

Trauma Narratives and Reconstruction of the Self:
A Study of the Novels of Edwidge Danticat

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by

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Chapter V

Summation

Literature is a criticism of life. Writers have used their talents towards awakening the public to injustices by portraying the social, cultural, and political maladies of time in their works. The novel of today has moved out of its earlier limits to take up a counter position to contemporary issues. It is no longer a mere exorcism of the past instead it is an interrogation, a self-introspection, and a face to face encounter with the present that exposes both the pain of damage and the guilt of the nations.

Danticat as a writer takes up the social responsibility of depicting the horrors of the society. Her narratives unearth the voice of the voiceless. Her works act as testimonies in the absence of reconciliation committees. She provides critical spaces that offer new opportunities for a coming together of social movements. By doing so there will be a rethinking and re-expressing of democracy as a struggle over values, practices, and social relations that enlarge the term of human capacities and possibilities as a basis for compassionate social order.

Danticat accepts the criticisms of fleeing the country during difficult times. Though her works are grounded on her homeland Haiti, she is guilty of physically distancing from it. Her immigration at the age of twelve during the Duvalier dictatorship left her with no options as like many she had to choose either exile or death.

In her essay, "AHA!" (African-Haitian- American) contributed to *Becoming American: Personal Essays by First Generation Immigrant Women*, she

acknowledges the Caribbean writers' ancestral roots to Africa. They can also be called Haitians as most of them were born in Haiti or were the first generation born of Haitian parents and living in America makes them Americans. This complexity exhibits the fragmented nature of the cultural heritage of the Caribbean writers. The multiple traditions to which Danticat belong are exhibited in the multivalence of her prose. She throws light on the Creole expression '*map we lonbraj ou la*' which means 'I will see your shadow there'. In "AHA!", she expatiates on the association of body whose shadow is elsewhere. Her spirit remains in Haiti while she physically resides in US. This shows her longing for the homeland.

Danticat's concerns revolve around Haiti, the plight of Haitians, and its diaspora. Poverty, pain, suffering, and violence are the dominant motifs in Danticat's novels. The past is something which haunts the characters for different reasons. The recurrence of nightmares adds to the their distress.

Danticat's works are influenced by Haitian writers such as Marie Vieux-Chauvet, J.J. Dominique, as well as Afro-Americans like Paule Marshall, Maya Angelou and Caribbean writers like Maryse Conde. Her effective handling of the problems like patriarchy, femininity, and mother-daughter relationships keeps her in line with other Caribbean women writers. At the same time, her works are analogous with African-American writings as she records the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and encounters of the black women. Her protagonists are mostly women who battle against the adversities of life which is a typical trait of African-American women's writing. Her themes are also similar to that of African-American writing which includes sexual assaults on women, female bonding, the legacy of traumatic memory, and the use of folklore.

Danticat's concerns revolve around the 'Haitian Black Women' who live in Haiti and in US. This is evident both in her novels and short stories. In *BEM*, she portrays the lives of three generations of Caco women. In *KK*, we could find stories such as "Night Women", "New York Day Women" and "Caroline's wedding". In *FB*, the events are narrated in Amabelle's perspective. In *DB*, there are several women characters like Ka, Anne, Rezia, Mariselle, Freda, Beatrice, Aline, and Nadine who outnumber the men. Even in *CSL*, she has presented characters like Claire's mother and Flore who in spite of their low paying jobs remain dynamic and strong. There are also other dynamic characters like Gaele, Lousie George, and Jessamine who withstand life's adversities in a composed manner. The story *Untwine* is told in the view of the female twins. Danticat also excels in depicting the relationships and bonding between these women which is another trait of Afro-American writers. In most of her novels, female characters aid in the plot's movement. Danticat creates characters whose wholeness or sense of belonging is predicted on their connection with and understanding of other black women. Their individual experiences are understood in the context of the larger female community.

