Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Centro de Educação e Humanidades
Instituto de Letras

Christiane Fontinha de Alcantara

A Legacy of Violence and Trauma in the Diasporic Literature from Hispaniola

Rio de Janeiro
2009

Christiane Fontinha de Alcantara

A Legacy of Violence and Trauma in the Diasporic Literature from Hispaniola

Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Profª. Drª. Leila Assumpção Harris

Rio de Janeiro
2009

CATALOGAÇÃO NA FONTE
UERJ/REDE SIRIUS/CEHB

P438 Alcantara, Christiane Fontinha de.
A legacy of violence and trauma in the diasporic literature from Hispaniola / Christiane Fontinha de Alcantara. – 2009.
109f.

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

1. Perez, Loida Maritza. Geographies of Home – Teses. 2. Danticat, Edwidge. Breath, eyes, memory – Teses. 3. Estupro na literatura – Teses. 4. Vítimas de abuso sexual – Teses. 5. Análise do discurso – Teses. 6. Literatura dominicana – Teses. 7. Literatura haitiana – Teses. I. Harris, Leila Assumpção. II. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Instituto de Letras. III. Título.

CDU 860 (729.3)-95

_____ _____
Assinatura Data

Christiane Fontinha de Alcantara

A Legacy of Violence and Trauma in the Diasporic Literature from Hispaniola

Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Aprovada em 04 de março de 2009

Banca Examinadora:

_____

Profª. Drª. Leila Assumpção Harris (Orientadora)
Instituto de Letras da UERJ

_____

Prof. Dr. Antonio Dwayne Tillis
College of Liberal Arts of Purdue University

_____

Profª. Drª. Peonia Viana Guedes
Instituto de Letras da UERJ

Rio de Janeiro
2009

To women of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are some people I would like to thank:

First of all, I have to thank my family for always supporting me regardless of how crazy my ideas seemed to be. Thank you Dad, for saving me when I accidentally erased an entire chapter: love you; Mom, thanks for teaching me everything you know about what it is like to be a woman in a patriarchal society and for encouraging me to be independent; thank you Patricia and Daniel for helping me relax when I just couldn't focus anymore and for making me laugh at my own insecurities;

Thanks Vagner, *meu amor*, for listening and believing in me even when I stopped believing;

My special thanks to Professor Leila Harris, my advisor, for the knowledge, patience and friendship. It has been an honor to be your student;

Special thanks to Dr. Antonio Tillis for sharing his knowledge and insights with the students at UERJ upon several occasions;

Professor Peonia Guedes, thank you for the friendship and for broadening my mind to issues I had never thought about before;

I have to thank FAPERJ and the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, for granting me a scholarship;

Thanks to my colleagues in the Masters program, especially Lidia and Maria Cláudia, for the understanding at moments of complete desperation and for all the help before and during the program;

To all the teachers in the Masters Program, thank you very much for encouraging me and for making me fall in love with Literatures in English;

Thank you my friends, especially Victor, Vander, Carol, Ambelle, Fabiana and Débora for showing me the world outside the pages.

Without all of you, this dissertation would not have been the same. Thank you very much!

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou,
“Still I Rise”

RESUMO

ALCANTARA, Christiane Fontinha de. *A Legacy of Violence and Trauma in the Diasporic Literature from Hispaniola*. 2009. 109f. Dissertação (Metrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

O objetivo desta dissertação é analisar os romances *Geographies of Home* (1999), da escritora dominicana-americana Loida Martiza Pérez, e *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), da escritora haitiana-americana Edwidge Danticat. Ambos os romances tratam de famílias caribenhas que migram para os Estados Unidos por questões econômicas ou por razões políticas. Nos dois romances, personagens centrais são vítimas de abuso sexual. Em *Geographies of Home*, Marina é estuprada por um astrólogo negro e acaba por violentar sua irmã Iliana. Em *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Martine é violentada por sua mãe através de "testes" de virgindade que se encerram quando Martine é estuprada por um membro do exército particular do ditador François Duvalier. Entretanto, apesar de ressentir a prática dos "testes", Martine os repete quando sua filha Sophie cresce. Como sujeitos diaspóricos, estas personagens são influenciadas tanto pelos seus lugares de origem como pela cultura do país anfitrião. Assim, eu analiso o pano de fundo histórico e político da República Dominicana e do Haiti. Eu também discuto as motivações que levaram aos estupros retratados nos romances e exploro conseqüências físicas e psicológicas das memórias traumáticas causadas pela violência sexual. Eu também exploro a conexão entre a violência dirigida aos corpos das personagens femininas e a violência contra a nação.

Palavras-chave: Diáspora. Trauma. Estupro. Raça. Literatura caribenha.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the novels *Geographies of Home* (1999), written by the Dominican-American novelist Loida Maritza Pérez, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), by Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian-American writer. Both novels deal with Caribbean families that migrate to the United States, primarily for economic and political reasons. In both novels, main characters are victims of sexual abuse. In *Geographies of Home*, Marina is raped by a black astrologer and ends up violating her sister Iliana. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Martine is violated by her mother through virginity tests that end when Martine is raped by a member of the Dictator François Duvalier's private army. However, despite resenting the "testing" practice, Martine repeats it when her daughter Sophie grows up. As diasporic subjects, these characters are influenced both by their places of origin and the culture of the host nation. Thus, I analyze the historical and political background of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. I also discuss the motivations that led to the rapes portrayed in the novels, and I explore the physical and psychological consequences of the traumatic memories caused by sexual violence. I also explore the connection between violence directed towards the bodies of female characters and the violence perpetrated against the nation.

Keywords: Diaspora. Trauma. Rape. Race. Caribbean literature.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Brazilian newspapers have shown shocking scenes of large numbers of victims of slave and indentured labor. It is surprising that this practice, commonly attributed to Indigenous and African peoples in colonial times, is still present in the countryside of Brazil in the twenty-first century. According to information provided by the Brazilian Ministry of Employment and Labor, last year, 5,016 people were rescued from slavery and indenture work[1]. Even though the Brazilian Penal Code considers the enslavement of people a felony, the penalty for this crime is two to eight years of reclusion and a fine (BRASIL: 2006, 64)[2], too short a time for such a brutal crime.

On January 27, 2009, eighteen rural workers were freed in the city of Lucas do Rio Verde, in the state of Mato Grosso. These workers were paid a wage of R$25.00 per day to deforest and clean an area for the construction of a farm. Despite the extremely low payment, the workers had not received their salary for two months. These servants were watched and threatened daily by armed men ready to shoot if the laborers decided to leave or call the authorities[3].

Two days later another group of thirteen workers was freed in Cocais, in the state of Maranhão. This group – which included two women and a four-year-old child - was rescued in a corral, sharing the space with livestock. The workers were forced to live in extremely unhealthy and unsanitary conditions, without proper nutrition and sanitation: they were fed with plain coffee and manioc flour for breakfast, rice and beans for lunch and they had to use a dam for bathroom. These laborers had been working for over a month without receiving any payment and each worker owed the contractor about R$100.00, money borrowed to buy food and clothes. Thus, the workers were forced to remain in the farm until paying the debt, an impossible task to accomplish given the very low wages and the high prices of everything they were forced to buy.[4]

However, Brazil is not the only country where such violations of human rights exist. In 2007, Bill Haney directed the documentary *The Price of Sugar*, set on the island of

[1] Available at http://www.mte.gov.br.

[2] Article 149 of the Brazilian Penal Code

[3] *O Globo*, Jan 27, 2009.

[4] *O Globo*, Jan 29, 2009.

Hispaniola, which comprises two countries: the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The movie, which condemns the exploitation of Haitian migrant workers by Dominican sugar mills, shows thousands of dispossessed Haitians harvesting sugarcane with machetes under armed guard on plantations. They work an average of sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, frequently without access to decent housing, electricity, clean water, education, healthcare or adequate nutrition. For the labor, these men earn an average of U$3.00 a day. (HANEY: 2007). Although these sugarcane workers live in extremely precarious condition in the Dominican Republic, they cross the border between the two countries because recruits from the Dominican farms promise them better economic and living conditions than they have in their own country. Once they cross into Dominican territory, their identity papers are confiscated, making them liable to being arrested in either country. Thus what had looked like a chance for a better life turns into a nightmare. This situation is not new, though. In *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola*, published about ten years ago, critic Michelle Wucker called attention to the critical conditions besieging Haitians, who in order to escape starvation, run "to the center of Hispaniola, fleeing across the border in hopes of finding a means to survive." (WUCKER: 1999, 59). The frequent migratory movement of large numbers of Haitian workers to the Dominican side proves the extent of poverty and misery in Haiti and is one of the reasons for the animosity between Dominicans and Haitians: since the Dominican Republic and Haiti share a border, and the Dominican economy is more stable, a lot of Haitians decide to immigrate to the neighbor country in search of better living conditions.

For Wucker, illegal immigration, unemployment and land disputes contribute to aggravate racial problems between both countries. (WUCKER: 1999, ix). Movements of people from poor to richer countries tend to be seen as a threat imposed by foreign lower-class groups and are often perceived by the richer nations as an "invasion" of citizens that are going to bring social and economic problems to their countries. Hence the intense xenophobia and racial discrimination Haitian migrant workers face in the Dominican Republic.

However, the roots of the racial problems between Haiti and the Dominican Republic lie in the distant past of colonial Hispaniola. As will be discussed in further chapters, peculiar historical events have created ideologies that helped shape the subjectivities of Dominicans and Haitians. Discriminatory ideologies, present in the Dominican unconscious since colonial times, exploded during Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship, resulting in the slaughter of thousands of Haitians on Dominican soil. In "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic", Richard Lee Turits claims that

> narrating the history of the Haitian massacre as a story of anti-Haitian racism resonates powerfully with contemporary issues in Haitian-Dominican relations and comparative themes in world history, namely, hostility toward lower-class immigrants and the racial and ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing, and genocide that marked the twentieth-century. (TURITS: 2002, 592).

For Turits, the hatred Dominicans feel towards Haitians has been growing as the number of Haitians who migrate to work the sugar zones increases. These movements of people from poor countries into more developed ones are present throughout the world and have increased in the second half of the twentieth century.

Contemporary critics, including Stuart Hall and Ella Shohat have written about the massive migrations taking place primarily for economic and political reasons after World War II. (HALL: 2005, 596; SHOHAT: 2006, 236). Migration generally occurs from the so-called "Third World" to the "First World". Nevertheless, it can also happen between two "Third-World" countries when one of them offers slightly better economic opportunities – as is the case between Haiti and the Dominican Republic – or even within different regions of a large country, as is the case in Brazil.

As the world became more globalized, the development of means of transportation and telecommunications allied to economical difficulties experienced in developing countries resulted in the migration of peoples to developed nations which could offer a better economic situation than that experienced in their homeland. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that most of minority populations throughout the world cannot afford the trip to developed countries in order to find better conditions of living. In "Place and Space", Linda McDowell affirms that "travel or mobility, at least as a choice, is still to large extent a privilege of the affluent minority." (MCDOWELL: 2003, 12). In other words, mobility is a privilege of a group of subjects who, despite facing situations of poverty in their countries of origin, are still in an advantaged situation because they can afford to leave. The place of destination is largely conditioned to the means available to those migrants. This movement of peoples from their homelands into new places is called "diaspora".

The term "diaspora" has been used for many centuries to refer to the dispersion of Jewish people outside of Israel. However, the term has recently been appropriated by critics and scholars to define the dispersion of a people from their original homeland and to identify large scale migrations throughout the world. In "Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World", Gayatri Spivak analyses two types of diasporas: old and new. According to Spivak, old diasporas are the resulting movement of peoples due to "religious oppression and war." (SPIVAK: 1996, 245). Since the nineteenth century, "slavery and indenturing, trade and conquest, and intra-European economic migration […] took the form of

migration and immigration into the United States." (SPIVAK: 1996, 245). Further in her text, Spivak argues that new diasporas are like the old ones but that "the only significant difference is the use, abuse, participation, and role of women". (SPIVAK: 1996, 250).[5]

In my dissertation I deal with diasporic experiences as a gendered mechanism, since women who leave their homeland try to escape not only economic and/or political hardship, but also patriarchal oppression and prejudice. In "Os Percursos Diaspóricos de Dionne Brand", Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida argues that women leave their home and immigrate to discover that, despite socioeconomical changes, they still have to face the impositions of the gender roles, although different from those they were accustomed to. The diasporic movements change gender relations but new forms of coercion and prejudice become evident. (ALMEIDA: 2006, 200).

In the essay entitled "Diasporas", James Clifford defines diasporas as displacement experiences which

> usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future. Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this interconnection, but multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary. (CLIFFORD: 1994, 304).

However, Clifford argues that "the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement." (CLIFFORD: 1994, 308). Therefore, to Clifford, the term implies not only a dislocation of people from their homeland but also a struggle to maintain the cultural traditions of these people in the new surroundings.

When individuals engage in diasporic experiences and are introduced to new cultures, they have to deal with the consequences of this contact, which tends to result in the production of figures of difference. In the introduction of *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha explains that "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion." (BHABHA: 1994, 01). This cultural difference produces minority identities, multiculturally divided.

Thus, these experiences of displacement in the international arena have caused people who share different cultural backgrounds to face each other, creating "contact zones." (PRATT: 1992, 06). In the process their identities are affected and so is the way they

[5] The use of the concept "diaspora" in this paper will refer to Spivak's "new diasporas".

understand the world. In *The Question of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall says that modern societies of the end of the twentieth century are suffering major structural changes which end up de-centering the idea that individuals have fixed identities:

> A distinctive type of structural change is transforming modern societies in the late twentieth century. This is fragmenting the cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality which gave us firm locations as social individuals. These transformations are also shifting our personal identities, undermining our sense of ourselves as integrated subjects. (HALL: 2005, 596).

The dislocation of a person from his or her "natural" place in the social and cultural world causes a cultural clash. In other words, the sharp diversity of his or her cultural background creates a shock in the individual, which may lead to an identity crisis. In the essay entitled "Situando o Sujeito do Feminismo: O Lugar da Teoria, as Margens e a Teoria do Lugar", Claudia de Lima Costa argues that with the emergence of modern societies (characterized by frequent and fast changes generating, on the one hand, the disintegration of traditional and essentialist philosophical systems and, on the other hand, the loss of any sense of continuity between past, present and future) the subject begins to experiment an existential anguish followed by deep identity crisis. The subject becomes fragmented, plural, as his identity faces different and new social antagonisms. (COSTA: 1997, 124). In *Reclaiming Difference: Caribbean Women Rewrite Postcolonialism*, Carine Mardorossian argues that subjects are "constituted by a network of interdependent identities." (MARDOROSSIAN: 2005, 03). When discussing the process of identity construction in the introduction of *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall argues that

> identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through its relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed. (HALL: 1996, 04).

Thus, the cultural identity of diasporic subjects is constructed in contrast to what it is not, to what it is different from.

Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, a Cuban-American poet, fiction writer and scholar, mentions in his essay "Transcending Exile: Cuban-American Literature Today" the registering of this phenomenon in literature. He believes that "the ethnic writer […] cultivates not identity but difference. He does not seek to identify with his culture of origin or with his culture of destination; or rather, he does not seek an exclusive identification with either one of them." (PÉREZ-FIRMAT: 1987, 05). For Pérez-Firmat, the process of identification of writers who live in a dominant culture different from that of his homeland occurs not with the culture of origin or with the culture of destination, but rather a third identification emerges from the

mixture of these two. Pérez-Firmat follows Homi K. Bhabha's conceptualization of a "Third Space" of enunciation, a space of intersection between cultures, where identifications, rather than identities are constructed: "these in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular, communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself." (BHABHA: 1994, 01).

In *Identity and Difference,* Kathryn Woodward analyzes this phenomenon of identity construction of subjects who inhabit this "third-space of enunciation":

> although we may, in common-sense terms, see ourselves as the "same person' in all our different encounters and interactions, there is also a sense in which we are differently positioned at different times and in different places, according to the different social roles we are playing. (…) In all these situations we may feel, literally, like the same person, but we are differently positioned by the social expectations and constraints and we represent ourselves to others differently in each context. In a sense, we are positioned – and also position ourselves – according to the 'fields' in which we are acting. (WOODWARD: 2002, 22).

In other words, Woodward argues that we position ourselves according to the different situations we face, and we incorporate different identities for each of these contexts. She sees identities as flexible and changing according to the varied encounters we may have in life. Complementing Woodward's ideas, in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Hall argues that

> identity is not transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (HALL: 1990, 222).

Consequently, identities should not be thought of as fixed objects, but as processes of identification in constant transformation and represented in literature accordingly.

When we deal with subjects who migrate from the Caribbean into more developed nations, these processes of identification become evident. According to Carole Boyce Davies in *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, "migration and exile are fundamental to human experience. And each movement demands another definition and redefinition of one's identity." (DAVIES: 2001, 128). When subjects migrate, they develop new identifications that result from the contact of two cultures - the culture of origin and that of destination – and their cultural and national identities remain in constant process of transformation, producing new (hybrid) forms of culture. When discussing hybridity, Linda MacDowell says that "in this global system, identities based on place are transformed through real and virtual travel and migration into hybridized, nomadic versions of traveling subjects." (MCDOWELL: 2003, 11). In *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence*, Hellen Scott argues that "concepts such as transnationalism, hybridity,

nomadism, syncretism, creolization continue to be central to critical exploration of Caribbean culture" (SCOTT: 2006, 11) because the Caribbean itself is the product of mixing cultures. Carole Boyce Davies describes this hybrid characteristic of Caribbean culture:

> For the Caribbean, the separations based on language, colonial political and economic structures, land and the treacherous sea allows us to understand and question the formation of nations based only on island boundaries. Also, the multiple peoples and languages of this part of the world offer us interesting postmodernist ways of seeing identity. Further, the Caribbean understood (within the context of the Americas) as the history of genocide, slavery, physical brutality, […] demands some sort of understanding of culture either as oppositional or as resistance, and further as transformational if we are to recoup any identities beyond the ones imposed. (DAVIES: 2001, 12).

In other words, the hybrid nature of culture in the Caribbean can be considered a means of resistance: in order not to have their traditions erased, the peoples of this region had to mix their culture with those with which they had contact, resisting complete assimilation.

The novels I have selected to work in this dissertation deal with diasporic movements of Caribbean families to the United States: in *Geographies of Home*, a family of Dominican origin migrates for economic reasons, and in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, mother and daughter leave Haiti for political reasons. Loida Maritza Pérez - the author of *Geographies of Home* - was born in 1963, two years after Rafael Trujillo's assassination. At the time of her birth, the Dominican Republic was still suffering the consequences of thirty-one years of a corrupt, violent and exploitative dictatorship. Like the family portrayed in her novel, Pérez's family engaged in a diasporic movement to the United States when she was three years old in search of better economic conditions. Similarly, Edwidge Danticat – the writer of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* - was born in Port-au-Prince in 1969, during the last years of François Duvalier's dictatorship. Her family immigrated to the U.S. when she was very young in order to improve their financial situation. Like the main character in her novel, Danticat was raised by an aunt while her parents lived in New York, and at the age of twelve, she left Haiti to join her family in Brooklyn[6]. It is worth mentioning that both Pérez's and Danticat's novels present autobiographical elements. However, Pérez emphasizes that her novel is not autobiographical, refusing to claim Iliana as a representation of herself.

The two novels I work with in this dissertation were written by female authors born in different regions on the same Caribbean island – Hispaniola - during or soon after their countries experienced violent and abusive dictatorships. As a result, their writing is scarred by the history of their countries of origin, which is marked by conflicts internal and external to the island and by specific cultural traditions. However, there are some distinctions in their work which reflect the specificities of their origin. When discussing this topic, Hellen Scott

[6] For further information on the authors' lives, see Danticat: 1996, Danticat: 2003, or visit http://voices.cla.umn.edu/.

claims that "[…] while regional characteristics are strong, and countries cannot be extricated from a global system, nonetheless each nation experiences regional and international influences in distinct ways, and also possesses particular social and cultural characteristics." (SCOTT: 2006, 18). Complementing Scott's ideas, Smaro Kamboureli argues in *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*, that it is important to be aware that "particular communities and individuals resist being subsumed into a single narrative; instead, they demand that we address their cultural and historical specificities." (KAMBOURELI: 2000, vii). In other words, although these works present some similarities in their Caribbean origin and in having been produced by hyphenated writers in the United States, each text is grounded in national specificity. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that these works do not represent the entire Dominican and Haitian societies: the circumstances each family lives is portrayed in the novels as singular and unique.

It is important to mention that both *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are extremely rich novels which provide several topics for analysis. However, given the scope of this dissertation thesis, it becomes impossible to explore each and every one of them. For this reason, I have chosen to explore race and gender relations, patriarchal oppression and violence, because when individuals engage in diasporic experience, they often leave their country in order to escape oppression, but end up encountering similar situations in the host country.

According to Amy Kaminsky in *Reading the Body Politic: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers*, "the experience of exile is the experience of being feminized, for the condition of exile and the condition of women in patriarchal culture are remarkably alike." (KAMINSKY: 1993, 36). In other words, in exile the subject becomes "the Other", like women in patriarchal societies. Thus, diasporic subjects struggle to become agents in the new environment and, similarly, women fight to gain voice in patriarchal systems. As feminist works, *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* deal with these issues of gender and patriarchal oppression. When analyzing the situation of women in Western society, Amy Kaminski argues that

> women are expected to maintain the home, and they have done so, whether that meant serving as mistress in the enclosure of a big house, going out to fields to produce the family's food supply, or even traveling many miles to market to sell home-produced goods. For women to venture beyond cultural expectations of familial responsibility, however, in order to look elsewhere – or to look at all – for intellectual and spiritual sustenance is profoundly upsetting to men on the left, who, like those on the right, count on "their" women to maintain, and be, a familiar place of refuge. (KAMINSKY: 1993, 16).

Thus, certain roles have been attributed to women as "characteristic" or innate of our gender. In societies where patriarchal values are more firmly enforced, women are born to become wives and mothers, or whores. Those who do not follow these prescribed patterns disturb the "natural order" of things and end up being punished for their transgression. Therefore, an analysis of the construction of gender binaries in Western society becomes crucial for the development of this paper. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler talks about the need to expand the concept of gender beyond the dichotomy masculine/feminine:

> gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (BUTLER: 1990, 03).

Consequently, by deconstructing traditional female roles, these novels provide new possibilities of Caribbean identification.

In order to understand the specificities of each novel, it is necessary to learn about the history of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Thus, the first chapter of this dissertation presents a historical background of the island of Hispaniola, focusing on the most important events that have taken place from colonial times to the present, because the ideologies present in both societies influence the molding of the subjects' identities. The historical accounts provided by Frank Moya Pons, Michelle Wucker, Joan Dayan, Pedro San Miguel and Charles Arthur will serve as the basis for the understanding of historical events in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti. Moreover, I provide an analytical account of these events with support from critics Silvio Torres-Saillant, Hellen Scott and Richard Turits. Since this chapter deals with over 500 years of history, there are many dates, names and facts which may become difficult for the reader to apprehend. Nevertheless, they are crucial for understanding the historical and cultural peculiarities of each country and, consequently, of each novel.

The violent dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (1930 – 1961) and of the Duvaliers in Haiti (1957 – 1986) are crucial historical events that have been inscribed into the psyches of citizens of both countries. One of the common practices used to impose control and fear over the population during dictatorial regimes is raping women. Rapes are still a frequent form of sexual abuse to which women are more exposed than men. In both novels, there are situations in which the bodies of female subjects are exposed to risky situations such as beatings, molestations and rapes: in *Geographies of Home*, Marina and her sister Iliana are victims of rape and in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Martine and her daughter Sophie are sexually molested. Therefore, the second chapter of this dissertation will analyze

the construction of the female body in Western society, the forms of sexual abuse suffered by women and the motivations for these abuses, as represented in the novels *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The postulates of Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Susan Friedman and George Yancy will serve as basis for my discussion of the issues addressed in order to understand the social-cultural structures presented in these works.

It is widely known that survivors of traumatic experience often suffer physical and emotional injuries. This is also the case of rape victims: the abuse provokes physical consequences and a tendency to develop disorders. In order to understand these consequences related to the body and mind of rape survivors, the third chapter of this dissertation deals with traumatic consequences of rape, as represented through the female characters. For the theoretical development of this discussion, I chose the works of Carole Boyce Davies, Cathy Caruth, Susan Bordo, Joan Dayan and Lucía M. Suárez. Thus, this chapter explores the symptoms commonly affecting victims of rape and relates them to the experiences of the female characters in the novel. Moreover, it builds a parallel between mythical representations of Haitian culture and Martine.

To sum up, the main objective of this dissertation is to analyze the circumstances of rape as represented in *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, since in both novels main characters are victims of sexual abuse. I intend to discuss the motivations that led to the rapes and to explore the physical and psychological consequences of the sexual assaults. Moreover, I will analyze the ideological construction of the feminine body and "female" gender and the way historical discourses and traditions perpetuate discriminatory ideologies. It is also worth mentioning the parallels that will be drawn between the novels: I explore the connection between violence directed towards the bodies of female characters and the violence perpetrated against the nation. I will also try to highlight the similarities and differences between the representations of rape in both novels, and I will relate these rapes to the historical and cultural backgrounds.

1. HISPANIOLA: HISTORY, POLITICS AND IDENTITY OF A DIVIDED ISLAND

1.1. The discovery of the island

The island of Hispaniola was discovered by Christopher Columbus on December 5, 1492. On December 25 that same year, the Spanish established a colony on the north coast of the island called *La Navidad*, where nowadays is the city of Cap Haïtien. According to Frank Moya Pons' account of the discovery of Hispaniola in *The Dominican Republic: a National History*, soon after their arrival, the colonizers realized the economic importance of Hispaniola: the land was fertile, and there was plenty of gold, which the Spanish extracted from alluvial deposits and traded with the natives in exchange for beads, mirrors, and hats that Columbus had brought as trade goods. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 30).

Gold and the existence of native Taínos who served as labor force attracted many Spaniards over the first years. However, the mistreatment and extortion of the Taínos, allied to the violence inflicted against members of their tribes deteriorated relations with the Spanish. As a result, the native Taínos started to react violently against the abuse and intolerance of the colonizers. In *Haiti: a Guide to People, Politics and Culture*, Charles Arthur explains that when Columbus returned to Hispaniola in 1493, he discovered that *La Navidad* had been destroyed and all its inhabitants killed by the natives. Thus, Columbus created a second establishment, *La Isabela*. Once more the natives rebelled, but were dominated in 1495. (ARTHUR: 2007, 16).

After several attempts to establish colonies in the north coast of Hispaniola, the first permanent colony was finally settled in the south coast of the New World. In 1496, the city of Santo Domingo was founded and soon all the island received the same name. Santo Domingo became an important center for the administration of the colony, the starting point of new conquests and a laboratory for the development of governmental politics for the new possessions.

Extensive labor, abuse, diseases against which the natives were not immune and the increase of the mixed population contributed to the disappearance of the Taínos and of their culture. As a consequence of the elimination of natives, the Spanish had to find another kind of workforce to work in the mines and the sugar cane fields. Thus, in 1503, there began the

importation of African slaves and in 1520 it was the only workforce available on the island. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 40).

1.2. The Devastations and the birth of Saint-Domingue

The fast exhaustion of gold and indigenous workforce contributed to the stagnation of the economy of the island of Hispaniola, which lasted several centuries. In *The Imagined Island: History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola,* Pedro L. San Miguel argues that in order to overcome the economic crisis, Spanish colonizers practiced illegal trade with French buccaneers. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 38). In 1598, a local bureaucrat, Baltazar López de Castro, wrote a letter to the Crown of Spain offering a solution to the problem. According to Moya Pons, López de Castro believed that

> The only way to deal with the problem was to move all the residents and their cattle from the island's northern and western regions to the surrounding areas of Santo Domingo. […] This measure would prevent the foreigners from illegally trading with the colonists, and would also provide Santo Domingo with an abundance of livestock and dairy products. Royal revenues would increase since the hides would be exported directly through the harbor of Santo Domingo. The church would enjoy the additional advantage of increased tithes. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 46).

