

Chapter I

Introduction

Literature is an art form having creative and rational value. It is derived from the Latin word *litteratura* which refers to all written accounts. In the contemporary sense, the word 'literature' extends to include texts in oral that are spoken or sung. It can be classified into categories such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama.

The genre chosen for this research is novel. It has a great influence on social patterns as it depicts the social, religious, cultural, and political factors. The English novel is a significant component of English literature. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is one of the earliest novels written in epistolary form. The story is based upon the experiences of Alexander Selkirk who had been marooned in the island of Juan Fernandez.

The American literary tradition began as a part of the broader tradition of English literature. William Brown's *Power of Sympathy* (1791) is considered to be one of the early American novels which advocate the moral education of women. It is a sentimental novel written in epistolary form.

The novels in Caribbean literature are realistic and reflect the fragmented psyche of its citizens who were subjected to brutish slavery and colonization. The wounded Caribbean sensibility caused by the frustrations and exploitation has been authentically expressed in fiction. Being a former European colony, the region is well known for slavery and sugarcane plantations.

The Caribbean Sea, its islands, and the surrounding coasts together constitute the Caribbean region. The Caribbean islands which include the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antilles, and Lucayan Archipelago are collectively known as West Indies. The Greater Antilles consists of the larger islands like Hispaniola shared by Haiti and Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands. The Lesser Antilles comprises of the Windward Islands, the Leeward Islands, and the Leeward Antilles. Lucayan Archipelago consists of the Bahamas, Turks, and Caicos Islands. The region is named after Caribs, the indigenous people of Lesser Antilles.

Like the various regions forming the body of the Caribbean, the languages are also multifarious. The official languages include Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Haitian Creole, and Papiamentu. Apart from the official languages there are various creoles used for informal conversations. Creole is a kind of vernacular language which developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the European plantation settlements during colonial times. It emerged as a result of contact between different groups that spoke diverse languages. The variegated languages spoken in the Caribbean aided in dividing the region into Anglophone (English-speaking), Francophone (French-speaking), Hispanic units (Spanish-speaking) etc., which offers rare to find comparative studies of literature and culture of the Caribbean basin.

The inhabitants of the Caribbean belong to different ethnic groups brought to the region as the result of indentured labour, so Caribbean literature lacks any pre-colonial native tradition to return to. Africans who worked on the land as slaves passed on a culture of orality which consisted of proverbs, riddles, and stories of

Africa. Ian Mackean in his book *the essentials of LITERATURE IN ENGLISH POST -1914* quotes the words of David Lichenstein:

“Caribbean possessed no indigenous tradition in writing . . . The first breakthrough in Caribbean literature came in French and Spanish islands in the works of Aime Cesaire of Martinique, Luis Pales Matos of Puerto Rico, Jacques Romain of Haiti, Nicolas Guillen of Cuba and Leon Damas of French Guyana.” (281)

Since the Caribbean is culturally fragmented owing to the colonization by several European powers such as Britain, France, and Spain, the writers had a choice between writing in Standard English and the local creoles of individual islands. Edward Kamau Brathwaite uses Creole in his poems as a decolonising gesture where as Derek Walcott uses Standard English with Creole inflections. Many novels which were written in the native languages had been translated into English. The works produced by the diaspora of this region is also termed as Caribbean literature. The inhabitants of this region often migrate to different countries owing to the socio-political conditions and the natural disasters. As Benitz Rojo envisions, “Caribbeaness will always remain beyond the horizon”(xi).

V.S. Naipaul (1932), born in Trinidad and settled in Britain, is a Nobel Prize winner for literature for the year 2001. His grandparents emigrated from India to Trinidad to work as farm labourers. His early career was marked by comic novels such as *The Mystic Masseur* (1955) set in Trinidad. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961) received an international acclaim. It chronicled how the Indians adapted to the rigours of the new world. Many critics compare him to

Joseph Conrad for his travel narratives. His first travelogue is *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies - British, French and Dutch in the West Indies and South America* (1962) sub-titled “The Caribbean Revisited”.

Jean Rhys (1918-1996) is a Caribbean novelist settled in England who is well known for her novel, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), written as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. It is a feminist novel which explores the inequality of power between men and women. The protagonist, Antoinette Cosway from Jamaica is married to an English gentleman. She is modelled upon Bertha, Rochester’s wife in *Jane Eyre*. While Bertha remains silent, Antoinette Cosway is given voice, thereby offering a surrogate narrative to that of madness. She reinterprets the fate of Antoinette by leaving the novel open-ended. A significant post-colonial response to an English classic is represented through this technique.

Jamaica Kincaid (1949) is an Antiguan-American novelist, short story writer, and an essayist. She is well-known for her autobiographical novels. Her debut short story collection *At the Bottom of the River* (1983) explores the family relations and the Caribbean childhood. Her novels *Annie John* (1985) and *The Autobiography of my Mother* (1996) deal with the themes of mother-daughter relationships, colonialism, and oppression.

Julia Alvarez (1950) is a Dominican-American poet, novelist, and essayist. Her novels *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (1991) and *In the Time of Butterflies* (1994) received an international acclaim. Her non-fiction work *Something to Declare* (1999) consists of twenty-four personal essays which

capture her life and mind as an artist. The Dominican Republic to which Alvarez belongs shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

Haiti is a part of French-Caribbean to have evolved a national literature. The population of Haiti consists of 90% blacks who were the slaves from Africa and 10% of mulatto elites (people of mixed race). The official language is French, but French Creole is spoken by the majority of people. French was considered to be a prestigious language and was spoken only by the elites. In 1969 Creole was recognized as the official language of Haiti along with French. Creole started to find its way in literature only after the second half of the 20th century.

