

30,000 “Sebastiens Onius” brought from the margins to the center through memory in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*

30,000 "Sebastiens Onius" resgatados das margens para o centro através da memória em *The Farming of Bones*, de Edwidge Danticat

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For history as for the individual, forgetting can be just as convenient as remembering, and remembering what was once forgotten can be distinctly unforgettable.

Margareth Atwood

ABSTRACT: The present work aims at highlighting the traumatic historical experience of discriminatory violence and oppression suffered by Haitians during the dictatorial regime of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina in the Dominican Republic. The Haitian Massacre of 1937 is magnificently “uncovered” by a hyphenated writer, the Haitian-American, Edwidge Danticat in *The Farming of Bones*, a novel whose title refers to the “phrase used by the cane workers for their grueling work in the fields.” (DIVAKARUNI: 1998, online) The thesis of this paper is that memory might work as a tool to recover the “names and faces” of silenced and oppressed people. Indeed, memory may enable them to create their own (hi)stories, bringing them from the margins to the centre. Moreover, regarding the main function presented in the meaning of *testimonio*, that is, a story “that needs to be told”, I will attempt to prove that reading Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* could be taken as the reading of a *testimonio* itself.

Key words: Memory; history; literature

RESUMO: O presente artigo objetiva enfatizar a traumática experiência histórica de violência discriminatória e opressão sofrida pelo povo haitiano durante o regime ditatorial de Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina na República Dominicana. O massacre haitiano de 1937 é “desvelado” de forma magnífica pela escritora haitiana-americana Edwidge Danticat em *The Farming of Bones*, romance cujo título refere-se à “expressão usada pelos cortadores de cana em seu árduo trabalho nos campos.” (DIVAKARUNI: 1998, online) O propósito do presente trabalho é demonstrar como a memória pode funcionar como instrumento na recuperação de “nomes e rostos” de silenciados e oprimidos. Na realidade, a memória permite que essas pessoas criem suas próprias histórias, movendo-os das margens para o centro. Além disso, considerando a principal função apresentada no significado da palavra *testimonio* (testemunho), que é, uma história “que precisa ser contada”, tentarei provar que a leitura do romance *The Farming of Bones* da escritora Edwidge Danticat pode ser considerada como um *testimonio* propriamente dito.

Palavras-chave: Memória; história; literatura

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The present work aims at highlighting the traumatic historical experience of discriminatory violence and oppression suffered by Haitians during the dictatorial regime of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina in the Dominican Republic. The Haitian Massacre of 1937 is masterfully “uncovered” by a hyphenated writer, the Haitian-American, Edwidge Danticat in *The Farming of Bones*, a novel whose title refers to the “phrase used by the cane workers for their grueling work in the fields.” (DIVAKARUNI: 1998, online) The thesis of this paper is that memory might work as a tool to recover the “names and faces” of silenced and oppressed people. Indeed, memory may enable them to create their own (hi)stories, bringing them from the margins to the centre. Moreover, regarding the main function presented in the meaning of *testimonio*, that is, a story “that needs to be told”, I will attempt to prove that reading Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* could be taken as the reading of a *testimonio* itself.

The literary production of contemporary Caribbean writers can not be detached from the historical background of the islands as well as from the traumas experienced throughout their history. Taking into account that most of these authors do not live in the Caribbean islands anymore, we may say that the physical distance they experience promotes an intellectual distance that allows them room to criticize their homelands’ situation. As Wendy W. Walters states, “Distance, then, couples the longing of nostalgia with the liberty of critique. These entanglements and complications are fruitfully articulated in literary narratives.” (WALTERS: 2005, p. viii-ix) Indeed, Edwidge Danticat seems keenly aware of her particular “in-between” status, and locates herself in what Jean Bertrand Aristides calls “the tenth department” of Haiti, the floating homeland, the ideological one, which joined all Haitians living in the diaspora. (HARRIS: 2010, p. 31) Regarding the positive aspects of being a hyphenated writer, I may say that if you are in a “valley” you can see both sides more clearly. Rather as Edward Said points out:

