

Chapter III

The Magnitude of Traumatic Memories

Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers in order to recount it.

-Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Living to Tell the Tale*

When Psychology emerged as an autonomous scientific discipline in Germany during the middle of the nineteenth century, it defined its goal as the analysis of consciousness in a normal human being. It conceived of consciousness made up of structural elements that were closely correlated with processes in the sense organs but this theory was refuted by many researchers stating that the characteristics of the conscious mind are its active processes and not its passive ones, “Sensing and not sensations, thinking and not ideas, imagining and not images- these processes, it was asserted should be the principal subject matter of the science of psychology” (Hall and Lindzey 31).

Sigmund Freud attacked the traditional notions of psychology by comparing the human mind to an iceberg in which the smaller part which is visible above the surface of the water represents the region of consciousness while the larger mass beneath the water represents the unconscious. This vast area of unconscious becomes the repository of passions, the repressed ideas, and feelings which exercise the control over the conscious thoughts and deeds of the individual.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the father of psychoanalysis was born in Moravia. As a neurologist by profession, he began to work in a psychiatry clinic in

the Vienna General Hospital. Psychiatry at this time did not focus on the psychological components of mental health instead it viewed human behavior in terms of anatomy of brain.

Freud improved his skills under a famous French psychiatrist Jean Martin Charcot and was attracted by the hypnosis methods adopted by him. Though Freud initially focused his study on hypnosis as a therapeutic tool, he later found it to be inadequate for therapy and concluded that talking was a way of releasing pent-up feelings. He encouraged his patients to voice their thoughts freely which was termed as 'psychoanalysis'.

Psychoanalysis aims to cure the mental disorders, "The classic method of doing this is to get the patient to talk freely, in such a way that the repressed fears and conflicts which are causing the problems are brought into the conscious mind and openly faced, rather than remaining 'buried' in the unconscious"(Barry 92). Freud's major works in this field of are *The Interpretation of dreams* (1900) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). Later, along with his colleague Breuer, he started to explore the traumatic events in the life of his clients who suffered from hysteria and began to indulge in scientific exploration and observation of the human psyche.

Freud had a strong belief that there is a cause for every thought, revived memory, feeling, and action. He stated that the thought process in the human mind is not random but a continuous thing. He believed in the existence of definite cause for a thought and it could be either a conscious or an unconscious intention associated with events that happened before it. According to Freud, the human mind centers upon

three structures – the id, the ego and the superego. The id forms the unconscious which is the repository of repressed thoughts, traumatic memories, and fundamental drives of sex and aggression which is responsible for neuroses or mental illness. The ego comprises of the conscious perceptions and thoughts that help people to tackle the real-life events. The basic distinction between the id and the ego is that the id knows only the subjective reality of the mind whereas ego distinguishes between things in the mind and things in the external world. The superego attempts to mediate the drives of the id through socially acceptable behaviours. It represents the ideal rather than the real and it strives for perfection than pleasure.

Joseph Breuer used the method called catharsis or ‘talking cure’ which consisted of the patient relating the details of the first appearance of each of the symptoms, following which the symptoms disappeared. Out of this, Freud developed his free-association method which made the patients voice out whatever comes to their conscious. Unlike the ‘talking cure’ method, the free association did not stop with the origin of the symptoms; it demanded the patients talk about everything that occurs in their mind even if it was not a meaningful discourse. The role of the therapist to a certain extent was a passive one as they had to sit and listen until they finished talking. They encourage the patients by occasionally asking questions without disturbing the verbal flow. Under such circumstances, Freud noted that the patients started to talk about memories of their early life which provided him with his first real insight into the formation of the personality structure.

The method of analysing dreams is also linked to free association. Freud’s patients spontaneously recalled their dreams and then proceeded to give free associations to them. He understood the fact that these dreams and the accompanying

free associations were rich in information which revealed the dynamics of human personality. From this Freud formulated the theory which stated that dream is an expression of the most primitive workings and contents of the human mind, which was published in his seminal work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). He termed the primitive process which created the dream as the primary process. It attempts to fulfil a wish or discharge a tension by inducing the image of the desired goal.

When Freud formulated his theory of psychoanalysis, physicians from all over the world associated with him and formed a society to publish research papers and journals on psychoanalysis. This movement started to gain momentum when a group of disciples like Carl Gustav Jung of Zurich, Alfred Adler of Vienna, Sandor Ferenczi of Budapest, Karl Abraham of Berlin, and Ernest Jones of England joined him.

Carl Jung, a young psychiatrist from Zurich was very much impressed by Freud's ideas after he read, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. After he met Freud in Vienna, Freud believed that Jung was to be his successor in his research endeavours. Both the luminaries defined the world of psychology. When the international psychoanalytic association was founded in 1910, Jung became its president. As the therapeutic value of Freud's method is limited and had methodological irregularities, Jung withdrew from the Freudian circle and developed rival viewpoints. He refuted Freud's theory which stated sexuality as a behavioural force and also felt that Freud's concept of the unconscious was much restricted. Jung adapted his own theory of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy which was known as analytical psychology.

In 1912, Jung's magnum opus "Psychology of the Unconscious" was published. It was considered to be the founder text in the field of Analytical

Psychology. Jung divided the human psyche into three parts; the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. The ego is the conscious mind which is made up of conscious perceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings. The personal unconscious consists of experiences that were once conscious but have been repressed or ignored and the collective unconscious is the most powerful and influential system of the psyche. The collective unconscious is the storehouse of latent memory traces inherited from one's ancestral past, a past that includes not only the racial history of humans as a separate species but their pre-human or animal ancestry as well:

The collective unconscious is the psychic residue of human evolutionary development, a residue that accumulates as a consequence of repeated experiences over many generations. It is almost entirely detached from anything personal in the life of an individual and it is seemingly universal. All human beings have more or less the same collective unconscious. (Hall and Lindzey 119)

When Freud believed that the content of dreams was sexual, Jung focused on the symbolic imagery of the dreams and stated that dreams could have multiple meanings which relates to the dreamer's associations. Jung believed in the retrospective nature of dreams and also in its ability to anticipate future events. While Freud's focus was primarily on the external and objective aspects of a person's dream, Jung concentrated on both the objective and subjective contents.

Although Freud and Jung framed contradictory theories, their discoveries had led to the development of successful psychological treatments for mental ailments.

They defined the unconscious and stated the importance of dreams in understanding problems. Their theories play a pivotal role in psychotherapeutic approaches of today.

Trauma has been the central concept in the Psychology of the present day. Psychic trauma deals with extreme personal suffering. It is the rigorous emotional shock caused by an extremely distressing experience or a life-threatening event. The increase in violence all over the world had received more attention which led to the growth of professional research in this field. But the researchers face many hurdles as they try to understand the nature of suffering and find the ways to cure the victims, without eliminating the force and truth of reality. Trauma affects the psyche of a person and alters his personality.

Trauma begins when the disastrous event is already over. So the ability to remember and reflect contributes more to the individual's distress. Trauma is not bound to the place or time of origin of the event as the victims experience it irrespective of the place and time. The belated effect of trauma bestows an ultimate shock in an individual. The magnitude of this shock when recalled is higher when compared to the time of the original event. Cathy Caruth in "Trauma and Experience: Introduction" details on the impact of trauma on the psyche of an individual:

Trauma is not experienced as a mere repression or defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic reexperiencing of the event thus *carries with it* what Dori Laub calls the "collapse of witnessing," the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it. And by carrying

that impossibility of knowing out of the empirical event itself, trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, *of impossibility*.(10)

The trauma victims hesitate to consciously process trauma as it would be painful but still the event becomes unconsciously repetitive against their will.

The traditional Freudian notion states that trauma is a result of unfulfilled fantasy but later Freud was startled to see the returning traumatic dream as it could not be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning. The event literally returns against the will of the individual. Cathy Caruth in “Trauma and Experience: Introduction” explains the literality of these dreams, “Indeed, modern analysts as well have remarked on the surprising *literality* and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely literal” (5). Thus the traumatized carry an untold and impossible history within them.