After the Haitian independence in 1804, Creole was considered as the language of slavery. The Creolite movement started in 1980's by Caribbean writers such as Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabe, and Raphael Confiant helped to regain its lost recognition. Creolite is a neologism which attempts to describe the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of the Antilles. Creole is now used in songs, stories, poetry, and novels. Hence, it is a marker of collective memory and resistance.

Haiti is famous for its oral tradition and folklore. The inspiration for Haitian oral tradition came from African storytelling. The Vodou religion practiced in Haiti has also contributed many magical tales. This religion has its roots in Africa. Haitian Vodou is an amalgamation of African, Roman Catholic, and native Taino traditions. In a telephonic interview to *Art Beat*, Thomas Spear, a professor at the City University of New York and a scholar and reader of Haitian literature, observes that Haiti's literature is strong, vibrant and has a long tradition. When questioned about

Haiti's high illiteracy rate and the role of literature, he proclaims the importance of the oral tradition:

That sort of depends on how you define literature. Of course, there is very much an oral literature and there's many types of literature written, for example for the radio, radio plays. There's theatre, there is performance, there's often oral poetry, as I said, as people know poetry, out loud. But the idea of illiteracy is often given into, these horrible stereotypes, and much progress has been made. It's closer to a figure of perhaps 50 percent illiteracy in the country, compared to what people give. I think great progress has been made there, but you also have public libraries, such as a series of libraries of the FOKAL or the national library through the ministry of culture. Libraries exist and people do read and read voraciously when they can get their hands on books and they are very much shared, so it's not an illiterate culture, but it is also very much an oral, living literature. (Spear)

Haitian literature has close ties with the socio-political and cultural life of Haiti. Haitian history which is marked by many revolutions, upheavals, atrocities, and injustices is also a rich source of inspiration for the writers. These writers assume the role of defenders of the nation and black race in general. The dominant and most influential figure, in Haitian literature has been Jacques Roumain(1907-44), who was a mulatto elite. He was a poet, essayist, diplomat, politician, and a novelist. Though Roumain has several novels to his credit, his best work is *Gouverneurs de la Rosee* (*Masters of the Dew*) which deals with the theme of reconciliation. Jacques-Stephen Alexis(1922-61) is another important figure, whose

Les Arbres Musiciens (The Musical Trees) published in 1957 is a work of magical realism. His *Compere General Soleil (General Sun, My Brother)* published in 1955 is an account of peasant life in Haiti. He was murdered by the agents of Duvalier who ruled Haiti in 1960's.

Haiti which is widely known for poverty and repression has a powerful and neglected story of resistance. Haitians have played a huge role in changing the balance of political and social power, even as they have endured rampant and devastating state-sponsored violence which includes abuse, illegal arrest, disappearance, and assassination.

The Duvalier regime witnessed the mass migration of many Haitian writers. Post-migration, these writers engaged in a kind of rebellious writing which dealt mainly with memory, trauma, and guilt of being expatriates. Their works also reflected the brutal dictatorships, violence, vulnerability, and dispersal. Jean Metellus's *Louis Vortex* (1992) depicts the lives of the Haitian diaspora. Writers like Rene Depestre, Dany Laferriere, Jacques-Stephen Alexis, and Marie Vieux-Chauvet were forced to live in exile during the Duvalier dictatorship. They involved themselves in the indigenist movement which aimed to restore the culture from the changes that the American occupation and Duvalier dictatorship had bestowed on Haiti.

Josaphat-Robert Large (1942-2017) is a Haitian-American poet, novelist, and art critic. He won the Caribbean Literary Prize for his novel *Les Terres Entourees de Larmes (Shore Surrounded with Tears)* in 2003. He was a nominee for the Haitian

Grand Literary prize in 2004. He wrote in French and Haitian Creole. He was arrested in 1963 during a student protest opposing the rule of Duvalier and left Haiti.

Dimitry Elias Leger (1971) is a Haitian-American diasporic writer and humanitarian. He is best known for his novel *God Loves Haiti* (2015). Until the age of fourteen, he shuttled between New York City and Port-au-Prince and then he moved to the US. His writing has appeared in US newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Observer*. He became a United Nations advisor for its operations following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Michele-Jessica Fievre (1981) is a Haitian writer and educator who lives in US. At the age of sixteen she has written her first novel *Le Feu de la Vengeance* which is a mystery fiction. She has also written Young Adult novels. She edited the anthology *Ainsi Parla la Terre (So Spoke the Earth)* in 2001. She is secretary for Women Writers of Haitian Descent, an organization based in Florida. She has published stories in English and French in several American literary journals.

Marie Vieux-Chauvet (1916-1973) is a Haitian novelist, poet, and playwright. Her works center on class, race, women. Her works reflect Haiti's turmoil during the US occupation of Haiti and the Duvalier dictatorship. Her trilogy *Amour, Colère, Folie (Love, Anger, Madness)* was published in 1968. It was considered to be an attack on the Duvalier dictatorship. Her husband and daughters bought all the copies of the trilogy in Haiti and France as they were afraid of the aftermath consequences. She later moved to New York. Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat has written an introduction to Chauvet's *Love, Anger, Madness*. In an

interview to *World and Travel*, Danticat declares Chauvet as one of the significant writers of Haiti:

Marie Vieux-Chauvet is for me one of Haiti's iconic female writers. She wrote primarily during the Duvalier dictatorship and her personal story is a powerful story of the choices writers during that time were forced to make. Her book was printed and ready to go when the publication was stopped in France because it would put her family in Haiti in danger. So she really had to choose between the safety of her family and her book.

