Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

Centro de Educação e Humanidades

Instituto de Letras

Priscilla da Silva Figueiredo

“A revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past”: literary constellations as decolonial strategies in contemporary fiction by afro-caribbean woman writers.

Rio de Janeiro

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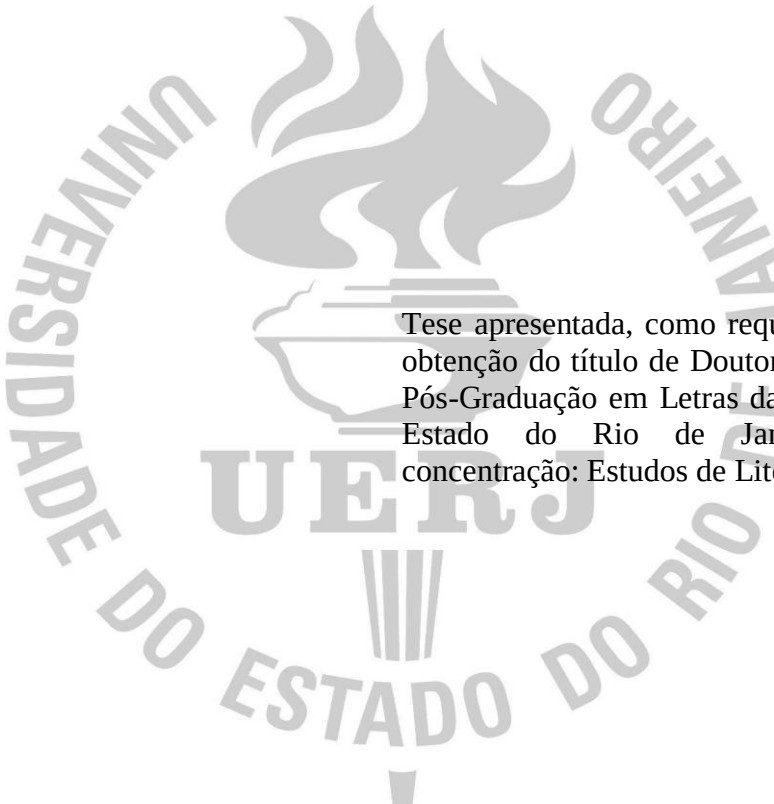

Tese apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Doutor, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Estudos de Literatura.

Orientadora: Profª. Dra. Leila de Assumpção Harris

Rio de Janeiro

2020

CATALOGAÇÃO NA FONTE
UERJ/REDE SIRIUS/BIBLIOTECA CEH/B

F475 Figueiredo, Priscilla da Silva.
"A revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past": literary constellations as decolonial strategies in contemporary fiction by afro-caribean woman writes / Priscilla da Silva Figueiredo. – 2020.
149 f. : il.

Orientadora: Leila de Assumpção Harris
Tese (doutorado) – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto de Letras.

1. Rosario, Nelly, 1972–. Song of the water saints – Teses. 2. Danticat, Edwidge, 1969-. The drew breaker – Teses. 3. Cezair-Thompson, Margaret. The true history of paradise - Teses. 4. Chancy, Myriam J. A., 1970-. The loneliness of angels – Teses. 5. Literatura caribenha (Inglês) – História e crítica – Teses. 6. Caribe – Escritoras – Teses. 7. Mulheres e literatura - Teses. 8. Memória na literatura - Teses. I. Harris, Leila Assumpção. II. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Instituto de Letras. III. Título.

CDU 820(729)-95

Bibliotecária: Mirna Lindenbaum. CRB7 4916

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Assinatura Data

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Aprovada em 13 de novembro de 2020.

Banca Examinadora:

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Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

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Profa. Dra. Liane Schneider

Universidade Federal da Paraíba

Rio de Janeiro

2020

DEDICATÓRIA

Para todos aqueles que sonham com a Pátria Grande

Para o povo brasileiro

AGRADECIMENTOS

Essa tese fala de constelações. Fala de coletividade. Fala de resistência. Se cheguei até aqui, foi por causa de cada uma dessas coisas. A constelação fala de sonhos que parecem inalcançáveis, a coletividade fala das pessoas que nos ajudam a conquistar esses sonhos, e a resistência fala das dificuldades que temos que superar para que os sonhos se tornem realidade. Se esse trabalho está pronto, foi porque eu tive todas essas coisas. Ao olhar para trás, enxergo uma constelação de pessoas que me sustentaram e me ajudaram a realizar o sonho do doutorado.

Em primeiro lugar, agradeço ao Senhor Jesus, aquele que é o Autor da minha fé. Sem Ele, eu nem estaria aqui. Ele, que me ensina a não me conformar, a crer num Reino onde a paz e a solidariedade prevalecem. Ele é maior estrela deste céu.

Agradeço aos meus pais por todo apoio. Obrigada pelo estímulo à leitura, que certamente foi a primeira semente deste trabalho que hoje apresento.

Agradeço à minha irmã Thamara, companheira de vida. *i carry your heart*.

Agradeço à minha família da fé. Agradeço em especial ao meu amigo e discipulador Marco Aurélio, maior exemplo de cristão que eu conheço e inspiração nesta caminhada. Obrigada por investir seu tempo na minha vida. Há amigos mais chegados que irmãos.

Agradeço aos meu amigos e minhas amigas, um número cada vez menor, com uma importância cada vez mais maior. Obrigada por me ajudarem a caminhar e a continuar buscando alcançar estrelas.

Agradeço ao Povo Brasileiro por acreditar na educação pública de nível superior, permitindo assim que eu concluísse o meu doutoramento.

Agradeço à Professora Doutora Leila Harris, minha querida orientadora, por todos esses anos que estivemos juntas. Obrigada pelo convite para ser sua orientanda de IC na graduação, aquela oportunidade definiu a minha rota acadêmica. Obrigada pelo apoio, pelas intermináveis conversas e revisões desta tese, mesmo em meio a uma pandemia.

Agradeço à Professora Doutora Myriam J.A. Chancy, que me recebeu na Califórnia para o meu período de doutorado “sanduíche”. Obrigada pelas reuniões e conversas que redefiniram o rumo da minha pesquisa e da minha tese. Obrigada por sua profunda sensibilidade e generosidade.

Agradeço à Professora Doutora Carlinda Nunez por suas aulas, dentro e fora de sala, por sua genialidade e generosidade. Obrigada pelo seu carinho sempre. Obrigada por ter aceitado o convite para compor a minha Banca de qualificação e, agora, de defesa.

Agradeço ao Professor Doutor Victor Hugo Adler por suas aulas que me inspiraram desde o 1o período da graduação até o doutorado. Em suas aula de Teoria da Literatura me tornei leitora de Walter Benjamin. Obrigada por acreditar em meu potencial como pesquisadora e por ter aceitado o convite para compor a minha Banca de qualificação e, agora, de defesa.

Agradeço ao Professor Doutor Eduardo de Faria Coutinho e à Professora Doutora Liane Schneider por terem gentilmente e generosamente aceitado a compor a Banca de minha defesa.

Agradeço à Professora Doutora Ana Claudia Viegas e ao Professor Doutor Felipe Fanuel por terem gentilmente e generosamente aceitado a compor a Banca de minha defesa na qualidade de suplentes.

Agradeço ao PPGL-UERJ e aos seus docentes por sua seriedade e dedicação. E agradeço aos técnicos do programa, sempre tão dispostos a me ajudar e tornar minha vida ali mais fácil.

Agradeço aos meus colegas de programa. Pelas conversas, pelos cafés, pelo apoio incansável. A vocês que tornam a vida acadêmica menos solitária, o meu muito obrigada.

Por fim, agradeço à UERJ, que me ensinou a amar e a lutar por uma Educação Pública, Gratuita, Popular e de Qualidade para todos. Feliz 70 anos, UERJ!

O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) – Código de Financiamento 001

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Bob Marley

RESUMO

FIGUEIREDO, Priscilla da Silva. *"A revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past":* literary constellations as decolonial strategies in contemporary fiction by afro-caribbean woman writers. 2020. 149 f. Tese (Doutorado em Letras) - Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

A escrita literária tem um papel importante na tarefa de revisitar o passado e escová-lo a contrapelo, trazendo à tona vozes e histórias que muitas vezes foram apagadas. As características estilísticas particulares deste discurso fazem com que ele se torne um ente complementar à historiografia e aos testemunhos, sobretudo para falar de eventos que geram experiências traumáticas em uma nação, tais como momentos de ditadura, estado de emergência, guerra civil… momentos que parecem persistir na região da América Latina e do Caribe. Essa tarefa de representar o passado traumático é realizada nos quatro romances que compõem o corpus da análise desta tese. As quatro escritoras de origem caribenha recriam ficcionalmente períodos turbulentos em seus países de origem, e através das categorias ficcionais de seus romances conseguem penetrar nas brechas abertas pela história e pela memória e, de certa forma, aplacar a dor do tempo pretérito. Em *Song of the Water Saints*, Nelly Rosario cria uma protagonista que através do movimento busca transgredir e transcender sua condição de pobreza numa República Dominicana que vive debaixo de uma invasão internacional. Em *The Dew Breaker*, Edwidge Danticat entrelaça histórias de pessoas, incluindo um ex-torturador, que buscam superar o passado traumático, o legado terrível da ditadura Duvalier. Em *The True History of Paradise*, Margaret Cezair-Thompson abre o arquivo de histórias que sua protagonistas ouve desde criança e, através dessas histórias, constrói uma historiografia ficcional de sua ilha natal, a Jamaica. Por fim, em *The Loneliness of Angels*, Myriam J.A. Chancy traz à vida personagens que, através de seu chamado espiritual, se tornam guardiões de histórias de vítimas da ditadura haitiana. A análise dos romances para esta tese baseou-se no conceito benjaminiano de constelação em busca do elemento articulatório unificador da estrutura ficcional, que dá coesão ao elemento poético nos romances. Esta análise focaliza dois elementos através dos quais os romances reconstroem o passado e revisitam suas ruínas: movimento e o arquivo-vivo. Desta maneira, é através da simulação da verdade por meio de seu mecanismo estético que os romances escolhidos para compor o *corpus* da análise desta de tese contribuem para o processo de retomada do passado e superação do trauma. Esta tese norteia-se também pelo conceito de decolonialidade e da poética da pós-memória. Por se tratar de uma pesquisa no campo dos estudos literários, o método adotado é o exploratório, que envolve mapear fontes teóricas relevantes e relacionadas ao tema com o objetivo de examinar o *corpus* ficcional e alcançar respostas teóricas e críticas.

Palavras-chave: Constelação. Estratégias narrativas decoloniais. Pós-memória. Ficção contemporânea de expressão inglesa. Escritoras caribenhas.

ABSTRACT

FIGUEIREDO, Priscilla da Silva. *"A revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past":* literary constellations as decolonial strategies in contemporary fiction by afro-caribbean woman writers. 2020. 149 f. Tese (Doutorado em Letras) - Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

Literary writing has an important role when it comes to revisiting the past and brushing history against the grain, bringing to light voices and stories that very often were erased. The specific stylistic features of this discourse make it a complementary element to historiography and testimonials, especially when it is used to talk about events that cause traumatic experiences in a nation, such as periods of dictatorship, a state of emergency, civil wars… moments that seem to persist in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The task to represent the traumatic past is accomplished in the four novels which comprise the literary corpora of this dissertation. The four Caribbean woman writers recreate in fiction turbulent periods in their countries of origin and, through the fictional categories of their novels, they manage to have access to the gaps opened by history and memory, alleviating, to some extent, the pain of the past. In *Song of the Water Saints*, Nelly Rosario creates a protagonist who is in constant movement as she attempts to transgress and transcend her condition of poverty in the Dominican Republic, which is under international occupation. In *The Dew Breaker*, Edwidge Danticat intertwines stories about people, including a former torturer, who try to overcome the traumatic past, the terrible legacy from the Duvalier dictatorship.. In *The True History of Paradise*, Margaret Cezair-Thompson opens the archive that contains stories that her protagonist has listened to since childhood and uses them to create a fictional historiography about her homeland, Jamaica. Finally, in *The Loneliness of Angels*, Myriam J.A. Chancy brings to life characters whose spiritual connection makes them guardians of the stories lived by victims of the Haitian dictatorial regime. The analysis of the novels in this dissertation was based on Walter Benjamin's concept of constellation as a means to find an element capable of articulating and unifying the fictional structure, thus, giving cohesion to the poetic element in the novels. This analysis focuses on two specific elements through which the novels reconstruct the past and revisit its ruins: movement and the living archive. Thus, it is through the simulation of truth and as an aesthetic mechanism that the novels chosen to comprise the *corpora* of this dissertation contribute to the process of revisiting the past and overcoming trauma. The present dissertation is also guided by the concept of decoloniality and the poetics of postmemory. As this is a research in the field of literary studies, the adopted method is the exploratory one, involving the mapping of theoretical sources both relevant and related to the theme in order to analyze the fictional corpora, finding theoretical and critical answers.

Keywords: Constellation. Decolonial narrative strategies. Postmemory. Contemporary fiction in English. Caribbean woman writers.

SUMÁRIO

INTRODUCTION

Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation. Its definition can, if we want to describe it accurately, be summed up in the well-known words: "The last shall be first." Decolonization is verification of this. At a descriptive level, therefore, any decolonization is a success.

Franz Fanon[1]

A Long Journey to the Stars

Not even in my wildest dreams did I anticipate that I would be defending my PhD dissertation in Literary Studies twenty years after graduating from Law School (UFRJ) and on the 70th anniversary of UERJ. As many people in their 20's, I thought I had a clear planned path before me: studying hard to become a Public Prosecutor. What I did not know was that three years later I would be giving up my career as a lawyer and would be completely lost about what to do with my life. After different unsuccessful experiences, in 2006 I started a new undergraduate course at UERJ, the place that has become my true *alma mater*. Since my first day at the university I knew I wanted to become a Professor, but honestly had no idea how to get there. In 2008, I took one of Dr. Leila Harris's courses and she gave me the opportunity to become her undergraduate student researcher. After so many years, I can definitely say that my PhD started in my first year under her supervision. I still remember my first SEMIC session; I delivered a ten-minute presentation on an excerpt from Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, in which the protagonist reflected how her education in Antigua had been a colonial one. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* served as my theoretical argument. Looking back now, it seems an obvious reading. From the very beginning, Professor Harris

[1] FANNON, Frantz; PHILCOX, Richard (trad.) Wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

supported me and helped me all the way. In all those years we have been working together, I have learned many valuable lessons on becoming an ethical, competent, and compassionate researcher and teacher.

For my master thesis (2013), I wrote about two works by Haitian author Edwidge Danticat: *The Farming of Bones* and *Brother, I'm Dying*. The first is a historical novel and the latter is an auto/biographical narrative. During my writing process I had a persistent feeling; I noticed that I was reading the historical novel as if it were a historical account and the memoir as if it were a fictional text. When I shared my feelings with Prof. Harris, she suggested that I read *Tiempo passado: cultura de la memoria y giro subjectivo: una discusion* (2005), by Beatriz Sarlo. There, I found that which I consider to be the explanation for the experience I was having. Sarlo states: "From a personal standpoint, I dare say that it was in literature (and its hostility in having limits of accurate truth forced upon it) that I have found not only the most accurate images of horrors of a recent past, but also the very texture of its ideas and experiences[2]" (SARLO, 2007, p. 17[3]). As I quote Sarlo's words, I am not idealizing literature to the detriment of testimonial or historical narratives. However, I align my thoughts with her conclusion: "Literature can't, of course, put an end to problems, or even explain them, but [in the literary text] there is a narrator who thinks from 'outside' the experience, as if human beings could take hold of nightmares instead of just living them"[4] (SARLO, 2007, p. 119). After reading Sarlo's book, I knew what would be my next step. For my PhD research proposal, I submitted a project with the intention to research about novels that covered periods of dictatorships, states of exception, civil war… in the Caribbean. As I was choosing the novels that would become my literary corpora, I noticed that there were narrative strategies, metaphors, episodes that appeared and re-appeared in different novels. That intrigued me. Why did that happen? Was it a coincidence? It was then that Dr. Carlinda Nunez introduced me to Walter Benjamin's concept of constellation, which became the reading method I adopted for my research and this dissertation. I also would like to add that my first encounter with the works of Walter Benjamin took place in an undergraduate course taught by Dr. Victor Hugo Adler.

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[2] In Portuguese: "Se tivesse de falar por mim, diria que encontrei na literatura (tão hostil a que se estabeleçam sobre ela limites de verdade) as imagens mais exatas do horror do passado recente e de sua textura de ideias e experiências" (SARLO, 2007, p. 117 – translated from the Spanish by Rosa Freire D'Aguiar)

[3] All translations, with the exception of those included in the bibliographical references, are either mine or my supervisor's.

[4] In Portuguese: "A literatura, é claro, não dissolve todos os problemas colocados, nem pode explica-los, mas nela um narrador sempre pensa *de fora* da experiência, como se os humanos pudessem se apoderar do pesadelo, e não apenas sofrê-lo" (SARLO, 2007, p. 119). Translated to English by Prof. Dra. Leila Harris.

During my PhD research I had the opportunity to spend one semester in the United States, sponsored by Programa de Doutorado Sanduíche no Exterior from CAPES, under the supervision of Dr. Myriam J.A. Chancy. Aside from being one of the major influences in contemporary Caribbean studies and a prolific author, Dr. Chancy is a dedicated professor and a very generous person. Our meetings and conversations redefined many aspects of my dissertation, including the choice of writing in English. I did so in order to honor the authors I am working with, the research area I belong to at UERJ, and the time I spent in the Claremont Colleges. During my period there, with the exception of one of the original novels, my literary corpora changed completely. After much thought, I selected *Song of Water Saints* (2002), by Nelly Rosario, *The Dew Breaker* (2005), by Edwidge Danticat, *The True History of Paradise* (2009), by Margaret Cezair-Thompson, and *The Loneliness of Angels* (2010), by Myriam Chancy. All the novels are written by Afro-Caribbean woman authors living in diaspora. Even though I do not explicitly treat it as one of my constellations, race is everywhere in my dissertation, as it should be.

As I move towards the completion of this phase in my academic life, I hope to have done my job well. What I could not have predicted when I submitted my proposal late in 2015 was that in the following year President Dilma Rousseff would suffer a staged impeachment and that in 2017 we would face that which is possibly the worst crisis faced by the state of Rio de Janeiro, affecting UERJ directly. These four years have also witnessed Marielle Franco's brutal execution while doing her job as an elected city councilwoman and the rise of neofascism in Brazil. The pages in the novels and all the decolonial theorists I was reading were never more realistic. However, the words of Danish author Isak Dinesen have kept resounding in my mind: "I am not a novelist, really not even a writer; I am a storyteller. One of my friends said about me that I think all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them, and perhaps this is not entirely untrue". These woman authors I was reading used their stories to help them, their islands, and their readers to bear the sorrows coloniality insists on inflicting on its victims and those who dare to defy them.

Decolonial Storytellers

In The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov (1936, 2006), Walter Benjamin defends that the art of storytelling is coming to an end. "One reason for this

phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value" (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 362). According to him, events that are marks of modernity, such as war and inflation had an impact on *Erfahrung*, – "the source from which all storytellers have drawn" (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 362) – and affected its exchange. However, I defend that storytellers are alive in Latin American and on the Caribbean. In Towards a Decolonial Feminism (2010), Maria Lugones places the decolonial as a non-modern category. The *non-modern* would, therefore, be an epistemological (and, I say, artistic) position from which people would resist capitalist modernity. Lugones observes: "The modern apparatus reduces them to premodern ways. So, non-modern knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, 'categorial' logic" (LUGONES, 2010, p. 743). The authors and the novels analyzed here are examples of the permanence of storytelling and its power to transmit experience. Even though the literary works analyzed are novels, accused by Benjamin of being solitary endeavors, it is possible to see them as carriers and transmitters of experience. The characteristic of storytelling that stands out most in the novels is the way it is not limited to the written words. It is not engaged with presenting a *new* story, but to share old one. In the words of Benjamin, storytelling has been present in the everyday lives of people for a long time:

> It does not aim to convey the pure essence of thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 367).

All these characteristics figure in the four novels featured in this dissertation. These are stories that talk about people who endured slavery and threats of cultural erasure. They also talk about places that faced colonization and international domination. The stories analyzed here are filled with handprints from generations that came before their authors and narrators. They are the proof that the art of storytelling is alive and resides in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Keep Your Eyes on the Stars, But You Feet on the Ground

The first chapter, entitled Theory (Still) Matters: Reflections on Constellation, Coloniality, and Postmemory, is devoted to set the theoretical foundations of the main argument for the dissertation, i.e., the narrative images and strategies that are repeatedly used in the novels and that represent their engagement with a decolonial project. In order to do so, I have divided the chapter in three parts. On the first one, I reflect on the concept of constellation, developed by Walter Benjamin in his work *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1928). Works by intellectuals such as Márcio Seligmann-Silva and Paulo Sérgio Rouanet, among others, helped me develop my understanding on constellation as my reading method and adopt a constellatory attitude. In relation to this attitude, in Um olhar constelatório sobre o pensamento de Walter Benjamin (2000), Georg Otte and Míriam Lidia Volpe state that the reader should contemplate the texts in the same way that someone observes stars , attentive to which of their elements stand out and which connections can be established between them (OTTE; VOLPE, 2000, p. 39). I have consciously adopted this attitude every time I re-read the novels.

On the second part, I establish a dialogue between Postcolonial studies and the Decolonial turn. Postcolonial studies had been crucial for my research for a long time; however, the more I learned about the Decolonial turn, the more it shaped my views about the standpoint from which the novels should be analyzed. And, even though I make use of both academic lines, the decolonial intellectuals have become my main reference. Therefore, in the second section of the chapter I present the reasons for my change in perspective. The concept of coloniality of power, developed by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano has been definitely crucial for this change. To understand that colonialism, which started in the 15th century in the Americas, as constitutive and not derivative of modernity changed the way I understood the anti-colonial resistance I could read on the pages of the novels. It was not *post*-colonial resistance any longer; it was rooted in a struggle that started together with colonialism and that carries on a legacy of survival and endurance.

Finally, the third subdivision of the chapter centers on the role of Postmemory and its importance for Latin American and Caribbean novels. Postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch to address the works of children of Holocaust survivors, could certainly have been presented in this dissertation as one of its constellation because every novel in this dissertation can be seen as a work of a postmemory generation writer. Nevertheless, the concept proved to be so relevant that I decided to refer to it as one of my three theoretical arguments.

"We Go Waiting for the Stars to Come Showering Down"

The next two chapters focus on analyzing the literary constellations found in the novels. Truth be told, every time I re-read the novels, I noticed the presence of the two constellations in all of them. Hence, my choice to have them analyzed two by two is the result of a pedagogical position and is based on which novels were *more* representative of the constellations. I could have chosen differently, though.

Movement as Decolonial Constellation

In the second chapter, entitled Movement as a Decolonial Strategy of Resistance in *Song of Water Saints*, by Nelly Rosario, and *The Dew Breaker*, by Edwidge Danticat, I show that, contrary to the Western paradigm that divides body and spirit and treats them as separate entities, people belonging to the Global South have a more holistic approach to life that shows whenever they have to deal with traumatic experiences. Therefore, their bodies, mind, and spirits are engaged in the task of overcoming the hurt left by trauma. In order to support my view, I have relied especially on the works of Walter Mignolo. His concept of border thinking, which he developed from his readings of Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1977) and his idea of epistemic disobedience have proved that *an-other* approach to history and genealogy is possible. Moreover, the epistemological reference to movement as a literary constellation comes from the concept of *Tidalectis*, coined by Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite. The concept has served as an alternative to Rosi Braidotti's *nomadic subject*, which, as I understand, is still subscribed to a Eurocentric worldview.

The two novels chosen to be the literary representations for this chapter are *Song of the Water Saints* and *The Dew Breaker*. They privilege movement as strategy to escape trauma or deal with traumatic experiences. In *Song of the Water Saints*, the protagonist, a poor, black, Dominican woman becomes a wanderer in order to find meaning for a life that is affected by poverty caused by colonial/imperial relations. In *The Dew Breaker*, a string of characters, including a former torturer, tries to heal from the past trauma experiences brought by Haitian dictatorships headed by the Duvaliers.

Living Archives as Decolonial Constellation

In the third chapter, entitled Living Archives as a Decolonial Strategy of Resistance in *The True History of Paradise*, by Margaret Cezair-Thompson, and *The Loneliness of Angels*, by Myriam Chancy, I present archive as a constellation to resist historical erasure of subaltern stories and experiences. In the first part of the chapter, I bring two Caribbean intellectuals, Edouard Glissant and Michel-Rolph Trouillot and present their problematization on History when it comes to the Caribbean. Glissant's idea of *non-history* and Trouillot's concept of *historical overdose* are contrasted and compared. Then, I make use of Jacques Derrida's and Michel Foucault's ideas of archive in order to see how Caribbean authors have made use of the concept of living archives as a decolonial strategy of resistance. In doing so, I side with Eurídice Figueiredo and her thesis that literary works are able to become sites to resist the *archiviolithic* drive present in Latin America and the Caribbean. Her book A literatura como arquivo da ditadura brasileira (2017) is fundamental to my understanding of the archiving power of literary works.

The two novels chosen as literary representations to my arguments in this chapter are *The True History of Paradise* and *The Loneliness of Angels*. In the first novel, Margaret Cezair-Thompson creates a protagonist who has been hearing the voices of her ancestors since childhood. Those stories are told as Jean Landing, the protagonist, crosses Jamaica in order to leave the country, which is facing a state of emergency. In *The Loneliness of Angels*, Myriam Chancy brings a number of protagonists who share a spiritual calling: they are to be the bearers of the stories they hear and they are to offer relief for those who suffer, living or dead. Spirituality in the novel is the archive and the means to resist colonial/imperial erasure.

Conclusions

Throughout this dissertation I will use texts written and interviews given by the novelists because all of them are also professors and researchers in Caribbean Literature. Their reflections on the topic of literature of resistance and anti-colonial struggles have been fundamental to my research. They are all producers of epistemologies of the south, even

though all of them currently live in diaspora. Due to their intellectual and literary production, along with their political actions, I consider them Caribbean authors, Afro-Caribbean authors, to be more precise. I am (and they are) aware of the position of privilege they occupy nowadays, being respected critics and professors, and celebrated authors. Nevertheless, their works reflect the *other* knowledges they carry as displaced, non-modern beings that they are.

Ultimately, I am sure that coloniality defines our lives in Latin America and the Caribbean. But so does decolonial resistance. Those postcolonial and decolonial theorist are here to prove it. Those authors and their novels are here to prove it. Our lives are here to prove it. The wretched of the earth will keep on moving, and will keep on archiving and telling their stories until everyone is emancipated from mental slavery.

1 **THEORY (STILL) MATTERS: REFLECTIONS ON CONSTELLATION, COLONIALITY, AND POSTMEMORY**

If to use a simile, one views the growing work as a burning funeral pyre, then the commentator stands before it like a chemist, the critic like an alchemist. Whereas, for the former, wood and ash remain the sole objects of his analysis, for the latter only the flame itself preserves an enigma: that of what is alive. Thus, the critic inquires into the truth, whose living flame continues to burn over the heavy logs of what is past and the light ashes of what has been experienced.

Walter Benjamin[5]

... I note here there is a great danger; that the colonial enterprise is to the modern world what Roman imperialism was to the ancient world: the prelude to Disaster and the forerunner of Catastrophe. Come now!The Indians massacre, the Moslem world drained of itself, the Chinese world defiled and perverted for a good century; the Negro world disqualified; mighty voices stilled forever; homes scattered to the wind; all this wreckage, all this waste, humanity reduced to a monologue, and you think all that does not have its price?

Aimé Cesairé

1.1 **Opening Remarks**

This chapter aims to present the theoretical parameters that comprise the groundwork for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Overall, the present work deals with the notion that the literary discourse may take place – along with historiography and testimonials

[5] BENJAMIN, Walter. Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926, ed: Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. London: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

– in the struggle to decolonize history. Specifically, it focuses on the potentiality literary texts have in the attempt to recover the traces which are left by an experience of state of exception. In On the Concept of History (1938) Walter Benjamin argues that "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception, but the rule[6]", thus, a state of exception may be understood as a mark of coloniality. In this dissertation, a state of exception entails periods of dictatorship, a legal state of exception, and international occupation, among others, faced by Caribbean – and Latin American – countries after their independence. Such factors are directly related to colonial and imperial relations lingering in the region.

Regarding textual organization, this chapter will be divided in three parts: the first one will deal with Walter Benjamin's concept of constellation, which serves as the methodological lens through which the literary works have been selected and analyzed. Two of Benjamin's works were paramount to the development of a constellatory reading of the novels: The Espistemo-Critical Prologue found in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) and Convolute N of *The Arcades Project* (1927 – 1940). Nevertheless, other texts written by Benjamin will also be taken into consideration so as to give a better understanding of how constellatory Benjamin's oeuvre is. This approach was useful during the research that led to this dissertation. Other authors who are dedicated to the reading of Benjamin's work are also going to be considered as they can serve as a telescope to Benjamin's ideas.

The second part of this chapter will focus on decolonial theory. In fact, decolonizing theories will be a more appropriate term because Decolonial and Postcolonial authors will be used. The choice of not adopting a single theory was made due to the relevance of both lines of studies to this research. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the idea of coloniality brought by the Decolonial Turn was paramount throughout the period of research to this dissertation. For example, the novels chosen are not considered here as belonging to postcolonial literature, but as part of decolonial literature, in the sense that they are in line with the idea that decolonizing our thoughts, minds, lives, and cultural practices is one of the hardest, yet most important endeavors of our time. Having said that, in this section, the leading names in Postcolonial and Decolonial studies will be briefly presented along with one of their major works. Then, they will be compared and contrasted. Finally, the thesis adopted in this dissertation will be elaborated. The article Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogue

[6] BENJAMIN, Walter. On the Concept of History. In: BENJAMIN, Walter. Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938 - 1940, ed: Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. London: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

(2014), by Gurminder K. Bhambra served as the starting point for the discussion presented here; however, other texts have proven to be equally important to the argument developed and therefore will also be investigated.

The third and last part of the chapter will treat the concept of Postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch. In this dissertation, her book *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012) will be the work to be considered most closely. Postmemory is important to the context of this dissertation because some of the women authors and the characters of their novels can be viewed as part of that generation. It is worth mentioning again that, when it comes to coloniality, the state of exception is the rule; nevertheless, there are some experiences such as dictatorship, international occupation, and civil conflicts experienced in the author's place of birth and which are portrayed in the novels that make postmemory a useful theoretical framework to be adopted. Then, the use of postmemory by artists from Latin America and the Caribbean will be specifically addressed, taking into consideration how the concept was adapted in order to serve to the local experiences.

1.2 **"Ideas Are to Objects as Contellations Are to the Stars": Walter Benjamin's Constellation as a Reading Method**

In order to address Benjamin's theory and method, two works by Brazilian intellectuals were fundamental to this dissertation. The first one is *A atualidade de Walter Benjamin e Theodor W. Adorno* (2009), by Marcio Seligmann-Silva and the other is the didactic presentation to the Brazilian edition to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama/A origem do drama barroco alemão* (1928, 1984), by Sérgio Paulo Rouanet. The two names chosen here as guides through Benjamin's words were not accidental. Marcio Seligmann-Silva is a translator, literary theorist and critic, and a professor in one of the most important universities in Brazil. He is also considered one of the biggest advocates of Walter Benjamin's ideas in the country, having translated part of Benjamin's work to Brazilian Portuguese and written books and articles about this German Philosopher. Sérgio Paulo Rouanet is a diplomat, a philosopher, an essayist, and a scholar. He served as Brazil's Secretary of Culture during the years from 1991 to 1992, and is a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters. Rouanet was the translator of Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic*

Drama to Brazilian Portuguese, among others of the philosopher's works. Besides translating Walter Benjamin, Rouanet also wrote about him in several books and essays. Seligmann-Silva and Rouanet were not the only intellectuals that contributed to my understanding of Benjamin's thoughts, but their words and reflections worked as groundwork for this section.

1.2.1 The Actuality of Walter Benjamin

In *A atualidade de Walter Benjamin e Theordor W. Adorno*, Seligmann-Silva explores what the concept of *actuality* – which was taken very seriously by the two philosophers – meant to Benjamin and Adorno. According to Seligmann-Silva, actuality is not to be considered from a pragmatic point of view, rather, it must be seen as the capacity of an idea to meet its present in order to facilitate change. He comments: "therefore, the actuality searched here results from the capability that some aspects of the works of these authors have to still assemble not so much philologic approaches but, above all, vital readings which recover Benjamin's and Adorno's ideas[7]" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2010, p. 11). Actuality is about assessing their contemporaneity in relation to us; therefore, Benjamin's ideas are relevant to this dissertation to the point that they communicate with a decolonizing approach found in the novels analyzed in the other chapters. Additionally, in order to reflect on actuality one should be implicated in a reading that is different from the usual. Seligmann-Silva reflects on it:

> The author who searches for the actuality of an idea starts from a diagnosis of its own present. *To actualize implies to be attentive to what happens in the present-time of the author that is writing now.* Actualization expects a short-circuit between what happened in the past and what is happening now. It is an act of memory and, as every aspect of actualization, it comes from a strong concept of now (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2010, p. 11, 12, my emphasis)[8].

Here lies the possibility to use Walter Benjamin as a reading method to works of women authors who are engaged in denouncing and resisting colonial power. All of them, Benjamin and the Caribbean authors in this dissertation, are attentive to their present-time and

[7] In Portuguese: "A atualidade buscada aqui, portanto, é derivada da capacidade de determinados aspectos das obras desses autores de mobilizar ainda hoje não tanto abordagens filológicas mas, antes, leituras vitais que resgatem as ideias de Benjamin e Adorno…" (SELGMMAN-SILVA, 2010, p. 11).

[8] In Portuguese: "O autor que busca a atualidade de um pensamento parte de um diagnóstico de seu presente. Atualizar significa estar atento para o que se passa no presente do autor que escreve agora. A atualização busca um curto-circuito entre o ocorrido e o agora. Trata-se de um ato de memória e, como toda modalidade de atualização, parte de um conceito forte de agora" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2010, p. 11-12).

search for that space in which past and present clash, and write *in them* and *about them*. For what is worth, this section of the chapter will focus on the actuality of Benjamin's constellation which is not only the research and critical method used in this dissertation, but also a trademark of Benjamin's writings.

