STUDIA PHILOLOGICA UNIVERSITATIS VELIKOTARNOVENSIS
VOL. 43/3.1 2025 VELIKO TARNOVO

10.54664/QINX7484

Jelena ŠESNIĆ
University of Zagreb, Croatia

Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* between Aesthetics and Politics

Abstract
The argument of the article unfolds in the ambit of recent surge of political novels in American literature which pay attention to postmodern globalist conditions but do it from the vantage point of Third World or peripheral participants and observers. One of the most conspicuous writers in this vein is Edwidge Danticat, Haitian American author, uniquely poised to explore the political implications of the historically laden relations between the United States and Haiti. Using the generic model of the political novel and the novel of human rights, both on the rise in recent decades, the article then proposes to analyze Danticat's novel in stories *The Dew Breaker* (2004) as prime instance of the interweaving of particular political ideas and their aesthetic rendering as analysis invites us to get involved in narrative, thematic, and motivational clusters used by Danticat. The discussion intends to show that late modernity cannot so easily dispense with the idea of the political even though provided through the lens of postmodern suspicion of grand narratives. The recuperation of the political as a way to energize the literary form takes place on the backdrop of attendant methodological strains such as memory and trauma studies, and the representation of pain converging to reaffirm the idea of literature as a powerful way to discuss the political and its implications on today's unstable and fluid global scene.

Keywords: Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, geopolitical writing, political novel, novel of human rights, aesthetics

Considered one of the most compelling U.S. American writers in recent times, Edwidge Danticat creates what scholar Caren Irr has termed a new geopolitical American novel. Danticat, originating from Haiti, thus joins hands with other writers who figure as immigrants, second generation or naturalized citizens, for many of whom English is their second language.[1] Danticat had been steeped in Haitian Creole and French and came into English only after arriving to the United States to join her family at the age of 12 (Braziel, Clitandre 2021: 3). In Danticat's essayistic take on her biography, she points to the fact of living in the United States and "writing

[1] For the writer's succinct biography, cf. Braziel and Clitandre 3–4.

in this language that is not mine" (2010: 14–15).[2] These geographical and linguistic concerns which characterize the writers for whom English is their "stepmother tongue" (Novakovich, Shapard 2000: 9–18; Danticat's work is appropriately included in their anthology), however, are only the preliminary indicators of other essential features that stand out in their fictional representations. In this argument, it is my intention to account for some formal and thematic features that might be argued to constitute a set of writings at the intersection of the political novel, trauma discourse, and the discourse of human rights which underpins the fiction coming out from metropolitan centers and being directed to an international audience but concerned with localities in the global South.[3] This interweaving is furthermore accomplished by using explicitly literary means while simultaneously framing a political problem and thus complicating the distinction between literature and propaganda, the aesthetic and the political, striving to be both things at once. The contention is not simply that it is on the reader's end to decode the text as either an aesthetic exercise by foreclosing the infiltration of the political or, conversely, an explicitly political document which happens to have some prominent aesthetic features, but that this kind of writing speaks to us in both capacities – as literature and as a politically engaged writing, and asks to be regarded as such. As summed up by Spengler, "Danticat's oeuvre foregoes the inculcation of specific political creeds which engaged art has often been accused of" (2014: 190). In other words, there is a definite and discernible "social agenda" of the stories in *The Dew Breaker* – the themes of my ensuing comments – but it is interspersed by "various aesthetic strategies" that need to be decoded by the reader (Spengler 2014: 191).

In my argument I will be using some helpful observations made by James Dawes in his discussion of the novel of human rights in which Danticat figures as one of the featured authors. My primary point of interest, which will then branch out to encompass other themes, is a recognition of the aesthetic dimension of these literary works which simultaneously deflects our attention from the literary means to focus it on the explicitly political content. In that, I concur with Brüske, who also considers Danticat's text as regards the legitimacy of literature and language in the face of representing trauma or extreme situations of human existence (2021: 122). In making an argument for the potentially fruitful imbrication of literature and human rights – as one of the areas in which contemporary political concerns are taken up in literature – Greg Mullins observes that there are "two conceptual nodes . . . crucial to the crossing of literature and human rights, that is, memory and imagina-

[2] According to Dean Franco, we should be looking into how "writers of immigrant backgrounds" interiorize and project a different perspective since they may "literally turn the map of the United States inside out, prioritizing liminal spaces or even other nations" (114).

[3] However, as Caren Irr points out, the postmodern U.S. fiction is more diffuse than the straightforward center-periphery model since, as she puts it, "The postwar world system is premised instead on a decentralized and provisional set of relationships among global cultures" ("Postmodern" 48).

tion" (2008: 4). In other words, in today's violence- and war-ridden world, what is it that the politically engaged literature does by virtue of being literature, rather than a political pamphlet? And, finally, why do we need such an intervention at all?

Before I proceed, some operative definitions are in order to orient us in the reading to follow. Based on Irwing Howe's early definition, as clarified by Stuart Scheingold, the political novel was meant to be a modernist genre which illustrated the ways the grand political narratives of the 20th century were able to dramatize social change played out on individual destinies (1963: 10). Ludmilla Kostova notices how the rise of modern politics happened at the cusp of new political ideologies (she discusses nihilism in particular) and a new enactment of political agency stemming from the late nineteenth-century onwards and soon enough morphing into terrorism (2016: 345), and sees these new ways of political behavior as instances of political modernity finding expression in the novel form.

The political novel, Howe continues, usually engaged the forces of social upheaval stemming from political ideals, the idea of the revolution, or the ideas of democracy and populism (Scheingold 2010: 7–8, 9). While it depicted the fate of the individual caught up in the welter of historical events, it also remained attentive to the ways in which agency and subjectivity might be embedded in collective and historical responses. The political novel, in other words, would take the world of politics and political ideas seriously. Howe insists that "The 'modern', as it refers to both history and literature, signifies extremes situations and radical solutions. It summons images of war and revolution, experiment and disaster, apocalypse and skepticism; image of rebellion, disenchantment and nothingness" (ix). He continues to elaborate on a perhaps elusive distinction between literature and political (overtly ideological) discourse, even if it is not quite clear that the argument could be finally closed: "There is strong reason to stress the integrity of the work of literature, as an object worth scrutiny in its own right and in accordance with its own nature; but I would also insist . . . that the work of literature acquires its interest for us through a relationship, admittedly subtle, difficult and indirect, to the whole of human experience" (x). This was Howe's reasoning even when he was embroiled in a number of polemical discussions about the state of American culture in the early Cold War.