In 1603, in an attempt to control illegal trade, the *Consejo de Indias* adopted López de Castro's plan. Spain ordered Governor Osorio of Santo Domingo to supervise the removal of all Spaniards on the island to a line south and east of the current city of San Juan de la Maguana. The towns in the north in the west should be depopulated. These acts, known as the Devastations, took place from 1605 to 1606. However, the removal of the local population was not voluntary: many colonists did not want to leave their properties for fear of losing their cattle and African slaves. As a result, the Spanish government dislocated them by force, and ended up proving the colonists right: during the devastation of the lands in the north and east of the island, most of the animals could not be removed and many slaves ran away. Many families lost most of their source of income, and became financially ruined. The *devastaciones* dramatically impoverished Hispaniola and the emptied lands attracted French, Portuguese, Dutch and British colonists to the island. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 48).

With the colonial focus directed towards the east and south of Hispaniola, the northern and western parts of the island became neglected. Pedro L. San Miguel argues that the Devastations favored French colonization: "the depopulation of the northern and western coasts opened the door, in time, to French colonizers in the western part of the island." (SAN

MIGUEL: 2005, 20). From that time on, English and French pirates would attempt to take over the coastline.

As a result, in 1622, English and French groups settled on the island of San Cristóbal (nowadays St. Kitts and Nevis), where they remained until 1628, when the Spanish government forced the survivors to leave. "Attracted by the tranquility of the abandoned northwestern coasts of Española, the English and French survivors moved from San Cristóbal to the island of Tortuga." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 52). Taking advantage of the distance between the emptied northern lands and Santo Domingo, Bertrand D'Ogeron – governor of Tortuga – promoted the French to settle on the north coast of Hispaniola. The first major French settlement on Hispaniola was established in 1670 and was called Cap-François. Later it was renamed Cap-Français and currently it is called Cap-Haïtien. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 57). In *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola,* Michelle Wucker explains how France officially won the western part of the island - known as Saint-Domingue - after The French Revolution[7]:

> By 1655, France won western Hispaniola from Spain permanently, though it did not wrest a formal concession until the 1697 Treaty of Ryswick, which sealed the truce in the Nine Years' War in Europe and split Hispaniola into two colonies, the much larger Spanish Santo Domingo and the smaller French Saint Domingue. (WUCKER: 1999, 32).

Thus, after the Spanish lost the war against the French Republicanism, the Treaty of Ryswick was signed, officially dividing the island "into the two colonies of French Saint- Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo that today exist respectively as Haiti and the Dominican Republic." (ARTHUR: 2007, 17). After the loss of the western territory, conflicts between the Spanish and the French colonies began.

1.3. The Haitian Revolution and the unification of the island

By the end of the seventeenth century, the number of planters in the French area of the island became greater than the number of buccaneers. The population of the French colony lived on agriculture, which was encouraged by King Louis XIV. They grew tobacco, indigo, cotton, and cacao on the fertile northern plain, thus prompting the importation of African slaves. (ARTHUR: 2007, 17). The economy of Saint-Domingue gradually expanded. Since the slaves outnumbered the colonists, in 1685, King Louis XIV enacted the *Code Noir,* the

[7] See Annex 1.

first document for the policing of slavery. According to this code, slaves had virtually no rights, though masters became obliged to take care of the sick and old, to feed, clothe, and provide for the general well-being of their slaves. However, the code also sanctioned harsh corporal punishment, allowing masters to employ brutal methods to instill in their slaves the necessary docility. The *Code Noir* reinforced the dominant notions of relations between black and white peoples, "notions based on the premise of a 'natural order' in which whites commanded and blacks obeyed." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 22). The *Code Noir* allowed white settlers to continue their cruel exploitation of slaves with impunity, generating a sentiment of anger among slaves, who deeply resented the inhumane treatment imposed by the whites.

As colonization progressed and the number of slaves increased, it became necessary for the small white elite to dominate the black majority. In order to accomplish this, they resorted to the ideology of white supremacy which viewed whites as civilized in contrast to the black "savage". When discussing the racial issue in colonial times, San Miguel claims that

> skin color defined not only one's social condition, but also one's ethnic and cultural identity – in addition, of course, to one's position in the structure of production. In the face of the "other" – generally Africa, slave, and black – the hacendado, the merchant, and the bureaucrat affirmed their much-vaunted whiteness and their European roots. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 36).

George Yancy further develops these ideas in *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, where he claims that

> the Black body has been historically marked, disciplined, and scripted and materially, psychologically, and morally invested in to ensure both white supremacy and the illusory construction of the white subject as a self-contained substance whose existence does not depend upon the construction of the Black qua inferior. (YANCY: 2008, 01).

Europeans, then, disseminated the belief in white superiority, which viewed black people as uncivilized and animalistic. This discourse lowered the self-esteem of the slaves making their submission possible.

By 1789, the western part of the island constituted a prosperous colony where 80% of the inhabitants were black slaves who were discontent with the colonial regime. African culture thus remained strong among slaves, in particular the practice of *voudou*, which blended Catholic liturgy and rituals with African practices and beliefs. Apart from slaves, as the colony prospered, other groups became dissatisfied with the colonial system, which kept most of the profits in France. Planters in Saint-Domingue demanded the abolition of the monopoly France had over the colony and fought to obtain political autonomy and to form their own government. In addition, most of the population of Saint-Domingue was constituted of mulattos who "professed a deep aversion of the whites, who in turn resented the fact that

descendants of slaves had reached a preeminent position in the colonial economy." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 92).

The population grew more and more displeased with the colonial regime. The first attempt to promote the independence of Saint-Domingue occurred in 1790, when Vincent Ogé, a free man of color, arrived from Paris in Saint-Domingue. Influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution, Ogé tried to organize a rebellion to free the colony from the control of France. Although helped by the mulatto Jean Baptiste Chavannes, the revolutionaries could not convince other mulattos to join the cause, provoking the failure of the revolt. Ogé and Chavannes fled to the Spanish part of the island but were delivered to the French by Spanish authorities. Together with other conspirators, Ogé and Chavannes were executed. Nevertheless, after the rebellion, the oppressive living conditions of the black majority did not improve. As a consequence, on August 22, 1791, slaves in the northern region of the French colony staged a revolt claiming for their liberty. It was the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, which took over ten years to be accomplished (1791–1804). (MOYA PONS: 1998, 94).

In order to achieve their goals, the black slaves founded an alliance with the Spanish government, who saw an opportunity to recover the entire island. Led by the former slave Toussaint L'Ouverture, black slaves fought for the abolition of slavery and for the independence of Saint-Domingue. Two years later, the French commander Léger-Felicité Sonthonax abolished slavery in the colony, in a desperate attempt to save Saint- Domingue for France. This decision divided the rebels in two groups: those who wanted to continue fighting as auxiliary soldiers of the Spaniards, and those who joined the French, who seemed to favor their cause. According to Michelle Wucker, "weeks after the French commander Sonthonax decreed a partial end to slavery in August 1793, Toussaint switched his allegiance to France in a move that guaranteed the colonial power success in expelling English and Spanish troops." (WUCKER: 1999, 36). Toussaint crossed over to the French side and within a few months, invaded and annexed the Spanish colony to Saint-Domingue.

By 1801, Toussaint L'Ouverture had become the governor of the whole island. He took over Santo Domingo and liberated slaves in the eastern part of Hispaniola. The following year, Napoleon Bonaparte sent a massive invasion force under his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, in order to defeat L'Ouverture and restore the control of the colony by the French. He managed to conquer the eastern part of the island, which had been under Toussaint's control since 1801. However, "when Napoleon Bonaparte dispatched a massive 22,000-strong invasion force to bring the colony under control of the French Republic,

Toussaint was obliged to submit to these superior numbers, and on May 1, 1802, approved a truce." (ARTHUR: 2007, 20). During the negotiations, the black leader was captured and sent to prison in France, where he remained until his death. The slaves in their colony, heeding the call of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality", rebelled. The population of the island was once again divided, this time between Haitians and French people.

After Toussaint's imprisonment, Jean Jacques Dessalines and Alexandre Pétion joined forces to fight against the French. Dessalines was one of the main officers of Toussaint's black army and Pétion was a leader of the mulatto elite.

> The combined forces of Dessalines and Pétion overcame the French troops, capturing the capital, Port-au-Prince, in October 1803, and, a month later, at Vertères, outside Cap-Français, the conclusive battle was fought. The defeated French forces left the colony, and on January 1, 1804, Dessalines read the Proclamation of Independence. (ARTHUR: 2007, 20).

Charles Arthur highlights the determination and endurance of the rebels: "over twelve years of epic struggle, a succession of European armies tried and failed to crush the revolution. It was the first and only successful slave revolution, and resulted in the creation of world's first black republic." (ARTHUR: 2007, 15). In *Haiti, History and the Gods*, Joan Dayan claims that despite the achievement of independence, the Republic of Haiti – which constituted the western part of Hispaniola – was not recognized by France until 1825, after Boyer's government paid 150 million francs for the damage suffered by dispossessed planters of Saint-Domingue who had lost their lands after Dessalines' declaration of independence. (DAYAN: 1995, 13).

1.4. Santo Domingo under French rule

In 1805, General Dessalines - who had proclaimed himself Emperor Jacques I after Toussaint's imprisonment – signed the Constitution of the newly formed republic. Joan Dayan states that the Constitution called for freedom of religion for people of African descent, and prohibited white men from possessing Haitian lands. It also claimed that any Haitian, regardless of skin color, would be known as "black." (DAYAN: 1995, 24). One of the most shocking acts of his government was ordering the murder of all whites in Haitian soil that refused to go back to Europe. According to Dayan, "Dessalines ordered nearly 3,000 French men, women and children killed with hatchets, sabers, bayonets, and daggers. No gunshot was

allowed, no cannon or musketry. Silence and calm were necessary so that from one town to the next no one would be warned of the approaching slaughter." (DAYAN: 1995, 04). Ironically, over a century later, the same technique of murdering without gunshot would be used by the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo to eliminate Haitians, although his purpose was not to maintain silence, but to prevent his soldiers from being accused of the killings.

Although Dessalines was considered the hero of the proclamation of independence, he was also considered a tyrant. In order to reorganize the economy of the nation, the emperor instituted drastic measures, such as forced labor, which allied to cruel acts against the white population, helped decrease his popularity. As a result, on October 17, 1806, two of his own advisers, Henri Christophe and Alexandre Pétion, ambushed him north of Port-au-Prince and provoked his assassination. His body was shot, stabbed and cut off to pieces. After the *coup d'état*, the two main conspirators divided the country in two rival regimes. Henri Christophe created the authoritarian State of Haiti in the north, and Alexandre Pétion helped establish the Republic of Haiti in the south. (DAYAN: 1995, 17).

Besides the internal conflicts, the newly founded Haiti continued having problems with the Eastern part of the island, which was under French control. The aim of the French government was to rebuild and consolidate Santo Domingo by inviting French families to live in the colony. Many Spanish and French people migrated to the eastern part of the island and the economy continued to improve. The extraction of wood and the low taxes attracted newcomers and helped the inhabitants of the island to recuperate their fortune. However, the period of prosperity and peace was threatened when the French governor of Santo Domingo, General Louis Marie Ferrand, ordered the inhabitants of the colony to suspend all trade with the Western part of Hispaniola, inhabited by Haitians. To further complicate relations on the island, across the Atlantic Ocean, Spain had been invaded by Napoleon. In Santo Domingo, the treason of Napoleon against the Spanish monarchs caused the indignation of rich landowners, who felt humiliated at having their homeland under French domination and at having their businesses harmed by Ferrand's prohibition. One of these rich landowners, Don Juan Sánchez Ramírez, became the leader of a revolt which fought against the French in Santo Domingo. On November 7, Sánchez Ramirez's army became victorious. This conflict – known as the Battle of Palo Hincado - ended on November 7, 1808 with Ferrand's death and the expulsion of the French army from Santo Domingo. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 114).

1.5. The re-unification of the island

After the Battle of Palo Hincado there were many conspiracies in Santo Domingo which aimed at the creation of an independent country or the annexation to other countries, including Haiti. After the deaths of both Pétion (1818) and Christophe (1820), these internal divisions facilitated the invasion of the eastern territory by Jean Pierre Boyer – Pétion's successor – who proclaimed the unity of the island under his command and ruled as president until 1843. (ARTHUR: 2007, 21). According to San Miguel, "during these years the Haitian government and its president, Jean Pierre Boyer, introduced various measures that negatively affected the interests of the dominant sectors." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 46). Among these measures there was the redistribution of lands and holdings among freedmen and *campesinos*. With this action, many Spaniards lost ranches, plantations and homes that their families had owned for centuries. Boyer also laid claim to mansions, warehouses, churches and other valuable buildings and lots in the principal towns and cities.

Boyer seized all governmental posts in Santo Domingo and redefined the laws and court systems. He also imposed the French language upon the courts and schools, and restricted *fiestas*, cockfighting and other Spanish cultural traditions, substituting them for Haitian ones. According to San Miguel, the Dominican Republic had to struggle in order to maintain its Hispanic identity. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 25). Understandably, there was much resistance to the Haitian domination of Santo Domingo, especially by "whites", who resented being governed by "Africans". However, as I have already pointed out, racial problems had been present since colonial times.

1.6. The independence of the Dominican Republic

In order to escape Haitian oppression, many Spanish and people of Spanish descent abandoned the island, heading off to Spain, Puerto Rico, Cuba or the United States. Among those who remained, conspiracies flourished. As a result, in 1843, Charles Rivière-Hérard organized a revolt that overthrew Boyer. The overthrowing of President Boyer initiated a renewed cry for independence among the Spanish-speaking people of the eastern half of the island. Guided by Juan Pablo Duarte, Dominicans set multiple attacks on the Haitian army, who eventually retreated. Independence of the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola was officially

declared on February 27, 1844, and the name *República Dominicana* (Dominican Republic) was adopted. (WUCKER: 1999, 40).

The declaration of the independent Dominican Republic and the signing of its constitution did not, however, end the fighting between Haitians and Dominicans. In "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity", Silvio Torres-Saillant argues that "the various military attempts of Haitian leaders between 1844 and 1855 to bring Dominicans back under Haitian rule gave rise to a nation-building ideology that included an element of self-differentiation with respect to Haitians." (TORRES-SAILLANT: 2000, 1092). The national identity of the Dominican Republic was forged as white, civilized and Catholic, in contrast to Haitians, who were considered black, savage and *voudou* practitioners. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 39).

Torres-Saillant also claims that the population of the newly-born Dominican nation was considered as "other than black" by many foreign statesmen and journalists, in contrast to black Haitians, who were deemed savage due to the violence and oppression of the Haitian government. (TORRES-SAILLANT: 2000, 1087). Thus, "black" acquired a new meaning: it meant uncivilized, violent and oppressive, and was attributed to Haitians. This ideology helped to increase hostilities between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, because Dominicans feared being characterized like their neighbors. Other critics, however, have also pointed out that prejudice against blacks exists in the island since colonial times. This is a very complex issue that will be further explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

1.7. The American occupation of the Dominican Republic

After independence, the economy of the Dominican Republic was devastated. For years, Dominican presidents tried to attract foreign investments, while pocketing as much wealth for themselves and their supporters as they could. In 1882, General Ulysses Heureaux, also known as Lilís, came into power as a dictator of a corrupt regime maintained by violent repression of his opponents. Under his rule the Dominican Republic achieved certain stability, but the economy of the country regularly oscillated, due to the constant borrowing from European and American banks. At the time of Lilís' death (1899), the Dominican Republic owed over $34 million pesos to European and American banks, the equivalent to over 15 times the country's national budget. (WUCKER: 1999, 100).

The years that followed Lilís' death witnessed a series of revolutions and *coup d'états*. After five presidents failed to restore the economy of the country, the president of the United States - Theodore Roosevelt - declared that the United States would assume responsibility for ensuring that the Dominican Republic honored its financial obligations. In January 1905, under this corollary, a treaty annexing the country to the U.S. was signed, which determined that Americans would administer Dominican customs. In 1906, Ramón Cáceres became president of the Dominican nation. Although his government brought political stability and renewed the growth of the economy with American investments in the sugar industry, Cáceres was assassinated in 1911, bringing the country under chaos again. In July 1914, the U.S. government stepped in to control the civil war, provisionally appointing Dr. Ramón Báez to the presidency on August 27, 1914. Finally, democratic elections were held in October and Juan Isidro Jimenes won, but his term was short-lived because he refused to capitulate to all the terms demanded by the U.S. government. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 316).

Jimenes' fall gave a pretext for the United States to occupy the Dominican Republic: in order to control the chaos, U.S. Marines moved in to occupy the capital Santo Domingo in May, 1916, taking over the rest of the country in the following three months. (MOYA PONS, 1998, 322). Among the changes implemented during the time of the occupation - highway construction, improved mail service, expansion of the public school system, institution of a public health and sanitation division, changes to the judicial and penal systems, among others - no doubt the most influential on the country's future history was the establishment of the U.S.-Marine-trained Dominican National Guard, whose name was changed to the Dominican National Police in 1921 and later on, in 1928, it was re-named the National Army. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 327). Among the recruits was a young Dominican called Rafael Leonidas Trujillo y Molina. Although there were many improvements during the occupation, the U.S. authorities suppressed any resistance to their control, leading to executions and arrests. The First U.S. Occupation of the Dominican Republic would last until 1924, when the first free elections put General Horácio Vásquez in charge of the presidency. It was officially ended on July 1, 1924. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 335).

1.8. The American occupation of Haiti

In Haiti, the last two decades of the 19th century were marked by the development of an intellectual elite. The Constitution of 1867, which saw peaceful and progressive transitions in government, was signed. The development of its industrial sugar and rum industries made the nation, for a while, a model for economic growth in Latin American countries. However, the period of relative stability and prosperity in Haiti was faded to an end. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the U.S. became concerned about German influence in Haiti, since the German community controlled great part of the country's international commerce. Thus, in 1910-11, the State Department of the United States backed a consortium of American investors to acquire control of the *Banque National d'Haït,* in an effort to limit the influence of Germans in the nation. (ARTHUR: 2007, 22). Soon afterwards, in 1915, President Guillaume Vilbrun Sam established a dictatorship that resulted in the massacre of 167 political prisoners. Consequently, civil war broke out and a mob lynched the president in Port-au-Prince. In order to control the civil war and as a response to complaints from American banks to which Haiti was deeply in debt, the United States occupied the country. Haitians who opposed the American intervention were severely repressed. The U.S. occupation caused several problems in the country, but reforms were also carried out. The currency was reformed and the debt stabilized. Corruption was reduced and public health, education, and agricultural development were greatly improved. The occupation of Haiti lasted until 1934. (WUCKER: 1999, 101). However, the American occupation failed to achieve its goal of building a democratic government in Haiti: after the Marines departed, several presidents were elected, but were soon replaced by military governments.

1.9. Border disputes

By the 1920s, the rich, fertile lands of the Dominican Republic attracted investments by the powerful new agro-industrial capitalists of the 20th century. Tobacco, cacao, coffee and sugar cane created land and money speculation, spurred the laying of railroads and highways across the country. The opportunities to work in the agricultural fields and in the railroads and highways encouraged new immigration. "By the 1920s, braceros from Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean islands played a central role in the Dominican Republic's sugar production." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 52). In *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration*, Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar argue that many Haitians

had begun to migrate towards the Dominican part of the island in order to work in sugar production, since Dominicans refused to work in the cane fields for the low wages offered by the sugar industry. (GRASMUCK & PESSAR: 1991, 27). This situation posed a threat to the Dominican government because of border disputes between the two nations that divided Hispaniola. For many Dominicans, "Haitians settling in Dominican territory were evidence of an 'imperialist' policy that was a continuation of the principle of the 'indivisibility of the land' promulgated by Toussaint." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 53). In "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic", Richard Turits argues that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was believed that if large numbers of Haitian immigrants began to occupy the Dominican borderlands, the Haitian government could decide to claim part of the land of the Dominican Republic, which could result in another Haitian occupation of the entire island. (TURITS: 2002, 601). However, "to the Haitians, 'crossing-over' provided alternatives that were in short supply in their own country. Above all, it was easier to obtain land, pasture, and a water supply, assets that were highly valued by the inhabitants, most of them campesinos." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 53). In other words, in order to fight poverty in their own country, Haitians decided to work in agricultural areas of the Dominican Republic, performing activities Dominicans refused to do.

According do Michele Wucker, Dominicans would not do the work Haitians did and considered the cane cutters "good for labor and no more, worth consideration only to make sure they do not leave the *bateyes* and spread their dirty diseases, their inferior culture, their black, black skin." (WUCKER: 1999, 113). Unlike the African-descendant Haitians, In the process of formation of the country's identity, Dominicans steadfastly denied their black ancestry relying mostly on their European descent and occasionally on their Taíno heritage.

1.10. Trujillo's dictatorship and The Massacre of 1937

From 1924 to 1930, President Horácio Vásquez ruled the Dominican Republic. Although he continued many of the U.S.-implemented policies, Vásquez also sought to promote agricultural and industrial development, as well as international trade. His hand-picked successor was his Vice President José Dolores Alfonseca, but Alfonseca had a dangerous enemy, Rafael Trujillo, the chief of the National Army, a man who had only

recently become rich through military concessions and through investments in land and urban properties. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 349).

On February 23, 1930, Trujillo and his "private army" began a successful *coup d'état* against Vásquez. Vásquez and Alfonseca resigned and left for exile in Puerto Rico. Elections were held in May, with Trujillo running for president and Rafael Estrella Ureña as his vice president. There was no opposition and they were sworn into office on August 16, 1930. Trujillo, known as "*el Jefe*", ran the country in a dictatorial regime for the next 31 years. He was the author of political murders and responsible for a series of corrupt acts. "Trujillo organized a terrorist band, called *La 42*, to be in charge of persecuting and assassinating his opponents and to spread fear throughout the country." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 356). He amassed a fortune, for there was no industry in the country in which he or a member of his family did not own the majority share. His business ventures "ranged from prostitution to fruit exports, and included commissions on concessions for public works contracts." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 360). All of his economic operations were granted special tax exemptions, not to mention that they were protected not only from foreign competition but from internal trade union and labor demands. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 359).

On the other hand, Trujillo consolidated the financial prosperity of the country, paying its external debts. He also implemented many programs to promote national patriotism and international recognition, and programs of national reconstruction and modernization aimed at unifying the Dominican Republic's fragmented political system and at bringing the country into the modern, developed era. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 357). Trujillo dramatically improved the agricultural production facilities and industries of the nation, as well as educational, health and sanitation programs; he supported the founding and operation of a national symphony, radio and TV stations; built monuments, cultural *plazas* and government buildings; he offered asylum, land and a home to displaced Jews in the region known as Sosua and encouraged other immigrants and investors to come to the Dominican Republic, as long as they were white. He also had the capital renamed Ciudad Trujillo in 1936, stomping out antagonists to any of his plans and relying on both U.S. support and his private squad of assassins, *La 42*, to suppress his enemies. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 357). No doubt the most horrifying and outrageous of acts performed by his private army was the massacre conducted under his orders of Haitians on the Dominican side of the border in October of 1937. (WUCKER: 1999, 48).

Although there are no justifications for the massacre, there are several reasons which led to it. First of all, in the beginning of the twentieth century, waves of Haitians crossed into

the Dominican Republic to cut cane on the vast sugar plantations. However, in 1929, with the Great Depression, the price of sugar fell sharply and Haitian workers were no longer needed. “Throughout the 1930s, therefore, Dominicans had been seeking ways to send the Haitians packing.” (WUCKER, 1999, 47). Trujillo, then, approved new legislation requiring that all migrants were registered and Haitians with no documents be deported. Thus, many Haitians who had lived in Dominican soil for years but did not have documentation to prove it had to leave their homes in the Dominican Republic and were forced to head back to Haiti. In addition, Dominicans who displayed strong African traces and Dominicans of Haitian descent were considered Haitian, and received the same treatment inflicted on their neighbors, because Dominican officials failed to differentiate between Haitian lineage and Haitian nationality. (TURITS: 2002, 617).

Secondly, when Trujillo travelled to the border dividing both countries, he was surprised to see so many Haitians on Dominican land, even tough many of them had been working on the new International Highway which linked the north and south of the island. Most of Haitian workers living near the border and those who refused to leave were perceived as invaders trying to take over the island once again. When analyzing border disputes between both nations, Turits claims that, although the borderline dividing the two countries was not clear until 1937, “from Trujillo’s viewpoint, the frontier doubtless cried out for increased state presence, a concern heightened by ongoing border disputes with the Haitian government in the early 1930s.” (TURITS: 2002, 605). When visiting the frontier, Trujillo also heard complaints from Dominican farmers who claimed that their cattle and crop had been stolen by Haitians. Wucker describes the dictator’s reaction: “it also struck him as strange that there were no cattle on the grassy expanses in the valley around Pedro Santana. Peasants and town officials at each little town along the new highway responded that Haitians had stolen their livestock.” (WUCKER: 1999, 47). Although without proof of the Haitians theft, Trujillo judged them guilty and deserving of death penalty. (WUCKER: 1999, 47).

Furthermore, authorities complained that deported Haitians had returned to the Dominican Republic. In order to evict Haitians from Dominican soil, Trujillo resorted to a brutal task: reports began circulating about confrontations between Dominican soldiers and Haitians. Rumors spread that Trujillo ordered the murder of any person that his soldiers suspected was Haitian. On October 3, at a celebration near the border between the two countries, Trujillo proudly claimed that three hundred Haitians had already been killed in Bánica and that this practice should continue. The formal killing of Haitians had begun:

> Trujillo's men searched the houses and estates of the region one by one, rounded up Haitians, and initiated deportation proceedings against them; once paperwork was done, the Dominican government had "proof" that the Haitians had been sent back to Haiti. The Haitians then were transported like cattle to isolated killing grounds, where the soldiers slaughtered them at night, carried the corpses to the Atlantic port at Montecristi, and threw the bodies to the sharks. (WUCKER: 1999, 49).

It is necessary to stress that the Massacre of 1937 occurred during a period in which nations were defined by fixed characteristics and those in power fought to combat any alien element. When discussing this ideology present at the time of the Massacre, San Miguel argues that:

> in the Dominican Republic, as in other countries of the Americas, certain influences were becoming palpable: the influence of fascism and of doctrines in Europe that were promulgating the "cleansing" of one's nation of all those elements which were considered alien to the national "essence" and which were thought to somehow weaken that nation. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 58).

In other words, one of the factors that contributed to Trujillo's ordering the killing of Haitians was an ideology of "the purity of the nation" that had been spread in the Americas. In order to identify "true" Dominicans, Trujillo's soldiers performed a language test:

> They would accost any person with dark skin. Holding up sprigs of parsley, Trujillo's men would query their prospective victims: '¿Cómo se llama esto?' What is this thing called? The terrified victim's fate lay in the pronunciation of the answer. Haitians, whose Kreyol uses a wide, flat r, find it difficult to pronounce the trilled r in the Spanish word for parsley, perejil. If the word came out as the Haitian pe'sil, or a bastardized Spanish pewehi, the victim was condemned to die. (WUCKER: 1999, 49).