Before considering Walter Benjamin's constellation, it seems reasonable to reflect on the type of critique he was engaged in because it is the same approach adopted both in this dissertation and by the majority of the women authors featured here, as they are also literary critics and scholars. According to Seligmann-Silva, for Benjamin, critique was a reflective action which unfolded in five different levels. The first level included a self-reflection: "He always reflected on his own activity as a critic, about the place and the role of criticism in society[9]" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49). Then, he would deliver a detailed reading and a reflection about the work to be criticized, "which was always analyzed not from an a-historical model, but from its own 'Ideal *a priori*', in the words of Novalis[10]" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49). Third, Seligmann-Silva points out that it is possible to find a reflection about Literature and Art History. It is at this level that Benjamin – inside a German tradition – developed the theme of literary genres. Fourth, it is possible to see his movement as a critical reflection of society. "[I]n Benjamin, the critique was always performed from and facing its present, without a positivist illusion that it would be possible to access the past 'as it happened'[11]". (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49). Finally, Seligmman-Silva understands that the fifth level articulates all previous levels and emphasizes that Benjamin's theory of History criticizes the models based on a historical evolution, be them liberal or marxist. Benjamin believed in history as a series of catastrophes. Through his theory, Benjamin demonstrated that there is nothing which is outside politics. "Arts and its critique are '*medium* of reflection' not only of the aesthetic system, but also of the whole society. In this sense, he programmatically extrapolates the scope of the art and literary critique[12]" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 50). Seligmann-Silva adds that one cannot fully understand Benjamin's critique without taking into consideration his critical texts about the questions of Power and

[9] In Portuguese: "ele sempre refletia sobre sua própria atividade de crítico, sobre o papel e o local da crítica na sociedade" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49).

[10] In Portuguese: "que era sempre [a obra criticada] analisada não a partir de um modelo a-histórico, mas sim de seu próprio "Ideal a *priori*", nas palavras de Novalis" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49)

[11] In Portuguese: "a crítica foi praticada em Benjamin a partir do seu presente e voltada para ele, sem a ilusão positivista de se poder penetrar no passado 'tal como ele aconteceu'" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 49)

[12] In Portuguese: "A arte e sua crítica são '*medium* de reflexão' não apenas do sistema estético, mas, antes, de toda a sociedade. Nesse sentido, ele extrapolou programaticamente o âmbito da crítica da literatura e da arte" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 50)

Law, and his critique on the instrumental aspect of language, for example. Moreover, another aspect of Benjamin's critique is noteworthy:

> [H]e always performed criticism that was, at the same time, literary theory. This might be the most important legacy of his critical production: he exposed the sterility of the critique that is only philologic, as well as the narrowness of the criticism that is merely immanent or biographical. For Benjamin, critique only existed as a capacity to articulate (both tactfully and with all historical weight that the object of his analysis demands) the immanence of the work of art with its historical-critical reflection (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2011, p. 51).

Once more, one can find some commonality between Walter Benjamin and the Caribbean women authors and scholars included in this dissertation. A good example of it is found in *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (1997), where Myriam Chancy states:

> By necessity, the cultural or literary critic must engage such texts [resistance literature] not as empty artistic vessels standing outside of time, but as political manifestos emerging from distinct spatial and geographical locations and from distinct cultural and historical periods, and articulated from differing positions within those locations and periods… My own study will refuse to participate in the Western critical practice of co-optation by contesting theories of post-colonialism and postmodernism and displacing them through the theories the text themselves unleash (CHANCY, 1997, p. 9).

Chancy is one of the Caribbean authors and scholars to be engaged in producing and delivering fiction and critique which take into consideration the power relations involved in a work of art. Edwidge Danticat is another example. In *Create Dangerously: the immigrant artist at work* (2010), she declares: "The immigrant artist shares with all other artists the desire to interpret and possibly remake his or her own world" (DANTICAT, 2011, p. 18). She proceeds, recognizing that because her parents migrated, she is not writing under the threat of torture or while neighbors are digging mass graves. However, she understands that she is part of a group who might not have been able to go to school and whose parents also lived in the shadows for a long time. In ancient Egypt, slaves of wealthy men and women were buried alive with their masters, as sacrifice, in order to keep them company in the afterlife. Danticat compares the work of the immigrant artist to that of the sculptors in ancient Egypt who developed the memorial art which replaced human sacrifice. She concludes: "In the face of both external and internal destruction, we are still trying to create dangerously as they, as though each piece of art were a stand-in for a life, a soul, a future" (DANTICAT, 2011, p.

20). Both Chancy and Danticat are aware of their artistic and intellectual performances as one that articulates art and historical-critical reflection.

1.2.2 Representation, Dialectical Image, and Constellation: some considerations

Lately, the concept of constellation, brought up by Walter Benjamin, is regarded as an important principle to both philosophical and literary areas of study. Nevertheless, as Paulo Sérgio Rouanet reminds us, when Benjamin applied for a position of Associate Professor at the University of Frankfurt, and presented his dissertation, now published under the title *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, his work was rejected and even considered incomprehensible by one of the members of the evaluation committee. Therefore, even though Rouanet understands that systematizing seems incompatible to Benjamin's style, he decided, due to the complexity of the work at hand, to adopt a didactic perspective in the preface for the Brazilian edition and divided it in three parts: Theory of Knowledge, Theory of German Drama, and Theory of the Allegoric. For the following section of this chapter, the Theory of Knowledge will be the only one taken into consideration because it is there that the Brazilian intellectual makes relevant observations about Benjamin's constellation as a reading method that are instrumental to this dissertation.

"For Benjamin, the path to true philosophical investigation is representation[13]" (ROUANET, 1984, p. 13). This statement is a direct reference to an excerpt in which the non-cartesian view of the philosophical thought and writing, defended by Benjamin, is expressed: "If philosophy is to remain true to the law of its own form, as the *representation* of truth and not as guide to the acquisition of knowledge, then the exercise of this form – rather than its anticipation in the system – must be accorded due importance". (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 28, my emphasis). In Do conceito de *Darstellung* em Walter Benjamin ou verdade e beleza (2005), Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin argues that Rouanet's choice of the word *representation* as the Portuguese[14] translation for the German *Darstellung* is inaccurate and compromises the discussion Benjamin wanted to raise. She proposes that representation be replaced for exhibition as, she comments, "it is through the exhibition/ordination of the researched

[13] In Portuguese: "O caminho da verdadeira investigação filosófica, para Benjamin, é a representação" (ROUANET, 1984, p. 13).
[14] Both English and Brazilian translators of Benjamin texts chose the words *representation*/*representação*, respectively.

material that the particular contribution of the author is usually manifested[15]" (GAGNEBIN, 2005, p. 185). Gagnebin understands that Benjamin is engaged in elaborating and defending a certain contemplative approach to the truth. She continues saying that it is not a question of rhetoric or methodology alone that one finds in Benjamin's idea of exhibition; it is "also an apologetics of the speculative specificity of the itinerary of the philosophical thought. Exhibition is not ordering elements previously chosen, it is receiving and gathering those elements through thinking[16]" (GAGNEBIN, 2005, p. 185 - 186). Gagnebein's reflections are particularly in tune with the constellatory reading method proposed in this dissertation. Exhibition, word chosen by the scholar to replace representation, carries an intentionality as she affirms that *Darstellung*/*darstellen* are in the same semantic field as *Auustelleng* (German for Art exhibition). However, Rouanet's translation does not seem to have been a mistake, but a conscious choice which is in accordance with the ideas contained in the Epistemo-Critical Prologue. An example of this conscious (and correct) choice is present when Benjamin places the philosopher between the scientist and the artist. He comments:

> If it is the task of the philosopher to practice the kind of description of the world of ideas which automatically includes and absorbs the empirical world, then he occupies the elevated position between that of the scientist and the *artist*. The latter sketches a restricted image of the world of ideas, which, *because it is conceived as a metaphor,* is at all times definite. The scientist arranges the world with a view to its dispersal in the realm of ideas, by dividing it from within into concepts. He shares the philosopher's interest in the elimination of the merely empirical; while the artist shares with the philosopher the task of representation (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 32).

Considering that representation is a key concept to both literature and philosophy, it is important to briefly reflect upon the meanings of representation considered in this dissertation. Three different authors will be presented at this point due to the diverse views they bring: James O. Young, who reflects specifically on representation of literature, Stuart Hall, who presents four different approaches concerning language and representation, and Gayatri Spivak, who provides a discussion between two German words – *Darstellung* and *Vertetrung* – both of them translated in English as representation. Needless to say that Spivak's thoughts on the subject are particularly related to the discussion above mentioned about the Portuguese and English translations because *Darstellung* is the word used by Walter Benjamin to characterize philosophical writing.

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[15] In Portuguese: "é na exposição/ordenação do material pesquisado que, geralmente, se manifesta a contribuição singular do autor" (GAGNEBIN, 2005, p. 185)

[16] In Portuguese: "… mas também a defesa da especificidade especulativa do itinerário do pensamento filosófico. A exposição não diz respeito apenas à ordenação de elementos já escolhidos, mas ao próprio recolher e acolher desses elementos pelo pensar" (GAGBENIN, 2005, p. 185-186)

In Representation in Literature (1999), James O. Young defends that literary works contribute to the knowledge of the world and that in order to demonstrate how this contribution operates, one needs to restore the concept of representation as central to literary theory. Therefore, he presents a definition: "R is a representation of some object O if and only if R is intended by subject S to stand for O and an audience A (where A is not identical to S) can recognize that A stands for O" (YOUNG, 1999, p. 128). Young's definition sets three conditions for something to be considered a representation: it must *stand for* an object (or a person, an idea), it must be *intentionally* used as a representation, and it must be *recognized* as a representation (YOUNG, 1999, p. 128). He also notes that representations may come in a variety of forms and divides them into pictorial and linguistic representations. Literature stands in the second group. Then, he goes further: "In order to understand how literature represents, we need to distinguish between *semantic representations* and *illustrative representations* (or *illustrations*)" (YOUNG, 1999, p. 136). Young places literary representation as illustration and tries to prove his point by means of three forms of depiction: verbal, descriptive, and formal. He defends that, contrary to common sense, the best novels, the ones which are true representations, are not those which base themselves on statements, but those which are characterized by the effective use of illustrative representation. He concludes: "if one wants to establish that literature has no cognitive value, it is not sufficient to argue that it makes no true statements. Even if literature does not assert truths, it can still reveal them" (YOUNG, 1999, p. 142).

In The Work of Representation (1997), Stuart Hall reflects on three approaches concerning representation through language: the reflective approach, the intentional approach, and the constructionist approach. As the name implies, the first approach understands that meaning lies in the object, idea, event etc. and language is simply a reflection of what exists in the world. The second approach, according to Hall, would be the opposite of the first one. He comments: "It [the intentional approach] holds that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends they should mean" (HALL, 2009, p. 25). The third approach acknowledges the social aspect of language. The material world is an undeniable reality; nevertheless, according to the constructionist approach, the material world is not responsible for conveying meaning, rather, "it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts" (HALL, 2009, p. 25). That does not mean that the system determines meaning, though. "[I]t is social actors who use the conceptual system of their culture and the linguistic and other representational system to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to

communicate about that world meaningfully to each other" (HALL, 2009, p. 25). After defining and reflecting on the third approach, Hall introduces a fourth one based on Michel Foucault, the *discursive approach*. It is possible to say that the discursive approach is based on three ideas: the concept of discourse, the issue of power and knowledge, and the question of the subject. "By 'discourse', Foucault meant a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment… Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language" (HALL, 2009, p. 44). Sexuality, madness, punishment are examples of these discourses. In relation to power and knowledge, Hall underscores that Foucault saw knowledge as inseparably tied up in relations of power "because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice (i.e. to particular bodies)" (HALL, 2009, p. 47). Finally, contrary to the conventional concept that considers the subject as an individual possessing an autonomous, independent consciousness, in the discursive approach, the subject is produced *within discourse*. Hall comments, "it is discourse, not the subject who speaks it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture" (HALL, 2009, p. 55). Discourse produces subject-positions that are specific to specific historical periods and may vary in their attributes (for example, the madman, the homosexual, the woman), but there is no subject outside of discourse and the individual cannot be the source or author of power/knowledge. Hall concludes:

> Individuals may differ as to their social class, gendered, 'racial' and ethnic characteristics (among other factors), but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, *subjected* themselves to its rules, and hence become the *subjects of its power/knowledge* (HALL, 2009, p. 56).

In the first part of her text Can the Subaltern Speak (1982, 1983?), Gayatri Spivak makes a relevant review of a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze published in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (1977). At a certain point, Spivak observes that Deleuze falls into the trap of overlooking the contradictory existing in a position that values the concrete experience of the oppressed and, at the same time, is uncritical about the role of the intellectual. Spivak uses one of Deleuze statements – in which he compares theory with a tool box, saying that it has nothing to do with the signifier – to show that the philosopher himself commits a verbal relapse when he affirms that there is no more representation, only action. She comments:

> If this is indeed Deleuze's argument, his articulation of it is problematic. Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy. Since theory is also only 'action' the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group. Indeed, the subject is not seen as a representative consciousness (one re-presenting reality adequately). These two senses of representation – within state formation and the law, on the one hand, and in subject-predication , on the other – are related but irreducibly discontinuous (SPIVAK, 1988, p. 70).

In order to elaborate her arguments, Spivak makes use of the German language and reflects on the meanings of the words *Darstellung* and *Vertretung* as Karl Marx uses them in a passage of his book *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852). Then, she continues affirming that in a post-Marxist description of power, an older debate takes place: "between representation or rhetoric as tropology and as persuasion. *Darstellen* belongs to the first constellation, *vertreten* – with stronger suggestion of substitution – to the second" (SPIVAK, 1988, p. 71). Characteristic of her critical reflections, she concludes: "Again, they [*Darstellung* and *Vertretung*] are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act, and know for themselves, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics" (SPIVAK, 1988, p. 71). In *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990), Spivak further elaborates on the distinction between the two German terms. She explains that *Vertretung* means representation in the political sense (proxy), referring to that which takes place in the parliament and *Darstellung* means representation in the sense of *placing there* (portrait). She observes that even though there are two ways of representing, "in the act of representing politically, you actually represent yourself and your constituency in the portrait sense as well" (SPIVAK, 1990, p. 108). According to Spivak, the discussion that really matters these days is not about essentialism or anti-essentialism – once the subject is always centered, always talking from somewhere – but about those two ways of representing. She concludes:

> The relationship between the two kinds of representation brings in, also, the use of essentialism because no representation can take place – no *Vertretung* representation – can take place without essentialism. What it has to take into account is that the "essence" that is being represented is a representation of the other kind, *Darstellung* (SPIVAK, 1990, p. 109).

Having examined diverse views of representation, I now return to Walter Benjamin's thoughts on the matter. He affirms that the philosopher occupies the place between the scientist and the artist. He does so in order to question the instrumentalization of philosophy

that reduces it to a mere acquisition of *knowledge*. Benjamin refuses this idea; he is engaged in philosophical *truth*. He states: "Inasmuch as it is determined by this concept of system, philosophy is in danger of accommodating itself to a syncretism which weaves a spider's web between separate kinds of knowledge in an attempt to snare the truth as it were something which came flying from outside" (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 28). Alternatively, Benjamin puts forward that the philosophical thought and writing should be attentive, made of new beginnings and ever returning to its original object. "This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of *contemplation*" (BENJAMIM, 1998, p. 28, my emphasis). Benjamin's choice to relate contemplation to the philosophical thinking foreshadows the concept of constellation he is going to present later in his text. Such argument is complemented with the metaphor chosen by the philosopher in order to illustrate his thesis: the mosaic. Benjamin compares the philosophical contemplation to the object and comments:

> Both are made up of the distinct and disparate; and nothing could bear more powerful testimony to the transcendent force of the sacred image and the truth itself. The value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea, and the brilliance of the representation depends as much on this value as the brilliance of the mosaic does on the quality of the glass paste (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 28-29).

Mosaic and constellations are brought by Walter Benjamin as means to express how ideas are represented. Unlike the system, the differences between the elements which compose them are not ignored. "Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars" (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 34), declares Benjamin. In Um olhar constelar sobre o pensamento de Walter Benjamin (2000), Georg Otte and Miriam Lídia Volpe comment that when the philosopher chooses the German *Sternbild* instead of the latinism *Konstellation*, he is doing so in order to highlight the relevance of the imagery as *meaning making*. Constellation for him is not simply an ensemble, but an *image* where "the relationship between its elements, the stars, is not motivated only by their proximity, but also by the possibility of meaning which might be given to it[17]" (OTTE; VOLPE, 2000, p. 37). The image which can be considered a constellation is a dialectic one; one in which *what-has-been* and *now* encounter and reveal their presence to the attentive contemplator. In the "N" convolute of *The Arcades Project* (1999), he says:

[17] In Portuguese: a relação entre seus componentes, as estrelas, não seja apenas motivada pela proximidade entre elas, mas também pela possibilidade de significado que lhe possa ser atribuída" (OTTE; VOLPE, 1998, p. 37).

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression, but image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language" (BENJAMIN, 1999, p. 462).

Walter Benjamin never developed a definition for his concept of dialectical image. Still, in Method and time: Benjamin's dialectical images (2006), Max Pensky argues that this construction which combines two opposite terms was the quintessence of Benjamin's method and his coining the term was a critique to the means of historical interpretation. "The primary locus of the term 'dialectical image' is thus itself the establishment of a (eminently dialectical) tension between two terms which, developed to their extreme, suddenly overcome this opposition" (PENSKY, 2006, p. 179). Besides, the Arcades Project was, for Benjamin, an exercise of radical historiography, "a reservoir of raw materials for the construction of images: images that would 'spring forth' from constructions of historical material itself" (PENSKY, 2006, p. 180). This dissertation is not dealing with historiography, but with literature. Yet, the idea that literary works may become repositories of elements which would "spring forth" in order to form images where what-has-been and now meet and form a constellation proved effective in the novels here analyzed, actualizing Benjamin's method.

Sérgio Rouanet proceeds to explain that, for Benjamin, "it is possible to reformulate the relation which exists between the empirical reality and the world of ideas. That which gathers around ideas, actualizing them, are not any elements, rather, they are extreme elements, or extreme aspects of elements[18]" (ROUANET, 1984, p. 14). Rouanet observes how Benjamin applies his theory of ideas to the aesthetic experience and gets two results from it: "First, he demonstrates the autonomy of the artistic genres – taken as ideas – and their relationship with particular works. Second, he obtains an instrument for the specific investigation of a genre: the German Tragic Drama, which he reckoned as an idea[19]" (ROUANET, 1984, p. 14). Still according to the Brazilian commentator, "such as other genres, the tragic drama is an idea, thus, it must observe the following: it ought to be

[18] In Portuguese: Podemos assim reformular a relação entre a empiria e as ideias. O que se agrupa em torno das ideias, atualizando-as, não são quaisquer elementos, e sim os elementos extremos, ou os aspectos extremos dos elementos (ROUANET, 1984, p. 14).

[19] In Portuguese: "Em primeiro lugar, demonstra a autonomia dos gêneros artísticos – considerados como ideias – e sua relação com as obras individuais. Em segundo lugar, obtém um instrumento para investigação específica de um desses gêneros: o drama barroco, visto como ideia" (ROUANET, 1984, p 14).

represented, through redemption, through concept, by its elements, from their extremes[20]" (ROUANET, 1984, p. 15). For the present dissertation, genre will not be considered an idea – although it was taken into consideration when the choosing of the works which comprise the literary *corpora*; the proposition is that the metaphors, tropes, and images presented and analyzed in the novels carry within them an anti-colonial idea. D*ecolonizing* is the truth which every novel bears and that a constellatory reading of their extreme elements will reveal. Also, it is worth noting that the constellations chosen to be analyzed revealed themselves after an attentive, repetitive, and meticulous observation. The same kind of contemplation which Benjamin understood as necessary, with a continual pausing for breath and then returning to the same object. "This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation. For, by pursuing different levels of meaning in its examination of one single object it receives both the incentive to begin again and the justification for its irregular rhythm" (BENJAMIN, 1998, p. 28). Lastly, in *Negative Dialects* (1966), Theodor W. Adorno calls the attention to the importance of the externality – the constellation, the image – which the internal aspect of the idea needs. He states: "[t]he object opens itself to a monadological insistence, to a sense of the constellation in which it stands; the possibility of internal immersion requires that externality. But such an immanent generality of something individual is objective as sedimented history" (ADORNO, 2004, 163). These criteria were adopted when choosing the four novels which comprise the literary *corpus* of this dissertation. The fact that all novels were written by Caribbean women as well as the strength of the images they present was paramount to my choice. The external – literary genre – and internal – the metaphors and images – were taken into consideration when defining the constellations to be analyzed in the next two chapters. With this in mind, the following words by Adorno proved compelling:

> Becoming aware of the constellation in which a thing stands is tantamount to deciphering the constellation which, having come to be, it bares within it. The *chorismos* [separation] of without and within is historically qualified in turn. The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in relation to other objects – by the actualization and concentration of something that is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object (ADORNO, 2004, p. 163).

[20] In Portuguese: "Como os outros gêneros, o drama barroco é uma ideia, e vale para ele o que vale para as outras ideias: essa ideia tem de ser representada, através da "salvação", pelo conceito, dos seus elementos, a partir dos extremos (ROUANET, 1984, p. 16)

1.3 **"Decolonialization Is the Encounter Between Two Congenitally Antagonistic Forces": considerations on Postcolonial Studies and the Decolonial Turn**

For a while now, there has been an important debate over Postcolonialism and Decoloniality in Latin American and Caribbean studies. This section of the chapter will be dedicated to discussing some of the issues relevant to this debate. Needless to say, one section in this dissertation is not enough to cover all the aspects involved, but it will serve to mark the theoretical position adopted here. Postcolonial theory will be addressed in the first part and the second will be dedicated to Decolonial studies. In the third part, a dialogue between the two and the theoretical framework of this dissertation will be exposed.

1.3.1 Considerations on Postcolonial Studies

In *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2000), Ashcroft *et al* state that Post-colonialism was a term adopted by historians after the Second World War to define and deal with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. In this sense, the term post-colonial was related to chronology and mainly to the processes of de-colonizations that took place after WWII, affecting countries which were colonized by England and France (ASHCROFT *et al*, 2004, p. 1). From the late 1970s, though, the term has been used in academic circles in order to qualify various instances and aspects involved in these processes (one can easily think about postcolonial literatures, postcolonial critic, and postcolonial theory, for example). This theoretical shift originated what is addressed in this dissertation as a *postcolonial condition*. In *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (2012), Robert Young states that "[t]he phrase 'postcolonial condition' is usually invoked with respect to the particular state, as well as the common circumstance, of the many colonies that were freed from colonial rule during the second half of the twentieth century and are now living the legacy of colonialism"[21]. In The postcolonial condition, the decolonial option, and the post-socialist intervention (2019), Madina Tlostanova defends that postcoloniality should be

[21] Found in: https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199560981.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199560981-e-30#:~:text=The%20phrase%20'the%20postcolonial%20condition,on%20the%20legacy%20of%20colonialism., last accessed in June 3, 2020.

regarded as *condition* due to the fact that colonization deprived the colonized and formerly colonized of the possibility of choosing.

> The starting point of my reflections on postcolonialism and its old and new discontents is the idea that postcoloniality should be regarded as a *condition*, a certain human existential situation which we have often no power of choosing. While decoloniality is an *option*, consciously chosen as a politcal, ethical, and epistemic positionality and an entry point into agency, the postcolonial condition is more of an objective given, a geopolitical and geohistorical situation of many people coming from former colonies (TLOSTANOVA, 2019, p. 165).

Both Young's and Tlostanova's thoughts about the concept of postcolonial condition point to the objective, material aspects of colonization and its aftermaths. Even though their observations are relevant enough to be considered here, the viewpoint adopted in this dissertation is the one that takes into consideration the postcolonial condition in its epistemological aspect. In The Postcolonial Condition, a chapter from *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel* (2010), Phyllis Taoua remarks that, from the 1980s on, the postcolonial became an intellectual trend in the First World Academia and influenced intellectuals in the Third World. Taoua points out that some of the works now considered seminal in Postcolonial Studies were written and edited by professors in universities in the U.S. She comments: "The way these 'First World' sources of inspiration and institutional structures shaped the point of departure for postcolonial studies raised substantial concerns about the relevance of this kind of theory and criticism for those who live and write in the 'Third World'" (TAOUA, 2010, p. 209). In order to emphasize the theoretical aspect of postcolonial studies, it is worth noting the considerations of Ella Shohat. In Notes on the "Postcolonial" (1992/2006), regarding postcolonial discourse: "it evokes the contemporary theoretical writings, placed in both the First World and the Third World generally on the left and that attempt to transcend the (presumed) binaries of Third Worldist militancy" (SHOHAT, 2006, p. 238). In the same vein, postcolonial condition in this dissertation will be regarded mainly as theoretical and artistic attitude.

Another issue to be considered is the use of the prefix *post*. In the early days of the discipline, there were heated debates over the use of the prefix with or without hyphen and whether the *post* in post-/postcolonial would mean *after*. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* brings an attempt to clarify the matter: "There is no strict general practice, but the hyphenated version is often used to refer to the condition of life after the end of colonialism while the non-hyphenated version denotes the theory that attempts to make sense of this

condition"[22]. In *Post-colonial Studies Reader* (1995), Ashcroft *et al* defend the use of the hyphenated option. They advocate that:

> the hyphenated form of the word 'post-colonial' has come to stand for both the material effects of colonization and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world. We use the term 'post-colonial' to represent the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges throughout this diverse range of societies, in their institutions and their discursive practices (ASHCROFT *et al*, 2003, p. 3).

This dissertation will adopt the pair post-colonial/postcolonial proposed by the encyclopedia in order to highlight the argument that the postcolonial condition is mainly an intellectual/discursive movement which was originated inside academic spaces; thus differing from the historical/material anti-colonial struggles which took place throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

In Histories, Empires and the Post-Colonial Moment (1996), Catherine Hall calls attention to the fact that colonization is a two-way event, which means that both colonizer and colonized are connected through histories. Most often than not, after the process of de-colonization starts, even though the evidences of colonization are present everywhere, some of these histories are forgotten "in the desire to throw off the embarrassing reminders of the Empire" (HALL C., 1996, p. 67). In the case of Britain these reminders are, for instance, in the name of streets, the sugar in the tea, the coffee they drink, among others. Hall believes that, instead of forgetting, it is necessary to start a work of remembering empires differently (HALL C., 1996, p.66). The suggestion of this dissertation is that postcolonial writings and readings are efficient strategies used in order to avoid this erasure. However, if we are to consider the multiplicity of colonial and post-colonial experiences, how does one overcome the challenge of defining and categorizing a work of literature as postcolonial? Ashcroft *et al* respond that what postcolonial literatures have in common, apart from their regional specificities is that "they emerge in their present form out of the experience of colonization and assert themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumption of the imperial centre" (ASCHCROFT *et al*, 2004, p. 2). In other words, postcolonial literature suggests a political position deeply rooted in resistance. Thus, in the core of postcolonial writings is a desire to (re)view and

[22] Found in: QUAYSON, Ato. Postcolonialism, 1998. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/postcolonialism/v-1, last accessed on May 26, 2020.

(re)write the conventions delimited by the former colonizer, a desire to recuperate the silenced voices and to break free from the bars of exoticism.

1.3.1.1 The Postcolonial References: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak

In Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues (2014), Gurminder K. Bhambra lists three important characteristics about the Postcolonial studies. First, it was developed mainly around the ideas of three intellectuals: Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri C. Spivak. Second, even though there are important works which address social-economic issues, the majority tends to focus on the cultural area. Third, it emerged as a consequence of the works of "diasporic scholars from the Middle East and South Asia and, for the most part, refers back to those locations and their imperial interlocutors (Europe and the West)" (BHAMBRA, 2014, p.115). Bhambra's analyzes of the contributions of the three postcolonial intellectuals she has selected will be useful to the dialogue between the postcolonial and decolonial studies proposed in this section of the chapter. Bhambra focuses first on Edward Said, who is considered by many a precursor of the postcolonial studies, the first one to address the question that later became the quest of a whole discipline. According to her, *Orientalism* (1977),

> not only presented a thorough-going critique of the arcane discipline of Oriental Studies, but opened up the question of the production of knowledge from a global perspective…He unsettled the terrain of argument concerned with the 'universal' by demonstrating how the idea of the universal was based both on an analytic bifurcation of the world and an elision of that bifurcation. This double displacement removed the 'other' *from* the production of an effective history of modernity. History became the product of the West in its actions upon others (BHAMBRA, 2014, p. 116).

In E*dward Said and the Post-colonial* (2001), Bill Ashcroft and Hussein Kadhim had already acknowledged Said's role concerning the postcolonial studies, considering *Orientalism* a seminal text in the area. "[*Orientalism*] stands as a reference point, a marker at an imagined junction of the many tributaries that had been feeding the growing awareness of post-colonial cultural production since World War II" (ASHCROFT & KADHIM, 2001, p. x). Moreover, they also pointed to Edward Said's contradictory relationship with the

postcolonial studies despite his position as one of the pioneers in the field. In fact, Ashcroft and Kadhim called attention to the controversial nature of this area of studies:

> There is possibly no other contemporary movement beset by such a range of definitions and interpretations, and, consequently, such a multi-facetted collection of objections and controversies. In what other field of study do we see greater confusion and anxiety about its very name; what other theory experiences such complaint and condemnation from the very people whose names have come to be associated with it? And yet, just as the contradictions of Said's work are a sign of its vitality, so too, the paradoxes and plurality characterizing post-colonial studies are a sign of its dynamism and strength (ASHCROFT & KADHIM, 2001, p. x).

The second intellectual addressed by Bhambra is Hommi Bhabha. She considers Bhabha and his collection of essays *The Location of Culture* (1994) another landmark for Postcolonial studies. According to her, Bhabha's postcolonial theory is not about establishing separatist trajectories or parallel interpretation. "The issue is more about re-inscribing 'other' cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives – both in historical terms and theoretical ones – rather than simply re-naming or re-evaluating the content of these other 'inheritances'" (BHAMBRA, 2014, p. 116). In Moving Beyond Edward Said: Homi Bhabha and the Problem of Postcolonial Representation (2012), Summit Chakrabarti observes that Bhabha, with his postmodern techniques of reading, confronts both the discursive systems of the West and some of its critique. She comments:

> Homi Bhabha, with his postmodern tools, has taken this technique of disruption to new heights. As a major theoretician from the Third World, the pressure that Bhabha has exerted with his unique ideas of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity, has not only challenged Western discursivity, but has also finally consolidated the position of the Third World postcolonial intellectual in the First (CHAKRABARTI, 2012, p. 12).

Homi Bhabha himself shows awareness of the complexity of the postcolonial perspective as he addresses it:

> The postcolonial perspective – as it is being developed by cultural historians and literary theorists – departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or 'dependency' theory. As a mode of analysis, it attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres (BHABHA, 1994, p. 173).

The third influential figure for the development of postcolonial studies discussed by Bhambra is Gayatri Spivak and her text *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988). Bhambra mentions how postcolonial scholarship has been dedicated to revealing and examining the assumptions made by the dominant discourse in relation to *the other*, and how those assumptions affect the way we make sense of the worlds we live in. According to her, Spivak's major contribution to this postcolonial quest is that she addresses "[intellectual] Western efforts to problematize the subject and, in the process, questions how the Third World subject is represented in Western discourse" (BHAMBRA, 2014, p. 117). This contribution can be seen in *Can the Subaltern Speak*. In the preface of the Brazilian Portuguese translation to the text, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida observes that Spivak elaborates a fine critique on Western intellectuals – specially Deleuze and Foucault – questioning the discursive practices of the so called postcolonial intellectual and posits a self-critique when she addresses the Subaltern Studies group, which follows Antonio Gramsci concept of subaltern classes. Conscious of the role of the intellectual who is engaged with the postcolonial and subaltern studies, Spivak explicits this intellectual position as a position of power and, because of that, every resistance act which takes place in the name of the subaltern is itself imbricated in the hegemonic discourse. Almeida comments:

> In this way, Spivak unveils the uncomfortable place and the complicity of the intellectual who believes he can speak for the other and, through this other, build the discourse of resistance. Spivak argues that adopting this course of action reproduces the same structures of power and oppression and maintains the subaltern silenced, without providing them a position, a space from where they can speak and, above all, be heard. Spivak, therefore, alerts to the risk of creating the other and the subaltern just as objects of knowledge for intellectuals who mostly crave to speak for the other (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 14)[23].

Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak were considered here because their works are regarded as landmarks of the Postcolonial Studies, not only in the English language, but throughout the world. Needless to say, there are many others whose thoughts are definitely important to the area. Some of them appear in this dissertation, but the fact is that numerous relevant names have been left out. Postcolonial studies continue to be an

[23] In Portuguese: Dessa forma, Spivak desvela o lugar incômodo e a cumplicidade do intelectual que julga poder falar pelo outro e, por meio dele, construir um discurso de resistência. Agir dessa forma, Spivak argumenta, é reproduzir as estruturas de poder e opressão, mantendo o subalterno silenciado, sem lhe oferecer uma posição, um espaço de onde possa falar e, principalmente, no qual possa ser ouvido. Spivak alerta, portanto, para o perigo de se construir o outro e o subalterno apenas como objetos do conhecimento por parte de intelectuais que almejam meramente falar pelo outro (ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 14).

important and innovative field of research even after almost half a century of reflections and productions.