As trauma threatens the safety of day to day life and ruptures the confidence of the individual, trauma sufferers may have ongoing problems with relationships and self-esteem or they might develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that may develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which severe physical harm occurred or was threatened. In “Trauma and Experience: Introduction”, Cathy Caruth states the general definition of posttraumatic stress disorder given by American Psychiatric Association:

“There is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with

numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event.” (4)

Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, deaths, natural or unnatural disasters, accidents, or military combat. Many people with PTSD tend to re-experience the ordeal that set the disease in motion, especially when they are exposed to events or objects reminiscent of the trauma. People who have suffered childhood abuse or other previous traumatic experiences are more likely to develop the disorder. And people who experience emotional distancing may be more prone to PTSD. Though the causes for PTSD are innumerable, the common cause for trauma is sexual violence and war. In “Who Develops Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?” Emily J. Ozer and Daniel S. Weiss explains the various causes for PTSD:

The response to traumatic stress varies widely, ranging from transient disruption of functioning to the -chronic clinical condition known as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Interest in and knowledge about PTSD increased dramatically after its diagnosis was formalized in 1980, but study of the effects of extreme stress has a long history, primarily focused on the effects of war (e.g., shell shock in World War I) and of sexual assault against women. According to generally accepted criteria, diagnosis of PTSD requires exposure to a traumatic event that causes feelings of extreme fear, horror, or helplessness. Traumatic events are defined as experiences that involve death, serious injury, or threat of death. The consequences of this exposure are manifested in three symptom clusters required for

diagnosis: involuntary reexperiencing of the trauma (e.g., nightmares, intrusive thoughts), avoidance of reminders and numbing of responsiveness (e.g., not being able to have loving feelings), and increased arousal (e.g., difficulty sleeping or concentrating, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response). (169)

Hence trauma affects the psyche of a person. It is brought on by the memory of the conflict.

To be traumatized is to be haunted by an image or event. Even if the memory of the traumatic incident is lost from the consciousness, it still stays in the subconscious and finds expression in the form of nightmares and intrusive thoughts. The dreams which occur in such a state repeatedly place the individual back into the same situation from which they wake up in another fright. Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart in “The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma” argues that though most of the memories are malleable by constant reworking and recategorization, there are few memories which are fixed in time, “Yet some memories are fixed in the mind and are not altered by the passage of time, or the intervention of subsequent reexperience. In our studies on post-traumatic nightmares, trauma scenes were reexperienced at night over and over again without modification”(172).

Memory plays a pivotal role in trauma theories. Memory is the ability to recall or remember information or events in the past. This is carried out through three distinct processes such as encoding, storage, and retrieval. Encoding is a process of receiving sensory input and transforming it into a form, or code, which can be stored;

storage is a process of actually putting coded information into memory; and retrieval is the process of gaining access to stored information when it is needed.

Memory can be classified into short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM). Short-term memory is also known as working memory. As the capacity of this memory is small, much information stored here is lost because it is displaced by incoming items of information. Long-term memory stores large amounts of information over a long period of time.

Two types of information are stored in: semantic and episodic. Semantic memory involves the abstract knowledge and meaning of words, symbols, ideas and rules for relating them. Episodic memory records an individual's past experiences and episodes of one's daily life. It consists of long-term memories of specific things that happened to us at particular times and places. Thus episodic memories are memories of episodes which have a biographical reference. These memories have a greater impact on the human mind. Jonathan Foster in his book, *Memory: A Very Short Introduction*, details on the function of memory and the way it projects itself on later events, "Memory is far more than simply bringing to mind information encountered at some previous time. Whenever the experience of some past event influences someone at a later time, the influence of the previous experience is a reflection of memory for the past event" (3).

Trauma is universal and it is omnipresent in Danticat's narratives. She pictures the psychic fragmentation in her characters owing to their traumatic past. In all her works, the traces of the past become inevitable in the present. The trauma inflicted by the memories has a strong impact on the psyche of Danticat's characters, as a result,

they suffer Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Traumatic Memories act as a destroyer of life by keeping them intertwined with the past conflicts. In an interview to *Pittsburgh Courier*, she reveals the way she used to depict her characters, ““I love building characters,” she said. “I draw from their emotional spaces, from the memories of sadness. I love investing in the character”” (“Courier Q and A”).

A dual representation theory of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was framed by Chris R. Brewin and his colleagues. Brewin is a professor of clinical psychology at the University College in London. According to this theory, trauma is an experience which threatens the health or well-being of the individual. Just as physical trauma may extend from minor abrasions to severe tissue damage, there is no implication that psychological trauma must involve an event outside the ordinary range of human experience, although it may do so.

Trauma generally involves a violation of basic assumptions connected with survival as a member of a social group. These include assumptions about personal invulnerability from death or disease, status in a social hierarchy, the ability to meet internal moral standards, and achieve major life goals, the continued availability and reliability of attachment figures, and the existence of an orderly relation between actions and outcomes. The types of events likely to violate these assumptions will frequently involve indications that the world is uncontrollable or unpredictable, including major illness or disability; physical or sexual assault; social humiliation; transgression of one’s own moral code; loss of employment; divorce and separation; bereavement; and involvement in actual or potential accidents, conflict, and natural disasters. Where such assumptions have already been violated, events that confirm the violation may also be traumatic.

Dual representation theory states that traumas experienced after early childhood give rise to two sorts of memories: Situationally Accessible Memories (SAMs) and Verbally Accessible Memories (VAMs). The sensory input is subject to both conscious and nonconscious information processing. The characteristics of nonconscious processing permit far more detailed and extensive computations than does conscious processing, which is limited by its slowness, serial nature, and our inability to hold more than a small amount of information in memory at one time. Hence Brewin suggested that from the outset there will be more than one type of representation of an experience of single or repeated trauma.

One representation or set of representations will be of the person's conscious experience of the trauma. Brewin termed this as verbally accessible memories because they can be deliberately retrieved from the store of autobiographical experiences. These memories, although they are likely to be reasonably detailed, may be highly selective because anxiety increases attentional selectivity and decreases short-term memory capacity.

The output of the more extensive nonconscious processing of the traumatic situation will form a second representation that cannot be deliberately accessed. Brewin termed this situationally accessible memories because the representations may be accessed automatically when the person is in a context in which the physical features or meaning are similar to those of the traumatic situation.

The features of the traumatic incidents like sounds, smells, and sights are retained in SAMs which is similar to episodic memory. When individuals reflect upon this information consciously, trying to understand these features and details, the

ensuing insights are retained in another system, called verbally accessible memory, more or less akin to semantic memory.

Situationally accessible memories are non-verbal as they are not processed linguistically and information received is accompanied by a strong emotional response and bodily sensations. There is a perceived here-and-now threat and it is stuck in time. The perceptions and emotions remain the same at the time of the incident. The survivors tend to dissociate from the event out of fear of reliving it again and to avoid negative moods. The details of the event are retained in SAMs in the form of sensory information and spatial images. The information cannot be deliberately accessed by the individual.

Cues or stimuli in the environment which are associated with the traumatic event activate the contents of SAMs, thereby making the information accessible. This is apparent in the characters of *Danticat*. Place became a negotiator of memory in *BEM*. For Martine, a visit to Haiti was like returning to the scene of rape. Martine struggled because of the sleepless nights at La Nouvelle Dame Marie in Haiti, “Whenever I’m there, I feel like I sleep with ghosts. The first night I was there, I woke up pounding at my stomach”(BEM 192). Martine hesitated to go to Haiti because her nightmares became more violent:

“I have to go back to make final arrangements for your grandmother’s resting place. I want to see her before she dies, but I don’t want to stay there for more than three or four days. I know that sounds bad, but that is the only way I can do it. There are ghosts there that I can’t face, things that are still very painful for me.” (76)

Food served as a reminder of past to Sophie. She stopped cooking Haitian dishes after her marriage as it reminded her of her life with her mother, “I usually ate random concoctions: frozen dinners, samples from global cookbooks, food that was easy to put together and brought me no pain. No memories of past that at times was cherished and others despised” (151). She neither wished to cherish the good memories nor liked to remember the days she spent with her mother in Brooklyn.