Seeing ‘the entire world as a foreign land’ makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from a music is – contrapuntal. (SAID: 2002, p. 186)

Bearing in mind the importance of knowing about the history of Haiti in order to understand the specific concerns brought by Danticat throughout her work, I will begin my research bringing some historical background of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The border between Haiti and Dominican Republic in the Cordillera Central mountain range is virtually irrelevant to the peasants who cross it, and in the north, the river that divides the two countries is an unimpressive stream. Indeed, the real border between Haitians and Dominicans is a history based on oppression, racism, tragedy and trauma. In Eduardo Galeano's article *The White Curse [Haiti]*, the author states that on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, "there is a sign that reads: Road to Ruin." (GALEANO: 2004, online)

Haiti and the Dominican Republic also share a history of border disputes and too-often-bloody battles. Among these appalling events, it is the Haitian Massacre of 1937 when the Dominican dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, "El Jefe", unofficially ordered the murder-by-machete, the Dominican peasant uprising against Haitian cane laborers in the country; (BRAZIEL: 2008, p. 150). More recently, the condemnable conditions of Haitians migrant workers in the Dominican Republic's *bateyes*, or corporate sugar cane farmers have been shown in the 2007 documentary "The Price of Sugar" directed by Bill Haney.[†]

In the 1930s, Rafael Trujillo approved a new legislation requiring that all migrants be registered and Haitians with no documents be deported. Therefore, many Haitians who had lived in the Dominican Republic for years but did not have documentation to prove it had to leave their homes in the Dominican Republic and were forced to head back to Haiti. (Turits: 2002, p. 617) Throughout Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*, part of this cruel history is shown, as we may read in the following passage when some parents are complaining about the limitations on their Haitian children's education in the Dominican Republic:

Me, I have no paper in my palms to say where I belong. My son, this one who was born here in this land, has no papers in his palms to say where he belongs. Those who work in the cane mills, the mills owners keep their papers, so they have this as a rope around their necks. Papers are everything. You have no papers, they do with you what they want. (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 70)

[†] Bill Haney's *The Price of Sugar* is available, divided into 9 parts, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs-vBI0tmIQ&feature=related>

In October 1937, Trujillo, who was a former sugar cane plantation guard, and who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930 until his assassination in 1961, commanded his army to kill all Haitians living in the Dominican Republic's northwestern frontier, which borders on Haiti, in order to "cleanse" the country. Within a period of seven days, 15,000 ethnic Haitians were rounded up and slaughtered with machetes, many of whom had been born in the Dominican Republic, thus were Dominican citizens according to the Dominican Constitution, and some whose families had lived in the Dominican Republic for generations. Haitians were slain even as they attempted to escape to Haiti while crossing the fatefully named Massacre River that divides the two nations. After the first days of the slaughter, the official checkpoint and bridge between Haitians and the Dominican Republic were closed, thus impeding Haitians' escape. In the following weeks, local priests and officials in Haiti recorded testimonies of refugees and compiled a list that ultimately enumerated 12,168 victims. Subsequently, during the first half of 1938, thousands more Haitians were forcibly deported and hundreds killed in the southern frontier region. (TURITS: 2005, p. 589-591) Once more Danticat enables us to verify part of the history inside her narrative, "verbalizing" it through one of her characters, "To them we are always foreigners, even if our granmèss' granmèss were born in this country," [...]. "This makes it easier for them to push us out when they want to." (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 69)

Travelling to the other side of the border, one will get into Haiti, which is the first black republic in the Americas, as the journalist and writer Eduardo Galeano, reminds us. (GALEANO: 2004, online) Haitians were ruled by François Duvalier from 1957 until his death in 1971. His rules, based on the purge of his opponents by military force, or rather, a rural militia, known as Tonton Macoutes – named after a voodoo monster – and the use of a personality cult and voodoo, resulted in the murder of an estimated 30,000 Haitians and an ensuing brainwashing politics from which the country apparently has not recovered yet.