1.3.2 Considerations on the Decolonial Turn

In Decolonización y el Giro Decolonial (2008), Nelson Maldonado-Torres establishes some important arguments related to the topic to be addressed in this part of the chapter. He explains how the horror caused by the destruction spread by colonization ended up giving birth to decolonization. This colonial horror led to a decolonial attitude, which was the base for an ethical-political posture Maldonado-Torres calls *decolonial reason*. Both decolonial attitude and reason are cornerstones to the *decolonial turn*, "which proposes that decolonization (and not modernity) is a project that is not yet accomplished on a global level" (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008, p. 61). Based on the ideas of Maldonado-Torres, decolonization and decolonial are not to be considered synonyms in this dissertation. Decolonization begins right at the outset of colonization; in this sense, it is possible to conclude that there was not one process of colonization that did not have its decolonial counterpart. Decolonial resistance (or attitude) – which can be found, for example, in language, religious practices, and rebellious movements – originated the decolonial knowledge (or reason), and not the contrary. Therefore, decolonization is first and foremost an organic phenomenon and not an intellectual or academic one. When reflecting on the subject, Maldonado-Torres observes:

> Decolonization is no longer a strange reference or a reference to past political processes today. We do not owe this only to the spread of postcolonial studies in the United States and Latin America, but we see the term decolonization used in reference to the defiant presence of Chicanas/os, Puerto Rican, and migrants from Latin America within the U.S. society, and in Latin America, by both Afro-descendant and indigenous groups, both in Ecuador, as in Bolivia and Brazil (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008, p. 63)[24].

[24] In Spanish: La descolonización ya no es hoy una referencia extraña o una referencia a procesos políticos del pasado. No le debemos a esto sólo a la propagación de los estudios poscoloniales en Estados Unidos y America Latina, sino que vemos el termino descolonización usado en referencia a procesos políticos actuales tanto en Estados Unidos en relación a la presencia desafiante de chicana/os, puertorriqueña/os y migrantes de America Latina en el seno de la sociedad estadunidense, y en America Latina, por grupos de afro-descendientes y indígenas tanto en Ecuador, como en Bolívia y Brasil (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008, p. 63).

The decolonial turn, on the other hand, similar to other turns, is an intellectual movement. In Thinking Through the Decolonial Turn (2011), Maldonado-Torres elaborates a brief genealogy and sees that the shift that led to decoloniality took place in the twentieth century. According to him, the turn was announced by W.E. DuBois in the beginning of the last century and made explicit first by people like Franz Fanon, Aimée Césaire, and later intellectuals like Enrique Dussel, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chela Sandoval. Maldonado-Torres also considers that the end of the European Age, with the two World Wars and the second wave of decolonization which took place in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other territories consolidated the decolonial turn. Because decolonization was there since the beginning of colonization, anti-colonial and decolonial practices – be they political, intellectual or artistic – also existed before the decolonial turn; however, it is worth mentioning that, it is during the twentieth century that those practices achieve self-awareness and local and global exchanging as never before. Self-reflection and coalition are the features that characterize the decoloniality as a turn. Commenting on some attributes of the decolonial turn, Maldonado-Torres states:

> There have been and there are differences and tensions among figures and movements that advance the decolonial turn. The decolonial turn does not refer to a single theoretical school, but rather points to a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern (as well as postmodern and information) age, and decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2011, p. 2).

Three important figures of the decolonial turn will be briefly presented here. The choice of following intellectuals proposed by Bhambra is due to the relevance of their ideas to the research that led to this dissertation. Granted, this choice does not cover the complexity of the decolonial turn; however, it provides a good example of the diversity of voices that can be found there.

1.3.2.1 The Decolonial References: Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, and María Lugones

Aníbal Quijano is probably the most prominent scholar associated with the Decolonial turn. The Peruvian sociologist developed the concept of *coloniality of power*, which influenced a generation of intellectuals of various areas engaged in the decolonial project. Quijano was a prolific writer, having published numerous books and articles in which he

discussed issues concerning Latin America and the Caribbean, and their relation to the colonial/imperial centers of power. Some of his texts stand out as foundations for the decolonial turn, for example: Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality (1991), Colonialidade del poder, cultura y conocimiento en America Latina (1998), and Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America (2000). According to him, the period of conquest of cultures and societies which are now known as Latin America and the Caribbean inaugurated a new world order, serving as a model for other geographic regions. More than five hundred years later this new order reached its peak, achieving the status of a global power which comprises virtually the whole planet. Quijano shows that this new model of power was built upon two basis: the racial superiority of white Europeans over blacks and indigenous peoples and a new organization of labor. The sociologist also claims that the idea of race as it is conceived from modernity on started together with the colonization of America and served as means of classification for domination. Race became so powerful an instrument of domination that terms such as Portuguese or European, which previously defined only regions of origin, turned into new identities that expressed hierarchies. This is not to say that prior to the colonization of America, the dominance of one people over another did not exist, but the creation of race as a biological/colonial category brought legitimacy to the relation of domination that began with the conquest of the *New World* and has lasted to this day. Also, during the constitution of America, the ideology of European racial superiority – Western Europeans, to be more precise – was linked to new forms of labor control; this association gave birth to world capitalism. On this matter, Quijano observes:

> each form of labor control was associated with a particular race. Consequently, the control of a specific form of labor could be, at the same time, the control of a specific group of dominated people. A new technology of domination/exploitation, in this case race/labor, was articulated in such a way that the two elements appeared naturally associated. *Until now, this strategy has been exceptionally successful* (QUIJANO, 2000, p. 537, my emphasis).

In Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking (2007), Walter Mignolo sums up Quijano's concept of colonial power. He says:

> In Quijano's seminal article, the colonial matrix of power has been described in four interrelated domains: control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources); control of authority (institution, army); control of gender and sexuality (family, education) and control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education and formation of subjectivity) (MIGNOLO, 2007, p. 156).

Walter Mignolo is the second intellectual of the decolonial turn to be discussed in this section. As Quijano, Mignolo has several works that are now considered influential to the area. Among them are: *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking* (2003, 2012), The geopolitics of knowledge and colonial difference (2002), and *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Option* (2011). Gloria Anzaldúa and Aníbal Quijano are his main influences. In an interview to E-International Relations, Mignolo mentions that he learned the ideas of colonial difference and border thinking with Anzaldúa:

> If reading Roland Barthes in Argentina motivated me to go to Paris to study under his supervision, Gloria Anzaldúa, who I did not know at the time of course …, motivated me to change direction: from semiology through a long route to the encounter with modernity/coloniality, and, consequently, decoloniality (MIGNOLO, 2017, p. 1).

Mignolo is indeed responsible for further developing Anzaldúa's concept of border thinking. His thoughts on the subject are addressed in the next chapter of this dissertation. The encounter with Aníbal Quijano led Mignolo to another of his most powerful arguments, i.e, that coloniality is not to be considered apart from the project of modernity. "[Aníbal Quijano] … taught us that modernity was half of the story hiding its darker side, coloniality. Thus, modernity/coloniality. And he taught us that decolonilization after the Cold War was no longer motivated to 'take hold of the State'" (MIGNOLO, 2007, p. 1). The use of nationalism by the local elites as an excuse to perpetuate colonial power showed that coloniality is indeed an epistemic issue and the efforts to decolonization must include an epistemic reconstitution, which Mignolo called *epistemic disobedience* (2011). His approach on this matter will also be treated in the next chapter.

Colonial difference will be briefly addressed because it is an important concept in Mignolo's oeuvre and also for this dissertation. The idea of colonial difference is grounded in Quijano's concept of coloniality of power and refers to the establishing of hierarchies between Western European (modern) and non-Western European (colonial) cultures, where Western European racial, moral, artistic, philosophical… values are considered superior to the ones produced by the non-Western world. In an interview to IHU Online, Mignolo explains that terms like *First World*, *Third World*, and *Developing Countries* do not describe ontological differences and that it is important to bear in mind that those classifications are epistemological, developed as a strategy to undermine regions and peoples. Colonial difference considered the region of Latin America inferior to Europe right from the start;

"since Buffon and Hegel [Latin America] is an inferior part of the world, with its population and its fauna, with its crocodiles and its swamps[25]" (MIGNOLO, 2013, n.p). In The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference (2001), Mignolo brings colonial difference to the center of the discourses of modernity, postmodernity, and world-system, concluding that "[t]he colonial difference, in short, refers to the changing faces of colonial differences throughout the history of the modern/colonial world-system and brings to the foreground the planetary dimension of human history silenced by discourses centering on modernity, postmodernity, and Western civilitazion" (MIGNOLO, 2001, n.p.). The argument of this dissertation is that even though the authors of the novels analyzed here live in the U.S., their works are literary representations of lives, fauna, and flora that inhabit this rich space of colonial difference.

The third decolonial intellectual to be contemplated in this chapter is the Argentinian sociologist and feminist philosopher María Lugones. Similar to Walter Mignolo, Lugone's major influences were Aníbal Quijano and Gloria Anzaldúa. Amongst her main works, it is important to highlight *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (2003), The Coloniality of Gender (2008), and Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms (2014). Lugones' main contribution to the Decolonial turn was the concept of *modern/colonial gender system*. In her article The coloniality of gender, Lugones presents a reading of Quijano's coloniality of power and points out that the Peruvian intellectual had a limited understanding of gender, which caused him to unwillingly accept its hegemonic meaning. "Quijano's lenses also assume patriarchal and heterossexual understandings of the disputes over control of sex, its resources, and products. Quijano accepts the global, Eurocentered, capitalist understanding of what gender is about" (LUGONES, 2008, p. 2). Lugones defends that in accepting this modern/colonial concept of gender, Quijano's coloniality of power fails to unveil the ways colonized women of color were subjected and disempowered.

On the other hand, while addressing different works of authors such as Julie Greenberg, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Paula Gunn Allen, and Oyeronke Oyewumi, Lugones takes into account the concept of gender based on a sexual dimorphism was forced upon peoples by the modern/colonial system, regulating different aspects of their lives, from the organization

[25] In Portuguese: "desde Buffon e Hegel, [a América Latina] é uma zona inferior do mundo com suas populações e suas faunas, seus crocodilos e seus pântanos" (MIGNOLO, 2013). Taken from: http://www.ihuonline.unisinos.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5253&secao#:~:text=Walter%20Mignolo%20%2D%20A%20diferen%C3%A7a%20colonial,b%C3%A1sico%20do%20projeto%20modernidade%2Fcolonialidade.&text=A%20diferen%C3%A7a%20colonial%20%C3%A9%20uma,popula%C3%A7%C3%B5es%20e%20regi%C3%B5es%20do%20mundo. last accessed on August 3, 2020.

of reproduction to social structure. Two examples brought by Lugones in her text are important to be highlighted here. First, the case of intersexed people, who in colonial/modern societies are forced to choose between becoming a man or a woman as the law does not recognize intersexed status. The Argentinian professor remembers that "as Gunn Allen and others make clear, intersexed individuals were recognized in many tribal societies prior to colonization without assimilation to the sexual binary" (LUGONES, 2008, p. 7). Second, the idea of patriarchy as a transcultural category. In order to prove that the previous statement is a fallacy, Lugones dialogues with the Nigerian scholar, Oyeronke Oyewumi, who affirms that no gender system was in place in Yoruba society. "The assumption that Yoruba society included gender as an organizing principle is another case of Western dominance in the documentation and interpretation of the world, one that is facilitated by the West's global material dominance" (LUGONES, 2008, p. 8). Comprehending that gender played a different role in pre-colonial societies is crucial to understand that gender is – along with race – constitutive of the colonial system. Lugones adds:

> Considering critically both biological dimorphism and the position that gender socially constructs biological sex is pivotal to understand the scope, depth, and characteristics of the colonial/modern gender system. The sense is that the reduction of the gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for European/"whites" and colonized/ "non-white" peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender, both powerful fictions" (LUGONES, 2008, p. 12).

Finally, as Lugones alerts, considering both race and gender as constitutive of coloniality enables women of color, who find themselves in the intersection (the border) between race and gender, to finally *be seen*. She concludes, "[w]e need to understand the organization of the social so as to make visible our collaboration with the systematic racialized gender violence, so as to come to an inevitable recognition of it in our maps of reality" (LUGONES, 2008, p. 16).

1.3.3 From Postcolonial Studies to the Decolonial Turn

Both Postcolonial studies and the Decolonial turn play significant roles in this dissertation as they are part of the theoretical frameworks upon which the analysis of the

selected novels featured in the next two chapters are based. Both Postcolonial studies and the Decolonial turn question the claim of Western Europe as a paradigm of universality and reveal the system which attempted to erase and silence a diverse body of knowledges. Nevertheless, after a while, the ideas of the Decolonial turn became predominant for some reasons. While postcolonial intellectuals place Modernity in the 18th century, when England and France became imperial powers, decolonial thinkers, many of them coming from Latin America and the Caribbean, consider that Modernity starts together with the colonization of the American continent. In Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introductions to the Frankfurt Lectures) (1993), Enrique Dussel understands that modernity must be seen as a dialectical phenomenon started in the last part of the 15th century:

> According to my central thesis, 1492 is the date of the "birth" of modernity, although its gestation involves a preceding "intrauterine" process of growth. The possibility of modernity originated in the free cities of medieval Europe, which were centers of enormous creativity. But modernity as such was "born" when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself (DUSSEL, 1993, p. 66).

Walter Mignolo also considers coloniality as constitutive of modernity. In *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), he observes: "the 'discovery' of America and the genocide of Indians and African slaves are the very foundation of 'modernity', more so than the French or Industrial Revolutions. Better yet, they constitute the darker and hidden face of modernity, 'coloniality'" (MIGNOLO, 2005, p.xiii). In addition to defining coloniality as a constitutive aspect of modernity, the decolonial turn introduced the idea of *americanity*, a term which was coined by Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein. In Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system (1992), they propose that capitalism would not have become a global system without the creation of America as a geopolitical entity. Quijano and Wallerstein argue that, differently from peripheral zones in Europe, where the local population was able to establish their resistance as a certain notion of historicity, in the Americas, there was such a widespread destruction of the indigenous peoples and forced importation of Africans that it is accurate to say that economic and political institutions in the region were built up out of nothing. Americanity, then, became a new model of exploration which was based on "coloniality, ethnicity, racism, and the concept of newness itself" (QUIJANO & WALLERSTEIN, 1992, p. 550). Another important aspect to be considered here is the difference between the concepts of colonialism and coloniality. In Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality (2016), Nelson Maldonado-Torres establishes some

differences between those two concepts. While colonialism is usually referred to episodes which can be empirically situated inside geopolitical, socio-historical, and economical conditions, coloniality and decoloniality "refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonization and decolonization" (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2016, p. 10). Thus, contrary to colonialism, coloniality is not limited to specific events and it is not extinguished once colonial occupation ends, rather, it is a rationality upon which the idea of modernity was established. Finally, the main focus of the intellectuals committed to the Decolonial Turn is to investigate in which ways coloniality was instilled in the minds and bodies of the americanized populations and how those populations have been resisting it. This decolonial approach resonated with the novels analyzed in the next chapters.

1.4 **"I Had Not Experienced Any of Them Directly": Marriane Hirsch's Concept of Postmemory and Its Use in Latin American and the Caribbean Context**

When Jamaican writer Margaret Cezair-Thompnson, was asked whether, like the protagonist of her novel, had ever heard the voice of her ancestors, she replied;

> I don't hear them the way Jean does in the book. But I live with an awareness of those who came before, their mistakes and their triumphs. Their accumulated experiences amount to something and guide us. Many of us have internalized the voices of our parents, for instance; their words come to us sometimes about something quite trivial, at other times when we're confused or in distress[26].

The question posed by the Random House Reader's Circle, and above all, Cezair-Thompson's answer finds echo in many other Caribbean scholars and authors. The awareness of an experience which is *not really theirs* but of previous generations seems to be a recurrent trope for a great part of the Caribbean Literature. Another author to address the role of memory is Edwidge Danticat. In an interview on the occasion of the release of her book *Brother, I'm Dying* (2007), a piece of life narrative centered on the lives of her father and uncle, she states:

[26] The interview given by Cezair-Thompson to the Random House Readers Circle was published as part of the Reader's Guide of her novel *The True History of Paradise*. (p. 339 - 342)

> [*Brother, I'm Dying*] was a book I felt I had to write, for my uncle who died in immigration custody as well as for my father who died at around the same time and for the future generation, including my daughter, who was born in the midst of all that. It was indeed very therapeutic to write. I've said this *before I think of Brother, I'm Dying as not a me-moir, but a nou-moir, a we-moir; it's not just my story but all these stories intertwined*[27] (italics are mine).

Marianne Hirsch uses the term *postmemory* to refer to the phenomenon mentioned by Cezaire-Thompson and Danticat. In her book *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (2012), Hirsch describes how the *generation after* deals with the personal, collective, cultural trauma which they did not experienced and, yet, they *remember*.

> Certainly we do not have "memories" of others' experiences, and certainly, one person's lived memories cannot be transformed into another's. Postmemory is not identical to memory: it is "post"; but at the same time, I argue, it approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 31).

Hirsch adds that those remembrances were passed on through stories, images and behaviors those of the generation of postmemory grew up with. "These 'not memories,' communicated in 'flashes of imagery,' and these 'broken refrains,' transmitted through 'the language of the body,' are precisely the stuff of the *postmemory* of trauma, and of its return" (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 31). In this section, the concept of postmemory will be taken into consideration as a common feature of the four authors whose literary works are analyzed in this dissertation. In order to reflect on how they may be considered members of the generation of postmemory – and in what way they sometimes distance themselves from it – their interviews, non-fictional, and critical texts will be included in the discussion.

1.4.1 Postmemory: general concepts

In an interview given to Columbia United Press, Marianne Hirsch says that she first used the term postmemory in the early 1990's, in an article about the graphic novel *Maus* (1991), by Art Spiegelman. *Maus* was originally a serialized comic strip that ran from 1981 to 1991 and recounts Spiegelman's father's experience as a Holocaust survivor. Since then,

[27] In interview to Martha St Jean from Huffington Post online source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/martha-st-jean/genius-a-talk-with-edwidg_b_295040.html (last accessed in 09/09/2020).

Hirsh has been interested in how the "postgeneration" have dealt artistically with their parents memories. The topic also has a personal interest to her. She comments:

> [T]here was a moment, in the 1980's, when I first began to wonder why certain stories that my parents had told me, or scenes they had evoked about what they always referred to as "the war", were more vibrant and more vivid in my memories than moments I recalled from my own childhood. Their accounts had textures and qualities of memories, but they were clearly not my memories: I had not experienced any of them directly[28].

Even though Marianne Hirsch has written a number of works dealing with the topic of postmemory, her aforementioned book will be the one used in this dissertation due to its pedagogical reflections on the matter. Hirsch turns to the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann on the transmission of memory. In order to highlight that certain historical events affect memory, the scholar points out that the "break in transmission resulting from traumatic historical events necessitates forms of remembrance that reconnect and re-embody an intergenerational memorial fabric that is severed by catastrophe" (HIRSCH, 2004, p. 32). Hirsch presents the typology developed by The Assmanns in their work. Jan Assmann introduces two kinds of collective memory: communicative memory and cultural memory. The communicative memory would be the one "located within a generation of contemporaries who witness an event as adults and can pass on their bodily and affective connection to that event to their descendants", while the cultural memory would be a more "institutionalized archived memory" which is developed once the bearers of the communicative memory enter old age (HIRSCH, 2004, p. 32). Aleida Assmann develops this idea and brings forth four memory formats where "the first two, 'individual' memory and 'social' memory, correspond to Jan Assmann's 'communicative' remembrance, while 'political' and 'cultural' memory form part of his 'cultural' memory" (HIRSCH, 2004, p. 32). Even though Aleida Assmann defends that once individual memories are integrated in the symbolic system of language, they are no longer an exclusive propriety, Hirsch understands that any memory could be critically damaged by traumatic experience not only by the extreme violence committed against its victims, but also "by the erasure of records such as those perpetrated by totalitarian regimes" (HIRSCH, 2004, p. 33). Here lies the importance of how the postgeneration deals with the inherited memory. Hirsch states:

[28] Interview found at: https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory, last accessed in 04/23/2020.

> Postmemorial work, I want to suggest – and this is the central point to my argument in this book – strives to *reactivate* and *re-embody* more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression. In this way, less directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory that can persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone (HIRSCH, 2004, p. 33).

This statement will reappear later in this section when dealing specifically with Latin American and Caribbean postgeneration; for now, it seems important to note how Hirsch's suggestion is in tune with some reflections about memory brought by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. In their work *Reading Autobiography: a guide line for interpreting life narratives* (2001), the scholars emphasize that memory is as a process of reinterpretation of the past in the present. They comment: "The process is not a passive one of mere retrieval from a memory bank. Rather, the remembering subject actively creates the meaning of the past in the act of remembering" (SMITH; WATSON, 2010, p. 22). Needless to say, the subject of postmemory is also actively involved in the act of remembering the past they inherited. Another important topic brought by Smith and Watson is that the act of reinterpreting the past in the present has its own politics. They call it *politics of remembering*.

> Contexts are charged politically. What is remembered and what is forgotten, and why, change over time. Thus, remembering has a politics. There are struggles over who is authorized to remember and what they are authorized to remember, struggles over what is forgotten, both personally and collectively… [P]olitics of remembering - what is recollected and what is obscured – is central to the cultural production of knowledge about the past, and thus to the terms of an individual's self-knowledge. Autobiographical narratives, as we will see, signal and invite reading in terms of larger cultural issues and may be productively read against the ideological grain (SMITH; WATSON, 2010, p. 24).

Despite the fact that Smith and Watson deal with autobiographical practices in their books, it is possible to understand that works produced by the postmemory generation may also offer an alternative view of a historical fact and become an instrument useful to a reading that is engaged in resistance. Marianne Hirsch is well aware of the struggle involved in the act of remembering and understands that postmemorial works are crucial to the task of recovering traumatic past experiences.

Furthermore, Marianne Hirsch locates artists belonging to the generation of postmemory within familial dynamics; they are the children of those who survived a collective trauma. The horrific past is their inheritance. Their art is shaped by their parents' traumatic experiences. She affirms: "Second generation fiction, art, memoir, and testimony are shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the

pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma" (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 34). In this sense, postmemorial works do not only try to recover and deal with the trauma of the past generation, but also with their own trauma, the trauma of living within a memory that is not really theirs, but one from which they cannot escape. Hirsch also defends that postmemory transmission is not limited to the individual; it is also part of a generation, once family life is always included in a community that is shaped by "public, generational structures of fantasy and projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the broader transfer and availability of individual familial remembrance" (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 35). From this perspective, Hirsch includes people who are not children of survivors. Those people can become members of the postmemory generation by means of what she calls *affiliative postmemory*.

> [Affiliative postmemory] is the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation, combined with a set of structures of mediation that would be broadly available, appropriable, and, indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 36).

1.4.2 Post-Memory in Latin America and the Caribbean

Marianne Hirsch concentrates her research on the productions of artists whose parents outlived the horrors perpetrated by Hitler's regime although she never intended to restrict the notion of postmemory to the Holocaust[29]. However, her concept found echo and is largely used by Latin American and Caribbean scholars who work with (and produce) artistic forms which address periods of exception in the region. In the article Los rubios o del trauma como presencia (2004), Argentinian Professor Cecilia Macón considers Alberta Carri's documentary/drama film as an exercise of postmemory in the Argentinian cinematography. When commenting on *Los rubios (The Blondes)*, Macón declares:

> It is not about memory of the genocide at work, but its postmemory: it is about trauma being passed from one generation to the other and, being reshaped right there, not only in the ways it is represented, but also in the attributes that, by their

[29] "Nor do I want to restrict the notion of postmemory to the remembrance of the Holocaust, or to privilege the Holocaust as a unique or limit experience beyond all others: the Holocaust is the space where I am drawn to into the discussion" (HIRSCH, 2001, p. 11).

> very nature, define an experience as trauma[30]" (MACÓN, 2004, p. 45, translation is mine).

In Vacíos e imágenes de la memoria. Algunas novelas y películas en la postdictadura chilena y argentina, 2001-2015 (2016), Luiz Valenzuela Prado and Viola Pizarro observe how some films and novels produced by children of people who disappeared, were tortured, and/or died during Argentinian and Chilean dictatorship try to fill "those silent spaces of memory – through narrative or filmography – creating, building, setting, and assembling an image which stares – or at least tries to stare – this emptiness of memory[31]" (PRADO & PIZARRO, 2016, p. 140). In *Bridges to memory: postmemory in contemporary ethnic American women's fiction* (2015), Maria Rice Bellamy uses the term *trauma's ghost* to explain how "traumatic events leave a haunting vestige both on those who experience them and on their descendants for multiple generations" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 1). Bellamy uses *ghost* because the traumatic events leave a "haunting resonance" on those who experience them and on their descendants, "particularly those unrecorded, discredited or repressed histories" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 2). Trauma's ghost, she concludes,

> manifests the unacknowledged suffering of others and implicates us (the contemporary haunted) in their traumatic histories. Exposing the root causes of social dysfunction in contemporary society, traumas's ghost challenges those it haunts to respond to the repressed knowledge it reveals (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 3)

Bellamy finally hits a nerve when she comments on using postmemory as a category to analyze works of "ethnic American writers", which in her studies, include Caribbean woman writers. Contemporary ethnic American writers, she says, make an effort to "recover those histories and experiences repressed from mainstream social consciousness in order to understand and represent their importance to individual and collective experience in today's multiethnic, global, and often traumatized society" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 3). She actually uses postmemory as a theoretical paradigm for her work and makes some relevant remarks about its relation to the literature produced by contemporary ethnic American woman writers. Two of her contributions are worth mentioning: first, she highlights how postmemory is a conduit to narratives dealing with the relationship between the personal and collective.

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[30] In Spanish: "No se trata ya de poner in funcionamento la memoria del genocidio, sino su postmemoria: es el trauma transmitido a lo largo de gelaciones y allí mismo modificado, no meramente en sus modos de representación, sino también en los atributos mismos que lo definem como trauma" (MACÓS, 2004, p. 45).

[31] In Spanish: "esos silencios espaciales de la memoria – en la narrativa y en el cine – creando, construyendo, configurando y erigiendo una imagen que encara, o intenta hacerlo, los vacíos de la memoria" (PRADO, 2016, p. 140).

> The multitude of collective traumas experienced in the contemporary era joined with the exercise of cultural authority by ethnic American women produces a setting conducive to the creation of a profusion of narratives exploring the relationship of the contemporary individual to her traumatic inheritance, or postmemory (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 5).

Bellamy also emphasizes how ethnic American writers engaged with postmemorial works tend to "employ innovative means both to overcome the traumatic ruptures and temporal distance that separate the child of postmemory from her ancestral inheritance and to represent the result of her postmemorial journey" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 7). As they do so, they transgress the often white male-dominated forms of narrative and make theirs a literature of resistance. Bellamy concludes: "the resulting hybrid texts manifest both the subversive strategies required to render traditionally excluded perspectives and the development of a significant new genre in American [sic] fiction" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 7). In *Literatura Comparada na América Latina*: ensaios (2003), Eduardo Coutinho notes:

> The literature of the different Latin American [and Caribbean] countries certainly receives a strong influence from the European one and assimilates a series of aspects both of this and other literatures. However, it substantially modifies these aspects at the moment of appropriation, starting to present its own elements, often resulting from this process[32] (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 26).

In Argentina and Chile, the literature produced by the postgenaration receives the name of *literatura de los hijos* – literature of the children – and is one of the most prominent forms of literature of resistance. In the Caribbean, there are also artists who can be listed as part of the generation of postmemory, including the ones analyzed in this dissertation. In her book *Brother, I'm Dying*, the narrator Edwidge Danticat expresses the awareness of belonging to the postmemory generation, even though she does not use the term. As Marianne Hirsch, she understands that those frames of memory she writes about do not belong to her, nonetheless, she feels the urge to tell them.

> I write these things now, some as I witnessed them and today remember them, others from official documents, as well as borrowed recollections of family members. But the gist of them was told to me over the years, in part by my uncle Joseph, in part by my father. Some were told offhand, quickly. Others in great detail. What I learned from my father and uncle, I learned out of sequence and in fragments. This is an attempt at cohesiveness, and at re-creating a few wondrous and terrible months when their lives and mine intersected in startling ways, forcing me

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> to look forward and back at the same time. I am writing this only because they can't (DANTICAT, 2008, p. 25-26).

It should be noted the paradoxical feature of the concept of postmemory when associated with the idea of coloniality. At this point, it is important to raise some questions. Even though it is possible to locate a postmemory generation within Latin America and the Caribbean, when coloniality is taken into consideration, where violence and traumatic shared experience never seem to end? Can postmemory be used as a decolonizing strategy? In the opening of *Framing Silence*: revolutionary novels by Haitian women (1997), Myriam Chancy provides a work of postmemory through storytelling. She tells the story of Solange, an eleven year old girl who is killed while reading her History textbook at a piazza in front of the Palais National in Port-au-Prince, capital of Haiti. Nobody will ever know who killed Solange. After telling her readers about the girl, Chancy reveals:

> This story is only true in spirit. It is inspired by accounts of childhood in Haiti told by my father who remembers well years in the country's history when the emerging working, middle classes petitioned for electricity, and roads were beginning to be built to join the metropolis, Port-au-Prince, to smaller cities, like the burgeoning Pétion-Ville. In the absence of modern conveniences, those who had gained access to education, but not to privileges of class, would not guarantee the means to sustain their thirst for knowledge, would do all that it took to obtain books, or light by which to read – the later most often found in public spaces (CHANCY, 1997, p. 3-4).

This picture of one girl who was "accidentally" killed while reading her History book in a piazza seems nothing compared to the horrors committed by the Nazism. Nonetheless, without trying to compare tragedies, what Chancy does is a snapshot of a silent massacre that is recurrent in Haiti as well as in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. She adds,

> Solange's story is also inspired by Paul Farmer's account of the death of Rosaline Vaval, who, killed by the army in the small town of Petit Goâve at eleven of age (and yes, while she was reading her history of Haiti) became the catalyst for grassroots uprising throughout the provinces. Her death became symbolic of the repression perpetuated by the army under General Prosper Avril, from 1988 to 1990, through the same dictatorial means established so thoroughly by the Duvalier patriarchs (CHANCY, 1997, p. 4).

The book *Infância Roubada* (2014)[33] organized by the head of the Truth Committee of the State of Sao Paolo Rubens Paiva[34], tells the story of 40 Brazilian children who were

[33] The book can be found in: http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/livros/infancia-roubada/, last accessed in April 30, 2020.

subjected to different types of State violence during the Civil-Military Dictatorship in the country. They were arrested, witnessed sessions of torture suffered by their parents, and, many of them, banned from the country. The 2019 Report[35] of the digital platform *Fogo Cruzado*, developed in order to monitor Police actions in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, informed that 24 children and 88 teenagers were hit by bullets in events involving policemen. 20 of the 24 children and 16 of the 44 teenagers were hit by stray bullets, like Solange, in Myriam Chancy's story. State violence in Latin America and the Caribbean is undoubtedly a continuation of colonial violence. Also, it is not the exception in the region, but the norm. Nevertheless, as it was shown here, different artists from different countries in the area made use of postmemory and considered themselves as part of the postmemory generation, the *hijos*, the ones responsible for telling the stories that are trying to be silenced. Like Edwidge Danticat, who declared that she was writing *Brother, I'm Dying* because both her father and uncle could not do it, many writers, visual artists, movie makers have been doing the same, they all use different languages to produce alternative knowledges. Four of them, including Edwidge Danticat, form the literary *corpora* which comprises this dissertation.

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[34] The National Truth Committee (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, in Portuguese) was established in May 16, 2012 with the purpose of investigating the cases of Human Right violations committed during the period of September 18, 1946 to October 5, 1988. The National Committee concluded its works in December, 2014 and released a report which can be found in: http://cnv.memoriasreveladas.gov.br/textos-do-colegiado/586-epub.html.

The Truth Committee of the State of Sao Paolo, Rubens Paiva, was the first state committee to be established (February 10, 2012) and concluded its works in March 14, 2015. The investigated Human Rights violation committed by the State during the Civil-Military dictatorship in Brazil in the State of Sao Paolo(1964-1985). The final report can be found in: http://comissaodaverdade.al.sp.gov.br/.

[35] The 2019 Report can be found in: https://fogocruzado.org.br/criancas-e-adolescentes-2019/, last accessed on April 30, 2020.

2 **MOVEMENT AS A DECOLONIAL STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE IN *SONG OF THE WATER SAINTS*, BY NELLY ROSARIO AND *THE DEW BREAKER*, BY EDWIDGE DANTICAT**

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or through the confines of the "normal".

Gloria Anzaldúa

As one who is considered as being neither from here nor there, I have become unmoored and borderless and, accordingly, Americana. And by this I don't mean American, but Americana, meaning a legitimate heir and product of the Americas of which both Hispaniola and the United States are a part.

Loida Maritza Perez

2.1 **(Des)integrated Beings: considerations on *an other* way to address the traumatic experience**

When it comes to the standard Western trauma treatment, there has been the belief that one may overcome any kind of traumatic experience solely through traditional psychotherapy. Even though nowadays many intellectuals in the area and mental health practitioners consider this approach insufficient – many of them even contradicting part of the works of Sigmund Freud – it is accurate to say that the field of Psychology – taken here as a broad term – still

centers its existence around verbal language. Most psychologist practices still emulate the psychoanalytical setting, replacing the classic couch – where the analysand would ideally lie down with his or her back to the therapist, who remained silent most of the time – for a modern one where the patient (or patients) and a more talkative therapist will face each other during their session. In *Caribbean Healing Traditions: Implications for Health and Mental Health* (2013), Patsy Sutherland *et al* affirm that this pattern of treatment comes from the idea held in the Western models of health care that illness is either located in the mind or in the body. Hence, when dealing with a traumatic experience, the treatment should concentrate on mental and emotional elements. They add that "this compartmentalization of the individual is a legacy of the dualist Cartesian paradigm which claims that the body and mind are separate entities" (SUTHERLAND; MOODLEY; CHEVANES, 2013, p. 3) Notwithstanding the importance of the Psychoanalysis and Psychology concerning the advances of human wellness, it is possible to affirm that dealing with trauma solely through talking reinforces a paradigm derived from the Enlightened period, which is Eurocentric, Colonial, and Modern.