Danticat's writings honour Haitian women who have made blood sacrifices in the ravaged nation. The female blood in her texts not only remembers the wars of Haitian independence, it also remembers Anacona and the foremothers whose names go unwritten. By remembering the silence of the Haitian women and mothers through speech and writing, Danticat texts open expressive channels into the past through which the voices of the dead can mingle with those of the living to create a vibrant chorus of resistance.

In *BEM*, Danticat honours the lineage of Haitian women. Breath signifies life, eyes relate to bearing witness and memory refers to the act of remembering. The protagonists of *BEM* are multi-religious. Tante Atie likes to read Bible but her limitations in reading made her quote the scriptures that she had memorized. Grandma Ife and Sophie follows both Catholicism and Vodou. *Marasas*, the twin spirits are invoked throughout the course of the novel. This twinship is apparent in mother-daughter associations. Sophie is envisioned by Martine as her *Marasa*, Atie also finds comfort in being with Sophie and Sophie believes that her daughter Brigitte will be the one who will never abandon her. Though male figures in the novel like Marc and Joseph provide temporary comfort to Martine and Sophie respectively, these women find solace in living with their daughters. Myths and tales fairy are incorporated into the main narrative of *BEM*. They are used as the mediators of pain and suffering. Ife used to tell stories about stars to Martine and Atie. The stories Ife told them warned that a girl who yearned for the stars discovered that the man she wished for was a monster.

The novel *FB* allegorically delineates the cyclical sowing and reaping of death in the Caribbean. The main theme of the book *FB* is racism, tyranny, loss, and perseverance. Remembering is one of the major themes as there is always a fear of forgetting the names of their loved ones. Remembering also results in trauma. The novel is a documentation of individual and collective memories. Danticat emphasises that Hispaniola is one island and Haitians and Dominicans are one, even though history and geographical dispositions have different conceptions. The need of maintaining the balance between the racial groups is firmly stated. The Haitian workers are needed for the cane harvest in the Dominican Republic at the same time

they are despised. The magnitude of the crime that Trujillo committed against Haitians can be labeled as attempted genocide. The novel starkly portrays migration based on economic instability, sugar monoculture, intra-Caribbean rivalry, and political volatility. The novel *FB* is not only a book of testimony and mourning but also a record of love and life.

Danticat's *DB* is a novel of fragmentation, disassociation, and disconnection. Totalitarianism is one of the significant themes and its aftermath effects continue to haunt the characters even in the new land. In this novel, Danticat uses art as a revolutionary force. The government targeted the art galleries as a result Mariselle's husband is murdered for his painting. Freda's songs speak for her dead father who was unjustly killed. Aline as a reporter wishes to tell the story of Beatrice to the rest of the world. The plight of women is common in totalitarian regimes and that these regimes cause significant social fragmentation. Beatrice and Anne, for example, are both bereaved by Haiti's horrible past. Nadine is not directly affected by the regime but she suffers due to the disintegration of Haitian community caused by the regime. On the other hand, Danticat portrays women as playing a reconstructive role, often in community with one another. Aline and Ka both plan to work to portray the truth. Anne, while traumatized, works for the redemption of her husband.

Misery and agony are the major themes in the novel *CSL*. The novel moves back and forth between the present and the memory. Danticat tells the story through multiple voices and points of view, which provides a kaleidoscopic view of the past. The lives of each character intersect in a complex web of competing needs. The people of Ville Rose encounter both natural and socio-political disasters. While a few like Laurent, Bernard, Rose, Claire's mother and Caleb die, the rest survive the

adversities. The radio is a key media of communicating stories throughout the novel, and the radio station is a place where confessions and revelations take place. The radio shows exhibit the desire of the Haitians to be 'heard' by the outside world.

Danticat's *Untwine* is a novel of grief and resilience. It explores the special bond between the twins. It is a story of agony and hope. The novel draws readers through the aftermath of unexpected loss. Danticat not only exposes the delicate bond that twins share but also beautifully weaves in Haitian culture and family traditions throughout the novel. Mystery and emotions which surface in the novel add to the reality. The novel is a celebration of family and sisterhood. It explores how family and friendship help to cope up with the loses in life.