The next generic mold, that of the trauma fiction, in its own way stemmed from the failures or excesses of the political systems in the course of the 20th century, creating a powerful corrective to the modernist promise of deliverance of society and individual through politics. Trauma has signified precisely the limits of the illusion that the strong ideologies could solve the entrenched social problems as it focused on the great cost paid by individuals and groups caught in the grip of ideology, from the Holocaust to Gulag in the course of the previous century (Assmann 2016). Finally, it was from the ashes of the modernist belief in politics, and the endpoint reached by ideology with the failure of the Enlightenment project, that the discourse

of human rights arose which would put premium on ethical issues and how they impinge on political processes, to paraphrase Dawes (2018: 5). Dawes further explains the specific thematic terrain covered by the human rights novel identifying "the three primary themes of the genre as a whole: endangered privacy, restricted movement, and damaged families" (2018: 55), all of which figure prominently in Danticat's collection *The Dew Breaker*.

That being the case, the dilemma spelled out in the title, "between politics and aesthetics," is perhaps moot since Danticat has made clear how this connection is not secondary, but seminal to her art, acting as the spring of her artistic imagination. The similar entanglement, as she further makes clear, is observable also in the ancient Greek art and literature, which arises precisely as a response to or as contingent on the political and social issues rather than in self-imposed isolation that we tend to attribute to it.[4]

Danticat evidently sees herself as a writer who has to respond to moments of danger and political exigencies wrecking her native Haiti, while addressing them not only at their source, but also tracing how they are transplanted by migratory routes into the United States, thus creating a truly Inter-American and transnational context. In her collection of essays, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010), Danticat evokes the episodes of political terror, so prevalent in Haiti's past and continuing into the present to be considered "ordinary," making it an aesthetic challenge for the writer to present them in a defamiliarizing way: creating an aesthetic form that might elicit reactions of horror, pity or outrage. Greek literature, its myths and plays; Albert Camus, the French existentialist writer; Graham Greene, one of the masters of the political novel, all of these provided Haitians with the venue to express the unspeakable, to oppose the two successive Duvalier regimes in the twentieth century and to reaffirm their human dignity in the face of continuing and criminal disregard for human life and freedom (Danticat 2010: 9). Camus's Caligula is thus an epitome of the crazed and paranoid political tyrant, in which the Haitian dictators could find their own reflection. Sophocles's Antigone dramatizes the conflict between the law of the state relying on pure force and crushing the individual who dares oppose it, and the laws of familial loyalty and affection which prompt Antigone to defy the King's orders, bury her brother, and suffer the consequence of death due to her disobedience (Danticat 2010: 9–10). Literature thus becomes a very

[4] A helpful way to conceptualize the proposed binding of the aesthetic with the social is provided in Rita Felski's recent plea that literature be taken on its own terms as a discourse "fundamentally different from the world and our other ways of making sense of that world, and . . . this difference . . . is the source of its value" (4). Reacting to decades of theory and ideology-laden critical discourse, Felski would like to revive the argument that literature exists apart from illustrating or embodying a particular writer's or critic's ideological stance. In that sense, the ideological contamination and confusion of Danticat's narrators and points of view in the collection is an indication of such a revival of the potential of literature to offer a *poiesis* of the world rather than simply its reflection.

effective political tool for dramatizing the basic conflict – between the individual and the state, between freedom and coercion, between conscience and complicity. Additionally, when we place the text between the arts and society, literary aesthetics and the political order, one way to do it, as suggested by Greg Mullins, is to consider how literature relates and contributes to the discourse of human rights, where the question immediately follows: "Should we place trust in literature when we study the theory and practice of human rights?" (2008: 04). I would like to invoke some of Rita Felski's arguments in that literature creates the likeness of our own world(s) in which various affective and cognitive realizations may take place related to the pre-eminent ethical questions of our social and personal relations and responsibilities, entailed in the responses of "recognition," "enchantment," "knowledge," and "the experience of being shocked" (14). We understand that each of these complex reactions entails or requires the activation of our ethical and aesthetic capacities, sometimes both at once.

We can therefore assume that there is a substantive claim in favor of literature as, among others, an ethical discourse which allows us to imagine what the proper ways to act or feel towards others would be as this is elaborated upon by Martha Nussbaum (Mullins 2008: 6). Besides this generalized point, there remains an additional urge that pushes Danticat's discourse in the direction of the political. As Anja Bandau comments, there is "[the] Caribbean tradition to think about the relation between memory, history, and the role of art as imagination" (2021: 214), and it is this tradition that informs the entanglement of aesthetics with politics. In line with a number of cultural readings of the Caribbean space, we may want to consider the idea of (possibly) traumatic repetition that marks historical processes in the aforementioned space (Šesnić 2007: 217–18). On cue from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary predecessors, in Haiti and in the Western literary canon, Danticat presents an epistemology of twentieth-century state-sponsored terrorism, where it is the state, rather than an isolated or deranged individual, which levels its raw power on the entire population in the pursuit of political goals. The trajectory from the late nineteenth- to the twentieth century, as outlined by Scheingold, certainly does not show the trend of ideological pressures abating (2010: 13–18).[5]

Reading *Create Dangerously* as Danticat's extended meditation on the relationship between literature and politics, proscribed for some time in the Western literary and critical discourse and largely delegitimized in the ambit of postmodernist theories, Bandau rightly points to an act of violence as a primal scene of the collection of short stories that I am about to discuss in the remainder of the text, *The Dew*

[5] Martin Munro, in his overview of Danticat's biography, intersperses salient political events with the facts of the writer's life providing a poignant record of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Haitian history (Munro). Glover's text, on the other hand, weds more stringently the political context and a reading of the short story collection (13–29).

Breaker – the torture and murder of a political prisoner by the member of the Haitian paramilitary police, who is also one of the characters in the stories. Likewise, as Bandau continues, in *Create Dangerously* Danticat locates another act of violence as her own "creation myth" (Danticat 2010: 5) – be it of her parents' immigration to the United States, her own subsequent arrival there, or be it as the ultimate motif of her writing. The act in question, aptly placed by Danticat at the opening of her non-fictional collection, contains the public execution by firing squad of two young men who stood against the first Duvalier regime. As Danticat then explains the repercussion of that act of violence, witnessed by her parents among many others, this was an impetus for the Haitian diaspora and the point of departure for many young people such as her parents (Danticat 2010: 219).

Moreover, the inscription to the story cycle is taken from the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, one of the recurring references that constitute Danticat's international literary canon. Elsewhere, such as in the collection *Create Dangerously*, she singles out Mandelstam among the authors whose poetry spoke back to the Stalinist regime and in doing so literally cost the poet his life (Danticat 2010: 11; Shirazi). For Danticat, this is an indication of the strength of literature and its vision in the face of political power. At the same time, we are invited to inquire how today literature might or might not have the same purpose or impact, competing in a media-saturated environment with other communication channels.