This view of the mind and body as separate entities that should be treated as such is not universal, though. Some non-Western cultures adopt different cosmologies and a diverse mode of living, which includes how they deal with traumatic experiences. In *African Holistic Health* (1989), Dr. Llaila O. Afrika, comments on differences between African holistic medicine and Western medicine. He says, "caucasians [sic] treat the mind in a psychiatric clinic, the spirit in a church, and the body in a hospital while African science includes the spirit, mind and body, present, past and future as a whole – wholistically" (AFRIKA, 1989, p. xxx). He adds that traditional European medicine is based on a military logic and treats the symptoms; alternatively, the African medicine integrates the spiritual, mental, and physical causes of an illness. In order to exemplify his point, Dr. Afrika explains what would be the African medical approach to deal with a body that cannot get rid of a toxic state: "in African wholistic medicine, the cause of the toxic state would be treated with massage, acupuncture, aromatherapy, herbs, and a cleansing diet. European medicine stops or suppresses the symptoms of disease with aspirin, cough suppressant, antihistamines, etc." (AFRIKA, 1989, p. xxxii). It is true that for some time now, the so called alternative medicine has been gaining popularity and becoming more respected even among Western physicians thanks to recent research findings about its benefits to health in general. The presence of *Other* medicines cannot be denied, but they are still very incipient and normally related to medical practices from Asia. African medical practices – if acknowledged at all – are considered synonym with witchcraft. Hence, the idea of humanity that it incorporates remains marginalized.

The framework of Amerindian cosmologies is not in accordance with the Eurocentric view either. In *Cannibal Metaphysics: for a post-structural anthropology* (2014), Eduardo Viveiros de Castro exposes some fundamental differences between them; citing a parable recounted by Lévi-Strauss, Castro explains how a few years after reaching the American continent, the Spaniards sent investigators in order to define whether natives had a soul or not. The natives, on the other hand, were trying – through drowning their Spaniard prisoners – to discover how long it would take their corpses to start decomposing so that they could conclude if their enemies had bodies (CASTRO, 2014, p. 50). This tale shows how the two cultures had diverging perspectives regarding the body and the soul: "the marked dimension for the Spanish was the soul, whereas the Indian emphasized the body" (CASTRO, 2014, p. 52). Though the Amerindian view may sound strange to western ears, as it conceives an existence with a unity of mind and a plurality of bodies, Castro comments that,

> The ethnography of indigenous America is replete with references to a cosmopolitical theory describing a universe inhabited by diverse types of actants or subjective agents – human or otherwise – gods, animals, the dead, plants, meteorological phenomena, and often objects and artifacts as well – equipped with the same general ensemble of perspective, appetite, and cognitive disposition: with the same kind of soul (CASTRO, 2014, p. 56).

The difference in cosmology affects the way American Indians (AI) deal with their health, including their mental health. In the article Incorporating Traditional Healing Into an Urban American Indian Public Health Organization: A Case Study of Community Member Perspectives (2012), William Hartmann and Joseph Gone show that in spite of many demands for improvement, little progress occurred when one compares the health of Native Americans and non-AI. The authors comment that even though the explanation for the underuse of the health system focuses on problems with access, the American Indians hesitancy towards using mental health services afforded by state agencies is "frequently attributed to divergences in worldviews and healing traditions found between clinics where Western medicine is practiced and AI cultural contexts" (HARTMANN; GONE, 2012, p. 542). They describe a qualitative research that was held with members of an urban AI community to understand how traditional Native practices could best be integrated into the health system. Though the research is not specifically relevant to this dissertation, it is meaningful to mention that many of the members of the community pointed out the importance of the incorporation of traditional ceremonies besides treatment with herbs, consequently, involving the body as a part of mental healing.

African and Indigenous peoples are two of the most important ethnic matrices for Latin America and the Caribbean peoples, thus, it is pivotal to take them into consideration. Additionally, as this dissertation deals with Caribbean literary representations that are engaged with a decolonial project, it is crucial to bring some of these decolonizing voices. In the article After Nature: Steps to Antiessentialist Political Ecology (1999), Arturo Escobar points out that the idea of nature separated from people is related to the Capitalist ideology and that this dichotomy is not present in many non-industrialized societies (ESCOBAR, 1999, p.8). He affirms:

> Unlike modern constructions, with their strict separation between the biophysical, human, and supernatural worlds, it is commonly appreciated now that local models in non-Western contexts are often predicated on links between these three domains. This continuity – which may nevertheless be experienced as problematic or uncertain – is culturally established through rituals and practices and embedded in social relations different from capitalist and modern ones. Thus living, nonliving, and often supernatural beings do not constitute distinct and separate domains – certainly not two spheres of nature and culture (ESCOBAR, 1999, p. 8).

In Toward a Decolonial Feminism (2010), María Lugones takes a decolonial approach to the gender studies arena. Lugones remarks how categories of human and non-human and of man and woman were first imposed on the colonized peoples in the Americas and the Caribbean as a means of oppression and in service of *the civilized Western men* (LUGONES, 2010, p. 743). This concept of non-human paved the way for all kinds of violence against the colonized in the name of civilization. However, those people were not empty beings living in a vacuum; rather, they were "selves in complex relations to the cosmos, to other selves, to generation, to the earth, to living beings, to the inorganic, in production" (LUGONES, 2010, p. 747). Some beliefs concerning gender are pointed out by Lugones in her article also add to the idea that the concept of self praised by the Western society is historically/socially constructed in order to serve the capitalist/colonial system and it is largely resisted by different non-Western societies. Finally, Lugones does not recommend that gender be just overlooked or ignored; instead, she proposes a "feminist border thinking where the liminality of the border is a ground, a space, a borderlands, to use Gloria Anzaldúa's term, not just a split, not an infinite repetition of dichotomous hierarchies among de-souled specters of the human" (LUGONES, 1999, p. 753).

This brief, yet important overview of how the body is perceived by peoples and cultures that have been inhabiting the American continent in general, but especially the Latin America and the Caribbean, may be instrumental to understanding movement as a

constellation in fiction accounts of traumatic experiences caused by colonial and state violence. Colonial violence though seemingly incurable must be addressed. Therefore, in order to understand coloniality – and decolonial strategies as its counterpart – some considerations on border thinking are inescapable.

2.2 **Juggling Cultures: considerations on border thinking**

In dealing with Caribbean authors and literary works it is always important to bear in mind the concept of border thinking to avoid confining them in structures that will compromise their decolonial projects. Border thinking was first brought to light by Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), a collection of essays and poems where Anzaldúa describes her experiences of living between cultures as a Chicana, as a woman, as a lesbian, and as a writer. Through this work Anzaldúa criticizes the apparent divide between here and there, us and them. The inhabitant of the border, the new *mestiza*, she says, "copes by developing a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 79). Living in the border does not limit her; on the contrary, it gives her a certain ability to move across, to become *somebody else*. Anzaldúa continues saying that this woman "has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, *she turns the ambivalence into something else*" (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 79, my emphasis).

The importance of border thinking was recognized and later further developed by decolonial scholars, most notably by Walter Mignolo. The main idea here is that there is a kind of episteme which was not considered so by Imperial/Modern/Colonial knowledge and epistemology. In Theorizing from the Border: Shifting the Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge (2006), Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova situate border thinking as a response to a violence that was/is based on and justified by the belief that the *other* – in relation to the West – is inferior and evil. In this way, border thinking is the "epistemology of the exteriority; that is, of the outside created from the inside" (MIGNOLO; TLOSTANOVA, 2006, p. 206). In Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de)coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience (2011), Walter Mignolo states the importance of border thinking

to a decolonial project because of its epistemic singularity. According to him, "border epistemology is the epistemology of the *anthrópoi*, who do not want to submit to *humanitas*, but at the same time cannot avoid it. Decoloniality and border thinking/sensing/doing are strictly interconnected since decoloniality couldn't be Cartesian or Marxian" (MIGNOLO, 2011, p. 131, 132). Mignolo not only correlates the border thinking/sensing/doing to the immigrant consciousness but also to what he calls a thinking that is geo- and body-politically based. He adds,

> [n]ow, if the point of origination of border thinking/sensing and doing is the Third World, and its routes of dispersion traveled through migrants from the Third to the First World, then border thinking created the conditions to link border epistemology with immigrant consciousness and, consequently delink from territorial and imperial epistemology grounded on theological (Renaissance) and egological (Enlightenment) politics of knowledge. As it is well known, theo and ego-politics of knowledge were grounded in the suppression of the sensing and the body, and of its geo-historical location. It was precisely that suppression that made it possible for both theo and ego-politics to claim universality (MIGNOLO, 2011, p. 132, 133).

In a recent interview to the website *Haiti Now and Then*, Myriam Chancy reflects on the main topic of her most recent book *Autochthonomies: Transnationalism, Testimony, and Transmission in the African Diaspora* (2020). She points that "having been disrupted by European colonization, enslavement, and displacement [transmission of gnosis and epistemes within African traditions] are, perhaps, less discernible or regimented through institutionalized processes, like the 'academe' for example" (CHANCY, 2020). Chancy emphasizes that, even though those epistemes and gnoses are less discernible, they are not inexistent. She continues:

> In the current work, I am arguing that people of African descent, in various geographies, communicate via their works visions informed by African gnosis and epistemes which are discernible precisely because they do not derive from European models even if the genre of transmission itself owes its form to a European model (for example, long film, the novel, etc.) (CHANCY, 2020).

The two novels analyzed in this chapter, *Song of the Water Saints* and *The Dew Breaker* – in fact, all four novels analyzed in this dissertation – are part of this body of artistic works that do not derive from a European model and, in fact, the present dissertation is engaged in an effort to break the cycle which is also pointed out by Chancy in this interview. "I argue that the treatment of works by people of African descent in the academe is largely incompetent and does not take into consideration the philosophical, spiritual, communal, traditional cultural background of their creators" (CHANCY, 2020). The idea of an episteme

whose foundations are located in the body, which was spread and established by movement of individuals and peoples, and which posits itself as an option to Western/Modern/Colonial episteme is central to the argument of this chapter. The goal here is not to defend that movement narratives are new, but to propose that the literary works presented and analyzed in this dissertation are part of *an-Other* set of works.

2.3 *An other* History and Genealogy: Caribbean religious practices as sites of decolonial knowledge and healing

Mignolo and Tlostanova understand that in order not to remain as either an appendix or an object of study of Western epistemology and social sciences, border thinking "needs its own genealogy and its own history; a history and a genealogy that emerge in the very act of performing border thinking" (MIGNOLO; TLOSTANOVA, 2006, p. 213). Among many cultural elements that could be established as part of this genealogy and this history, religious practices seem central when dealing with Caribbean and Latin American decolonial projects even though – perhaps, *because* – they have to face all kinds of persecution and prejudice.

Caribbean and Latin American peoples inhabit a plethora of different ethnic matrices upon which they constitute their cultural identities. Some of those matrices are barely possible to identify due to the Western compulsion to demonize and exterminate that which is not their equal, in a very narcissistic mode. To begin with, the extermination of indigenous peoples and the kidnapping of Africans from their original continent, and, later on, the exoticism and primitivism presented by anthropologists and social scientists not engaged in a decolonial project contributed to the erasure of the existing matrices. Again, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2014) clarifies that "no history or sociology can camouflage the complacent paternalism of this thesis, which simply transfigures the so-called others into fictions of the Western imagination in which they lack a speaking part" (CASTRO, 2014, p. 40). In *The Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction* (2010), Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzales identify three major theories that try to explain the Caribbean culture and that seem to fall into this trap: the plantation society theory, the plural-society theory, and the theory of creolization (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 8). The authors comment that the plantation society theory considers slavery central to the Caribbean. According to the scholars who defend that theory, the coercion and violence inflicted by the white European minority upon the Blacks

were so appalling that their cultural heritage was basically erased and a new identity forced on them. Albeit the extreme conditions and violence that Africans and their descendants endured in the Americas, it is not accurate to say that it completely destroyed their cultural background. The second theory developed as an attempt to explain the Caribbean is the plural-society theory, which proposes that the Caribbean societies "have no shared culture and no shared participation in common social institutions that could provide a precondition for social stability" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 9). The greatest divider in the region would not be class, but culture. This argument is easily proved inaccurate, so it will not be taken into account. The third and final theory is that of creolization. Ultimately, creolization would focus on how different cultural elements combined in order to form a new one. The authors remark that differently from the other two theories, the creolization theory acknowledges the movement of societies and cultures, recognizes the role social actors play and even takes into account the changes that took place in Caribbean history. Yet, the critics add that "creolization theorists have not paid sufficient attention to the mutual influence of diverse elements of African heritage and have paid scant or no attention to the contributions of ethnic groups other than Europeans and Africans to the dialect of the Caribbean culture" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 11). What might be concluded from these theories is that Caribbean cultures and people are indeed very rich and complex, and, in order to begin to address them, one should adopt an attitude that encompasses an active decolonial perspective, engaged in dismantling the silences imposed by the West to *others* histories and cultures in order to universalize that which is local. Thus, what one needs to bear in mind is that when it comes to the Caribbean, even in highly westernized urban areas, it is possible to recognize that those non-Western identities and traditions are still alive and manifest themselves on a daily basis. One of the manners in which those cultural identities are conceived – and, as aforementioned, should become an element of this decolonial, border thinking, genealogy – is through religious practices. There are a multitude of religious practices in the Caribbean, but, this part of the chapter will focus only on some of the Amerindians and African descent practices. Those religious practices cannot be overstated because they are not only expressions of faith; they are bearers of cultural traditions for the descendants of those peoples. In fact, many of these practices are so ingrained in the culture that they became part of the Caribbean culture in general. However, the idea is to sort out their importance as carriers of stories and histories of kingdoms, scientific knowledges, and great civilizations which were relegated to an inferior role in the grand narrative of the West.

The general belief is that, differently from Afro-Caribbeans, most of the Amerindian descendants who inhabit the Caribbean area profess Christianity and that their major influence in the region is a cultural one. Nevertheless, while commenting on the Taínos, Edmonds and Gonzales recognize that they lived in a integrated world, that is "a world that made very little, if any, distinction between the sacred and the secular" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 30). Almost every aspect of the Taíno's life was embedded with sacredness and considered as a ritual; their everyday lives "were informed by their understanding of a sacred past in which the materials in their environments and the elements of their way of lives came to be. Cultivating the soil, going on a fishing expedition, and playing a ball game – all had religious resonance" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 30). In this sense, the influence left by the Tainos in diverse aspects of the Caribbean culture – especially in relation to fishing habits, the relationship with the land and agriculture – might be also considered a religious legacy.

The Afro-descent religious practices are more easily to be perceived and considered as a site of decolonial activism. Africans included various ethnic groups; their cultural legacy to the area is ubiquitous since they were taken to the Caribbean for slave labor in the plantations. With time, "in attempt to negotiate their own diversity and their contact with Europeans, Africans created religious traditions such as Santería, Palo Monte, Abakuá, and Vodou, with adherents that crossed ethnic lines" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 93). In order to reflect briefly upon the influence of those religious practices as sites of knowledge and healing, only *Vodou* and *La Veintiuna División*, originated and practiced in Haiti and the Dominican Republic respectively, will be taken into account in this chapter. The choice to focus on these two religions as examples for the Caribbean area is not based on the lack of importance of other practices found in the archipelago. The two were chosen as representatives because the novels analyzed in this chapter were written by a Haitian and a Dominican author, and they either take place in those countries or include characters originally from there.

Non-Haitians erroneously associate V*odou* with sorcery and witchcraft. In fact, this Afro-Caribbean religion represents a range of African religious traditions. In *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions* (2010), Nathaniel Samuel Murrell defines it as

> a pantheon of deities as well as the spirituality and rites developed around, and devoted to those spirits. *Vodou* also refers to one of the dance styles, or rhythmic patterns and movements that bring the community in sync with the spirits in a progressive and mutual relationship of experience and fullness (MURRELL, 2010, p. 59).

Hence, *Vodou* encompasses an energetic and organic view of reality, "in which all events and conditions, whether natural, spiritual, or social are believed to be animated by spiritual forces" (EDMONDS, GONZALES, 2010, p. 109). It recognizes a Supreme God (*Gran Mét* or *Bon Dieu*, also *Bondyé*); yet it is accurate to say that Vodou is centered on the *Iwa*, "active agents *Gran Mét* has placed in charge of the ongoing operation of the world" (EDMONDS; GONZALES, 2010, p. 109). Some examples of *Iwa* are *Ezli*, who represent different aspects of womanhood and *Azaka*, lord of agriculture and symbol of the family. Moreover, Murrell points out that although *Vodou* is connected with spirituality, it also has a historical substance and function. "Its historic emergence in Haiti is concomitant with the Haitian revolution and is a symbol of the Haitian struggle" (MURRELL, 2010, p. 60). The revolutionary aspect of the Vodou started early on when Africans were forcefully brought in slavery to the colonial Saint Domingue plantations and were forbidden to practice their religions. The following comment by Murrell accentuates this aspect of this Haitian religious practice and reinforces the idea that Afro-descent religions are a site of decolonial knowledge and healing:

> In the repressive plantation society, Africans nurtured the desire for both physical and cultural freedom. They employed whatever means were available to preserve and perpetuate their sense of self. Ignoring the interdiction and condemnation of their religious practices, they sneaked into the bushes during the night to perform their Vodou rituals and dances in small gatherings. These gatherings not only preserved African religious traditions and cultural identity, they also served to establish a communal bond among oppressed people with diverse backgrounds (MURRELL, 2010, p. 62).

The majority of the population in the Dominican Republic is officially adherent of the Catholic faith. As the Afro-descent religions are often practiced in secret, it is difficult to estimate the number of their followers. It is known that, differently from its neighbor Haiti or Cuba, the Spanish speaking part of the Hispaniola Island did not give birth to a specific Afro-Caribbean religious practice; nevertheless, in the article *Vodú* of the Dominican Republic: Devotion to "La Veintiuna Division" (2007), Martha Ellen Davis affirms that there is a religious practice called *vodú* that might be considered the Dominican counterpart of the Haitian Vodou. She emphasizes that most of its practitioners are rural dwellers or from urban lower classes, and of a more evident African descent, who trust in the deities in order to solve their everyday problems. However, she completes, "in moments of desperation, when modern medicine fails, even the more Hispanic affluent class seeks out mediums to appeal to the *vodú*

deities and their mysterious powers of divination and healing" (DAVIS, 2007, p. 75). The name vodú is used almost exclusively by scholars, though, probably due to the prevailing anti-Haitianism that prevails in the country among the Dominicans, they favor the term *La Veintiuna División*, based on the twenty-one families of African and Creole deities. Again, even though the relevance of the Afro-religions may not be openly perceived in the Dominican Republic, its holistic cosmology has undoubtedly an effect on this society, becoming, in this way, another site of decolonial knowledge and healing.

2.4 **Tidalectics, not Dialectics: movement as constellation**

Movement is the first constellation noticed when one observes the selected works together. It might sound common sense, nowadays, that movement is central to Caribbean (Post-Colonial, Decolonial, Chicana) literature – and art in general; nevertheless, it is important to locate it as a strategy for building a literary representation of persons trying to address, deal with, and overcome a traumatic experience. For the purpose of this dissertation, movement will include ideas of fluidity, limits, border, transit, space, impermanence, restlessness, etc. It encompasses Nature, the human body, and mind – perceived here as indivisible. In Of other spaces (1984), Michel Foucault considers

> the present epoch will be above all the epoch of *space*. We are in the epoch of the *juxtaposition*, the epoch of the *near and far*, of the *side-by-side*, of the *dispersed*. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. italics are mine).

Foucault's words brought here show a shift in Western thought about the way experience is perceived; according to him, it changes from the category of time to that of space, however, the dichotomy body x mind still seems to exist. Nevertheless, it is interesting to reflect how his choice of words related to space is also related to the idea of movement and positionality, which may help understand that, although virtually everybody moves, movement occurs for different reasons, bringing about different outcomes. It is movement that allows the subjects to assert themselves in the world; at the same time, it is through movement that they come in contact with the borders that contain them. Within the context of colonialism/coloniality, movement can be read in association with slavery, oppression, and

racism, if one takes into consideration the Middle Passage and the New Diasporas, for example. At the same time, it may also be read as resistance, community, and healing. In this sense, when asked about borders and islands, Nelly Rosario answered, "we want to straddle the border. I mean racial borders, economic borders. We still want access, access to the money but we still want to be real. There are a lot of fences we want to sit on, language, sexuality, citizenship[36]" (CALENDARIO, 2004, p.81).

Nowadays, one of the most celebrated and respected authors reflecting on movement is Rosi Braidotti. In *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011), Braidotti dwells on what she calls nomadic subjectivity and nomadic thought; according to her,

> nomadic thought amounts to a politically invested cartography of the present condition in a globalized world. This project stresses the fundamental power differential among categories of human and nonhuman travelers or movers. It also sustains the effort to develop suitable figurations for the different kinds of mobility they embody and engender (BRAIDOTTI, 2011, p. 4).

Braidotti proposes a (re)signification of subjectivity in a process of becoming nomad. She continues, "politically, nomadic subjectivity addresses the need to destabilize and activate the center. Mainstream subject positions have to be challenged in relation to and interaction with the marginal subjects" (BRAIDOTTI, 2011, p. 5). At first glance, Braidotti's nomadism seems to be in tune with the decolonial project and practices. She emphasizes her alignment with an antiracist theory and struggle, as well as with postcolonial feminist criticism; nevertheless, although her theoretical project agrees with the same critique of power as black and postcolonial theories do, she understands that "the sociological variables (gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, health) need to be supplemented by a theory of the subject that calls into question the inner fibers of the self" (BRAIDOTTI, 2011, p. 10). This "theory of self that calls into question the inner fibers of the self" seems distant from the border thinking and even the politics of identity defended by Postcolonial scholarship. Moreover, in a interview for the website *Political Critique*, Braidotti, when answering a question about nomadism and about the figures and everyday experiences that might represent it, recommends a nomadic citizenship which is based on participation instead of on nationality; in order to support her stance, she emphasizes that this kind of citizenship is important because "we have to start from the fact that the world will never be culturally and ethnically homogeneous aga*In:* that

[36] Voices from Hispaniola: A Meridians Round Table with Edwidge Danticat, Loida Maritza Pérez, Myriam J.A Chancy, and Nelly Rosario. In: Meridians: feminism, race, transnacionalism, 2004, v. 5, n. 1, pp. 69-91.

world is over"[37]. The understanding that there was recently a *world* that was culturally and ethnically homogenous sounds very Eurocentric to decolonial ears. If one takes into consideration the dislocation of the starting point of Modernity from the 15th to the 18th century, proposed by the Decolonial Turn, the idea of a culturally and ethnically homogeneous world ended over 500 years ago. Likewise, it seems relevant to remember what Walter Mignolo (2011) has pointed out: that the suppression of the sensing and the body and of its geo-historical location made it possible for the theo- and geo-politics to claim universality. The criticism towards Braidotti's nomadism in this chapter does not intend to ignore the importance of her work; in fact, once more, the aim is to delink the category of movement found as a constellation in the selected novels to be analyzed here from an Eurocentric frame of mind and localize them as part of *an-other* tradition.

For the present chapter, instead of nomadism, the concept of *tidalectics* seems to be more pertinent. Tidalectics is a concept developed by the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite. In an interview with Nathaniel Mackey, Brathwaite defines it as "dialectics with my difference. In other words, instead of the notion of one-two-three, Hegelian, I am more interested in the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic, I suppose, motion, rather than linear" (BRATHWAITE; MACKEY, 1995, p.). In *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2005), Elizabeth DeLoughrey states:

> Tidalectics engage what Brathwaite calls an "alter/native" historiography to linear models of colonial progress. This "tidal dialectics" resists the synthesizing *télos* [aim] of Hegel's dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean. Tidalectics also foreground alter/native epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases (DELOUGHREY, 2005, p. 2).

In this context, a *tidalectical movement*, found in the novels analyzed in this chapter, is in opposition to *western movement*, and even to Braidotti's concept of nomadism. As a category, the tidalectical movement confronts the rigidity, fixedness, and determinedness that is present in the movement narrative of the West, very much invested in the ideals of progress and evolution. Another important aspect to be taken into consideration when choosing Brathwaite's tidalectics is the association it makes between women and movement. This shift taken by Brathwaite represents a delinking attitude and disrupts the western narrative, which

[37] Taken from: http://politicalcritique.org/world/2018/nomadism-braidotti/. Last access, 08/08/2019.

has traditionally associated movement to the masculine. In the same interview, Brathwaite provides an image of the Caribbean connected to a woman sweeping sand off of her yard.

> in fact, a performing a
> very important ritual which I
> couldn't fully understand but
> which I'm tirelessly tryin to .
> ..
> And then one morning I see her
> body silhouetting against the
> sparkling light that hits the
> Caribbean at that early dawn
> and it seems as if her feet,
> which all along I thought were
> walking on the sand… were
> really… walking on the wa-
> ter… and she was tra
> velling across that middlepass
> age, constantly coming from h
> ere she had come from – in her
> case Africa – to this spot in
> North Coast Jamaica where she
> now lives…
> (BRATHWAITE, 1995, p. 33)

Later, he observes, "Like our grandmother's – our nanna's – action, like the movement of the ocean she's walking on, coming from one continent/continuum, touching another and then receding ('reading') from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of their future" (BRATHWAITE, 1995, p. 34). It should be noted again in Brathwaite own words, the nature of movement in tidalectics: instead of being progressive as an arrow pointing to the future, it is more of a lemniscate, i.e., an ongoing infinite back and forth movement. The idea of the lemniscate is useful when thinking about those narratives analyzed in this chapter. Movement is present in them, yet, it does not mean that they propose resolution, advance, or progress. Contrary to Braidotti's idea of a world that is over, being replaced by another one which should be completely new, tidalectics calls attention to a repetition with difference. It is not being static, though, or one that is locked in an irrational repetition; it is more of a sense of belonging and connection.

2.5 **Writing with Our Bodies on the Border: Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* and Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker***

The first of the two novels to be discussed in this chapter is *Song of the Water Saints* (2002), Nelly Rosario's debut novel. Rosario was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Brooklyn. She holds a B.A. in engineering from MIT and a M.F.A. in fiction writing from Columbia University. *Song of the Water Saints* tells the story of four generations of women from the same family in a span of 83 years and two countries, the Dominican Republic and the United States. The narrative is divided in two "Songs"; the first one, which comprises most of the novel, starts in 1916 and ends in 1929, covering the life of Graciela and the infancy of her daughter, Mercedes. The second one covers 59 years in the lives of Mercedes, her daughter Amalfi, and her granddaughter Leila. Rosario's novel received the 2002 PEN Open Book Award, an award aimed at authors of color with works published in the U.S.[38].

The second novel to be analyzed is *The Dew Breaker* (2004), the third novel written by Edwidge Danticat. Danticat was born in Haiti and emigrated to the U.S when she was 12 years old, following her parents who had emigrated 8 years earlier. She holds a B.A. in French Literature from Barnard College and a M.F.A. in fiction writing from Brown University. Her master's thesis, published as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), was her first novel. *The Dew Breaker* tells the stories of various people whose lives were affected directly or indirectly by the violence of the Duvalier's regime perpetrated by members of his militia, the T*onton Macoutes*. The novel is set between Haiti and the U.S after the Papa and Baby Doc Duvalier's dictatorship ends. It received the 2005 Anisfield-Woolf Book Award for Fiction and the 2004/05 The Story Prize. Also, it was nominated to the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction[39].

Both literary works find their importance by creating fictional accounts of historical events while giving voice to those who are silenced by official narratives. In her book *From Sugar to Revolution: women's vision of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic* (2012), Myriam Chancy considers the importance of authors like Rosario, Danticat, and herself. She reflects upon the idea that Caribbean women artists generally are

> the new archeologists of a historical site we would call "amnesia". Spokespersons for a majority that is nonetheless politically marginalized in outmoded, patriarchally regimented cultures, they seek to elucidate women's variegated lives within the confining walls of their national identifications, national identifications that are currently wholly defined as male (CHANCY, 2012, xxii).

[38] Information adapted from: http://williams.academia.edu/NellyRosario, https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/26084/nelly-rosario, and https://pen.org/user/nelly-rosario/, last accessed in 11/15/2019.

[39] Information adapted from: https://edwidgedanticat.com/, last accessed on 11/15/2019.

Chancy's words echo those of Walter Benjamin, who affirmed that the task of the historical materialist would be "to brush history against the grain" (BENJAMIN, 1974, n.p). The roles of archeologists and spokespersons assumed by those Caribbean women artists need to be brought to the foreground. Archeologists are professionals who – through excavating – get in touch with cultures, languages, remains, physical characteristics, etc. of peoples around the world, and attempt to recreate these worlds from the remains they find. Spokespersons are those who speak in the name of someone. Both occupations entail representation and run the risk of replacing one oppressive mode of living for another. However, Chancy argues that those artists do not seek to supplant an old regime with a new one that would ideally attend to their own agendas; rather, she adds,

> they see themselves as actively participating in a critique of history and present-day culture, while offering plausible alternatives to the static constructions of nation, metropolis, dominant-versus-subordinate powers, and identity, as each has been historically determined within the Caribbean ethos. They do so, more often than not, by exploring race and class, problematizing notions of national identity, and sometimes producing problematic versions of such variegated identities (CHANCY, 2012, p. xxxiii).

The stance of those Caribbean artists pointed out by Chancy resonates with Walter Mignolo's thoughts about decoloniality which he underscores should not to be taken "as a new universal that presents itself as the right one that supersedes all the previous and existing ones, but as an option" (MIGNOLO, 2001, p. 130). Option, alternative versions are keywords when taking into consideration not only the two novels to be analyzed in this chapter, but also the other works that constitute the corpus of this dissertation.

2.5.1 Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints*: restlessness as an instrument of resistance

Song of the Water Saints is a linear, third person narrative. In that respect, it follows the traditional Western mode of novel writing. Nevertheless, Nelly Rosario confronts and transgresses this ideal of an enlightened literary genre, and turns her storytelling into a decolonial practice. In an interview for the *Mosaic Literary Magazine*, Rosario comments that he has been accused of having written a plotless book, thus defying the idea of proper novel writing; such criticism, she says, was voiced

> Even from the beginning when I was workshopping it, that there was no real discernible plot and it just kind of aimlessly wanders. That's ok with me because I don't think our lives are plotted. We kind of aimlessly feel our way around. That's kind of how I wrote the book. I didn't know where I was going. I didn't have a master outline. I just knew my characters. That was my whole thing: try to figure it out your characters. That's how it is. I don't have a climax and that typical male structure of how stories are scripted. I think a lot of women write like that, very multi-climatic (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 35).

The author builds her narrative around the lives of poor black Dominican women and their struggles. Already in the first chapter of the first song, there is a reference to Graciela's skin color. The narrator says, "Her knees were ashy and she wore her spongy hair in four knots" (ROSARIO, 2002, p.7). In this short description it is possible to read the knees and the hair as metonymy for Graciela's African heritage, which openly opposes the dominant idea that Dominicans belong to an European (Spanish) lineage whereas Haitians are seen as the African descendants who inhabit the Hispaniola Island. Then, once again, even though *Song of the Water Saints* may not be considered by some critics as a novel that centers on the experience of state violence, the influence of the series of invasions by the U.S. Army and Trujillo's regime are very much present since the beginning. The title of the first chapter is "Invasions. *1916*", in reference to the presence of the *yanquis* in that part of Hispaniola Island. Later in the novel, there is a reference to the Parsley Massacre, the horrific event that took place in 1937 in the border towns of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and resulted in the killing thousands of people from Haitian origin living in the DR as well as black Dominicans. The event was initiated and supported by the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, but it was elaborated to look like a popular outbreak.

Nelly Rosario also includes elements of Magical Realism in her novel. In *The Afro-Latin@ Experience in Contemporary American Literature and Culture* (2016), J.T. Richardson points out that Rosario makes use of it to "demonstrate the influence of historical violence in ways that official narratives do not" (RICHARDSON, 2016, p. 99). The critic further calls attention to the fact that the use of elements of magical realism as a narrative strategy allows Rosario to "introduce a new dimension to [her] writing, beyond the real, that permits [her] to express the ways in which the legacy of historical violence haunts and damages the human spirit, the body, the psyche, and the family" (RICHARDSON, 2016, p. 99). Henceforth, it is under those lights that Nelly Rosario's debut novel will be read as an example of how literature may be used as a decolonial practice to deal with the trauma left by State terrorism.

2.5.1.1 Inherited Restlessness: analyzing the characters Graciela and Leila

Movement is a central narratological category in *Song of the Water Saints* since its inception. As Rosario mentions in the interview quoted previously, she based her novel on this idea of wandering. Therefore, movement is present since the beginning of the novel; it can be seen in the lives of the protagonists, it can be seen in Nature, and it can be seen through the process of the Dominican diaspora to the U.S. The section of the novel focuses mainly on the life of Graciela, the protagonist, as she is in constant movement. Another character, Leila, Graciela's great granddaughter will also be addressed, but shortly. Through the analysis of the characters, events, and metaphors, it is possible to demonstrate how movement is used by Nelly Rosario as a decolonizing narrative strategy.

Graciela is frequently considered an idle girl/woman by the rest of characters, especially by her parents, because she refuses to place herself in the socially determined gender roles that incarcerate women to house affairs; she is almost always in motion, both externally and internally. Thus, motion in the novel includes the physical, mental, and spiritual realms, taking into consideration the holistic approach adopted in this chapter. Indeed, according to *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (2013 [1882]), the noun *emotion* has its origins on the Latin *emovere*, which means "to move away or much" (SKEAT, 2013, p. 164); therefore, it is not a novelty that movement takes into consideration the immaterial part of human beings. Graciela is not the only one to be in constant motion in the novel, though in her case it seems more evident. In (Trance)forming AfroLatina Embodied Knowledges in Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* (2017), Omaris Z. Zamorra addresses this relationship Graciela develops with movement, declaring that, "the memories of pain, loss, and the constant movement and labor of Graciela – a key character in the novel – are stored and remembered through her movement from place to place" (ZAMORRA, 2017, p. 2). According to her, through Graciela, Rosario creates the epistemology of (trance)formation; an epistemology which is "rooted in constant movement, or translocality, but also in the ways that this centrifugal movement of leaving and coming back pushes [Graciela's] own consciousness and subject formation into a transcendental space where new subjectivities can be formed" (ZAMORRA, 2017, p. 2). Zamorra uses t*rance* as a prefix in two ways: first, to suggest suspended consciousness, as in a spiritual trance, and second, to suggest a third space, where subjectiveness is be/coming. The critic concludes that

> the movement of the body and the movement of the spirit, or sacred life force within us, leave space for (trance)formation to take place as an alternative epistemological process that ensures and proliferates survival. In Rosario's novel it is through Graciela's (trance)formation – the process through which her embodied archive becomes knowledge – that her spirit is able to relate the epistemological tools of survival to her great granddaughter Leila (ZAMORRA, 2017, p. 2).