(“Edwidge Danticat on Haitian Literature”)

Edwidge Danticat grew up under the Duvalier dictatorship in 1960's. She was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on January 19, 1969. She is a Haitian-American diasporic writer who writes in English. Her writing, as Conde calls, is a kind of linguistic revolution in the traditionally francophone literature of Haiti, “Breaking away from French and Kreyol, Danticat, in Conde's opinion, creates a new language: that of the newly exiled Caribbean subject in the era of globalization” (Munro, “Inside Out” 8). She did her B.A. in French literature at Barnard College where her writing skills were honed. She then enrolled for the Masters degree in the Fine Arts program offered at Brown University. The idea for her Master's thesis came from a manuscript which she was working throughout her high school and college days. It was accepted for publication by Soho press and it turned out to be her first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*(1994).

The iconic figures of post-occupation Haitian writing such as Jacques Roumain, Jacques-Stephen Alexis, and Rene Depestre are cited as literary precursors of Edwidge Danticat. She is a trendsetter in Haitian literature as she writes in English instead of French. She states that her writing in English is a consequence of her migration to US. She also targets the global readership by writing in English.

Danticat's father, Andre, is from the mountains of Leogane and her mother, Rose, is from the city of Leogane in Haiti. They belonged to peasant class who migrated to the capital Port-au-Prince in search of better prospects. Her uncle Joseph was a Protestant minister and his support helped her family to lead a decent life. Many of her family members were Protestants while few among them were Baptists and Pentecosts. Hard work and honesty were their mottoes in life. Danticat's summer vacations in the mountains of Leogane made her more familiar with peasant and folk elements which found expressions in her works.

Danticat's father moved to New York when she was two years old and was followed by her mother. Danticat and her brother Bob were under the custody of her uncle Joseph. Joseph's father was a member of guerrilla force who fought against US forces that occupied Haiti in 1915-34. Joseph moved to Bel Air district of Port-au-Prince in 1947. He worked as a salesman and was a supporter of Daniel Fignole, the founder of *Mouvement Ouvriers Paysans*, the Labourers and Peasants Party. Fignole sought to end the plight of Haiti's poor masses by expunging the Haitian elite's economic and political dominance. In 1957, his sworn in ceremony was celebrated by the massive crowd who gathered around the national palace but the happiness lasted only for nineteen days after which he was overthrown by Papa Doc Duvalier. As Joseph's political aspirations were terminated in the Duvalier regime, he

joined a Baptist group which provided an outlet for his public spirit. He contributed to the construction of his own church in Bel Air and named as the Christian Church of Redemption.

Owing to delay in the formalities of US immigration, Danticat and her brother were separated from their parents for eight years. The family communicated through long letters, cassette tapes, and phone calls. In the meantime, her parents were blessed with two more children, Kelly and Karl. Though this separation was emotionally taxing for both of them, they were considered to be fortunate. Their uncle constantly reminded that the money her parents sent not only helped them with food, clothes, and school fees but a promising future.

Danticat's schooling started in Haiti at a private school called College Elliot Pierre where she was introduced to Haitian history. The students were supposed to memorize the important dates and facts of the Haitian Revolution. At this level, she accepted the official version of Haitian history which was later questioned in her works.

Danticat started to write when she was nine years old. Initially, she wrote for pleasure and later found out the fact that writing was a way of being and keeping well. The medium of education in Haiti was in French and her family spoke Creole. French, according to her, was the language of books and she was never comfortable in communicating in it. Though French was considered to be a sign of prestige among the elites, Danticat's family viewed it to be a symbol of class inequality. Her family did not belong to the elites but they were trained to behave like them by their uncle. Her cultural upbringing was influenced by storytelling and carnivals.

At the age of twelve, Danticat and her brother moved to New York to live with their parents. New York became an imaginary haven for the kids and they addressed it as the city on the hill. Danticat's dreams of New York were met with the harsh realities owing to their immigrant status. Her father worked in a textile factory and in a night car wash for minimum wages. He grew tiresome of these two jobs which deprived his sleep, so he used his family cab as a taxi to make money. Still, he tried hard to make both ends meet. Their family was denied medical insurance because of their immigrant status.

Language was another major problem faced by Danticat in US but this was solved by her association with the Haitian migrants. She was mocked by the fellow students at the secondary school in New York for her strong accented and imperfect English. At that time, Haitians in general were tagged as boat people who were accused for spreading AIDS.

Danticat's family lived on Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn, in a building named Westbury Court. Though she witnessed many murders and injustices against the immigrants, she never felt US to be an unsafe place. She became an introvert and indulged more in reading and writing. Her writings started to appear in the school newspaper. She was much comfortable outside the school as she remained to live with the Haitian community. Her affinity to this community is seen till date as she chose to live in Miami's Little Haiti after moving from New York. The bond she shared with the fellow Haitian immigrants helped her to consider herself as Haitian rather than an exile.

When Danticat began to consider writing as a full-time profession, she encountered many criticisms in her family as many of the Haitian writers were either killed or made to live in exile. According to them, writing was a very dangerous profession, so they wanted her to pursue some other career and let writing be a hobby. Danticat was drawn towards literature, particularly African-American and Haitian literature. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) was the first book she read in English. She also read classic Haitian writers like Jacques Roumain, Jacques-Stephen Alexis, and Marie Chauvet.

Danticat grew up among the family which consisted of storytellers who incorporated proverbs, riddles, and songs in their daily conversations. She wished to transform these stories into fictionalized accounts so that the stories of her aunts and grandmothers would be known universally. She did her B.A. in French literature at Barnard College where her writing skills were honed. After leaving Barnard, she enrolled in the Fine Arts Program offered at Brown University. She took up the idea for her thesis from a manuscript which she was working throughout her high school and college days. Though the thesis had autobiographical elements, it was more fictional. It was accepted for publication by Soho press and it turned out to be her first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994). It was later translated into Spanish, French, and Dutch.