Believing their Hispanic origin, the mispronunciation of the word *perejil* meant the person could not speak Spanish properly, and, therefore, was Haitian. However, Trujillo and his soldiers failed to consider that alongside the border populations crossed from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and vice-versa, thus affecting their accents and the way they spoke. Thus, many black Dominicans were killed in the massacre because they were perceived as Haitians. In his analysis of the identification test, Richard Turits claims that by believing in the efficacy of the pronunciation test,

> killers imputed to their victims radical cultural difference that served to rationalize the violence and ethnicize images of the nation. Thus, violence in the Haitian massacre and the discourse within which it took place were themselves performances that helped constitute notions of inherent and transhistorical difference between Haitians and Dominicans. (TURITS: 2002, 618).

This scenery shows that Spanish-speaking African descendants were accepted by the Dominican society as "other than black", but French or Creole speakers were doomed.

After the massacre had gone on for more than a week, Trujillo ordered the end of *El Corte*, as the massacre was called. Nevertheless, some of his men continued to kill Haitians for an additional week. After the massacre, Trujillo launched a campaign to portray himself as the savior of Dominican nationhood: "Catholic, white, and oriented to Europe." (WUCKER:

1999, 52). The Trujillo era ended when General Juan Tomás Díaz "and a handful of other Dominican men assassinated the hated dictator Rafael Trujillo on May 30, 1961," (WUCKER: 1999, 19) leaving the government of the country to Trujillo's second-in-charge, Dr. Joaquín Balaguer.

1.11. Duvalier's dictatorship and the *Tonton Macoutes*

On the Western part of the island, in 1930, Sténio Vincent was elected President of Haiti, and the U.S. began to withdraw its forces. The withdrawal was completed in 1934, but the U.S. retained control of Haiti's external finances until 1947. All three rulers during the occupation came from the Haitian small mulatto minority, whom the Americans considered more "civilized", while the black majority was kept in subordination. At the same time, many critics of the occupation, in particular those from the growing black professional classes, faced with American racism, abandoned the veneration of Haiti's French cultural heritage and started to emphasize their African roots. One of the most notable of these critics was Dr. François Duvalier. (ARTHUR: 2007, 23).

From 1941 until December 1956, several presidents and military regimes came to power, only to be overthrown soon afterwards. After this period of disorder, elections were held in September 1957, which saw Dr. François Duvalier elected president. Duvalier, known as "Papa Doc", soon established another dictatorship. His regime is regarded as one of the most repressive and corrupt of modern times, combining violence against political opponents with exploitation of *voudou* to instill fear in the majority of the population. Duvalier's paramilitary police, officially the Volunteers for National Security (*Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*) but more commonly known as the *Tonton Macoutes* - named after a *voudou* monster - carried out political murders, beatings, and intimidation. The *Macoutes* had no official salary and made their living through crime and extortion. "Despite the brutality, Papa Doc enjoyed the support of the United States, which saw him as a valuable ally in its attempt to isolate the socialist revolution in neighboring Cuba." (ARTHUR: 2007, 23).

Duvalier's policies, designed to end the dominance of the mulatto elite over the nation's economic and political life, led to massive emigration of educated people, deepening Haiti's economic and social problems. However, Duvalier appealed to the black middle class of whom he was a member by introducing public works into neighborhoods which previously

had been unable to have paved roads, running water, or modern sewage systems. Moreover, Duvalier perpetuated the notion of *Négritude*, or Black Nationalism, which assured him significant support among the black rural masses, who felt oppressed by the historically dominant mulatto elite. (WUCKER: 1999, 117).

In 1959, François Duvalier suffered a heart attack and during his recovery, the leadership of the country was left at the hands of the *Tonton Macoutes*. By 1961, the *Macoutes* were more powerful than the Haitian army: the group terrorized, tortured, abused, and murdered anyone who seemed to oppose the Duvalier regime. The *Tonton Macoutes*' influence throughout the country was able to support Duvalier's government and later, his son's.

In April 1971, Duvalier died and power passed to his 19-year-old son Jean-Claude Duvalier, known as "Baby Doc". Under Jean-Claude Duvalier's rule, the economic and political condition of Haiti continued to decline. Content to leave administrative matters in the hands of his mother, Simone Ovid Duvalier, while living as a playboy, Jean-Claude enriched himself through a series of fraudulent schemes. (WUCKER: 1999, 119). In *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence*, Hellen Scott argues that "Jean-Claude Duvalier encouraged foreign corporations to exploit Haitian workers in low-wage agriculture and industry, and worked with neoliberal agencies as they imposed unequal terms of trade and structural adjustment programs." (SCOTT: 2006, 03).

Baby Doc's regime was vulnerable to unanticipated crises, exacerbated by poverty, by the widely-publicized outbreak of AIDS in the early 1980s and by the epidemic of African swine fever virus - which, at the insistence of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) officials, led to the slaughter of the Creole pigs, the principal source of revenue for most peasants. Widespread discontent in Haiti began in 1983, when Pope John Paul II condemned the regime during a visit. "As the opposition movement of Christian lay-workers, peasants, students, and workers grew in strength, both the United States and the Haitian military decided to ditch Duvalier before a revolution broke out." (ARTHUR: 2007, 24). Finally, in February, 1986, after months of disorder, the army forced Jean-Claude Duvalier to resign and go into exile in France. (WUCKER: 1999, 121).

1.12. The scars of Trujillo's dictatorship

In the Dominican Republic, after Trujillo's assassination, the country witnessed several presidents' elections and *coup d'états*. On April 25, 1965, civil war broke out in Santo Domingo. This became known as the Revolution of 1965, a revolution in which "leftist groups and Bosch's followers organized urban guerrillas to destroy the old Trujilloist army." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 388). In an effort, presumably, to control the civil war and the takeover of the Dominican Republic by supposed communists, U.S. Marines invaded the country on April 28, 1965. With the help of Brazilian, Honduran and Nicaraguan armies, the U.S. took control of the Dominican Republic. It was the second occupation of the century. After months of intensive combat and negotiations, the rebels managed to defeat the regular army and at the end of August, 1965, a provisional civil government was installed presided by Héctor García Godoy, resulting in free elections held in June, 1966. The U.S. occupation troops remained in the country to make sure that the elections were peaceful and non-fraudulent, but the occupation was not effective. The political campaigns between the two leading candidates, Bosch and Balaguer, were violent and bloody. In 1970, Balaguer left victorious. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 392).

Balaguer's term was marked by economic growth due to the enormous amount of money the United States poured into the country between 1966 and 1973 in order to protect American investments in the Dominican Republic and to obtain lower costs in the export of sugar. Moya Pons believes that "without direct injections of cash and the sugar quota offered by Washington the country could have hardly survived under the policy of extreme austerity imposed by Balaguer in 1966." (MOYA PONS: 1998, 397). The development plans designed by international fund agencies required improvements such as the construction of ports, highways, aqueducts, streets, energy plants, schools, houses and service infrastructures for the tourist industry. Hence, many cities experienced rapid growth and modernization. Despite the multitude of allegations that Balaguer ran the country as bloodily as Trujillo had, he managed to sidestep most of the bad press until May 16, 1978. On this date, Balaguer's military officers and soldiers were televised live as they destroyed ballot boxes bearing votes proving that Antonio Guzmán had won the election. Moya Pons describes this event in *The Dominican Republic: A National History*:

> That night, while the population was watching on television the general count of votes, military officers and soldiers who supported the reelection of Balaguer entered the offices of the Junta Central Electoral and interrupted the count, which already showed Antonio Guzmán as the certain winner of the election. After beating up witnesses, they proceeded to confiscate and destroy the ballot boxes holding the votes, and jailed a large number of political representatives. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 403).

Pressed by international authorities, Balaguer resigned in favor of Guzmán three months later, on August 16, 1978. Since the beginning, Guzmán's term was wracked by financial mismanagement and accusations of corruption. His government also faced agropecuarian problems and two hurricanes - which killed about hundreds of people and left thousands homeless. Politically, the country remained calm and relations with Haiti improved. Nevertheless, Guzmán committed suicide on July 3, 1982. (MOYA PONS: 1998, 412). After Guzmán, the most notable result in Dominican polls was Balaguer's victory in 1994. However, under accusations of fraud in the elections, Balaguer was forced to curtail his term from four to two years.

The 1996 elections demonstrated that colonial racist ideologies were never erased from Dominican minds. A month before the elections, the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) alleged that a large number of Haitians would attempt to vote using fake identification. In order to prevent Haitian voters, "police swooped into the cane fields and into Haitian urban ghettos, demanding identity documents from anyone whose skin was dark." (WUCKER: 1999, 187). The oppressive action of the Dominican police shows that the prejudice displayed against Haitians during the Massacre of 1937 did not disappear. *Antihaitianismo* also impelled José Francisco Peña Gomez from winning the presidential elections because the PLD accused him of having Haitian ancestry. Despite all efforts to assure his Dominican nationality, Peña was discriminated because of his color. (WUCKER: 1999, 191). Consequently, Dr. Leonel Fernández Reyna - the candidate for the PLD - was elected to the presidency of the Dominican nation in hope that he would eradicate corruption and introduce an era of economic prosperity. But his mandate was marked by the same charges of corruption as other had shown before.

In August, 2000, the new Dominican president, Rafael Hipólito Mejía, took office. Rafael Hipólito Mejía tried to be re-elected to the presidency of the Dominican Republic in 2004, but President Leonel Fernández won the election. Last year, elections were held in Dominican Republic on May 16, 2008, and President Leonel Fernández was re-elected.[8]

1.13. The scars of Duvalier's regime

[8] For further information visit www.electionguide.org.

A year after Baby Doc was exiled in France, in 1987, elections were to be held in Haiti. “The United States backed a military governing Council intended to oversee a transition to a restricted electoral democracy that would maintain the status quo.” (ARTHUR: 2007, 24). However, the marginalized majority emerged politically participating in marches, strikes and land takeovers to “demand justice, economic development, and a purge of Duvalierists from positions of power.” (ARTHUR: 2007, 24). The army repressed these mobilizations with violence and the 1987 elections resulted in a bloodbath. After that, several presidents came to power, but were soon overthrown by the army, who took control over the nation’s government.

At the same time, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a young priest, started the movement known as *Lavalas*, in which he promised to clean the country of its corruption and of the terror inflicted by the military regimes. (DAYAN: 1998, 49). Soon Aristide gained public attention and was forced to leave the church, accused of using religious power to influence people with his political beliefs. Nevertheless, Aristide’s ideas brought hope of peace and development to the Haitian population. It was only in 1990 that free elections, monitored by the United Nations, were held and Aristide became president of the country. (WUCKER: 1999, 146).

However, on September 30, 1991, with Aristide in presidency for less than eight months, a military coup was formed to overthrow the Haitian president. Fronted by the army chief, Raoul Cédras, the coup forced Aristide into exile in Venezuela and “the army and the police embarked on a campaign of repression intended to dismantle the popular organizations and force the marginalized masses to retreat from Haiti’s political arena.” (ARTHUR: 2007, 25). For three years the country remained under repressive military regime. During this period, the United States imposed an embargo on Haiti, soon joined by the international community. The purpose of the embargo was to convince Raoul Cédras to step down and allow Aristide to return, but the embargo was extremely damaging to the poor population as well. Without the possibility of trade, the majority of the population achieved shocking levels of misery. (WUCKER: 1999, 138).

In July 1993, the United States froze the bank accounts of coup supporters and announced the blockage of any ship that attempted to deliver arms and fuel in Haiti. Without provisions, the Haitian military agreed to sign an accord with President Aristide to end the crisis. (WUCKER: 1999, 161). However, months afterwards, “the newly-appointed justice minister was shot dead in Port-au-Prince, and it became clear to all that the military had cynically used the accord to buy time (as well as fuel and arms) and did not intend to honor it.” (ARTHUR: 2007, 26). Although the international community condemned the coup

regime, it was not until September 1994 that the United States and the United Nations took effective action against it: President Jimmy Carter convinced the army leader in Haiti to step down and "twenty thousand U.S. troops, acting with U.N. authorization, were dispatched to restore the constitutional order in Haiti." (ARTHUR: 2007, 26). The intervention was not opposed by the Haitian army and soon afterwards President Aristide returned, under U.S. protection, to serve out the remainder of his presidential term. (ARTHUR: 2007, 26).

In November 2000, elections for a new president went on in Haiti, with all the opposition parties refusing to participate and without international observers. During this election, a very small number of voters put Aristide in charge of the presidency and his party, the Lavalas Family, won the majority of senate seats and seats in the House of Deputies. The opposition and members of the international community contested the results and accused the government of manipulating them. Allied to the civil society and private sectors, the opposition parties began calling for Aristide's resignation. In 2004, armed conflict broke out with the opposition threatening to march on the capital of the country. On February 29, Mr. Aristide left the country and Boniface Alexandre - the President of the Supreme Court - became president of Haiti, as demanded by the Haitian Constitution. (ARTHUR: 2007, 28). That same day, answering the President's request for assistance, the Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations authorized international troops to enter Haiti.

In consultation with President Alexandre and the then-Prime Minister, steps were taken to form a transitional government. On March 17, 2004, a 13-member transitional Government was formed and a political pact - the Consensus on the Political Transition Pact - was signed. The signatories came to a general understanding on the political transition, which would see the holding of municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005 and would end with the installation of a newly elected President. The Pact also set out measures to be undertaken during the transitional period in order to improve of security, fight against impunity and corruption, reform the judicial system, strengthen political parties, reintegrate former armed elements and professionalize the Haitian National Police. Additionally, it was agreed to establish a number of commissions to address issues related to recent human rights abuses, financial wrongdoing and matters related to the former military. The Pact also emphasized the need to provide assistance to victims of the prior government[9].

[9] Information available on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti website: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/index.html.

On June 1, 2004, the U.N. Secretary-General recommended the establishment of a six-month multidimensional stabilization operation, to be known as the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, or MINUSTAH, which became responsible for supporting the continuation of a peaceful and constitutional political process and for the maintenance of a secure and stable environment. In view of the time line for elections, scheduled to be held in 2005, the mandate of the MINUSTAH was extended until May 31, 2006.

The presidential elections had to be delayed several times after having been originally scheduled for November 2005 and finally took place on February 7, 2006. Even though the electoral process was marked by allegations of fraud, errors and the discovery of destroyed ballots in Port-Au-Prince, René Préval was elected president and is expected to remain in power through his 5-year term[10].

Even though the U.N. intervention in Haiti was meant to end with the election of a new president, in 2008, the mandate of the MINUSTAH was extended until October, 2009, with the intention of further renewal[11]. As we can perceive, Haiti is still in great need of international assistance and its population remains hopeful that the country will overcome this general crisis.

1.14. The historical context and the novels

In "A Política de Localização em Maryse Condé, Dionne Brand e Edwidge Danticat", Roland Walter claims that it is necessary to analyze the history of the Caribbean – a history marked by violence against the nations and their population – in order to understand the processes of identity construction of Caribbean subjects. (WALTER: 2005, 85). Roland Walter defends the idea that in the Caribbean, to talk about race and identity implies talking about sexuality and violence too. Therefore, the understanding of the history of the island of Hispaniola and of the construction of the ideal nation in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti becomes crucial to understand the possible causes which led to the rapes of female characters in the novels *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

[10] For further information, visit http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/index.html.
[11] For further information, visit http://www.minustah.org.

2. THE FEMALE BODY AND REPRESENTATIONS OF RAPE

2.1. The construction of the female body in Western society

Descartes' famous phrase "*Cogito, ergo sum*", or "I think**,** therefore I am" distinguishes human beings from all those other beings who do not possess the capacity of reasoning. Descartes' *Discourse on Method* differentiates body and mind, a distinction in which the real "I" corresponds to the mind, the soul. (DESCARTES: 2005, 70). In "The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience", Lois McNay claims that the dualism mind/body "privileges an abstract, prediscursive subject at the center of thought and, accordingly, derogates the body as the site of all that is understood to be opposed to the spirit and rational thought, such as the emotions, passions, needs." (MCNAY: 1991, 126). Considering Western society as a wider scope, feminist critics have shown that women are cast in the role of the body and men in the role of the spirit, the soul. In this dichotomous system, the spirit, the mind, becomes the important, positive term.

In *The Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, Susan Bordo further explores this dichotomy: Bordo understands that "*the body* is the negative term, and if woman *is* the body, then women are that negativity, whatever it may be." (BORDO: 1993, 05). Moreover, when discussing this issue in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler claims that if women are associated with the body, then men become free spirits, which are not enclosed within the frames of matter: "this association of the body with the female works along magical relations of reciprocity whereby the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom." (BUTLER: 1990, 11). Thus, women are imprisoned and the walls which restrict their freedom are mediated by cultural constructs, associations and images responsible for determining the role of the female subject in our society.

According to feminist ideology, the body is "a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped by histories and practices of containment and control." (BORDO: 1993, 21). In "Refiguring Bodies", Elizabeth Grosz claims that "the body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution." (GROSZ: 1994, 23). That is, the body is the result of specific social-cultural

constructions. As George Yancy claims in *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race*, "the body is less of a thing or a being than a shifting or changing historical meaning that is subject to cultural configuration and reconfiguration." (YANCY: 2008, xxii).

Bodies are constantly being shaped by the culture in which they are inscribed. Susan Bordo believes that "the body, far from being some fundamentally stable, acultural constant to which we must *contrast* all culturally relative and institutional forms, is constantly 'in the grip', as Foucault puts it, of cultural practices." (BORDO: 1993, 142). In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault describes the body as "the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration." (FOUCAULT: 1977, 148). Foucault believes that the body is marked by past experiences and historical accounts of the specific contexts to which it is associated.

Feminist critics other than Bordo have problematized Foucault's ideas concerning the body as a site of cultural inscriptions. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler perceives the body as "a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to that body." (BUTLER: 1990, 129). In other words, cultural practices are always inscribed in our bodies: what we eat, the way we act and behave, how we dress, etc, are culturally constructed. Furthermore, in "Bodies that Matter", Judith Butler claims that for Foucault "the soul is taken as an instrument of power through which the body is cultivated and formed. In a sense, it acts as a power-laden schema that produces and actualizes the body itself." (BUTLER: 1993, 33). If we consider the dichotomy soul/body related to the dichotomy man/woman, it is possible to read that men are responsible for the shaping of the bodies of female subjects in our culture.

The female body is conditioned from an early age to control its behavior, gestures, and attitudes in order to conform to patterns associated with the female gender. Bordo argues that women learn how to be women through the behavior which is inscribed in their bodies:

> Through routine, habitual activity, our bodies learn what is "inner" and what is "outer", which gestures are forbidden and which required, how violable or inviolable are the boundaries of our bodies, how much space around the body may be claimed, and so on. These are often far more powerful lessons than those we learn consciously, through explicit instruction concerning the appropriate behavior for our gender, race, and social class. (BORDO: 1993, 16).

In the essay entitled "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body", Ann Cahill also dwells on Foucault's considerations on the matter: "the specifics of the feminine body, and particularly feminine bodily comportment, reflect the power relations

which have produced them and the myriad ways in which this production is accomplished." (CAHILL: 2000, 50). Thus, there isn't one static ideal of feminine body: definitions of what is "feminine" are constructed according to space and time.

Since femininity and body are related, it is crucial to analyze situations in which the bodies of female subjects are exposed to risky situations, such as rape. This is still a frequent form of sexual abuse to which women are more exposed than men. In Purna Sen's "Development Practice and Violence Against Women" and in Katherine Wood and Rachel Jewkes' "Violence, Rape and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township", statistics show that, regardless of social class, region, age, religion or political affiliation, large percentages of women have already been exposed to sexual violence. (SEN: 1998, 08; WOOD & JEWKES: 1997, 44).

Elódia Xavier argues in "Que corpo é esse?" that the representation of the body in literature and, above all, in narratives of feminine authorship also suffers the pressure of the social-cultural structure, and can thus be considered a map of the social life of that period. (XAVIER: 2006, 226). Therefore, this paper will analyze the forms of sexual abuse suffered by female characters, as represented in the novels *Geographies of Home*, by Loida Maritza Pérez, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, by Edwidge Danticat, as a means to understand the social-cultural structures in which these works are inscribed.

2.2. Rape and power relations

Representations of violence are present in many narratives about migrations. The violence experienced in the country of origin - state violence, political violence or patriarchal violence - may motivate the migratory movement. For state violence I understand the contempt of the authorities to famine, poverty and general disregard for the welfare of the population. Political violence corresponds to arrests, rape, murders, and other crimes motivated by political strife. Patriarchal violence, on the other hand, represents the authority male subjects impose on females, in private and public spaces, in which women are viewed as inferior or in need of protection. When in a host country, although usually in much better condition than that experienced in the country of origin, migrant women - often victims of poverty, racism and prejudice - are still subjected to violence, as they remain immersed in patriarchal societies.

A recurrent form of violence in narratives about migration is rape, widely recognized as a crime of power, hate and control. In "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency", Jenny Sharpe argues that rape is "a specifically sexual form of violence which has as its aim an appropriation of women as 'the sex'." (SHARPE: 1994, 229). Rape is neither about sexual attraction nor about the victim's sexuality or promiscuity. Rather it is about the attackers' use of force to dehumanize their victims and to obtain physical and emotional control over them. Purna Sen argues that "violence against women is an expression of power by the abuser, and it often forms part of a range of control-seeking behaviours." (SEN: 1998, 12). Thus, rape is the way encountered by the victimizers to submit victims to their power.

There is no such thing as one category of individuals who control power and another category of those who do not have any power. Rather, all individuals experience situations as oppressor and as oppressed. In other words, it is impossible to claim that "men have power, women have not". In "'Beyond' White and Other: Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse", Susan Friedman claims that "privilege and oppression are often not absolute categories but rather shift in relation to different axes of power and powerlessness." (FRIEDMAN: 1998, 40). Thus, it is too simplistic to say that "men are rapists and women are victims" because individuals cannot be categorized as agents/victims according to gender. Sexuality, gender, race, class, and nationality become crucial elements to define one's subjectivity. An individual's identity is not defined by a single axis; multiple crossings of categories are going to determine it. One must take into consideration the variety of possibilities of identifications: for instance, the white woman during colonial times became the oppressor of the female slave. The middle class white woman, though submissive to patriarchal authority, may exert power over lower class women, and so on.

In *Geographies of Home*, two diasporic female characters are sexually molested: early in the novel we learn about the abuse Marina suffered and at the end, Marina's sister, Iliana, is a victim of the same fate. Ironically, Marina, the first victim, becomes the victimizer of her sister Iliana. In a psychotic attack she violates Iliana's body. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the diasporic character Martine left Haiti as a means to escape the trauma of the rape inflicted upon her by a *Tonton Macoute*, a member of François Duvalier's private police. However, we also learn that Martine's mother used to "test" both Martine and her sister Atie by inserting a finger in the girls' vaginas, in order to check whether they remained virgin. Years later when living in the U.S., Martine, who had resented the "tests" her mother performed on

her, repeats the procedure with her daughter Sophie. Therefore, even though Martine and Marina are oppressed by rape, they also oppress Sophie and Iliana.

2.3. *Geographies of Home*: history, race, gender

Marina is a woman who comes from the Dominican Republic, a country marked by the encounter of many peoples (Indigenous groups, Spaniards, French, Africans, etc) throughout its history. However, since the colonial period there has been a tendency to "cleanse" all ethnic or African traces from the Dominican society. In *The Imagined Island: History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola* Pedro L. San Miguel argues that Antonio Sánchez-Valverde, the most important Dominican theologian of the eighteenth century, valued the lack of interracialism of the Dominican elite in the colonial period. According to Sánchez-Valverde's account, the Hispano-Dominican elite believed they were superior to elites in other Caribbean and Latin American colonies of the period because there was less mixing with black people in that country. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 12). This account shows us the racist ideology prevalent in the discourse of the time, which believed that having interracial relations with black people meant having an inferior social position.

This racist ideology has permeated the Dominican society through the centuries. Manuel Arturo Peña-Battle, one of the greatest Dominican historians of the 20th century, believed that "Haiti's Afro-Antillean population was a perennial threat to the racial and ethnic composition of the Dominican Republic, which Peña-Battle considered to be of fundamentally Spanish stock." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 24). Peña-Battle believed that "the Dominican community had to struggle mightily to maintain its Hispanic identity." (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 25). He claimed that, unlike their Haitian neighbors, Dominicans should preserve their Hispanic characteristics by not establishing relationships with Africans or African descendants. San Miguel continues by saying that

> The definition of "Dominican" became "non-Haitian". This dichotomy could be seen in nearly every sphere: Haitians practiced voodoo, Dominicans Catholicism; Haitians spoke Creole, Dominicans Spanish; Haitians were black, Dominicans were of mixed race or white. More than this, Haitian culture and society were seen as an extension of Africa, whereas Santo Domingo clung to its pure Spanish origins. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, 39).

In other words, Dominican identity was forged in contrast to Haitian identity, with Dominicans insisting on their European ancestry in contrast to the African origin of Haitians.

This ideology present since colonial times was firmly enforced during the Trujillo Era (1930 – 1961), a crucial period in the development of the Dominican notion of nation. As discussed in the previous chapter, at that time, many Haitians had begun to migrate onto the Dominican part of the island in order to work in sugar mills because the low wages offered by the emerging sugar industries did not attract Dominican workers. (GRASMUCK & PESSAR: 1991, 27). This situation posed a threat to Trujillo's regime because of border disputes between the two nations. Trujillo believed that if large numbers of Haitian immigrants began to occupy the Dominican borderlands, the Haitian government might decide to claim part of the land of the Dominican Republic, which could result in another Haitian occupation of the entire island. Afraid of a Haitian invasion, Trujillo disseminated the idea that Native Dominicans were "white", and should be proud to be descendants of the Spanish *Conquistadores*. On the other hand, Haitians were considered "merely" descendants of African slaves.

In *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*, Lucía M. Suárez comments on the political strategy adopted by Dominican officials: "the Dominican Republic fashioned its national image to discriminate against the Haitians. Dominican politicians depicted themselves and their country as Catholic Hispanics in contrast to Haitians, who were denigrated as *vodou* worshippers and 'Africans'." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 42). In other words, the Dominican idea of nation was built in contrast to Haiti: true Dominicans were white, European and Catholic, traces that were highly valued, whereas Haitians were black, African and *voudou* worshippers.

In the essay "Postmodern Blackness", bell hooks claims that the white supremacist discourse configured non-white populations as 'primitive'. (HOOKS: 1994, 425). Moreover, in *Black Bodies, White Gazes: the Continuing Significance of Race*, George Yancy argues that "whiteness is that according to which what is nonwhite is rendered other, marginal, ersatz, strange, native, inferior, uncivilized, and ugly." (YANCY: 2008, 03). Thus, when the Dominican nation affirms its "whiteness", it simultaneously devalues non-white peoples. Thus, the extreme contempt Dominicans display against their Haitian neighbors belies the fear that they might "contaminate" the eastern part of the island. In "Nação, nacionalismo e diferenças de gênero e raça na República Dominicana e no Haiti", Renata de Melo Rosa discusses this feeling experienced by Dominicans in relation to Haitians:

> In the Dominican nation, xenophobia which acquires the form of Antihaitianism, is forged through the elaboration of an absolute, essential alterity, a binary opposition equivalent to that existent between men and women, blacks and whites. Thus, the Dominican identity relates to the Haitian one from the edification of geopolitical, racial and national limits. And,

> since they constitute total alterities, Haitians end up defining the Dominican people. (ROSA: 2005, 06. My translation.)[12].