Movement, therefore, is a practice of resistance, transgression, and transcendence used by Graciela throughout the novel. The first time the readers come across Graciela, she is with her boyfriend Silvio, who later will become her first husband and father of her only child, Mercedes. Graciela and Silvio meet an American photographer on the beach and are paid some money to pose as models for him. When the couple gets to the warehouse where the photographer – whose name was, ironically, Peter *West* – had staged a beach scene, clearly intent on capturing a sexually charged moment that objectifies their bodies, especially Graciela's. The narrative voice indicates that the girl might be having second thoughts about the arrangement, and what makes her continue with that is her dream of keeping moving.

> Graciela's whisper rippled through the warehouse when the fantasy soured. The pink hand tugged at her skirt and pointed briskly to Silvio's pants. They turned to each other as the same hand dangled pesos before them.
> – *¿You still want to go way with me, Mami, or no?*
> Silvio's whisper was hoarse.
> Graciela's shoulder dropped. She unlaced her hair and folded her blouse and skirt. In turn, Silvio unbuttoned his mandarin shirt and untied the rope at his waist. Graciela folded her clothes along with his over a pile of cornhusks. In the dampness, they shivered while West kneaded their bodies as if molding stubborn clay (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 9, my emphasis).

Graciela's dream of keeping moving is reinforced both by the photographer's money offer and by Silvio's reminder that they need *the pesos* in order to start their journey.

It is also through Graciela's moving that the reader may see how the U.S. invasions affected the everyday lives of the poor population of the Dominican Republic. Two representative events take place on the same day in which the couple poses as models for West. In the first one, right after Graciela and Silvio part from each other and she goes to the market in order to get what her mother had asked her, Graciela has an encounter with a woman "with the carriage of a swan and a bundle balanced on her head" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 13) who tells her that her mother is looking for her. Then, the swan woman advises the young girl to be careful with the *yanquis*. After this piece of advice, the narrative takes the reader to a short but detailed description of the disrespect and violence spread by the U.S. Marine Corps. The incident ends up with the murder and possible rape of the swan woman by a group

of marines and with Graciela's running back to her neighborhood. By the time she approaches her neighbors' houses, she notices horses tied to fence posts, and two of those animals tied to the tree by the fence of her house. The horses indicate the presence of soldiers who were trying to find outlaw guns belonging to *gavillero* rebels – "peasants of the eastern region of the Dominican Republic [who] successfully waged a guerrilla war against the forces of the U.S. military government"[40]. When Graciela arrives, she sees her mother kneeling by the soldier and her brother in the corner of the room. "Inside, Mai knelt by a soldier whose fists entangled her hair and had undone the cloth rollers. Fausto, a statue in the corner." (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 14). The violence against women in the presence of their fathers, husbands, and sons was a strategy adopted by the Marines, as the narrator explains earlier, in the excerpt that serves as a foreshadowing for the two subsequent violent events that Graciela witnesses and suffers.

> The yanqui-men's rifles and giant bodies confirmed stories that had already filtered into the city from the eastern mountains: suspected gavillero rebels gutted like Christmas piglets; women left spread-eagled right before their fathers and husbands; children with eardrums drilled by bullets." (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 13).

The protagonist is able to convince the soldiers that there are no guns in the house. When she notes the bloodshot eyes of the interpreter, she says: "Pai don't got pistols, he only got cane rum" (ROSARIO, 2002, 15). She catches the attention of the men, who end up leaving with their horses loaded with bottles of cane rum, but no guns whatsoever. Later, the readers learn that her father actually has some pistols, but the narrator never reveals if he takes part in the guerrilla.

Graciela eventually elopes with Silvio, but he neither gives her the "turquoise palmwood and zinc house" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 20) that she wants so much nor fulfills her longing for movement. The narrative voice makes it clear that within only a year of their eloping Silvio believed he had already lost Graciela's love: "Graciela was no longer Silvio's, despite his having her under a roof and being able to hitch up her skirt at will." (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 20) and "now, more than ever, Silvio felt that he had lost Graciela to a world bigger than himself" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 21). Even though the narrator considers Silvio's thoughts regarding Graciela delusional, the young man decides to drop his position at Guardia Nacional Dominicana to become a fisherman. He searches relief for his sufferings through

[40] CALDER, Bruce J.. Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerrilla Insurgency during the Dominican Republic Intervention, 1916-1924. In: The Hispanic Historical Review, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Nov., 1978), pp. 649-675. Durham: Duke University Press.

movement. “Graciela’s cow eyes and Euclides’ murder convinced Silvio that he preferred the unpredictable ways of the water to the whims of the shrimp-skinned generals and to Graciela’s irritating company. Silvio planned to join a fishing fleet that circled the Caribbean” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 21). Silvio’s life does not last long, though. He is killed along with the crew he belonged to by the Marines because the fishermen were allegedly unloading weapons for the *gavilleros*. Graciela is left alone, pregnant with their daughter, Mercedes.

A secondary character in the novel, El Viejo Cuco, offers a clue to Graciela’s restlessness. During an evening of gathering and stories, Viejo shares an anecdote about the protagonist, who, according to her father (*Pai*) was born “with hot legs, like that maroon grandpa o’ yours” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 46). The maroons (name derived from the Spanish *cimarrón* – wild cattle) were Africans and African descendants who had escaped slavery and established independent communities, becoming a feared fighting force. This reference explains her restlessness as well as her blackness, confronting, again, the current idea that the Dominican Republic, unlike Haiti, is a white country. Cuco continues his narrative telling how once, when Graciela was a little girl, she followed her Pai all the way up to the hill:

> Hours later, as they set up camp by the plot, who should appear, the gal herself, beggin’ for water. She’d been followin’ them all along. Left her mai to all the chores, went through all that mess, just ‘cause she was curious. The pai didn’t snap her neck ‘cause she was always in his heart, he said… (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 46, 47).

Explaining Graciela's desire for movement as part of an inheritance from her grandfather is in accordance to the traditions of Afro-descent and Amerindian cultures, both known for the cult of ancestors. It also works as a foreshadowing of her own great granddaughter Leila’s constant need to move.

Not even the birth of her child or her second husband, Casimiro, quiets Graciela’s body, mind, and spirit. The narrator comments that “[e]ach time Graciela took the long walk to the market, thoughts of deserting Casimiro and Mercedita perched on her shoulder. It was during these solitary walks that her courage would bubble up.” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 56). From an early age, her daughter Mercedes seems to sense her mother's distance. On the occasion of her birth, “[t]he child latched on tightly to her mother, not letting go even after Graciela’s breasts were drained of their milk” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 36). Later, Mercedes would already understand her mother’s looks. “At three years old, Mercedita could already recognize the faraway stare that stole Graciela’s gaze from hers. When Graciela sat at the

table to eat, Mercedita crawled under her skirt and stayed there until Graciela nudged her away with a foot" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 57).

Graciela indeed leaves her daughter and husband twice, always returning to them, though. The first time she goes away, she gets some money from Casimiro and takes a train up to Santiago. By the time she gets there, there is an earthquake, signaling that the ground beneath her feet is also restless. The earthquake might be read as a symbol of Graciela's experiences in this trip which are far from liberating. On the contrary, she engages in the two activities that were traditionally destined to poor women of color. First, still during the train ride to Santiago, Graciela meets a German man called Eli Cavalier. Right from the start, the reader knows that the man is a pervert because he is caught masturbating while sitting in front of the protagonist on the train. Nevertheless, he is able to convince Graciela of his good intentions, seducing her with his traveling narrative and food.

> Eli minded the smallness of her world. Like a farmer fattening his cow, he embellished his ride on the ship across the Atlantic, leaving out the numbing seasickness, the howls of widows and orphans. By the time the train pulled into Santiago, Graciela had eaten three more loaves of bread and many strips of salted meat.
> – Never stayed in an inn before, she said, answering his bold question in one breath (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 71).

The earthquake hits Santiago while Graciela is still on the train station, foreshadowing her troubles. The inn she is going to stay with Eli is, in fact, a brothel. There, she is mistaken for a prostitute, contaminated with syphilis, and wounded in the face by one of the women who lives there. She has her wound sewed by a woman servant and, with her help, is able to escape. Back on the streets, Graciela finds an apocalyptic scenario before her. "The earthquake had chewed up the train tracks at the station. Fissures across the Santiago soil steamed as if releasing the city's life force" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 83). She wanders for a long time through rubble, with her face hurting, hungry, and thirsty. She finally finds a house where a young couple lives and ends up being hired by the woman as a maid. She accepts it in order to have a place to stay while planning how is she going to get to Santo Domingo. "Graciela had only wanted water. Now she had to plan her next move" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 86). Her thoughts lead her to remembering Casimiro and Mercedita, and she wonders if they can do without her for a little longer. The narrative voice makes it clear that even though she misses her family, the urge for movement is stronger.

> Despite the momentary pangs of homesickness, Graciela preferred the uncertainty of wanderlust to the dreariness of routine. Too much passion and curiosity for her own good, Mai and Pai always told her. But Graciela believed that neither Celeste, nor Casimiro, nor Mai, nor Pai could ever understand the pleasure to be had in letting risk wake every one of their senses from the stupor of routine. People back at home were simply too content being the spectators of their own lives (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 86, 87).

Once again, movement can be read as an act of resistance. The protagonist resists routine because routine condemns her to a narrow, numb existence; for Graciela, movement equals agency, even if it leads her to painful experiences. Her plan to reach the capital city does not come through though, and after being accused of stealing her *patrón*'s gold wrist watch and threatened to be sent to jail, she decides to return home.

While back at home, there is another episode worth mentioning. Graciela pays a visit to *La Gitana* to have her palm read. The description of the session is exemplary: "Then, La Gitana leaned in to examine the saluting system of lines. These lines were a tangled map of roads; some led to dead ends, others ran into each other, then swirled in opposite directions. One path led away from a road toward one of the mounts" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 113). The use of words like map and road, which are semantically related to traveling, reinforces Graciela's incurable restlessness and foreshadows her second leaving.

Years later, when her syphilis is in an advanced stage, Graciela has a dream with the statue of La Virgen de la Altagracia and decides to go to a convent. This time, she tells her plans to Casimiro and the couple engages in a quarrel. During their quarrel, the narrator makes an observation that shows how the protagonist's drive to move is a mystery even to her: "She could not understand what ravenous hole in her spirit made her want to jump out of her skin" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 143). Once again, the narrative is poignant and meaningful:

> Graciela arrived on foot at the Colonial Quarter. The quadrangle towers of the church of Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes had faithfully guided her like a constellation. Her knees had swollen tight as had her hands and ankles. It had been a long walk from home, the sun bearing down on her, the hillside winds blowing dust into her ears…
> *I call you, Graciela, but you just let my voice echo. Too drunk on the silly path, too high on the weeds along the way. But know that you always walk towards the light, even when you sit along the road for a sip of water or to pick at the calluses on your feet. You will always walk.* (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 144, 145).

The life at the convent was a lonely one for Graciela and though she was only a guest there, she had to respect the same rules the nuns followed. She had her hair shaved and there were no combs or mirrors anywhere. She worked mainly at the kitchen where she prepared the meals, but she also helped the nuns make vestments for the priests. At night, Graciela

suffered and when she could finally sleep, she was assaulted by nightmares, all of them related to movement. “The dreams continued. In one, rats chewed the calluses of Graciela’s heels. She tore through dense forest, her heels further ripping on thorns and exposed tree roots. Fear of rats, then of running guardians, then of slave hunters with dogs…” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 153). A year later, Graciela returns home; by the time she arrives, “sick and ready for death” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 166), Casimiro has already died.

Even though movement is present in the lives of Mercedes and Amalfi, daughter and granddaughter of Graciela, it seems that Leila, her great granddaughter is the one who inherits her restlessness. In fact, Leila and her great grandmother engage in a type of spiritual communication which the narrator calls “the feeling”: “the feeling started up again. She smiled. It had been a while since she had it. The familiar flutter center-left of her chest got warmer…” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 242). Taking into consideration that feelings and emotions may be synonyms, it is possible to understand that Leila moves when she channels Graciela’s words. Moreover, the possibility to communicate with her late great grandmother is a reference to the cult of ancestors, present in many religious expressions across the Caribbean Island. According to those practices, past, present, and future are not separated entities, they are a dynamic unity. In the chapter entitled “Circles", the narrative voice reflects on this unity:

> Graciela’s ghost is not a shadow, or a shiver, or a statue falling from the altar. It is not a white sheet with slits for eyes, or a howl in the wind. It is not in the eerie highlights of a portrait, or in the twitch of a nerve.
> Her ghost is in the fullness of a frog’s underbelly, in a cipher of pigeons, in the river’s rush. *It is threaded through the eggplant-and-salmon braid of birth* (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 202, my emphasis).

Much like her great-grandmother's, Leila’s body also moves around. First, she is separated from her mother at the age of three and taken to New York by her grandparents and uncle, who are part of the generation that migrate in search of a better life in the U.S. after Rafael Leonidas Trujillo’s regime ends. By the time the chapter entitled after her begins, Leila is a 14 year old girl living with her octogenarian grandparents in Brooklyn. The age gap gets bigger every day. She feels that she has no privacy and that her grandparents and uncle are always trying to control her. Leila complains that they are overbearing sometimes, not letting her go out with her friends. “Even the home attendant who cared for Mercedes and Andrés during the day was starting to get too preachy with Leila” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 205). And yet, nobody could make her be still. She sometimes waited until her grandparents went to sleep so she could escape and see her lover Miguel, an older married guy who lived in the

same building. Her disappointment increases right after she turns 15 and travels to the Dominican Republic to visit her mother. Her dreams of summer romance in a paradisiacal place do not take place and she ends up spending her days with her mother and grandparents. “She had fantasized running down the beaches and dancing merengue into the night for the five weeks, instead of sipping limeade on the porch while dust-stirring scooters screeched on the main road. No, she wasn’t allowed to ride her mother’s scooter into town” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 219).

Overall, against all odds, Graciela enjoys more freedom than Leila, but their shared restlessness is pictured in the novel. One episode catches the eye; Leila leaves the house while her grandparents sleep in order to meet Miguel and her friends at a nightclub. The one time Leila escapes from her grandparents, she also ends up returning, following Graciela’s steps. She leaves home after Mercedes and Andrés go to sleep to meet Miguel and her friends at a dance club. Later, she goes with Miguel to a motel where they have intercourse, her first time. The atmosphere of the scene brings to mind the first sexual encounter between Graciela and Eli, the man that Graciela had met on the train and infected her with syphilis. To begin with, there was no pleasure involved in the act for either of them. Then, instead of going back home, they both continued on their movement. Whereas Graciela finds work as a servant in a house, Leila goes to one of her friend’s house (whose parents are traveling to the DR) and spends a week there. Finally, when Leila returns home, she also does so mirroring Graciela’s first return, as the narrative voice reveals: “Mercedes and Andrés received Leila quietly, almost matter-of-factly, as they had known all along that she would come home a week later with the faithfulness of a boomerang” (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 239).

Leila is the character that most clearly represents the living in the third space, in the borderland. She is neither completely American, as she was not born there, nor Dominican, having migrated so young. The best example of her *inbetweeness* appears in the novel when Leila writes to her mother. The girl is responsible for writing the letters that her grandmother dictates and later sends to Amalfi. Each time the task becomes more difficult because the girl is not fluent in Spanish any longer:

> The Spanish trudged through Leila’s weak short-term memory and slow hands; a script full of fat spaces and balled dots. In the beginning, she faithfully included Mercedes’ every “humph" and her occasional laughter (written as “ja ja ja” in comic-strip bubbles). The process: take in the words tumbling out of Mercedes, remember them, translate into English for meaning in her own mind, then translate into Spanish, and, finally write them neatly and correctly on the page – all the while listening for the next barrage (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 206).

After this excerpt, Leila and Mercedes engage themselves in a conversation about how life in New York and the Dominican Republic are different. The old lady tries to warn the girl to be smart and not to have too many kids because there was "no village around to help you raise them" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 208). Leila tries to change the subject and her grandmother concludes, telling her to always remember the things she says. Leila's answer to Mercedes' advice also reflects her position as someone who inhabits the third space:

> "Nah, 'Buela, I live for the now. Everyone is either telling me to remember stuff I never lived, or to prepare for some who-knows future."
> Mercedes yawned,
> To Leila, those who carried the past carried the dead, and those who chased the future died of cardiac arrest (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 209).

The closing of the novel shows Leila on the move again. Before going back home after running away, she decides to go to Manhattan and spend time in the gift shop of the Metropolitan Museum, "The Gift Shop was nestled in a glass box under the arches of the museum" (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 240). An hour later, in the subway station, probably the most emblematic symbol of movement in Manhattan, "the feeling" starts again and Leila listens to her great grandmother's voice once more. *Song of the Water Saints* finishes with past and present tangled together in movement.

> The Feeling started up again. She smiled. It had been a while since she'd had it. The familiar flutter center-left of her chest got warmer…
>
> *Waited on a long time to get born. Still, life dealt me a shit deal. Don't listen to whoever invents magics about me. Always tried to live what I wanted. Never pretended to be a good woman. Never tried to be a bad one. Just lived what I wanted. That's all my mystery. Forget dirty tongues. They're next door, in the soup, even in your own head. Some weak soul always trying to slip their tongue inside your mouth, clean as a baby's pit. You, listen. My life was more salt than goat. Lived between memory and wishes… but ¿how much can a foot do inside a tight shoe? Make something better of it than me* (ROSARIO, 2002, p. 242).

2.5.2 Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*: the eternal searching for closure and new beginnings

In Haiti, the Duvalier regime lasted almost 29 years (from 1957 to 1986). The first Duvalier dictator was François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, who ruled the country from 1957 to 1971. He was followed by his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who ruled until he was

overthrown by popular uprising in 1986, when he had to escape to France in a U.S Air force aircraft. The Duvalier regime was one of the most barbarous in the history of Haiti. François Duvalier rose to power as a democratically elected president, but in 1961 he violated the Constitution and ran for reelection. He won with an official tally of 1,320,748 votes to zero. Finally, in 1964, he declared himself president for life. After an unsuccessful coup attempt in July 1958, Duvalier turned the Presidential Palace army unit into the Presidential Guard. The Guard became the elite corps of the Haitian army, and its sole purpose was to maintain Duvalier's power. The creation of the rural militia formally named the Volunteers for National Security (*Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*—VSN) was another way that Duvalier found to maintain his regime operating. The members of this militia were known as the *tonton macoutes*. Haitians named this force after the Haitian mythological bogeyman, *Tonton Macoute* ("Uncle Gunnysack"), who kidnaps and punishes unruly children by snaring them in a gunny sack (French: *macoute*) and carrying them off to be consumed at breakfast[41]

The Dew Breaker, by Edwidge Danticat, was first published in 2004. The title is an English translation to the Creole expression *choukèt laroze* which is another way the *tonton macoutes* were called by the Haitians. Commenting on the choice of the title, Danticat says, "I have always been fascinated by the poetic naming of such a despicable authority figure and when I started writing about a former torturer, I decided to translate the expression in the most serene sounding way I could. And so we have the dew breaker"[42]. The book is composed of nine different stories with one element in common: each of them portrays characters impacted directly or indirectly by the State violence. Danticat's protagonist is a former *tonton macoute* who emigrates to the U.S. after disobeying a superior's order. In his new country, he works as a barber and becomes an exemplary husband and father, but can never leave his old life completely behind as he is tormented by nightmares. The choice of having a torturer as a protagonist is a bold one; when it comes to works concerning dictatorships, terrorism, or any kind of state of exception. Those individuals are normally given secondary roles while their victims come to the center. It is worth noticing that even though he is clearly "the dew breaker" (the title of the novel and of the last story in the book), this protagonist remains unnamed. In his family, he is father and husband. To those who recognize him from his former life, he is the barber, identified by his current profession. Even in the last story, in which he plays a central role, he is referred to by the personal pronoun "he", perhaps

[41] Taken from: http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti/duvalier-dynasty.htm; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonton_Macoute, last accessed on 24/08/2017.

[42] Taken from: https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/1022/edwidge-danticat, last accessed on 24/08/2017.

signaling Danticat's suggestion that he is one among many former torturers.

In Trauma of a Perpetrator: Reimagining Perpetrators in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2014), Marinda Quist understands that Danticat offers a sympathetic portrait of the character without excusing him for his acts and that "this characterization of a perpetrator creates space for a discussion of the role and expectations of trauma literature since genres typically present stories that evoke feelings of sympathy for the victims of trauma but not for the perpetrators" (QUIST, 2014, p. 5). Edwidge Danticat does not seem to agree with Quist's reading and gives another reason for having a former torturer as a protagonist. When asked why, instead of telling the story through a traditional novel writing, she uses the series of stories intertwining the lives of the *tonton macoute* and his victims, Danticat explains:

> for a long time this person was a ghost, the center of these people's lives - the kind of machete, the killer of their memories. It took over their path. So I wanted them to have a saying in the story. And it is through them, it is through these different people who have had terrible encounters with the central character, The Dew Breaker, and through their eyes I wanted to see him revealed[43].

Unlike *Song of the Water Saints*, *The Dew Breaker* does not follow a traditional linear narrative. In fact, many critics choose to call it a short story cycle instead of a novel. In Postcolonial Trauma Theory and the Short Story Cycle: Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2014), Silvia Martínez Falquina comments,

> I argue that the most appropriate definition of the short story cycle is that it is a peculiar case of the simultaneity of closure and openness, *both formally and in terms of meaning*. In the process of reading a short story cycle, each closure is followed by new openings, which make it necessarily provisional. The full text is therefore characterized by the openness given by this provisionality of any impulse towards closure (FALQUINA, 2014, p. 180, my emphasis).

Additionally, in Between Worlds: Imagining *Dyaspora* in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* and Chancy's *The Spirit of Haiti* (2012), Jo Collins defines Danticat's narrative as "fragmented, with the various stories *moving* centrifugally from the provisional centre signified by text's enigmatic protagonist 'the Dew Breaker'" (COLLINS, 2012, p. 123, my emphasis). Taking into consideration both Falquinas' and Collins' commentaries, it is possible to set movement as a fundamental category present in the narrative style as well as in the story of the characters. Regarding the formal aspects, *The Dew Breaker* is a deconstructed literary work, which unsettles its readers and makes them uncomfortable, as it should happen

[43] Taken from: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment-jan-june04-dew_05-05/, last accessed on 24/08/2017.

on a decolonial narrative. In The Language of Wounds and Scars (2010), Aitor Ibarrola Armendariz states that "what characterizes Danticat's collection most distinctly is the sense of disjunction and fragmentation that the story presents, compelling the reader to delve more deeply into the dilemmas faced by the victims" (ARMENDARIZ, 2010, p. 34). The story of the protagonist is told backwards and disrupted by the stories of the other characters, which gives the book a certain mosaic or puzzle form. The stories might be read subsequently or separately. "Each of the nine stories has a title and shows some degree of unit in structure, narrator, character, setting, symbolism, and theme" (FALQUINA, 2014, p. 181).

When asked about the structure of *The Dewbreaker* in an interview, Danticat says that her aim was to "open up" the story and she explains "with each new character, each new situation, I wanted to add layers upon layers to the central figure, the dew breaker. I wanted the reader to be introduced to the dew breaker from different angles, and for those who love him, and even for him, to see himself from various perspectives"[44] In another context, Danticat also stresses that her intention was not to write a novel or a short-story collection, "but *something in between*" (DANTICAT, 2010, p. 62; my emphasis). Her comments help highlight the organicity between the structure and theme of the work. The narrative strategy chosen by Danticat reflects the interstitial condition of characters that inhabit this fictional world, in which the ambivalences and mediations of a hyphenated existence are affected by the legacy of violence they carry along wherever they are.[45]

It is possible to identify movement in almost every short story in *The Dew Breaker*. There are people becoming part of the diaspora movement, there are letters and money being sent back and forth to the U.S.A. and Haiti, there are people moving across town, etc. However, for this dissertation, three of the nine stories have been selected due to the importance of movement as a strategy used by the characters in dealing with the trauma left by the State terrorism: "The Book of the Dead", "Night Talkers" and "The Bridal Seamstress".

2.5.2.1 "The Book of the Dead": the confession of the former torturer

[44] Taken from: https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/1022/edwidge-danticat, last accessed in 24/08/2017

[45] This paragraph, a contribution from my adviser, Dr. Leila Harris, is based on one of her previous publications about Danticat. It will appear in an upcoming chapter, written in Portuguese, and co-authored by the two of us.

The opening story in the volume, “The Book of the Dead” is a first person narration where movement is central. It is the first of the three stories which are centered on the protagonist. The other two are “The Book of Miracles”, and “The Dew Breaker”. “The Book of Dead” starts with the former *tonton macoute* and his daughter Ka driving from New York to Florida in order to sell one of the young woman's sculpture. They decide to spend the night in a hotel before reaching their final destination and when Ka wakes up, her father and the sculpture are gone. This is actually the first sentence of the whole book: “My father is gone” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 9); the opening sets the tone of the narrative. It indicates the movement present in the story, but it also foreshadows the revelation Ka is about to learn and that will change everything. The father she knew is gone. At first, she thinks that the man had gone out to buy them breakfast, but when he does not come back, she calls the police to report his disappearance and her mother to break the news. By the time her father returns to the hotel, the sun is setting and the sculpture disappeared. “The sun is setting and my mother has called more than a dozen times when my father finally appears in the hotel room doorway. He looks like a much younger man and appears calm and rested, as if bronzed after a long day at the beach” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 13). When asked the whereabouts of the sculpture, he tells his daughter that he has objections about it and that they needed to talk. Then he drives Ka to the lake where he had thrown his daughter's sculpture, which was a figure of a man with a scar on his face, much like himself. There on the lake, the protagonist starts opening his past to his daughter. Offering a partial disclosure of his past but revealing facts unknown to her until then, he affirms he did not deserve the statue because unlike she assumed, “[he] was hunter, he was not the prey” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 21). He goes on with his confession:

> “Ka, I was never in prison”, he says.
> “Okay”, I say, sounding like I am fourteen again, chanting from what my mother used to call meaningless adolescent chorus, just to sound like everyone else my age.
> “I was working in the prison”, my father says. And I decide not to interrupt him again until he’s done.
> Stranded in the middle of the speech now, he has to go on. “It was one of the prisoners inside the prison who cut my face in this way face this way”, he says.
> My father now points to the long, pitted scar on his right cheek. I am so used to his hands covering it up that his new purposeful motion toward it seems dramatic and extreme, almost like raising a veil.
> "This man who cut my face”, he continues, “I shot and killed him, like I killed many people” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 21, 22).

As the previous excerpt makes clear, Ka was already aware that she belonged to the postmemory generation. However, she did not know that instead of being persecuted by the

Duvalier's regime, her father had been a *tonton macoute* back in Haiti. In *Bridges to memory: postmemory in contemporary ethnic American women's fiction* (2015), Maria Rice Bellamy reflects on the relevance that the three stories centered around the Bienaimé family have to the Postmemory studies.

> When Ka, the child of postmemory, hears her father's confession about his history in Haiti, her lifelong quest to understand and represent his tortured past is renewed and redirected. Ka's narrative of postmemory finally transcends the dichotomy between the hunter and the prey to reveal a third option, a model of righteous resistance to oppression that redefines Haiti's history of violence (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 128).

That Danticat has chosen her protagonist to reveal his secret to his daughter while the two of them were traveling is worth noting. In doing so, she seems to be including him in this genealogy of trauma that would sadly encompass both victims and tormentors. The former torturer in *The Dew Breaker* was traumatized by his own choices, nonetheless, he also has to carry the physical and emotional scars left by State violence. He too is locked in this experience and finds in movement a possibility to address it, although he sees no hope of overcoming it himself. In the case of the dew breaker, he has found a possible solace in his daughter who can be read as a symbol of a new life, but a new life that is not disconnected to the old one. Bellamy further recognizes the character of Ka as a *Marasa* (twinning and doubling) for her father. She argues that Danticat makes use of the image of the divine twins of Vodou as a strategy for postmemory. "[The use of the *Marasa*] provides a framework for considering Ka's parents relation to their traumatic pasts and enables [Danticat] to imagine a character like Ka's father who has committed violent acts but is also a loving husband and father" (BELLAMY, 2015, p. 130). And, I might add, a character who is also affected by the traumatic experience. Commenting on the *Marasa*, Danticat says: "the idea is that two people are one, but not quite; they might look alike and talk alike but are in essence, different people[46]".

> "I call you Ka," he says, "because in Egyptian world –"
> A ka is a double of the body, I want to complete the sentence for him – the body's companion through life and after life. It guides the body through the kingdom of the dead. That's what I tell my students when I overhear them referring to me as Teacher Kaka.
> "You see, ka is like a soul," my father now says. "In Haiti is what we call good angel, ti bon anj. When you born, I look at your face, I think here is my ka, my good angel" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 17).

[46] Interview entitled "The Dangerous Job of Edwidge Danticat", conducted by Renne H. Shea, 1996.

He cannot see redemption and resolution in his own life, only in his double, in another life who is different from his but at the same time part of him. It is only through this transference, this movement, that he can find some peace. After this dialogue takes place, the reader and Ka are left without further information about the man, except from the fact that his wife is aware of his previous life. The chapter ends with father and daughter in movement, going back to New York and, even though the protagonist's secret is revealed from the beginning, there is no sense of conclusion; on the contrary, when the reader turns the page, a new story begins with no apparent relation with the previous one, postponing the closure, maybe trying to emulate the sense left by a traumatic experience *via* a narrative strategy.

2.5.2.2 "Night Talkers": an attempt to deliver a new found piece of the puzzle

"Night Talkers" tells the story of a young man named Dany who decides to pay a visit to his aunt Estina in the countryside of Haiti to where the woman returned after he emigrated to New York ten years before. The visit has a purpose; Dany wants to tell his aunt that he has found the *tonton macoute* who killed his parents in the same fire that left her blind. Dany has the need to talk about the tragedy that happened in their lives but he cannot do it unless he goes back home, i.e., only through movement he can find a way to speak about his trauma. The short story opens with Dany on the move:

> He thought that the mountain would kill him, that he would never see the other side. He has been walking for two hours when suddenly he felt a sharp pain in his side. He tried some breathing exercise he remembered from medical shows on television, but it was hard to concentrate (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 87).

Indeed, movement is the tone of the story. Once Dany is able to find a village, the scenery before him is of a girl "pounding a pestle in a mortar, forming a small crater in the ground beneath the mortar as a group of children watched" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 89). There, he drinks water and finds help to go to his aunt's house. The description of Estina's house is notable because of its significance: it reverberates movement and contains in itself present and past. The living and the dead. The narrative voice gives the place an almost mystic atmosphere, contrasting the scorching sun and the desert-like landscape he faced to get there. "Estina Estème lived in a valley between two lime-green mountains and a giant waterfall,

which sprayed a fine mist over the banana grove that surrounded her one-room house and the teal ten-place mausoleum that harbored the bones of many of her forebears" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 93). When Dany gets to his aunt's house, she is not there. She is also on the move.

> "You still go on your visits?" he asked.
> "When they came to fetch me, I was with a girl in labor," she said.
> "Still midwifing?"
> "Helping the midwife," she replied. "You know I know every corner of these mountains. If a new tree grows, I learn where it is. Same with children. A baby's still born the same way it was when I had sight." (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 96).

The young man, then, tells his aunt the reason for his return in the hope they can talk about it, but is interrupted by a neighbor. That the interruption did not seem to bother his aunt may suggest that the old lady was not willing to have the conversation about the episode that haunted Dany's mind.

One of the times Dany thinks he will be able to approach his aunt with the subject of his parents' death, Estina has a visitor, a young man named Claude who is probably in his late teens. Dany's and Claude's stories are apparently very different. While Dany is a victim of the dictatorship which took place in the country, Claude is sent back to Haiti from the U.S. after killing his own father. Yet, the sense of incompleteness is present in both characters. The narrative voice describes Dany's incompleteness as following: "He had so little information and so few memories to draw on that every once in a while he would substitute moments from his own life in trying to re-create theirs" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 99). The void created by the absence of his parents was filled with his own life and, in this sense, Dany is also a double to his parents, the same way Ka is a double to her father. Claude's incompleteness is voiced differently. During a conversation, Claude explains how the people in the village are helping him find his pieces.

> "They still took me in, after everything I did, because my moms told them I was their blood. I look at them and I see nothing of me, man, blank, nada, but they look at me and say he has so-and-so's nose and his grandmother's forehead, or some shit like that."… "It's like a puzzle, a weird-ass puzzle, man," he said. "I'm the puzzle and these people are putting me back together, telling me things about myself and my family that I never knew or gave a fuck about" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 102).

Dany is back in Haiti because he believes he has found another piece of the puzzle of his life when he believes that he has found the *macoute* responsible for his parents' death. He wants to take that new found piece to his aunt and join it to the ones she already has. Dany wants to solve the puzzle so he can move on with his life. Claude sees himself as the puzzle,

his life being solved by the power of community and storytelling.

The only time Dany is able to talk to his aunt about his parents and his finding is at night. Both he and his aunt are night talkers, that is, people who talk while sleeping. The part of the narrative that introduces the story of his parents' assassinations starts with the following sentence: "That night, Dany dreamed that he was having the conversation he'd come to have with his aunt" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 104). Later on, Dany is woken up by the sound of his own voice telling the story. His aunt is awake too and listening to him. Even though a sort of a conversation between the two characters takes place, for Estina the night talking is a more effective way to address trauma memory. The excerpt is filled with a language that expresses movement, linking the short story once again to the argument of this chapter

> "I'm sorry I woke you", he said, wiping the sweat off his forehead with the backs of his hands.
> "I should have let you continue telling me what you came here to say." His aunt's voice seemed to be floating toward him in the dark. "It's like walking up these mountains and losing something precious halfway. For you, it would be no problem walking back to find it because you are still young and strong, but for me it would take a lot more time and effort (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 108-109).

This excerpt can also function as a foreshadowing of what happens next in the short-story, as Estina dies that same night: "When he woke up the next morning, she was dead" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 110). In "Night Talkers", trauma is left unresolved, even though it is possible to say that for Dany and his aunt there was a sort of closure.