The essence of guilt is one of the determining features of Danticat's novels. In *FB*, Amabelle suffers from survivor's guilt and in *DB*, Ka's father is guilty owing to the ruthless acts of his past. Max Junior in *CSL* is guilty of not acknowledging Flore and his son.

Symbols play a crucial role in Danticat's narratives. In *BEM*, the colour red plays a vital role in the Caco family as they are named after a Haitian bird which is red in colour. Originally Caco's were rebels who fought against the US occupation of Haiti between 1915- 1934. Danticat's grandfather was a Caco. They were monikered after the Taco bird whose wings resembled that of flames. The colour of the bird symbolizes passion and violence which can be associated with Martine's character. Her favourite colour is red and she furnishes her Brooklyn home in different shades of red. Sophie, who is aware of Martine's obsession with red, dresses her mother in the

same for the burial though it's considered to be a too loud colour for the occasion.

Sophie prepares her mother for an afterlife where she would become a Jezebel, a hot-blooded Eruzile who feared no men.

The daffodils in *BEM* symbolize the diasporic community. Haiti's climatic conditions were not favourable for daffodils but still, it turned out to be a type of hybrid when it was forced to grow in Sophie's village. When uprooted, Sophie and Danticat were like these daffodils as they obtained a hybrid identity in US. The sugarcane field is a site of traumatic memory and it is a symbol of slavery. In *BEM* and *FB*, cane becomes a powerful image of Haitian suffering. Despite their hard work, the cane cutters were unable to relish the sweetness of the cane.

Haitians perceive water as a gateway which separates the living from the dead. In the case of Amabelle's parents water becomes a representative of death but at the same time, Amabelle finds solace in the water flowing in the cave where she and Sebastien used to hang out. Life and death coalesce with her final re-unification with the river and it also suggests her spiritual re-birth. Water in *DB* is a symbol used for cleansing throughout the novel. The statue of Ka's father serves as a reminder of his terrific past. His act of throwing the statue into the water symbolises his transformation. Water flowing from Christophe's tap station represents the cleansing of the evils which Duvaliers had inflicted on the people.

In *DB*, the scar on the Dew Breaker's face is a reminder of his past atrocities. At the night after killing the preacher, Dew Breaker dreams of his childhood. He and his mother are working in the garden and his father watches them at a distance. To his

surprise, he witnesses the seeds sown have become trees of various kinds and healing weeds. This symbolically suggests the idea of redemption through images of nature.

In *CSL*, the town itself acts as a symbol representing the dual nature of the community. Rose is a beautiful flower with thorns in it. Thus Ville Rose as a community has many negative aspects like class divisions, gangs, and corruption but at the same time it embraces and comforts people when there is a need. Salt in the novel represents life and good luck. The fishermen's wives throw salt into the sea before their husbands leave for sea. They believe that this act ensures their safety in the sea. It is also believed that Zombies are brought back to life after consuming salt. Lighthouse serves as a symbol for guidance for those who are lost and in need of guidance. It helps Claire in returning home and saves the life of Max Junior when he is about to be drowned. Frogs mirror life and death. In Ville Rose births and deaths take place simultaneously. The births and deaths of frogs reflect this cyclic pattern in the lives of people in Ville Rose. Claire's mother dies giving birth to Claire and Rose was born when her father Laurent dies. Starfish is a symbol of rebirth. It reflects the story of Lousie George who in spite of being humiliated by Max Senior re-emerges victoriously and avenges him through her radio show.

In *DB*, fatherhood also becomes a metaphor of the political leadership in Haiti. The civilians are unhappy with their rulers. Many of the characters like Ka, Michel, Romain, and Claude are never in good terms with their fathers. In *Untwine*, Frida Kahlo's "The Two Frida's" is a metaphor of Giselle. The two Frida's is originally a self-portrait by the Mexican artist which shows two Fridas. While one is lively with a beating heart, the other has a bleeding heart. It represents the twins. The bleeding one represents Isabelle who is no more and the other represents Giselle.