In *FB*, the smell of parsley started to haunt Amabelle when Odette and Wilner rescued her. When Wilner’s hand touched Amabelle’s forehead, she could sense the smell of parsley, “The hand he lay on my forehead when he stopped smelled of parsley. Odette’s clothes smelled of parsley. I closed my eyes and entered a darkness of parsley”(FB 197). Similarly, Yves could not tolerate the smell of cane, the taste of parsley, and the sound of Spanish as it reminded him of the massacre:

The slaughter had affected him in certain special ways: he detested the smell of sugarcane (except the way it disappeared in rum) and loathed the taste of parsley; he could not swim in rivers; the sound of Spanish being-spoken-even by Haitians-made his eyes widen, his breath quicken, his face cloud with terror, his lips unable to part one from the other and speak. (273)

In *DB*, Anne stopped going to the sea after her brother’s drowning, “She had gone nowhere near the sea since her brother had disappeared; her heart raced even when she happened upon images of waves on television” (*DB* 71). Thus traumatic memory is induced under specific conditions. It occurs repeatedly in situations which is reminiscent of the actual traumatic circumstances.

Situational Accessible Memories are characterized by visual intrusions, nightmares, numbness, dissociation, restlessness, and hypervigilance. These clinical symptoms of PTSD are exhibited by Danticat's characters.

The memories that are associated with PTSD appear rapidly and spontaneously, often intruding into consciousness with high frequency. In many cases, these intrusive memories consist of images accompanied by high levels of physiological arousal and are experienced as reenactments of the original trauma. The characters like Yves Moulin and Anne suffer intrusive memories.

In *CSL*, Gaelle's daughter, Rose was hit by a car which was driven by Yves Moulin, a luminary soccer player in the youth soccer league in Ville Rose. His future in the game came to a close after the accident as he was unable to forget it. He started to visualize Rose flying in the air, whenever he kicked the ball:

Before the accident, Yves Moulin had been a star in the youth soccer league in Ville Rose and everyone thought that he'd be recruited by a team in Europe. But after the accident he gave up playing altogether and stayed mostly in the private residence at the hotel. People said that he was unable to get the image of her daughter out of his mind, of her daughter's body taking off from the back of the motorcycle and seeming to fly. They speculated that he couldn't separate this image from that of kicking a soccer ball. The ball too was flying. And it was his foot that was refusing to let it rest on the ground. (*CSL* 156)

Anne is one among the traumatized in *DB*. Her life in Haiti was determined by many awful incidents. She lost her brother and her parents when she was young. As a

result, she had an aversion towards the cemeteries. It reminded her of her losses. On the way to the mass, her family crossed a cemetery which made her to relive the moment of her brother's drowning in Haiti:

Whenever she went by a cemetery, any cemetery, she imagined him there, his tiny wet body bent over the tombstones, his ash-coloured eyes surveying the letters, trying to find his name. The cemetery was on both sides of them now, the headstones glistening in the evening light. She held her breath the way she imagined her brother did before the weight of the sea collapsed his small lungs and he was forced to surrender to water, sinking into a world of starfishes, sea turtles, weeds, and sharks. (*DB 71*)

Thus the intrusive memories make the survivor feel that the traumatic event is happening in the present. They are vivid and the person becomes involved in the entire experience.

The next significant symptom of PTSD is nightmare. They are dreams that are violent and frightening. The patients who suffer PTSD experience chronic nightmares. It is one of the ways in which people re-experience trauma after the event. Martine, Sophie, Amabelle, Dany, and Dew Breaker are haunted by nightmares of the past traumatic incidents.

The trauma of sexual violence on Haitian women transmitted through generations is the main focus of Danticat's *BEM*. Sophie was haunted by the memories of testing and her mother Martine was obsessed with memories of rape. The memories of rape resulted in nightmares. Martine was raped at the age of sixteen by a

masked *Macoute* in the cane fields of Haiti. The rape not only left her with a child-Sophie, but also evoked constant nightmares in her. She emigrated to US after Sophie's birth and worked hard to earn a living. Sophie who joined her at the age of twelve and was taken aback to see her mother's struggle with the nightmares:

Later that night, I heard the same voice screaming as though someone was trying to kill her. I rushed over, but my mother was alone thrashing the sheets. I shook her finally and woke her up. When she saw me, she quickly covered her face with her hands and turned away . . . "It is the night," she said. "Sometimes, I see horrible visions in my sleep." (*BEM* 45)

Sophie became Martine's saviour by waking her up during the nightmares but at the same time she made Martine more terrified as her face echoed the face of the rapist. Martine never wholly revealed the incident to Sophie, "The details are too much," she said." "But it happened like this. A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me in to a cane field, and put you in my body"(59). It was commonly believed in Haiti that, "A child out of wedlock always looks like its father" (59). As Sophie bore no resemblance with Martine, it was apparent that she looked like her rapist father:

Whenever my mother was home, I would stay up all night just waiting for her to have a nightmare. Shortly after she fell asleep, I would hear her screaming for someone to leave her alone. I would run over and shake her as she thrashed about. Her reaction was always the same. When she saw my face, she looked more frightened.

“*Jesus Marie Joseph.*” She would cover her eyes with her hands.
 Sophie, you’ve saved my life.” (79)

The nightmares which haunted Martine after rape affected her sanity. She became insane after the rape and post-delivery she committed several suicidal attempts as the nightmares were too real, “For months she was afraid that he would creep out of the night and kill her in sleep. She was terrified that he would come and tear out the child growing inside her. At night, she tore her sheets and bit pieces of her own flesh when she had nightmares”(138). But these attempts proved to be unsuccessful.

Martine’s pregnancy made her nightmares worse and she desperately needed to abort the child, “The nightmares. I thought they would fade with age, but no, it’s like getting raped every night. I can’t keep this baby”(193). Sophie understood her mother’s anxiety as she had witnessed the concentration of Martine’s nightmares:

I knew the intensity of 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 finger off, ripped her nightgown, or threw herself out of a window.
 (195-196)

Incapable to disconnect herself from the moment of rape, Martine never distinguished between the past and present. Her present was shaped by Marc, her lover and Sophie remained a living memory of her past, “My mother now had two

lives: Marc belonged to her present life, I was a living memory from the past” (53).

Her life was unstable due to this conflict:

Martine has lost the ability to make a distinction between past and present. This is in sync with theories that have explained how “trauma is not simply a horrific event, but [that] misaligns our perception of time,” . . . 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.

(Rosello 121)

Pregnancy is a phase considered to be cherished by the women but Martine’s trauma became intense in both her pregnancies. As the baby started to grow the nightmares which she witnessed only at night take a different turn and trouble her all the time, ““You know what happens now. I look at every man and I see him” “Marc?” “*Non non,*” she whispered. “Him. *Le violeur,* the rapist, I see him everywhere””(202). Her second conception left her more anxious, as she heard the rapist voice from the baby, “Last night when I heard it speak to me.” “It has a man’s voice, so now I know it’s not a girl”. “Everywhere I go, I hear it. I hear him saying things to me. You *tenten, malpwop.* He calls me filthy whore. I never want to see this child’s face”(221).

The burden of inheritance was seen in Sophie as Martine’s nightmares reflected in her. Sophie’s stay at her mother’s house influenced her psychologically, so she too in her dreams, witnessed a masked man raping a young girl in the cane fields. This proved the troubling influence of human beings on one another:

After Joseph and I got married, all through the first year I had suicidal thoughts. Some nights I woke up in a cold sweat wondering if my mother's anxiety was somehow hereditary or if it was something that I had "caught" from living with her. Her nightmares had somehow become my own, so much so that I would wake up some mornings wondering if we hadn't both spent the night dreaming about same thing: a man with no face, pounding a life into a helpless young girl.

(196)

Sophie is doubly victimized as Martine passed the trauma of rape onto Sophie by the process of testing. Martine's psychic instability made her inflict the same pain on her daughter,

As insanity is slowly creeping into Martine's mind the boundary between reality and phantasm seemed to merge gradually. Instead of attempting to bridge the emotional gap between her and her daughter, she proceeds to revisit the past and oddly inflicts on Sophie the same pain and suffering she experienced at the hand of rapist.

(Christophe 100)

Testing built up a phobia for sex in Sophie and she felt ashamed of her body. She used the technique of 'doubling' for diversion when Joseph made love to her. Here again doubling helped her only for a short span of time. Unable to continue the relationship with Joseph, she returned to Haiti. To discover the reason behind this Haitian tradition, Sophie enquired to Grandma Ife the reason for testing her daughters. Ife stated that it was a mother's duty to safeguard her daughter's purity until marriage.

Memories of testing resulted in a strained marital relationship. Sophie revealed to her grandmother that testing was the sole reason for leaving Joseph, “I hated the tests,” I said. “It is the most horrible thing that ever happened to me. When my husband is with me now, it gives me such nightmares that I have to bite my tongue to do it again.”(BEM 156). Grandmother Ife suggested that patience would help her in fading away the pain, “Now you have a child of your own. You must know that everything a mother does, she does, she does for her child's own good. You cannot always carry the pain. You must liberate yourself” (156).