Even though my focus in the present argument is on Danticat's text *The Dew Breaker* (2004), it is hardly isolated from similar concerns recurring in her fiction. Her previous texts, from novels to short story collections to creative non-fiction, have consistently and probingly delved into particular historical moments and periods where the entanglement of Haitian history and political violence was decisive and inescapable. And yet, despite Danticat's obsessive dwelling on her home country's historical burden that is never laid to rest but continues to haunt its present, her fiction and non-fiction do not recede into pamphleteering or political sermon but require primarily an aesthetic response, which could then lead to a historical or epistemological lesson to be imbibed by the reader, and eliciting in her the range of aforementioned responses cited by Felski.

A similar narrative procedure was used by Danticat in her coming-of-age novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, where the political subplot hovers behind the individualized and personalized narrative of traumatization, self-destruction, and psychic healing, and is subordinate to it but never quite subdued. In the novel, the point of origin (the birth of the girl protagonist, Sophie) is marked by the trauma of the mother's rape, which is itself not only the infliction of individual suffering but part of the broader political crisis – since the mother's rapist is one of the dictatorial regime's militiamen, who remains unknown to the victim. Thus is the girl's recognition entangled with the idea of knowledge that only later through the painful processes of working-through, self-examination, and therapy could be turned into other, more

nurturing and creative kinds of responses, such as beauty and the sublime. But importantly, one set of experiences is inextricably tied to its correlates.[6]

The Dew Breaker as a short story cycle or a loosely composed novel addresses the question of (collective) memory of violence or trauma straddling generations and being ensconced within a transnational family stretching between the United States and Haiti.[7] As such, reading can be both sequential and autonomous (chronological and lateral); namely, it can be chronological spanning the first and the second Duvalier regime, and its aftermath taking us to the 1990s as in "The Book of Miracles" or the early 2000s as in "Monkey Tails," or it can take the historical and political events as the continuous backdrop for experiences affecting individuals. Even so, chronology is only re-constituted retroactively, in the reader's mind since the ordering of the stories jumbles the temporality of narrated events. It is thus in the exposition of the family's experience that we first get the daughter's, Ka's, perspective; next, in the middle of the collection follows the mother's point of view (in "The Book of Miracles") in a third-person voice; and the whole collection is capped by the perpetrator's story, told in an omniscient, impersonal perspective in the closing story "The Dew Breaker." Interestingly, the chronology is also jumbled since it is this particular story that takes us furthest back in time, close to the early days of the first Duvalier regime ("circa 1967," as the subtitle suggests (183)). The stories move around the salient political events in the second half of the twentieth century but render them as intensely personal experiences for the characters, all leading up to and climaxing in the reconstruction of the titular Dew Breaker's psychological profile. This reversal is not only challenging ethically – due to his perpetrator status – but also narratively, since it is at the end point that we are given most of the clues with which to decipher the meaning of the events in previous stories since, as Spengler rightly points out, "The book's title character forms the nucleus of violence. He is the epicenter from which violence and secondary forms of violence spread" (2014: 192) but he is also the necessary "link" to other characters and their stories whereby the reader reconstitutes a more complete narrative (2014: 195). By enacting this unsettling reversion, Danticant continues to violate other ethical and narrative norms of the human rights fiction since she doesn't opt for "the justice plot" but rather has the characters enact, what Dawes defines as "the escape plot" (2018: 22). But this is then also undercut by the idea that the perpetrator himself has the same privilege as his victims – that of reaching the U.S. as a safe haven.

[6] This is the line of reading that I pursue in my analysis of the novel based on the trauma theory and the idea that, however risky and tenuously, one needs to consider the possibility of aligning the individual with collective (historical) trauma, while giving both their due in relation to their particular exigencies. These mostly come out in the process of remembering, as a requirement for both an individual and a society (Šesnić 218–36).

[7] For a detailed and nuanced perspective of genre criticism applied on Danticat's text, especially relevant to the distinctions between a short story collection, a short story cycle, and a novel-in-stories, cf. Jung 56–71.

The justice plot is never realized in Danticat's narrative world as she refuses to coddle the reader by providing a neat closure. This is in line with Glover's acute observation to the effect that the notions of justice and evil are "difficult" to address or resolve (2020: 23). This is repeatedly highlighted in the stories. We come up against the characters such as Dany, the bridal seamstress, the funeral singer or Michel, who have to a greater or lesser extent been victimized by the regime and could find themselves in a position to demand or enact (just) revenge. However, the text doesn't offer a neat resolution or accomplishment of this desire: Dany finally draws back from killing the supposed murderer of his parents, the dew breaker; the bridal seamstress's story doesn't stand scrutiny and becomes confusing in the face of reality; the funeral singer will very likely not be able to return to Haiti for a long time to come, and Michel, who emigrates in the wake of the deposition of Duvalier the son, was too young to be directly brutalized by the regime. The text simply does not offer likely openings or scripts which would include the idea of "retributive justice" or even give characters full license to claim that what they might be doing is not "mere vengeance" but an ethical act of vindication, as Glover insists (2020: 24).

On this model, the transnational ambit of trauma might serve as a buffer offering a character a compensatory space wherein the trauma can be acted out from a safe distance and then worked through in order to lead to a tentatively constituted memory culture. Another important thing is the larger context of remembering as offered by contemporary memory studies so that Astrid Erll cites "literature and film as media of cultural memory" (2008: 13). In the case of Edwidge Danticat's novel-in-stories *The Dew Breaker*, the trauma that engulfs the writer's native Haiti is palpable and apparently omnipresent, and it transcends generations. Danticat's short story cycle addresses the longitudinal violence embedded in the continuity of colonial and post- or neocolonial histories and uncovering convergences between the past and present not as a simple causal link but in terms of non-linear, submerged causalities. As in the previous general observation, however, there appears another caveat about the contemporary anglophone fiction coming from "the Caribbean Basin," as observed by Caren Irr, assuming that even though the area is "marked by war, poverty, and genocide [sic]," "trauma" is not "the only story that the migrants tell" about their homelands (2014: 49). As Irr then shrewdly observes, Danticat's rerouting of trauma happens "through communication technologies of the modern state": "Detailing media systems that circulate traumatic histories, Danticat complements the individualist preoccupation with memory with the public concerns of the twenty-first century migration model," in which Irr places her reading of *The Dew Breaker* (2014: 31).