Danticat uses flashbacks in her novels to create an interesting storyline. In *DB*, she uses it to narrate the past life of Ka's father. The thoughts of Anne too oscillate back and forth as she reviewed her life. Danticat also uses the technique of foreshadowing events in her novels. The parable of bleeding woman in *BEM* foreshadows Martine's death. In *FB*, the twins' struggle and Rafael's death foreshadowed the massacre. The dark-skinned Rosalinda's survival against lighter-skinned Rafael suggests that Haiti will endure and stay alive against all odds.

Fragmented narrative is a part of exile writing. The experience of the exile disrupts linear development. Danticat's fragments remain troubling and disjointed, signs of lack rather than abundance. It is a result of the prolonged nature of Haitian trauma. This kind of writing is born out of catastrophes. In *FB*, Danticat juxtaposes the traumatic past and the present. It is a narrative strategy that serves temporally to entwine events from her childhood with not only her personal experience of the massacre, but also those collective experiences reported by other named and unnamed characters. The memories and dreams embossed in the novel give more insight into the character.

Like the Haitian women writers, Yanick Lahens and Evelyne Trouillot, Danticat's love for short story form is obvious in her full-length novels like *DB* and *CSL*. In these two novels, she uses episodic way of storytelling which is reminiscent of short story. As the stories are interconnected and related to one another it could also be read as the separate chapters of a novel. Hence, her experiment with the two genres of fiction is evident in *DB* and *CSL*.

Danticat's prose style is expressive, simple, and poised. The readers are shocked by the openness in the description of cultural practices and violent sexual assaults. She uses it as an expression of resistance writing. Her novels are heteroglossic. She incorporates Creole words and phrases into English. The Creole words are italicized and are mostly followed by English equivalents: *tantes*, aunties; *bonjou*, greeting; *Ou byen?*, Are you all right? *travay te po zo*, the farming of bones; *Ki jan w ye?*, How are you; etc. Many Creole words stand alone and the readers can determine the meaning from the surrounding context. The use of a local dialect like Creole alongside with English helps in gaining familiarity among the universal readership. By accessing a third world element, such as the Creole language, Danticat is giving third world people an agency to open up.

Haitians struggle to speak English is apparent through the character of Anne who speaks it ungrammatically. When Ka tells her about Dew Breaker's disappearance, Anne says, 'He come back' omitting 'will' which represents the future. Dew breaker also has difficulties in expressing his deepest emotions in English but comfortable in using the Creole phrases. He switches to Creole when he narrates his past to Ka. Eric's telephonic message to Nadine starts with, 'Alo, allo, hello' which are the expressions of Creole, French, and English respectively. The rest of his message is delivered in a heavy accented English. Freda, Mariselle, and Rezia struggle with their English in US.

Danticat's novels are steeped in Haiti's culture, cuisine, and folklore. It also deals with issues of immigration, political oppression, and social injustice. For her, writing is about bearing witness. She views her writing as a kind of rebellious art form

to voice against the injustices. Her fictions are marked by exile, departure, brutality, violence, sadness, and death.

In Danticat's narratives individuals and communities are silenced, as a result, they are deprived of the possibility of mediating their stories. This repression is not only implemented by the political system but also out of love. In this process, individuals perpetuate lies and are often haunted by secrets. In penning down the secret hurts and violations, as well as the lies in the lives of Haitians and Haitian-Americans, Danticat's work formalizes the oral tradition and the unspoken histories by translating them to the written word.

Danticat's novels echo Haitian history and personal and collective memory. Instead of depicting Haitian history in a broad general way, she places her characters in the context of certain political events in Haiti and examines their lives. Her inaccuracies with the dates, places, time and events were essential for the narrative flow. Her works also deal with the issues of migration and return. Danticat's works can be considered as testimonials where the marginalized subjects narrate their individual experiences of social injustice. Her characters are subjected to crossing and re-crossing from one nation to another, between the past and present without ever getting answers.