Danticat's first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) had been selected by the Oprah Book Club in 1998. *BEM* is a realistic novel written in first person narrative. The novel seems to be semi-autobiographical because like Danticat, the protagonist Sophie was raised by her relatives as her mother Martine moved to US in search for a better life. It explores the centrality of mother-daughter relationships. Sophie's

relationship with her biological mother Martine and surrogate mother Atie are discussed in detail. The novel is a bildungsroman in that it fine points a young girl's coming of age. In an interview with Bonnie Lyons, Danticat revealed the reason for portraying a matriarchal family in *BEM* and the reason for choosing a rural backdrop for most part of the novel:

I wanted the book to have a matriarchal family. In my experience of rural life in Haiti, I had seen many matriarchal families. It was still the time of the Duvalier dictatorship when I was a girl in Haiti who spent her summer in provinces. A lot of men were away –in the city, in the neighbouring Dominican Republic working in cane fields, or working in other countries. However, the main reason for writing about a family like the Caco's, a matriarchal family, was that I wanted to explore a matriarchal family. Some people have said that I purposely excluded men; however, the way I see that it's like taking a photograph. You need to decide what you want to focus on from a larger landscape. I wanted to explore how a family of rural women passes things down through generations. Another thing I changed was location. Unlike Sophie, I grew up in the city and spent summers in the country. I wanted to explore a rural upbringing than an urban upbringing.

(Danticat 186)

Haiti is an agricultural country and 80% of Haitian population is rural. The Haitians who moved to cities always longed to go back to their rural backgrounds, so Danticat wished to set *BEM* in rural areas of Haiti. She was also interested in exploring the lineage of rural Haitian women.

Following the success of *BEM*, Danticat's short story collection *Krik? Krak!* (1995) was published. It became a National Book Award finalist. Danticat's fascination for Haitian storytelling traditions is the reason behind this work. In Haiti, *Krik?* is a request to tell a story, and eager listeners answer *Krak*. The collection contains nine stories and an epilogue. Many of the stories in *Krik? Krak!* was already published under different titles in *The Caribbean Writer*, a literary anthology published by the University of the Virgin Islands. Her poem "Sawfish Soup" (1991) was the first to find its way in the journal and it was one of her rarest attempts in the genre of poetry.

The stories in *KK* revolve around Haitian women who try to comprehend their associations to their families and to Haiti. Love, suffering, hope, and violence weave their way in the stories of *KK*, "The reappearance of thematic elements serves to bind narrative diversity in a literary form that remains fundamentally indebted to oral storytelling traditions"(Nesbit 75). The epilogue, "Women Like Us," suggests that these women are related. The epilogue's unnamed narrator notices her similarity to her mother and female ancestors. These women cook to pass on sorrow, while the narrator chooses to write. The narrator's female ancestors are united in death and she uses stories to keep their history alive. Haitian women like men have a natural flair for storytelling but they have restrictions to become professional writers. According to Danticat, the art of writing is not gender specific. In an interview with Bonnie Lyons, she observes as follows:

I don't connect writing with either gender particularly. When I was growing up, most of the writers I read were male. I don't think I read a single female writer until I came to the United States. So writing

almost I felt like it was a forbidden activity. Being poor and being female, it was unheard to write books. It was a double transgression. Using those metaphors, for me, wasn't a way of saying writing was natural for a female, but almost to impose these "female" metaphors and female-linked activities on what is often taken as a male territory. It's saying, as Paul Marshall did in an essay about "kitchen poetry," that yes, there is poetry in women's daily lives and activities. And that there are parallels between cooking a meal and writing, or quilting and writing, or braiding hair and writing. You don't have to go on a hunt or go to war to be a writer.

("An Interview with Edwidge Danticat" 192-193)

Daily chores of women have a touch of poetry in it as we could witness the links between cooking and writing, braiding and writing etc.

Paul Marshall's idea of 'kitchen poetry' is echoed in Danticat's *KK*. Paul Marshall in her essay on "From the Poets in the Kitchen" acknowledges that her writing was greatly influenced by the housewives who gathered around the kitchen table to talk about the variety of subjects in a passionate and poetical manner:

When people at readings and writers' conferences asked me who my major influences were, they are sometimes a little disappointed when I don't immediately name the usual literary giants. True, I am indebted to those writers, white and black, whom I read during my formative years and still read for instruction and pleasure. But they were preceded in my life by another set of giants whom I always

acknowledge before all others; the group of women around the table long ago-this is why the best of my work must be attributed to them; it stands as testimony to the rich legacy of language and culture they so freely passed on to me in the wordshop of the kitchen. (30)

Danticat's second novel *The Farming of Bones* was published in 1998. It is a historical fiction set in 1937. The massacre of Haitian cane workers in the Dominican Republic forms the core of the text. The inspiration for this novel comes from Danticat's predecessor Jaques-Stephen Alexis's *Compere General Soleil* (1955) and Rene Philoctete's *Le Peuple des Terres Melees*(1989). The protagonist, Amabelle Desir is a Haitian-born domestic worker who serves in the household of a rich Dominican family and her lover Sebastien is as a cane cutter. Though they both are from the same place, north of Haiti, they have met each other only in the Dominican Republic and fell in love. Amabelle witnesses the hardships that afflict the lives of her near and dear who are the cane cutters and the victims of the 1937 massacre. The helplessness of the Haitian migrants in protecting their life under the tyrannical rule of Raphel Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic is stated in detail. The inefficiency of Papa Vincent, the president of Haiti, to safeguard his citizens in the neighbouring land is also described.

