable past in Haiti makes him unworthy of the sculpture that his daughter made for him. Such a reaction can be interpreted as a symbolic suicide. He describes himself as an incomplete being: "But all you noticed was how there were pieces missing from them [The statues in the Brooklyn Museum]... Ka, I'm like one of those statues." Finally, he admits: "I don't deserve a statue [...] Your father was the hunter, he was not the prey" (20). This crucial truth will be later revealed through the long flashback in the different stories. Refusing such a resemblance and association with the sculpture means that his past still haunts him. Consequently, he has not yet detached

himself from his past identity as a former killer, a torturer and a dew breaker. Thus, his identity remains suspended.

Mr. Bienaimé's two identities cannot define themselves independently and therefore cannot be separate. His identity is still wavering between both poles, which implies that he still experiences the liminal transitory phase. He is tragically self-divided in this conflicting identitarian framework. The tension between the conflicting identities results from his being torn between two cultures. Homi Bhabha describes this situation as one where there is "no necessary or eternal belongingness" (Bhabha 179). Still according to Bhabha, liminality and hybridity are interrelated as he affirms that this "interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 4). In other words, hybridity is the obvious consequence of the blending of identity and culture. Accordingly, the Dew Breaker is "hybrid" and "hybridized." In fact, the use of both English and Creole languages is an instance of his hybridity. He tells his daughter, "[...] I say rest in Creole," he prefaces, "because my tongue too heavy in English to say things like this, especially older things" (17). Ka is a second generation immigrant, as she says in the *Book of The Dead,* "I was born and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, and have never even been to my parents' birthplace" (3-4**).** Further, she says: "Haiti [...] is one more thing I've always longed to have in common with my parents" (4).While she seems to assume a more definite cultural identity, her father is trapped between two worlds and alienated from both alike.

As a matter of fact, the Dew Breaker's ambivalent, liminal and hybrid identity produces a liminal, ambivalent and "hybrid space." This third dimension of ambivalent identities generates the production of a "Third Space of Enunciation" to use Homi

Bahbha's concept. In *Home(s) Abroad: Diasporic Identities in Third Spaces*, Sura P. Rath asserts that "In *The Location of Culture,* Homi Bhabha has called this the third space, a hybrid location of antagonism, perpetual tension, and pregnant chaos" (10). "The production of meaning" as Bhabha holds "requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space" (*The Location of Culture* 36). This negotiation (that is to say the production of a hybrid culture or entity) is neither "assimilation" nor "collaboration." It is the "intervention of the Third Space [that]... makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process" (The Commitment To Theory 208). The title character lives similarly in this "Third Space". The stay in the hotel room in Lakeland, the visit to Gabrielle Fonteneau's house and the drive to the lake can be seen as hybrid third spaces which deepen the Dew Breaker's alienation and fragmentation of the self. Yet, the process of creating "the hybrid culture or space" does not spoil the past or the present identity for a "better" one. Mr Bienaimé is neither American nor Haitian. He is not at home, nor is he abroad. He is neither here nor there. He neither forgets his past nor adjusts to his present. However, both identities are deeply present in him, yet each remains as sovereign as the other. Thereupon, his identity is always delayed.

Mr. Bienaimé's postponed identity fits into the Derridean concept of "deferring meaning". Coined by the contemporary French philosopher Jacques Derrida, "deconstruction" suggests that "meaning is at once 'differential' and 'deferred'" (Norris 15). In Derrida's view, "meaning is nowhere punctually 'present' in language, that it is always subject to a kind of semantic slippage (or deferral) which prevents the sign from ever coinciding with itself in a moment of perfect, remainderless grasp" (15). *In this*

part, I will use Derrida's concept of "deferred meaning" to show that Mr Bienaimé's identity is constantly deferred.

The title character's ambivalence and the impossibility of fitting into any identity frame come from his refusal to acknowledge his horrible past and his escape to the United States. Ka's father has attempted to build a new identity not only by migrating to the States but also by trying to forget about his past. The Dew Breaker never wants to assume his responsibility, and therefore never accepts his past. At the end of the narrative, the Dew Breaker admits that "He had escaped from his life. He could no longer return to it, no longer wanted to" (237). He seems to be well integrated into American society, but his past always haunts him wherever he goes, shaming him. This denial always interferes in his multiple attempts to shape a new self. The character is subject to a profound dilemma that results from the inner conflict between the two opposing poles and dichotomies. The fact that the Dew Breaker is nameless in the story reinforces this ambivalence and demonstrates that Edwidge Danticat's creation of an anonymous character is intentional. Thus, the meaning of the Dew Breaker actually slips and escapes the title character's attempts to fix it.