That is, Haitians incorporated the features of the Other, which the Dominican Republic tried to avoid in order not to be placed under the same category. This is the reason why Trujillo's dictatorship was marked by *Antihaitianismo,* a politics of racial discrimination against black Haitians that resulted in the Massacre of 1937.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault claims that the body is marked by past truths and beliefs of the culture in which it is inscribed: "the body maintains, in life as in death, through its strength or weakness, the sanction of every truth and error, as it sustains, in an inverse manner, the origin – descent." (FOUCAULT: 1977, 147). Thus, in Loida Maritza Pérez's novel *Geographies of Home*, Marina is portrayed as having internalized the ideology of the white supremacy existent since colonial times and spread by Rafael Trujillo during his dictatorial government. Although she has lighter skin than the rest of her family members, Marina displays many physical characteristics attributed to the black ethnicity. In a description of a family photo when Marina is seventeen, she is portrayed as having kinky hair, a wide nose and big lips. (PÉREZ: 1999, 40). However, in several instances of the novel she demonstrates that she believes she is superior to black people because she is "Hispanic, not black" (PÉREZ: 1999, 38) and that all blacks are "lazy as shit and undependable." (PÉREZ: 1999, 38).

In "Indio Claro o Oscuro?", Zenaida Méndez says that almost no Dominican would call himself a "black Dominican". Although almost every Dominican family has some African heritage, few identify as black or African because "black" is a pejorative term reserved for Haitians. (MÉNDEZ: 2001, 25). The use of the adjective "black" as synonym for "Haitian" is also pointed out by Michele Wucker in *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians and the Struggle for Hispaniola*. Wucker argues that "in the Dominican Republic, calling someone Haitian is on the surface synonymous with describing them as *negro* or *morado* but with an added psychological weight of fear and hatred." (WUCKER: 1999, 33). Furthermore, in the essay "'I'm Hispanic, not Black': Raza, Locura y Violencia en *Geographies of Home* de Loida Maritza Pérez", Dolores Ramírez Alcaide affirms that

---

[12] Original extract:
Na nação dominicana, a xenofobia que adquire a forma de antihaitianismo, consolida-se a partir da elaboração de uma alteridade absoluta, elementar, uma oposição binária equivalente às existentes entre homens e mulheres; e negros e brancos. Sendo assim, a identidade dominicana relaciona-se com a haitiana a partir da edificação dos limites geopolíticos, raciais e nacionais. E, por constituírem alteridades totais, os haitianos acabam definindo o povo dominicano. (ROSA: 2005, 06).
All further translations in the text are of my authorship. Original extracts will appear in footnotes.

> The primitivist discourse of the Dominican Republic has made people from this country consider themselves not as black, but as "Indigenous" or mixed descendants from the Spanish and Taíno Indians. It is to say that the black man is completely out of the idea of nation and, thus, is also insane, since rationality would be a characteristic of "*dominicanidad*" in contrast to the irrationality of Haitians. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05)[13].

These passages illustrate how Dominicans tend to see themselves as descendants of Indigenous and European peoples, whereas Haitians are seen as animalistic and irrational for having African origins. When analyzing Pérez's novel, Lucía M. Suárez affirms that Marina

> deprecates herself. Not only can she not accept her own African blood, she dismisses anyone who is black as inferior, evil, and unworthy. She denies herself, her history, and her links to the expansive world of the African diaspora. The myth of the horrible Haitian translates into the denial of Dominican history. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 159).

Thus, having African traits situates the subject under the scope of racism and prejudice. Dominicans with African ancestry deny their heritage because it has low social status and it is considered inferior and ugly, which is the reason why Marina cannot accept being considered black. Alcaide further discusses the racist ideology internalized by Marina: "According to this racist ideology strongly consolidated in the Dominican identity, the beautiful, that which is physically attractive, are traces considered European: thin lips, straight hair and light skin color." (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05)[14]. The opposite traces - curly hair, thick lips and dark skin - are considered ordinary, bad, or Haitian. For this reason, Marina refuses to have relationships with black men: she thinks they are ugly. For Yancy, Western society has absorbed the belief that in the black/white dichotomy, "whiteness is deemed the transcendental norm, the good, the innocent, and the pure, while Blackness is the diametrical opposite." (YANCY: 2008, xvi). As a consequence, Marina cannot consider a black person attractive because she has been raised to believe that European traces offer the only possibility of physical beauty.

This becomes clear when Marina decides to consult an astrologer to learn about her future. She is told that a black man will cure her loneliness, but she refuses to accept that fate. The black astrologer "had divined her loneliness and had predicted the coming of a dark stranger like himself; a seer who became enraged when she said no – surely a white man or at least a light-skinned Hispanic like herself would come into her life." (PÉREZ: 1999, 17).

---

[13] El discurso primitivista de la República Dominicana ha hecho que la gente de este país no se considere negra, sino "'Indians' or mestizos descended from Spaniards and Taíno Indians" (79). Es decir, el negro está totalmente fuera de la idea de nación y, por ende, también el loco puesto que lo racional sería una característica de dominicanidad frente a la irracionalidad de los haitianos. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05).

[14] "Según esta ideología racista fuertemente afincada en la identidad dominicana, lo hermoso, lo que es físicamente atractivo, son rasgos considerados como europeos: labios finos, pelo liso y piel de color claro." (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05).

Marina thinks that she deserves a man with lighter skin color, either Hispanic or white, displaying her own internalized racism.

The racist ideology and imagery places non-white peoples as marginal, hypersexual and criminal. When analyzing the construction of black bodies as such, Yancy states that

> whiteness comes replete with its assumptions for what to expect of a Black body (or nonwhite body), how dangerous and unruly it is, how unlawful, criminal, and hypersexual it is. The discourse and comportment of whites are shaped through tacit racist scripts, calcified modes of being that enable them to sustain and perpetuate their whitely-being-in-the-world. (YANCY: 2008, 03).

Moreover, Yancy claims that in Western society, the black man has to face the "reality" of his dual hypersexualization: the black man is either a sexual trophy or a rapist. (YANCY: 2008, 16). When Iliana and Marina talk about men, it becomes clear to us that Marina has internalized this discourse:

> 'Talking about men, have you hooked yourself a gorgeous, blue-eyed hunk yet?'
> Iliana entered her room and hoisted a suitcase she had dragged into the basement up onto her bed. Afraid that her eyes would betray what her brother had disclosed, she kept her back to her sister.
> 'Blue-eyed wouldn't be my first choice,' she muttered.
> 'Why? What do you have against white people?'
> 'I didn't say I had anything against them. And all whites aren't blue-eyed.'
> Marina shrieked. 'A big, black stud. That's what you want.'
> 'Yeah', Iliana retorted. 'A big-black-man-with-a-great-big-dick. What would be wrong with that if I did?'
> 'Only that you could do better.' (PÉREZ: 1999, 38).

Although both women share the same national background, Iliana has not internalized prejudice against people of African descent. She does not share Marina's belief in black people's inferiority. In this discussion, Marina demonstrates her belief that black men can only assume these identities: the "black stud" and the sexual predator, therefore not the ideal husband she expects her sister to have. Marina thinks Iliana can have a white, blue-eyed man instead, features Marina considers attractive.

Yancy explains that in racist ideology, while whiteness is believed to be "supremely beautiful, untainted, moral, good, intelligent, civilized, and lawful" (YANCY: 2008, 25), blackness receives the opposite characteristics. This constructed binary opposition has also been addressed by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon emphasizes the violence that is produced in the mind of the black person when he has to face the reality that his skin color is dark, but he has been educated to think as white. (FANON: 1986, 148). Fanon analyzes the black Antillean child's realization of his blackness and comes to the conclusion that if the little black child has no contact with white people, he will develop successfully. (FANON: 1986, 149). But when the Antillean child realizes he is immerged in a white society, he "has therefore to choose between his family and European society; in other words,

the individual who *climbs up* into society – white and civilized – tends to reject his family – black and savage – on the plane of imagination." (FANON: 1986, 149). Fanon argues that the result of this is an internalized racism, the desire of black men and women to "improve the race", getting married and having children with white people. Fanon further states that this internalized racism results of a fragmentation in the identity of the subject whose skin color contrasts to the color valued by society. It is a way of violence against the black person's body, whose color denotes his/her origins:

> when the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. The goal of his behavior will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth. That is on the ethical level: self-esteem. (FANON: 1986, 154).

Similarly, in *Geographies of Home*, Marina realizes that in the context of the Dominican Republic, she could identify herself as white, but when she moves to the United States she has to face the reality that, in this country, she is considered black. This produces a fragmentation of identity that leads Marina to self-depreciation. For this reason, although Marina considers her parents and siblings black, she refuses to identify with them. Marina believes that her sister can "do better" (PÉREZ: 1999, 38) by dating a white man, since she believes that intercourse with a white man would help "whiten" and thus improve her family. Marina's inability to accept her origins constitutes a violent act against her own identity, and contributes to lower her self-esteem. Marina follows the pattern described above by Fanon. In her discussion with Iliana, she claims that white people have always been nicer to her than anyone else (PÉREZ: 1999, 39), proving she has suffered a "collapse of the ego." (FANON: 1986, 154). When Marina claims that black men are lazy and undependable, Iliana replies:

> "You've been watching too much TV", Iliana snapped.
> "TV, my ass. Look at all your brothers."
> "Look at yourself. You're suffering from the same thing they are, thinking anything lighter must be better." (PÉREZ: 1999, 38).

Iliana understands that Marina's racism is a product of her having internalized the ideology of white supremacy. This internalized racism leads the insulted astrologer, a black man, to impose his power over Marina, to show his "superiority", by raping her. This becomes evident in the second chapter of the novel:

> "You want to know your fate?" he had asked the first time. "Here it is!"
> The cold steel of his zipper cut into Marina's hips. His penis found an entry. Shutting her eyes against the searing pain, she attempted to hurl him off.
> "Look at me!" he yelled, tightening his mount and jamming into her so that it felt as if he would exit through her mouth. "Look at me, you fucking bitch!" (PÉREZ: 1999, 17).

In the case of Marina's abuse, the astrologer wants to appropriate her body as "the inferior sex" in order to prove that, although he is black, he is the most powerful one.

In the novel, it is never clear to readers whether the rape was real or imaginary. So far, I have analyzed the rape as real. However, given Marina's propensity to hallucinations, we may speculate that the rape is imaginary. In order to understand it as product of Marina's imagination, I recur to Fanon's investigation of the psychic structure of the phobic. In his analysis, Fanon realizes that the choice of the object of fear is overdetermined by some situation that has previously evoked an affect[15] in the patient. (FANON: 1986, 155). This object does not need to be in the presence of the phobic person: the mere possibility of its existence terrifies the patient. Thus,

> if an extremely frightening object, such as a more or less imaginary attacker, arouses terror, this is also – for most often such cases are those of women – and especially a terror mixed with sexual revulsion. "I'm afraid of men" really means, at the bottom of the motivation of the fear, because they might do all kinds of things to me, but not commonplace cruelties: sexual abuses – in other words, immoral and shameful things. (FANON: 1986, 155).

According to Fanon, "*contact* alone is enough to evoke anxiety." (FANON: 1986, 156). He believes that "if we go farther into the labyrinth, we discover that when a woman lives the fantasy of rape by a Negro, it is in some way the fulfillment of a private dream, of an inner wish. Accomplishing the phenomenon of turning against self, it is the woman who rapes herself." (FANON: 1986, 179). So, if we consider Marina's rape imaginary, her fear of rape could, indeed, be an expression of her conflicting sexual anxiety, a manifestation of her repressed sexual desire. Her nervousness in the presence of black men may be her inner expression of unconscious physical attraction for them. According to Fanon's ideas, the woman fantasizes about being raped by a black man the same way she would act against another woman if she were this black man. Thus, if we consider Marina's rape imaginary, it becomes easy to understand the reasons why she attacked Iliana: in her psychotic attack, Marina identifies with a black male and projects onto her sister her repressed desires of engaging sexual intercourse with a black man.

Either real or imaginary, the consequences of the rape are reflected in Iliana as Marina repeats the violent experience of the rape, assuming the role of victimizer of her sister. As Marina sees the attacker in every black man she comes upon, the rape is constantly re-lived; therefore, all black men she meets become a threat. When she returns home after attempting suicide by taking Aurelia's pills, Marina begins to fantasize that Iliana might be a man,

[15] The term "affect" is used in psychology to describe a subject's externally displayed mood.

possibly the man who assaulted her. In fact, Marina fails to see that Iliana's expression of gender differs from the standards of her culture.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler analyzes true sex, gender and sexuality as constitutive of one's identity. She argues that if bodies are products of the culture in which they are inscribed,

> gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction. (BUTLER: 1990, 138).

Thus, gender is the product of a series of cultural practices which are inscribed on the body and which are repeated, becoming what Butler calls "styles of the flesh." (BUTLER: 1990, 139). It is important to stress that "gender is not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex, but rather gender must also designate the apparatus of production whereby the sexes are themselves established." (MCNAY: 1991, 130).

As discussed in the introduction, identities are fluid: there is no room for fixed identities because subjectivities are always in process of development and (re)construction. This fluidity of identities suggests a possibility of gender resignification in which transgressive gender identities may deconstruct hegemonic assumptions of male/female as "natural" genders. Butler states that "gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex." (BUTLER: 1990, 06). Thus, genders also become fluid, escaping the essentialist dichotomy male/female.

As we can perceive in several instances of the novel, Iliana transgresses her gender identity: her behaviour does not conform to the way most men in her community expect women to be. In church, right before Marina's outbreak, Iliana remembers her brother Gabriel's affirmation: "if you weren't my sister I wouldn't know if you were a man trying to look like a woman or a woman trying to be a man." (PÉREZ: 1999, 107). Having her hair pulled back, her eyebrows thick and wearing no make-up make Iliana unrecognizable as a woman. Marina cannot understand that and ends up violating her sister in order to find out the truth – whether Iliana is a man or not - simply because Iliana is not a model of femininity as demanded by Western culture.

At first, Marina notices Iliana's hands, which she considers masculine: "Marina watched her sister fumble with a menu. Iliana's hands were as wide as Ed's, her fingers just as long. It was those hands which had first hinted at her secret. Those hands were too large for a girl." (PÉREZ: 1999, 275). Judith Butler observes that even bodily structure is determiner of gender expression: "the very contours of "the body" are established through

markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence." (BUTLER: 1990, 131). In "Writing and Reading the Female Body: Female Sexuality and Recent Feminist Fiction", Molly Hite discusses the issue of borders that limit gender expression: "in order to be product, object, or fetish, women must remain within boundaries ordained from outside, constricted to the dimensions that the dominant culture deems appropriate by devices ranging from exemplars to definitions to corsets." (HITE: 1988, 136). These borders determine what is "normal", that is, what is considered appropriate in our society and what is "Other", what is dismissed as abject.

Marina cannot identify "feminine" features in Iliana's body, perceiving her as the "Other". Thus, Marina associates Iliana's large hands and fingers with masculinity; she reads her sister's body as expressing a "masculine" gender. Moreover,

> other details coalesced with the theory forming in Marina's mind. She noticed the width of her sister's shoulders, the prominence of her forehead, the impudent curve of her full lips. She noticed too the hair pulled austerely into a ponytail like Ed's and the baggy sweater more appropriate for a man. She added to the list of evidence the fact that her sister disliked skirts and usually opted for pants loose enough to conceal her hips narrow as a boy's. (PÉREZ: 1999, 276).

Iliana's body and clothes, allied to the fact that Iliana is the first woman in her family to attend college, lead Marina to imagine that Iliana is a man pretending to be a woman. Iliana crosses the gender borders and boundaries that limit her body. In her analysis of gender constructions, Butler claims that "we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right." (BUTLER: 1990, 139). Therefore, believing Iliana failed to express her gender properly, Marina punishes her: in order to discover the truth about her sister's sex, Marina rapes Iliana, inflicting upon her sister the same violence she received from the astrologer.

The fantasy of the "real woman" creates fictionalized corporeal styles, configuring bodies under the binary opposition male/female. When examining this issue, Butler proposes that the

> sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a "natural sex" or a "real woman" or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another. (BUTLER: 1990, 140).

Consequently, Iliana is not perceived as a "real woman" because she does not conform to the standards of femininity of her chauvinist culture. The rape is the last warning Aurelia and Papito get to the dangers the family is exposed when Marina is around, leading them to decide to put their daughter in an asylum. Marina's psychotic episodes become dangerous to herself and to those living with her. She tries to commit suicide, to choke her brother Tico, to burn down the house and she finally rapes Iliana. As Marina fantasizes that Iliana is a man, her

sister becomes a threat, a reminder of the man who raped her. In a psychotic attack, trying to discover whether her sister is a man or not, Marina molests Iliana in the middle of the night:

> Her sister's hand tore into her. The pain, when it shot through her, was incisive as a blade. "Ticohhhhhhhhh-"
> Back arched against the raging pain, hands clawing futilely at the fitted sheet, Iliana thrashed and writhed. The world, as she had known it, crashed irrevocably around her head as her sister's hand curled into a fist. Her thoughts screeched mercifully to a halt as that fist crashed against her womb. (PÉREZ: 1999, 284).

After the attack, Iliana tries to pretend nothing happened and, trusting her sister would not hurt her again, decides to go back to sleep in the same room with Marina. Unfortunately, she is attacked again. As both women are discussing whether to keep the lights on or not during the night, Iliana turns off the lights and Marina attacks her for the second time. During this attack, Iliana can perceive the hatred expressed in her sister's eyes:

> Hatred was visible in Marina's eyes: raw, unadulterated hatred that confirmed those times Iliana had detected glimmers of it but had dismissed it, times when her sister had said, "You're so beautiful, so smart, so cool." Hatred that now conveyed: *You think you're so special, so goddamn smart and cute! Let's see what you think of yourself after I'm through!* This hatred paralyzed Iliana as the blankets were again stripped from her body, her legs violently pried apart. This hatred pierced her infinitely deeper than the hand thrust between her thighs. (PÉREZ: 1999, 289).

In this scene Marina seems to have completely identified with her rapist. The sentences "*You think you're so special, so goddamn smart and cute! Let's see what you think of yourself after I'm through!"* (PÉREZ: 1999, 289) might be Marina's repetition of what the astrologer said as he raped her.

Although Marina abuses Iliana with her fist, her act can be compared to that of the astrologer, since she penetrates her sister against her will, hurting her physically and emotionally. According to Cahill, "other assaults, including those made with fists, […] may in fact be experienced as sexual in nature." (CAHILL: 2000, 61). Taking this into consideration, we may affirm that, indeed, Iliana was raped by Marina.

2.4. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: politics, patriarchy, tradition

Likewise, in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the tradition of testing young girls in order to check if they are virgins can be seen as rapes. When Sophie's grandmother tested her aunt and her mom and later on when Sophie is tested by Martine what we see are cases of rape in which the aggressors as well as the victims are female subjects. When Sophie uses the pestle to break her hymen, the reader witnesses an instance of self abuse motivated by the

aggression she has suffered from her own mother. The violation of female bodies appears in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as a recurrent theme. Through the reading of this novel, we learn that in Haitian society, during the Duvalier regime, many girls and women were raped by François Duvalier's private police, the *Tonton Macoutes*. We also become aware of a common practice in the context of the novel, the "testing" of girls. Both forms of abuse are dealt with in Danticat's novel, which also portrays the consequences – physical and psychological – of these forms of sexual violence.

Breath, Eyes, Memory is a novel that depicts four generations of women living in two patriarchal societies: the Haitian and the North American. In both societies, women are portrayed as having little or no control over their bodies. We learn in this novel that in patriarchal societies, men try to impose an ideology of masculine superiority on women, either through discourse or through physical force. The novel shows that if tradition is transferred from one generation to the other without questioning, it may carry irreparable consequences through life. The character that seems to be more aware of patriarchal oppression in Haiti is Tante Atie, who points out to Sophie that

> "they train you to find a husband," she said. "They poke at your panties in the middle of the night, to see if you are still whole. They listen when you pee, to find out if you're peeing too loud. If you pee too loud, it means you've got big spaces between your legs. They make you burn your fingers learning to cook. Then you still have nothing." (DANTICAT: 1994, 136).

Moreover, the violence of patriarchy in Haiti is sung by the cane cutters in the fields. When Sophie is walking with Atie, they hear the men singing: "about a woman who flew without her skin at night, and when she came back home, she found her skin peppered and could not put it back on. Her husband had done it to teach her a lesson. He ended up killing her." (DANTICAT: 1994, 150). When aunt and niece go out to buy some food, Tante Atie tells Sophie:

> *The men in this area, they insist that their women are virgins and have ten fingers.*
> According to Tante Atie, each finger had a purpose. It was the way she had been taught to prepare herself to become a woman. Mothering. Boiling. Loving. Baking. Nursing. Frying. Healing. Washing. Ironing. Scrubbing. It wasn't her fault, she said. Her ten fingers had been named for her even before she was born. Sometimes, she even wished she had six fingers on each hand so she could have two left for herself. (DANTICAT: 1994, 151).

These passages clearly show us that, in the context of the novel, women are brought up to become mothers and wives and to live in service of others, their sexuality channeled to procreation and the pleasure of their husbands. According to Carolle Charles in "Gender Politics in Contemporary Haiti: The Duvalierist State, Transnationalism, and the Emergence of a New Feminism (1980 – 1990)", "gender roles, household relations, and conjugal mating

patterns reinforce Haitian women's subordination. Women's 'place' is still defined in relation to home and domesticity even in progressive circles." (CHARLES: 1995, 142). In Danticat's novel, although Atie demonstrates a will at changing this by wishing to have two extra fingers for herself, she is also aware of her incapability at doing much, since women in her society have no control, even over their own bodies: " 'Your mother and I, when we were children we had no control over anything. Not even this body.' She pounded her fist over her chest and stomach." (DANTICAT: 1994, 20).

Atie is warning Sophie about the tests to which she, along with Sophie's mother and many other women in the village, was subjected. We learn that a good mother must listen to her daughter while she is in the bathroom, must make sure her daughter does not ride horses or bicycles and keep her panties on, so that the girl can maintain the honor of the family:

> My mother always listened to the echo of my urine in the toilet, for if it was too loud it meant that I had been deflowered. I learned very early in life that virgins always took small steps when they walked. They never did acrobatic splits, never rode horses or bicycles. They always covered themselves well and, even if their lives depended on it, never parted with their panties. (DANTICAT: 1994, 154).

This obsession with the girl's virginity is reinforced by the "tests". We first explicitly learn about them when Martine tells Sophie: "when I was a girl, my mother used to test us to see if we were virgins. She would put her finger in our very private parts and see if it would go inside." (DANTICAT: 1994, 60). When Sophie is in Haiti, there is mention to this practice committed by other women in the village. One night, after Atie goes to her reading lessons, Grandmè Ifé tells Sophie she can hear a young girl in the bushes. The girl, Ti Alice, is about fourteen or fifteen years old. By listening to the sounds of the girl's steps on the grass, Ifé knows that this girl had been in the bushes with a boy. The girl is running home and her mother is at the door, waiting to test her. (DANTICAT: 1994, 154).

Since Sophie and Martine live in the U.S., we believe this is all going to be part of their past history. However, when Sophie is eighteen, she meets a man, her neighbor Joseph, an older musician with whom she falls in love. After furtive encounters in Sophie's house, she considers going to his place, but her narration makes it clear for us that it would not be appropriate for a girl to go to a man's house unaccompanied: "I knew what my mother would think of my going over there during the day. A good girl would never be alone with a man, an older one at that." (DANTICAT: 1994, 72). Nevertheless, Sophie defies and transgresses her mother's rules by visiting Joseph everyday.

One night after meeting Joseph, Sophie is surprised at finding her mother at home holding a belt in her hand. After questioning where Sophie has been and receiving no answer,

Martine decides to find out whether her daughter has "misbehaved": "She took my hand with surprised gentleness, and led me upstairs to my bedroom. There, she made me lie on my bed and she *tested* me." (DANTICAT: 1994, 84). Repeating what her mother did to her as a young girl, Martine tests Sophie in order to make sure her daughter remained a virgin. Despite seeming to be ashamed of violating her daughter's body – "walk[ing] out of the room with her face buried in her hands" (DANTICAT: 1994, 85), Martine repeated the procedure on a regular basis.

Feeling completely desolate, Sophie decides to put an end to the tests: she goes to the kitchen, gets her mother's pestle and takes it to bed with her. She uses the pestle to break her hymen, believing that once she is no longer a virgin girl there will be no reason for her mother to continue testing her: "my flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet. I took the pestle and the bloody sheet and stuffed them into a bag. It was gone, the veil that always held my mother's finger back every time she *tested* me." (DANTICAT: 1994, 88). Thus, to end the humiliation and suffering provoked by the "tests", Sophie violates her own body.

In committing a "self-rape", Sophie breaks with the reduction of her female identity to her sex. Her action is the means by which she tells Martine that she is more important as a person, as a woman, than the skin of the hymen. Suárez believes that Sophie's "defiance is acted out through self-mutilation. With this act, she rejects her mother's overprotection and her culture's repression of women and symbolically precludes violation by a stranger: she has beat him/her to it." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 82). Nevertheless, regardless of how victorious this self-mutilation may appear, it will leave physical and psychological consequences to Sophie's sexual life. Such consequences will be dealt with in the following chapter.

When the day of the next test comes, Sophie fails and Martine expels her, sending her to the man she believes Sophie has slept with. We can perceive that Martine's lack of trust in Sophie, allied to a tradition of "tests" she experienced in Haiti, led her to violate her daughter's body, "raping" her over and over, until one day Sophie gets tired of the abuse and decides to finally break the skin that keeps her mother coming every week. Thus, Sophie's self- molestation is intended to release her from the pain that the "tests" cause her.

Although she was also exposed to the "tests", Martine did not experience them for too long. She explains to Sophie and to us readers why she stopped being tested at an early age: "'The details are too much', she said. 'But it happened like this. A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me into a cane field, and put you in my body. I was still a young girl

then, just barely older than you'." (DANTICAT: 1994, 61). Since she had been raped, there was no need for her mother to continue testing her.

Although the rapist is unknown, it is likely that he was a member of Duvalier's private police, the *Tonton Macoutes*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this group became known for their brutality and violence, which remained unpunished despite the evidences of their abuse. Critic Carolle Charles portrays the situation of violence exhibited during the period of Duvalier's regime: "uniformed military personnel and their civilian allies systematically attacked women's organizations and individuals, inflicting on them sex-specific abuses." (CHARLES: 1995, 135). The whole story of the novel takes place during Duvalier's government, therefore, when Sophie returns to Haiti to visit her grandmother and Tante Atie, she witnesses the violence of the *Tonton Macoutes*. At first, when a group of *Macoutes* is drinking colas, one of them harasses her: "one of them was staring at me. He was younger than the others, maybe even a teenager. He stood on the tip of his boots and shoved an old man aside to get a better look. I walked faster. He grabbed his crotch with one hand, blew me a kiss, then turned back to the others." (DANTICAT: 1994, 117). The young *Macoute* sees Sophie as an erotic object to be used uniquely for his pleasure. In feminist theory, the male gaze reflects an asymmetrical power relationship which reduces women to the condition of objects. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey provides readers with profound criticism of Hollywoodian images that depict women as icons, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men. (MULVEY: 1999, 837). The young *Macoute*'s gaze projects his fantasies onto Sophie, asserting control over her as the bearer of the look.

Later on, Sophie testifies the violence of the *Macoutes* towards a coal vendor, Dessalines. The same young man who harassed her claims that the vendor stepped on his foot and as punishment, "he rammed the back of his machine gun into the coal vendor's ribs" (DANTICAT: 1994, 118), probably trying to intimidate Sophie with his strength and power. Sophie's grandmother tries to quicken their pace so that Sophie won't see what the men are doing to the vendor, but she takes a final glimpse at the scene: "I turned back for one last look. The coal vendor was curled in a fetal position on the ground. He was spitting blood. The other *Macoutes* joined in, pounding their boots on the coal seller's head. Everyone watched in shocked silence, but no one said anything." (DANTICAT: 1994, 118). Sophie notices how the *Macoutes* impose their violence and how the population watches in silence for fear of what might happen to them in case they decide to speak up for the wounded seller. Suárez explains the consequences of psychological violence exerted by dictatorial governments on the population:

> When the people realize they have been tricked and cannot revolt against the deceit, they become either desperate or numb. State repression reminds them that they cannot speak; the people cannot express their needs because they know they will be punished for treason. This is psychological violence. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 38).