Transnational connections continue to beset both national contexts, that of Haiti and of the USA. In her essay titled "Bicentennial," a reference to the anniversary of the Haitian Revolution, Danticat also revisits the history of uneasy

relationship between the first two republics in the Western Hemisphere, the United States and Haiti (2010: 11), both born out of the act of political trauma, wedding national emergence to revolutionary violence. However, recognizing both the deep similarity and the radical difference of this uncanny doubleness is what fails to be communicated solely by the historical record but must be apprehended by other epistemologies, such as the literature of trauma or the literature of migration. This would indicate that methodologies for dealing with this kind of knowledge stem from transnationalism, cultural memory and a new literary geopolitics. Memory studies methodology, for instance, will be interested in the ways fictionalized memory and non-fictionalized memoirs serve as a supplement to the mandatory historical record produced by various regimes. In the collection referenced here, particularly, the memory goes back to at least 1967, the onset of the first Duvalier regime and extends into the present.

The idea of a *new literary geopolitics* is elaborated upon by Irr, where she considers texts clearly exceeding the boundaries of a single nation, here, the United States, as they illustrate the characters or issues spawned by globalization and which often in terms of plot, setting or character types, step outside the nation.[8] For Irr, this growing tendency marks the rise of a new type of writing in the United States, which she terms the new geopolitical novel, a genre adopted also by Danticat, whose works in turn evoke a globally interconnected space where the First and the Third World, the global North and the South interfere creating moments of rupture and harnessing vast imaginative possibilities. Since Danticat claims that as an emigrant writer she "creates dangerously," we detect a similar sense of danger and urgency firstly in the association from the collection's title, where the reader gets to appreciate the fact that Danticat's bogeyman, a Dew Breaker, is a member of the paramilitary militia in Haiti, a relic from the past whose ghastly presence haunts the pages of her text and whose past and present the narrator is trying to disentangle, examine, and explain through the lenses of trauma, memory, and ethics (human rights). Further, Danticat makes clear that writing, and especially writing in moments of danger, is always a therapeutical exercise but that writing (fiction) alone cannot substitute for specific measures in the political sphere. In his full-length study of the novel of human rights, expressive of the recent concerns with the global distribution and implementation of universal human rights, James Dawes dedicates an entire chapter to the texts that present the perpetrator's point of view or that delve into his inner world trying to decipher the enigma of violence and evil entailed in the blatant violation of human rights in different political contexts (2018: 169–202).

[8] Specifically, some of these writers, Danticat included, invite influences and intertextual references "from outside the American canon" (Irr, "Postmodern" 53). As quite a few scholars observe, and as Danticat clarifies herself in her non-fiction, these include European intertexts and, importantly, the Haitian literary canon (Bellamy 190; Brüske 123, 139–40; Clitandre 36; Dash).

In the course of the argument references will be made to several stories in this cycle of short stories (or "a novel-in-stories" as it is sometimes called) as an illustration of Danticat's narrative procedure. A motif that is used to great effect is the fact of violence which comes out as a violation of and in the family, which thus shields it as a dark kernel that has to be wrestled away, disclosed and revealed for healing and reconciliation to take place on personal, familial, national, and transnational levels. It is indicative, though, that for Danticat this revelation of violation occurs at the beginning of her collection and forms a dark backdrop for her entangled stories. A few comments are in order at this point as relates to an aspect of the political novel, namely, its representations of violence. In a slightly different but intellectually relevant context, Kostova rightly contends that in the case of a literary work we deal with representations of violence, thus "experience is transformed into discourse" (2009: 110). Therefore, by "literalizing" the acts of extreme violence, such as we find repeatedly in Danticat's fiction and in the collection at hand, we are called upon by the writer to interpret or understand (rather than sublimate or utterly defamiliarize) the evil (2009: 111). One could argue that Kostova is correct to posit, on her reading of the literature of atrocity (e.g., the Holocaust memoirs and fiction), that "imaginative literature" evinces a powerful and ethically engaging way to enable what she calls "*rational comprehension*" (emphasis L.K.) of evil and its resultant violence (ibid.). It would seem as if Kostova, in her theoretical argument, reflected the fictional drift of some, if not all, but certainly Danticat's political writing, as she invites us to move away from poststructuralist ideas of ineffability, incomprehension and (negative) sublimity of evil, even while she retains the cogent view of its discursive formation.[9] With these coordinates in mind, let us delve into Danticant's fictional rendition of pervasive political violence and the ensuing collective traumatization.

The Dew Breaker's core story is that of a Haitian American family, whose daughter, Ka, gradually learns about the father's dark past—that he was a dew breaker, one of dictator Duvalier's secret police, Tonton Macoutes, who kidnapped, tortured, and executed thousands of people during the dictatorship lasting from 1959 to 1971, and then transferred their allegiance to Duvalier's son until 1986 and his exile in France. Irr calls the daughter's process of realization "the primal scene" of the stories (2014: 32), thus inviting a traumatic framework of reading that gets

[9] In her now seminal study of the representation of bodily pain in the context of the infliction of politically motivated violence, Elaine Scarry moves from the ideas of the incomprehensibility of other's pain, "its unsharability," "resistance to language" and a "reversion to a state anterior to language" (4) to the ideas that "those who are not themselves in pain" should take up the task to "speak on behalf of those who are" (6). The notion of objectifying pain, as Scarry puts it, becomes especially pertinent as one tries to capture "the political consequence" of expressing (physical) pain (6), just as it is in unmasking the process whereby the expression of pain is appropriated by and turned into "a regime's fiction of power" (18).

refracted through the diasporic, migrant, and media-saturated spaces. As testified by one character, the elderly Haitian bridal seamstress, that man, who now presumably lives on the same street as herself, is "the Haitian prison guard" she knew back in Haiti (Danticat 2004: 128). Beatrice explains where the name comes from: "They'd break into your house. Mostly it was at night. But often they'd also come before dawn, as the dew was settling on the leaves, and they'd take you away" (Danticat 2004: 131). The daughter Ka, a sculptor and an artist, has no links to or memories of Haiti, since her parents didn't dare visit the homeland, but she shares both in her country's troubled history and present, as well as in her family's secret, even if she doesn't yet know what it is. It is interesting to consider the fact of Ka's art, since here Danticat subtly suggests how art and trauma link hands. We understand that there is a peculiar quality to the daughter's art given that she "obsessively" carves statues of a single object, her father (4), and this is the first alert to the reader that there is something peculiar going on in the family. As suggested by trauma theory, the emotional dispositions and affects can be transmitted non-verbally from one generation to the next in a familial context sustaining the dynamics of second-generation memory, as suggested by Assmann (2016: 82). Danticat certainly works with the idea of epigenetic transmission of memory traces but initially casts it in an ironic frame: the memory that Ka believes to have inherited or imbibed by the parents is not the victim memory, it is rather the perpetrator memory.[10]