Sophie viewed her body as the site of shame. Her return to her husband made her feel both happy and painful. She understood that her life would be incomplete without Joseph and Bridgette, yet she remained unhappy at Joseph’s house, “I went to the living room and crashed on the sofa. It suddenly occurred to me that I was surrounded by my own life, my own four walls, my own husband and child. Here I was *Sophie-maitresse de la maison*. Not a guest or visiting daughter, but the mother and sometimes, more painfully, the wife”(198-199). She enjoyed her role as a mother but became terrified to fulfill her duty as a wife. Sophie’s reunion with Joseph continued with doubling. She reassured herself that every night when Joseph made love to her, she would visit her mother and woke her up during her nightmares. She felt happy as it would be a chance to console her mother by the process of doubling:

He reached over and pulled my body towards his. I closed my eyes and thought of the *Marasas*, the *doubling*. I was lying there on that bed and my clothes were being peeled off my body, but really I was somewhere else. Finally as an adult, I had a chance to console my mother. I was holding her and fighting off that man, keeping those images out of her

head. I was telling her that it was all right . . . I would visit her every night in my doubling and, from my place as a shadow on the wall, I would look after her and wake her up as soon as the nightmares started, just like I did when I was home. (203)

Haitian Mothers' obsession with their daughters' chastity could be compared to the virginity cult. Martine's obsession with the tradition made her test Sophie. She performed a compulsive repetition of violence on her daughter which can be construed as ritualistic rape. Sophie enquired to Martine the reason behind her testing and found out the fact that Martine herself was a victim of this ritualistic practice, "I did it, she said 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 by being raped was that it made the testing stop. The testing and rape I live both everyday" (173). The traumas keep repeating themselves as the women pass it on to their daughters in the name of safeguarding their purity. Sophie's return to Haiti and her confrontation with the reality of her Haitian heritage made her remember a tale which detailed on the virginity cult:

There was once an extremely a rich man who married a poor black girl. He had chosen her out of hundreds of prettier girls because she was untouched. For the wedding night, he bought her the whitest sheets and nightgowns he could possibly find. For himself, he bought a can of thick goat milk in which he planned to sprinkle a drop of her hymen blood to drink.

Then came their wedding night. The girl did not bleed. The man had his honor and his reputation to defend. (154-55)

Unable to make the bride bleed, the groom used a knife to cut her. He got enough blood to drench the sheets and an unusual amount to impress the neighbours.

Excessive bleeding resulted in the girl's death. Her husband wanted to display the blood-soaked sheets at her funeral to show that she had been a virgin on her wedding night and at her grave, he drank the blood-spotted goat milk. In this tale, there is no consideration for the young girl who is killed to satisfy the man's honour. This proves that Haitian women had no control over their bodies. Remembering the tale transported Sophie back to the traumatic event of testing. As the act of testing sealed the bond shared by mother and daughter, Martine desperately wanted to reconcile with Sophie, "I want to be your friend, your very very good friend, because you saved my life many times when you woke me up from those nightmares"(173).

The sexual assaults on women categorized them as weak and vulnerable. Sophie and Martine underwent a parallel journey of pain imposed by the social, cultural, and political setup of Haiti. Martine, a victim of rape, strived hard to come to terms with her own body while Sophie rallied against the intolerable customs. Mother and daughter became the subjects of violence and proved to be tortured souls who attempted to emancipate themselves, in the journey to become complete.

The endurance of Haitian women went unrewarded as their lives became hollow. Martine and Atie never lived happy lives because of testing. Like Sophie, Atie hated testing and she used to scream like a pig at the slaughterhouse. Her life was devastated by two great betrayals: her lover married another woman and her friend,

Lousie left for Miami without bidding goodbye. Her life became meaningless as she was unable to find a match. She got addicted to alcohol to forget her worries, “they train you to find a husband,” she said. “They poke at your panties in the middle of the night, to see if you are still a whole. They listen when you pee, to find out if you’re peeing too loud. If you pee loud, it means you’ve got big spaces between your legs . . . Then still you have nothing.”(135). Likewise, Martine could not lead a happy life with her lover Marc as the memories of rape tortured her. Neither of the sisters achieved the womanhood for which they were groomed.

Martine’s attempts to retrieve her body through abortion resulted in vain. Her struggle to destroy her second child vividly pictured her efforts to destroy the memories. She had stabbed herself seventeen times with an old rusty knife and informed the ambulance men that she was unable to carry the child in her. Her repeated stabs represent the assault on her attacker. It was her attempt to destroy the rapist’s body, which had become inseparable from her own:

The nightmare made her an uncertain personality, “Nightmares are a dimension where the distinction between Martine’s body and self disappears, which reduces her to an ambiguous human state where present and past are fused destructively” (Rosello 123).

Martine nightmares culminated in her suicide. The way she ended her life explains the intensity of trauma she had underwent.

In *FB*, Amabelle repeatedly witnessed the nightmares of her parents drowning in the Massacre river. Her lover, Sebastien strived hard to put an end to her nightmares, “His name is Sebastien Onius. He comes most nights to put an end to my

nightmare, the one I have all the time, of my parents drowning. While my body is struggling to sleep, fighting itself to awaken, he whispers for me to “lie still I take you back”” (*FB 1*). Like Sophie who was Martine’s savior in *BEM*, Sebastien became Amabelle’s rescuer.

In the beginning of the novel, Amabelle recalls her childhood preoccupation of playing with her shadow. Her father warned her against this as he felt it could lead to nightmares like “seeing voices twirl in a hurricane of rainbow colors and hearing the odd shapes of things rise up and speak to define themselves” (4). His words came true as she was constantly tormented by the nightmares. Amabelle was disturbed by the nightmares of her parents drowning. As her thoughts were focussed on her past, she existed in a detached state. Her disengagement from the present exhibited her traumatised sensibility, “It’s either be in a nightmare or be nowhere at all. Or otherwise simply float inside these remembrances, grieving for who I was, and even more for what I’ve become. But all this when he’s not there” (2).

Amabelle’s dreams were centred around her parents and the sugar woman, “If I mumble to him in my sleep, it is either about my parents or the sugar woman”(133). The sugar woman is a folkloric figure used by Danticat who seemed to be Amabelle’s reflection. The sugar woman revealed to Amabelle that she was her eternity. Like Amabelle who did not exhibit her true self owing to her trauma, the sugar woman also hid her face under a shiny silver muzzle. For Amabelle’s question, ‘Is your face underneath this?’, the sugar woman replied in the voice of the orphaned child at the stream. This proved that the sugar woman was none other than Amabelle. Her traumatized sensibility was reflected in the figure of sugar woman as both had to hide their true selves, thereby existing in an orphaned state.

The sugar woman appeared to Amabelle with chains on her ankles, “Around her face, she wears a shiny silver muzzle, and on her neck there is a collar with a clasped lock dangling from it” (132). Amabelle asked her why she wore the mask and the woman replied, ““This?” She taps her fingers against the muzzle. “Given to me a long time ago, this was, so I’d not eat the sugarcane””(132). The collar and chains suggest her enslaved status. The sugar woman symbolically represents the collective trauma of the cane workers.

The long nights symbolized the dead season for Amabelle. After the massacre her dreams were centred on the testimony of the slaughter which was never addressed, “I dream all the time of returning to give my testimony to the river, the waterfall, the justice of the peace, even to the Generalissimo himself (264)”. The freely structured dream sequences along with the primary plot suggest the disrupted memory of the traumatized person. The very opening lines of the novel, “His name is Sebastien Onius”(1), suggests her idea of bearing witness to the massacre. In mass massacres and genocides the lives become very insignificant as the people who die are identified in numbers rather than by their names:

What constitutes the outrage of Holocaust- the very essence of erasure and annihilation-is not much death in itself, as the more obscene fact that *death itself does not make any difference*, the fact that death is radically *indifferent*: everyone is levelled off, people die as numbers, not as proper names, to testify is to engage, precisely, in the process of *redefining one’s own proper name, one’s signature*. (Felman 53)

Amabelle visualized her own death when she thought about the death of those who were dear to her, “ Only when Mimi and Sebastien were taken did I realize that the river of blood might come to my doorstep, that it had always been in my house, that it is in all our houses (*FB* 265)”. Finally, she became aware of the disaster approaching her.