Michele Wucker points out in her article that "history is no longer in the hands of dictators, since the presidents of Haiti and of the Dominican Republic have been elected democratically"(WUCKER: 2004, online) Nevertheless, we may consider the distinct differences between the two countries. Haiti was hit by a 7.0 earthquake in 2010 which killed more than 200,000 people and left a million and a half homeless there. Last

year's Haitian national election was followed with reports of fraud, and protestors went to the streets in order to fight against it. The earthquake, the hurricane and the recent cholera outbreaks make us think that Haiti is a country that has not really recovered from its "curses" yet. (HARVEY: 2011, online) Moreover, the condemnable conditions of Haitians migrant workers in the Dominican Republic's *bateyes*, as shown in Haney's documentary, prove us that the history of violence and racism between Haitians and Dominicans is very far from its end. Pondering on the historical hatred between Haitians and Dominicans, which is represented in Danticat's novel, I will bring part of the fictionalized story in order to show Danticat's awareness of this fact.

Although Señora Valencia, who is Amabelle Désir's mistress, has just lost Rafael, her baby boy, who was named after the "Generalissimo", she invites the "cane people" to have a "cafecito" at her home. When her husband, Señor Pico, who is a military man, returns from the burial of their son, Señora Valencia tells him what she has done for the cane workers. Danticat, subtly, represents the despal of Dominicans against Haitians:

He did not scold her, but once he discovered that she had used their imported orchid-patterned tea set, he took the set out of the yard and, launching them against the cement walls of the house latrines, he shattered the cups and saucers, one by one. (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 116)

Stuart Hall, in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, states that the "loss of identity" has been an inescapable aspect of Caribbean experience, going back and forth inside the history of the two countries, we may say that the issue of identity is more problematic for Haitians than for Dominicans. According to Pedro San Miguel, the national identity of the Dominican Republic was forged as white, civilized and Catholic, in opposition to Haitians, who were considered black, savage and voodoo practioners. (SAN MIGUEL: 2005, p. 39) Black acquired a new meaning: it meant uncivilized, violent and oppressive and was attributed to Haitians. This ideology helped to increase hostilities between the Dominicans and Haitians since Dominicans feared being characterized like their neighbors. The "curse" of being Haitian in Trujillo's Dominican Republic is clearly depicted in Danticat's novel through the voice of the character, Amabelle Désir. After escaping Alegría, Amabelle and her fellow survivors reach Dajabón, which was "lit up like a carnival parade", (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 188) while the crowd was celebrating the presence of Trujillo, who had given a speech, restating

that Dominicans “problems with Haitians would soon be solved.”(DANTICAT: 1998, p. 189) In the middle of the crowd Amabelle states: “Some of the Dominicans who were closest to us that showed they pitied us more than they despised us. Others pointed us out to their children and laughed. They told jokes about us eating babies, cats and dogs.” (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 190)

The Farming of Bones is set in the fictional Dominican border town, ironically called Alegría. Although the name of the city means happiness; it is where the persecution of Haitians and the slaughter take place. Danticat’s novel is a fictionalized account of an actual event that is the 1937 massacre; which is recounted by Amabelle Désir, a young woman born in Haiti, but raised in the Dominican Republic by a Dominican family who “adopts” her after her parents drown in same fateful river. Amabelle has a lover, Sebastien Onius, who was also from Haiti but had to migrate in order to help his mother after his father was killed by a hurricane. Amabelle’s narrative is alternated with poignant memories of her parents, her dreams, her conversations with her beloved Sebastien. The fictionalized characters Amabelle Désir and Sebastien Onius, as well as their creator, Edwidge Danticat, are diasporic subjects. Taking into account the relationship established between the postcolonial contemporary woman writers and their characters, professor and critic Leila Harris, in her article *Outras Cartografias: Espaços Geográficos e Discursivos*, argues that “migrating woman authors as well as their created characters are influenced by two or more cultures, thus developing hybrid identities from the ruptures suffered by geographical and cultural dislocations they experience.” (HARRIS: 2007, p. 48 -49)[‡]