Suárez continues by saying that

> by disciplining a country through fear, dictators negate citizenship. Leaders that use tactics of physical and psychological terror become stronger vehicles of authority, insisting on worship and breaking down the identity and desires of individuals. In essence, the person is crushed under the power of an omnipotent leader (and his advisors and henchmen) who denies him/her individual rights, and consequently the status of being a person, a citizen of his/her own country. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 38).

The reason why no one complains about the brutal treatment the *Tonton Macoutes* give Dessalines (the coal vendor), is that they are too afraid to do so. In other words, Duvalier's use of extreme force against the population is a means of denying their identity, using the *Tonton Macoutes* to prove that any Haitian must submit to his authority. Later on in the novel we learn that "The *Macoutes* killed Dessalines." (DANTICAT: 1994, 138). Dessalines serves as expiatory goat of the *Macoutes'* hatred and terror.

In the novel, the violence that Duvalier's private police inflict upon the coal vendor Dessalines is similar to the violence which killed Jean Jacques Dessalines on October 17, 1806. By choosing to name the coal vendor after the historical figure, Danticat establishes an intertextual connection between her novel and true events of Haitian history. According to Joan Dayan in *Haiti, History and the Gods*, "a young officer shot Dessalines. General Yayou stabbed him three times. Vaval filled him with bullets from two pistols. Then he was ripped naked, his fingers cut off so that the jeweled rings could be removed." (DAYAN: 1995, 17). Even though it is never clear whether the fictional Dessalines' murder is caused by fire weapon or not, the violence directed towards his body can be compared to that inflicted upon the first president of Haiti: both are ambushed and brutally victimized by a group of military men. This episode connects the violence characteristic to the historical past of Haiti with the present of the narrative.

Grandmother Ifé, warns Sophie that watching what the *Macoutes* do may provoke psychological trauma: "you want to live your nightmares too? She hollered." (DANTICAT: 1994, 118). From this passage it becomes clear to us that Martine's nightmares reflected the trauma resulting from her having been raped. Later on, there is evidence that the sexual violence Martine suffered was caused by a *Macoute.* After Dessalines is killed, Louise tells Ifé: "Next might be me or you with the *Macoutes*" (DANTICAT: 1994, 138), to which Ifé replies: "we already had our turn." (DANTICAT: 1994, 138).

Sophie further exposes the atrocities performed by the *Macoutes* and their impunity:

> But the *Macoutes*, they did not hide. When they entered a house, they asked to be fed, demanded the woman of the house, and forced her into her own bedroom. Then all you heard was screams until it was her daughter's turn. If a mother refused, they would make her sleep with her son and brother or even her own father. (DANTICAT: 1994, 139).

As Suárez describes it, "the rape of women, often in view of their families, has been deployed as a political tactic of terror by several repressive regimes, including those of the Duvaliers (1957-86)." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 64). Therefore, Sophie's description of the atrocities performed by the *Tonton Macoutes* points to a governmental strategy of maintaining women submissive and the whole population under terror. The description of the *Macoutes'* behavior leads Sophie to believe that the man who raped her mother was one of them. Sophie provides details about her mother's rape:

> My father might have been a *Macoute*. He was a stranger who, when my mother was sixteen years old, grabbed her on her way back from school. He dragged her into the cane fields, and pinned her down on the ground. He had a black bandanna over his face so she never saw anything but his hair, which was the color of eggplants. He kept pounding her until she was too stunned to make a sound. When he was done, he made her keep her face in the dirt, threatening to shoot her if she looked up. (DANTICAT: 1994, 139).

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* rapes carry clear political implications. In "Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-Related Violence in Latin America: a Model for Gender-Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts", the author Helen Leslie – a lecturer in the faculty of Nursing and Health at Griffith University in Australia - claims that sexual violence is often designed to violate women's dignity and identity: "gender-related violence acts to disempower women by terrorizing them into submission and by instilling in them the impossibility of struggling for social change." (LESLIE: 2001, 51). Moreover, in " 'Silences Too Horrific to disturb": Writing Sexual Histories in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*" ', Donette A. Francis says that "Duvalier's rural militia wielded more power than the Haitian army and their own brand of *politically motivated rape* was a notorious method of maintaining their power." (FRANCIS: 2004, 78). By raping Haitian women, the *Macoutes* assured their power, maintaining a climate of terror and fear in the population.

In Haitian *voudou*, the *Macoute* is the bogeyman, a folkloric figure that terrifies the imaginary of children. However, the *Tonton Macoutes* were real figures who tortured and killed many men and women in Haiti. Martine is victimized by a *Macoute* and is consequently haunted by the memories of what the "bogeyman" did to her. After the rape, she tries to bury these memories inside her heart. However, when she sees Sophie after the nightmares and when she gets pregnant a second time, we realize that what she had been trying to hide was not buried deep enough.

3. THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES OF RAPE

3.1. Trauma and the abused mind

Throughout the world, women are victims of sexual violence which results in psychological trauma experienced during, immediately following, and for a considerable time after they have been raped. As a consequence of such abuse, victims exhibit a variety of symptoms, including fear, self-disgust, depression, powerlessness, denial and sexual avoidance. Rape survivors are also prone to developing eating disorders. In addition, many women with trauma-related disorders frequently injure themselves as a means of substituting physical pain for emotional pain, which is more difficult to heal. As a result, these women wound their own bodies and attempt to commit suicide in order to erase the psychological trauma of the abuse.

According to Cathy Caruth in "Trauma and Experience", most victims of abuse suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD,

> a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have been begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (CARUTH: 1995, 04).

In "The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire: Feminist Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychic Trauma", Janice Haaken argues that PTSD is considered a normal response to abnormal situations, a means of coping with disturbing memories of a traumatic event. (HAAKEN: 1996, 1077). Although PTSD is a medical condition, it must be emphasized that the effects of each rape affect their victims differently, depending on the specific circumstances of the victim and her environment. In "The Abused Mind: Feminist Theory, Psychiatric Disability and Trauma", Andrea Nicki argues that "mental illnesses, like physical illnesses, involve difficulties in social adaptation that, without proper accommodation, sources of support, and aid, can be seriously disabling." (NICKI: 2001, 81). In the specific case of sexual molestations, PTSD can be experienced as Rape Trauma Syndrome. According to Simone Lima Caldas de Menezes in *The Stigma of Madness in Women: A Study of "New Hysterians" in Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman and Lady Oracle,* the symptoms for this syndrome include having nightmares, developing phobias,

avoidance of men, fear of sex, depression, self-mutilation, eating disorders, among others. (MENEZES: 2005, 32).

Victims of rape tend to blame themselves for the violence inflicted against their bodies. In the essay entitled "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body", Ann J. Cahill says that the reactions of rape victims are

> marked by overwhelming guilt and self-loathing, are the reactions of a person who should have known but temporarily forgot that she was always at risk, that in fact the risk followed her everywhere she went, that it was inescapable. To have believed for even a moment that she was not in danger, for whatever reason, is felt to be the cause of the attack. (CAHILL: 2000, 60).

Rape is, thus, experienced as the fulfillment of a threat which leaves most survivors humiliated, embarrassed, powerless and damaged with trauma. In "Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-Related Violence in Latin America: a Model for Gender-Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts", Helen Leslie states that "The UNHCR [United Nations High Commission for Refugees] concluded that all victims experience psychological trauma and that in the worst cases this trauma can lead to chronic mental illnesses." (LESLIE: 2001, 52). When analyzing the occurrence of mental illnesses in rape victims, Andrea Nicki concludes that

> some women have ceased to trust their minds because they have been subject to gender-based violence – because they have been experienced as so infuriatingly "other" – just as a woman might become physically disabled after a male lover beats her. In this case they might be tortured by ideas of self-blame that make them believe that they are unworthy of respectful treatment or that resistance is futile. (NICKI: 2001, 92).

Thus, after suffering abuse, the self-esteem of these women becomes so low that they often believe they are not worthy of help or respect. For this reason, women who survive abuse tend to blame themselves for what has happened.

PSTD may manifest itself in the form of eating disorders, often developed, according to Mercedes, when women attempt to achieve control over their bodies and emotions in stressful situations. (MENEZES: 2005, 33). In *The Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, Susan Bordo argues that the relationship between women and food is not carefree: "for most women of today – whatever their racial or ethnic identity, and increasingly across class and sexual orientation differences as well – free and easy relations with food are at best a relic of the past." (BORDO: 1993, 103). Culture and gender play important roles in the triggering and producing of eating disorders since Western culture is constantly teaching women how to see their bodies. However, "the unique configurations (of ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, genetics, education, family, age, and so

forth) that make up each person's life will determine how each *actual* woman is affected by culture." (BORDO: 1993, 62).

Bordo believes that female bodies are regulated by external forces, which transform them into "docile bodies – bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, 'improvement'." (BORDO: 1993, 166). This means that culture becomes responsible for the transformation of female identity. As a result, in order to cope with "feminine" roles, women develop eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and compulsive overeating (also known as binge eating).

Anorexia is a chronic eating disorder "characterized by self- starvation and excessive weight loss, induced and/or sustained by the patient. Other essential features of this disorder include an intense fear of gaining weight [and] a distorted body image." (MENEZES: 2005, 35). Likewise, bulimic patients submit to excessive dieting, but after a stressful situation, they eat compulsively and then throw up, take laxatives or exercise exhaustively, in order to avoid putting on weight. The basic difference between bulimic and anorexic patients is the severe state of malnourishment that patients suffering from anorexia develop. On the other hand, compulsive overeating "is characterized by uncontrollable eating within a short period of time and consequent weight gain." (MENEZES: 2005, 36). The compulsive eater "experiences frequent episodes of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating, but does not use any form of purging (i.e. vomiting, taking laxatives and/or excessive exercising) following a binge, as those with bulimia nervosa." (MENEZES: 2005, 36).

Bordo argues that "the *physical* body can, however, also be an instrument and medium of power." (BORDO: 1993, 143). In this sense, by gaining control over the size of their bodies, women find ways of fighting powerlessness. Becoming obese or anorectic can, then, be considered a political act of fighting repression in patriarchal societies:

> The symptomatology of these disorders reveals itself as textuality. Loss of mobility, loss of voice, inability to leave the home, feeding others while starving oneself, taking up space, and whittling down the space one body takes up – all have symbolic meaning, all have *political* meaning under the varying rules governing the historical construction of gender. (BORDO: 1993, 168).

In both *Geographies of Home* and in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, victims of sexual abuse develop eating disorders and other symptoms of Rape Trauma Syndrome: in Pérez's novel, Marina demonstrates terror in the presence of black men and feels guilty about what happened. She also becomes mentally ill and identifies with her aggressor; as a result, she molests Iliana. After being attacked, Iliana enters a process of denial and becomes terrified at the presence of her sister. In Danticat's novel, Martine becomes depressive after the rape and associates the face of her daughter to that of her rapist, making her re-live the abuse whenever

she sees Sophie. She also re-lives the rape in her constant nightmares and ends up killing herself. Sophie inherits Martine's nightmares and becomes terrified at her mother's approach at night, afraid she will be tested. The "testings" and her self-molestation bring physical and psychological consequences, especially in relation to her marriage since she cannot experience sexual pleasure with her husband. However, unlike Marina and Martine, Iliana and Sophie break with the cycle of violence choosing a different future for themselves.

3.2. Marina's malady: guilt, fear, madness

A possible consequence of rape is the development of a mental disorder manifested as hallucinations and paranoid or bizarre delusions. The first appearance of Marina in the novel happens as she is struggling against imaginary spiders in one of her psychotic episodes:

> What she saw as her eyes adjusted to the sudden glare chased a shiver up her spine. She seized a towel off a chair and beat the wall near a door leading to the backyard and another to her parents' room. Several of the large, black spiders fell, but more teemed in from under the backyard door to continue weaving a web that already extended toward the ceiling. With an agility surprising for her massive body, she darted to the sink under which her father stored cans of lighter fluid. Careful to spill none on herself, she doused and flung a lit match at the wall. The flames caught the dark wood paneling as if it were kindling and traveled swiftly toward the ceiling. (PÉREZ : 1999, 13).

Although Marina's mental illness may have genetic or biophysical basis, the fact that her hallucinations appear only after the rape lead me to believe that, in fact, she is suffering from Rape Trauma Syndrome.

As previously mentioned, survivors of abuse tend to blame themselves for the violence to which they are subjected. Marina believes she is responsible for the rape, since, after she discovered that the astrologer was male and black, she decided to stay instead of leaving the place. Cahill cites Young and Bartky's analysis of the feminine body in which these authors "describe a feminine bodily comportment which is marked by fear: fear of bodily desires (so strong they threaten to undo all the subject's best efforts), and fear of harm (so likely that the subject constructs a small "safety zone" around the body)." (CAHILL: 2000, 52). According to Young and Bartky, when a woman goes beyond these "safety zones", she becomes exposed to the possibility of danger. "If, then, that body is hurt or violated, then the blame must rest on the woman's failure to sufficiently limit its movements." (CAHILL: 2000, 53). Likewise, Marina blames herself for her curiosity and for her disrespect of the

boundaries of the "safety zone" which could have prevented her from being raped by the male astrologer.

Marina is a product of the patriarchal culture in which her body is inscribed. The Dominican-Adventist culture states that a woman's place is in the safe sphere of the home and that a woman must be dependent and submissive to her husband. Marriage and motherhood are women's ultimate goal. Transgressing the rules of patriarchy makes Marina believe that she is responsible for the assault. Susan Bordo argues that women and men who are subjected to our culture are vulnerable to historical power and to the pervasiveness of certain traditions and ideologies: "women and girls frequently internalize this ideology, holding themselves to blame for unwanted advances and sexual assaults. This guilt festers into unease with our femaleness, shame over our bodies, and self-loathing." (BORDO: 1993, 08). That is what happens to Marina, who believes that her transgression – being unaccompanied in the presence of men – has led to her rape.

To make matters worse, Marina is a member of the Seventh - day Adventist Church, which prohibits consultations with astrologers or any type of future tellers, because, according to their beliefs, God prohibits the practice of divination[16]. Therefore, when Marina decides to go to an astrologer she transgresses not only the boundaries of gender, but also those of religion, thus leading her to blame herself for the assault. Marina's belief that her body exhales a rotting odor, which "proves" that she has been raped, is directly related to the guilt she feels:

> But proof of the events was in her aching body, in its tenacious, rotting smell. Each time she inhaled, nostrils flaring to detect its source, the odor wafted toward her from all directions - her hair, her skin, the roof of her mouth when she raised her tongue to scratch it – confirming that something putrid had been implanted deep inside her and emitted its stench through all her pores. (PÉREZ: 1999, 18).

In order to get rid of the putrid smell that she believes emanates from her body, Marina takes a steaming hot shower, shaves all her pubic hairs and those under her arms, scours herself with Brillo pads and sprays herself with Lysol. (PÉREZ: 1999, 18). These violent actions that Marina inflicts upon herself are a desperate attempt to cleanse her body and to erase her memory of the rape.

Marina's rape trauma is evident: she cannot be alone with a black man because it reminds her of the abuse. Marina believes that every black man she encounters is a potential

[16] See http://www.vistasda.org/

rapist. When she is looking at the houses along Sunnyside Street, there is a car accident and Marina discovers that the driver is a black man:

> A well-dressed black man climbed out of the car. As he stepped toward the damage, the fear smoldering at the base of Marina's uterus caught flame. Its heat extended through her veins, thawing her feet which had numbed unnoticed and lending her the impetus to flee. (PÉREZ: 1999, 85).

The darkness of the driver's skin scares Marina. It reminds her of man who hurt her and the only possibility of escape becomes to run.

After an incident in church, Marina also decides to run, to escape. She plans to kill herself taking her mother's pills:

> Her free hand had collected vials from the drawer and meticulously arranged them by size atop the bureau. She had no idea how to go about selecting which of the vials' contents to ingest. In the past she had slit her wrists or swallowed aspirins. But this time she wanted something potent enough to leave her dead, not merely weak or retching. (PÉREZ: 1999, 117).

This passage shows that Marina has attempted to commit suicide on other occasions: she had previously slit her writs and had swallowed aspirins, but these were not efficient. This time, Marina wants to make sure she will die. Andrea Nicki argues that women who commit suicide are "judging that their lives with mental illnesses and the social sources of these illnesses are not worth living." (NICKI: 2001, 86). Thus, Marina's self-esteem is so low that she believes she does not deserve to live: the pain of the sexual molestation is so vivid that she prefers to quit her life instead of enduring it.

When returning home from the hospital after attempting to commit suicide, Marina is welcomed by Rebecca's children. In the urge to embrace their aunt, the kids press their bodies against Marina's, but this act of love reminds her of the physical contact experienced during her rape:

> A tangle of arms immediately enclosed Marina. She swatted them away. Her nephew and nieces mistook her gestures for a game and pressed their bodies closer. Their laughter was oppressive. It spiraled around Marina, shattering the composure she had been trying to maintain.
> It was happening again: the body crushing hers, the arms forcing her to submit. She reached through her narcotic haze and feebly lashed out with hands whose nails she had chewed back to the quick. Hysteria clogged her throat as she opened her mouth to scream. The body that had retained a memory of its degradation simultaneously stiffened to absorb the pain that shot between her thighs and extended upward, exploding behind the lids she'd shut to block out the face that daily haunted her in dreams and insidiously materialized in life. (PÉREZ: 1999, 243).

Even her brother, Tico, becomes a threat to Marina after the rape. In one of her psychotic episodes, Marina believes he is the man who assaulted her and tries to choke him as he sleeps. (PÉREZ: 1999, 173). The violent act she suffered has caused deep psychological wounds which prevent her from feeling safe in the presence of black men – even her own kin

- because whenever she is left alone with them, the memory of the rape is re-lived. The traumatic memories of the abuse allied to the oppression of patriarchal society and internalized racism may have caused Marina's mental breakdown. In "Diasporas", James Clifford suggests that

> diaspora women are caught between patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember in complex, strategic ways. The lived experiences of diasporic women thus involve painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds. Community can be a site both of support and oppression. (CLIFFORD: 1994, 314).

For Clifford, the diasporic experience proves to be ambiguous because, although women may find liberation in the new environment, they often find themselves trapped between two patriarchal societies. In this sense, Marina suffers the oppression and the prejudices of belonging to two patriarchies, the American and the Dominican. She tries to fit into both worlds, to incorporate the identity of a fancy American secretary with that of a young Dominican woman, looking for a suitable husband. According to Lucía M. Suárez, "Marina is a dark woman from the Caribbean who cannot fit into the world of white businesspeople in Wall Street, where she works as a secretary and dreams of marrying a rich white man." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 172). Dolores Alcaide also establishes a connection between Marina's insanity and her post-colonial condition:

> Her madness is, in part, an answer to the violence of colonization and to internalized racism, product of the first, since […] she hates the physical traces of African heritage she finds in her body. Moreover, her madness may also be a response to the oppression exerted by patriarchy over the female body, which tries to fixate her roles in the domestic sphere as mother and wife. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 01).[17]

Nicki argues that "women become mentally ill as they realize to an extreme degree feminine norms of dependency, vulnerability and helplessness in order to escape constraining traditional female roles." (NICKI: 2001, 83). Thus, Marina's mental disability may be her only way to escape the pressure of living between two patriarchal societies. In "A Política de Localização em Maryse Condé, Dionne Brand e Edwidge Danticat", Roland Walter argues that the Caribbean migration causes a change in Caribbean people's attitudes, customs and points of view. (WALTER: 2005, 84). Such changes may be perceived in Marina: she is a woman with conflicting identities. On the one hand she has grown up in the Dominican society and has learned how a wife and mother should behave in a patriarchal society. On the other hand, when Marina migrates to America, she sees herself as a subject in a culture in

[17] Su locura es, por una parte, una respuesta a la violencia de la colonización y al racismo internalizado producto de ésta puesto que […] ella odia los rasgos físicos de herencia africana que encuentra en su cuerpo. Pero por otra, también la locura puede ser una respuesta a la opresión ejercida por el patriarcado sobre el cuerpo de la mujer, que intenta fijar sus papeles dentro de la esfera doméstica como madre y esposa. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 01).

which women have to find their place in the job market. It is a conflict between traditional values of femininity and the social mores prevailing in the U.S. The greater freedom women have in American society is perceived by Marina as the embodiment of "masculine" values. These factors caused an identity crisis that contributed to Marina's mental breakdown. Suárez arguments that

> theoretically, Marina's madness suggests the madness provoked by the denial of one's self. Her madness physically obliterates the body that has been historically shunned. Her robust womanhood, the deep color of her skin, and her sensual needs were squelched by Dominican racism and sexism. She was further disembodied when she confronted the same racism and sexism in her host nation, the land that was supposed to offer her freedom. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 172).

In other words, Marina's madness is the product of social and cultural oppression allied to her own internal conflicts – the reality of her black origin in contrast to the color of her skin, her sexual desire in contrast to Dominican sexism and her excess of weight in a society that worries about the body and physical appearance.

In *Geographies of Home*, Marina uses her physical body as a means of achieving power. In the novel we learn that after being raped, Marina became obese through compulsive eating. The fact that Marina's eating disorder appears after the rape may be seen as her way of making her body unattractive, in order not to be envisioned by men as seductive. According to Simone Menezes, fat has a protective function for compulsive eaters, especially for people who have been victims of sexual abuse because being overweight supposedly keeps others at a distance. (MENEZES: 2005, 37). Marina apparently believes that by gaining so much weight she will not be an object of masculine desire, keeping her safe against male abuse. Moreover, according to Bordo, "slenderness […] carries connotations of fragility and lack of power in the face of a decisive male occupation of social space." (BORDO: 1993, 171). Thus, Marina's obesity can be considered a way of fighting against powerlessness since by getting fatter and fatter she loses fragile features, becoming powerful enough not to be violated again.

Marina's incontrollable eating may also be interpreted as the sublimation of sexual desire. Bordo believes that hunger can be a cultural metaphor for unleashed female power and desire. (BORDO: 1993, 116). Taking this into consideration, we may claim that Marina's constant eating can also be her way of expressing her sexual appetite, which in the Dominican-Adventist culture is denied to women before marriage.

Conversely, Marina's insanity may also be interpreted an act of rebellion. During the breakdowns, Marina is able to expose the hypocrisies she sees in her family: " 'All of you are going to burn in hell! Burn! Next time evil comes into this house, it can carry you all off for all I care! Especially you!' she shrieked at Gabriel. 'You're the worst of them! Fucking your

brother's wife and pretending to be devout!' " (PÉREZ: 1999, 15). Apart from denunciating her family's hypocrisies, Marina's disturbing outbreaks give her voice against the patriarchal oppression of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In the research "A Sexualidade como uma Construção Cultural: Reflexões sobre Preconceitos e Mitos Inerentes a um Grupo de Mulheres Rurais", Lúcia Beatriz Ressel and Dulce Maria Rosa Gualda analyze prejudices and myths related to sexuality in a group of women in rural areas of Brazil. This study concludes that the church, as a religious institution, plays the role of maintaining social values. (RESSEL & GUALDA: 2003, 86). In *Geographies of Home* such values are incorporated and transmitted by Pastor Rivera. In the sermon "The Virtues of Marriage", he argues that in marriage the man is tricked by his wife, because when he is single, he meets the woman with

> the smoothest skin, the reddest lips. And her hair, Lord, is the softest he's ever touched. It frames her face and makes her look prettier than any painting he's laid eyes on in his entire life. Then there are her lashes, fluttering like the wings of birds whenever he comes near and making him feel like he's soaring toward heaven. She is beautiful, more beautiful than he had imagined a woman could ever be. (PÉREZ: 1999, 105).

But after marriage, this same man has to face the reality behind the prettiness of his wife, the hardships women have to endure in order to have their bodies admired by men. The pastor questions: "Who is this creature daring to impersonate his wife? Who is this being with a helmet of green and blue plastic things around which strands of its hair are wrapped? And *its*[18] face! Mercy me! It is pockmarked and creviced like the moon!" (PÉREZ: 1999, 106). For Pastor Rivera, "the vanity of women" (PÉREZ: 1999, 106) is the reason why many marriages fail. The ideology he is trying to preserve in his sermon is that women's use of their bodies to please men and "hook" them into marriage is an act of treason and dishonesty, which therefore will be evened out by the husband's adulterous behavior. Pastor Rivera propagates the ideology exposed in Ressel and Gualda's research; according to their findings, male infidelity is often justified by female behavior. (RESSEL & GUALDA: 2003, 85).

In an attempt to confront Pastor Rivera's ideas, as if decided to make the pastor stop talking, Marina starts to move her body spasmodically in front of the congregation. Later on, she claims to have seen God. The congregation reacts in disbelief and tries to throw her out. Instead, Marina rises to go home and says: "I'm going home where I belong. My Redeemer Himself will deal with all of you". (PÉREZ: 1999, 110). These sentences display her strength. Marina believes that she is chosen and that God is on her side and He will deal with the rest of the congregation for having turned their backs on her. She does not need the pastor or the church members in order to meet God. She believes in her power:

[18] I have used italics here in order to call attention to the way the pastor refers to the woman. By using the pronoun "it", he is treating the woman either as an object or as an animal.

> She was certain that she radiated power and that her eyes glowed as had Moses's when he descended from the mountaintop. She was also wise enough to know that the unworthy, having never looked upon God, could not look directly at one who had. Moreover, sin-stained, they were inevitably made uncomfortable by those who, like her, had passed through fire to emerge redeemed. (PÉREZ: 1999, 275).

In her lunacy, Marina believes she is more powerful than other people in the Adventist Church because she has seen God's face. It is plain that in her outbursts, Marina voices the problems society tries to forget, therefore gaining power over social oppression. However, it is important to point out the debilitating aspect of her madness: although it may seem to be victorious against patriarchy, Marina ends up hurting her sister and heading to a mental institution.

3.3. Fighting back: Iliana's process of recovery

One of the consequences of Marina's mental illness is the violation of Iliana's body. Iliana is attacked by Marina because her gender is not expressed in accordance to what is expected of a woman. In "The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience", Lois McNay argues that

> once the female sex has come to connote specific feminine characteristics, this "imaginary signification" produces concrete effects throughout diverse social practices. These concrete effects are not the expression of an immutable feminine essence. However, they react, in turn, by contributing to the maintenance and reproduction of this symbolism and thus, of the myth of immutable feminine qualities. (MCNAY: 1991, 128).

For McNay, once the "feminine" gender has become a pattern, women have been expected to follow it. However, by wearing "masculine" clothes and displaying a "masculine" behavior, Iliana deviates from the pattern ascribed to her, triggering Marina's belief that she is not a woman, but a man, the man who raped her.

After being attacked by her sister, Iliana tries to deny the reality of what had happened. When Tico asks Iliana if she wants him to call their mother, she replies by saying "She didn't do anything to me." (PÉREZ: 1999, 286). Then, Iliana wishes to vanish, to disappear in order not to face her brother's words: "she became convinced that she was vanishing bit by bit and that he was losing his ability to see her." (PÉREZ: 1999, 286). After that, Iliana goes into the bathroom and tries to convince herself that what happened to her was of no great importance:

> She told herself there was no need to make a fuss, no need to wake her parents, no need to wipe the blood off her thighs or to consider in other ways the body that had been violated for

> what amounted to a mere fraction of her existence. She was far more than the sum of her spilled blood and her flesh that had been pierced. She was the breaths seeping from her lips, the heart resounding in her chest, the anima enabling her to perceive. (PÉREZ: 1999, 287).