Amabelle’s trauma was multilayered. She was unable to forget her mother’s hands which were raised at the time of drowning as she was unsure whether it invited her to join them or stay at the same place. She also endured the survivor’s guilt- the guilt of being survived while the others were massacred. Her escape from Trujillo’s genocide made her feel the weight of the survivor’s guilt. She never had a clear picture of Sebastien’s death. Her personal past infused with the political aggravated her trauma. In the process of saving herself being shot in the river she suffocated Odette, “I must have been standing over her body for several hours. Wherever I go, I will always be standing over her body” (205). Amabelle’s envisioned herself as an executioner which aggravated her trauma.

Unlike Martine and Amabelle, the nightmares of Ka’s father in *DB* were the result of what he had done to others. He was a Haitian prison guard who tortured and killed the innocent people, “And those nightmares you were always having, what were they?” “Of what I,” he says, “your father, did to others”(*DB* 23). Here, the torturer himself became the instrument of suffering as he was caught in the mesh of traumatic memories, “My father has had partial frontal dentures since he fell of his and my mother’s bed and landed on his face ten years ago when he was having one of his prison nightmares”(4). The novel captures the melancholy in the lives of both the torturer and the tortured.

Dew breaker's revelations of his past made Ka see him in a new light, "Ka, I don't deserve a statue," he says again, this time much more slowly, "not a whole one at least. You see, Ka, your father was the hunter, he was not the prey"(20). The mark on his face was created by a prisoner whom he tortured, "It was one of the prisoners inside the prison who cut my face in this way," he says . . . "This man who cut my face," he continues, "I shot and killed him, like I killed many people"(21-22). His life transformed after marriage and he declared to Ka that he would never commit such things in future, " Ka, no matter what, I'm still your father, still your mother's husband. I would never do these things now"(24).

Ka and her mother defined her father's present. They appeared to be the masks against his face, shielding and protecting him, though no amends can be made for his past deeds. Ka's father had an inborn ability to decode the permanent markers of the ancient Egyptians through their crypts but he never wanted anyone to unearth his secrets in such a way except for Ka and her mother who were his guardian angels,

He taught himself to appreciate the enormous weight of permanent markers by learning about the ancient Egyptians. He had gotten to know them, through their crypts and monuments, in a way that he wanted no one to know him, no one except my mother and me, we, who are now his kas , his good angels, his masks against his own face. (34)

Ka understood the intensity of her father's nightmares. He lived a life of guilt, concealment, and hypocrisy. His past could never be cherished as it was layered with the blood of innocent lives, "I imagine my father's nightmares. Maybe he dreams of

dipping his hands in the sand on a beach in his own country and finding that what he comes up with is a fistful of blood”(30). The father-daughter relationship became strained when she came to know that he had been a member of Duvalier’s secret police. Ka bore the burden of her father’s legacy as a Duvalierist *Macoute*. Her involuntary bond with her father’s past became evident when she scratched her face in the same way as her father used to rub the scar on his face “out of strange reflux, I scratch my face on the same spot”(32). The weight of the past and redemption are the major themes in *DB*. The novel focused on the connection between the past and the present, “Most importantly, the story is about how to represent the troubling ambiguities of this past, which reaches beyond the opposition of victim and torturer, father and daughter, past and present”(Dash 29).

In *DB*, the family disintegration becomes a motif throughout the novel, which was linked to Ka’s father and the system he was involved. Dany who lived at the basement of the Dew Breaker’s house travelled back to Haiti and revealed to his aunt that his landlord was the one who had killed his parents, ““ I found him in New York, the man who killed Papa and Manman and took your sight””(DB 97). His Aunt Esteme died without giving him the answers to his parents murder. She had convinced him that revenge is not worthwhile. After witnessing the death of his parents Dany and his aunt became *palannits*, night talkers. Dany was troubled by the memories of his parents’ death, “Lately what was taking up the most space in his mind was not the way his parents had lived but the way they had died” (99). Dany intended to kill the Dew Breaker, but dropped the plan for fear of killing a wrong person. He also confronted the possibility of the cyclical nature of violence that continually disrupted the lives of Haitians, so he chose to put an end to it.

Thus the nightmares experienced by Martine, Sophie, Amabelle, Dany, and Dew Breaker induced a feeling of anxiety and terror in them. These characters remain tied to their past, in spite of all their efforts to transcend it.

Dissociation is another symptom of PTSD. It is a learned response to prolonged or repeated trauma. Trauma survivors find it very hard to bond with others so they prefer to stay aloof, “To describe people as traumatized is to say that they have withdrawn into a kind of protective envelope, a place of mute, aching loneliness, in which the traumatic experience is treated as a solitary burden that needs to be expunged by acts of denial and resistance” (Erikson 186).

Amabelle and Yves could never bond with the Haitian community after the massacre. They found no solace even after returning to Haiti. Though Haiti was the homeland for the exiles, the survivors of the slaughter suffered a sense of detachment, “Persons who survive severe disasters . . . often come to feel estranged from the rest of humanity and gather into groups with others of like mind. They are not drawn together by feelings of affection . . . but by shared set of perspectives and rhythms and moods that derive from the sense of being apart” (Erikson 194). Their failure to record the testimonies continuously haunted them and as a result they remained alienated from others. The priests who initially recorded these testimonies withdrew from the act as it was psychologically overtaxing. These terrible stories were taking them to the traumatizing abyss so they stopped hearing it:

The exiles find themselves nominally and physically in their “homeland,” but psychologically they inhabit a completely different space, as Haiti is unable to accommodate their experience. With no one

to address their testimonies to-apart from themselves-they form, without being conscious of it, a subgroup of the wider Haitian population, so that, in a very real way, they remain in exile, despite apparently being “at home”. (Munro, “Writing Disaster” 89)

The burden of the Massacre river crippled Amabelle, so she began to sink with the memories of her dear and near whom she had lost: her parents, Wilner, Odette, Sebastien, and Mimi, “I hear the weight of the river all the time. It creaks beneath the voices, like a wooden platform under a ton of mountain rocks. The river, it opens up to swallow all who step in it, men women and children alike, as if they had bellies full of stones”(FB 266). The water which had separated Amabelle from her dear ones became the veil which separated the living and the dead, “Heaven-my heaven- is the veil of water that stands between my parents and me. To step across it and then come out is what makes me alive. Odette and Wilner not coming out of it is what makes them dead (265)”. In Haiti, water is closely associated with spirits and ancestors, “Water metaphors recur throughout *The Farming of Bones*. Their connotations can be traced, once again, to Haitian Africanisms perceiving water as a “gateway” separating the world of the living from that of the dead; hence water’s close connection with the spirits and the ancestors”(Gonzalez 57). Having been tormented psychologically, Amabelle was desperate to lay down the burden of slaughter in a place, such that it never tortured her:

The slaughter is the only thing that is mine enough to pass on. All I want to do is find a place to lay it down now and again, a safe nest where it will either be scattered by the winds, nor remain forever

buried beneath the sod. I just need to lay it down sometimes. Even in the rare silence of the night, with no faces around. (*FB* 266)

When Amabelle came to know that Man Denise, Sebastien's mother, had left Haiti, she felt bad for not sharing more memories of her children with her. At the same time, she felt that few things cannot be shared, "I wish I could have done more for her. But some sorrows were simply too individual to share"(252). The life of a common man like Sebastien vanished like smoke while men in power were remembered for generations. Unsure of her lover's fate, Amabelle's dream testimony was aimed at validating Sebastien's existence:

This past is more like flesh than air; our stories testimonials like the ones never heard by the justice of the peace or the Generalissimo himself.

His name is Sebastien Onius and his story is like a fish with no tail, a dress with no hem, a drop with no fall, a body in the sunlight with no shadow.

His absence is my shadow; his breath my dreams. New dreams see waste, needless annoyances, too much to crowd into tiny space that remains.

