

Braiding Ancestral Remembrances: Examining Narrative Self-Construction in *Krik? Krak!*

NINA KAUSHIKKAR
Carleton College

Introduction

THE EVOLUTION OF TRAUMA FICTION in recent decades has been driven in part by writers who have adopted intersectional lenses in their coverage of traumatic events, particularly those occurring in postcolonial states and the Global South. In these works, fact and fiction can become blurred as authors insert aspects of their own experiences through the narrator. One example of such a work is *Krik? Krak!*, a collection of short stories by Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat centering the multigenerational experiences of Haitian women. By shifting to a second-person point of view in the epilogue of *Krik? Krak!* in contrast to the first-person perspective used in the collection's other stories, Danticat argues that it is necessary to narrativize the self as part of a collective rather than as an individual to heal from intergenerational, shared trauma. Furthermore, Danticat points to generations of women as the conduit through which collective narrativizing and subsequent healing from trauma will occur. By embracing the role of the collective in healing from trauma, and inserting her own experiences into these characters' lives, thereby creating a work of autofiction, Danticat reconceptualizes the relationship between trauma and the self, particularly as it pertains to women, presenting broader implications for narrative self-construction in Haitian and postcolonial literature.

A Brief Overview of Trauma Theory

Since post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was recognized as a condition of trauma in 1980, scholars have distinguished between the clinical definition of trauma studies and "trauma theory," which explores the cultural effects of trauma.¹² Cathy Caruth, a leading scholar in the field of trauma theory, defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena."³ According to this definition, it is only through the process of first forgetting and then reliving a single event that a person experiences trauma. This definition also highlights the unpredictability of trauma responses, implying that survivors lack control over the way they understand, process, and react to traumas that they face.

Recent scholarship has criticized Caruth's definition on the grounds that it is limited to the Holocaust and other Western conflicts,⁴ raising two primary concerns. First, Caruth's definition of trauma neglects the unique experiences of Black and Brown people who experienced trauma under colonial and imperial rule and in the postcolonial regimes that followed. These experiences

¹Kirby Farrell, *Post-Traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties* (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 1998).

²Sarah Wood Anderson, *Readings of Trauma, Madness, and the Body* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2012), 11.

⁴Mairi Neeves, "Apartheid Haunts: Postcolonial Trauma in Lisa Fugard's 'Skinner's Drift'," *Studies in the Novel*, 40 1/2 (2008), 108-126.

challenge Caruth's definition because forms of trauma sustained under these conditions do not occur as a single event, but rather as a collection of varied incidents of abuse. Additionally, defining trauma responses as "overwhelming" and "uncontrolled" denies agency to marginalized people in their expressions of trauma, suggesting that they are incapable of possessing control over their reactions. Second, Eurocentric definitions of trauma lead to a contestation between what may or may not constitute "legitimate trauma," as trauma experienced outside of a Western context may not be recognized as such. As a result, many scholars have called for "decolonizing" trauma studies, acknowledging that "by ignoring or marginalizing non-western traumatic events and histories and non-western theoretical work, trauma studies may actually assist in the perpetuation of Eurocentric views and structures that maintain or widen the gap between the west and the rest of the world."⁵

Caruth's definition also elides uniquely gendered aspects of trauma. Not only have traumatic events that largely impact women (such as rape and sexual assault) been overlooked, but women's expressions of trauma, particularly if they have not engaged in military action, is ignored or even overtly disregarded, in part due to definitions of trauma that privilege PTSD resulting from military activity or war.⁶

Moreover, Caruth, in attributing trauma to a singular event, fails to acknowledge the impact of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma occurs when "the trauma and its impact may be passed down as the family legacy even to children born after the trauma,"⁷ meaning that trauma responses, if left untreated, manifest through multiple generations in the form of emotional distance, abuse, mental and physical illness, or toxic relationships with others. Intergenerational trauma is also linked to historical trauma, a "collective trauma experienced...by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance,"⁸ which is particularly relevant in discourse surrounding trauma related to postcolonial events.