Her third novel *The Dew Breaker* (2004) focuses on the life of a former torturer in Haiti who attempts to build a new life in the US. The title of the novel is derived from a Creole phrase meaning 'the torturer'. These torturers arrived at the homes of their victims at the break of day, just as the dew appeared on the leaves. The 'dew breaker' is a nickname for the *Tonton Macoutes* - a special operations unit within the Haitian paramilitary created by Francois Duvalier in 1957. The novel

encompasses the lives of both the victims and the victimizer. The fragmentation of family setup due to the socio-political atmosphere of Haiti is one of the major themes.

The narrative of *DB* is told in the form of several stories which overlap. In “The Book of the Dead”, Ka is the central figure. She sculpts a wooden statue of her father in a cracked wood. Ka and her father are on a trip in order to deliver the statue to a buyer. As the statue is a disturbance to Ka's father, he destroys it. “Seven”, dwells on the reunion of a couple after seven years in Brooklyn. They live together in a basement with two other men, Michael and Dany. The couple have their own secrets which they never share. In “Water Child”, the protagonist Nadine is the ex-girlfriend of the unnamed man- Eric, in “Seven”. The story is about her unborn, aborted child. Eric lives happily with his wife while the memory of Eric and the unborn child puts Nadine’s life to halt. “The Book of Miracles” chronicles the Christmas-Eve mass and Ka’s encounter with a man who resembles the Haitian criminal, Emmanuel Constant. It also features Anne's guilt of living with a murderer. In “Night Talkers”, Dany, one of the men in “Seven” travels back to Haiti where he meets Claude, a patricidal night talker. He reveals to his aunt that his landlord is the one who has killed his parents. He intends to kill the Dew Breaker but drops the plan for fear of killing a wrong person. “The Bridal Seamstress” is the story of the magazine intern Aline Cajuste and Beatrice Saint Forte, the bridal seamstress. She is the victim of Ka’s father in Haiti. “Monkey Tails” recounts the troubled political situation of the island. It features young Michel, one of the men from the basement. “The Funeral Singer” revolves around three Haitian women who try to get a diploma degree in US. One of the women Mariselle may have been a victim of Ka’s father, as her husband was shot leaving a show. The final story “The Dew Breaker” is set in Haiti. This story unites

the other stories and clarifies the story of Ka's father and his relationship with his wife. Anne's husband is also the murderer of her brother, the priest, which makes the situation epically poignant. The novel's message is that atonement and reparation is available for all.

Claire of the Sea Light (2013) is Danticat's fourth novel. It was initially a short story published in the anthology *Haiti Noir* edited by Danticat and later it was developed into a novel. Claire Limye Lanme Faustin is a seven-year-old girl who disappears in Ville Rose, a fictional town in Haiti. As Claire mother dies at childbirth, her father Nozias plans to give her away to a local shopkeeper Gaelle. When the residents of the town are in a hunt for her, each remembers a loved one they have lost. Threads of memory bind them. According to a review published in *the guardian*, "Danticat shows us a town scarred by violence, corruption, class disparities and social taboo, which is also a town of hope, dreams, love, and sensuality. But these are enmeshed rather than opposing elements. Love leads to violence, dreams lead to corruption" (Shamsie). The book appeared on 2013 best book lists of *Publishers Weekly* and *The Washington Post*.

Similar to that of *DB*, the narrative of *CSL* is also fragmented and told in interconnected stories. The novel is set in Ville Rose, a fictional town in Haiti. "The Frogs" is the story of Gaelle, a fabric vendor and her husband Laurent. Laurent sponsors programs in local radio station and is shot dead by the Gangsters. "Ghosts" exhibits the gang culture in Haiti. Bernard is a young man whose parents own a restaurant. Their customers are gang members. Tiye, a gang leader makes Bernard fall into the trap for the shooting at the radio station. Later, Bernard is murdered. "Home" is about Max Ardin Junior, a friend of Bernard. On his return to Ville Rose from U.S.,

he meets Flore, a former maid in his house whom he had impregnated. Haunted by the past and at his friend's death, he arrives at the beach and joins the search for Claire. "Star Fish" centers on Louise George, hostess of the radio program *Di Mwen*, Tell Me. Max Senior sleeps with her after his divorce and invites her to read to the students at his school- Ecole Ardin. Henry, a student of the school misbehaves in Lousie's class for which he is slapped by Lousie. Henry's mother Odile slaps her in return but Max. Senior never tries to defend her. The slap entirely cuts her off from him, making her stronger and free. "Anniversary" tells the story of Gaelle, the Fabric Vendor who avenges for her husband's death. She hires people to kill Bernard and Tiye. Her daughter Rose dies in an accident. Max Senior visits her at night but proves to be an inconsistent lover. On the death anniversary of her daughter, she encounters the man who hit her daughter. Grief-stricken Gaelle moves to the beach and informs Nozias that she is ready to take Claire. On hearing Gaelle's intention, Claire disappears. "Di Mwen" is a reality radio show which features the host Lousie. Flore is invited to the show where she reveals her story of being forcibly impregnated by Max.Jr and this serves as a chance for Louise to avenge Max. Senior. Max. Junior who wanted to prove that he was not a homosexual to his father, impregnated Flore. Nozias' love episode with his wife who worked at a funeral parlour is also narrated in this section. "Claire de Lune" is about Claire. She meets Madame Gaelle, who shares a memory of her mother. Claire starts to run, when she hears that Gaelle has come to take her away from her father. On reaching Anthere hill, she sees a group of men including Nozias and Gaelle trying to breathe life in to Max.Jr. Finally, she returns home.

Untwine (2015) is Danticat's fifth novel. Giselle Boyer and Isabelle Boyer are identical twins. Their parents were born in Haiti and settled in US. When they were considering divorce, a tragic accident changes their life forever. On their way to a concert where Isabelle is to play the flute, a van rams on their car leaving Isabelle dead. Giselle who is seriously injured wakes up in the hospital but she could neither move nor communicate. As her body becomes a kind of prison, she revisits her past to understand how her life was shaped by her near and dear. The family struggles to overcome the trauma bestowed on them owing to Isabelle's loss. Identity and coping up the trauma are the major themes in the novel. Left with two choices, recovery or eternal despair, Giselle chooses the path of recovery.