Still I think I want to find new manners of filling up my head, new visions for an old life, waterless rivers to cross and real waterfall caves to slip into over a hundred times each day. (281)

Amabelle felt that it is her duty to leave a record such that the dead and forgotten ones will remain in the communal memory. As the testimony takes place only in her dreams, she remained in a detached and voiceless state

In *DB*, Dew Breaker and Anne lived a life of isolation. The fear of being identified for his previous crimes, never allowed Ka's father to mingle with others. To the people who questioned him about his whereabouts in Haiti, he gave different answers. He never spoke the truth, to ensure his family's safety:

Mr. Fonteneau asks my father where he is from in Haiti, and my father lies. In the past, I thought he always said he was from a different province each time because he'd really lived in all of those places, but I realize now that he says this to reduce the possibility of anyone identifying him, even through thirty-seven years and a thinning head of widow-peaked salt -and -pepper hair shield him from the threat of immediate recognition. (*DB* 28)

Anne never discussed her losses with her family which exhibited her traumatic state, "Her daughter knew she reacted strongly to cemeteries, but Anne had never told her why, since her daughter had already concluded early in life that this, like many unexplained aspects of her parents' life was connected to "some event that happened in Haiti"'(72). Past remained a mystery to Ka as her parents never revealed about their life in Haiti. The silence that surfaced in the mother-daughter relationship was mostly borne from the secret she and her husband had kept from Ka for years, "Because of the secret they constantly live between two worlds, measuring the past

against the present in fear that their secrets from the past will come to inhabit the present”(Michelle and Charles 66).

The Christmas-Eve mass and Ka’s encounter with a man who resembled the Haitian criminal, Emmanuel Constant, brought to light Anne’s own guilt and fear of living a lie. Though Ka’s father was not a famous torturer like that of Emmanuel Constant, he still lived in the memories of his victims, “He hadn’t been a famous “dew breaker”, or torturer, anyway, just one of hundreds who had done their jobs so well that their victims were never able to speak of them again”(DB 77). The ruthless acts of Ka’s father had bestowed a life of long-lasting despair on his victims. The book documents the memories of Haitians who suffered the vindictive rule of dictatorships.

The suppression of guilt and pain damaged Anne in several ways. She remained disconnected and failed to have a good relationship even with her daughter. Her past kept her eternally trapped. She was crippled by guilt and the fear of being detected by the victims of her husband forced her to live an estranged life. Ka’s father too was alienated from both his Haitian and his American identities. Neither place offered him the possibility of redemption. Hence, he took shelter in the Egyptian civilization. Ka explains her father’s admiration for the Egyptians, “My father loves museums. When he’s not working at his barbershop, he’s often at Brooklyn Museum. The ancient Egyptian rooms are his favourites” (12). Ka’s parents’ seclusion forbade them to mingle with people, so they were unable to reconstruct their lives.

Similar to Ka’s parents, Nadine is another character in *DB* who remained in a dissociative state. The fragmentation of families is expanded to include secondary

plots which include Nadine's story and her relationship with Eric. Nadine the ex-girlfriend of Eric works as a nurse in a hospital. She seemed to be a lonely figure who suffered an abortion on her boy friend's request. The memory of the unborn child troubled her. She erected a shrine for the child in her apartment. While Eric concealed his past and lived happily with his wife, the memory of Eric and the aborted child had put Nadine's life to halt.

Though Nadine was successful in her career as a nurse in a New York hospital, her victory was something hollow. The sacrifices her parents made for her immigration did not help her to lead a happy life in US. The weight of her seclusion and her responsibility to repay her parents tormented her. Remaining isolated from the Haitian community, her sorrows were never communicated. She worked among people who were unable to speak. Her life was marked by silences, responses of guilt, of hopelessness, and of trauma. Her inability to convey her abortion to her parents made her mute. When she finally spoke to her parents, she lied. It was apt for her profession in the surgical ENT wing of a New York hospital, as she was one of the few who knew what it feels like for the laryngectomy patient to wake with no voice. Despite her loss, she was very empathetic to Mrs. Hinds, a patient who reacted violently to her speechlessness. Nadine could understand Hinds' pain of remaining voiceless as she too remained in a voiceless state. But Nadine's detachment is a result of the trauma she suffered after her abortion. She feared that her voice would expose her sorrow so she hesitated to talk to her parents, "Rendered voiceless by the trauma of her recent abortion and her need to keep the loss secret from her parents, Nadine does not speak to her parents, . . . (Murphy 11)". Her ailed parents were in need of her money, at the same time, they wanted her to interact with them and lead a happy

life. But her disconnections made her no longer recognize her own reflection in the closed elevator door:

The elevator door closed behind them sharply, leaving Nadine alone, facing a distorted reflection of herself in the wide, shiny metal surface. Had she carried to full term, her child, would likely have been born today, or yesterday, or tomorrow, probably sometime this week, but this month of certain.

She thought this for only a moment, then of her parents, of Eric, of the pebble in the water glass in her bedroom at home, all of them belonging to the widened, unrecognizable woman staring back at her from the closed elevator doors. (*DB 68*)

Nadine's seclusion is too intense to be surmounted. Her unwillingness to have a lively life in the US signals her inability to mingle neither with Haitians nor Haitian-Americans. Like Nadine, there are many characters who are alienated owing to their exile of immigration. They are cut off from the community which would lend them a helping hand at the time of need. They are marooned as migrants in the new land. Unfortunately, many of the characters in the novel are so damaged as to be incapable of overcoming their trauma and isolation. They should have maintained a balance between the culture left behind and the new culture which requires hybridity. Alienation and isolation proved disastrous and prevented the immigrants from the full benefit of their privileged state.

Emotional numbing is yet another symptom of PTSD. It appears to be a pre-programmed response that is not under conscious control. Trauma survivors

experience a sense of numbness. Amabelle's world without Sebastien was incomplete, so she yearned for a mundane life which had no meaning in itself, "All I wanted was a routine, a series of sterile acts that I could perform without dedication or effort, a life where everything was constantly the same, where every day passed exactly like the one before" (*FB* 262).

Similarly, in the novel *Untwine*, Giselle too found herself to be a changed person who was devoid of any kind of feeling after her sister's demise. She was unable to forget the moments with Isabelle. They were born holding hands. They were each other's strongest source of support. Their lives were intertwined in such a manner that without one the other would be incomplete. They remained inseparable until the accident:

I was used to living two lives at once, sometimes carrying around in my head both Isabelle's memories and mine, both her dreams and mine. Sometimes I said "I" even when talking about the two of us, and I said "we" when I meant just me. I sometimes tasted what she was eating, especially when it was something with strawberries, which I don't like. The same thing happened to her, too. She hated onions, which I some-times ate just to annoy her. But I don't remember ever seeing such a blinding star with her before. (29)

Isabelle was Giselle's saviour whenever she was in danger. She strongly believed that Isabelle would also have the same feelings like her as they were *Marasas*, "Our lives began with one cell. We are almost the same person"(41). At the hospital, she was mistaken for the dead Isabelle but this mistaken identity pleased her

as everyone believed that Isabelle was still alive, “And hearing Aunt Leslie call me by my sister’s name is now comforting me. As long as everyone thinks that Isabelle is me, then Isabelle is also getting better. She is still here, in this room, in this world”(50). The trauma she suffered made her secluded. She could neither sense the love that she had towards Jean Michel nor could establish the same kind of friendship with Tina:

Jean Michel and I don’t act the same way around each other anymore. He is less flirtatious with me now, a lot more cautious. Maybe he’s responding to the ways I have changed, the way I can’t even imagine being playful, or even being fully myself, with him or anybody else. Things haven’t been the same with Tina, either. How can they be? With Isabelle gone, I have no right to do the same things Tina does, to go on with my life just like it was before.(244)

Likewise, Gaelle’s reminiscence of her husband’s murder shunned her from leading a normal life. She could neither stay in the town nor flee away from it as she had too many memories associated with it, “There were too many memories in this town to bind her and make her want to flee at the same time . . . Her pain, her losses: these were what was keeping her in the town” (153-154). She got the help of two special forces policemen to kill Bernard and Tiye. Though she avenged for her husband’s murder, she was unable to find the inner peace:

She had not felt the kind of relief she’d expected when she’d heard all this. She hadn’t thought that the deaths would bring her husband back, but she’d expected a hole to feel plugged that never was . . . A few

high-level friendships had made her judge, jury, and executioner. Yet she felt powerless, incapacitated, cursed. (146)

Gaelle started to live a life of confinement after childbirth. She was able to move only when her child moved, “Gaelle got out of her bed only when she could no longer keep her daughter in it, when the child began to crawl. And when her daughter started to walk, Gaelle walked again. And when Rose began to talk, Gaelle talked again” (*CSL* 144). Gaelle’s life was defined by her daughter after her husband’s death. Her daughter’s demise was yet another blow. It created a vacuum in Gaelle’s life and made it meaningless

The protagonists like Amabelle, Gaelle, and Giselle experience emotional numbing; hence they have a lack of feeling towards the day today events. They feel a sense of emptiness and do not find any kind of pleasure in life.