At first, we find out from Ka's description that her father has recurrent violent nightmares, his "prison nightmares" (Danticat 2004: 4), suggesting a political backdrop. Also, her father is marked by a scar on his face, "the only visible reminder of the year he spent in prison in Haiti," as the daughter opines based on the family's official story (Danticat 2004: 5). Next, she senses that her father is somehow different: "it took me years to realize that my father was doing his best to be like other fathers, to share as much of himself with me as he could" (Danticat 2004: 15). It is also indicative that her art is motivated by her desire to tell the story of her father whom she imagines as a victim of political persecution in Haiti (Danticat 2004: 6), until he confesses to her about his past. This confession is the first testimony in the text, with many others to follow, but what is disturbing is that the testimony comes from the perpetrator and heavily disrupts the daughter's (and the reader's) moral equilibrium.

In his overview of the recurring themes of the novel of human rights Dawes singles out, among others, "damaged families" (2018: 55), drawing attention to the symbolic purchase of the image of the family for the genre in which a violated family usually stands for the expression of political violence or the incursion on individ-

[10] Assmann has recently made a sustained argument for why and how it is necessary to include both strains in the discourse of trauma even though she is averse to the term "perpetrator trauma" but rather looks at perpetrators' dispositions in the light of taboo (78). Dawes also makes an argument for literature being a compelling channel for engaging the ambivalence of perpetrator experience in his study; cf. also Bellamy for the dichotomy.

ual rights. Apparently, at the outset of *The Dew Breaker*, Danticat uses precisely this key image to alert us to the status of the titular family, a symbolic equivalent of the ruptured nation, which is damaged. By focusing on that pole of traumatic dynamics, as Dawes explains, Danticat provokes us into considering our own closeness to and implication with perpetrators who pose a serious moral challenge (2018: 175).

Dawes suggests that the narrative interest in perpetrators, although morally reprehensible, is ethically justifiable and, moreover, artistically gratifying – since it is through fiction, storytelling, and imagination that we could get an answer to the enigma of evil, cruelty, and the deliberate infliction of pain. Given that literature is able to grapple with morally ambivalent or dubious situations by engaging the full scale of our cognitive and affective capacities, it presents us with a correlative to the real world of political and social violence entailed in so many political arrangements nowadays. As Dawes argues, setting "politicized art" against "human rights literature" enables us to appreciate how the letter is able to evince the complexity and urgency of a host of moral and ethical arguments that may (or may not) affect the social sphere. In any case, a work of literature, Danticat's included, teaches us that "the perpetrator might not be so ethically distant from us as we might imagine" (Dawes 2018: 201).

However, as I have suggested, emotional ties – required to keep the family together or used as a screen against which the memory can be projected into the text – occur transnationally, just as the families in the stories brought out by the collection are divided, separated precisely as a result of political violence and a resultant trauma. For Ka, the daughter, this separation is caused by her absence from Haiti and only an imaginary relationship with the place, her parents' homeland. For other characters, it is the forced separation from Haiti or their immigrant or exile status that reinforces the breach since all stories are concerned with Haitian diasporic communities in Florida and New York, intersecting with the stories from Haiti. So even though those traumas occur locally, still the broader context causing them and the conditions of their enactment suggest an international environment and global mapping of trauma, especially since it is necessary to place these discussions in the context of the spatial politics of traumatization relative to Haiti, the Caribbean, and the space of the United States.

In "Night Talkers," another short story in the cycle, the spatialization of trauma happens in the act of immigrating and coming back to find knowledge and the truth about the violent event. Dany, one of the young Haitians skirting the margins of other stories, appears here as a central character, motivated for his return trip to Haiti by the desire to find out the truth about the perpetrator of the arson and murder of his parents in their own home, which he barely escaped as a child, saved by his aunt. In "The Bridal Seamstress," the motif of immigration is also political since a woman in the story wants to escape from violation and persecution by the titular Dew Breaker but has a notion – which is neither corroborated nor dispelled in the

course of the story – that he is haunting her since he presumably occupies one of the buildings on her street. While Dany carries no obvious physical scars from his ordeal, Beatrice, the seamstress, has scarred soles of her feet, a sign of being tortured by the militiaman.

The observable dynamics of trauma displays the following pattern: home country (Haiti) is a place of violence, violation, and a source of traumatization. Once the character or the family transfer to the United States, the hold of the past is supposed to slacken if not entirely disappear since America is a safe haven for the family and the individual character. However, as Raab puts it, "freedom from pain . . . is a far cry from the potential liberation that the United States may offer. It merely means a halt of the process. . ." (2018: 282). First, family history must be remembered and narrated as if the breach or fault line didn't happen—the earlier memories often supersede or loom over more recent events. This is inevitably the case for the first generation, the parents, the political exiles (or the perpetrators, as we see here), whose memory processes evidence the traumatic dynamics: deferred but intrusive and obsessive memories, which refuse to be laid down. Next, the second generation, the often Americanized, assimilated children, should be safely outside of trauma's impact but they become drawn into its inexorable reach. However, one of the conclusions drawn by Danticat's text is quite disturbing: the transfer happens not only for victims, but also for perpetrators and their offspring. Aleida Assmann has recently queried this uneasy aspect of cultural memory in the context of the politics of European memory, but applicable in other contexts as well. As Dawes clarifies, "the justice plot" is one of the key narrative elements of the novel of human rights (2018: 201) but in Danticat we have opportunities to observe how this plot is thwarted and not easily closed since, as Raab explains, "It is less about justice than it is about reconciliation" (2018: 269).