Regarding the consequences that diasporic individuals engage experience when they are introduced to new cultures, critic Homi K. Bhabha in his work *The Location of Culture* argues that “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where place and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.” (BHABHA: 2010, p. 02). In accordance with the process of identity construction in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall states that:

identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that is only through its relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that

[‡] MY TRANSLATION

the ‘positive’ meaning of any term – and thus its ‘identity’ – can be constructed. (HALL: 1996, p. 04).

According to Wendy Walters, the texts of diasporic writers give us new ways to conceive of community and resistance to oppression and domination, thus these writers believe in writing as a hopeful space. (WALTERS: 2005, p. xx) *The Farming of Bones* can be read as a site of claiming voice to the oppressed as well as a site of fighting against historical oblivion. Considering these arguments, I selected two relevant passages having as its narrator, our “border character”, Amabelle. In order to claim voice to the oppressed, Amabelle states that “It is perhaps the great discomfort of those trying to silence the world to discover that we have voices sealed inside our heads, voices that with each passing day, grow even louder than the clamor of the world outside.” (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 266) Considering the idea of narrative as a site of fighting against historical obscurity Amabelle states that, “All I want to do is find a place where it will neither be scattered by the winds, nor remain forever buried beneath the sod.” (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 266) Another important suggestion presented by Amabelle’s narrative is the retention of memory as an act of resistance, as she states that, “The slaughter is the only thing that is mine enough to pass on.” (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 266)

Ella Shohat, like Stuart Hall, highlights the importance of communities that have experienced brutal ruptures and which are now in the process of forging a resistant collective identity through the retrieving of their traditions, in other words, their past – “not as static, but as fragmented sets of narrated memories and experiences” – “no matter how hybrid that identity has been before.” (SHOHAT: 2006, p. 244-245) In accordance with Shohat, Hall argues that “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.” (HALL: 2010, p. 236) Danticat’s attempt, throughout the novel, to move away from official discourse, creating a powerful counter narrative, indicates she is fully aware that the past is “not something to be escaped, avoided, or controlled [...] The past is something with which you must come to the terms and such a confrontation involves an acknowledgement of limitation as well as power.” (HUTCHEON: 2002, p. 55) According to Stuart Hall, in his essay *Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities*, the past is always retold, reinvented; moreover, it has to be narrativized. And since we

go to it through history, memory, desire, past is not a literal fact. (HALL: 1997, p. 58). Bearing in mind the importance of the past, not as a revival but as a new possibility, Danticat, in a 1998 interview, states that:

The massacre is not well-known here in Haiti...But I was thinking so much I want to popularize it with a larger audience as with younger people, like my brothers, who didn't know about it at all. It's a part of our history, as Haitians, but it's also a part of the history of the world. Writing about it is an act of remembrance. (CHARTERS, 1998, p. 42)

Throughout the novel, Danticat interweaves history and literature in order to posit new possibilities for the future. In addition, she reformulates the relationship between history and identity offering us, the readers, an instance of how history can be re-written to include women and other marginalized groups, therefore joining a number of contemporary authors who are concerned in historicizing “the event of the dehistoricized.” (BHABHA: 2010, p. 283) The writer, in a way, entraps us, the readers, in her blurred realms of fiction and history facts, making us wonder where the fiction ends and the history starts or vice-versa. Rather as Linda Hutcheon states, “The borders between literary genres have become fluid: who can tell any more what the limits are between the novel and the short story collection, the novel and the long poem, the novel and autobiography, the novel and history, the novel and autobiography?” (HUTCHEON: 1993, p. 250) Hutcheon also argues that combining and making genres unstable facilitates the representation of what was previously “un-representable.” Therefore, the representation of history in *The Farming of Bones* becomes the history of representation.