Dual representation theory of PTSD also fine points the arousal symptoms, such as the startle response and hypervigilance which are common in trauma victims. In *DB*, Beatrice, the bridal seamstress, is a living portrait of a realistic torture survivor. Though she was successful in her career, she had a constant fear over life as she believed that Ka’s father would hurt her again. Her fear resulted in the increased anxiety. Aline was taken aback by the intensity of Beatrice’s trauma. Her interview with Beatrice took a different turn when she came to know about the Dew Breakers. Beatrice pointed at the house of a Haitian prison guard, Ka’s father, and showed her whipped feet to Aline, “Aline had never imagined that people like Beatrice existed, men and woman whose tremendous agonies filled every blank space in their lives.

Maybe there were hundreds, even thousands, of people like this, men and women chasing fragments of themselves lost to others . . .” (*DB* 137-138).

Intrigued by Beatrice’s story, Aline checked the house and informed Beatrice that it was empty. Beatrice replied that these empty houses were his hideouts which helped him not to be spotted by anyone. She thought that he was always able to find her, wherever she moved. Aline concluded that the woman’s agony over what she suffered had left her mentally unbalanced. Freda too demonstrated an excessive fear by twisting her doll’s neck and filling her notebook with faces, “After my father was gone, I twisted the doll’s neck night after night. During the day, I crowded the pages in my notebook with more tiny faces, to keep me company in case my mother also disappeared”(178). The fear of abandonment in Freda increased her anxiety.

Another hallmark characteristic of PTSD is the alternation between reexperiencing and avoiding trauma-related memories. Like remembering, forgetting is one of the main aspects of trauma, “Indeed, the vivid and precise return of the event appears, as modern researchers point out, to be accompanied by an amnesia for the past, a fact striking enough to be referred to by several major writers as a paradox” (Caruth 152). According to Dual representation theory, amnesia is a kind of protective reaction against the traumatic memories. Father Romain’s amnesia was the result of the trauma he experienced after the massacre. After his release from Dominican prison, he lost his ability to recognize people, “Father Romain’s amnesic sensibility is the most extreme case of traumatized memory in the novel” (Munro, “Writing Disaster” 87). He continued to mutter the words, which he was forced to speak in Dominican prison:

Our motherland is Spain; theirs is darkest Africa, you understand?
 They once came here only to cut sugarcane, but now there are more of
 them than there will ever be cane to cut, you understand? Our problem
 is of one dominion. Tell me, does anyone like to have their house
 flooded with visitors, to the point that the visitors replace their own
 children? How can a country be ours if we are in smaller numbers than
 the outsiders? Those of us who love our country are taking measures to
 keep it our own. (*FB* 260)

Father Romain's memory became unstable as trauma had a drastic impact on his
 consciousness.

Thus the memories of the traumatic events in the characters like Martine,
 Sophie, Amabelle, Yves Moulin, Dany, Nadine, Freda, Gaelle, Anne, Dew Breaker,
 Giselle, and Father Romain remained situationally accessible. These memories tend to
 be highly detailed and repetitive that are difficult to edit. They are accompanied by
 emotional and physiological changes experienced during the traumatic event.

Martine was unable to process her trauma of rape linguistically as she was
 fearful of reliving the incident once again. She told Sophie "The details are too
 much," (*BEM* 59). She concealed her encounters during her pregnancy to Marc. This
 made her psychologically depressed. If she had described it to Sophie or to her lover
 Marc she could have put an end to her psychological fears. Instead, she attempted to
 escape her past and nightmares through her death. Her suicide represents the end of
 her plight. Sophie tried her best to take her to a therapist but at last her efforts were in
 vain as Martine committed suicide. Though Martine and Sophie demonstrated a

gallant courage in their battle against the impact of abuse, Martine was unable to process her trauma in a healthy way. Her fear to discuss her problems and attend the therapeutic classes never allowed her to become free.

Other than Sophie, Atie, and Martine who belonged to Caco family, there were also other female victims in the novel like Sophie's friends Buki and Davina who were haunted by traumatizing memories. Buki's sexual organs were cut and sewed up by her grandmother in a female rite of passage. Female genital circumcision was performed on Buki as it was a part of African tradition. As a child she was unable to defend herself and escape from this customary ceremony. Growing into an adult she endured the aftermath effects of FGC. Female genital mutilation practiced in the African countries had a devastating effect on the psyche of the victims. Davina had been raped by her grandfather for ten years, as a result, the memories of abuse haunted her. Thus the systematized and institutionalized violence made these characters live a life of horrific memories. The sexual violence endured by the women in the novel exhibits their collective trauma.

Like Martine, Amabelle and Yves never spoke openly about the massacre. Though Yves and Amabelle survived crossing the river and stayed together, they never bonded with each other. They settled in a kind of sterile relationship. The impact of the past was too much for them that they could never discard the events from her mind. The past became inseparable and terrific such that new dreams seemed to fritter away. Amabelle and Yves feared of being a reminder to each other's past, so they restricted their conversation to minimal words, "For twenty-four years all of my conversations with Yves had been restricted to necessary prattle. Good-morning. Good-night. What goes? Good-bye. The careful words exchanged between people

whose mere presence reminds each other of a great betrayal”(FB 270). They could neither share their trauma amongst themselves nor to others. Likewise Amabelle never narrated the death of her parents to anyone including Sebastien.

Unable to share her experience, Amabelle’s dreams served to be testimonies in themselves as they displayed the tensions of the traumatic memories. The memories of Amabelle and Yves remained situationally accessible. For Amabelle, life proved to be a strange gift. While Sebastien died in the slaughter, she chose a living death. Suspended between life and death, belonging and uprooting, past and present, Amabelle and Yves represent a voiceless community.

The protagonists in *DB* remain unhealed as they never articulated their trauma. The characters suffer the dearth of memories linked with their past, “Trauma and loss loom large in the psychological landscape of *The Dew Breaker*” (Gallagher 154). The characters in *CSL*, suffer PTSD owing to the impact of the traumatic incidents they encountered. Likewise in *Untwine*, Giselle struggled hard to come out of Isabelle’s loss. The memories of these characters were situationally accessible, as a result, they struggled to process their trauma.

Unlike SAMs, verbally accessible knowledge of the trauma consists of a series of autobiographical memories that can be deliberately and progressively edited to control affect. For example, autobiographical knowledge can be ordered on a hierarchy of generality from broad lifetime themes, to general descriptions of events, to detailed event-specific knowledge. There will also be an initial attempt to assign meaning to the trauma in terms of verbally accessible constructs and to consider the implications for valued life goals. As time goes on, however, more generic memories

may be created that encompass the fact of having experienced the trauma but without the same level of detail.

As VAMs are processed linguistically, there is no here -and -now threat. The conscious experience of the traumatic event is brought forth by the individual. VAMs are branded with verbal narrative, voluntary recall and are integrated into the present with the perspective of past.

Telling the story is a mere act of saving the life. Sophie, being the narrator, takes up the role of narrating her mother's story and her own. But her late discovery of her mother's tale was not fruitful. She confesses, "It took me twelve years to piece together my mother's story. By then it was already too late" (*BEM* 61). This suggests that she could have saved her mother's life if she had known about her little earlier, "The role of the storyteller is potentially lifesaving: Sophie's comments suggest that by taking on the role of storyteller, she could have helped to save her mother's life. For her, sharing her story is an act of triumph, and telling the stories of others acts in the same way" (Michelle, Charles 56). Danticat wanted the readers to feel as though Sophie is telling her story to safeguard her life. Speaking openly helps the characters in the process of liberation. It is through open speech that women reject oppressive and destructive precepts, by refusing to pass them on to the next generation. Sophie learns this because she refuses to remain silent.

Narrating the traumatic incident verbally is a way to recover from trauma. Sophie in *BEM* used the technique of narration to encode SAMs into VAMs, thereby placing the danger in the past, "These individually experienced traumas cause great pain for the Caco women in the novel, and to cope with them some of the women use

narration as a method of negotiation” (Eerinen 76). Sophie’s technique of narrating her story to the readers and the therapist helped in liberating her.