Danticat expands the Bienaimés story (ironically, their family name reads as Beloved, and one wonders if this might be Danticat's textual nod to Toni Morrison and her previous conceptualization of trauma in the Interamerican and transatlantic context that she offered in her eponymous neo-slave novel) so as to include the entire nation, and bring in its transnational circuits.[11] While the Bienaimés live in self-imposed isolation ("he and my mother have no close friends, … they never speak of any relatives in Haiti or anywhere else"), and throw a veil over the history of the land itself (Denticat 2004: 21), their victims sustain a network of connections that yield a counter-history of the post- and neo-colonial entanglements in Haiti, and between Haiti and the United States. This is subtly interwoven in the stories. Some of them are ostensibly not about politics but even as such, they cannot miss pointed references to immigration as a result of Haiti's economic or political volatility ("Seven," "Water Child"). Other stories make a broader historical reference but

[11] Clitandre, moreover, indicates that the family name is deployed by Danticat from one of the Haitian literary intertexts (109).

embed it into a personal or familial story of immigration and exile. So, in "Monkey Tails," the narrative makes an arch from 1986, as it recounts the fall of the second Duvalier regime as an impetus for the protagonist, Michel's, departure from Haiti, to 2004 as he is trying to explain his past to his soon-to-be-born son by making a tape of his experience. Implicitly, the historical conundrum of Haiti is derived from more impervious structures as it is made clear that the dictator, "a pudgy thirty-four-year-old man and his glamorous wife" will escape from the country on "an American airplane that would carry them to permanent exile in France," thus giving an ironic shade to the notion of exile besetting other characters in the stories (Danticat 2004: 140). Metonymically, "brown sugar," the staple of the colonial and post-colonial Haitian economy, still sways the present: "That's the price of their eating sugar in Europe" (Danticat 2004: 152). "Funeral Singer" is another story of the trauma of exile, this time for three women. To orient us in time, the story brings up a reference to a 1970s visit of Onassis's yacht to Haiti and a brief stay of Jackie Kennedy Onassis on the island. The women rue the notion that they will never have the opportunity to return to their homes.

The work of memory and imagination is carried on in the family and across generations, even in a diasporic context which doesn't interrupt the flow of narratives. The characters in the stories may be exiled but they share their painful experience and their remembering of political terror with other members of the community, or, they freely go back and forth between Haiti and the United States and transmit their story in a transnational context. As Mullins points out, "The trauma of torture, state terror and political violence in Haiti is refracted in this novel through a nuclear family, the family allegorically standing for the nation" (2008: 10). These "international connections," here exemplified by rich diasporic networks, as Irr explains, require as "protagonists characters who encounter large and well-established institutions; the protagonists tour and compare these institutions in the context of border-crossing plots" (2017: 51). However, due to specific historical and contemporary exigencies of crossings, migration, and mobility (here that between Haiti and the USA, and back), the characters cannot rely on "received national narratives" but "[t]hey typically turn instead to counter- or alternative histories collected first-hand from a variety of authorities" (ibid.). In *Create Dangerously* Danticat engages as her informants or alternative voices a range of people who act as witnesses for themselves and others or who "create dangerously" the art that speaks to the present moment of Haiti. This plethora of voices and perspectives, according to Irr, brings rise to a particular sensibility that departs from the ironic, intertextual, and ludic aspects of the postmodernist fiction and aims at different goals: "Rather than concentrating their energy on provoking animus toward the perceived national other and its literary voice, late postmodernists dedicate themselves more fully to deepening the authority of the new voices they include; they more often honor than excoriate" (ibid.).

In line with a transnational perspective, Clitandre proposes to read *The Dew Breaker* in the space between the diaspora and the nation (2018: 105) since, as she observes, this might indicate the replacement of paternal narratives (emerging in the nation) for those maternal (nurtured by the diaspora) (2018: 107). Starting from these structuring dualities, Clitandre further notes how doubling acts as an important narrative strategy in the cycle given that it comes forth as thematics, as narrative form, and as character relations, thus giving rise to various ethical and psychological observations. For this, we will take an example form "The Bridal Seamstress" and "The Dew Breaker." In the former, Beatrice, the traumatized victim of the Tonton Macoutes, specifically the Dew Breaker, carries a physical reminder on her body – her scarred feet. This wound is directly, if subversively, correlated with the frightening scar that the Dew Breaker carries across his face, except that here it not only corresponds to psychic suffering but is the indication of his perpetrator sadism turned back on himself. However, as Spengler correctly points out, "[E]ven in the case of the victimizer, the scar bespeaks the psychological wound" (2014: 199). Martínez Falquina, in her discussion of the scar's manifold implications, contends that "his scar proves the aliveness of the past in the present, haunting him as his memory haunts his many victims"; further, it works its effect "by silences and gaps, by hidden memories and failed attempt at forgetting a terrible past" (2014: 172). It is precisely in the realm of literature that these kinds of ethical dilemmas might be brought up for consideration and the resultant ambiguities tolerated since the scar, going back to Martínez Falquina's argument, sits between "fragmentation and connection, wounding and healing, forgetting and remembrance" (ibid.). Another instance of a perpetrator-victim dynamic, if not quite so obvious, takes place in "Night Talkers" between Dany's experience, the loss of his parents in a Tonton Macoute raid led by the Dew Breaker, and another young Haitian American man, Claude, who is traumatized by the crime he has committed – the murder of his father, for which he served a prison sentence and was deported to Haiti. The narrative brings us to realize "interrelations" and "connections" even if sometimes we still have to understand what the underlying meaning is meant to be (Spengler 2014: 203).

Other moments of doubling (for the discussion of cultural, religious, and psychological implications of the term, (cf. Clitandre 18–20, 81–82) and dualism can be observed at the level of structural nodes in the cycle where another underlying connection is that of loss (absence, parting, death) and presence (reunion, healing), as indicated by the stories of "Water Child" and "Funeral Singer," as opposed to "Seven" and "Monkey Tails." In the former set, it is the women who carry the plot of loss and irresolvable, unattenuated grief that is lodged inside them and blocks their process of healing. They create and sustain their rituals of mourning and devotion to death and loss (in the case of the aborted baby or in the case of exile from Haiti). In the mirror stories, interestingly, men seem more capable of transcending pain and trauma and enacting hopeful rituals of life, resilience, and love. As other critics

have helpfully pointed out (Bellamy 2012: 181 et passim; Conwell 2005–2006: 221; Martínez Falquina 2014: 186),[12] one could observe the axis of speech and silence as fundamental for the organization of the stories, which ranges from Dany's compulsive and subliminal nightmares in which he verbally reenacts the episode of his parents' murder and arson to Michel's urge to tape his story for this newborn son, or to an interview that the bridal seamstress gives ostensibly about her sewing skills but that turns into an act of witnessing to the bewildered reporter. On the other side are the instances of silence, silencing, muteness, and breakdown in communication. The grieving nurse in "Water Child" shuts herself from communication; in "Seven," the estranged husband and wife experience awkward silences upon their reunion in the States after seven years of separation; Ka notes the ominous conspiracy of silence enveloping her childhood and growing up amidst the family's secrets; in "Monkey Tails," the mother refuses the speak the identity of Michel's father. In "Funeral Singer," the singer falls silent and is unable to perform her art.