The society and human psyche are explored by Danticat in all her works wherein memory forms the thematic thread. Her texts refer to the past and history. A constant clash between memory and reality is found in all her novels. Her works are celebration of cultural traditions of Haiti, but at the same time she condemns the unmindful practices that hinder women's progress in the society. The cultural nationalism motivated by the US occupation appears to be a literary legacy to which she is deeply bound. She uses the folklore and ancestral wisdom as tools of resistance against neo-colonialism.

Danticat has written two children's novels, *Behind the Mountains* (2002) and *Anaconda, Golden Flower* (2005). *Behind the Mountains* is a first-person fiction narrated by Celiane Esperance who resolves to be reunited with her father living in New York. Danticat's experiences as a child immigrant are articulated through Celaine's story. *Anaconda, Golden Flower* is a story that takes place before 1492. Anaconda is the Taino queen who waits to be crowned as ruler of her part of Haiti. The

idea of Children's literature sprang up in Danticat when she wanted to give her daughters Mira and Leila something to read. She thus assumes the role of the storyteller which is a typical characteristic of Haitian women.

Danticat's non-fiction writings include a travelogue, *After the Dance: A walk through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti* (2002). It is an account of Danticat's travel to the carnival at Jacmel in southern Haiti in 2001. This book is a piece of history and autobiography. It presents the connectivity between the past and the present by dealing with the issues of identity, "the text's final section presents the traveler as others see her (i.e., belonging, but not belonging), rather than as she might like to perceive herself" (Forsdick 113).

Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work (2011) is a collection of essays in which Danticat reflects on art and exile. Being an immigrant, she analyses the fact of what it means to be an immigrant artist from a country in catastrophe. Inspired by Albert Camus' lecture, "Create Dangerously", Danticat unfolds the lives of artists, including who create despite the horrors that drove them from their homelands and that continue to haunt them. *Create Dangerously* is an eloquent and striking expression of Danticat's belief that immigrant artists are bound to bear witness when their homelands are tormented owing to violence, oppression, poverty, and calamity.

Brother, I'm Dying (2007), is a memoir by Danticat. She recounts the life of her uncle Joseph, her father, and the entire family till the birth of her daughter, Mira. The book is a kind of testimony, bearing witness for those whose lives were full of struggles. Similar to her other works; we could find the personal issues transforming

into the political. Owing to Haiti's turmoil, Joseph fled the country and tried to seek safety in Miami. Unfortunately, he was detained by the customs officials and eventually died in the prison. Shortly after her uncle's death, her father died of lung infection. Danticat acts as a chronicler who records her family's history in this book.

Danticat's non-fiction works help her to break the monotony of writing fictions and allows her to explore new genres. According to Danticat, writing fiction has helped with her non-fiction and vice versa. In spite of the story being available for nonfiction, it still demands hard work on the mode of telling it. Writing fiction after nonfiction helped to make her novels more realistic.

Danticat has won several prestigious awards which add to her literary credit. She is the winner of the 2018 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, Pushcart Short Story Prize for "Between the Pool and Gardenias", National Book Critics Circle Award in 2007 for *Brother, I'm Dying*, American Book Award in 1999 for *The Farming of Bones*, The Story Prize for *The Dew Breaker* in 2005.

Danticat is the editor of *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States*. This anthology is divided into four sections: Childhood, Migration, First Generation, and Returnee. The authors have written about their lives in Haiti and in US. It vividly pictures the complexity of being an immigrant.

'Home' becomes the central topic of discussion in diasporic writing as it is lost or left behind. Danticat, a writer from Haiti living outside the country brings her under the category of diasporic writers. Her novels deal with the plight of Haiti, its

people, and the diaspora. In an interview to *Meridians*, Danticat discloses her interest in writing fiction:

I love stories. I have always loved stories, ever since I was a little girl. I have always enjoyed listening to people telling stories, whether these stories were folktales or personal gossip. I was a nosy child . . . Adults were afraid to talk in front of me when I was a young girl because they knew I was relishing and loving every bit of information that came out of their mouths and they were suspicious of my curiosity, of my wanting to have a certain kind of information that they considered too “advanced” for me . . . So I guess it is that curiosity that eventually pushed me to write fiction, this desire to participate in, listen to, and share stories.

I write fiction because I love the way a story can stretch my imagination. It’s so much more exciting to imagine what could be than what actually is. Writing fiction gives you a feeling that you can change things, that you can effect their outcome, make people weak or strong, vile or noble. It also gives you deeper insight into truth . . . Someone can tell you a fact and you might remember it. However if they tell you a story you are more likely to remember the event through the story. Stories make events come alive. You can use a story to illustrate something in a manner that a fact cannot, and with fiction you can make up as many scenarios as you want to illustrate one thing, so you have more routes at your disposal. Something factual never

changes, but with fiction the means you have of illustrating your “truth” are endless. (Horn and Danticat 19)

The protagonists in most of Danticat’s novels are Haitian women as she wishes to tell their untold stories. In her essay “We Are Ugly But We Are Here”, she points out the absence of Haitian women in politics, culture, and media. They are actually made invisible by the political atmosphere of Haiti:

Watching news reports, it is often hard to tell whether there are real living and breathing women in conflict-stricken places like Haiti. The evening news broadcasts only allow a brief glimpse of presidential coups, rejected boat people, and sabotaged elections. The women’s stories never manage to make the front page. However, they do exist . . . We are part of an endless circle, the daughters of Anacona. We have stumbled, but have not fallen. We are ill-favored, but we still endure. Every once in a while, we must scream this as far as the wind can carry our voices: We are ugly, but we are here! And here to stay. (Danticat)