Danticat's writing mirrors Haitian life and loss in historical and personal terms. She writes about the humanity of Haiti and skilfully balances the pain and joy experienced by them. She uses this technique to lighten up the difficult times. Her works attempt to rule out the misconceptions about Haiti and Haitians. Violation of

human rights is one of the common themes in Danticat's novels. The characters face several internal and external conflicts that kindle the reader's sympathy.

Danticat writes in the tradition of combining story and history. She places the audience in a expedition between Haiti and the United States. Danticat is creating a new space for her audience, who is unfamiliar with Haiti's history the cultural, political status; as well as, her audiences who are aware of the Haitian situation. Danticat's new literary space is where history and fiction work together to address new social, cultural, and political issues of Haitian women. Danticat's integration of history and story is significant in her resistance writing because she illustrates the physical violence and mental abuse which was targeted against the Haitians.

Danticat pictures the problems faced by the immigrants in US like language, identity, and longing for the homeland etc. Beyond the problems of language, belonging, and uprooting the characters are confronted by the demons of their past no matter how far they distanced themselves physically from the sites of horror. The Haitian immigrants in US are continuously haunted by their past.

Danticat's characters suffer from isolation. Haiti itself is isolated as the outside world has branded it as the poorest nation in the western hemisphere. Danticat's writing is a kind of invocation to the solitary sufferers by helping them realize that they are not alone. This is carried out by the force shared in discovering the common voice. Danticat does not speak in the place of others but voices the experience of a marginalised community.

Though Haiti becomes the primary literary concern for Danticat, she never pictures it with extravagance. In her works, Haiti is portrayed as a society which is

full of prejudices and taboos. Haitian reality exploded into numerous pieces is one of the trademarks of her literary work. The universe which she depicts allows the readers to see the convulsiveness of a situation of continual political crises on the individual and the society. By creating transnational sites of memory beyond the sea and across the island, Danticat restores the agency to a landscape that in the Caribbean has always been saturated with intermingled histories unfolding tidaectically. She digs deep into the silenced stories and creates literary monuments to life, resistance, and survival. Her works instil hopes to trauma survivors.

The first chapter of the thesis outlines the blossoming of Caribbean literature from its folklore and oral traditions. It delineates the major works in Caribbean literature starting from the classics to the contemporaries. It gives an aerial view of Haitian-American diasporic writers, highlighting Edwidge Danticat and her works. As Danticat's novels are intertwined with the politics of Haiti, a brief political history of Haiti has also been described.

The second chapter focuses on the oppression faced by the protagonists of Danticat owing to the social, cultural, and political factors prevalent in the Caribbean and US. It lime lights their struggle, sufferings, and trauma. It also vividly pictures the social, cultural and political maladies which had a huge impact on the psyche of these characters.

The third chapter traces the history of psychoanalysis beginning from Freud till date. As the protagonists of Danticat's narratives are unjustly victimized, they are haunted by the traumatic memories. This chapter analyses the trauma of the oppressed psyche and details on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A dual representation theory of PTSD framed by Brewin is used to analyse the psyche of Danticat's characters.

The fourth chapter sketches out the strategies adopted by the protagonists to overcome trauma. While some of the characters become tired of fighting the traumatic memories and admit defeat, many try and succeed in healing themselves in various ways. In Danticat's novels healing occurs in various forms. The protagonists experience suffering irrespective of their social and economic backgrounds. The characters try hard to fight against the traumatic memories as they were the prime cause of their despair. The character like Martine, fails in her attempts to conquer grief while others like Sophie, Amabelle, Claude, and other minor characters adopt various strategies to conquer trauma and ultimately emerge successful. There are also people like Dew breaker and Anne who adopt survival strategies and remain unhealed.

Danticat's novels are entangled by the macrocosmic level of the nation and microcosmic problems of the individuals. Her narratives are marked by the voice and silence. Despite their suppression beyond imagination, these voices convey sensibility, courage, and power. Her tales tell about how Haiti's poor and dispossessed have fought for their personal and collective survival. She unearths the stories which are silenced and ensures that injustices are brought to the limelight. Her works weave together an inspiring study in resistance and survival.