2.5.2.3 "The Bridal Seamstress": not every tortured body is a body of a political activist

The third story to be addressed, "The Bridal Seamstress", tells the story of Beatrice Saint Fort, a Haitian seamstress living in Brooklyn who, on account of her retirement, is interviewed for the *Haitian American Weekly*, by the intern journalist Aline Cajuste,. Like "Night Talkers", this is a third person narrative but, while the first one covers a period of days, "The Bridal Seamstress" takes place in one single afternoon. In both stories, there is a generation gap between the main characters. Here, the gap can be felt right from the start. Cajuste arrives at Beatrice's house at the time they have previously arranged only to find the old lady "in a green flannel nightgown and matching rabbit-shaped slippers… rubbing the

sleep out of her eyes" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 121). The age difference continues to be evident when, thirty minutes later Beatrice reappears all made up and, instead of starting the interview, she offers – and does not wait for the answer – Aline coffee. "By Aline's watch, it took Beatrice another twenty minutes to make the coffee. When Beatrice finally returned, Aline promised herself she wouldn't let the woman out of her sight again until they'd completed the interview" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 123).

The interview indeed starts after that. Beatrice talks about her business, the process of making a wedding dress, and her retirement.

> "I've been making these dresses since Haiti." Beatrice arched her neck and pushed her head toward Aline's. "In all that time, I've sewn every stitch myself. Never had anyone helping me. Never could stand having anyone in my house for too long. Now it's become too hard. I'm tired" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 126).

When one side of the cassette was nearly full and Aline moves to turn the tape over, Beatrice suggests they continue the interview while walking down her block. The young woman tries to protest, but it is too late, "Beatrice was already standing up and walking to her door" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 127). As they stroll up and down the block, the old lady reveals that she was a victim of torture back in Haiti. Her tormentor was a *tonton macoute*, and she suffered not on account of her involvement in politics, but because she did not go dancing with him. After showing Aline the soles of her feet, "thin and sheer like an albino baby's skin" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 131), Beatrice explains:

> "He asked me to go dancing with him one night," Beatrice said, putting her feet back in the sandals. "I had a boyfriend, so I said no. That's why he arrested me. He tied me to some type of rack in the prison and whipped the bottom of my feet until they bled. Then he made me walk home, barefoot. On the tar roads. In the hot sun. At high noon. This man, wherever I rent or buy a house in the city, I find him, living on my street." (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 132).

When Aline questions if she was sure about the identity of her torturer, the seamstress's answer is poignant. "'You never look at anyone the way you do someone like this.' Beatrice's exasperation was spewing out with the spittle at the side of her mouth. 'No one will ever have that much of your attention. No matter how much he'd changed, I would know him anywhere'" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 132). Beatrice's way to deal with her suffering caused by trauma is to keep moving. First from Haiti to New York, than from house to house.

In addition to Beatrice's urgency in moving around town, Edwidge Danticat brings a series of images, incorporating the idea of movement in this short story which may be related

to the idea of border thinking/sensing and doing (Walter Mignolo, 2011) and to the holistic notion found in African and Indigenous cosmology. The story is full of sensorial descriptions. The effect of the coffee that Beatrice prepares, possibly with a touch of alcohol, provides an example. “Aline was tasting spirits in the coffee but could not identify which” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 123) and had an effect on the intern's body and perceptions. “The tips of Aline's finger and toes were tingling, and Beatrice was starting to seem like someone she knew or should have known better, like her college professor girlfriend, who was always looking for new conquests, in both life and career” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 123). Another instance can be seen right after the beginning of the interview, when Aline asks the seamstress her age:

> “Do you mind if I ask how old you are?”
> “Old,” Beatrice said.
> “Forties?” Aline ventured, even though Beatrice looked much older, late fifties at least.
> Beatrice threw her head back and let out a*n ear splitting laugh, contorting her face in such a way that her skin, had it been cloth, would have taken hours to iron out* (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 125, my emphasis).

The corporality in the short story may suggest that the interview is not the most important event in the narrative, preparing the reader for what is about to be revealed.

In the second part of the story, in which Aline and the readers learn about Beatrice’s past, movement is also present in the scenery the narrative voice describes: “It was a sunny, yet breezy afternoon. There were birds and squirrels skipping on the branches of the tall green ash in front of Beatrice’s house” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 128). Moreover, as they walk, Beatrice points to the houses and tells Aline about her neighbors’ nationalities and professions. “On the left was the home of the Italian baker and his policewoman wife. Across the street was the house of the elderly Guyanaian dentist and his daughter, the bank manager. Further down the block was the Dominican social worker, then the Jamaican schoolteacher, and finally the Haitian prison guard” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 128). After talking about the prison guard, Beatrice’s reaction calls Aline’s attention. “Beatrice had another coughing spell in front of the prison guard’s house, and when it stopped, her face was somber, her eyes moist” (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 128). The traumatic event still takes its toll on her body albeit the time has passed; it is not only a wound that resides on her mind or on the sole of her feet. Trauma still affects her whole self.

Near the very end, Aline recognizes her privilege of not having experienced the trauma Beatrice and many others Haitians have. “Growing up poor but sheltered in Somerville, Massachusetts, Aline never imagined that people like Beatrice existed, men and

women whose tremendous agonies filled every blank space in their lives" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 137). However, the interview and getting to know the story of Beatrice made Aline part of the affiliative postmemory generation, in charge of carrying on the seamstress' story and also the stories of so many others like her. In *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (2012), Marianne Hirsch poses even though the affiliative postmemory is different from the familial one, people from affiliative postmemory generation "share a legacy of trauma and thus the curiosity, the urgency, the frustrated need to know about the traumatic past" (HIRSCH, 2012, p. 35). The drive described in Hirsch's quote leads the journalist to a bold decision. "These were the people Aline wanted to try to write about now, no matter what Marjorie Voltaire said. And if Marjorie didn't like it, then she would quit and go to work somewhere else" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 138). The young woman might not be the daughter either of a *hunter*, or of a *prey*, but she recognizes herself as part of the postmemory generation and is willing to carry on her traumatic legacy.

2.6 **Moving Forward: final considerations**

"But for now, she would simply sit with Beatrice and wait for some time to pass, so that she might see how the green ash leaves looked slowly falling from the tall tree in the very ordinary golden light of dusk" (DANTICAT, 2004, p. 138). The last words of the last story analyzed in this chapter follows the pattern of other stories in *The Dew Breaker*, the closing of "The Bridal Seamstress" does not offer a resolution to the traumatic experience faced by Beatrice. Maybe one can never fully recover from the trauma left by state inflicted violence. Much less those who are caught in coloniality, which is the case of the literary representations delivered by Nelly Rosario and Edwidge Danticat. Still, the two books are far from fatalist. Instead, they must be counted as part of the legacy of work of arts engaged in the decolonial project. They are produced by women authors who inhabit the third space and portray characters who are literary representations of people who inhabit the borderland. Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* and Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* provide narratives which are centered around movement and transgenerational affection as decolonizing constellations.

3 **LIVING ARCHIVES AS A DECOLONIAL STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE IN *THE TRUE HISTORY OF PARADISE*, BY MARGARET CEZAIR-THOMPSON AND *THE LONELINESS OF ANGELS*, BY MYRIAM J.A. CHANCY**

But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while other are that are in fact close to us are already going pale.

Michel Foucault

Therefore, the archive is an open structure where discursive practices are assembled; every new inscription or description is another trace in the archive. The very man [sic] that works the archive is, himself, an archive, for the subject is a discursive effect.

Eurídice Figueiredo[47]

3.1 **History Seats at the Dinner Table: Considerations on Édouard Glissant's Concept of *Nonhistory* and on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's Concept of *Historical Overdose***

[47] In Portuguese: Assim, o arquivo é uma estrutura aberta onde se acumulam práticas descritivas; cada nova inscrição ou descrição é um novo traço do arquivo. O próprio homem que trabalha os arquivos é, ele mesmo, um arquivo, pois o sujeito é um efeito discursivo (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 31)

In *Caribbean Discourse: selected essays* (1989), Édouard Glissant points out that, unlike European peoples whose historical consciousness was gradually and continually built, French Caribbean – and, one might add, the Caribbean region in general – "came together in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces" (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 62). This constant dislocation which caused an "inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all" (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 62) he calls *nonhistory*. Differently from Hegel, who considered African peoples ahistorical and American peoples prehistorical, Glissant reflected on how this series of dislocations and ruptures erased collective memory preventing culture and nature from forming "a dialectical whole that informs a people's consciousness" (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 63). According to him, the absence of this vital dialectical relation condemned the Caribbean to a past that has not emerged as history but is nonetheless obsessively present.

The idea of a *nonhistorical* Caribbean consciousness does not seem to be shared by Haitian intellectual Michel-Rolph Trouillot. In *Silencing the Past: power and the production of history* (1995), Trouillot recognizes history and production of history as embodied forces, having a strong presence in the Caribbean. "I grew up in a family where history sat at the dinner table" (TROUILLOT, 2015, xxi), he says. As his preface continues, the Haitian anthropologist unfolds the story of two men – his father and his uncle – who used to spend Sundays together talking about History. "Sunday afternoon was ritual time for the Trouillot brothers. History was their alibi for expressing their love and disagreements" (TROUILLOT, 2015, xxii). Although being the son of a history teacher and the nephew of the director of the National Archives surely gave him some privilege, Trouillot understands that no one can escape historicity; on the contrary, people can, in fact, suffer from historical overdose. He comments,

> Long before I read Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, I knew intuitively that people can suffer from historical overdose, complaisant hostages of the past they create. We learned that much in many Haitian households at the peak of the Duvaliers' terror, if only we dared to look outside. Yet being who I am and looking at the world from there, the mere preposition that one could – or should – escape history seems to me either foolish or deceitful (TROUILLOT, 2015, xxii)

Edouard Glissant and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's views are not necessarily opposites, however. Glissant's idea of nonhistory does not disregard the historical narratives produced in and about a region. What he understands is that, as the Caribbean collective memory has been

constantly wiped out, the narrative of past events has been constantly and easily altered. He gives one example of this phenomenon:

> When in 1802 Colonel Delgrès blew himself up with his three hundred men using the stock of gunpowder at Fort Matouba in Guadaloupe, so as not to surrender to six thousand French soldiers who were encircling him, the noise of his explosion did not resound immediately in the consciousness of Martinicans and Guadaloupeans. It happened that Delgrès was defeated all over again by the sly trickery of dominant ideology, which succeeded for a while in twisting the meaning of his heroic act and removing it from popular memory. Consequently, the French government's March 1848 proclamation to the slaves in Martinique asserted that Guadaloupeans had themselves demanded the reimposition of slavery in 1802 (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 62).

The same tone seems to reverberate in Trouillot's considerations. He exposes how the idea of "Man" developed at the beginning of the sixteenth century created a perception that a revolution led by enslaved black people would never take place. According to him, this impossibility is reflected on the historiography of a given event: "If some events cannot be accepted even as they occur, how can they be assessed later? In other words, can historical narratives convey plots that are unthinkable in the world within which these narratives take place? How does one write a history of the impossible?" (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 73). Trouillot continues to show how the non-acceptance of the Haitian Revolution by its contemporaries reflects on historians outside Haiti. He observes that the event is regarded accompanied by either *erasure* or *banalization*, and brings up several examples for both cases. In order to exemplify cases of erasure, he points out that the *Penguin Dictionary of Modern History* has neither Saint-Domingue nor Haiti in its entries, and that in Eric Hobsbawn's *The Age of Revolutions, 1789-1843* the Haitian Revolution scarcely appears (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 99). At the same time, due to an increasing specialization within the historical guild, it is impossible to deny that a revolution took place in Saint-Domingue/Haiti. Still according to Trouillot, this is when the banalization appears. In order to demonstrate this matter, he notes how "many of the rhetorical figures used to interpret the mass of evidence accumulated by modern historians recall tropes honed by planters, politicians, and administrators both before and during the revolutionary struggles" (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 102). The most important of these rhetorical figures is the idea that the revolution must have been provoked by some external agent instead of the slaves themselves. Even the exceptions pointed out by him – Eugene Genovese and Robin Blackburn, who insisted on the role of the Haitian Revolution in the fall of the slavery system – have their shortfall: "the impact of this

counter-discourse remains limited, however, especially since Haitian researches are increasingly distant from this international debates" (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 105).

Another important commonality between Glissant and Trouillot is the understanding that history is not exclusively made by historians. Glissant states: "as far as we are concerned, history as a consciousness at work and history as lived experiences are therefore not the business of historians exclusively" (GLISSANT, 1999, p. 65); Trouillot's words complement Glissant's:

> Debates about the Alamo, the Holocaust, or the significance of U.S. slavery involve not only professional historians but ethnic and religious leaders, political appointees, journalists, and citizens, not all of whom are activists. This variety of narrators is one of the many indications that theories of history have a rather limited view of the field of historical production. They grossly underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 19).

The thought that history can be – and is – produced by people who are not in academia is not new; nonetheless, it is important that it be considered in this chapter. Archive and archival power are closely related to the idea of history making and my argument is that the authors who are going to be analyzed in this work and the literatures produced by them can and must be seen as engaged in a decolonial project that questions and revises the canonical, Eurocentric version of archive that privileges certain voices and versions while silencing others. In order to better understand the archive as a decolonial strategy, a reading of archive based on Derrida and Foucault will take place. Then, the constellatory aspect of archive will be addressed. Finally, by means of the two novels chosen to be analyzed, the main argument of this chapter will be illustrated.

3.2 **Commencement and Commandment: considerations on Jacques Derrida's and Michel Foucault's concepts of archive**

In order to lay down the fundamentals of the idea of archive to be discussed and questioned in this chapter, two texts will be used: Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression (1995), by Jacques Derrida and *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), by Michel Foucault. Jacques Derrida's text first appeared in 1994 as a lecture delivered at an international conference, *Memory: The Question of Archives*, organized by René Major and Elisabeth

Roudinesco. The initial title of the lecture, The Concept of Archive: A Freudian Impression, was later modified by the author. Michel Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* is considered a historiographical treatise, where Foucault outlines the method he used in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), and *The Order of Things* (1966), more specifically, how to assemble and interpret the range of documents present in historical records. Despite the fact that "Archive Fever" was published more than 25 years after *Archeology of Knowledge*, Derrida's text will be treated first because the author dedicated some time to ponder on the origins of the word *archive*, achieving some level of definition – though Derrida himself tries to avoid establishing a concept of archive.

In Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, Jacque Derrida addresses Freudian concepts such as *unconscious* and *death drive* in order to question and deconstruct the traditional concept of archive and its importance to history. In order to better understand Derrida's attempt, his text needs to be inscribed within the historical context of the 20th century, which was marked by various debates over events and changes in the international arena. The horrors of the Shoah, the naturalization of genocides, and the decline of the category of Nation State are some of the topics that need to be taken into consideration while reading Archive Fever. Joel Birman reflects upon Derrida's text:

> The "Archive Fever" inscribes itself, *de facto* or *de jure*, where the concepts of *history*, *truth*, and *power* were incorporated into that of archive, and how all of them were predisposed to the same direction. Derrida's theoretical audacity centers rightly in the inquiry he poses about the *medium*, which not only registers our utterances but also hierarchically classifies them in different discursive series, that is, the archive (BIRMAN, 2009, p. 4, my translation)[48].

Derrida starts his text with a discussion about the origin of the word *archive*. According to him, the Greek *arkhé* is related to both the ideas of commencement and commandment; that is, the principle according to nature or history – "*there* where things commence" – and the principle according to the law – "*there* where authority, social order, are exercised" – are the ontological principle and nomological principle, respectively (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 9). In this sense, the archive will set the beginning of an event and ascertain the relevance of such event *because* it is archived. Another Greek word related to archive is *arkheion*, which refers to the construction in itself, "the residence of the superior

[48] In Portuguese: Assim, o ensaio sobre o 'Mal de Arquivo' aqui se inscreve, de fato ou de direito, onde os conceitos de *história*, de *verdade* e de *poder* foram então conjugados com o de arquivo, sendo todos esses declinados na mesma direção crítica. A ousadia teórica de Derrida se formula justamente na colocação em questão que realizou do *suporte*, que não apenas registra os nossos enunciados, mas também os ordena hierarquicamente nas suas várias séries discursivas, isto é, o arquivo.

magistrates, the *árkhon*, those who commanded" (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 9). Thus, it is possible to conclude that, for Derrida, the idea of archive comprises the documents, the building in which they are stored, and the person who has the power to decide which document is worthy of being archived, hence achieving the status of law. On the role of the *árkhon*, Derrida states:

> The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect *state the law*: they recall the law, and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they needed at once a guardian and a location. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence (DERRIDA, 1995, p.10).

According to this quotation, it is possible to define at least three characteristics of archive that will be used in this chapter. It must be a *document*; it must have an *árkhon*, someone who will be the guardian and interpret the archives; and it must have a *location*.

Additionally, Derrida points out that from the *árkhonic* power derives the power of consignation which means "to gather the signs" (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 10). "*Consignation* aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unit of an ideal *configuration*" (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 10, my emphasis). This configuration feature presented by him gives the archive a constellatory aspect that agrees with the core of this dissertation. In On the Concept of History (1940), Walter Benjamin states a difference between the historian engaged in historicism and the one engaged in historical materialism. According to him, while historicism is an additive method, historical materialism is based on a constructivist principle which creates the historian and observer of constellations. He explains:

> The historical materialist approaches a historical object solely and alone where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a messianic zero-hour [*Stillstellung*] of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past. He perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogeneous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work. The net gain of this procedure consists of this: that the life-work is preserved and sublated *in* the work, the epoch *in* the different life-work, and the entire course of history *in* the epoch (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 396).

In *Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault defines archives as systems that transform statements into events and things. In other words, Foucault understands that an archive is not the number of documents that vouches for a culture or a civilization, nor is it

the building or institution that preserves such documents. Rather, the archive is the power that guarantees the recording and preservation of specific discourses instead of others.

> [The archive] is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; *it is the system of its functioning*. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, is that which differentiate discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration (FOUCAULT, 1969, p. 129).

In this dissertation, both views of archive are going to be taken into consideration because both are relevant to the idea of archive and archivalisation as a strategy to resist colonial power. Some questions are of paramount importance: how and why are discourses or documents chosen to be archived? Who decides which discourses or documents are to be preserved? The answers may vary, but as mentioned previously, both Derrida and Foucault understand that archives (or the archive power) seem to function under a constellatory principle which organizes them. In *Negative Dialectics* (1973), Theodor Adorno states that concepts – or discourses – are unified because they enter a constellation which illuminates the specific side of an object. The internal value or relevance of a discourse can be only achieved through this external instance, i.e., the constellation. "The object opens itself to a monadological insistence, to a sense of the constellation in which it stands; the possibility of internal immersion requires that externality" (ADORNO, 2004, p. 163). Therefore, the importance of a specific document or discourse is verified when analyzed in its constellation, i.e., in relation to the decolonizing project.

3.2.1 Challenging the *Archiviolithic* Drive: the archive as a decolonizing constellation to resist colonial trauma

In his Freudian reading, Derrida understands that the destruction (death) drive is also *archiviolithic*, that is, an eager desire to destroy archives. He comments that this destruction drive "not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory…, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mneme*, or to *anamnesis* , that is, the archive" (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 14). This *archiviolithic* drive is especially present in the context of colonization and coloniality. In Coloniality of

Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America (2000), Aníbal Quijano explains that Europe, being the center of global capitalism, was able not only to control world market but also to incorporate other regions to this system through colonization, in a process he called "historical reidentification" (QUIJANO, 2000, p.541). By way of this process, new geocultural identities were produced and diverse and heterogeneous cultural histories were assimilated into a single narrative dominated by and revolving around Europe. In order to achieve this intent, Quijano points out that Europeans did the following:

> In the first place, they expropriated the cultural discoveries of the colonized peoples most apt for the development of capitalism to the profit of the European center. Second, they repressed as much as possible the colonized forms of knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their symbolic universe, the model of expression and of objectification and subjectivity (QUIJANO, 2000, p. 541)

Quijano's words show that colonial power has operated since its outset under the *archiviolithic* drive. In Coloniality at Large (1999), Walter Mignolo emphasizes how colonial power was constructed on an imaginary based on violence and erasure. He declares:

> The imaginary of the modern/colonial world arose from the complex articulation of forces, of voices heard or silenced, of memories compact or fractured, of histories told from only one side that suppress other memories, and of histories that were and are told from the double consciousness that generates the colonial difference (MIGNOLO, 1999, p. 28).

Even though most of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are independent nations, coloniality is still the mark of the region. In order to illustrate this argument, two cases will be considered. The first one is the case of Haiti, and the second the case of Brazil. The two countries have been selected due to their importance to the region, past and present. In the first section of this chapter, two *archiviolithic* strategies presented by Trouillot – *erasure* and *banalization* – are used to show how the Haitian Revolution was – and still is – ill treated by intellectuals. Trouillot enumerates some instances when this *archiviolithic* power was exercised against the Haitian Revolution: the event is not present in most Latin American textbooks; historians of Poland paid little attention to the fact that five thousand Poles were involved in the Saint-Domingue campaigns; and England remained silent despite the fact that the country lost more than sixty thousand men during the eight years of an anti-French Caribbean campaign (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 99). The United States and France are the most critical examples of power at work when it comes to the Haitian Revolution. Even though the revolution provoked the Louisiana Purchase, in the U.S., "with

the exception of Henry Adams and W. E. B. Du Bois, few major writers conceded any significance to the Haitian Revolution in their historical writings up to the 1970s" (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 99). Likewise, according to Trouillot, notwithstanding the importance of Saint-Domingue to the economy of France during the colonial period, most French historians simply underestimate the role Haiti plays in the history of France.

> [R]evolutionary France left a trail of records on these subjects. Colonial management and both private and public communications between France and the Americas also left their paper trail. In short, the inaccessibility of sources is only relative. It cannot explain the massive disregard that French historiography shows for the colonial question and, by extension, for the Haitian Revolution. In fact, French historians continue to neglect the colonial question, slavery, resistance, and racism more than the revolutionary assemblies ever did. *Most historians ignored or simply skipped whatever record there was*. A few took time for short and often derogatory passages on the Haitian revolutionaries before moving, as it were, to more important subjects. (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 101, my emphasis).

In *A literatura como arquivo da ditadura brasileira*[49] (2017), Brazilian literary critic Eurídice Figueiredo emphasizes the presence of the *archiviolithic* drive in the country and how it is detrimental to the necessary work of *remembering* that must take place after a period of dictatorship. The official version claims that, during the last year of the dictatorship, Brazilian Military Forces destroyed the archives from the period in order to erase all traces of their deeds. They based this action on the Regulamento para Salvaguarda de Assuntos Sigilosos (loosely translated as Rules to Safeguard Classified Information), published 1967. Even though there have been real efforts from different sectors of the civil society and the Academia to find documents of this period of Brazilian history, the country does not have a proper Dictatorship Archive. Among the countries of South America which suffered *coups d'etat* during the second half of the twentieth century, Brazil might be considered an extreme case of how the *archiviolithic* power operates to the point that it becomes part of the country's legislation.

In order to resist the power that destroys the archive, one contracts an *archive fever* or, in the words of Figueiredo, an *archiving obsession*: "the archiving obsession is the corollary of the loss of memory; one archives in order to protect him/herself from forgetfulness. As memory is lost, we live in a culture of remnants, and those remnants are preserved through archives[50]" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 28, my translation). In this sense, it can be said that a

[49] In English, *Literature as Archive of the Brazilian Dictatorship*, my translation.

[50] In Portuguese: A obsessão pelo arquivo é o corolário da perda da memória; arquiva-se para se resguardar do esquecimento. Como não existe mais memória, vivemos numa cultura dos vestígios, vestígios esses que são preservados em arquivos" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 28).

decolonial archiving is a project anchored in obsession because colonial power is determined to alter and erase memory. For the purpose of this dissertation, following the example of Eurídice Figueiredo, due to the lack of enough official archives in Latin America and the Caribbean, literature – novels, to be more precise – will become archives and their authors will be *árkhons*. Furthermore, in the novels analyzed in this chapter, archiving will be central to the narrative and the lives of the characters. The archiving obsession is, thus, another constellation to be noticed among artists who are engaged in questioning colonial power and dismantling its ideologies. In *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (1997), Myriam Chancy states, "since a codified history of Haitian women has yet to be written, the project of recovering the roots of Haitian women's self-definition is made possible only through the evaluation of narrative forms" (CHANCY, 1997, p. 6). Although her statement refers specifically to the history of Haitian women, the same void/erasure can be seen in different parts of Latin America and the Caribbean as a result of the politics of colonialism and coloniality. Chancy complements: "The fictional is therefore a conduit for a historical narrative that is elsewhere denied existence" (CHANCY, 1997, p. 6). The fiction treated here cannot be and is not equated to a lie, as many historians accuse it to be. Figueiredo states: "Fiction is not a synonym of fantasy and imagination: rather, it is language's ordering strategy in order to create a narrative that is readable, comprehensible[51]" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 44). Therefore, the use of fiction as an archive does not threaten history; on the contrary, it contributes by filling in the gaps caused by colonial – or any kind of – violence.

3.3 **Margaret Cezair-Thompson's The True History of Paradise and Myriam J.A. Chancy's The Loneliness of Angels: novels as decolonial archives**

The first of the two novels to be analyzed in this chapter will be *The True History of Paradise* (1999), by Margaret Cezair-Thompson. Cezair-Thompson was born in Jamaica in 1956. She later immigrated to the United States in order to attend Barnard College, in New York, where she received a B.A. in English. She received her PhD in English from the City University of New York. *The True History of Paradise* is a polyphonic novel that takes place

[51] In Portuguese: A ficção não é sinônimo de fantasia e de imaginação: trata-se, antes, de uma estratégia ordenadora da linguagem a fim de criar uma narrativa legível, compreensível.

in Jamaica, during a state of emergency. As the protagonist Jean Landing decides to cross the island to flee the country, she starts channeling the voices she has been hearing for a long time. Those are the voices of her ancestors telling the history and the stories of Jamaica and its people. The story of Jean's escape is told in a third person narrative, while the stories she channels are all narrated in first person. The novel was short-listed for the Dublin International I.M.P.A.C. The second novel to be analyzed is *The Loneliness of Angels* (2010), by Myriam J.A. Chancy, who was born in Haiti, raised in Canada, and currently lives in the U.S.. She holds a B.A. in English/Philosophy from the University of Manitoba, a M.A. in English Literature from Dalhouise University, and a PhD in English from the University of Iowa. She is a very influential scholar in the Caribbean Studies area and has been a fellow at the Guggenheim Foundation since 2014. *The Loneliness of Angel* is Chancy's third novel and centers on the lives of five main characters: Ruth, Catherine, Rose, Romulus, and Elise. They all have unresolved spiritual paths they will have to cross, successfully or not. The novel has a polyphonic, nonlinear narrative, and takes places in Haiti, Canada, and Paris. *The Loneliness of Angels* was awarded the 2011 Guyana Prize in Literature Caribbean Award and was short-listed for the 2011 OCM Bocas Prize in Caribbean Literature.

Both novels were chosen because they are good examples of how literature may become an archive to be used as a decolonizing strategy. It is possible to recognize this decolonizing use of the archive both in the writing of the novels and in the selected narrative strategies. In an essay published on the online literary journal *Small Axe* entitled History, fiction, and the myth of marginality (2013), Cezair-Tompson reflects on this matter:

> As a fiction writer, I'm always thinking about history. Naipaul (my unwitting mentor) once said that 'the history of these islands can never be satisfactorily told' and I agree. It's too multilayered to make sense in a conventionally structured novel. But that is what makes it fascinating. We've barely begun to tell the region's stories and are still figuring out how best to do so. Edward Baugh's magnificent poem 'Old Talk or West Indian History' expresses the profound relationship between the writer and history, and reminds us of the writer's traditional role as bard and archivist (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2013, n.p)[52].

This sense of hi/story that contains multiple layers is also evoked by Eurídice Figueiredo. The Brazilian literary critic calls attention to the fact that those who deal with the recuperation of the past through literary writing ought to engage themselves in a work of gathering and rearranging traces, documents, which have already gone through a process of

[52] Taken from: http://smallaxe.net/sxsalon/discussions/history-fiction-and-myth-marginality, last accessed in 01/15/2020.

erasure and rewriting. On this subject, Figueiredo comments: "it is possible to perceive this superimposing of elements as a palimpsest to be deciphered, to be recovered, to be resignified" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 29, my translation)[53].

Furthermore, Eurídice Figueiredo ponders on the importance of the literary work that deals with periods of dictatorship – which takes into consideration the context of Latin American and the Caribbean is intrinsically related to coloniality.

> Literature on the dictatorship is built from this palimpsest and fulfills the role of supplementing the archives, which, even when open to the population for consultation, are arid and difficult to read. By creating characters, by simulating situations, the writer is able to lead the reader to imagine what was actually experienced by men and women (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 29, my translation)[54].

In *The True History of Paradise*, Cezair-Thompson makes use of several devices – aside from her choice of characters and plot development -- in order to associate her work as an author to that of an archivist. In Histórias interrompidas: The True History of Paradise, de Margaret Cezar-Thompson (2012), Leila Assumpção Harris draws attention to the use of family trees which, according to her, blend familial and collective stories. In addition, she points out to other elements found in the book:

> the use of the phrase 'true history' along with the term novel suggests that the historical and literary discourses coexist in the text. The section 'author's note' preceding the beginning of the narrative reinforces the idea. Besides announcing the presence of a glossary in the end of the book containing Jamaican words and phrases that are recurrent in the text, the note explains that even though events in the book are based on historical facts, and while many of the described places are real, the story is a work of fiction (HARRIS, 2012, p. 55)[55].

In an interview to *Penumbra* journal, Myriam Chancy reflects on her role as a scholar and novelist in such manner that also resonates with the work of an archivist. She says:

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[53] In Portuguese: "Pode-se perceber essa sobreimpressão de elementos como um palimpsesto a ser decifrado, a ser recomposto, ressignificado" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 29).

[54] "A literatura sobre a ditadura se constrói a partir desse palimpsesto e cumpre o papel de suplemento aos arquivos que, ainda quando abertos à população para consulta, são áridos e de difícil leitura. Ao criar personagens, ao simular situações, o escritor é capaz de levar o leitor a imaginar aquilo que foi efetivamente vivido por homens e mulheres" (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 29).

[55] "A combinação da frase 'história verdadeira' com o substantivo romance sugere que os discursos históricos e literários coexistem no texto. E a 'Nota da autora' que precede a narrativa reforça a sugestão. Além de anunciar que há um glossário para palavras e frases jamaicanas que aparecem com frequência no texto, a nota explica que embora certos incidentes sejam baseados em fatos históricos e embora vários lugares escritos sejam reais, trata-se de uma obra de ficção" (HARRIS, 2012, p. 55)

> Earlier in my career, I made it my duty to always leave behind traces of works I was discovering. So if I did some research on a particular topic – at the time I was doing work on what was considered somewhat obscure (especially around Caribbean women writer) and lived between countries – while gathering all the information it occurred to me that there might be somebody else who comes out of a similar background or thinks about this issues the same way I do and doesn't have the liberty of going from one country to another as I did, or going to independent bookstores and seeking this information out. Everything I read or collect must somehow result in a placement in a publication that is accessible to someone who needs that information (CHANCY, 2012)[56]

Her choice of words in this comment makes it clear that Chancy is well aware of the importance and the privilege an archivist has when in touch with materials others may not have access to; at the same time, she understands that, along this privilege, the role of the archivist comprises not only the gathering of documents – used here in a loose sense, since those may include oral stories, novels, and artifacts, for example – but also making them available to others, not only through research theory, but also through fiction. *The True History of Paradise* and *The Loneliness of Angels* are not only literary works written by authors who are well aware of their roles as archivists. They are also pieces of fiction writing in which the protagonists are á*rkhons* engaged in the role of choosing and protecting decolonial archives.

3.3.1 *The True History of Paradise*: a constellation of voices

3.3.1.1 State of emergency as an *archiviolithic* force: the Jamaican case

"It's Easter, and Jamaica is in a state of emergency" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p.3). The back cover of the novel sets the plot in 1981, with Jamaica in the middle of a political turmoil. One cannot affirm that Cezair-Thompson decided to set her novel in this specific year in order to highlight its fictional aspect, since Jamaica was not under a state of emergency in 1981, but it is a possibility. Nevertheless, the use of this situation in the novel is representative because the author sets the tone of the narrative from the beginning. There had indeed been a state of emergency years before 1981 – a very controversial one, as most states

[56] Taken from: https://unionpenumbra.org/article/an-interview-with-myriam-chancy/, last accessed in 01/05/2020.

of emergency are – declared by the People's National Party (PNP), which was also the party of Michael Manley, Prime Minister at the time. Leaders of PNP accused members of the opposition party, the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP), of trying to overthrow the Government. An official document (Ministry Paper N. 22/1977 - Review of the State of Emergency) reads:

> 2. Although the leading events to the Proclamation of the State of Emergency are well known, it is desirable to recapitulate the important factors which necessitated its Declaration. The six and one half month period prior to the Declaration witnessed a significant escalation in the incidence of crimes of violence and, in particular, those involving the use of firearms. From reports received it was evident that a large percentage of the crimes committed were politically motivated (p. 2)[57]

The opposition denied this version and accused the Government of being responsible for at least one violent incident and of declaring the state of emergency in order to prevent the opposing party from winning the election expected for later that same year, but which took place only in 1977. In an article to the *Jamaica Observer* entitled The Anguish of the 1976 State of Emergency and its disasters, published in May 6th, 2018, Edward Seaga, candidate from the opposition at the time of the 1976 State of Emergency gives his version of the story. A particular incident of violence occurred on May 19th, 1976; fifty men set fire to tenement buildings, leaving 10 dead and 500 homeless people. The press implied that the arsonists were supporters of JLP. The fire took place in Orange Street, West Kingston constituency, where Seaga was a member of parliament and the JLP had a significant majority. He believes a political stage was set in order to blame JLP for extreme violence.

> Those on the ground politically, so to speak, knew that the gunmen came from Arnett Gardens. But it was after a Commission of Enquiry was established under Mr. Justice Small, in the testimony before the commission from people who asked to be heard in secret, the arsonists and terrorists were identified to be from Arnett Gardens, a PNP stronghold.
> A report on the secret sessions was submitted by Mr. Justice Small and submitted in 1976, but it was repressed and never published. The damage, however, had already been done[58].