As Danticat’s novels are intertwined with the political life of Haiti, it is indispensable to discuss Haiti’s political history. It also provides significant insights for explicating the conflicts in her works. Haiti is located in the island of Hispaniola in the Greater Antilles archipelago of the Caribbean Sea. It is situated in the western part and occupies three-eighths of the island while the eastern part is occupied by the Dominican Republic. Haiti is one of the populous countries in the Caribbean. The original inhabitants of this region were Tainos, the indigenous people of the

Caribbean. It was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his first voyage across the Atlantic in 1492. Spain claimed the island and named it as *La Espanola* and ruled it until early seventeenth century. Slowly, the French made their settlements in the western third and named it Saint Domingue. The colonists established sugarcane plantations in the region and the slaves from Africa were brought to work in it.

Slavery is an important part of Haitian history as it has assisted in constructing black Haitian culture which is a reason for the problematic race ideals that affect Haitians till date. At the time of slavery, the individuals of whiter skin tone were given importance and blacks were neglected from the forum. Motivated by the French revolution in 1789, the slaves started to revolt against the colonists in 1791 which lasted till 1804. The revolution was led by the first black general of the French Army, Toussaint Louverture. After his death, Jean-Jacques Dessalines headed the revolt and declared Haiti's sovereignty. Slavery was abolished and Haiti became the first independent nation of Latin America and the Caribbean in 1804. Henri Christophe, a former slave, became the first king of Haiti. He built a huge Citadel to survive the foreign attack.

Saint Domingue was divided between the Kingdom of Haiti in the north, ruled by Henri and a republic in the south, headed by Alexandre Petion. President Jean-Pierre Boyer, the successor of Petion, united the two parts of Haiti and ruled the complete western portion of the island. After Santo Domingue declared its independence from Spain on 30 November 1821, Boyer sent forces to take control. Boyer ruled the entire island with the iron rule, ending slavery. Later Saint Domingue came to be known as Haiti.

In 1825, the French king Charles X sent a fleet to regain the control over the island. President Boyer agreed to a treaty by which France formally recognized the independence of the nation in exchange for a payment of 150 million francs. After losing the support of Haiti's elite, Boyer was ousted in 1843. A long succession of coups followed his departure to exile. The imposed payment to France reduced Haiti's economy for years and the western nations did not give Haiti a formal diplomatic recognition. Both of these problems kept the Haitian society isolated.

Haiti experienced a great political instability in the early decades of the twentieth century and was heavily in debt to France, Germany, and the US. Fearing possible foreign intervention, President Woodrow Wilson sent US Marines to Haiti in December 1914, just after the outbreak of World War I.

In 1915 Haiti's president Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was assassinated and the island was under the control of US for twenty years. The Marines had taken control of the capital city and all the finances of the island. A pro-American President, Philippe Sudre Dartiguenave came to power and a new constitution was framed which favoured the interests of US. This allowed foreign ownership of land in Haiti, which was opposed by the Haitian legislature and citizenry.

The US Marines started to torture and murder the locals. Many Haitians lost their lives at the hands of these forces. Finally, the Marines withdrew from Haiti as a result of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour Policy' in 1934. However, Haiti's elections and the economy were controlled by U.S. till 1980's. After the withdrawal of US forces in 1934, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo implemented anti-

Haitian policies. He ordered his men to murder the Haitians living on the border which was known as Parsley Massacre.

After a period of chaos and confusion, Dr. François Duvalier became the President of Haiti in 1957. He was popularly known as Papa Doc. He refused to hold new elections and his opponents were repressed by his militiamen, the *Tonton Macoutes*. The members of the militia were poor folks from urban and rural Haiti. He used them to threaten the civilians and his political opponents. He was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude Duvalier known as Baby Doc. He was equally atrocious and was ousted in 1986. He sought exile in France after a heavy protest. When the dictatorship was passed from father to son, the Haitian government willfully sent its people to work like slaves in the sugar plantations of the Dominican Republic.

General Henri Namphy became the head of a new National Governing Council. General elections were cancelled after dozens of inhabitants were shot in the capital by *Tonton Macoutes*. Fake elections were held. Leslie Manigat was elected as the president but was overthrown in a coup. General Prosper Avril led a military regime until March 1990.

In 1990, a former Catholic priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was elected as the President of Haiti. He had a great support of all the poor people of the nation. He gained an immense popularity and huge support for his daring speeches against the Duvaliers. A few months later, Aristide was overthrown by the military. In 1994, US negotiated the exit of Haiti's military leaders and the peaceful entry of US forces under Operation Uphold Democracy. This enabled the restoration of Aristide. He held

the office till 1996. Rene Preval was the next president until the year 2000. In 1994, Hurricane Gordon brushed Haiti, dumping heavy rain and creating flash floods that triggered mudslides. In the year 2000 Aristide was re-elected for the second term but the election was boycotted by the opposition which grew stronger over the next three years. Mass rallies were held by the supporters of Aristide in Bel Air and there were constant clashes between the two sides. In subsequent years, there was an increase in violence and human rights abuses.

Danticat revisited Haiti in 1994 for the first time after leaving in 1981 when Aristide was the President. She was taken aback to see the political turmoil which resulted in the destruction of towns like La Saline and City Soleil. Her uncle showed her a list of victims of political violence,

Most striking however, was the list of casualties of violence that her uncle Joseph had kept during the political troubles, and that he showed to her on her return, the hundreds of names reading like a litany of Haiti's decline, a memorial to the forgotten, expendable lives destroyed in the rush for power. (Munro, "Inside Out" 22)

The list was like a memorial to those whose existence otherwise would have been forgotten. Haiti's unrest had a great impact on Danticat and subsequently, it became the main topic of discussion in her novels.