Wounds of memory cannot be healed in silence. The weight of silence in trauma might be the outcome of slavery, oppression, dictatorship, and war. Writing is a kind of breaking the silence. Haitian writer Evelyne Trouillot comments, "The

silence around social injustice, sexual or religious taboos, all kinds of discrimination, all that hinders breathing and becomes a source of malaise and unhappiness. When silence threatens humanity, it deserves to be destroyed”(173).

Traumas can be negotiated in various ways. Verbally narrating it as stated in this dissertation is one of the strategies to come out of the shock, for example in the #Me Too campaign, we could find the voices of men and women in the social media who were sexually abused. The movement gained momentum on October 15th in response to allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein who was accused of sexual misconduct, actress Aiyssa Milano tweeted the following note on Twitter: ““Suggested by a friend: If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘Me Too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of magnitude of the problem”, she said” (Zachariah 1).

#Me Too campaign helped those who were sexually abused and felt ashamed to come out with their stories to open up in public. In an interview to *The Times of India*, Eve Ensler, an American playwright, performer, feminist, and activist appreciates the move of men and women sharing their stories in #Me Too campaign, “Breaking this silence to tell our stories for the cause itself is a great move”(1). The sexual abuse stories should no more be considered as a marker of shame. Sharing such stories not only helps in self-healing but also creates awareness. Making it vocal helps the victims to gain support from the people which makes them feel less lonely.

A real life case study is cited to emphasize the extent of truth in Danticat’s trauma narratives. It is the story of self-healing by Eva Mozes, one of the identical

twins who survived the Holocaust in the death camp of Auschwitz during 1944-1945. She and her sister Miriam Mozes are the victims of deadly genetic experiments performed by the German physician Josef Mengele, who was popularly known as 'The Angel of Death'. Born in 1934, the twins lived in Transylvania, Romania. They were taken in a cattle car to Auschwitz where people were selected either to live or die. The family was separated and the twins were taken away. Mengele's mission was to discover the means to increase the birth rate of an Aryan master race. Eva was used in two types of experiments. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, they put her naked in a room with her twin sister and many other twins for eight hours. They measured every part of her body and compared it with her twin sister and noted down in the charts. On other alternate days Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, they were taken to the labs for blood tests and were administered a minimum of five injections, the contents of which were unknown till today.

After being injected, Eva was down with fever. Her legs and arms were swollen and there were huge red spots all over her body. On her next visit to the lab, they took note of her fever and she was immediately taken to the hospital where she was examined by Mengele who declared that she would die in two weeks. She started to crawl as she was unable to walk. Fortunately, two weeks later her fever subsided.

When Eva returned, she found Miriam in a traumatic state staring into space. Miriam was reluctant to talk about her encounters in the lab till 1985. Later, she revealed Eva that she was injected with numerous medicines which deteriorated her health. After the Holocaust got over, Miriam moved to Israel and got married. When she was expecting her first child, she developed several kidney infections that did not respond to any of the antibiotics. When she was pregnant for the second time the

situation became worse and an Israeli doctor found that Miriam's kidneys did not grow larger than the size of ten-year-old kid. Every pregnancy was life-threatening. Her third pregnancy deteriorated her kidneys and Eva donated one of her kidneys to her sister.

A year after the surgery, Miriam developed cancerous polyps in the bladder. The doctors asked Eva to find out the drug injected with the help of Auschwitz files but there were no files found. Miriam died on 6 June 1993. Later, Eva received a phone call from a professor at Boston who requested her to visit Boston and narrate her experiences. He asked her if she could also bring a Nazi doctor with her. Eva was stunned at such a question. In 1992, she and her sister worked on a documentary along with a Nazi doctor called Munch. She traced him and invited him to Boston. He was unwilling to go but expressed his desire to meet Eva at his residence in Germany.