The tone of the first pages of the novel echoes the political accusations that led to the state of emergency and shows how the country had been torn apart: "The city has been divided into war zones, marked out by graffiti. The name MANLEY or SEAGA, or letters, PNP or JLP are painted on the sidewalks and walls in the respective party colors, orange, and

[57] Document found in: <http://www.nlj.gov.jm/MinistryPapers/MinistryPapers1970-79.htm>, last accessed in February, 2020.
[58] Taken from: http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/the-anguish-of-the-1976-state-of-emergency-and-its-disasters_132301, last accessed on January 28, 2020.

green. No graffiti means you're in No Man's lands and you take your chances" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 4).

By the time the novel was first published (1999), several states of emergency had been declared in Jamaica. Some of them were due to natural disasters such as hurricanes, but the majority was due to occurrences of violence and crime. Part of Jamaica is under a state of emergency right now (2020), including its capital, Kingston. According to the Caribbean National Weekly (CNW), it is used as a strategy for fighting crime, but Julian Robinson, member of the Jamaican Parliament, accuses the government of using this remedy to detain people. "Now, what the state of emergency does [sic] it allows the security forces to detain people and I suspect that is the main motivating factor for this", said Robinson to the CNW[59].

The Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) defines states of emergency as following:

> A state of emergency derives from a governmental declaration made in response to an extraordinary situation posing a fundamental threat to the country.
> The declaration may suspend certain normal functions of government, may alert citizens to alter their normal behavior, or may authorize government agencies to implement emergencies preparedness plans as well as to limit or suspend civil liberties and human rights (DCAF, 2005, p.1)[60].

The implementation of the state of emergency needs to be in accordance with the constitutional and legislative base. This is worth mentioning and reflecting upon, especially in the context of countries that went through colonization, which is the case of those located in the Caribbean. In their struggle to become independent, most countries that were former colonies opted to replicate Western models of democracy and government, making use of strategies that are far from being decolonizing ones. The state of emergency is one of them. According to Giorgio Agamben, modern totalitarianism makes use of the state of exception in order to decide who deserves to live and who deserves to die, not very different from the colonial power that divided people in categories of human and non-human:

> In this sense, modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. Since then, the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the

[59] Taken from: https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/caribbean-breaking-news-featured/another-state-of-emergency-declared-in-kingston-jamaica/, last accessed on January 28, 2020.
[60] Taken from: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/14131/backgrounder_02_states_emergency.pdf, last accessed on January 28, 2020.

> technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones (AGAMBEN, 2005, p.2).

States of emergency become official archives as they register the motives which led a government to declare it. At the same time, they may become an instrument of governmental power to destroy and discredit living archives. In *The True History of Paradise*, the state of emergency will be considered as a metaphor /metonymy for the *archiviolithic* drive because as it has been discussed, it gives a government power to take the lives of "entire categories of citizens", especially those who resist state oppression and violence. In this sense, instead of reading Jean Landing as someone individualist, who cares only about herself and her safety, it is possible to understand the protagonist's escape as a act of resistance, as someone who wants to protect the precious archives which are under her responsibility and to preserve the history one cannot find in official books.

3.3.1.2 "Revising Broken Grammar": opening the generational archive

Even though the state of emergency in Jamaica is crucial to make the protagonist plan to leave the island, a private matter is what seems to set Jean Landing into action. News from her older sister, Lana, is the trigger for her leaving. In fact, death sets the tone of the narrative because other than her friend Paul, who will drive her to the other end of the island, Jean's ancestors will be her sole companion. In *The True History of Paradise*, the archive is opened when the protagonist decides to leave the country permanently, as if she needed to reveal everything she had been listening to and holding in for years. One could even say that she decides to open the files of Jamaica and leave them there, where they belong.

> Ghosts stand on the foothills of this journey. She smells their woody ancestral breath in the land's familiar crest and undulations. She heard them all her life, these obstinate spirits, desperate to speak, to revise the broken grammar of their exits. They speak to her, Jean Landing, born in that audient hour before daylight broke on the nation, born into the knowledge of nation and prenation, the old noises of barracks, slave quarters, and steerage mingling in her ears with the newest sounds of self-rule. On verandas, in kitchens, in the old talk, in her waking reveries and anxious dreams, see gas heard their stories (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 17)

Jean Landing is the *árkhon* in the novel; she is the one who determines who is going to be listened to and who will remain silenced, and she is the one that holds the files of this

generational archive. This role gives her an authority and power that may not be noticed at first. The protagonist is described as a frail person since the beginning of the narrative. Two excerpts are exemplary: first, she is considered weak by her mother, Monica Landing. "Monica has never been afraid of anything and is openly contemptuous of anyone who shows fear. She considers her daughter weak-minded, like her husband, Roy Landing" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 4). Then, when reflecting on her reasons to start the journey, right after her sister's funeral, Jean understands that the government will fall within days and that it does not matter if one has chosen a side or not. "However, things turn out here, it will be bad for her. She has no interest in politics, no ideology, no allegiances; but it doesn't matter; everyone has had to take sides" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 11). Jean Landing is surrounded by strong-willed, politically engaged, courageous characters. Her mother is a daring businesswoman who, in one occasion, vehemently defends her baker from a raging crowd. Her father was a founding member of the People's National Party. Her childhood friend, Faye Galdy, is a proud white Jamaican and a lesbian who is a playwright and owns a theater company. Her older sister, who seems mentally unstable, makes a good career as a singer and has her choice of lovers. Compared to them, the protagonist seems bland, uninteresting. Nevertheless, she is the one who has been listening to the stories since childhood. The following excerpt gives an idea on why she is chosen as an *árkhon*. It says that she was born "in that *audient* hour before daylight broke on the nation" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 17); listening is, therefore, her main talent. At a certain point of the journey, still in Kingston, Jean recalls some thoughts she had after visiting the Arawak Museum with her family and being incredulous of the fact that the Arawaks were decimated by the Spaniards:

> For years she played with an imaginary Arawak boy she called Kawara. He spoke the sleeping language of the volcanos, and showed her how to hunt iguanas, build canoes, and pound cassava as his people had done before the Spaniard discovery. she smiles to herself, grateful for the memory. She hasn't thought about Kawara in years (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 15).

In a country full of silencing and annihilation due to coloniality, being able to listen becomes a skill to be valued. Those who listen and do not forget are very important in the resistance field, even though they are not always considered heroes.

The novel presents nine "archive files". As aforementioned, *The True History of Paradise* presents a third person narrator, except when it comes to the voices Jean hears. When they appear, the text is in italics and the narrative is in first person as if to indicate that

those ancestors own their stories despite the erasure and the violence that have taken place. Even though one cannot say that the novel is able to represent the whole racial experience in Jamaica, it is important to note that the author presents a multicolored archive comprising Jamaicans from different backgrounds, such as Africa, China, Europe, and India. This chapter will focus on three of the ancestors who tell their stories: Rebecca Landing, Mr. Ho Sing, and Mary "Iya ilu". They have been selected because they represent different peoples and periods of the history of the island, showing that it is impossible to consider a sole narrative even – or especially – when it comes to coloniality, be it past or present.

3.3.1.2.1 Rebecca Landing

Rebecca Landing is the first ancestor to speak. She is an English woman, according to her mother, and a Creole woman, according to her father. Either way, she was a member of the elite. Her narrative starts describing Jamaica as a place that is close to the Biblical paradise. "Flowers outbloomed the seasons; fruit ripened on the trees all year long. The rivers were cool and fresh. We were children of the sun, my sister Susannah, and I. She was my sole companion" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 17). The peace and quietness, however, lasts only for the first sentences and the tone changes as the narrative continues; just like the Genesis account, the idyllic atmosphere precedes tragedy and a brute reality shows itself. First, Rebecca witnesses the assassination of an enslaved man. "I cannot remember what his crime was, but it must have been abominable because for several days there had been much talk about it among my father and friends. I heard him say that it was a miserable thing to have to lose a whole man, but in the long run better than inviting insurrection" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 18). The event itself cannot be considered a tragedy, but her witnessing it serves as foreshadow of what is to come. Watching him being slaughtered reminded her of illustrations she had seen in the Scripture. She says: "To think that a Negro, a slave, who was by no means innocent, should remind me of our Lord's suffering!" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 18). The Biblical accounts about the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ register darkness and natural disasters taking place during the event. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. … And the earth shook, and the rocks were split." (BIBLE ESV, 2016, p. 834). It is after the killing of the enslaved man that the tone of the narrative changes completely; an almost apocalyptic scenery is

presented to the reader. “On the seventh day of June, sixteen hundred and ninety-two, the world changed” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 18). The family was going on a day trip to visit some friends and planned to stop at Rebecca’s grandmother’s house on the way back, as part of the celebration of the girl’s tenth birthday. Even before disaster takes place, Nature is described as a threat: “It was uncommonly hot for that time of the day, and within hours the sky was glowing red. We feared a hurricane, but we were already too far on our journey to turn back” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 19). Rebecca, her sister, and her mother were resting in a public house before continuing their journey while her father was off on some business when the earthquake struck.

> First there was a deep, terrible rumbling, which knocked over the pitcher and glasses. Then the building shook suddenly and with such a force that we were thrown from our chairs. The walls crumbled. The rumbling sounded like thunder breaking from the bowels of the earth, a sound so hellish that I know whatever calamity had befallen was being visited upon the entire land. My mother held us tightly, shielding us as well as she could. Susannah would not stop screaming, and I was certain that we would die (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 20).

Mother and daughters survive the earthquake and go outside the building, finding a scenario even closer to the Gospel’s: “The world appeared to be breaking into many pieces. The sky was dark, yet there were no clouds” (CEZAIR-THOMPSOM, 2009, p. 20). The family is reunited and finally reaches Spanish Town where the grandmother lives. The father leaves the women there and goes in search of his cousin Pietra, who lives in Port Royal, the epicenter of the earthquake. When he returns from the second attempt to find his cousin –who was also his mistress – Susannah had died from dengue fever. Besides losing her sole companion, Rebecca is left with a father and a mother who are lost and buried in their own grief. “Days passed without my talking to a living creature or hearing the talks of others. My parents had become strangers to each other and to the world, their souls unhinged by their tragedy” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 200). Mother and daughter are finally sent to England never to return to Jamaica. Rebecca’s mother dies within a year and the girl is raised by her uncle and his wife, the Gilberts of Monmouth, as their own daughter. Her uncle and aunt try to erase her early memories and account the stories she tells as “morbid imagination” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 25). Rebecca has some opinion about what she reads on Jamaica History and how it is different from her own stories; one excerpt is worth mentioning. It is related to ideas that English had about whites who were born in the islands; they believed that the climate altered their features and behavior.

> I have read widely on the subject of the West Indies. Indeed, I am considered bookish. I search for facts equal to my memoirs and I search in vain. I read one of those books, which are called Histories, that Creole women are cruel and that they indulge themselves in licentious amours. These books hurt me. They are cracked mirrors which break the paradise in my mind (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 24).

Rebecca faces racialization in England, where people sometimes are surprised that she is a Creole woman having such pale complexion. At the same time, it is important to point out that, as a member of the elite, she carries all the racist beliefs against people of African-descent to the point that she considers the raping of enslaved women that many times resulted in pregnancy, not as a crime but a plan of God. "It is possibly God's plan to whiten the Africans and so better their race. Though this means our men fall to degeneracy, we must accept, as Sarah accepted the Egyptian handmaiden" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 25).

Despite her racist beliefs, Rebecca is aware that History is full of lies and misinterpretations. Most of all, she is aware that her stories – and many others – are doomed to be silenced. Nevertheless, she tells what she can as a living archive fighting the *archiviolithic* violence England and her own family tried to impose on her. The final paragraph of her account reads as following:

> Know what I know: Time has shaped you from a hundred histories which will never be told; our voices are not welcome among the living. Stay and die there, unaccounted for. Or escape, live, and be silent among the migratory whose lives are like a discontinued letter. What do you expect? What consolation do you seek from the eternally disconsolate? (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 26).

3.3.1.2.2 Mr. Ho-Sing

Mr. Ho-Sing is Roy Landing's grandfather and the third ancestor to speak. The character represents the Chinese people who migrated to the Caribbean. According to the *Caribbean Atlas*, there were two main waves of Chinese migration to the area: the first one formed by indentured workers who were taken predominantly to Trinidad, British Guiana, and Cuba, in order to work on sugar plantations after the Emancipation period; the second one was formed by free voluntary migrants who would go in small groups primarily to British

Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad[61]. Mr. Ho-Sing is not his real name; the character had to change his name because he was a *hakka.* Hakkas were members of a people from southeastern China who migrated from the north during the 12th century. "I come from de people in Kwantung wha' dem did call Hakka. 'Hakka' mean 'visitor' an' is so dem did call us because we did come down from the North. One day some people come an' bun down the whole village. Everybody dead. Only two a we escape, me sister and me" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 77). After escaping death, they lived on the streets of Macau, begging and stealing. One day his sister disappears and he never sees her again. After her disappearance, the boy starts working for a crimp – a person who used to kidnap people and take them to the ships that went from China to the Caribbean. "Ships tekin' Chinese people to Cuba and Sout' America to work in de sugar field because African slavery done. A lot a crimp, den beat up people and put dim 'pon de ship" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 78). Mr. Ho-Sing survives a shipwreck close enough to land to allow him to swim back to Macau before he finally boards a ship taking laborers to Jamaica. He plans on getting a boat to Cuba right after he gets there, but when he finally saves enough money to do it, ten years later, he decides to stay and start a small shop for himself.

Mr. Ho-Sing's accounts are mostly prosaic, seeming to have no political content. Nevertheless, Cezair-Thompson makes use of his narrative to denounce some important facts in the History of Jamaica. Two brief – yet important – moments are worth mentioning. The first one is an observation he makes about the conditions of the ships and the violence suffered by the indentured workers. Mr. Ho-Sing compares it to African slavery. "Almos' seven hundred Chinese 'pon the boat goin' Jamaica. Right away I see is true: I sign myself ina slavery. We down in de ship bottom and we don't see daylight. Hakka an' Cantonese too. People fightin'. People sick. People hungry an' t'irsty (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 78). Even though indentured work cannot be compared to African slavery, it is important to acknowledge that different peoples were victims of brutality in the formation of the Caribbean. "Wha' people den suffer on all den ship from China, from India, from Africa, nobody know, nobody can say. Too much people. Too much story" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 78). Despite their shortness, those excerpts are important because, even though they do not tell a lot, they remind the readers that there are archives which will never be opened, those which are lost forever. The second moment occurs when Mr. Ho-Sing comments about

[61] Taken from: http://www.caribbean-atlas.com/en/themes/waves-of-colonization-and-control-in-the-caribbean/daily-lives-of-caribbean-people-under-colonialism/the-chinese-in-the-caribbean-during-the-colonial-era.html, last accessed in 01/28/2020.

the Anti-Chinese Riots that took place in Jamaica in July 1918. He says: “Dem say Black people turn against Chinee shopkeeper. So dem say, dem history book an’ history teacher. But is not true. Syrian shop-dem don’t give credit to Black people. Only Chinee give credit and sell small-small fe Black people. Is not true dem hate we” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 80). The character is very much aware of the institutionalized version, represented by the history teacher, but he confronts it, offering his own version for the riots which is, again, a very ordinary narrative. “A Chinee man catch him ‘ooman in bed wid a policeman and him beat him up. Policeman start tell people lie ‘bout how Chinese people goin’ tex over de island, tex over government an’ bank, an’ turn Communist. *Dat is de true story behind the Anti-Chinese Riot: man an’ ‘ooman*” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 80, emphasis are mine). Although the reasons Mr. Ho-Sing presents for the riots to take place might be considered mundane, the character becomes a literary representation of Trouillot’s idea that “human beings participate in history both as actors and narrators” (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 2) regardless of their social, racial or sexual status, conditions, and identities. It is through him that Cezair-Thompson defies the official version of that historical event through fiction, highlighting the importance of ordinary people in the construction of historical narratives. Trouillot adds: “This variety of narrators is one of many indications that theories of history have a rather limited view of the field of historical productions. They grossly underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia” (TROUILLOT, 2015, p. 19).

3.3.1.2.3 Mary “Iya ilu”

Mary “Iya ilu” is the last ancestor to speak; she is a Yoruba woman who was kidnapped as a child and brought to Jamaica as a slave. She is the only African ancestor to have a voice. Her narrative differs from the others because it is very short and comes in a poem-like form; despite its shortness, it is probably one of the richest in symbolism and encompasses past, present, and future. Also, the chapter that precedes her narrative is worth mentioning. It is one of the last stops on Jean's way to the other side of the country, when she visits with an old Maroon couple who works for Paul, her driver and lifelong friend. The man’s name is Kofe: “Kofe comes over to the truck. Yes, this man is African. He is dark as night and has a youthful, unlined face despite his gray hairs. He wears his khaki shirt open and carries a machete.” (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 296). His wife is Adina: “Adina has

the slim, firm body of a thirty-year-old. Her hair is covered in a red-and-yellow head tie. Her skin is taut over a high forehead, and her cheekbones seem uncontainable. … She is the most spectacular woman Jean has ever seen" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 296). Despite Jean's and Paul's African descent, it is clear the couple is different from them; differences that go beyond the color of the skin. "'You never hear Adina and Kofe talk 'bout slavery'", Paul tells her. "They don't consider themselves descendants of slaves the way we do. Is a spirit thing. The slave ships had their bodies for a little while, but their spirits were already waitin' from them in these mountains and guiding them here" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 297). Jean and Paul are indeed from a different branch, so to say; still, Jean is the *árkhon*, the *egun iponri* – "ancestors coming, and going, living in and around a person"– in the novel (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 297). It is to her that Mary "Iya ilu" announces her narrative.

"Iya ilu" means *mother of drums* or *talking drum* in Yoruba. According to the encyclopedia *Britannica*, the talking drums imitate the rhythm and the rise and fall of words in language and are used as communication devices in parts of Africa and Asia, being able to send messages up to 20 miles[62]. Mary is certainly someone whose message never ceases and whose voice needs to be heard. The opening sentence (or verse), "I see sun shine an' rain fall on t'ree centuries" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 298) demonstrates that she considers herself part of those peoples forced to come to the Americas. Even though Mary makes it clear that she has lived a long life – "One hundred an five, me get certificate write-up in gold letter say me a ole, ole 'ooman" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 298) – the first verse refers to the presence of Africans and African descendants in the area. In the second stanza, she tells the reader how she and her sister were separately kidnapped and sent to slavery. "Tek me 'pon ship. Me an' me sister. Dem tek her one way. Me anada way" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 298). When she arrives in the Caribbean, she is 12 or 13 years old and goes to the house of a man who eventually frees her. "Him free-up plenty slave-dem. Him free me husban' Dayo, An' him free me. Him no 'gree wid slavery. Congotay!" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 298). Like Mr. Ho-Sing, Mary mentions the devastating aspect of the trip to the Americas; she compares it to a place close to purgatory, or a non-place:

> You see picture ina history book, you
> Hear story, an you ask how we let
> Dis ting happen to we.
> I tell you: On dat ship

[62] Taken from: https://www.britannica.com/art/talking-drum, last accessed 02/02/2020.

> I did tink me was dead-o,
> I tink me in anada life-o
> Who can fight Ara Orun?
> (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 299)

In her poem, Iya ilu expresses concern with the current state of Jamaica and considers it a sin that both nature and people are being killed, and that people are suffering with starvation. Her words can be considered a cry to the present generation who consider themselves postcolonial but repeat colonial practices:

> Wha' g'wan now in Jamaica is a sin.
> Rain a-fall, but dutty-tuff. Me glad fe dead-o.
> River day, wheel a-stop, tree cut down, belly bawl.
> Dem burnin' and' killing baby. O day!
> Everywhere me see black people' bone.
> How come no white hand on de knife?
> We come all dis way fe slaughter-o!
> One day, one day Congotay.
> (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 299)

Iya ilu trusts Jean with the responsibility of going back to Africa and telling her mother – her people – that they have survived; that they are alive. "Tell dem we did mea it cross the water. Mea dem know. Mek dem know we is here" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 299). As the *árkhon*, she is responsible for opening the archives, making them public and making them reach their destiny. Mary's narrative encompasses past, present, and future. The future aspect can be noticed in the poem's refra*In:* "one-day, one-day Congotay" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 298) repeated after every stanza. *The Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago: on Historical Principles* (2008) explains that the refrain is "an expression that indicates that the oppressed will finally be freed and one day justice will prevail" (WINER, 2008, p. 240)[63].

3.3.1.2.4 Jean Landing Finally Speaks

It is worth mentioning that Jean Landing has her own entry in the novel, the very last one, indicating that the protagonist is at the same time the *árkhon* and a living archive herself. It is the first time that she assumes the first person narrative voice and her story is also printed

[63] Taken from: Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago: On Historical Principles, edited by Lise Winer. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008.

in italic. Landing, now the first person narrator, does not use her entry to tell the story of her life until that point; rather, she chooses to point towards the future. When Cezair-Thompson ends her novel with her protagonist/living archive, taking hold of her own narrative and leaving space for the future, she is reverberating Derrida's reading of archive. In Paixão do Arquivo (2007), Diana Klinger indicates that, for Derrida, the archive is not merely the place where the past is conserved.

> Archiving both produces and records the event. The technical structure of the archiving archive determines the structure of the archival content in its own appearance and in relation to the future. For the question of the archive is not a question of the past: it is about the future, an answer, a promise, and a responsibility for tomorrow (KLINGER, 2007, n.p.)[64].

Landing's first sentence as the protagonist who has just acquired her own voice reads, "I am leaving the island" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 329), and sounds as if her own story was finally beginning. Nevertheless, her last words – which are also the last words of the novel – suggest that Jean Landing will not surrender to the *archiviolithic* power that threatens her country of origin, on the contrary. At the very last sentence it is possible to understand that, instead of being in a hurry to leave all the stories behind, she is finally taking ownership of her role as *árkhon* and as "archive". Landing states, "Panic and history are mine" (CEZAIR-THOMPSON, 2009, p. 331).

3.3.2 *The Loneliness of Angels*: spirituality as archive

3.3.2.1 The Repelling and Attracting Force of Haiti

Haiti conquered its independence in 1791. It was the second country to achieve this in the continent and the only experience of enslaved people conquering their masters. The follow up of their revolution was completely different from that of the United States, though. Haiti's independence was not recognized by the international community; in fact, Thomas Jefferson –

[64] In Portuguese: "O arquivamento tanto produz quanto registra o evento. A estrutura técnica do arquivo arquivante determina a estrutura do conteúdo arquivável em seu próprio surgimento e em sua relação com o futuro. Pois a questão do arquivo não é uma questão do passado: trata-se do futuro, de uma resposta, de uma promessa e de uma responsabilidade para amanhã". (KLINGER, 2007, n.p).

one of the founding fathers of the U.S., its third president, and a slave owner – was of the opinion that the radical and most necessary revolution that took place in Haiti could become a bad example, and defended the idea that it was necessary to isolate the country. In an article for *Time* magazine entitled Thomas Jefferson: The Private War: Ignoring the Revolution Next Door (2004), Edwidge Danticat points out that supporting the Haitian Revolution would have emphasized the contradictions the U.S. revolutionary process:

> Haiti's very existence highlighted the deepest contradictions of the American revolutionary experiment. Though the U.S. Declaration of Independence stated that all men were created equal, Haitian slaves and free men and women of color battled what was then one of the world's most powerful armies to prove it. Yet how could the man who wrote about freedom in such transcendent terms have not seen echoes of his struggle in the Haitians' urgent desire for self-rule? Possibly because as a slave owner and the leader of slaveholders, he could never reconcile dealing with one group of Africans as leaders and another as chattel. So Haiti's independence remained unrecognized by Jefferson, who urged Congress to suspend commerce with the nascent republic, declaring its leaders "cannibals."[65] (DANTICAT, 2004)

Another example of non-acceptance of Haiti's independence came from Brazil, where disorder and uproar was called *hatianism*. In *Brasil: uma biografia* (2015), Lilia Schwarcz and Heloisa Starling comment: "Besides, there was the fear of black rebellions, a phenomenon coined as 'haitianism', referring directly to the conquering of the French colony by the enslaved people. The Haitian Revolution was powerful enough to spread fear (to the elites) and hope (amongst the enslaved)[66]" (SCHWARCZ; STARLING, 2015, p. 187). Schwarcz and Starling continue, saying that the fear of having the same kind of revolution in the country led to a centralized model of government after the independence. They conclude: "Therefore, Brazil invented itself as a anti-Haiti: in opposition, we were all white, Christian, and civilized[67]" (SCHWARCZ; STARLING, 2015, p. 229). Also, as it is now well-known, the new-born country was made to pay its former colonizer, France, the equivalent of $21, 7 billion dollars (150 million gold francs at the time). In "The White Curse" (2004), Eduardo Galeano summarizes the atrocities suffered by the place which was once known as The Pearl of the Antilles as part of its condemnation: "Haiti is a country that has been thrown away, as

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[65] Taken from: http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,994563,00.html, last accessed on 09/15/2020.

[66] In Portuguese: "Havia ainda o medo de rebeliões negras, fenômeno que ficou conhecido como 'haitismo', em alusão à tomada da colônia francesa do Haiti pelos negros. Esse movimento teve a capacidade de exportar o medo (por parte das elites) e a esperança (para os escravizados)" (STARLING; SCHWARCZ, 2015, p. 228).

[67] In Portuguese: "O Brasil se inventou, assim, como um anti-Haiti: por oposição éramos todos brancos, cristãos e civilizados" (SCHWARCZ; STARLING, 2015, p. 239).

an eternal punishment of its dignity" (GALEANO, 2004)[68]. Thus, even though Haiti has been independent and has not had enslaved people for over two centuries, its history, the series of international invasions and the Duvaliers' dictatorships (funded and endorsed by the international community) make it possible to place the country under the coloniality umbrella. Due to the *sin* of being victorious in their revolution, the blacker half of Hispaniola Island suffered the same process which took place throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Decoloniality may, therefore, be used as a lens to read the Haitian experience.

In contrast with *The True History of Paradise*, which has a more linear plot and takes place exclusively in Jamaica, *The Loneliness of Angels* resembles a mosaic; there is a multiplicity of protagonists whose stories develop on multiple narrative spaces and times. The protagonists are mostly originally from Haiti, a place which seems to be a centripetal and centrifugal force, attracting and repelling the characters while they try to fulfill and/or escape their destinies. However, the novel is also set in French Canada, Paris, and Ireland in a span of time that goes from 1848 to 2004 in a non-chronological order. A major motif in the novel is that of the archipelago. In an interview conducted by Brian McLoughlin and entitled Bridging Islands with Myriam JA Chancy (2013), for the journal *Afro-Hispanic Review*, Chancy reflects: "An island onto itself is something that is unreachable, and so the loneliness that comes out of that has to do with the degree to which individuals, or groups of people, or communities that are islanded or grouped together are able to recognize their similarities" (MCLOUGHLIN, 2013, p.88). The motif in the novel and Chancy's words in the interview echo the concept of constellation considered in this dissertation in the sense that an idea is not represented in itself, but in arrangement with other ideas. In the novel, the characters find their importance within the relation they have with one another and their main similarity is the fact that all of them must deal with their spirituality at some point in life. The use of spirituality instead of religion here is intentional; the novel does not address a specific religious practice, even though the reader may identify one or two Catholic ceremonies, elements of Haitian Voodoo, and some syncretic characteristics that are relatively common in the Caribbean and Latin America. Instead, it explores a sense of mysteriousness that seems to transcend institutionalized religiosity and whose presence is undeniably *there* – wherever *there* is. In *The Loneliness of Angels*, the mystical, mysterious power is used as a decolonizing strategy in order to resist the *archiviolithic* drive that colonial power inflicts by means of State violence and terrorism.

[68] Taken from: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Haiti/White_Curse.html, last accessed on February, 18th, 2020.

3.3.2.2 “Remembrance Is the Seed for All Beginnings”: women’s bodies and lives as resistance archives

3.3.2.2.1 Ruth

The Loneliness of Angels has three parts and a short Coda – a concluding part. Each part is subdivided with narratives entitled with the names of a protagonist as their stories are developed. This chapter will focus on the characters of Ruth, Catherine, Rose, and Elise; the four women share family ties, by blood or otherwise. The novel starts in 2004, with Ruth walking through her house while remembering several episodes of her life. In the context of the novel, Ruth and her house can be read as *árkhons*, both guardians of memories, [hi]stories and peoples. The opening paragraph says:

> Ruth smoothes the plastic covering of her memory table as if she is trying to undo wrinkles in time. Below the plastic, the faces of her youth stare up at her along with those of her two brothers, their wives, their children, along with the faces of the young people she has taught over the three decades. All of them have inhabited this house that had been left for her by her parents. She was the only one remaining by the time they passed away, the boys long gone and married with lives and houses of their own (CHANCY, 2010, p. 13).

The narrator states that Ruth decided to start the memory table in order to fill the emptiness she felt after everybody else left her house. Everybody for Ruth was mainly Romulus, Catherine, and Lucas; all of them also protagonists in the novel and all of them raised by Ruth as her own offspring, even though the woman never got married or had biological children. Unlike Jean Landing, who tried all her life to keep distance from politics, *The Loneliness of Angels* features as its *árkhon* a brave woman who uses her privileged socioeconomic status in order to help her people. Ruth is both a political and a spiritual leader for her community. She never leaves Haiti and helps NGOs, grassroots organizations and, “especially the clandestine women’s organization that rise like lotus flowers from mud, unable to fully display themselves in the wake of the Duvalier regime’s relentless brutality” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 29). Ruth and Jean Landing share some commonality though. Like the protagonist of *The True History of Paradise*, Ruth was considered an odd girl, someone not even her parents seemed to really understand. “She thinks of becoming a writer herself even

though when she brings it up, [her father] only smiles indulgently, as if she were a small pet able to do a few tricks but nothing more" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 22). And although she has a better listener in her mother, the woman "doesn't seem to make much sense of her daughter's desire to have a public life" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 22). Ruth does not have a good relationship with her classmates either, the narrator says: "The group tolerates Ruth because she is the daughter of two prominent citizens, because their mothers want invitations to the house in the hills with the special garden" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 24). Ironically, it is in an outing with her schoolmates that she understands her *calling*. While the rest of the group is playing and watching volleyball, Ruth decides to take a walk by herself. During this walk, she has an encounter with two very poor children. "The children are dusty and barefoot. The hand the boy holds up, pointing to an indiscernible point behind her, is mottled and discoloured. Ruth wonders at his suffering. What she can do?" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 27). Her thoughts and interaction with the kids are interrupted by the arrival of JP, her love interest at the time – and who later in the novel fathers another protagonist, Lucas – who yells at the children and makes them go. The event has two outcomes: it makes Ruth walk away from JP and makes her decide to help children like those she has just met.

> Ruth walks along for a while on the dirt road but the children are long gone. She will never see them again. She will never have the opportunity to ask the questions she had wanted to ask them. She will never find out the nature of the boy's skin disease or whether they need help. There are children like them everywhere she realizes and she *can* help. Somehow, she will help them (CHANCY, 2010, p. 28).

Ruth's odd and reserved personality contributes to her becoming an *árkhon*, someone who would be entrusted with receiving relevant information. The narrator informs the reader that the protagonist's discretion and loyalty make men she trades with tell her their secrets. They tell her information which will help her business as well as information about the government and the resistance which, in a time of dictatorship, is a matter of life and death. In contrast with Jean Landing, whose archives were from the past, Ruth's archives hold data from the present and even from the future:

> They tell her of killings before they happen, as if they are prophets. They tell her who *not* to do business with, who is unclean, trading with the regime henchmen. They tell her who has what so she can avoid duplicating goods on the market. They tell her who is underselling her and which of the market women keeps some of the profit hidden from her so she can set her prices in such a way as to still make her margins. They tell her who is organizing and who has disbanded, which of the grassroots leaders is the most trustworthy, who to back, and who to simply tolerate (CHANCY, 2010, p. 32).

Ruth is also a spiritual leader in the novel; she is called a *mambo* – a voodoo priestess – even though she is not initiated in this religion: "She is of Haiti and not of it, following the threads of practices that seem imprinted in her cells that bear no resemblance to the Catholic rites with which she was raised nor the *vodou* of the people she supports. They call her *mambo* because they do not know what else to call her" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 15). In another excerpt, the narrative ties her role as a spiritual leader to that of an *árkhon*:

> She knew her gifts were not of the same order as their children's. Her patron saint was St. Peter or Legba, after her father. She opened doors; she did not go through them. She understood the ways of the gods and respected them but she was not of their emissaries, at least, not like Lucas and Catherine and all the others. She witnessed. She supported. She tried to keep those meant to be doing the *real* work alive (CHANCY, 2010, p. 47).

For *The Loneliness of Angel*, spiritual practices might be read as archives and as places where history and knowledge may be stored and preserved from destruction. Even when she was a child, Ruth exercised her role as a spiritual árkhon. Her father, from a Syrian background, did not go to Church or was particularly religious in Ruth's opinion. Nonetheless, he kept an altar in his office "with an effigy on it of Moses holding the two stones etched with the ten commandments. Next to Moses was Papa Legba, god of crossroads, in the guise of St. Peter. These were his gods and before them he placed bowls of water, a snifter of rum, and the occasional orange" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 38). Besides, when the Church starts a campaign against voodoo priests and practices and demonizes them, Ruth brings home a pamphlet and her father burns it on his altar. After that, knowing that the girl was having nightmares, he teaches her the prayer of the angels. From that point on, she starts to make sense of her spiritual role:

> It was then that her Father had taught her the prayer of the angels to protect her and she found that the strange voices had their sources and that they were not strange after all. She began to make peace with what was to become of her life, even though she was not quite sure what that might be (CHANCY, 2010, p. 39).

Although Ruth is very much involved with her community politically, it is her spiritual role that seems to be most important to the novel, to the point that it links her to the other protagonists to be analyzed in this chapter. Rose and Catherine, mother and daughter, will be discussed together because, in certain ways, their lives are unavoidably intertwined.