Thus, the memory work undertaken in Danticat's works is never easy, nor simply affirmative: the one thing that literature can do is to become a medium of public memory in the aftermath of political violence with the function to "foster counter memory" (Mullins 2008: 8), as quite a few stories in a collection testify (the bridal seamstress's story; Dany's story; Michel's testimony; the women's intertwined stories of exile in "The Funeral Singer"). However, in Danticat's collection this important role of memory is complicated and strained since the recuperation of counter-memory, even at the level of a single family, the Bienaimés, has to bring together and lay side by side the perpetrator's story (the father who is actually the militia-man and torturer) and the mother's (whose brother, the pastor, was one of many tortured and killed by the dew breaker but also his last victim before he fled the country). Danticat shows that there is no easy way out of this entanglement, which it is given to the daughter to work out. But it is ultimately only through the work of memory and imagination offered by literature that the question, as posed by Mullins, can be approached and possibly answered: "What kind of love [and we might add, trust, reconciliation, communal life] is possible in a family and a nation that has suffered such violence and betrayal" (2004: 10)?

Danticat's stories are much more resilient to the idea or possibility of reconciliation, partly since the recognition of the father's past takes place in a familial context, and not in any of the public places where it could be vetted by the entire community, especially by the victims or the people who were hurt by the dew breaker's or the regime's actions. Thus, the story of acting out is still the only outlet for a number of characters, who never get to the stage of working through. Nor can the father's story be integrated with or arranged alongside the victims' since there is no public court of opinion which would be able to adjudicate. This impossibility is

[12] In the scope of that thematic, it is indicative that Danticat herself addresses her narrative procedure in the text in terms of voice, marking the collection in an interview as a moment in which she found a voice of her own (Clitandre 24).

evident in the plotlines of the stories: while it is Danticat's idea to interweave the plotlines and to show, in a manner of shortcuts, how the paths of torturer and victim intersect mostly unknowingly, sometime consciously, still the confrontation never happens and the victims never achieve narrative victory. The examples of failure are Beatrice's testimony that falls on the ears of a sympathetic journalist, a Haitian American girl with no connection to the dark past, but also by the fact that Beatrice's story can be dismissed as ranting by a senile old woman suffering from persecution paranoia (Danticat 2004: 137). The other example is the testimony of Dany, who as a child witnessed the murder and burning of his parents in their own house. After so many years he recognizes the dew breaker as a barber in a local Haitian American community in Brooklyn, where he has emigrated, but his testimony is ineffective since it is told only to his elderly aunt and enacted in his recurrent nightmares that the dew breaker is now coming for him (Danticat 2004: 108). This miscommunication is perhaps a result of the still open wounds even after the fall of the regime in Haiti. Not even the transnational context can help here: it is simply the case that national traumas are carried across borders, and that even in the relative safety of American spaces dark history lurks so that one of the victims, the bridal seamstress, does not feel safe even in her suburban home or women, political migrants, feel the pain of never being allowed to return under the threat of death.

Danticat's spaces might be a refuge, but this reading is complicated by the fact that they are so for both the victims and the victimizers. This fatal duality then ultimately prevents the achievement of closure, either for the dew breaker's family or for his victims. It also criticizes the slippage whereby the perpetrator of torture can reinvent himself in the States while this is often denied to his victims raising questions of justice in relation to the closure of trauma (Rohrleitner 2011: 75): "He hadn't been a famous 'dew breaker,' or torturer … just one of hundreds who had done their jobs so well that their victims were never able to speak of them again" (Danticat 2004: 77). Quite a few readers thus found Danticat's text quite disturbing and risky considering how Danticat sways the reader response, first by drawing the reader into the dew breaker's world and his psyche and then countering it with the testimonies of his or the regime's victims (Bellamy 2012: 179; Dawes 2018: 178; Glover 2020: 23; Mullins 2008: 6); importantly, in the opening story it is the father's, dew breaker's testimony that we read. The final story reconstructs the story of the dew breaker, his origins and his rise in the hierarchy of terror, conveying the depth of his sadism and the perverse refinement of his procedures of torture (Danticat 2004: 198). How his path intersected with that of his future wife's, Anne, is also reconstructed: Anne's brother, the preacher who speaks up against the regime is taken into prison and tortured by the dew breaker, and the scar across his face was inflicted by the preacher, who is ultimately killed by him. On that same night, upon leaving the site of torture, he encounters the preacher's sister. This woman was presumably his savior, an angel, an agent of grace sent to deliver him from his old life (Danticat 2004: 237). Is the miracle possible, is the atonement, reparation available (Danticat 2004: 242)?

By not offering easy answers, which by the way would bely the historical outcomes in Haiti, Danticat's writing poses stark questions of the failure of the state and the political domain to hear and adjudicate the narratives that she presents in *The Dew Breaker*. As an instrument of global human rights discourse, literature can only go so far. As Rohrleitner cogently points out, Danticat's focus on the Dew Breaker, the perpetrator type, is also an implicit criticism of "the flaws in U.S. asylum policies and U.S. support of dictatorial regimes and military coups in the Caribbean nation" (2011: 74).

What seems to be particularly invigorating about a new geopolitical fiction by Danticat is her staunch refusal to allow the process of traumatization to lock her characters in either the process of melancholic, unresolved grieving or the inevitable obsessive repetition. The roles, even though set down by the inexorable historical processes are not fixed forever – especially as the characters are able or cajoled to provide stories about their plight. I would connect this capacity, which needless to say is not a miraculous panacea for collective suffering and individual trauma, with the observation that Danticat makes in *Create Dangerously*. What seems to be a recurring pattern is the idea of resilience, resistance, witnessing, self-witnessing, denouncing, preaching, talking back to power, that real-life people have exhibited in moments of danger. As Spengler helpfully points out, Danticat revises the concept of trauma insofar as she envisions and allows for "the importance of voicing traumatic experiences in order to foster healing" (2014: 196) or, rather, to affirm the potential to survive. Haitian writers keep writing, even though some are forced into silence or exile, radio hosts keep broadcasting even though it might cost them their life, the witness of torture will eventually tell her story even though half mutilated by the experience, the painter will keep on painting striking compositions. This brings us to the original question – to consider the ways that the value of literature as a discourse that pertains to politics, human rights and trauma is unquestionably salient and that it shows greater capacity to do so than a host of other discourses put together. That seems to be the abiding if not quite objectively measurable value of literature in the present day and age when rather than reducing the need for this kind of politically engaged writing, it appears to grow as we speak.

