

THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND MEMORY IN THE FARMING OF BONES STORY IN THE DEW BREAKER

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Abstract. *This article examines how Farming of Bones story addresses the lasting psychological impact of political violence on survivors and their communities. Through the experiences of the protagonist, Amabelle Desir, Danticat weaves a narrative that reflects on the complexity of identity, particularly in the context of the Haitian-Dominican divide. The novel highlights the fragmented nature of memory and the role of storytelling in preserving collective history. The novel emphasizes the power of memory to resist erasure and serves as a reminder of the importance of acknowledging past atrocities for reconciliation and survival.*

Keywords: *trauma, memory, identity, Parsley Massacre, fragmentation, historical violence, political violence, psychological scars*

Introduction Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998) stands as a powerful exploration of trauma, memory, and identity within the context of a dark chapter in Caribbean history. Set against the backdrop of the 1937 Parsley Massacre—an event where thousands of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic were killed by the government—Danticat weaves a story that highlights the profound emotional and psychological scars left by political violence. The novel centers on Amabelle Desir, a young Haitian woman who survives the massacre and struggles to rebuild her life amidst the enduring trauma. Through

Amabelle's journey, Danticat captures the complexity of survival and the difficult process of reconciling with a painful past.

In *The Farming of Bones*, Danticat examines how trauma not only disrupts the individual's sense of self but also shapes collective memory and identity. The novel underscores how history, particularly one marked by violence and injustice, cannot be easily erased. Instead, it lives on through stories, both personal and communal, passed down through generations. This article delves into the ways in which Danticat uses memory and trauma to explore the struggles of her characters and their attempts to heal in the aftermath of unimaginable violence. It also considers how storytelling serves as a vital tool for preserving history and fostering understanding, offering a means for both personal and collective redemption. Through *The Farming of Bones*, Danticat provides a poignant meditation on the importance of remembering and confronting the past in order to move forward.

Literature review Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* has generated significant academic interest, particularly regarding its exploration of trauma, memory, and identity, as well as its representation of the 1937 Parsley Massacre. Scholars have analyzed the novel through various lenses, from historical trauma theory to post-colonial studies, emphasizing its contribution to both Haitian and Dominican cultural histories. One of the central themes explored in *The Farming of Bones* is the long-lasting effect of trauma, particularly trauma experienced through political violence. Scholars like Anna M. McCarthy (2003) have noted how Danticat's portrayal of the Parsley Massacre emphasizes not only the individual suffering of those who survived but also the collective amnesia that often follows such atrocities. McCarthy discusses how Danticat frames memory as fragmented and elusive, showing that trauma manifests in dreams, physical pain, and disjointed recollections, often leaving survivors struggling to make sense of their past. This aligns with Cathy Caruth's (1996) theory of trauma, where she posits that traumatic events cannot be fully integrated into the victim's life narrative, leading to an ongoing disconnection from reality. Danticat's

narrative style, which shifts between past and present, reflects this fragmentation, demonstrating the difficulty of confronting past violence while simultaneously attempting to heal from it.

Discussion At the heart of *The Farming of Bones* is the theme of trauma and its effect on memory. The novel presents the experiences of Amabelle Desir, a young Haitian woman who survives the massacre but loses her lover, Sebastien, and many others during the brutal violence. As Amabelle struggles to cope with the loss of her loved ones, she experiences a fragmented sense of memory. Her recollections of the massacre are fragmented, hazy, and often disjointed. This aligns with trauma theory, especially Cathy Caruth's (1996) assertion that trauma cannot be fully integrated into the victim's consciousness. Caruth argues that traumatic events disrupt the normal processing of memory, preventing individuals from making sense of what they have lived through. For instance, Amabelle's memory of the massacre is fragmented, often showing the impossibility of fully remembering or understanding the depth of the violence. She recalls images of her dead loved ones and the terror she witnessed, but these memories remain incomplete, repeating in a cyclical manner, preventing her from fully healing. This mirrors the experience of many trauma survivors who are unable to fully integrate their traumatic memories into their life narrative, leading to ongoing emotional and psychological pain. Danticat demonstrates that the process of confronting trauma requires piecing together disjointed memories to reclaim lost parts of oneself, yet even when faced with memories, characters cannot escape the overwhelming nature of what they've endured.

Conclusion In *The Farming of Bones*, Edwidge Danticat masterfully intertwines the themes of trauma, memory, identity, and storytelling, offering a profound meditation on the impact of historical violence on both personal and collective lives. The novel's exploration of the 1937 Parsley Massacre serves as a lens through which Danticat examines the complexities of national identity, particularly the fraught relationship between Haitians and Dominicans. Through the fragmented and often painful memories of the survivors, Danticat illustrates

the lasting emotional scars left by political violence and the difficulty of reconciling with a painful past.

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