The Portrayal of Trauma in Literature

Literary narratives surrounding and centering traumatic events are not new. Such "trauma narratives" are "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience"; they are culturally driven, addressing trauma sustained by individuals in the wake of catastrophes such as war, poverty, the emergence of colonialism and neocolonial activity, and domestic abuse.⁹ More recently, trauma narratives have extended beyond the impact of a single person or event to focus on examples of collective and intergenerational trauma that persist in the public memory, spoken or not.¹⁰ This trend is reflected in postcolonial fiction, with novels such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* spanning multiple generations and depicting the effects of traumatic events over a long period of time. In this way, literature can force people to reckon with events that are locked away in silence either out of shame on the part of the oppressors or as a trauma coping mechanism on the part of survivors (recognizing

⁵Stephen Craps & Gert Buelens, "Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels," *Studies in the Novel*, 40 1/2 (2008): 1-12.

⁶Aisha Ibrahim, "Connecting Testimony, Trauma, and Memory: The Sierra Leone Experience." *Pacific Coast Philology* 44, no. 2 (2009): 249-271.

⁷Yael Danieli, "Assessing Trauma Across Cultures from a Multigenerational Perspective," in *Cross-Cultural Assessment of Psychological Trauma and PTSD*, ed. Catherine So-kum Tang and John P. Wilson (Springer, 2007), 69.

⁸Nathaniel Vincent Mohatt and others, "Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A conceptual review of how history impacts present-day health," *Social Science and Medicine* 106 (2014): 2

⁹Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002).

¹⁰Michelle Balaev, "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 41, no. 2 (2008): 160.

that there may be overlap between those groups).

Part of the reason literature may be such a useful medium in addressing an individual's trauma is because it is "at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet."¹¹ Literature provides a voice for the expression of an individual's knowledge of an event, whether that knowledge contains the "real" truth of the event - that is, an accurate retelling of the events - or a psychological truth, which encompasses the way a witness or survivor remembers the event and may fabricate or imagine it.¹² Literature does not require a holistic telling of a traumatic event and gives the author room to prioritize a single story and perspective. In not having to adhere to the boundaries of truth, the author is free to use the narrator of the story as a device to depict different responses to trauma, and to move the experience of trauma beyond the individual, instead reflecting on a larger community. There is no singular truth - and no singular story - that needs to form the basis of the narrative.

This idea reflects narrative theorist Barbara Herrnstein Smith's conception of multiple narrative versions; she writes that "for any particular narrative, there is no single basically basic story subsisting beneath it but, rather, an unlimited number of other narratives that can be constructed in response to it or perceived as related to it."¹³ The different contexts in which narratives and narrative selves are constructed give those selves their character; this allows for varied interpretations and understandings of a singular traumatic moment based on the narrative self that is present. Furthermore, the lack of a "basically basic story" carries forward the critique of Caruth's reliance on a single traumatic moment in the definition of trauma; Caruth's definition sets up a two-tier model of understanding trauma that centers a single event, which in turn produces an "accurate" narrative. Herrnstein-Smith allows for a rejection of that model, carving out room for multiple events and narratives that embody different forms of truth. This understanding supports the existence of collective, intergenerational traumas that, based on the person experiencing them, can manifest in different ways.

The language used in trauma literature matters as well: the format of fiction allows the author to stretch the story beyond the limits of conventional narrative and formal, "acceptable" language. Language itself can be manipulated, and "in testing formal boundaries, trauma fiction seeks to foreground the nature and limitations of narrative and to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event."¹⁴ Various literary devices and tools, such as point of view and mixing genres of writing, can be used to amplify this effect. Conversely, fiction allows for the processing of traumatic experiences to be expressed in a coherent telling through manipulating language. Such expression may aid not only the survivor but also the audience in comprehending the events that occurred.

Edwidge Danticat's short story collection *Krik? Krak!* plays with some of these different aspects of narrative construction. Although the narrator is never named, these stories draw upon Danticat's own experiences and hearing the stories of the women around her, making *Krik? Krak!* an example of a trauma narrative that blends elements of fact with fiction, potentially complicating the positionality of the author. Furthermore, the inclusion of multiple generations in the collection - and highlighted in the epilogue - speaks to the representation of inherited trauma, particularly for women, in literature.

¹¹Caruth, 3.

¹²Shane Graham, "The Truth Commission and Post-Apartheid Literature in South Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 1 (2003): 11-30.

¹³Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 221.