Iliana seems to be in denial. In "The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire: Feminist Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychic Trauma", Janice Haaken argues that

> in order to survive emotionally overwhelming experiences, the individual splits off the memory of the traumatic experience from consciousness. The dissociated memories are preserved in an alter ego state, or alter personality, through an amnesic barrier protecting one part of the personality from knowledge of the abuse. (HAAKEN: 1996, 1075).

Apparently, Iliana dissociates the experience of the abuse from her consciousness, as a means of protecting her ego.

Iliana tries to understand that her sister is the one who needs help for her mental imbalance. She justifies Marina's attitude, claiming that "it was her madness which had lashed out." (PÉREZ: 1999, 287). She chooses to forgive and to forget her sister's assault because "to rail against what had been done to her would be to credit her sister's madness with having affected her." (PÉREZ: 1999, 287). She then decides to fight her fear and return to bed in the same room with Marina.

The trauma Marina suffers makes her identify with the aggressor, attacking her sister again. The whole family is awakened by their screams. Nevertheless, in the fuss, Iliana trusts that she has become invisible: "She rose unsteadily from bed. Certain of her invisibility, she made no effort to hide her nudity or shame." (PÉREZ: 1999, 290). Despite trying to demonstrate pride by keeping her body erect and balanced, Iliana is destabilized by the fear of her sister's voice: "the equilibrium with which Iliana had managed to endure her mother's gaze was instantly displaced by her sister's voice. Her body shuddered, jerked forward, shook spasmodically and did not still." (PÉREZ: 1999, 290). The sound of Marina's voice terrifies Iliana. As a consequence of the attack, Iliana's body responds to her sister's voice with a rush of adrenaline which makes her afraid that her legs will not be able to support her body.

Like the rapist, Marina knew what she was doing when she attacked Iliana: "Her sister knew. Her sister knew precisely what it was she'd done. She knew and was pleased that no one else would ever detect what it was she had destroyed. She knew and depended on shame to silence Iliana and to efface whatever self she'd been." (PÉREZ: 1999, 290). These lines show us that, like the astrologer, Marina is aware of her actions, of destroying Iliana's subjectivity by inserting her fist into her sister's vagina. She also counts on the victim's silence- caused by shame and fear – like male rapists, who are seldom caught by their crimes because many victims are too ashamed to speak of their trauma.

Iliana's trauma is also expressed by seeing invisible marks on her face that she believed could show what had happened to her:

> She would be all right as long as she did not glance at her reflection in the hallway mirror. Were she to look and find that her face bore scars or that her eyes conveyed how she'd been marked, her remaining self-control would thaw and she'd be unable to bring herself to set foot back inside her parent's house once she ventured outside their door. (PÉREZ: 1999, 306).

These invisible lines that Iliana sees in her face are a product of Iliana's guilt. Like most rape victims, Iliana blames herself for ignoring the "safety zone" despite having been attacked by her sister once. Like the odor exhaled by Marina's body, the lines on Iliana's face are a fantasy that expresses her guilt.

Moreover, when Iliana leaves the house, and men start to harass her, she believes her walk shows that she is no longer a virgin. In "Bodies on the Move: a Poetics of Home and Diaspora", Susan Friedman argues that "the body that looks "foreign" is subject to a variety of gazes – from the curious and rude to the dangerous and violent." (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 191). Because Iliana is a black Latina - thus different from most women in the United States – and because she is attractive, she becomes an object of male desire. Iliana, however, does not realize that her looks – foreign and beautiful – are the reason for the men's attraction. She is convinced that they know she is not a virgin:

> She told herself that if ignored the man would go away. Yet she could not help but recall her brothers' notion that a woman's walk conveyed her sexual status and availability. If she had been penetrated, and recently at that, her hips would thrust forward and sway as if unhinged. If she remained intact, she would walk as if protecting what she foolishly deemed a treasure. (PÉREZ: 1999, 307).

What her brothers tell her are mainly expressions of patriarchal discourse, which view women as objects available for male satisfaction. Burdened with guilt, Iliana believes the man knows what has happened to her: "surely her walk had convinced him that she was loose." (PÉREZ: 1999, 307). But probably it was her beautiful exotic look – different from the "standard" American woman – allied to the way she walked, that attracted the men's gaze.

After Iliana is abused by Marina, she thinks she is also losing her mind. When entering her parents' bathroom, she sees ants on the floor and believes they are a product of her imagination:

> Her thoughts remained as suspended as they'd been that morning when she entered her parents' bathroom to find, despite the fact that it was winter, hundreds of ants crawling from between the tiles. Spellbound by what logic denounced as an illusion, she had watched the ants invade. She had been sure that blinking would make them disappear. Yet each time she had, her eyes had opened to find more ants teeming from the floor. Ants that suggested that her sister had succeeded in pushing her over the same edge past which she herself had tripped. (PÉREZ: 1999, 308).

Afraid of having hallucinations like Marina, Iliana goes to the kitchen to call her mother. "Only on hearing her shriek had Iliana resigned herself to the freakishness of life." (PÉREZ: 1999, 309). Then we realize that, in fact, against all odds, her parents' bathroom was filled with insects.

When Iliana visits her friend Ed, she tries to tell him what has happened but is unable to utter the words. Only when she finally says "Ed, I was – I was attacked, Ed. Last night I was a-attacked" (PÉREZ: 1999, 311), she begins to face reality. In "Reading Rape Stories: Material Rhetoric and the Trauma of Representation", Wendy Hesford argues that by narrating the traumatic experience, the survivor can reestablish the social dimension of the self lost in the process of violation. (HESFORD: 1999, 194). Thus, when Iliana is able to speak out about the rape, she starts her process of recovery. She will not be disempowered by her trauma like Marina: "*No no I will not have this life I will not have this blood which also flows through my sister's veins I will not have it daily reminding me of the feel of her intrusive hand of its fingers tinged with red of her weight upon my own.*" (PÉREZ: 1999, 311).

As Iliana returns home after going to Ed's place, she feels the weight of patriarchal authority in her father's arm:

> His arm swung up so fast that she had no opportunity to move out of its reach.
> "Shameless hussy! Whore!"
> Iliana heard the sharp sound of his palm as it landed on her face. Yet she felt no pain, only rage. Rage potent enough to swell her veins and cause one of them to throb rebelliously on her forehead. (PÉREZ: 1999, 313).

For having stayed out later than what Papito allowed, Iliana is beaten up by her father when she returns home. Apart from the physical violence, there is also the psychological and emotional violence he inflicts on her. Papito fails to understand the depth of Iliana's pain after being molested and her need to stay away from the house. Furthermore, when he calls her "whore", he also hurts her: she had been able to keep chaste while she was away, and lost her virginity in the hands of her own sister. The lack of trust her father demonstrates hurts Iliana, but again she refuses to be victimized:

> *No No. I will not fall or flinch. I will not let you or anyone else ever knock me down again. I may have been molded from your flesh but this body is mine and mine alone. You will not make me be ashamed of it as my sister did. You will not make me recoil from it or renounce my life as I though I would do. I will survive all this. I will walk out of this house erect. I will amount to more than you can ever hope to be and you will rue the day you saw me leave.* (PÉREZ: 1999, 313).

In "Development Practice and Violence Against Women", Purna Sen argues that "education may have a contributory role in enabling women to resist domestic violence." (SEN: 1998, 12). Sen suggests that the higher the level of education of victims of abuse, the

easier it is for these women to escape violent relationships. Since Iliana is a college student, her educational level may contribute to her understanding of the abusive relationships experienced in her parents' home, leading her to develop a more critical view on the issue, thus encouraging her to distance herself from situations of violence.

3.4. After great pain: Sophie's healing process

Like Iliana, Sophie, the main character in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, experiences violation of her body in the hands of a female relative. In order to end the "tests" performed by her mother, Sophie breaks her hymen using a pestle in a kind of self-rape. The act is so violent that she needs medical intervention: "I had spent two days in the hospital in Providence and four weeks with stitches between my legs. Joseph could not understand why I had done something so horrible to myself. I could not explain to him that it was like breaking manacles, an act of freedom." (DANTICAT: 1994, 130). Despite the physical injury, Sophie considers her act a form of resistance; however, such freedom is limited. As Donette A. Francis puts it in '"Silences Too Horrific to disturb": Writing Sexual Histories in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*"',

> this act of resistance signifies an incomplete victory for Sophie since it later haunts her. As a short term victory, Sophie alters the situation: the violation of the testings stop[s]. Yet this one violent attempt to reclaim agency contributes to the phobia she associates with having sex with her husband. (FRANCIS: 2004, 84).

The self-molestation is Sophie's final act of resistance against the tests. However, during the virginity exams she also demonstrated resistance: in order to stand the horrible experience of the tests, Sophie tells us that she performed the *doubling* or *Marassa*, a common practice throughout Haitian history to mask the terror of real life and to cover painful events. In *voudou*, the *Marassa* are twin *Lwas* (deities) who represent double life and the Haitian capacity to retain contradictory concepts and ideas. (DANTICAT: 1996, 385). The practice of doubling is common in Haiti: in *Haiti, History and the Gods*, Joan Dayan argues that the nation had to double its racial identity in order to be formed:

> If the justification of slavery depended on converting a biological fact into an ontological truth – black = savage, white = civilized – the descendant of slaves must not only pay tribute to those who enslaved but *make himself white, while remaining black.* Further, acquisition of the forever unreal new identity is paid for by the negation of the old self. (DAYAN: 1995, 08).

In other words, the act of doubling the color was necessary for Haitians to see themselves as a nation: since France symbolized the civilized world, Haiti had to pass as white/civilized. This "*politique de la doublure"* was mainly used by light-skinned elites to remain in power under cover of blackness.

In addition, when brought from Africa to America, slaves had to "double" religion as a means of resisting total acculturation: since the French colonizers were Catholic and prohibited slaves to practice freely their African religious rituals, soon the black population learned to disguise their *Lwas* as Catholic saints, because "a person or thing can be two or more things simultaneously." (DAYAN: 1995, 33).

Sophie learns from her aunt and grandmother about the act of doubling, the tradition of pretending to be somewhere else, in order to endure the hardships of real life, which are put into practice when she faces the "tests". Helen Leslie argues that this practice of doubling or dissociation "is a common psychological survival mechanism necessary to avoid an 'overwhelming anxiety which would lead to total disintegration'." (LESLIE: 2001, 52). In the essay entitled "Situando o Sujeito do Feminismo: O lugar da Teoria, as Margens e a Teoria do Lugar", Claudia de Lima Costa quotes Naomi Schor's idea that "the most active site of the feminine resistance to the discourse of indifference is a certain insistence on doubling, which may well be the feminine mode of subverting the unitary subject." (SCHOR *apud* COSTA: 1997, 132).

Therefore, this separation of her mind and body can be seen as a private act of resistance against the painful sexual violation experienced in her mother's hands. It is worth mentioning that Martine also resorts to the practice of doubling during the "tests". While Martine tests Sophie, she tells "elaborate tales" (DANTICAT: 1994, 155) in order to distract Sophie's mind from the humiliation of that tradition, and to escape from the perverse act she is performing. According to Francis, "doubling becomes the coping mechanism in relation to sex and sexuality that Martine passes on to her daughter; this practice teaches Sophie that such dissociation is the way to deal with painful sexual events." (FRANCIS: 2004, 83). When interviewed by Renee Shea, Edwidge Danticat explains that during the *Marassa*, Sophie and Martine become one, although they remain separate persons: "going back to the mother-daughter relationship, the idea is that two people are one, but not quite; they might look alike and talk alike, but are, in essence, different people." (DANTICAT: 1996, 385). Thus, like the twins of African tradition who are united but also remain two separate people, mother and daughter become one during the "tests".

This act of doubling also appears later when Sophie talks about her relationship with her husband Joseph: "After my marriage, whenever Joseph and I were together, I *doubled*." (DANTICAT: 1994, 156). Making love to her husband was not an act of pleasure: for Sophie, it was a painful duty she had to go through as a wife:

> Even though it occurred weeks later, our wedding night was painful. It was like the tearing all over again; the ache and soreness had still not disappeared.
> Joseph asked me several times if I really wanted to go through with it. He probably would have understood if I said no. However, I felt it was my duty as a wife. Something I owed to him, now that he was the only person in the world watching over me. That first very painful time gave us the child. (DANTICAT: 1994, 130).

These revelations make clear to readers the consequences of the tests Sophie that suffered in the hands of her own mother and that led to her self-molestation. As Suárez puts it, "in the private confines of her own home, which is supposed to be safe, she undergoes the humiliation of 'testing'." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 82). For Francis, "during sex with her husband, Sophie has flashbacks to the initial scenes of subjection, the sexual abuse of *testings*." (FRANCIS: 2004, 83). The testing made Sophie loathe her body and become ashamed of it; in consequence, making love to her husband becomes something ugly and gross. Roland Walter claims that the effects of the tests and the knowledge of her origin as a product of rape torment Sophie: having sexual relationships with her husband is felt as something bad, as the accomplishment of a duty instead of a source of pleasure. (WALTER: 2005, 85). Sophie is unable to have a healthy sex life. Whenever she is with her husband, she has to imagine she is somewhere pleasant in order not to succumb the pain of the sexual act: "He reached over and pulled my body towards his. I closed my eyes and thought of the *Marassa*, the doubling. I was lying there on that bed and my clothes were being peeled off my body, but really I was somewhere else." (DANTICAT: 1994, 200).

Although Joseph seems to be a good man, he does not understand the trauma his wife has gone through. There are several instances in the novel in which this becomes clear. When Sophie returns from Haiti, Joseph asks her for an explanation for leaving so suddenly:

> "I need to know. Did you leave on impulse or had you been planning to go for a long tie?" he asked.
> "We weren't connecting physically."
> "Did you find an aphrodisiac?"
> "I don't need an aphrodisiac. I need a little more understanding."
> "I do understand. You are usually reluctant to start, but after a while you give in. You seem to enjoy it." (DANTICAT: 1994, 196).

Joseph's affirmation is contradicted soon afterwards. After having sex with Sophie, Joseph tells her: "You were very good," to which Sophie replies: "I kept my eyes closed so the tears wouldn't slip out." (DANTICAT: 1994, 200). This conversation demonstrates that

Sophie does not enjoy engaging in sexual activity with her husband. This is the reason why she left for Haiti: she confesses to her grandmother that she left her husband because she was not able to perform her "marital duties":

> "Are you having trouble with any marital duties?'
> "Yes", I answered honestly.
> "What is it?"
> "They say it is most important to a man."
> "The night?"
> "*Oui.*" (DANTICAT: 1994, 122).

Sophie dreads having sexual intercourse with her husband. As the conversation goes on, we realize that the reason for the pain Sophie feels during the act is the trauma caused by the tests and by her self-molestation:

> "Your husband? Is he a good man?"
> "He is a very good man, but I have no desire. I feel like it is an evil thing to do."
> "Your mother? Did she ever test you?"
> "You can call it that."
> "That is what we have always called it."
> "I call it humiliation." I said. "I hate my body. I am ashamed to show it to anybody, including my husband." (DANTICAT: 1994, 123).

Sophie then questions why mothers test their daughters, to which her grandmother replies: "From the time a girl begins to menstruate to the time you turn her over to her husband, the mother is responsible for her purity. If I give a soiled daughter to her husband, he can shame my family, speak evil of me, even bring her back to me." (DANTICAT: 1994, 156). Suárez explains that "in Haiti, honor continues to be one of the most valuable possessions a woman, and her family, can maintain." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 62). In addition, Francis says that "in a society where marriage is equated with respectability, and respectability with honor that merits protection, mothers perform "testing" to ensure that their daughters can become marriage material." (FRANCIS: 2004, 82). Thus, parents consider it their duty to make sure their daughters remain chaste until their marriage, in order to preserve the honor of the family. "Since marriage was institutionalized as the only legitimate and therefore dominant site for the expression of women's sexuality, mothers like Martine were equally invested in disciplinary practices that curtail their daughters' sexuality." (FRANCIS: 2004, 82). However, Sophie, having grown up in the United States[19], cannot understand the cultural implications of such procedure, which equates women to "marriage material", valuable only for their virginity.

[19]It is important to mention that there is patriarchal oppression in the U.S. too, but patriarchal oppression differs from culture to culture.

As the discussion proceeds, Sophie tells Ifé how much she hated the tests and the consequences it brings to her present sexual life:

> "I hated the tests," I said. "It is the most horrible thing that ever happened to me. When my husband is with me now, it gives me such nightmares that I have to bite my tongue to do it again."
> "With patience, it goes away."
> "No Grandmè Ifé. It does not." (DANTICAT: 1994, 156).

In "Bodies on the Move: a Poetics of Home and Diaspora", Susan Friedman claims that "intimacy begins in the body, needs the body, - the body of touch, the body of sensation and feeling, the body of speech." (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 190). Since Sophie's body is traumatized by her mother's molestation and her own, she cannot experience full intimacy with Joseph. Sophie's trauma – resulting from both the tests and from her self-abuse - is so great that when she and her mother are in Haiti, even though she is already a married woman, she quivers to hear her mother approaching her room in the middle of the night: "My mother paced the corridor most of the night. She walked into my room and tiptoed over to my bed. I crossed my legs tightly, already feeling my body shivering." (DANTICAT: 1994, 169). Like Iliana, who shivers at the sound of Marina's voice, Sophie becomes terrified by her mother's approach in the middle of the night because she associates Martine's proximity with the virginity tests.

Another traumatic consequence is that Sophie starts to think about committing suicide and to have nightmares:

> After Joseph and I got married, all through the first year I had suicidal thoughts. Some nights I woke up in a cold sweat wondering if my mother's anxiety was somehow hereditary or if it was something that I had "caught" from living with her. Her nightmares had somehow become my own, so much so that I would wake up some mornings wondering if we hadn't both spent the night dreaming about the same thing: a man with no face, pounding a life into a helpless young girl. (DANTICAT: 1994, 193).

According to Francis, "Martine's experience of sexual abuse has also shaped her daughter's consciousness so that after Sophie's marriage to Joseph, she too begins to have nightmares." (FRANCIS: 2004, 82). In her discussion of gender-related violence, Leslie argues that the trauma resulting from rape extends beyond the individual, affecting families and the society in general. "It is then a 'psychosocial' trauma, or the 'traumatic crystallization in persons and groups of inhuman social relations'." (LESLIE: 2001, 53). In Danticat's novel, trauma becomes an heirloom which Martine transmits to her daughter: Sophie starts to associate her mother's rapist - that is, her biological father - with her husband.

Like Marina, Sophie is also affected with an eating disorder as a consequence of abuse she has suffered. However, unlike Marina who becomes obese because of her compulsive

eating, Sophie develops bulimia. Susan Bordo claims that “incidents of sexual abuse lie in the background of the so-called flight from sexuality of many anorectics, and in the histories of bulimics as well.” (BORDO: 1993, 46). As previously discussed, the women in these novels may have developed eating disorders in an attempt to gain control over their bodies.

The first time Sophie’s disease is mentioned in the novel is when Martine and Sophie are returning to the U.S. after having spent some time in Haiti. Martine notices that Sophie does not eat much, and Sophie confesses to her mother that she is bulimic. (DANTICAT: 1994, 179). Donette A. Francis argues that “for many bulimic women, eating serves to numb pain and enable[s] them to cope with bodily violations.” (FRANCIS: 2004, 84). Thus, bulimia is the mechanism Sophie encounters to deal with the sexual trauma. After returning from her trip to Haiti, Sophie and Joseph engaged in sexual practice. After having sex, Sophie waited for her husband to fall asleep and “went to the kitchen and […] ate every scrap of the dinner leftovers, then went to the bathroom, locked the door, and purged all the food out of [her] body.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 200). In order to stand having sex with her husband, Sophie has to double, to pretend to be somewhere more pleasant. After sex, she eats compulsively and then purges all the food out of her body. The food here becomes her way to fill in the emptiness of the sexual intercourse and to fulfill her sexual desire. But after eating, Sophie feels guilty for giving in to bodily pleasures and forces herself to throw up, as if she needed to punish herself for the pleasure achieved. In other words, since Sophie has no control of her body during sex, she attempts to gain control over it through bulimia. According to Francis,

> That she is bulimic and not anorexic suggests that she does not lack an appetite for food or sex. Instead she strongly desires to consume both, but guilt and negative body memories of sexual violation force her to purge the pleasure of eating, like sex, from her body. (FRANCIS: 2004, 84).

In *Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*, Lucía M. Suárez argues that “Sophie’s bulimia evokes her emotional relationship to life. She wants to live fully, even excessively, but she feels she cannot.” (SUÁREZ: 2006, 83). Suárez also points out that “bulimia for Sophie is about wanting and not wanting, living excessively and depriving herself violently.” (SUÁREZ: 2006, 84). It can be noted that Sophie wants to experience pleasure but feels guilty in doing so. Her psychological and emotional distress results in the cycle of eating compulsively and vomiting, feeding her anxieties and purging them off her body.

In addition, Sophie denies herself food because she finds her body unattractive. By having grown in a society which teaches young women that fat is undesirable, she cannot hold food in her stomach, for she visualizes herself as a fat woman. For this reason, when Sophie

eats and fulfils her bodily desire for food, she feels guilty: “I felt both fat and guilty after eating my supper.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 122). Sophie hates her body because of the violence inherited, the violence suffered both in the hands of her mother and in her own hands, and the “violence” inherent in rigid patterns of beauty imposed by society. When showing pictures of Brigitte to grandmother Ifé, she claims that she almost refused to let her husband take pictures of her with the newly-born baby, because “[she] was too ashamed of the stitches on [her] stomach and the flabs of fat all over [her] body.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 129).

Eating also becomes a problem for Sophie because she connects Haitian food with pain: whenever she eats traditional food from her country of origin, Sophie remembers her mother, the abuse her mother suffered, the “testings” and her self-molestation with the pestle: “I usually ate random concoctions: frozen dinners, samples from global cookbooks, food that was easy to put together and brought me no pain. No memories of a past that at times was cherished and at others despised.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 151). Sophie refuses to eat Haitian food as a means of denying what has happened to her.

In the end, Sophie’s grandmother realizes how much grief the tradition of the “testings” has caused and apologizes to Sophie: “‘My heart, it weeps like a river,’ she said, ‘for the pain we have caused you’.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 157). Martine is also able to acknowledge the pain she has inflicted upon her daughter by performing the “testing”. When Sophie asks Martine why she tested her, Martine confesses: “I realize standing here that the two greatest pains of my life are very much related. The one good thing about my being raped was that it made the *testing* stop. The testing and the rape. I live both every day.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 170). Although Martine knows that the “tests” were horrible, still she did the same to her daughter because that is how she learned from her mother to deal with young women. Suárez claims that “the memory of violence, if repeated unconsciously and accepted without question in the present, should not be condoned. Memory should not be the excuse for failing to deal with the present *in* the present.” (SUÁREZ: 2006, 05). Thus, by repeating what her mother had done to her without consciously thinking about it, Martine is repeating the tradition of violence and trauma she experienced.

However, unlike her mother, Sophie knows she can fight tradition: “it was up to me to avoid my turn in the fire. It was up to me to make sure that my daughter never slept with ghosts, never lived with nightmares, and never had *her* name burnt in the flames.” (DANTICAT: 1994, 203). Sophie realizes she can break with this continuing process of abuse through the “tests”. In this sense, the novel points to the importance of revising and rewriting cultural practices. This awareness that the maintenance of the tradition of testing

depends only on her leads Sophie to join a sexual phobia group. Sophie understands that, in order to escape the suffering, she must confront her trauma. Instead of acting like Martine who could not face talking about the sexual molestation, Sophie finds solace in this group of third-world women who have faced similar experiences. As Suárez puts it, "Sophie, a second-generation survivor, starts her healing process through community when she seeks therapy and joins an international group of women all healing from past violence." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 77). This act of speaking can be seen as an act of resistance against the silence that has historically protected rapists and molesters in their society.

In the support group, she meets Davina, a Chicana woman and Buki, an Ethiopian girl, who were both victims of sexual abuse. Davina had been raped by her grandfather for ten years, whereas Buki had had her clitoris cut off and her vagina sewn up. In one of the group's sessions, Buki wrote a letter to her dead grandmother:

> "Because of you, I feel like a helpless cripple. I sometimes want to kill myself. All because of what you did to me, a child who could not say no, a child who could not defend herself. It would be easy to hate you, but I can't because you are part of me. You are me." (DANTICAT: 1994, 203).

In the letter we perceive the shared traumatic consequences of practices promoted in certain patriarchal societies, such as the circumcision of girls so that they feel no pleasure in sex, and "testing" so that they will remain virgin. We can see that the feeling Buki experiences for her grandmother is similar to the one Sophie has towards her mother: she cannot hate Martine because, like the *Marassa*, they are part of one another. She even claims: "I knew my hurt and hers were links in a long chain and if she hurt me, it was because she was hurt, too." (DANTICAT: 1994, 203). In *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, Carole Boyce Davies claims that in Caribbean novels, "still presented with all their failings, [mothers] nevertheless remain heroic (sometimes anti-heroic)." (DAVIES: 2001, 129). Sophie understands her mother's behavior in "testing" her: she does not blame Martine for having performed a cultural Haitian tradition. For Suárez,

> Martine evokes victims of the past who had little recourse to human rights action. Sophie, on the other hand, suggests that there is hope for recovery from trauma through community and engagement in a present that allows the trauma of the past to be viewed as the past. An important point in the stories of Martine and Sophie is that trauma begets trauma and that much work must be done to address violence and its repercussions. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 90).

When discussing the importance of building community ties in order to recover from mental imbalance, Helen Leslie argues that "as conflict results in the shattering of the social fabric of society, interventions that attempt to reconstitute a sense of community, rather than the treatment of a 'mentally ill' individual, would be more helpful." (LESLIE: 2001, 54).

Thus, Sophie's trauma may be treated and healed through her new attachments with the community. By collectively sharing experiences, women start the healing process.

3.5. Living a nightmare: Martine's depression and suicide

Like Marina in *Geographies of Home*, Martine seems to become mentally imbalanced after being raped. One of the consequences of Martine's rape is an unwanted pregnancy, which results in Sophie's birth. Although Martine never demonstrates hatred towards Sophie, it is clear that, after the rape, Martine develops Rape Trauma Syndrome. Even though her second pregnancy, this time from her boyfriend Marc, happens years later, the disorder – that was never treated – worsens and leads to her suicide.

Danticat alludes to an intertextual connection between the narrative of Martine's sexual violation and the legend of Sister Rose. According to Joan Dayan, the legend of Rose, like that of the land of Haiti (and, implicitly, like the tale of Défilée[20]), begins with a woman brutally fertilized: "in this story, the Haitian nation began in the loins of a black woman. The ancestress must be ravished for the state to be born." (DAYAN: 1995, 48). Dayan continues her analysis of the legend of Rose by saying that "in the legend of Sister Rose, *to give oneself to a man*, voluntarily or not, is *to give Haiti a history*." (DAYAN: 1995, 50). Like Rose, Martine was brutally raped; thus, her body can be a symbol of Haiti as a nation. The violence inflicted towards Martine's body becomes representative of the violence inflicted on the nation by its several revolts, *coup d'états*, dictatorial regimes and foreign occupations.[21] Hence, when Martine gives birth to Sophie, she is also giving Haiti a history, this time a history of change, since Sophie will probably refuse to continue the tradition of testing young girls.