In 2004, a revolt began in northern Haiti which eventually reached the capital, and Aristide was forced into exile. The United Nations Security council stationed peacekeepers in Haiti. The United Nations Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) was established after the 2004 coup. The political instability of Haiti and the brutal

regimes were the main source of despair to its citizens. Danticat pictures their trauma in her works.

Danticat's narratives offer a new formulation of gender, race, and class divisions by radically reconceptualizing the previous frameworks of the Caribbean writers. This helps the postcolonial studies to reconfigure the traditional ones. The issues of voice and voicelessness have become key factors to understand Caribbean women's writing. *Out of the Kumbla*, an anthology by Caribbean women writers, sheds light on the 'voicelessness' against which the women authors have to write. The voicelessness refers to the lack of their perspectives in the texts and also the silence, which is the inability to speak and be heard,

As Danticat's fiction exemplifies, rather than unproblematically linking voice and agency, or literary and social authority, contemporary Caribbean women authors attend to the complexities of "finding a voice" and "breaking the silence" in the context of the conflicting legacies of colonialism. (Mardorossian 41-42)

In the recent times, critics like Selwyn Cudjoe and Strong-Leek have observed that the Caribbean female writers have made a mark in the literary canons of US and Canada, where their works are received with remarkable acclaim and commendation. Indeed Danticat's novels are considered to be the best sellers and are taught in universities. In her interview with Bonnie Lyons, when questioned about the pressure faced by the minority writers to create positive role models, Danticat reveals the criticisms that she has encountered:

For me the question has been more how Haiti is represented in my work. People often ask me, “Why don’t you write about the good things. Why there is so much violence in your work?” Even with my new book, *After the Dance*, which is about a carnival in a southern town in Haiti, I start the book in a cemetery, so people will ask, “Why start in a cemetery? There is much negative press about Haiti, why would you want to write about a cemetery?” My answer is, “Because I like cemeteries.” But of course that is not enough. There is a larger responsibility, or so it’s perceived, for Haiti’s writers to only celebrate it and not talk about the sadness and pain that exists there.

(Danticat 191)

Hence her narratives demonstrate trauma to be an inevitable human experience.

The present study attempts to explore the novels of Edwidge Danticat in the light of sociological and psychological approaches. Sociology is the study of human society which includes social relationships, social interaction, and culture.

Sociological approach analyzes the literary work in accordance to the society of the particular time and place in which the work is framed. Therefore it is important to understand the social milieu and the manner in which the artist responds to it.

Psychology, on the other hand, deals with the unconscious. Psychological application to a literary work offers precise language to explain the creative process and it assumes that there is an important relationship between the artist and the art.

Psychological critics examine the art and understand the unconscious drives of the artist. Psychology also helps in analysing the inner mind of the fictional characters.

The main aim of the thesis is to explicate how social, cultural, and political elements serve to be the agents in creating trauma in the lives of the protagonists. It attempts to study the impact of the traumatic past and its memories on their psyche. It also highlights the solutions suggested by Danticat to overcome trauma with reference to the novels, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, *The Farming of Bones*, *The Dew Breaker*, *Claire of the Sea Light*, and *Untwine*.

The hypothesis of the thesis is that if the strategies adopted by the characters of Danticat help them to overcome trauma after the psychological devastation and move ahead in life, then it is possible for anyone who suffered a victimized past to lead a successful life using these techniques. Thus mankind in future will benefit from this study.

The methodology of this research includes sociological and psychological approaches to analyze the novels of Danticat. As trauma becomes the main focus of this study, A dual representation theory of posttraumatic stress disorder is used to analyze the traumatic memories. *MLA Handbook for Writers Research Papers: Seventh Edition* is followed.

The literary survey comprises of *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide* (2010) edited by Martin Munro, *Allegories of Desire: Body, Nation and Empire in Modern Caribbean Literature by Women* (2004) by M.M. Adjarian, *Theories of Personality* (1989) by Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, and *Trauma : Explorations in Memory* (1995) edited by Cathy Caruth, *Sociology: A brief Introduction* (2011) by Richard T. Schaefer, and *Political Sociology* (2005) edited by Satyabrata Chakraborty.

The journals and research articles referred for this study include

Journal of Haitian studies: A special issue on Edwidge Danticat (2001) published for the Haitian Studies Association by The Center for Black Studies UCSB, “Writing Disaster: Trauma, Memory, and History” in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* (2006) by Martin Munro, “Landscape, Memory and Survival in the Fiction of Edwidge Danticat” (2008) by Elvira Pulitano, and “Traumatic Realism in the Fiction of Edwidge Danticat”(2005) by Cherie Meacham.

The dissertations consulted are *The Trauma of Black Haitian Womanhood in Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory* (2016) by Marianna Eerinen, *Probing the Wound: Re-membering the Traumatic Landscape of Caribbean Literary Histories*(2003) by Kim Dismont Robinson, and *Cartographic Memories and Geographies of Pain: Bodily Representations in Caribbean Women’s Art* (2006) by Belinda Deneen Wallace.

The second chapter of the thesis focuses on the social, cultural, and political determinants and policies in US and Haiti which result in the trauma of the protagonists. Since the traumatic past and its memories have an immense effect on their psyche, they suffer Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The third chapter analyses the traumatic memories using A dual representation theory of posttraumatic stress disorder framed by Brewin. The fourth chapter focuses on the strategies and factors which proved helpful to recover from trauma. Hence the source of trauma, its effects on the characters’ psyche, and strategies adopted to negotiate and overcome it are discussed in detail. The last chapter sums up the findings of the study and it concludes with the case study of a real-life trauma survivor.