The Dew Breaker's masculine identity is not constructed on a solid basis. In fact, as the book reveals, he met Anna when he was running from the jail after his murder of the preacher, and when she was running to the same prison to find that same preacher, her step-brother. While married with Anna, he never reveals to his wife that he killed her brother. The fact of not telling his wife the last part of the story about the preacher puts Mr. Bienaimé in the position of a liar. He lies to her even by evading the truth, a lie that can endanger his relationship with her. "The Dew Breaker," the last short story in this book, reveals that "After her daughter was born, she and her husband would talk about

her brother, but only briefly. He refers to his 'last prisoner,' the one that scarred his face, and she to 'my step-brother, the famous preacher':

> [N]either of them venturing beyond these coded utterances, dreading the day when someone other than themselves would more fully convene the two halves of this same person [...] She accepted that he [the Dew Breaker] had only arrested him and turned him over to someone else. (241)

He tells her about his last victim and she knows about him, but he has not told her about the identity of his last victim. This lie can cost him his marriage. Yet, it is this lie that sustains the marriage and permits each the necessary illusion. In this respect, his identity is always not only at risk but also always postponed and apprehended.

Trauma as Transgenerational: the Daughter's Separation from Her Father's Body

In her book, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory,* Marianne Hirsch introduces the notion of postmemory. She defines the notion as follows:

> Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through imaginative investment and creation. [...] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. [It is related to] second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences. (22)

Following Hirsch's conceptualisation of the term, postmemory represents the second-generation's responses to their parents' traumatic past, a response experienced via displacement and surrogacy. Accordingly, trauma affects not only its survivors but also the "survivors of the survivors," their children. Therefore, postmemory can be depicted as a Transgenerational Transferal of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (22). While

Hirsch takes the Holocaust as a site of postmemory, Ka's experience can be read in light of this process. Significantly, her reaction manifests an act of postmemory that culminates in her separation from her father's body.

As a diasporic Haitian exile subject, Ka experiences displacement from her father's homeland. She admits that "I was born and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, and have never been to my parents' birthplace" (3-4). It is in fact her father's past that leads the family to leave Haiti and live permanently in the US. Ka is taught that her father was a victim of political terror who had been unjustly imprisoned. The only escape was to leave Haiti once and for all. Based on the knowledge and the stories that she has been told about her father's imprisonment and his suffering, Ka recreates her father's past through her sculptures. She says:

> I had never tried to tell my father's story in words before now, but my first completed sculpture of him was the reading for our trip [...] it was my favourite of all my attempted representations of my father. It was the way I had imagined him in prison. (6)

The daughter's sculptures represent a kind of "memory" that is meditated through the reproduction and representation of her father's traumatic past. The very choice of the daughter to make a sculpture of her father is in a way a symbolic attempt to recreate/reshape/refashion her father, as if she wanted to give him a new birth, a new being, a new shape, a new identity. Ka, a survivor of her father's past, becomes its ultimate incarnation. Inheriting the trauma that he has experienced, she therefore becomes as traumatized as he. Consequently, trauma becomes trans-generational, an inherited memory.

Ka says "When I woke up, my father was gone and so was the sculpture" (5). This moment in the story is the climax, for she is actually going to learn about the ultimate truth: her father's role in torturing people. Her father confesses just after throwing the sculpture in the lake, and unveils the unspoken and unspeakable past, a shameful past that no one can escape. The father confesses that he does not deserve a statue. He reveals that he "was the hunter not the prey," and that he was not a prisoner but rather a notorious prison guard who "killed many people" (22). Her father is not a victim but the perpetrator. The father's story about his imprisonment is but a lie. Hence, the father's narrative is doubly traumatizing for the daughter. As he throws the statue away, he indicates his inability to be reborn/recreated, because he has become a prisoner of history. Now he is tortured by his own memory. This sculpture was made to commemorate the heroic deeds of a heroic person. A sculpture can remain, but this man seems eager to disappear. Hence, a commemorative statue offered as a tribute to his suffering may ironically suggest his ultimate failure to assimilate to a new cultural or individual model since no real conversion of his personality or past is actually possible.

The father's revelation and confession shock Ka, shake her present, and alienate both her father and herself. The idealized image of her father that she used to have is now but a lie, an image that has become tainted with an unforgiveable offence and betrayal. She says: "[...] my life could have gone on fine without my knowing these types of things about my father" (26). She even questions the love that her mother has for her father, asking her: "Manman, how do you love him?" (24). The revelation affects the father-daughter bond by making the daughter long for separation from her father's body, the previous source of her artistic inspiration, a body that is now considered an agent of violence by both Mr. Bienaimé and his daughter. She declares, "I have lost my

subject, the prisoner father I loved as well as pitied" (31). This confession suggests that the daughter seeks not only to separate herself from her father at that particular moment, but also reveals her wish to free herself of her identification with her father's body. She declares, in the first line of the opening chapter, "My father is gone" (3), a statement that goes beyond physical disappearance to reach the emotional and moral vanishing of her father in her eyes. Thus, she decides to leave home. By leaving, she challenges her prior relationship with her father and his paternal identity, an identity which is unstable and always delayed. Her father's body, which was once her own source of artistic inspiration, identified with what she assumed was his history of political dissidence, now becomes her enemy and a source of disgust, hate and rejection.