¹⁴Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

Depictions of the Temporality of Trauma and Self-Construction in Narrative

An important factor in examining the portrayal of intergenerational trauma in trauma fiction and literature is the effect of time on self-narrativization. Galen Strawson's "Against Narrativity" articulates two conceptions of understanding self through the lens of time: being either diachronic or episodic, in which a diachronic is one who "naturally figures oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future" and an episodic is one who "does not figure oneself, considered as a self, as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future."¹⁵

Definitions that center the temporality of self-construction allow for the character to determine to what degree they want to accept their inheritance of intergenerational trauma (although this may not even be a choice, as some responses to trauma involve a subconscious forgetting). Applying Strawson's definitions to inherited trauma, diachronics operate with a self-awareness of their positionality in generational trauma. They are aware that they have absorbed certain traumas that existed in the further past (even if the diachronic figure did not exist yet), so through these traumas they consider themselves having existed in the further past. Likewise, diachronics recognize that because of the nature of inherited trauma, a part of themselves will continue to exist in the further future, even if their physical form has passed.

Extending Strawson's definition, episodics do not intentionally perceive themselves as operating within the timeline of intergenerational trauma, whether by choice or involuntarily. Even if they are conscious of their traumas (and are not blocking them from memory), they do not view their traumas as an extension of themselves. They may acknowledge the presence of intergenerational traumas that affect their idea of self, but they have not absorbed those traumas into their perceived consciousness of themselves, nor do they feel that the traumas that they have experienced are so much inherently part of them that they will pass it down involuntarily to the next generation, where those traumas will continue to exist in the further future. In the epilogue of *Krik? Krak!*, because it is narrated in the second person, it is possible to view the narrator as both a diachronic and an episodic. This perception is dependent on whether the use of second person is meant to create distance from trauma and a rejection of its memory or if the second person is meant to create a larger sense of community around these traumas, fully embracing them as part of the self.

Intergenerational trauma does not only deal with different temporal contexts of trauma; it also concerns different people, and the transference of aspects of one person's identity as developed through trauma onto the next generation. This ultimately complicates understandings of self, where the self is no longer necessarily limited to the experiences of a single, isolated being. In the second part of his argument, Strawson rejects the claim that it is necessary to self-narrativize to be considered a self. Anthony Rudd, in response, posits that "one needs to understand where that person has come from and where s/he is trying to get to. And it is narrative that makes what a person is doing at one time intelligible."¹⁶

Both Strawson and Rudd are right; per Strawson, when it comes to individuals who are dealing with complex forms of trauma, there is no way to construct a self in isolation, or in a vacuum, separate from the trauma that they inherit. Therefore, it is not necessary to construct an autobiography, or a narrative about oneself, to be considered a self, because that story, in neglecting the effect of intergenerational trauma, would be constructing an incomplete self. However, Rudd is also correct in saying that people draw upon their understanding of their heritage and where they come from to make sense of themselves, and that narrators embody their past— whether that

¹⁵Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio* 17 (2004): 428-452.

¹⁶Anthony Rudd, "In Defense of Narrative," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 17 (2009): 64

is within their own timeline as a living being or extending beyond that— to construct their stories. Ultimately, a “wholly encompassing” construction of self must account for inherited traumas and absorbing parts of others’ consciousnesses.

In the epilogue of *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat upholds both interpretations of narrativizing self by using the second-person point of view to demonstrate the effects of two possible responses to trauma.

Point of View and Processing Trauma

The use of second-person point of view in the epilogue is particularly interesting, since the rest of the collection is told in the first person; there are two types of trauma responses that are depicted in this style of narration. In the first interpretation, the second person is used to distance the narrator from their participation and inclusion in these traumatic experiences. This echoes the understanding that “second-person narration is a kind of masked first-person narration.”¹⁷ In this case, the “you” that the implied “I” is addressing would be the implied reader. The implied reader is simultaneously “the flesh-and-blood re-creator of many stories” while also being “a relatively credulous listener within the tale...who accepts it all as happening” and “who knows that the story is not literally true.”¹⁸

The reason for combining two definitions of the implied reader is the concept of “autofiction” - writing that combines autobiographical details with fiction. Because Danticat draws upon many of her own experiences in Haiti, as well as memories of people she knows, *Krik? Krak!* can be defined as a work of autofiction. The application of the term “autofiction” is perhaps best understood through the epilogue, which includes events generic enough that it is unclear whether the things that the narrator is addressing to the “you” are existing only within the bounds of the story, or whether they spill beyond the page and into the “real” (non-story) world. Relevance to the “real” world is particularly important for works of autofiction that are rooted in significant political or historical moments, such as Danticat’s, because the “you” that the narrator addresses may have also lived through the events that shape the background of the story, which would impact the implied reader’s determination of how true the stories are, and how they choose to recreate it in their own imaginations. If these political and historical events are sources of trauma, the piece of autofiction becomes a trauma narrative, with consequences for both the implied reader and the narrator in their constructions of self.