When Eva met Dr. Munch in 1993 and questioned him about the gas chamber deaths, he confessed, 'This is the nightmare that I lived with every single day of my life'. He witnessed the operations of the gas chamber from outside and saw many people dying in it. He was asked to sign a single death certificate with no names but only numbers of the victims who were dead. She asked him to come with her to Auschwitz in 1995 to commemorate the 50 years of liberation of the camp. She wanted him to sign a document which recorded his experiences of the death camp at the ruins of the gas chamber for which he readily agreed. The motive of Eva was to possess an original document signed by a Nazi doctor as a proof of the Holocaust.

The Gas chamber operation was finally documented. Eva wanted to thank the doctor but didn't know the perfect way to execute it. After ten months, an idea popped

into her head in the form of a letter. It was a letter of forgiveness from Eva to Dr. Munch, a letter from the victim to the perpetrator. She felt it would be a meaningful gift. It took four months for her to complete it. As she was poor in vocabulary, she sought help from her former English professor. The professor told Eva that her problem was not with Dr. Munch but with Dr. Mengele. However, Eva was not ready to forgive him. The professor requested her to go home and pretend that Mengele is in the room and tell him that she had forgiven him. The professor was curious to know how Eva felt after this act.

Eva went home, picked a dictionary and wrote twenty nasty words which she read aloud believing that Mengele was in the room and finally she told that she had forgiven him. She felt very much relieved after this. Dr. Munch and Eva travelled to Auschwitz with their families:

We arrived in Auschwitz in January 27, 1995. Dr. Munch came with his son, daughter, and granddaughter, and I came with my son Alex Kor, and my daughter, Rina. Dr. Munch signed his document. Then I read my own personal statement of forgiveness, and I signed it.

Immediately I felt that a burden of pain had been lifted from my shoulders, a pain I have lived with for fifty years: I was no longer a victim of Auschwitz, no longer a victim of my tragic past. I was free.
(Kor 133)

After Eva read her declaration of amnesty, the document was signed by both of them. She felt free from Auschwitz and from Mengele. Though other survivors denounced her for the act of forgiveness, for her it was an act of self-healing,

self-liberation, and self-empowerment. Her message to the victims who feel hopeless, powerless, and helpless is that we cannot change what happened but we can change the way in which we relate to it. This exhibits her power to live and forgive.

Like Sophie and Amabelle, Eva revisits the site of horror, Auschwitz, to relieve herself from the trauma of the Holocaust. She adopts forgiveness as a strategy to overcome her despair. Her letter of forgiveness also helps Dr. Munch to get over his nightmare. Eva's reflection on her life is a kind of testimonial process as she emerges out from a life of silence. This vital act of testimony not only helps her but it also leaves a striking and vivid example of liberation to forthcoming generations. Eva's shattered self is reconstructed by her survivor mission of carrying through the responsibility of bearing witness to the dead.

Danticat's message is that healing is possible for everyone. Her memoir *Brother, I'm Dying* helped her to come out of the terrible loss which she faced after the death of her uncle and father. In an interview with Renee H. Shea, Danticat states:

All my tears are on the page. I don't imagine myself crying at public readings-as I did, for example, for *The Farming of Bones*. Writing this was extremely healing. It was like visiting with my uncle and father. They're not dead to me because they are so alive in this book, through both good and bad times. (187)

This book helped her in coping up the loss. She managed to heal herself by writing this memoir.

Traumatic memories become a dominant motif in the Haitian experience. Danticat pictures the devastating effect of trauma on the psyche of her characters. Her

characters, no matter how wounded, are individuals of dignity and irreducible worth. The protagonists tackle death using love, surpass violence with the help of community, and ultimately heal themselves by their unyielding spirit.

Danticat's novels are marked by ardent lyricism, control of the craft, and seriousness of intention. Her narratives highlight the fact that healing is possible for all trauma survivors. Her works have a universal appeal as they aid mankind to conquer trauma and triumph in life. This thesis has sketched out the strategies and factors which prove to be remedial for psychic trauma.

The scope for further research includes mother-daughter relationships, father-daughter relationships, post-colonialism, and diasporic politics.