Similarly, Amabelle’s lover Sebastien willingly shared the memory of his dead father to Amabelle. He preferred to converse with her because to him, the silence was close to death, “We must talk to remind each other that we are not yet in the slumbering dark, which is an endless death, like a darkened cave . . . Silence to him is like sleep, a close second to death”(FB 13). This exhibited his willingness to keep himself engaged with the present.

Claude had been deported from US after killing his father who tried to stop him from taking drugs. Though he was rehabilitated in prison, he was sent to Haiti. He successfully stepped out of his past as he was able to process his trauma linguistically. Dany felt that Claude was lucky because he articulated his nightmares:

Claude was a palannit, a night talker, one of those who spoke their nightmares out loud to themselves. Except Claude was even luckier than he realized, for he was able to speak his nightmares to himself as well as to others, in the night time as well as in the hours past dawn, when the moon had completely vanished from the sky.(DB 120)

Claude frankly spoke his nightmares out to himself and others. He never allowed his past to agitate his present. Narrating his story was a healing experience for Claude. He does it without guilt or remorse which most of the characters in *DB* cannot do.

Beatrice is assumed to be unshackled from her trauma after being interviewed by Aline. Aline takes on the responsibility for bearing witness that Beatrice felt she bore alone. By sharing her story with Aline, Beatrice has passed on her trauma:

The green ash, the only one in the block, was still shaking ever so lightly in the afternoon breeze, letting loose a few more leaves. Beatrice was sitting on the steps in front of her house, watching the street, but mostly watching the leaves drop. It was an add yet beautiful sight, the leaves seemingly suspended in the air, then falling ever so slowly as if cushioned by air bubbles. (133)

The imagery of the leaves falling from the tree and the setting sun indicate the end of Beatrice's trauma.

Freda, Mariselle, and Rezia represent the young Haitian diaspora in US who struggle with the traumatic memories which their homeland Haiti had bestowed on them. The funeral singer, Freda, shared her memories as she thought would also help the rest in becoming free from their traumatic past, " I thought exposing a few details of my life would inspire them to do the same and slowly we'd parcel out our sorrows, each walking out with fewer than we carried in" (170). Like Claude, narrating the trauma helped them to become free.

Cognitive theories state that trauma is followed by a period of emotional processing. According to Dual Representation Theory, the term 'Emotional processing' denotes a largely conscious process in which representations of past and future events, and awareness of associated bodily states, repeatedly enter into and are actively manipulated within working memory. This process has at least two elements. One element involves the activation of highly specific SAMs, whose

function is to aid the process of cognitive readjustment by supplying detailed sensory and physiological information concerning the event. The second element is the conscious attempt to accommodate the conflicting information supplied by the trauma by searching for meaning and making judgments of cause and blame. The endpoint of this process is to reduce negative affect by restoring a sense of safety and control and by making appropriate adjustments to expectations about the self and the world.

Emotional processing involves different kinds of emotional reactions. First, there will be conditioned emotional reactions corresponding to the activation of specific emotional states such as fear, anger, etc., experienced during the trauma, as recorded in the person's SAMs of the event. In conjunction with these, emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear for the future will be generated by ongoing threat to safety, the disruption of plans, and the loss of valued goals. Other emotions, such as guilt and remorse, may be generated through responsibility attributions. All of these secondary emotions follow from the consequences and implications of the trauma.

The three endpoints of emotional processing are complete integration, chronic emotional processing, and premature inhibition processing. Completion or integration represents the ideal stage in which the memories of the trauma have been fully processed, or worked through, and integrated with the person's other memories and sense of self in the world. In part, this involves reducing negative affect by restoring a sense of control and by resolving discrepancies with preexisting expectations and goals. There must be sufficient repetition of the incident in memory for the person to accept the reality of what has happened to them and its consequences without being overcome by the accompanying emotions. Readjustment of the self

reduces the negative affect. Social support reduces the negative affect by offering physical comfort and emotional support.

Chronic emotional processing is a result of severe trauma. For a variety of reasons, complete integration may represent an ideal that is not possible to attain. The trauma may have been so severe and so prolonged, or have such profound consequences for the person's sense of self and of future safety, that the discrepancy between the trauma and the prior assumptions is too great and the memories cannot be integrated. Alternatively, the person may not have been able to process memories of the trauma effectively because of competing demands, aversive secondary emotions, lack of an appropriate confidant or unwillingness to confide, being too young to appreciate the meaning and circumstances of the event, and the presence of ongoing trauma or threat that continually reactivates trauma memories. The memories concerning the trauma are chronically processed, with the result that the person is permanently preoccupied with the consequences of the trauma.

The other possible outcome is that emotional processing will be prematurely inhibited. Usually, inhibition is the result of sustained efforts to avoid the reactivation of unpleasant memories. Trauma victims frequently describe strategies they use for avoiding thinking about the trauma and hence escaping the accompanying emotional arousal. In this state, there will no longer be any active emotional processing, intrusive memories, or deliberate attempts to avoid intrusions, but the SAMs concerning the trauma should still be accessible in the right circumstances. The significance of this type of outcome is that, although the person may appear to have recovered from the effects of the trauma, the unprocessed memories remain

vulnerable to reactivation later in life. This may occur when the person encounters similar situations or enters similar mood states. It leads to chronic nightmares.

The goal of trauma processing according to Dual representation theory is to eliminate intrusive memories by re-encoding SAMs into VAMs which now have spatial and temporal context and place the danger in the past. It encourages the individual to overcome inhibitory processes and to avoid chronic processing. It helps in the healthy processing of traumatic memories which leads to complete integration. This is helpful in removing the threat associated with traumatic memories.

Silencing is definitely not a sensible way to deal with trauma. Instead, voicing it helps the victims to become free. The sufferers have to invest the horror in words to release themselves from the weight of trauma and to treat it in a healthy way. In the interview with by Bonnie Lyons, Danticat acknowledges the fact that for a person who has suffered PTSD, the primary liberation is achieved by narrating the incident:

I was invited to participate in a psychiatry training program at a hospital in the Bronx after *Breath, Eyes, Memory* was published. They were using characters in novels as case studies. At the conference they discussed Martine as a woman having post-traumatic stress disorder. And suggested possible treatments for her. They were trying to learn how to do more culturally specific psychotherapy and to recognize that some of their patients are not going to suffer solely from a bad relationship with their mother. Julia Alvarez's sister, who works with trauma survivors, has told her, as Julia reports in her book, *Something to Declare*, that once trauma victims can tell their stories,

they are going to be OK. The biggest obstacle is often telling the story of what happened to you. In some cultures being raped is almost the worst thing that can happen to you and the last thing a woman wants to do is talk about it. That's Martine's problem. I see Sophie's telling her story as an act of triumph. (*BEM* 197)

Culture is one of the biggest hurdles which prevent women to open up and share their stories. While Sophie breaks this barrier for self liberation, Martine thinks it is a shame to talk about it.

Telling the story is the foremost and primary step towards the process of healing. Julia Alvarez in her book *Something to Declare* states:

The telling of the story decreases our sense of isolation. My sister, a therapist, whose clientele is primarily Latino, has worked with refugees who have survived incredible trauma-villages burnt, relatives tortured or shot before their eyes. They are numb and silent with grief. My sister says she knows they are going to make it when they can tell her the story of exactly what happened to them. (278)

Dori Laub in "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle" narrates his experience with trauma survivors:

The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive. There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has

to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life. (63)

The act of telling the stories is a form of change which one has to pass through in order to continue and complete the process of survival after liberation. Repression never helps the trauma survivors to live their life peacefully. Trauma needs integration to be testified and to be cured. The transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory allows the story to be integrated into one's own knowledge of the past. This helps to minimize the force that characterizes the traumatic recall.

Speaking openly about the traumatic event is a vital means of overcoming it. The characters who conceal it become silent sufferers. The lives of Danticat's characters' illustrate the fact that silence is not the solution. Likewise, if Haiti is to overcome the repeated periods of violence, then Haitians must tell the stories, reveal the trauma, and exorcise the ghosts of their collective violent past.

Other than verbally processing the trauma, the characters adopt different strategies to overcome grief and lead life afresh. A variety of factors too assist them in this process. These strategies and factors which are helpful in the healing process will be discussed in the next chapter.