The interpretation of second person being a masked first person is supported in the epilogue, as Danticat writes, “sometimes, they [the women in your life] were talking to faces across the ages, faces like yours and mine.”¹⁹ The use of the word “mine” here implies that the narrator is a singular individual, intentionally separating herself from the “face like yours,” hinting that there is some difference, whether the “you” is an individual or a collective. The temporal indication in this line recalls Strawson, as the narrator seems to shift into the tone of a diachronic in recognition of an ancestral lineage that continues to interact with present generations. There is also an attempt to bridge the separation between the narrator and her ancestors in their understanding of the narrator’s need to write as a form of self-construction, as the aunties say that “women like you do speak, even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand.”²⁰ This validation of the narrator’s attempts to self-narrativize tries to fill some of that intentional distancing, but to little avail in part because of the untranslatability of trauma; the “tongue that is hard to understand” is a product of

¹⁷H. Porter Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative: Second Edition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 71.

¹⁸Wayne Booth. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 61.

¹⁹Edwidge Danticat, *Krik? Krak!* (New York, NY: Soho Press, 1995), 223.

²⁰Danticat, 222.

the narrator's unwillingness or incapacity to absorb and internalize these inherited and experienced traumas.

However, there are two other uses of first person in the epilogue that complicate the interpretation that second person is used solely as a mechanism to distance from trauma. Preceding the aunties' statements, the narrator explains, "the women in your family have never lost touch with one another. Death is a path we take to meet on the other side...there is an army of women watching over you...we are always with you."²¹ In this line, there are two interpretations of the term "we"; in the first mention, it sounds like the narrator is attempting to become part of the collective "you" that has been established as the implied reader, as they are traversing the same path of Death (or, at least, have traversed it before). In the second usage of "we," however, the narrator seems to become part of the past generations of women waiting for the "you" to arrive, as "we are always with you" implies that the narrator has already ascended to the ranks of the ancestral women interacting with the younger generations rather than the narrator being the one writing the inheritances of those ancestors, as established when the narrator speaks of "a thousand women urging you to speak through the blunt tip of your pencil."²²

The effect of the separation between the narrator in the mock first-person and the collective "you" that engages with these ancestral bodies and traumas is an active avoidance of self-narrativizing. Indeed, the narrator states that "sometimes, you dream of hearing only the beating of your own heart, but this has never been the case. You have never been able to escape the pounding of a thousand other hearts that have outlived yours by thousands of years."²³ Returning to Strawson and Rudd, such distancing from trauma has the effect of avoiding narrativizing self as an individual, because it is impossible to construct individual self without acknowledging traumatic inheritances. In avoiding self-narrativizing, the narrator remains in the position of an episodic, either unconsciously or intentionally separating oneself from their own traumas even as they acknowledge the traumatic experiences carried by their ancestors. Danticat thus demonstrates how narrativizing the self as an individual is insufficient when it comes to the work of healing intergenerational and transmitted trauma.

Danticat instead uses the second-person point of view to support narrativizing self as part of a collective; this is the second interpretation of the use of "you," and one that represents the point towards which the narrator seems to be approaching. The narrator opens the epilogue by writing, "you remember thinking while braiding your hair that you look a lot like your mother. Your mother who looked like your grandmother and her grandmother before her."²⁴ The references to these ancestors demonstrate that the narrator is aware to some degree of the way stories and identities are passed down through generations. These lines are repeated at multiple points throughout the epilogue as well, acting as markers of transition, where the narrator slowly begins to accept and absorb the identities of her ancestors. The second person "you" that is used here is not one meant to create distance between the narrator and other women who belong to this lineage; rather, the narrator is attempting to forge a larger community, where there is a collective "ancestral lineage" of women who, together, pass down their stories, their identities, and their traumas. The narrator is extending their arms to welcome more people - the implied and flesh-and-blood readers - into this circle of women. Returning to the point made about autofiction, and how this collection of stories is rooted in truthful and real experiences, the narrator is speaking to multiple audiences as she seeks to make this large group and carry forth these traditions. This is therefore a significant way that Danticat revolutionizes the relationship between trauma and self; because these multiple audiences can also include the reader and other real people (including Danticat herself), the narrativizing of

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Danticat, 224.