After the rape, when Martine moved to Croix-des-Rosets to work for a mulatto family, she "tried to kill herself several times." (DANTICAT: 1994, 139). Like Marina, Martine's

[20] According to Joan Dayan, Défilée was a black slave raped at the age of eighteen by her master. She escaped during the Haitian Revolution and supplied the revolutionary army with sex. She was Dessalines' sutler and sometime-partner. When Dessalines was dismembered, she collected and buried the pieces of his body and "became the embodiment of the Haitian nation: crazed and lost, but then redeemed through the body of her savior. A woman's lamentation converts a sudden gruesome act into a long history of potential devotion." (DAYAN: 1995, 40).

[21] The understanding of the body as a repository of national history was one of the topics discussed by Dr. Antonio Tillis during a lecture at UERJ on June 16, 2008. The implications of Marina's rape, which he discussed, also apply to Martine's predicament.

self-esteem is so low that she believes her life is not worth living and her only solution becomes to escape to the United States. In Marina's case, the family leaves the Dominican Republic propelled by economic necessity. However, Martine must leave Haiti to escape the memories of the violation of her body. Her painful memories are not forgotten, though, and she constantly suffers from insomnia and nightmares that Sophie describes in the following passage:

> Later that night, I heard that same voice screaming as though someone was trying to kill her. I rushed over, but my mother was alone thrashing against the sheets. I shook her and finally woke her up. When she saw me, she quickly covered her face with her hands and turned away. (DANTICAT: 1994, 48).

Like Marina, Martine cannot overcome the psychological injury resulting from the rape. When Suárez discusses Martine's rape in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, she says that

> since she cannot forget the rape, she lives in a space of insurmountable trauma and suffers from melancholia, or possession of the body by sadness. The story of her trauma is reproduced via two routes: acting out against herself, and transmission of the violent experience to her daughter. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 78).

Martine re-lives the rape in her nightmares. As she explains to Sophie, "The nightmares. I thought they would fade with age, but no, it's like getting raped every night." (DANTICAT: 1994, 190). According to Suárez, the rape "changes everything about the way the victim/survivor sees herself in the world, it can haunt her throughout her life, leaving a broken person sobbing in the night from post-traumatic stress, from fear." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 70). The years pass, but Martine's nightmares won't stop: when Sophie is eighteen, she still wakes her mother up in the night:

> Whenever my mother was home, I would stay up all night just waiting for her to have a nightmare. Shortly after she fell asleep, I would hear her screaming for someone to leave her alone. I would run over and shake her as she thrashed about. Her reaction was always the same. When she saw my face, she looked even more frightened. (DANTICAT: 1994, 81).

Martine's fear increases as she is wakened by her daughter because of the similarity between Sophie and her father, Martine's rapist. When Sophie arrives at Martine's home in the U.S., she sees a picture of herself as a baby and realizes she does not resemble any member of her family:

> I moved closer to get a better look at the baby in Tante Atie's arms. I had never seen an infant picture of myself, but somehow I knew that it was me. Who else could it have been? I looked for traces in the child, a feature that was my mother's but still mine too. It was the first time in my life that I noticed that I looked like no one in my family. Not my mother. Not my Tante Atie. I did not look like them when I was a baby and I did not look like them now. (DANTICAT: 1994, 45).

In addition, when Martine finally talks about her daughter's birth, she claims that Sophie looks like her father: "I did not know this man. I never saw his face. He had it covered

when he did this to me. But now when I look at your face I think it is true what they say. A child out of wedlock always looks like its father." (DANTICAT: 1994, 61). Even though Martine never saw the face of the rapist, she assumes that he must look like Sophie, an assumption that terrifies her as she wakes up and sees the girl's face. It is worth pointing out that the Haitian belief that a child born out of rape will look like her father aggravates the traumatic experience of victims. Besides the suffering caused by the abuse, survivors re-live the memories of the rape when looking at their children.

Martine's nightmares are painfully vivid, as described by Sophie: "for months she was afraid that he would creep out of the night and kill her in her sleep. She was terrified that he would come and tear out the child growing inside her. At night, she tore the sheets and bit pieces of her own flesh when she had nightmares." (DANTICAT: 1994, 139). Later, in other occasions, Martine wakes from her nightmares and realizes she is trying to choke her boyfriend Marc.

Like Marina in *Geographies of Home,* Martine starts to see her rapist in every man she encounters:

> "You know what happens now. I look at every man and I see him."
> "Marc?"
> "*Non non*," she whispered. "Him. *Le violeur*, the rapist. I see him everywhere." (DANTICAT: 1994, 199).

Martine's insanity, like Marina's, seems to grow worse as the years pass. About twenty years after the rape, when she gets pregnant with Marc's baby, the nightmares intensify. This pregnancy leaves her out of control: she starts to hear the baby talk to her, calling her names with a masculine voice: "Everywhere I go, I hear it. I hear him saying things to me. You *tintin, malpròp*. He calls me a filthy whore. I never want to see this child's face." (DANTICAT: 1994, 217). According to Francis, "that she associates her unborn boy with the *macoutes* rather than Marc shows that she has not recovered from the rape trauma." (FRANCIS: 2004, 86). From hearing voices, Martine moves into a further stage of mental imbalance and ends up killing herself. When analyzing traumatic memories of rape survivors, Suárez claims that

> psychological wounds are the hardest to describe, or even pinpoint, in any accurate way. Memory plays tricks on survivors, either torturing them with the horrors they have lived or relieving them of those horrors through glimpses of happier past moments. (SUÁREZ: 2006, 51).

As we can perceive, Martine's and Marina's psychological injuries keep bringing back images of their suffering, and both women cannot free themselves of the terror the memories remind them of. Moreover, Francis claims that

> Martine believes she has no power to construct an alternative narrative that would enable her to integrate this trauma into her life. The inability to do so contributes to Martine's voicelessness and the ultimate bodily pain to which she succumbs by the novel's end. (FRANCIS: 2004, 80).

In order to get rid of the baby and the voices that haunt her, Martine stabs her stomach seventeen times:

> "She stabbed her stomach with an old rusty knife. I counted, and they counted again in the hospital. Seventeen times."
> "Are you sure?"
> "It was seventeen times."
> "How could you sleep?" I shouted.
> "She was still breathing when I found her," he said. "She even said something in the ambulance. She died there in the ambulance."
> "What did she say in the ambulance?"
> "*Mwin pa kapab enkò*. She could not carry the baby." (DANTICAT: 1994, 224).

Suárez argues that Martine is a silenced victim, "her life is displaced via her nightmares and phantasmagoric experiences; she consequently engages new violations (her testing of Sophie) and completes the self-destruction the rape set into motion (her suicide)." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 77). Furthermore, Francis claims that

> Martine's inability to speak this trauma results in her death. Martine literally becomes subsumed by the traumatic after-effects of her rape because she never confronts nor revises the trauma. Instead she attempts to live as if the trauma has not irrevocably altered her subjectivity – her mind and body. (FRANCIS: 2004, 82).

Like Joseph, Marc cannot understand the consequences the rape had in Martine's sex life. Although he knew about the nightmares, he had sex with Martine and they did nothing to prevent pregnancy. Sophie blames him for impregnating her mother: "Why did you give her a child? Didn't you know about the nightmares?" (DANTICAT: 1994, 224). Sophie believes Marc is responsible for her mother's suicide, but, like Joseph, Marc was clueless. Apparently, only rape victims themselves can understand the depth of the psychological trauma caused by the aggression.

Martine also displays trouble with food and eating because she connects food to the memory of her daughter: "After you left home," she said, "the only thing I ate was spaghetti. I would boil it and eat it quickly before I completely lost my appetite. Everything Haitian reminded me of you." (DANTICAT: 1994, 182). Martine stops eating Haitian food because it reminds her of Sophie. She wants to forget the practice of "testing" Sophie and the night she discovered her daughter was no longer a virgin. She also misses her daughter very much.

Moreover, in the airplane, when returning from Haiti to New York, Martine recalls her compulsion for food when she first arrived in the United States. She tells Sophie:

> "You have become very American," she said. "I am not blaming you. It is advice. I want to give you some advice. Eat. Food is good for you. It is a luxury. When I just came to this country I gained sixty pounds my first year. I couldn't believe all the different kinds of

> apples and ice cream. All the things that only the rich eat in Haiti, everyone could eat them here, dirt cheap". (DANTICAT: 1994, 179).

Martine continues by saying that her reaction to eat compulsively in the United States was a consequence of having starved in Haiti. By claiming: "When I first came, I used to eat the way we ate at home. I ate for tomorrow and the next day and the day after that, in case I had nothing to eat for the next couple of days." (DANTICAT: 1994, 179), it seems that there were instances when she starved in Haiti. Thus, afraid of another period of hunger, she could not stop eating.

However, eating compulsively might also be the way Martine found to express what Bordo calls an "embodied *protest* – unconscious, inchoate, and counterproductive protest without an effective language, voice, or politics, but protest nonetheless." (BORDO: 1993, 175). That is to say that the body expresses what cannot be stated linguistically. Although this form of protest takes political dimensions, one cannot forget that, at the same time, it weakens and undermines the sufferer. When Sophie and Martine return from Haiti, Martine has to go to the bathroom several times to vomit. When questioned by Sophie if she is throwing up because of the cancer, Martine replies that it is her discomfort with being in Haiti. (DANTICAT: 1994, 179). By returning home all the memories of her sexual abuse become more vivid and force her body to purge.

Although the women in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are victims of patriarchal authority, Martine's death and burial can be perceived as subversive: by deciding to commit suicide, Martine finally frees herself. Death becomes the "only way of liberating herself from the living torture that she has experienced since the rape." (FRANCIS: 2004, 86). For Martine's burial, Sophie chooses a crimson suit to express that her mother did not fear men: "It was too loud a color for a burial. I knew it. She would look like a Jezebel, hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped *them*, and killed *them*. She was the only woman with that power." (DANTICAT: 1994, 227). In her mother's farewell, Sophie chooses to identify Martine with Erzulie (or Ezili), the most powerful and arbitrary deity in *voudou.* (DAYAN: 1995, 59), in an attempt to "reclaim in death for Martine the power over her body and sexuality that she did not have while alive." (FRANCIS: 2004, 87). In addition, she buries Martine as the mother she had always dreamed of:

> as a child, the mother I had imagined for myself was like Erzulie, the lavish Virgin Mother. She was the healer of all women and the desire of all men. She had gorgeous dresses in satin, silk, and lace, necklaces, pendants, earrings, bracelets, anklets, and lots and lots of French perfume. She never had to work for anything because the rainbow and the stars did her work for her. Even though she was far away, she was always with me. I could always count on her, like one counts on the sun coming out at dawn. (DANTICAT: 1994, 59).

Thus, as Sophie chooses to bury her mother as the *Lwa* Erzulie, she attempts to maintain their proximity: although her mother is in Guinea[22], she knows that she will always be able count on her.

In *Haiti, History and the Gods*, Joan Dayan argues that Erzulie is the "Tragic Mistress", a spirit that "carries the weight of a history that testifies to the union of profligacy and virtue." (DAYAN: 1995, 58). Erzulie represents both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, the generous, loving, pious woman and the sinner. According to Francis, "Erzulie Danto was an African slave who was wounded by her own people in their fight for emancipation." (FRANCIS: 2004, 87). In Haitian *voudou*, Erzulie is represented with a heart pierced with a dagger. Martine chose to pierce her abdomen instead. When Sophie decides to bury her mother wearing the colors of this goddess, she is trying to invert the order of submission her mother had faced throughout her life. Dayan says that "the pale "lady", alternately sweet and voracious, enters into the head of the black devotee, and together they re-create and reinterpret a history of mastery and servitude." (DAYAN: 1995, 60). Thus, when Martine is buried, she becomes the strong woman who will not submit to any man, like the *Lwa* Erzulie.

It is important to mention that Erzulie is not maternal. Although she is not a mother, as the *Lwa* of love, she "demands that the word be reinvented. In her rites, notions of affection or attachment undergo strange but instructive metamorphoses." (DAYAN: 1995, 63). Likewise, Martine is not the model of mother for Sophie. Nevertheless, she reinvents the relationship with Sophie, transforming the feeling she has for her daughter into comprehension, respect and understanding. It is love expressed in their way.

[22] Paradise or heaven in *voudou* mythology.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Dominicans and Haitians: What do their histories have in common?

The Dominican Republic and Haiti share more commonalities than the territory of the island. By analyzing the history of both countries, we perceive that colonization left marks imprinted in their national and racial identities.

Both countries experienced historical massacres provoked by racial divergences: after the Haitian Revolution, in 1805, Toussaint L'Ouverture ordered the killing of all whites who refused to leave for Europe; over a hundred years later, Rafael Trujillo ordered the murder of all Haitians who refused to leave the Dominican Republic. This panorama shows that the same racial intolerance black Haitians demonstrated against the French whites was repeated years later by Dominicans - who believed they were "other than black" - against black Haitians. In "Both Sides of the Massacre: Collective History and Narrative on Hispaniola", Kelli Lyon Johnson claims that "the nationalism that has characterized the Dominican and Haitian experience is largely predicated on memory, recollections of occupation, war, and political struggle." (JOHNSON: 2003, 78). Memories of a history of enforced racial, social and national prejudice between the two countries, thus, have forged their Dominican and Haitian identities.

In addition, the two countries have been occupied by the U.S. ostensibly as a means of restoring political stability. However, this ended up empowering their national armies, resulting in a history of military oppression. The military power allowed violent dictatorships that kept the population under fear and repression. The most remarkable dictatorship in the Dominican soil was that of Trujillo, who remained in power from 1930 to 1961; in Haiti, François Duvalier's extremely repressive ruling lasted from 1957 to 1971. Apart from the fear and violence inflicted on the population, the governments of both dictators were marked by corruption and economic instability.

Besides Trujillo's and Duvalier's dictatorships, the Dominican Republic and Haiti have had a list of corrupt political leaders who have exploited the population in order to enrich themselves and their families. As a result, the majority of the population in these countries lives in extremely poor conditions. This situation is worsened by frequent oscillations from economic growth to depressions. The effects are vivid in the social

inequalities: the wealth of both countries is in the hands of the small light-skinned elite, while the majority of the population experiences hunger, unemployment, inflation and abuse.

Today, Haitians and Dominicans still hope that this situation of exploitation, violence, corruption and poverty in their countries will change. Meanwhile, many Haitians and Dominicans leave their countries every day to go to the United States, Canada[23] and Europe in search of political and economic stability.

4.2. Diasporas in Dominican and Haitian fiction

Diasporic movements from Hispaniola to the United States increased after the second half of the twentieth century. (GRASMUCK & PESSAR: 1991, 20)[24]. This contact between people from different nations caused a cultural shock, affecting the identities of all subjects involved. This is the case of the female characters of the novels *Geographies of Home* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, who left the island of Hispaniola in search of a better life in the U.S., either for economic or political reasons. However, although with some improvement, they experience similar situations of oppression in the space of diaspora: in spite of some improvement in their living condition, they still face poverty and violence towards their bodies.

Women feel their diasporic experiences through their bodies. In "Home and Abroad: Diasporic Women Writers in Canada", Sandra Regina Goulart de Almeida argues that "for these hyphenated women who try to negotiate their diasporic displacement and affiliations, the body feels and reveals their experiences as displaced subjects." (ALMEIDA: 2006, 71). Women in the diaspora experience a state of in-betweenness: their identities clash as they realize they belong to two cultures and as they try to cope with both.

In *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Stuart Hall argues that the diaspora experience is defined by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity and by a conception of 'identity' as hybrid: "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference." (HALL: 1990, 235).

[23] The 2001 Canadian census shows Haiti as the tenth larger ethnic group, with 82400 Haitians living in Canada. This corresponds to 0.3% of the total Canadian population, proving the substantial numbers of Haitians who migrate towards this country. For further information, visit http://www.statcan.gc.ca.

[24] These authors only deal with immigrations to the U.S. However, as previously mentioned, many Dominicans and Haitians leave for other destinations.

As described by Hall, cultural identities are in constant process of transformation of mixed and diverse elements from different cultures the subjects have contact with, which may result in a hybrid identification that blends the culture of the country of origin with the culture of the host nation. As identities shift, the positions of the subjects may also change. According to Susan Friedman in "'Beyond' White and Other: Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse",

> within a relational framework, identities shift with a changing context, dependent always upon the point of reference. Not essences or absolutes, identities are fluid sites that can be understood differently depending on the vantage point of their formation and function. (FRIEDMAN: 1998, 47).

In other words, it becomes impossible to claim that a determined group holds power and that another group is made of victims; rather, power positions also become fluid. Moreover, Friedman claims that "the flow of power in multiple systems of domination is not always unidirectional. Victims can also be victimizers; agents of change can also be complicitous, depending on the particular axis of power one considers." (FRIEDMAN: 1998, 48). Thus, although individuals may take the role of victims of oppression, they may also assume the identity of oppressors.

In *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence*, Hellen Scott states that immigrant literature "reveals the international relations of domination that continue to delimit human experience; it also expresses the indefatigable human impulse towards something more." (SCOTT: 2006, 21). Pérez's novel shows us male domination over female bodies as well as the domination of the whites over blacks, whereas Danticat's work shows us that the Haitian population has lived a history of domination and continues to live under the subjugation of military forces. However, both novels point towards change in the continuities of patriarchal violence: in *Geographies of Home*, Iliana is determined not to have her life thwarted by the violations she has suffered and in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie knows it is up to her to protect her daughter's body from violation.

4.3. *Geographies of Home*: Understanding Marina

Marina comes from the Dominican Republic and has internalized the racial ideology prevalent in the nation since colonial times, which views Dominicans as white, civilized and Catholic in contrast to Haitians, who are considered black, savage and *voudou* worshippers. In "On National Culture", Frantz Fanon states that "colonialism […] has never ceased to

maintain that the Negro is a savage." (FANON: 1994, 38). This belief in black people's uncivilized nature, strengthened during Trujillo's regime, helped increase hostilities between Dominicans and Haitians. In "National Liberation and Culture", Amilcar Cabral, commenting on the consequences of colonization, argues that

> in the effort to perpetuate exploitation, the colonizer not only creates a system to repress the cultural life of the colonized people; he also provokes and develops the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the indigenous elites and the popular masses. As a result of this process of dividing or of deepening the divisions in the society, it happens that a considerable part of the population, notably the urban or peasant *petite bourgeoisie*, assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values. (CABRAL, 1994, 57).

According to Frantz Fanon, "the ideas developed by the young colonized intelligentsia are widely professed by specialists in the mother country." (FANON: 1994, 36). That is, the ideologies spread by the colonizers "infect" the minds of the colonized, affecting the way they see themselves. This is what happened in the Dominican Republic, when the ideology of white supremacy made Dominicans believe that they were superior to Haitians because they had European and Indigenous descent instead of having African blood. As a neo-colonized subject, Marina has learned to raise her immigrant status of Latina by seeing African Americans as inferior, barbarian and "savage": Marina cannot identify herself with a savage, thus, believes she is not black.

Carole Boyce Davies claims that the standard, defined as "white male, monied, propertied, middle or upper class, thin, young, blonde, Christian, heterosexual" (DAVIES: 2001, 30) is given positive value in society, whereas the rest "must strive to emulate them or be defined as 'strange' or 'mad'." (DAVIES: 2001, 30). In her analysis of the novel, Alcaide suggests that

> Marina refuses to recognize part of her identity, because for centuries this identity has been denigrated. In the historical context of the Dominican Republic, this form of racism is part of the national identity. Fernando Valerio- Holguín describes how in this country a national discourse was established that consciously distinguished racially the population of Haiti from that of the Dominican Republic. One has to remember that Haiti, with a majority of black people, represented a real threat to the criollo government of the Dominican Republic. The fear that most of the black population of the island could mobilize, like the Haitians had done, and had taken control of the government, made the Dominican elite establish a nationalist discourse based on the Spanish heritage and the whiteness of Dominicans in contrast to the black race and thus, the primitivity of their neighbors. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05)[25].

[25] Marina se niega a reconocer parte de su identidad, porque durante siglos esa identidad ha sido denigrada. En el contexto histórico de la República Dominicana, esta forma de racismo es parte de la propia identidad nacional. Fernando Valerio-Holguín describe cómo en este país se estableció un discurso nacional que conscientemente distinguía racialmente a la población de Haití de la de la República Dominicana. Hay que recordar que Haití, con una mayoría de población negra, representaba una verdadera amenaza para el gobierno criollo de la República Dominicana. El miedo a que la mayoría de la población negra de la isla se movilizara, como hicieron los haitianos, y tomara control del gobierno hizo que la élite dominicana estableciera un discurso nacionalista basado en la herencia española y la blancura de los dominicanos frente a la raza negra y, por ende, el primitivismo de los vecinos. (ALCAIDE: 2005, 05).

Thus, it is not hard to understand why Marina believes black people to be inferior to her "Hispanic" origin and the reason why she ignores her *négritude*.

According to George Yancy, "the sheer cumulative impact of such racist actions can result in a form of self-alienation where the integrity of one's Black body is shaken, though not shattered. Self-alienation can assume various forms, from self-doubt to self-hatred." (YANCY: 2008, 02). For Marina, self-alienation assumes the form of hatred towards black people and non-acceptance of her racial identity. She believes that only white and Hispanic men are beautiful, therefore eligible candidates for marriage. For this reason, the astrologer, who is a black man, becomes insulted and Marina ends up being raped by him. Although Marina is not white, she sees herself as such; thus, after the rape, every black man – including Marina's family members – becomes a potential threat to her, since they fit what Yancy calls the "predator stereotype." (YANCY: 2008, 17).

The rape brings several consequences to Marina's life, including depression, obesity, progressive mental imbalance and identification with the aggressor. Moreover, the sexism and racism she faces both in Dominican and American contexts oppress her to the point of finding an exit in madness, which provides her the strength and voice to expose the hypocrisies she sees in society. It is important to say that although Marina's mental illness becomes her way to gain voice against a patriarchal system, it also has negative consequences, since Marina attempts suicide and ends up hurting her sister.

For Lucía M. Suárez, "the victims/survivors of horrible events either reify the past horror into a continuing, conscious or unconscious, present state of repeated violence and fear, or they bury the horror and remain haunted in less visible but equally debilitating ways."[26] (SUÁREZ: 2006, 18). The first can be perceived as Marina's case, since she re-lives the trauma of the episode with every black man she meets and transmits the violence and fear she was submitted to her sister Iliana.

4.4. *Geographies of Home*: Iliana's gender trouble

[26] Martine falls into the second category presented by Suárez: she tries to forget the rape by burying it inside her heart, but when she sees Sophie after the nightmares and when she hears the unborn child talking to her during her second pregnancy, we realize the debilitating potential of these traumatic memories.

It is important to mention that what probably triggered Marina's psychotic attack was Iliana's expression of gender. Marina suspects Iliana is not a "real woman" because her body, her clothes and behaviours do not conform to the way society expects a "feminine" woman to be. Discussing the issue of gender, Judith Butler says that

> acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (BUTLER: 1990, 136).

Gender is the representation – "on the surface of the body" – of acts, gestures, and desire, which are constructed according to the specific culture to which it is inscribed. In "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power", Sandra Lee Bartky states that "we are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms, which surface as so many styles of the flesh." (BARTKY: 1988, 64). In other words, subjects learn to believe in coherence between true sex and gender expression, that is, a male subject displaying "masculine" characteristics and a female subject displaying "feminine" characteristics. This leads Marina to believe that these are the only possible "real" expressions of gender. For this reason, once Iliana does not conform to what Marina considers the "true" female gender, Marina becomes suspicious that Iliana is the man who attacked her. In order to prove that Iliana is not a woman but a man in disguise, Marina violates her sister's body, making Iliana pay dearly for disrupting the dominant cultural construction of femininity.

Although violated with a fist, the hatred expressed by Marina, and the act of violating one's body, classify the attack as rape. Iliana can see hatred in her sister's eye and understands that by attacking her, Marina tries to make her feel inferior. Probably because of her own low self-esteem, Marina believes Iliana considers herself superior, thus feeling compelled to diminish her. When Marina attacks Iliana she seems to have completely identified with the rapist: she wants to make Iliana feel inferior by imposing control over her sister's body.

After being raped, Iliana also presents some symptoms of Rape Trauma Syndrome, such as denial and self-blame. However, Iliana soon starts her process of healing by talking about the attack. As a first step, talking helps Iliana to acknowledge her situation and makes her stronger to fight other situations of abuse. Thus, unlike Marina who is entrapped in her home and, later on, in an asylum, Iliana refuses to be a victim of patriarchy.

4.5. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: Sophie and the breaking of tradition

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the tradition of "testing" girls in order to make sure they remain virgin can also be considered a form of sexual abuse. Atie, Martine and Sophie become victims of the abuse performed by their mothers. After being molested several times and feeling extremely humiliated by the "tests", Sophie decides to break her hymen, molesting herself with a pestle. However, it is important to stress that this is a work of fiction and that, as such, it does not represent the whole Haitian society. Even though the "tests" appear as a recurrent theme in the novel, in the Afterword, Danticat exempts Sophie from being a model of Haitian citizen:

> I write this to you now, Sophie, because your secrets, like you, like me, have traveled far from this place. Your experiences in the night, your grandmother's obsessions, your mother's "tests" have taken on a larger meaning, and your body is now being asked, I have been told, to represent every girl child, every woman from this land that you and I love so much. Tired of protesting, I feel I must explain. Of course, not all Haitian mothers are like your mother. Not all Haitian daughters are tested, as you have been. (DANTICAT: 1994, 236).

In addition, in an interview conducted by Bonnie Lyons, Danticat clarifies that the tradition of testing girls does not stand for the entire Haitian society, but it is a practice common in that particular family. (DANTICAT: 2003, 191).

Like Iliana, Sophie is victimized inside her home by a female aggressor, her own mother, who performs "tests" as a means of making sure that Sophie remains a virgin. Such "tests" prove Martine's lack of trust on Sophie, despite all efforts of the girl to gain her mother's confidence. Sophie obeys her mother's rule of never having a boyfriend before the age of eighteen and when she becomes old enough to have a relationship with a man, she asks her mother for permission: "I am eighteen now," I said. "Is it okay if I like someone?" (DANTICAT: 1994, 78). Although she lies about the boy's identity and regularly meets Joseph at night unaccompanied, Sophie does not have sex with him. When she returns home late, she finds her mother waiting for her with a belt in her hands. Instead of talking to Sophie, Martine "tests" her, perpetuating a Haitian tradition of female humiliation and oppression.

Sophie finds repetition of the violence inflicted by the *Macoute* on her mother in her own home, when Martine "tests" her regularly to ensure her virginity. In "Place and Space", Linda McDowell states that, for many women, the home is the site of oppression and abuse:

> For most women, the home is a site of social relations that are structured by power and inequality. […] For too many women, too, the home is a place dominated by fears of domestic violence and abuse, where women and children are the victims of male aggression. (MCDOWELL: 2003, 15).

Although Sophie's aggressor is not a man, her home is also dominated by fear of being "tested". Since she cannot endure these bodily violations, Sophie chooses to end them by breaking her own hymen. In her self molestation, Sophie learns "how the violence of the state and the home echo each other, how the violence passes down through the generations of women who serve and service the needs of men." (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 200).

After suffering the humiliation of the "tests" and the pain of her self-molestation, Sophie develops Rape Trauma Syndrome, expressed in her bulimia and her fear of her mother. In addition, she starts to have nightmares and cannot have pleasure in sex. However, Sophie points to a recovery: she has sessions of therapy and she becomes involved in a self-support group. The novel does not point to an end of patriarchal oppression, but rather shows us Sophie's process of healing with the help of the community (her therapy group) and of her therapist, who provides a different model of black woman for Sophie. At the end of the novel, Sophie can *choose* whether to "test" her daughter or not. For the sociologist Madan Sarup, home for the migrant is the place of tradition, but tradition "is always being reconstituted. Tradition is about change - change that is not being acknowledged." (SARUP *apud* FRIEDMAN: 2004, 192). Although Sophie's homes, both in the U.S. and in Haiti, are filled with tragic stories of violence continually committed against female bodies, she realizes that she can fight tradition and write a new history for her family.