In the postmodern literary discourse, memory has played an important role. Throughout her novel, Danticat makes use of memory as way of uncovering and recovering the forgotten and manipulated histories of the “nameless and faceless” in order to reshape a future of and for other subjects. Therefore, throughout her work, the act of remembering is fundamentally social and collective; it is a way to keep the continuity of an ethnic community; in other words, she makes use of memory as a political process. Indeed the stories and traumas brought with the slaughter throughout Danticat's novel can be seen as an attempt to construct a collective memory in which the discourse of the “Other” will come from the margins to the center moving away from historical discourse. Regarding the importance of memory as a political process,

Stephen Bertman, in his work *Cultural Amnesia: America's Future and the Crisis of Memory*, refers to memory as a very fluid process in constant change, stating that:

Memory is distorted by needs, desires, interests and fantasies. [Memory] is subjective and malleable rather than objective and concrete, memory is emotional, conceptual, contextual, constantly undergoing revision, selection, interpretation, distortion, and reconstruction... Cultural or collective memory constitutes the collective memory of many people, encompassing generations. (BERTMAN: 2000, p. 27; 31)

Danticat's awareness of the importance to build a collective memory is well portrayed through Amabelle's narrative as well as Father Romain's function, since he encourages Haitian congregants through his sermons remember their "common ties: language, foods, history, carnival, songs, tales and prayers." (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 73). Amabelle tells us about Father Romain and his vital importance for Haitians who were living on the border town, when she says that Father Romain, while "just" listening, enables Haitians living in the Dominican Republic to "return home" through memories as well as to release their sufferings:

This was how people left imprints of themselves in each other's memory so that if you left first and went back to the common village, you could carry, if not a letter, a piece of treasured clothing, some message to their loved ones that their place was still among the living. (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 73)

Regarding the absence of the "Other" history, Danticat creates the 30,000 "Sebastiens Onius's" History, as I will argue later on. Standing on the banks of the river, where the slaughter took place, Danticat's interested in creating a story out of the (Hi)story emerges, as she argues , "There are no markers. I felt like I was standing on top of a huge mass grave, and just couldn't see the bodies. That's the first time I remember thinking, 'Nature has no memory' [...] and that's why we have to have memory." (CHARTERS: 1998, p. 42) In a passage of the novel, the author brings the same idea of absence of the "Other" history when Amabelle, twenty-four years after the massacre, while celebrating Trujillo's death, states: "There were no graves, no markers. If we tried to dance on graves, we would be dancing in air." (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 270)

Individual as well as collective memory of Haitians and Caribbeans has been characterized by lacks, gaps and traumatized absences. The absence of the "Other" history from collective memory, as well as the author's urgency in "healing" this

absence by reconstituting the past can also be read as an effect of trauma, which is an inescapable aspect of the history of Caribbean islands. Trauma is never exclusively personal; it always interwoven with history. For the psychologists Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub working through trauma is really about the patient's ability to represent what was previously un-representable - that is, to represent trauma itself. Rather, they argue that re-narrativizing trauma is really about the articulation of rupture itself. (VÁZQUEZ: 2003, p. 389) In Danticat's novel historical and private traumas are re-narratized in order to move on beyond the shattered fragments of history; the characters want to speak out their sufferings in order to heal their "wounds."