The entangled skeins of trauma crisscross the transnational families of victims, perpetrators, exiles and immigrants as analogies of interwoven histories of "hunters" and "prey," while suggesting their familial proximity. This is, furthermore, what complicates the otherwise valid discourse of trauma in reading the stories. The narratives do not offer facile equation between the executioners or torturers and their victims (what Aleida Assmann calls "normalization") but show how their plotlines formed the collective memory in the periods of post- and neo-colonialism still persisting in the present. This entanglement then found its imaginative likeness in the form of the family which at its core bears a dark kernel that needs to be revealed so that the process of healing could begin. It is through the imaginative rendering of narration as uncovering of secrets that collective and national reconciliation might

occur. As we know, this is not so simple or straightforward in an extra-literary domain—but literature shows the way, not by burying stories but by keeping them alive. The political domain should follow this principle.

Works Cited

Assmann 2016: Assmann, A. *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*. Translated by Sarah Clift, Fordham UP.

Bandau 2021: Bandau, A. Create Dangerously: A Poetics of Writing as Memorial Art; the Text as Echo Chamber. – In: *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat,* edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Nadège T. Clitandre, Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 213–30.

Bellamy 2012: Bellamy, M. R. More than Hunter or Prey: Duality and Traumatic Memory in Edwidge Danticat's The Dew Breaker. – In: *MELUS*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 177–97.

Braziel, Clitandre 2021: Braziel, J. E., Clitandre, N. T., editors. *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Brüske 2021: Brüske, A. *Lòt bò dlo:* Producing Haitian Spaces of Death and Diaspora in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker.* – In: *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat,* edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Nadège T. Clitandre, Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 121–43.

Celucien 2020: Celucien, J. L. et al., editors. *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Edwidge Danticat*. Routledge.

Clitandre 2018: Clitandre, N. T. *Edwidge Danticat: The Haitian Diasporic Imaginary*. University of Virginia Press.

Clitandre 2021: Clitandre, N. T. Interview with Edwidge Danticat. – In: *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat,* edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Nadège T. Clitandre, Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 19–37.

Conwell 2005–2006: Conwell, J. Papa's Masks: Roles of the Father in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. – In: *Obsidian III*, vol. 6, no. 2/ vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 221–39.

Danticat 2004: Danticat, E. *The Dew Breaker*. Vintage Contemporaries, 2004.

Danticat 2010: Danticat, E. *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*. Vintage Books.

Dash 2010: Dash, M. J. Danticat and Her Haitian Precursors. – In: *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide,* edited by Martin Munro, University of Virginia Press. E-book.

Dawes 2018: Dawes, J. *The Novel of Human Rights*. Harvard UP.

Erll 2008: Erll, A. Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction. – In: *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Erll and Ansgar Nünning, in collaboration with Sara B. Young, Walter de Gruyter, pp. 1–15.

Felski 2008: Felski, R. *Uses of Literature*. Blackwell Publishing.

Franco 2017: Franco, D. Pluralism and Postmodernism: The Histories and Geographies of Ethnic American Literature. – In: *The Cambridge companion to postmodern American fiction,* edited by Paula Geyh, Cambridge UP, pp. 112–30.

Geyh 2017: Geyh, P., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern American Fiction*. Cambridge UP.

Glover 2020: Glover, J. From Duvalierism to Dechoukaj in *The Dew Breaker.* – In: *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Edwidge Danticat*, edited by Joseph L. Celucien et al., Routledge, pp. 13–29.

Howe 1963: Howe, I. *A World More Attractive: A View of Modern Literature and Politics*. Horizon P.

Irr 2014: Irr, C. *Toward the Geopolitical Novel: U.S. Fiction in the Twenty-First Century*. Columbia UP.

Irr 2017: Irr, C. Postmodern American Fiction and Global Literature. – In: *The Cambridge companion to postmodern American fiction,* edited by Paula Geyh, Cambridge UP, pp. 47–62.

Jung 2020: Jung, N. A. Teaching Genre as Method in *The Dew Breaker*. – In: *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Edwidge Danticat,* edited by Joseph L. Celucien et al., Routledge, pp. 56-71.

Kostova 2009: Kostova, L. Of Literary Representations of Extreme Violence and Their Ethical Coordinates. – In: *Literary into Cultural History/De l'histoire littéraire á l'histoire culturelle*, edited by Mihaela Irimia, Institutul cultural Român, pp. 110–22.

Kostova 2016: Kostova, L. 'A Dainty Morsel for the Executioner': Terrorism and Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Popular Fiction. – In: *Trees of Knowledge: Roots and Routes. Essays in Honour of Michael Grancharov*, edited by Snezha Tsoneva-Mathewson, Yana Rowland, and Vitana Kostadinova, Plovdiv UP, pp. 344–59.

Martínez Falquina 2014: Martínez Falquina, S. Postcolonial Trauma Theory and the Short Story Cycle: Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. – In: *ES: Revista de Filología Inglesa*, vol. 35, pp. 171–92.

Mullins 2008: Mullins, G. Labors of Literature and Human Rights. – In: *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 4–12, DOI: 10.1080/10402650701873668.

Munro 2010: Munro, M. Inside Out: A Brief Biography of Edwidge Danticat. – In: *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide,* edited by Martin Munro, U of Virginia P. E-book.

Munro 2010: Munro, M. editor. *Edwidge Danticat: A Reader's Guide.* U of Virginia P. E-book.

Novakovich, Shapard 2000: Novakovich, J., Shapard, R. Introduction. – In: *Stories in Stepmother Tongue*, edited by Novakovich and Shapard, White Pine P, pp. 9–18.

Raab 2018: Raab, J. Liberation and Lingering Trauma: U.S. Present and Haitian Past in Edwidge Danticat's The Dew Breaker. – In: *Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Media, Memory, and Projections of Democracy*, edited by Hans Bak, Frank Mehring, and Mathilde Roza, Brill, 2018, pp. 265–84.

Rohrleitner 2011: Rohrleitner, M. Ch. 'Breaking the Silence': Testimonio, Revisionary Historiography, and Survivor's Guilt in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* and *The Dew Breaker*. – In: *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, vol. 28, no 1, pp. 73–85.

Scarry 1985: Scarry, E. *The Body in Pain: Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford UP.

Scheingold 2010: Scheingold, S. A. *The Political Novel: Re-imagining the Twentieth Century*. Continuum.

Shirazi 2003: Shirazi, S. Mandelstam in Exile. – In: *New England Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 199–213.

Spengler 2014: Spengler, B. Art as Engagement: Violence, Trauma, and the Role of the Reader in Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. – In: *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 189–205, doi:10.1093/cwwrit/vpt020.

Šesnić 2007: Šesnić, J. *From Shadow to Presence: Representations of Ethnicity in Contemporary American Literature*. Rodopi.