²⁴Danticat, 219.

self in response to trauma is not limited to the text. Danticat therefore bridges the trauma healing process experienced by the characters in the story and by people in the non-story world who share such experiences.

This is also point at which Strawson and Rudd intersect regarding the necessity and appropriateness of narrativizing; maybe self-narrativizing for an individual is unproductive, but narrativizing self in the context of a collective, wherein the self is not just the individual but rather an amalgamation of many past selves and future selves (in the form of the traumas that are passed down). The forging of a collective process of self-narrativizing also aids in healing from trauma, particularly because it is not done alone - constructions of a narrative self are done in conjunction with the other women in this collective, with the “kitchen poet” ancestors “whispering in your ear.”²⁵ The necessity of the process of narrativization is best elucidated when the narrator explains, “you thought that if you didn’t tell the stories, the sky would fall on your head... there have been days when the sky was as close as your hair to falling on your head. This fragile sky has terrified you your whole life.”²⁶ If the sky falling on one’s head is equivalent to death, then that implies that it would be death to not write, and to not narrativize self and these experiences.

Throughout the process of writing the epilogue, the narrator seems to assimilate into the collective “you,” embracing their identity as part of this ancestral lineage of women with their inherited traumas that are passed down. At the beginning, the narrator seems to distance themselves not only from the rest of their family, who rejects the narrator’s aspiration of becoming a writer (also constituting a rejection of the narrator’s coping mechanism for trauma, as writing is a necessity for the narrator to continue existing), but also from their own inheritances of trauma. Nevertheless, by the conclusion of the epilogue, the narrator has appeared to internalize the inheritances of her ancestors and their traumas, as the narrator finishes with, “when [your mother] was done she would ask you to name each braid after those nine hundred and ninety-nine women...and since you had written them down and memorized them, the names would come rolling off your tongue.”²⁷ Danticat thus solidifies her argument that trauma healing through self-narrativization is best done by imagining the self as part of a collective – specifically, a collective of women.

Gendering Literary Trauma Narratives

In reckoning with trauma and self-construction, another important identity to consider that Danticat stresses throughout the collection, and particularly in the epilogue, is womanhood, and belonging to a network of women. A major motif in the epilogue is the idea of braiding hair, and braiding being analogous to weaving a story; at one point, the narrator expresses that “when you write, it’s like braiding your hair...your fingers have still not perfected the task.”²⁸ Because braiding hair is an activity done by other women for other women – such as a mother braiding her child’s hair - it sends an important message about the necessity of having collectives of women be the parties through which self-narrativizing (and thereby trauma healing) occurs. Here, Danticat also seems to be resisting the male domination of trauma narratives by demonstrating how women, as the unspoken inheritors of trauma who are often neglected, write their own stories, and must rely on each other to construct coherent selves.

Braiding hair also appears to be the conduit through which the narrator can absorb the traumas and stories of her ancestors. In the repeated braiding of hair, the narrator learns to memorize the names of the nine hundred and ninety-nine women who came before her; her mother, as she braids

²⁵Danticat, 222.

²⁶Danticat, 223.

²⁷Danticat, 224.

²⁸Danticat, 220.

the narrator's hair, transmits those names to her - and their associated stories and memories and essences. The process of braiding, therefore, becomes not only a way to heal from trauma through intergenerational bonding, but also a tool for the narrator to use as she continues to construct these stories - and herself in the process. It also serves as a tool to make these memories known to the public - by speaking them aloud or writing them down, or giving life to them in a collective memory in some way.