This analysis has shown that the father's self and body are not only split but also deracinated and alienated, resulting in his constant failure to identify himself throughout the book. His numerous attempts to establish himself in any identity frame fail because his identities remain in a constant state of postponement. He ends as a man deeply alienated from the world, isolated and disheartened. He migrated in search of a home that does not exist. The Dew Breaker's quest for meaning ends tragically as he denied his past, but more importantly also because he could not manage to assuage his conscience. Consequently, the father's past and his body affect and disturb the father-daughter relationship, resulting in Ka's wish to separate herself from the former. Thus, Mr. Bienaimé's past becomes Ka's heritage and his trauma becomes trans-generational.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, my main concern was to highlight the place that the body occupies within Haitian familial bonds. In the present thesis, the body is conceptualized as a site of the interplay of power and violence. By shifting our focus away from race, class and gender as primary and only sites of oppression and liberation, the present thesis attempted to demonstrate how relations of power and violence are involved in the construction and negotiation of parent-daughter relationships. In looking at the way power network manifests itself not only on but also through both the bodies of parents and daughters, the aim of the thesis was to examine the centrality of the Haitian black body in constructing filial relationships. Accordingly, I conceptualize the body as the ultimate target of dictatorship and parenting, and I consider it as a construct central to the negotiation of parent-daughter relationships. It helps illuminate the way Danticat's characters negotiate their bodies and their filial relationships by resisting power relations that predefine their bonds. By establishing and providing a strong correlation between the body and parent-daughter bonds, such an analysis investigates how the fictional daughters negotiate their relationship with their parents through identifying with or trying to separate themselves from either their mother's or their father's body. Thus, the present thesis tried to scrutinize the overlooked aspects of the parent-daughter bond.

The narratives under scrutiny have demonstrated how dictatorship played a destructive role in Haitian parenting. As analyzed in chapter one, dictatorship influenced all aspects of Haitian people. What results from this is a dysfunctional nation with a dysfunctional president that considers himself the God Father of Haiti. Accordingly, familial relationships appear to be as dysfunctional as Haiti. The present thesis attempted to answer questions such as what it means to be a daughter, a mother and a father within

Duvalier's dictatorship. My analysis raised some interrogations about how dictatorship manifests itself on the bodily level and how such bodily manifestations alter filial relationships. My present thesis exposed how regimes of control emanate from not only the political dynamic but also family and patriarchy.

The second chapter, "Negotiating the Mother-Daughter/Daughter-Mother Bond in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: A Question of the Nurtured or Tortured Body?," analyzed the mother-daughter bond in which power and body intervene in the negotiation of such a relationship. This chapter studied the ways the female body becomes the site of both oppression and resistance. Foucault's concepts of power, subjection and docility were chosen for the analysis of virginity testing as a means to control and subject Sophie's sexuality and behaviour. In doing so, I attempted to expose the power of the mother, Martine, and the daughter's resistance through self-mutilation. This chapter demonstrated that this intergenerational conflict, which is intensified by those bodily disorders, results in Sophie's acknowledgement that her wish to dissociate herself from her mother is not possible. The psychoanalytic framework, represented by Luce Irigaray and Nancy Chodrow, allowed me to scrutinize Sophie's identity and body negotiations.

The third chapter, "The Body and Violence: The Construction of the Father-Daughter Bond in *The Dew Breaker,*" analyzed the dysfunctional father-daughter bond, in which the father's past and his body entangle its negotiation. Foucault's theory on power, knowledge, discourse and truth provided a theoretical paradigm for exploring the father's body as a source of his daughter's inspiration and the cause of her latter separation. Along with Foucault's contribution, Elaine Scarry's theoretical discussion of the intersections of the body, torture, and pain enabled the analysis of the father's body

as the agent of political violence. With reference to the concepts of Victor Turner, Homi Bhabha and Derrida, this chapter scrutinized Ka's father wish to dissociate himself from not only his marked body but also his notorious past. Finally, the chapter explored the way the father's trauma is passed on to Ka and the role of her father's disordered body in disturbing their relationship.

The Dew Breaker and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* explore the complexity of filial relationships. These two works highlight the political context of Duvalier's dictatorship that frames the parent-daughter bond. In both works, the body complicates the construction and the negotiation of such filial relationships. However, while in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the body of the daughter is explored as a site of oppression and a tool of resistance to her mother's coercion, in *The Dew Breaker*, the focus is directed to the father's body. The paradox between Mr. Bienaimé's body as a source of his daughter's inspiration and his body as the actual agent of political coercion is what triggers interrogations. In both works, Danticat never answers whether the ideal father is found or whether it is just an illusion. Danticat attempts to recreate familial relationship through redefining the Haitian body. By reconstructing parenthood and daughterhood within Duvalier regime, Danticat speaks on behalf of daughters and parents, whose voice is silenced and whose stories are buried. Despite the presence of other interesting and complex filial relationships in both works, my interest was dedicated to the Martine-Sophie and Mr. Bienaimé-Ka bonds. Drawing on the connections and intersections in Danticat's writings, I was able to study the uniqueness and complexity of the parent-daughter bond. However, the remaining intersections of both works are considered as potential horizons for further exploration.

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