3.3.2.2.2 Rose

Rose's narrative starts in 1956 at the very beginning of what would become the fourteen-year regime of Papa Doc Duvalier. The general mood was discouraging: “They rolled into the New Year with a new president, but no one would say his name or drink to his health as should have been the custom” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 164). She was a university student at the time and tried to be as ordinary as she could. But it was not in her destiny, to be ordinary. The new regime marks the beginning of crime and bloodshed, which for her meant going insane because Rose comes from a family of people who dreamed of their death. Her gift was different, though, as she was able to see “those who dreamed their deaths or survived them” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 165). Rose is also an árkhon in the novel. She bears stories that would be otherwise silenced; nevertheless, her gift was also her curse and would turn her world around.

> Rose can feel it in her bones that the life she has been working diligently to build is going to fall apart. She is studying for her teacher’s certificate but every lesson she attends feels like receiving instruction on hopelessness. She isn’t ready for the change, the way the ground feels as if it is shifting away from her as she walks in the familiar roads to and from school, to market, to the neighbours’ houses. She isn’t ready. Why her? Why not someone else, older and wiser? *Mamie* never told why, never explained. *Ti fi*, she would say with a shrug of her shoulder aimed at her granddaughter’s way: *this is just the way* (CHANCY, 2010, p. 165).

Rose’s narrative resumes two years later soon after this excerpt, and everything has changed completely. Rose is constantly sleepwalking. It is true that she had done that before, when she was younger, and her mother had told her it would stop as she got older. Before the regime she had indeed felt some relief. “But since the disappearances started after the election, or just before – it’s hard to keep track – she sleepwalks restlessly, imitating the ponderous fear that catches everyone in the throat when they leave their houses” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 167). Her sleepwalking has to do with the people that visit her in her dreams. They are also sleepwalkers, not dead people. The one she dreams most about is worth mentioning. It is a woman called by her neighbors and acquaintance *La cubana* or *Coco*, because of her white complexion that reminds them of the flesh of the coconut. The woman is Ruth’s next-door neighbor and a journalist. On one occasion, Coco is taken at night from her house and is brutally tortured. While she is gone, the woman appears to Rose who, in addition to listening

to her stories, feels her pa*In:* "And once, after seeing Coco in the kitchen, face twisted and wistful, she feels a searing pain in her genitals, as if she's been knifed, flamed there. She presses her hands between her legs, but it doesn't go away until she begins to cite Hail Marys" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 168, 169). Whereas Ruth's house and her political activities may be seen as places of archivalization, Rose stores the archives in her self.

As the dictatorship and brutality deepens, Rose finds solace in drinking in hidden bars. "The alcohol takes away the pain and dulls the stories the ghost empty into her at night. Sometimes she can get herself to bed and fall into a deep, dull, dreamless sleep and wake next morning with no memory of anything…" (CHANCY, 2010, p.173). By the time Rose meets Fritz, the man she is later marrying, she is almost completely at loss. When she is not drinking, *they* appear to her; but she does not know how to help them deal with their pain and grief. Neither does she know how to deal with the remains of those encounters. At some point the woman really thinks she has gone crazy, as if she were inventing the stories; "[b]ut after the visitations, there is always corroboration of these "visits". If someone comes to tell her of a rape, a killing, a house burning, it's broadcast through the whispers of the teledjol in the days that follow" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 175). As Rose was not initiated or taught to control and make good use of her gift, it takes control over her. Rose and Fritz meet at a bar in 1965. The couple gets married a year later, when Rose is already pregnant. Rose meets Ruth at the wedding and has mixed feelings towards her now sister-in-law. When she starts sleepwalking again, her mother tells her to visit Ruth because, she says, the two women are alike, they are both sleepwalkers, implying that Ruth would understand what is going on. During her visit, Rose is unable to tell her what she needs; the two women never get along as they could have. Then, after losing their first baby and being pregnant with Catherine, the couple move to Canada.

During Rose's entry of 1969 the reader learns that the second protagonist keeps a notebook where she writes "to make sense of the nonsense" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 187). Though she is mentally frail, and probably ill, Rose seems to be aware of the importance of her role as an *árkhon* to the point of leaving a written trace of her experiences. Also, the novel seems to make it clear that the woman is losing her mind *because* she knows too much and has no one to turn to, as if the *archiviolithic* drive was taking control of her.

> Rose can't seem to hold two consecutive thoughts together in her mind and can spend a whole morning pondering a page in one of the books she's reading, wondering when it will all end – the killing, the betrayals, the lies. Everything starts to slip away from her and she has no one to talk to, not her mother, not Fritz's sister, who could have helped her but refused so long ago (CHANCY, 2010, p. 189).

Finally, defeated by her burden and loneliness, Rose takes her life in a car crash. After her death, Fritz and their only daughter, Catherine, move from Montreal to Chicoutimi, a small working town where they live until the girl is sent back to Haiti, to live with her aunt Ruth, three years later.

3.3.2.2.3 Catherine

Catherine, the third protagonist, has three entries in the novel and her character can be considered the link between her mother Rose and her aunt Ruth because after having denied help to her sister-in-law, Ruth sees Catherine as an opportunity to make amends with the late woman. “When Fritz had called her to tell her that he was sending Catherine to her, Ruth realized it was time to make recompense. It was strange to realize that there was no other choice she could have made back then even though she had the skills to teach Rose how to face her gifts, how to grow strength” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 56). The truth be told Ruth had tried to make amends with Rose earlier, when she started to write anonymous letters for underground papers in Coco’s name,

> and when there was nowhere to publish, she would run off the sheets herself on a portable mimeograph machine with a hand crank… Then she circulated her writings like flyers by passing them on to the street vendors in small bundles that they carried in their back pockets, beneath their shirts, distributing them amongst the market women as they parceled out the goods for sale. She signed her pieces, “Ezili Le Flambo,” honoring Coco and Rose, both” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 56).

However, Ruth’s most cherished opportunity to find peace is having Catherine with her.

The first narrative by Catherine tells the reader about the time in Canada after her mother’s death, a brief account of her living with Tatie Ruth, and her life with her boyfriend Sam in Iowa and Paris, where they move so she can continue her studies in music. Catherine’s father Fritz – whether she really is his child is not very clear in the novel – is also a musician and when she is sent to Haiti, her aunt – who was a piano teacher – makes sure that the girl practices the instrument twice a day every day. In addition to improving Catherine’s skill, the piano’s lessons were Ruth's strategy to help the girl overcome her sadness and to establish a

relationship with her. “It was with her that I learned to appreciate Chopin, both for his famed frailty and for his temerity of heart. Each piece seemed to read my emotions and gave me the outlet I needed to express what I could not say in words or express in tears” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 82).

Catherine’s second entry takes place mostly in Haiti, where she returns in order to attend Ruth’s funeral. The old woman had been brutally murdered by a group of men, including Romulus – another one of Ruth’s adoptive children.. The narrative, long and intense, is central to the novel, even though it covers only five days – from March 11, 2004 to March 16, 2004. It is also filled with some past remembrances where it is possible to learn more about her childhood, especially her relationship with Ruth, who eventually becomes like a second mother, and with Lucas, JP’s son and the first to be adopted. During her stay in Haiti for Ruth’s funeral, Catherine finally learns the truth about her mother’s suicide; up to that point, she believed in the version that her mother had died in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. It is also during her return to Haiti that Catherine discovers that she has a gift and calling and that the lives of the three women are more evidently enmeshed. Catherine’s spiritual gift enables her to become an *árkhon*. In her remembrances, the reader is told that Lucas is the first one to tell her about her calling. One night, after the young man takes Catherine to a voodoo ceremony, he tells her that someday she would find her goddess in the sea; when she questions him, he answers: ‘“You are too young to understand but it will come to you. By and by, it will come to you”’ (CHANCY, 2010, p. 224). Indeed, it all comes to her more than 20 years later. First, Catherine experiences some kind of trance during Ruth’s funeral. “I found myself falling into darkness, my head plunging ahead, my lips trying in vain to make contact with the cold, powdered, ashen, nutmeg skin. It’s as if *she* is pulling me in, into the cold and the dark. I feel my mother there, all blue and pink light, confusing” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 230, 231). Back at Ruth’s house, after the burial, she hears a voice: ‘“*Calme toi*,” the voice says. It’s an old voice, ageless. A woman’s voice. It feels like a voice I’ve heard before but cannot place” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 238). Finally, at the port Catherine has a crucial spiritual experience. She leaves the car she is in and walks onto the jetty. When she reaches the square platform at the end of it, she feels it. “[A] churning from the deep, rising from below, a dull throb as if some entity is trying to come up through the concrete and into [her] body” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 246). Then, she sees a woman holding on to one of the jetty's beams. “She is wearing a faded blue dress. Its skirt floats around her next to the beam, it folds echoing the waves that push past the woman’s body towards the shore” (CHANCY, 2010, p. 246). At first, the protagonist thinks that the woman is drowning, but then she

realizes that, in fact, she is just there looking landwards, without looking at anything in particular. The woman exerts a force on Catherine, as the following excerpt describes:

> I want to follow suit but all I can do is take in the woman's hard glance, her body holding on quietly to the beam, even though it is clear that something, somewhere, has fallen apart, something that can never be righted again. Or maybe it's the other way around. Maybe the whole world is waiting to be submerged beneath saltwater, waiting to be wiped out and to rise again to surface. This makes sense, somehow (CHANCY, 2010, p. 247).

Catherine returns to the car without knowing who this woman is or what she wants; still, the apparition leaves an everlasting imprint on the protagonist "Whatever she had intended, I will remember this woman always. Why I feel this I don't know, but she is my rainbow sign after the floods, the unreturning dove sent to let me know that some new day is coming" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 248). Catherine believes that the woman is a sign, "something that will explain the disappearance of my mother and Ruth, and even Lucas" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 248). The protagonist interprets the vision of the woman in her spiritual awakening as a sign, but it may also be understood in the context of the archive, of a vessel which carries precious and sometimes classified experience.

Still amidst her trancelike condition, Catherine decides to drive the car on her way back to Ruth's house and ends up suffering an accident. A memory assaults her mind; she is eleven or twelve years old and is crying in the kitchen. "I furrow my brow but, dangerously, my concentration is aimed inwards, towards memory, rather than towards the cluttered road in front of me. I remember the dancing women cast by my mother's candle flames. *Ezli Le Flambo*" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 2010). Catherine is taken from her memory by Dieudonné, the chauffeur, who yells at her. She says: "Dieudonné's shout penetrates the dense matter of my pensiveness and I slam on the brakes as his left hand comes down, hard, on my right. But the warning has come too late" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 249). The chauffeur manages to somehow get behind the wheel and avoid a car crash between their Jeep and a Pinto, an accident which could have been fatal. While their car continues to spin, Catherine experiences what can be considered another mystical experience: "Suddenly, as the car continues to spin, the scene before my eyes changes from the heat and squalor of Haiti to the vast coldness of the winter I had known as a child" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 251). It is then that she finally learns the truth about her mother's death and once more becomes an *árkhon*, i.e., someone who is responsible to guard and interpret an important piece of document or information. The excerpt reads:

> I feel myself in my mother's body, jerking, and then a searing pain as bone after bone breaks, and a series of small fireworks detonate all at once in my brain, simultaneously fierce and wondrous as the pain becomes overwhelming and then yields to nothingness. I feel my mother's body and mind acquiescing. Regret. I want to fight for my mother's life as I look out through her eyes onto the whiteness beyond the two cars gliding on black ice, but the remembering body is not fighting. It has no will… My mother's death had not been an accident (CHANCY, 2010, p. 251, 252).

As a spiritual *árkhon*, Catherine has access to the knowledge the document holds through her own body. She is the information, the interpreter, and the location at the same time.

The day after her accident, Catherine realizes that, although she had grown protected from the Duvalier's regime and its horrors, she will not be able to flee her destiny. The third protagonist is to become the spiritual leader her mother and aunt could not be; she knows her calling is not frivolous and that she will have to devote herself to it. After realizing this, she understands that her life will be unavoidably altered. "… I sit there knowing I will never use these hands to play in public again, that they're somehow reserved for some other use I haven't understood until now, until I heeded the call of the sirens" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 258). However, unlike her mother and Lucas, whose lives were ruined due to the lack of appropriate guidance, Catherine finds in her twin cousins Estelle and Marie-France the support she needs. The twins take her to see Lucas and during this poignant visit the protagonist has the chance to reflect on her role as an *árkhon*, as someone who understands the importance of protecting the information with which they are entrusted. The meeting between Catherine and Lucas is heart-wrenching. The child Catherine loved Lucas dearly: "I had adored Lucas since the moment he had greeted me in Ruth's kitchen with a handful of sweets", and also, "My cousin, my brother. Had anyone looked at me with such tenderness since?" (CHANCY, 2010, p. 203). Things have changed, though, and when the two meet again a long time has passed and Lucas, the man, is completely changed.

> I watch him and cannot respond. I am translating both words and eyes. I know these eyes. I know these eyes. Slowly. Who… brought…
> …
> Those eyes. The body, no, I do not recognize. But those eyes… Lucas…
> "Lucas?" I peer into the bloated face, the folds of skin almost closing the red of the eyes shut (CHANCY, 2020, p. 259).

And while she looks at the man who was once her main companion, a man changed into a stranger who is in front of her asking her questions, Catherine tries to make sense of all the lives lost in her country because of knowledge.

> In Haiti, we had been raised in a world in which to reveal one's self was dangerous. All we had were our stories, what we passed from mouth to mouth in person and over the telephone, seeking the morsels of truth lodged in the pauses of breath as minds wander and stories took lives of their own.
> It wasn't easy to speak about what one knew since much of it came secondhand, information that would never stand up in a court of law. It would be dismissed with one word: hearsay. But here, hearsay was all we had, along with gossip and innuendo, which amounted to much the same thing. *Between each nuanced variation in a story lay worlds of truth* (CHANCY, 2010, p. 260, my emphasis).

Much of the knowledge Ruth, Rose, and Lucas had acquired and which cost them their lives was considered gossip, hearsay. At this point, Catherine's voice is the literary representation of thousand, million living archives, people that are entrusted with stories and experiences which were rejected during the period after the dictatorship, state emergency, international invasion, or any other kind of colonial violence countries like Haiti (and Brazil) have experienced and still experience on a daily basis. Should they just try to forget what they know and move on with their lives? In the aforementioned interview for the journal *Penumbra*, when asked about Rose and her role in the novel as someone who knew too much and, because of that, lived in fear, Myriam Chancy answered

> … her function in the novel is to bring up the sovereignty of the self and what our responsibility is to greater liberations. If one is aware of harm taking place outside of oneself and has some access to what that means or its effect – the violence may not be directed at you, but you are aware that your neighbor has been taken away and tortured, for example – what is your responsibility? Do you tell that story? Do you keep it to yourself? If you tell that story, what does it do to you? What will it do to you socially, psychologically, and to generations ahead of you? That's what the novel speaks to – the trickling down of the violence that the regime does to the other generations and what their responsibility will be towards that (CHANCY, 2012).

The question is about Rose; nevertheless, Chancy's answer leaves room to reflect upon the younger protagonist, Catherine. In the novel, people went to Rose and Ruth in order to tell their stories, to confide their pains, their own businesses and those of the country. Both did their best to honor the information and stories with which they were entrusted. When living Haiti one more time, Catherine still knows very little about what is expected of her in the years to come, but her last entry, the novel's *Coda*, makes it clear that she is committed to her vocation:

> This is all I know:
> There are no answers.
> Only: is and is.
> (CHANCY, 2010, p. 347)

The Loneliness of Angels also ends suggesting that aspect of the archive that points to the future, with a protagonist that is very much aware of the role she has in front of her. Catherine is part of a people who resist having their histories and experiences erased by colonial violence. She knows that time has come for her to carry the legacy and become the spiritual *árkhon* her community needed.

CONCLUSIONS

Where thinking suddenly halts in a constellation overflowing with tensions, there it yields a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes as a monad. The historical materialistic approaches a historical object solely and alone where [s]he encounters it as a monad. In this structure [s]he cognizes the sign of a messianic zero-hour [Stillstellung] of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past. [S]he perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch, out of the homogenous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of the epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work. The net gain of this procedure consists of this; that the life-work is preserved and sublated in the work, the epoch in the life-work, and the entire course of history in the epoch. The nourishing fruit of what is historically conceptualized has time as its core, its precious but flavorless seed.

Walter Benjamin

Colonial Power, Decolonial Resistance, and Literature

Even during so called democratic periods, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has experienced extended periods of dictatorship, state of emergency, international intervention… and for instances of state terror and violence – such as forced disappearance,

torture, and illegal execution.. Those tragic events, which seem to be the *modus operandi* of different governments in this part of the American continent, are not derivative of misfortune or coincidence; rather, they are deeply rooted in coloniality. According to Aníbal Quijano, the new world order that was inaugurated in the 16th century with colonialism did not end when the countries achieved their independence because European colonization was not limited to controlling not only labor and natural resources but also cultural legacies, including diverse knowledges and beliefs. This permanent effect of colonization in the minds and bodies of former colonized peoples was defined by Quijano as coloniality. In Coloniality and Modernity/Racionality (2007), Quijano argues that the colonizers imposed a mystified image of themselves and their cultures. "At first, they placed this [cultural] pattern far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way in order to co-opt some of the dominated into the power institutions. The European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power" (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 169). Thus, co-opted local elites, through the (still) colonial institutions, have enjoyed a range of privileges, and contributed to repress any attempts of subversion of the imposed (colonial) order, preserving the Eurocentric agenda of power[69]. The allegiance between local elites and colonial/imperial powers has resulted in a permanent state of exception, as described by Walter Benjamin in his text On the concept of History (1938).

In order to impose their culture, the colonizers repressed modes of knowing and of producing knowledges and perspectives that belonged to the peoples and the cultures they dominated, including images, symbols, religions expressions… As Quijano underscores,

> The cultural repression and massive genocides together turned the previous high cultures of America into illiterate, peasant subcultures condemned to orality; that is, deprived of their own pattern of formalized, objectivised, intellectual, and plastic or visual expression. Henceforth, the survivors would have no other modes of intellectual and plastic or visual formalized and objectivised expressions, but through the cultural patterns of the rules, even if subverting them in certain cases to transmit other needs of expression. Latin America [and the Caribbean] is, without a doubt, the most extreme case of cultural colonization by Europe (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 170).

Nonetheless, colonial power has not prevented people from being engaged in the struggle of decolonization. On the contrary, Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues that decolonization, notwithstanding an unfinished project, started almost at the same time as

[69] It is worth noting that, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, colonial power has been replaced by imperial power for almost a century. Nonetheless, the concept of coloniality will be regarded as the one which best describes the social organization in the region owing to the fact that race is still a form of political and economic domination.

colonization (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008, p. 61). Hence, bearing those ideas in mind, the present dissertation considered the four novels analyzed here as instruments of resistance to colonial power produced by women authors engaged in the struggle of decolonization. It ought to be pointed out that these authors do not live in their country of origin; the four Caribbean writers whose novels make up my literary corpus currently reside in the U.S.. Nevertheless, I understand that they all carry the marks of coloniality in their bodies and mind, and this is the reason why I have considered them Caribbean authors living in diaspora, and not U.S. authors.

Every novel analyzed in this dissertation addresses periods which can be considered periods of exception: *Song of the Water Saints* is set mostly in a Dominican Republic which is first under international occupation and later, Rafael Trujillo's regime. *The Dew Breaker*'s protagonist is a former *Tonton Macoute*, member of the Duvaliers' regime militia. In *The True History of Paradise*, Jamaica is facing a state of emergency and is at the brink of civil war. *The Loneliness of Angels* covers the lives of characters who are victims and insubordinates of Haiti's dictatorship. My doctoral research and the present dissertation have revolved around the idea that some narrative elements, themes, and symbols repeat themselves in different literary works which address episodes of state terrorism and work as literary devices upon which resistance is built. In order to confirm my thesis, I used Walter Benjamin's concept of *constellation* as a reading method. Through this method I have been able to observe and identify at least three constellations, two of them present in this work.

Comparative Literature or Literary Theory?

In *Literatura Comparada na América Latina: ensaios* (2003), Eduardo Coutinho declares:

> Contrary to what one might suppose, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory do not antagonize at any time; rather, they complement each other and cannot do without one another. Any theorization on literary work or works inevitably presupposes a comparative activity, even if in a non-explicit intertextual level, and any serious comparative study converges towards a theoretical and critical reflection; otherwise it runs the risk of becoming mere descriptivism (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 18)[70].

[70] In Portuguese: "Ao contrário do que se poderia supor, a Literatura Comparada e a Teoria Literária não se antagonizam em momento algum; antes complementam-se, e não podem prescindir uma da outra. Toda

With Coutinho's reflections in mind, I have used the first chapter as a theoretical fundament for the subsequent chapters, building the tripod that supports the literary analyses of the two next parts. In the first part of the chapter, I address the concept of constellation, developed by Walter Benjamin. In order to better access Benjamin's thoughts, I have relied on the readings of two Brazilian intellectuals: Márcio Seligmann-Silva and Sérgio Paulo Rouanet. Both of them have dedicated their best efforts to make Walter Benjamin's oeuvre known in the country. They have written relevant works on Benjamin's thoughts and also translated some of the philosopher's writings. Adopting a *constellatory* attitude has proved fundamental to this dissertation. My choice of the novels has not been conditioned to a predetermined theme or motif; rather, it was an exercise of repeated observation until the constellations and the novels that better reflected them became visible.

The second part of the theoretical chapter focuses on a conversation between Postcolonial studies and the Decolonial turn. Even though both have been taken into consideration as critical academic studies of colonization and its aftermaths, thinkers of the Decolonial turn have proved to be pivotal for this dissertation because they consider Latin America and the Caribbean ground zero and model for the rest the colonial processes that have taken place in the world. Besides, essential concepts such as coloniality (of power, knowledge, and gender), border thinking, and colonial difference, developed by intellectuals engaged in the Decolonial turn, have been fundamental to delimitate the novels to be considered for the dissertation. In *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (1997), Myriam Chancy questions the Western paradigm that relegates works of fiction to a place that is lower than the one occupied by history, for instance, and resists the idea brought up by colonial difference that the knowledge developed by the non-western, colonized peoples, is to be disregarded. Chancy observes: "In Haitian women's literature, the novel most often serves as the vehicle through which identity is articulated and affirmed. Counter to Western ideology, imagination is rendered factual rather than false, a key to the real rather than its mere shadow" (CHANCY, 1997, p. 12).

Lastly, Postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch regarding artistic expressions produced by children whose parents survived the *Shoa*, has proved to be a lens through which works of many Latin American and Caribbean artists of different nations may be more clearly

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teorização sobre uma obra ou obras literárias pressupõem necessariamente uma atividade comparativista, ainda que num plano intertextual não explícito, e todo estudo comparatista sério conflui para uma reflexão de ordem teórica e crítica; caso contrário, corre o risco de ater-se a mero descritivismo" (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 18).

seen. All four novels of my literary corpora have been produced by postmemory generation writers. They also present characters that are literary representations of people belonging to the postmemory generation. When reflecting on the role of memory in novels written by Haitian women authors – and I argue that the same holds true for novels written by authors from other Caribbean islands – Chancy says: "Memory, then, serves as a paradigm for survival transhistorically: it is not a claim to an evasion of history but, rather, a challenge to remember that cultures are shaped by what survives from one generation to the next" (CHANCY, 1997, p. 11). The authors and novels in this dissertation are engaged in the task of preserving this transgenerational memory and contesting official historiography that at many times has proved to be compromised with the colonial/imperial project.

I Move, Therefore I Exist

In Decolonizing Postcolonial Studies and Paradigm of Political Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality (ANO), Ramón Grosfoguel summarizes border thinking as the following:

> Critical border thinking is the epistemic response of the subaltern to the Eurocentric project of modernity. Instead of rejecting modernity to retreat into a fundamentalist absolutism, border epistemologies subsume/redefine the emancipatory rhetoric of modernity from the cosmologies and epistemologies of the subaltern, located in the oppressed and exploited side of the colonial difference, towards a decolonial liberation struggle for a world beyond Eurocentric modernity (GROSFOGUEL, ano, n.p).

Tidalectics, developed by Kamau Brathwaite is the example of critical border thinking which better translates the first constellation considered in this dissertation. The movement found in the novels is not a linear, progressive one; but "that one humble repetitive ritual actio (n)…" (BRATHWAITE, 1995, p. 34). Tidalectics ties past, present, and future. In *Song of the Water Saints*, Nelly Rosario creates a restless protagonist who tries to find in movement an answer to the limits her condition as a subaltern woman living in a country under international invasion (followed by a dictatorship) impose upon her. Graciela's restlessness is inherited from her maroon grandfather and passed on to her great-granddaughter, Leila, a teenage Dominican girl living in Brooklyn, who sometimes *feels* the spirit of her great-grandmother. In *The Dew Breaker*, Edwidge Danticat creates a fictional work about lives affected by state-

based violence and presents a former torturer as a protagonist. Movement is often a strategy found by the characters to deal with traumatic past experiences. In the short-story entitled The Bridal Seamstress, Danticat gives life to Beatrice, a Haitian woman, tortured during the Duvaliers regime and living in New York who is caught in this *repetitive ritual* action as an attempt to escape her former tormentor. Even though it is not possible to find solutions for their traumatic past or to completely overcome the colonial/imperial violence, through the works of Nelly Rosario and Edwidge Danticat, it is possible to see how subaltern resistance is rooted in ancestral knowledge which, in spite of the epistemicide caused by coloniality, is still stored in the bodies.

I Archive, Therefore, I Remember

In A literatura como arquivo da ditadura brasileira (2017), Eurídice Figueiredo states:

> The document and the monument are important because they attest to the event and serve as a reference for both collective memory and historiography. However, this objective writing tends to homogenize so that a version of history without any fissures may be fixed. Literature, on the other hand, through its subjective aspect, is able to show residues of experience, fractured by the lived violence (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 44)[71].

Figueiredo acknowledges the importance of documents and monuments, but attests the power that literary works have to communicate traumatic past experience to a broader public. In this sense, according to her, literature is supplementary to the arid words of official archives. Nonetheless, sometimes, as the title of her book suggests, the *archiviolithic drive* is so powerful that literature becomes a site of resistance to historical erasure and gives voice to facts and people that would otherwise remain unknown. The second decolonial constellation treated in this dissertation is that of the living archive. In the chapter, the works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault serve as a starting point to understanding some of the ways authors engaged in the effort of decolonization write novels in which characters become bearers of untold stories and histories. In *The True History of Paradise*, Margaret Cezair-

[71] In Portuguese: O documento e o monumento são importantes porque atestam o acontecido e servem como referência tanto para a memória coletiva quanto para a escrita da História. Contudo, essa escrita objetiva tende a homogeneizar para que seja fixada uma versão da História sem fissuras, ao passo que a Literatura, pelo viés da subjetividade, mostra resíduos de experiências fraturadas pelo vivido (FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 44).

Thompson opens nine files from the Jamaican history. Through the stories of the protagonist's ancestors, Cezair-Thompson is able to *dis-cover* an island that is more of a mosaic than the monolithic historical accounts and touristic brochures present. In doing so, she successfully presents a more trustworthy picture of Jamaica than most people would realize. In *The Loneliness of Angels,* Myriam J.A. Chancy transforms spirituality as a means of preserving archives from destruction. In the novel, religious practices are both archives and places where archives may be preserved. By opening themselves to the metaphysical world, Chancy's protagonists are able to become *árkhons* and to resist the silence and erasure which the Duvaliers' regime tried to inflict upon its victims.

They Speak, Therefore I Exist

In Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile (1997), Myriam Chancy weighs the possibilities of Afro-Caribbean authors' affirming their existence without a language that is properly theirs. She reaches the conclusion that "Reclamation can only occur effectively when we take stock of the ways in which we, as Black women, have been able to lay claim to a language of our own making and placed ourselves at the center of that discourse in ways that have forced our excluders to take notice" (CHANCY, 1997, p. 7). Literary expression is part of this reclamation, together with a number of other discourses, such as Black feminism and Decolonial pedagogy.

For many years, literature of resistance produced by people belonging to subaltern, racialized groups was accused of being propagandistic and lacking any literary value. Even though this idea has apparently been overcome – African American author Tony Morrison received a Nobel Prize in 1993, for example – the truth is that when dealing with literary expressions engaged in projects of racial, social, sexual, and colonial liberation in the context of Western(-ized) academia scholars are still questioned whether they are really dealing with "Literature". The surprise is bigger when theoretical frameworks, like the Decolonial turn, show that those literary works, while using metaphors and narrative strategies which are seemingly the same as traditional ones, are inscribed in *an-other* body of epistemology and cosmology.

To reflect upon and make use of the concept of constellation as my reading method has not been accidental. The use of Walter Benjamin's works as part of the theoretical

framework of this dissertation is not accidental either. Rather, it has been a conscious choice made in order to prove that, as Myriam Chancy argues in a recent interview, "Haitian [and Caribbean] literature is by and large a 'literature engagé', with a political dimension that does not diminish its aesthetics but amplifies it" (CHANCY, 2020, n.p.). The constellations identified, presented and analyzed in this dissertation, are only the beginning of a research project that I intend to carry on in the near future. I have already identified another constellation in novels written by Caribbean woman authors engaged in literature of resistance, but decided to leave it out of this dissertation due to some personal challenges. Moreover, I intend to combine the work on the literary constellations with the research of the theoretical and philosophical productions of the diasporic Caribbean authors whose novels are part of my literary c*orpus*. Their academic work and interviews have shown that aside from being prolific novelists and artists, they are conscious thinkers and theorists of their own literary works and the works of their peers.

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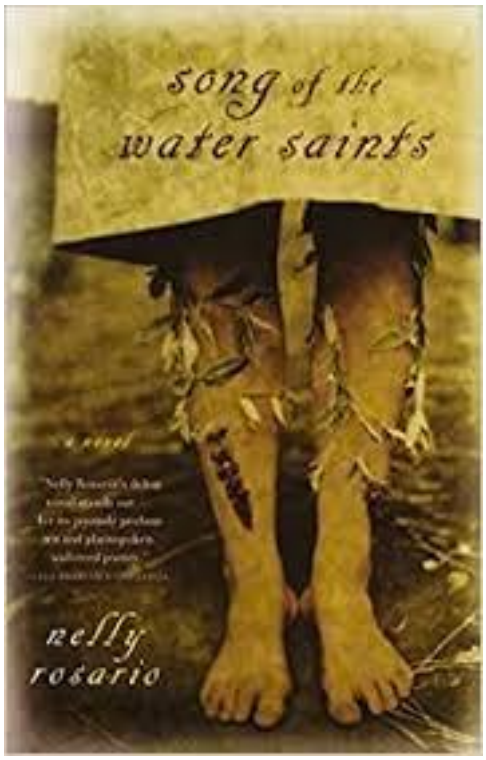
ATTACHMENT

Nelly Rosario



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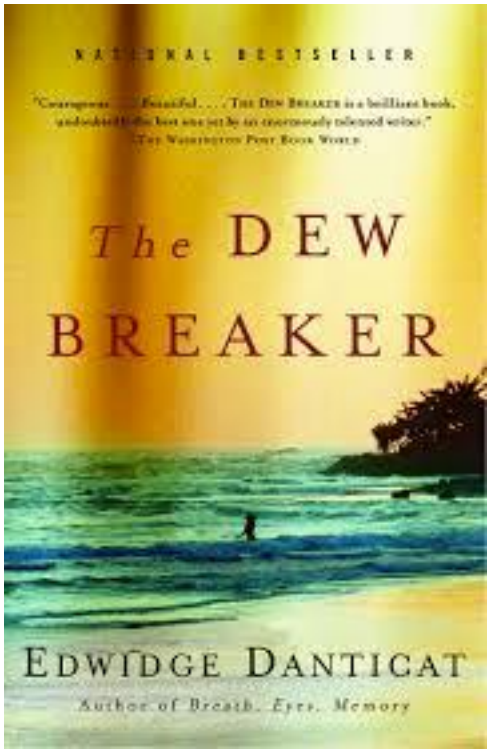

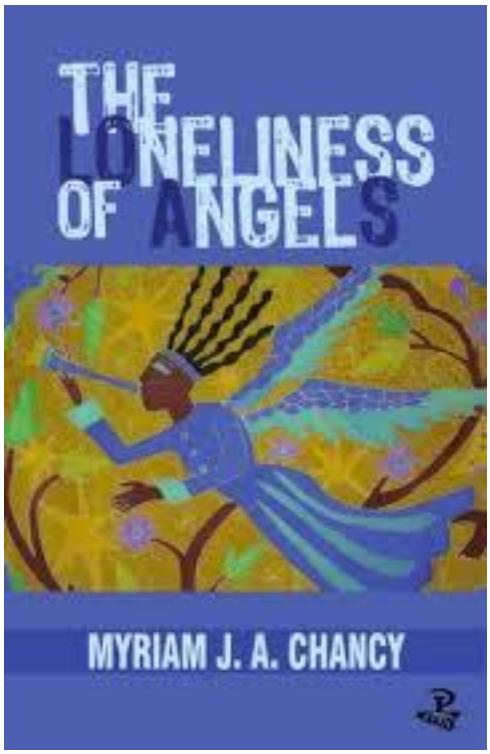

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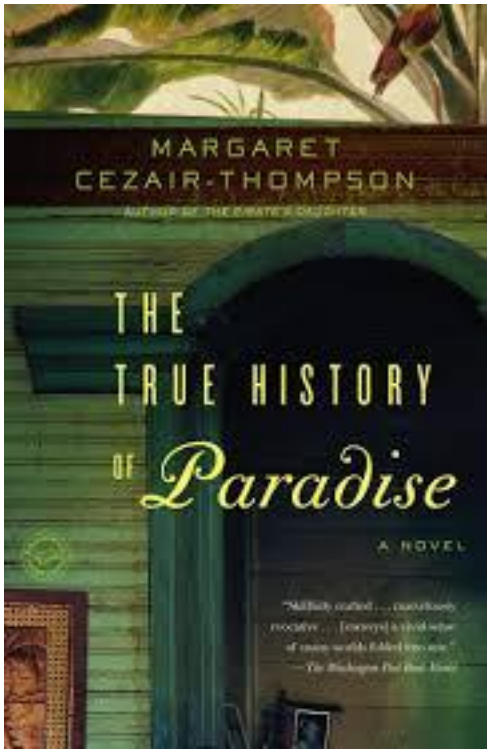

Margaret Cezair-Thompson