4.6. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: Martine and Haitian *voudou* myths

Martine is also a victim of the patriarchal tradition of "testings". However, she stops being tested at an early age because she is raped by a *Tonton Macoute*, a member of François Duvalier's private police. The memories of the rape debilitate Martine emotionally and psychologically, bringing several consequences to her life: she has to leave Haiti because she is terrified of the *Macoutes*, she constantly re-lives the violent act in her nightmares, and she develops compulsive overeating. Her trauma is long-lived: twenty years later, when she gets

pregnant with Marc's baby, she hallucinates that the child is calling her bad names, and ends up killing herself.

After Sophie is born, Martine tries to kill herself several times because "the nightmares were just too real." (DANTICAT: 1994, 139). These passages show us the trauma left by the rape. Later on, Sophie tells us that "the rich mulatto family helped [her] mother apply for papers to get out of Haiti. It took four years before she got her visa, but by the time she began to recover her sanity, she left." (DANTICAT: 1994, 139). Thus, it becomes clear that Martine migrated in order to free herself from the terror inflicted by Papa Doc's private police, because Haiti, her homeland, became a site of violence. When discussing the concept of home for immigrants, Susan Friedman claims that

> home may in fact be constituted upon an act of violence against the body, even as that body travels, migrates, or goes into exile. Safety might reside neither in home nor homeland but only in flight. Diasporic narratives often tell the story of travel to a new land where memory and desire produce an idealized image of the homeland. But violence done to the body in both old and new homes disrupts the familiar pattern. (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 200).

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, when Martine decides to go to the U.S., she believes she will no longer suffer from the violence of which she was a victim. In *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*, Rosemary George states that "forgetting the past or burying it creates the illusion of providing an escape route into the present that looks ahead rather than behind." (GEORGE, 1996, 178). When Martine goes to the United States she tries to forget her violent past, looking ahead to her future instead. However, leaving her homeland does not erase the psychological trauma of her rape.

I believe that Martine's identity is related to both female myths in Haiti: that of Sister Rose and of Erzulie. When analyzing the interconnection between deities and personal identity in Haitian culture, Joan Dayan claims that "in Haiti, the very notion of what constitutes a person or identity is indelibly tied to the Lwa, whose lineaments are in turn dependent on the human." (DAYAN: 1995, 67). Thus, when alive, Martine's identity is tied to that of Rose, a woman who was brutally violated and ended up writing a new history of the nation. After her death, Sophie chooses to bury her mother in the color of the *Lwa* Erzulie, the most powerful deity of Haitian *voudou*, as a means of subverting her position from a submissive woman into a fearless, voracious one.

4.7. Female characters: what do their stories have in common?

The characters dealt with in this dissertation – Marina and Iliana from *Geographies of Home* and Sophie and Martine from *Breath, Eyes, Memory* – come from the island of Hispaniola, which comprises the Dominican Republic and Haiti. These four women are victims of patriarchal oppression and of violence committed against their bodies which leads them to develop symptoms commonly attributed to the Rape Trauma Syndrome.

In both novels, the characters who were molested by men cannot overcome the consequences of the abuse: Marina is heading to a mental institution and Martine commits suicide. Although they are victims, they also play the role of victimizers, hurting other female characters: Marina hurts Iliana and Martine molests Sophie. Iliana and Sophie, unlike Marina and Martine, decide to break with the cycle of violence: they will not be victimized. As a result, Iliana leaves her parents' house and states that she will never let another person violate her body again. Sophie finds solace in her therapy group, which helps her understand her mother's actions and start the process of cure. She also knows that she has the power to stop the tradition of tests by choosing to trust Brigitte.

A common consequence of the rape is the development of eating disorders. By either eating compulsively or not eating at all, women lose the physical traces that characterize them as females, avoiding sexuality and becoming undesirable to men. Bordo argues that "as [a woman's] body begins to lose its traditional feminine curves, its breasts and hips and rounded stomach, begins to feel and look more like a spare, lanky male body, she begins to feel untouchable, out of reach of hurt." (BORDO: 1993, 178). The violated woman develops eating disorders as a way to transform her body into a model that hides the parts which mark her as female, in an attempt to become "untouchable" by men because she is aware "of the social and sexual vulnerability involved in having a female body." (BORDO: 1993, 179). In the novels, Marina and Martine's obesity transform their bodies into that which they consider undesirable, therefore likely of keeping men at a distance[27].

Sophie suffers from bulimia, a disorder characterized by exaggerated ingestion of food for a short period of time and then purging. By eating compulsively Sophie allows herself the bodily pleasure associated with eating and degustation. However, the fact that she forcedly vomits expresses her guilt for having delighted in such pleasures, which makes her punish herself by expelling the food from her body. Moreover, Sophie's fear of gaining weight reflects the pressure society exerts for people to look thin and attractive to men.

[27] Although Martine says she gained sixty pounds soon after she arrived in the U.S., at the time Sophie joins her in Brooklyn she is already very weak and thin as a result of the breast cancer treatment. (DANTICAT: 1994, 179).

Another common symptom that rape survivors develop is hallucinating or dreaming about the attack, frequently re-living it. The rape Marina suffers becomes a constant in her life: every black man she encounters reminds her of the violence suffered. Likewise, Martine experiences horrible nightmares about the rape, and hears the unborn baby calling her "filthy whore" (DANTICAT: 1994, 217), which further debilitate her. Both women attempt to commit suicide several times, and at the end of the novel, Martine succeeds.

Suárez points out that "memory of the experience of violence can be both debilitating and empowering. Traumatic memory is crippling; in contrast, active memory can be empowering if, and when, it leads to emotional and/or judicial redress." (SUÁREZ: 2006, 186). In Marina's and Martine's cases, I believe the memory of the rape suffered is crippling, since Marina ends up hurting Iliana and finally goes to a mental institution whereas Martine never recovers from her trauma and ends up killing herself. For Martine, home is a site of political struggle, and also of violence and oppression. It is the place – both geographical and psychological – she fears to return.

For Sophie, home is both the place where she feels safe from external prejudice and where she is hurt by her mother. At the age of twelve, when Sophie joins her mother in the U.S., she experiences dislocation as she encounters racism and prejudice in America and, her mother's home becomes her safe harbour. However, as a young woman, she faces the violation of her body in her mother's hand and her home becomes an oppressive and terrifying place. In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah says that "the same geographical space comes to articulate different histories and meanings, such that 'home' can simultaneously be a place of safety and terror." (BRAH: 1998, 207). Similarly, home for Iliana is a place where she believed she would belong, but it also proves to be an oppressive place. When talking about Gloria Anzaldúa, Friedman claims that "she is rooted in a sense of home as a place she can never be at home and from which she must escape to feel at home with herself." (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 191) Likewise, Iliana must leave her parents' house in order to develop and grow as a person. Even though Iliana's and Sophie's homes become sites of violations against their bodies, they choose to stop the cycle of violence. Acknowledging and understanding what they have gone through, they become aware of their own strength and manage to overcome their tragic stories.

To conclude, when Friedman discusses the partition of India in the essay "Bodies on the Move: a Poetics of Home and Diaspora", she claims that "the mutilated body of Mother India found its avatar in the violated bodies of women – tens of thousands abducted, recaptured, refused home by their families; untold numbers killed to preserve their family's

honor by their own hands or those of their relatives." (FRIEDMAN: 2004, 201). Likewise, when Hispaniola is divided, it is women who suffer on their bodies. As the island was divided, invaded, appropriated, as the Dominican Republic and Haiti developed into nations, each country suffered a number of violations, and great part of these violations were reflected onto female bodies.

Thus, it becomes possible to say that, in the context of the novels, women in diasporic movements experience home as a feeling of connectedness with their community and of acceptance of their bodies. The violence inflicted on their bodies is like the violence inflicted on the nation. In "Défilée's Diasporic Daughters: Revolutionary Narratives of Ayiti (Haiti), Nanchon (Nation), and Dyaspora (Diaspora) in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*", Jana Evans Braziel analyzes the re-enactments of historical violent moments in Danticat's fiction and its relation to the bodies of female characters:

> Danticat's images of violent birth, death, and even rebirth transcend the traumas of the enslaved female bodies and historical forms of maternal refusal. They might also suggest Ayiti's own embodied refusal of history's traumas (its corporealized national traumas – those experienced psychologically but also viscerally in the bodies of its citizens through whips, lashes, labor and hunger) – the periodic and even sustained moments of colonization, enslavement, oppression, economic isolation, invasion, occupation, neocolonialism, imperialism, and global capitalist "intervention" – that have often violently arrested its autonomous or indigenous forms of national development for a capitalist force of "development", which is too often externally imposed and abortifacient of socially egalitarian forms of democracy in the country. (BRAZIEL: 2004, 81).

For Braziel, Danticat's novels may portray rape as a consequence of the violent history of the nation. Likewise, in *Geographies of Home*, the bodies of female characters incorporate the sufferings of the Dominican Republic. Thus, when Marina and Martine are raped, when Martine molests Sophie's body, when Sophie hurts her own body, and when Marina violates Iliana's body, their experiences can be related to the violation of the nation - the violence of colonialism, invasions and dictatorships. In both the individual body violation and the violation of the nation there is trauma, but there is also the possibility of change. This change is pointed out at the end of these novels, when Iliana refuses to be victimized and further abused and when Sophie understands that she can break with the tradition of "testing". Thus, the novels point to a turn, in which women choose to stop being victims and to become agents, casting away crippling traditions of the patriarchal system.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ALCAIDE, Dolores. 'I'm Hispanic, not Black': Raza, locura y violencia en Geographies of Home de Loida Maritza Pérez. **Ciberletras**, West Lafayette, v. 14, p.01-14, 2005. Available at <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v14/alcaide.htm>. Acessed on: 22 jul. 2008.

ALMEIDA, Sandra Regina Goulart. Home and Abroad: Diasporic Women Writers in Canada. In: BERND, Zila; ANCTIL, Pierre. **Canada from the Outside in:** New Trends in Canadian Studies. Brussels: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006. p. 61-72.

ANGELOU, Maya. **The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou.** New York: Random House, 1994.

ARTHUR, Charles. **Haiti:** a Guide to People, Politics and Culture. Northampton: Interlink Publishing Group, 2007.

BARTKY, Sandra Lee. Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. In: DIAMOND, Irene; QUINBY, Lee (Comp.). **Feminism & Foucault:** Reflections on Resistance. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988. p. 61-86.

BEARD, John Relly. **1800 – 1876 Toussaint L'Ouverture:** A Biography and Autobiography. Boston: James Redpath, 1863. il. color.

BHABHA, Homi K. **The Location of Culture**. New York: Routledge, 1994.

BORDO, Susan. **The Unbearable Weight:** Feminism, Western Culture and the Body. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

BRAH, Avtar. **Cartographies of Diaspora**. New York: Routledge, 1998.

BRASIL. **Código Penal**. Organization of texts by Antonio Luiz de Toledo Pinto, Márcia Cristina Vaz dos Santos Windt and Lívia Céspedes. 44 ed. São Paulo: Saraiva, 2006. 638 p.

BRAZIEL, Jana E.. Défilée's Diasporic Daughters: Revolutionary Narratives of Ayiti (Haiti), Nanchon (Nation), and Dyaspora (Diaspora) in Edwidge Danticat's Krik? Krak!. **Studies In The Literary Imagination**: Caribbean Women Writers in Exile: Anglophone Writings, Atlanta, v. 37, n. 02, p.77-96, 2004. Available at <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3822/is_200410/ai_n14681748>. Accessed on 10 oct. 2008.

BUTLER, Judith. Bodies that Matter. In: BUTLER, Judith. **Bodies that Matter.** New York: Routledge, 1993. p. 27-55.

_____ **Gender Trouble***:* Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990.

CABRAL, Amilcar. National Liberation and Culture. In: WILLIAMS, Patrick; CHRISMAN, Laura. **Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory:** a Reader. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. p. 53-65.

CAHILL, Ann J.. Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body. **Hypatia**: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Seattle, v. 15, n. 01, p.43-63, 2000.

CHARLES, Carolle. Gender Politics in Contemporary Haiti: The Duvalierist State, Transnationalism, and the Emergence of a New Feminism (1980 – 1990). **Feminist Studies**, College Park, v. 21, n. 01, p.135-164, 1995.

CARUTH, Cathy. Trauma and Experience. In: CARUTH, Cathy (Comp.). **Trauma:** Explorations in Memory. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995. p. 03-12.

CLIFFORD, James. Diasporas. **Cultural Anthropology**: Journal of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, Charlotte, v. 09, n. 03, p.302-338, 1994.

COSTA, Claudia de Lima. Situando o Sujeito do Feminismo: O Lugar da Teoria, as Margens e a Teoria do Lugar. **Travessia**: Revista de Literatura, Florianópolis, v. 29, n. 30, p.123-160, 1997.

DANTICAT, Edwidge. An Interview with Edwidge Danticat Conducted by Bonnie Lyons. **Contemporary Literature**, Madison, v. 44, n. 02, 2003, Conducted in Dec. 2002, p.183-198. Interview.
_____ **Breath, Eyes, Memory**. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
_____The Dangerous Job of Edwidge Danticat: an Interview. **Callaloo**, Baltimore, v. 19, n. 02, 1996, Conducted in Jan. 1996, p.382-389. Interview.

DAVIES, Carole B. **Black Women, Writing and Identity***:* Migrations of the Subject. New York: Routledge, 2001.

DAYAN, Joan. **Haiti, History and the Gods**. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

DESCARTES, René (1637). **Discurso do Método**. Paulo Neves, Trad. Porto Alegre: LP&M, 2008.

ENCARTA. Online encyclopedia, dictionary and atlas. Available at <http://encarta.msn.com>. Accessed on 10 feb. 2009. il. color.

FANON, Frantz. **Black Skin, White Masks**. London: Pluto Press, 1986.
_____ On National Culture. In: WILLIAMS, Patrick; CHRISMAN, Laura. **Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory:** a Reader. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. p. 36-52.

FOUCAULT, Michel. Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In: BOUCHARD, Donald; SIMON, Sherry. **Language, Counter-Memory, Practice:** Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. p. 139–164.

FRANCIS, Donette A.. “Silences Too Horrific to disturb”: Writing Sexual Histories in Edwidge Danticat’s Breath, Eyes, Memory. **Research In African Literatures**, Bloomington, v. 35, n. 02, p.75-90, 2004.

FRIEDMAN, Susan S.. Beyond' White and Other: Narratives of Race in feminist Discourse. In: FRIEDMAN, Susan S.. **Mappings:** Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998. p. 36-66.
_____Bodies on the Move: a Poetics of Home and Diaspora. **Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature**. Tulsa, v. 23, n. 02, p.189-212, 2004.

GEORGE, Rosemary. **The Politics of Home***:* Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

GRASMUCK, S.; PESSAR, P. **Between Two Islands***:* Dominican International Migration. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

GROSZ, Elizabeth. Refiguring Bodies. In: GROSZ, Elizabeth. **Volatile Bodies:** Towards a Corporeal Feminism. Indianápolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. p. 03-24.

HAAKEN, Janice. The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire: Approaches to Sexual Abuse and Psychic Trauma. **Signs**, Chicago, v. 21, n. 04, p.1069-1094, 1996.

HALL, Stuart. Cultural identity and Diaspora. In: RUTHERFORD, Jonathan. **Identity:** Community, Culture, Difference. London: Lawrence And Wishart, 1990. p. 222-237.
_____ Introduction: Who needs identity?. In: HALL, Stuart; DU GAY, Paul. **Questions of Cultural Identity**. London: Sage Publications, 1996. p.01-17.
_____ HALL, Stuart. The Question of Cultural Identity. In: HALL, Stuart et al. **Modernity:** an Introduction to Modern Societies. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. p. 595-634.

HESFORD, Wendy S.. Reading Rape Stories: Material Rhetoric and the Trauma of Representation. **College English**, Urbana, v. 62, n. 02, p.192-221, 1999.

HITE, Molly. Writing and Reading the Body: Female Sexuality and Recent Feminist Fiction. **Feminist Studies**, College Park, v. 14, n. 01, p.121-142, 1988.

HOOKS, bell. Postmodern Blackness. In: WILLIAMS, Patrick; CHRISMAN, Laura. **Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory:** a Reader. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. p.421–427.

IFES Election Guide. Election Guide is a website that offers election information and results available online. Available at <http://www.electionguide.org>. Accessed on 24 jul. 2008.

JOHNSON, Kelli Lyon. Both Sides of the Massacre: Collective History and Narrative on Hispaniola. **Mosaic**, Farmington Hills, v. 36, n. 02, p.75-91, 2003.

KAMBOURELI, Smaro. **Scandalous Bodies:** Diasporic Literature in English Canada. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000.

KAMINSKY, Amy. **Reading the Body Politic***:* Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

LESLIE, Helen. Healing the Psychological Wounds of Gender-Related Violence in Latin America: a Model for Gender-Sensitive Work in Post-Conflict Contexts. **Gender And Development**, London, v. 09, n. 03, p.50-59, 2001.

MARDOROSSIAN, Carine. **Reclaiming Difference:** Caribbean Women Rewrite Postcolonialism. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005.

MCDOWELL, Linda. Place and Space. In: EAGLETON, Mary. **A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory.** Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. p. 11-31.

MCNAY, Lois. The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience. **Hypatia**: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Seattle, v. 06, n. 03, p.125-139, 1991.

MENDÉZ, Zenaida. Indio Claro o Oscuro? **Colorlines**, Oakland, v. 04, n. 02, p.24-25, 2001.

MENEZES, Simone L. C. de. **The Stigma of Madness in Women:** A Study of "New Hysterians" in Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman and Lady Oracle. 2005. 96 f. Dissertação (Mestrado) - Curso de Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, Departamento de Programa de Pós Graduação em Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2005.

MINISTÉRIO do Trabalho e Emprego. Results of governmental actions to eradicate slave work from 1995 to 2008 in Portuguese language. Available at <www.mte.gov.br/fisca_trab/resultados_op_fiscalizacao.asp>. Accessed on 05 feb. 2009.

MINUSTAH.ORG. The official Minustah website in French language. Available at <http://www.minustah.org >. Accessed on 06 mar. 2009.

MINUSTAH United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Minustah is a website in English language that offers in formation about the U.N. intervention in Haiti available online. Available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/index.html>. Accessed on 05 mar. 2009.

MOYA PONS, Frank. **The Dominican Republic***:* a National History. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998.

MULVEY, Laura. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In: BRAUDY, Leo; COHEN, Marshall. **Film Theory and Criticism:** Introductory Readings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 833-844.

NICKI, Andrea. The Abused Mind: Feminist Theory, Psychiatric Disability and Trauma. **Hypatia**: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Seattle, v. 16, n. 04, p.80-104, 2001.

O GLOBO. Ministério do Trabalho liberta 18 trabalhadores que viviam em regime de escravidão no MT. Jornal O Globo Online. 27 de Janeiro de 2009. Sect. Fiscalização. Available at < http://oglobo.globo.com/pais/mat/2009/01/27/ministerio-do-trabalho-liberta-18-trabalhadores-que-viviam-em-regime-de-escravidao-no-mt-754160797.asp>. Accessed on 29 jan. 2009.

_____ Treze trabalhadores em regime de escravidão são resgatados no MA. Jornal O Globo On line. 29 de Janeiro de 2009. Sect. Jornal Hoje. Available at <http://oglobo.globo.com/pais/mat/2009/01/29/treze-trabalhadores-em-regime-de-escravidao-sao-resgatados-no-ma-754189372.asp>. Accessed on 29 jan. 2009.

PÉREZ-FIRMAT, Gustavo. Transcending Exile: Cuban-American Literature Today. **Occasional Papers Series Dialogues**, Miami, p.332-350, 1987.

PÉREZ, Loida Maritza. **Geographies of Home**. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

PRATT, Mary Louise. **Imperial Eyes:** Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation. London: Routledge, 1992.

RESSEL, Lúcia B.; GUALDA, Dulce Maria Rosa. A Sexualidade como uma Construção Cultural: Reflexões sobre Preconceitos e Mito Inerentes a um grupo de Mulheres Rurais. **Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP**, São Paulo, v. 37, n. 03, p.82-87, 2003.

ROSA, Renata de Melo. Nação, nacionalismo e diferenças de gênero e raça na República Dominicana e no Haiti. **Universitas**: Relações Internacionais, Brasília, v. 03, n. 02, p.01-30, 2005. Available at <http://www.publicacoesacademicas.uniceub.br/index.php/relacoesinternacionais/article/viewFile/287/276>. Accessed on 22 jul. 2008.

SAN MIGUEL, Pedro L. **The Imagined Island:** History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

SCOTT, Hellen. **Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization:** Fictions of Independence. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2006.

SEN, Purna. Development Practice and Violence Against Women. **Gender and Development**, London, v. 06, n. 03, p.07-16, 1998.

SHARPE, Jenny. “The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency”. In: WILLIAMS, Patrick; CHRISMAN, Laura. **Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory:** a Reader. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. p.221–243.

SHOHAT, Ella. **Taboo Memory, Diasporic Voices**. London: Duke University Press, 2006.

SPIVAK, Gayatri C. Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World. **Textual Practice**. Glasgow, v.10, n. 02, p.245-269, 1996.

STATISTICS CANADA. Information about Canadian statistics provided by the Government of Canada. Available at <www.statcan.gc.ca>. Accessed on 10 feb. 2009.

SUÁREZ, Lucía M. **The Tears of Hispaniola:** Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006.

THE PRICE OF SUGAR. Director: Bill Haney. Production: Bill Haney and Eric Grunebaum. Featuring Father Christopher Hartley, Narrated by Paul Newman. Written by Bill Haney and Peter Rhodes. New York: New Yorker Films, 2007. 1 DVD (90 min.), Son., Color.

TILLIS, Antonio. Lecture given at UERJ. Rio de Janeiro, 16 jun. 2008.

TORRES – SAILLANT, Silvio. The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity. **Callaloo**. Baltimore, v. 23, n. 03, p.1086-1111, 2000.

TURITS, Richard. A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic. **Hispanic American Historical Review**, Durham, v. 82, n. 03, p.589–635, 2002.

VISTA Seventh-Day Adventist Church. A website that provides biblical and religious information about Seventh-day Adventist Church. Available at < http://www.vistasda.org>. Accessed on 05 feb. 2009.

VOICES From The Gaps: Women Artists and Writers of Color, An International Website. A web-based trans-national academic community that provides resources about artists and writers. Available at < http://voices.cla.umn.edu>. Accessed on 05 feb. 2009.

WALTER, Roland. A Política de Localização em Maryse Condé, Dionne Brand e Edwidge Danticat. In: MOREIRA, Nadilza Martins de B.; SCHNEIDER, Liane. **Mulheres no Mundo:** Etnia, Marginalidade e Diáspora. João Pessoa: Idéia, 2005. p.83–92.

WOOD, Katherine; JEWKES, Rachel. Violence, rape and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township. **Gender and Development**, London, v. 05, n. 02, p.41-46, 1997.

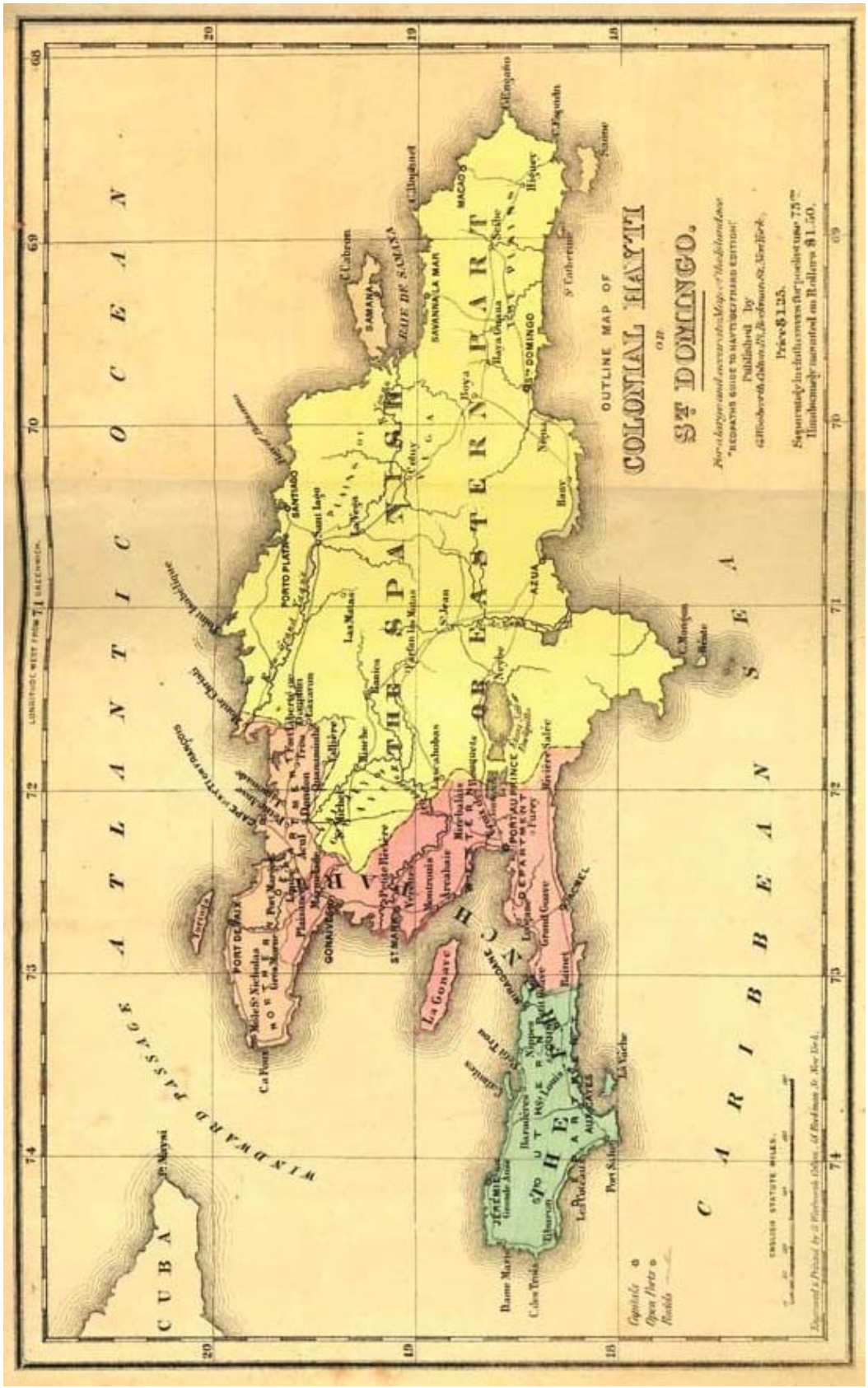
WOODWARD, Kathryn. **Identity and Difference**. London: Sage Publications, 2002.

WUCKER, Michele. **Why the Cocks Fight:** Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999.

XAVIER, Elódia. Que corpo é esse?. In: CAVALCANTI, Ildney; LIMA, Ana Cecília; SCHNEIDER, Liane. **Da Mulher às Mulheres:** Dialogando sobre Literatura, Gênero e Identidades. Maceió: Edufal, 2006. p.223–229.

YANCY, George. **Black Bodies, White Gazes:** The Continuing Significance of Race. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2008.

ANNEX 1



Map of the Island of Hispaniola during colonial times. (BEARD: 1863, 12a).

ANNEX 2

Map of Hispaniola[28].

[28] Available at http://encarta.msn.com.