The focus on women forming networks among themselves to heal from political or cultural trauma is even more significant because of the ways women's bodies and lives are used to construct the nation. The dictatorships that often defined postcolonial states were characterized by a public display of masculinity and its political power, and women were often glorified as symbols of the nation but were barred from significant action; Haiti, as Danticat shows, was no exception. Women are viewed as the biological reproducers of the nation, because they can physically create future generations. This stems from the idea of a common origin, which lies at the center of most ethnic and national collectivities. Women are also viewed as cultural carriers, allowing them to serve as the symbolic markers of the nation and of the group's cultural identity. Deniz Kandiyoti, a scholar on gender and politics, explains, "Women bear the burden of being 'mothers of the nation' (a duty that gets ideologically defined to suit official priorities) as well as those who reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/ national groups."²⁹

Both constructions lead to a loss of autonomy. Women become symbols, and almost deified, but are never allowed to be recognized as autonomous figures with their own desires separate from the actualization of the nation. Danticat rejects this foundation; in positioning collectives of women as a force of resistance to patriarchal formulations of the nation, she gives them the ability to retain their autonomy as they keep their own, neglected histories and memories alive. The epilogue of *Krik? Krak!* is evidence that women can express and heal from trauma by rejecting the role assigned to them by men to be carriers of the nation's culture and instead adopting the identity of creators of a new history, and thus a new nation in which they will have autonomy and freedom to determine their own identities. In repositioning women as not only the victims of trauma - which is often the most emphasized part of their identity, particularly within postcolonial literature - but also as the figures who possess healing powers from it, Danticat gives women new forms of agency in self-narrativizing in literature.

Conclusion

The evolution of trauma fiction and literary trauma theory alongside it has led to some exciting developments with regards to constructing self in postcolonial spaces among marginalized communities. The diversity of Haitian women's experiences within *Krik? Krak!*, and the multitudes of their traumas and resistances, linked through generational threads, reflects a broader shift towards new ways of understanding self-construction in narrative when the lines between fact and fiction are often blurred. Drawing upon a variety of narrative theorists and literary trauma studies specialists, I posit narrative constructions of self within postcolonial fiction are often complicated by the depiction of multigenerational traumas and the manipulation of non-traditional forms of narrative technique, such as the use of second person. Ultimately, in the epilogue of *Krik? Krak!*, the narrator can absorb the traumas and parts of selves of her ancestors, and in doing so, is able to self-narrativize and preserve the selves that she inherits from her women; the use of second person in the narrative speaks to not only an implied audience but also to those in the real world who turn to narrative as a mechanism for understanding self, particularly in processing and healing from intergenerational trauma. This model provides a compelling introduction to other narrative

²⁹Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam, and the State* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994), 376-77.

techniques that can be adopted in trauma fiction that centers intergenerational trauma in women.

Danticat's reformulation of women's responses to trauma are particularly important in the broader context of postcolonial literature. At the time of *Krik? Krak!*'s publication in 1991, the field of postcolonial literature was still largely male-dominated, and few women authors – much less Black women – had gained notoriety for postcolonial fiction at this juncture. Danticat's texts were a critical entry into the field because her stories were among the first to not only center the experiences of Black women in postcolonial fiction, but she also presented Black women as having agency and the power to resist the traumas they were subject to, rather than being presented as passive victims. Despite the progress made in the broader field of postcolonial literature in terms of amplifying Black women writers from postcolonial states and the diaspora, however, Danticat remains one of the most prominent Haitian American writers, and likely the most well-known Haitian female writer. One element of her writing that has continued to set her apart is her focus on the Haitian and Caribbean diaspora in the US and attempting to unite the experiences of the diaspora with those of people in Haiti. As a result, scholarship in the past few years has started to analyze her more recent works with a focus on self-identity construction and narrativization in relation to the diaspora. The intersection of self-narrativization, gender, and diaspora remains a fruitful topic for further study and discourse.

Another arena for further exploration is the inclusion of autofiction within the field of postcolonial literature and theory, with an added focus on the role of women as storytellers and cultural reproducers. Even though Danticat is not alone among postcolonial authors in blending personal experience with fiction, as most such authors draw on their personal histories or encounters with significant political or cultural moments, the genre of autofiction as it relates to the representation of the postcolonial world in literature has not received a great deal of attention. Danticat's forays into the intersection of autofiction and portraying the multigenerational traumas experienced by Haitian women provide a solid foundation for more research into how memoir and autofiction impact the formation of postcolonial literature.

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