Traumatic experiences permeate the whole novel and the river is the place in which all the traumas faced by the characters are posited, mainly if we take into consideration Amabelle, the protagonist, who loses her parents, her friends and her lover as well as her happiness in living in the same fateful place, the Massacre River. According to Heidi Tiedemann, novels dealing with past traumatic experiences appeared with some regularity during the 1980s and 1990s. These works will portray historical atrocities, such as slavery and genocide, as well as varying forms of interpersonal violence, mainly childhood sexual abuse. Trauma novels take the form of historical fiction, narrated by a first-person narrator or fictionalized survivors, whose accounts bear witness to the need for violent actions to be admitted into public consciousness. These literary works usually deal with women survivors, in order to highlight the relationships between narration, gender and trauma. (TIEDEMANN: 2001, p. ii)

"Trauma from Greek meaning 'wound', refers to the self-altering, even self-shattering experience of violence, injury, and harm." (GILMORE: 2001, p. 6) Psychologist Cathy Caruth goes beyond identifying trauma as an ethical discourse of the "Other" because it "opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening, the witnessing, precisely, of impossibility." (CARUTH: 1996, p. 10) While dealing with trauma, language is a crucial element. Despite the fact that trauma is marked by the difficulty, perhaps even impossibility of telling, it is also marked by the need for telling. In Danticat's novel, when the Haitians, in the makeshift clinic, tell their stories about the massacre, we can verify their need for telling: "Taking turns they exchanged tales quickly, the haste in their voices sometimes blurring the words, for greater than their

desire to be heard was the hunger to tell.” (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 209) Danticat, herself, grasps the importance of telling as a way of healing sufferings up. In 2004, her father after being diagnosed with a terminal disease began telling his family history; then she tells an audience at Bucknell University “Because he told his stories at an important point in his life, his heart was lighter.” (FERRANTE: 2011, online) In *The Farming of Bones*, the writer goes beyond the telling of trauma as a socially constructed and meaningful act, her writing about the trauma caused by the slaughter becomes more than criticizing and pointing out the systems of oppression and racism against Haitians. Indeed, it becomes a way to bring those living in the “margins” to the centre, enabling them tell their “Other” history.

While trauma gives rise to the need to tell, in *testimonio*, by contrast, there is a huge weight on hearing, on reception, because only if the audience truly listens can it be motivated to take action in the current crisis. In his essay *Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening*, Dori Laub emphasizes that the *testimony* always ‘includes the hearer’, whom he identifies as the survivor’s necessary “addressable other.” (LAUB: 1991, p. 68) Rather as Judith Herman states that “[r]ecovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it can not occur in isolation.” (HERMAN:1992,p.133). Therefore, Laub and Herman highlight that while it is important for the survivor to create a narrative about her experiences, it is equally important that the survivor have the support of a listener or a community of listeners. Considering the importance of a supportive listener, I selected a passage, in which is shown Father Romain’s vital importance for Haitians who were living on the border town, while “just” listening to them, he enables these people to “return home” through memories as well as to release their sufferings:

This was how people left imprints of themselves in each other’s memory so that if you left first and went back to the common village, you could carry, if not a letter, a piece of treasured clothing, some message to their loved ones that their place was still among the living. (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 73)

Although Amabelle is one of the traumatized survivors, she is also a means by which we witness the other survivors’ *testimonios*. The *testimonio* of those who experienced the oppression is important not only to point out the true problems faced by them, but also as an inspiration to make other voices come out from the margins to the centre. In Danticat’s work, the characters will revive the past through *testimonios*. Even

while they acknowledge that historical amnesia and silence are powerfully appealing alternatives, they bravely decide to speak out their traumas. Thus, their telling their stories is an act of renewal, a strategy of survival, a moment of witness, not only for the speakers but also for the listeners/ readers. Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*, through its characters, inscribes in the permanence of literary discourse the stories of the "Others". Rather, Danticat inscribes in the literary discourse the (Hi)story of 30,000 "Sebastiens Onius", providing them with some kind of name and identity, since "Men with names never truly die. It is only those nameless and faceless who vanish like smoke into the early morning air." (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 282) Regarding Danticat's awareness in relation to the importance of names and naming since "a person never dies as long as their name is remembered, called" (hooks: 1989, p. 166), the book has a relevant passage in which Man Denise, Sebastien's mother, tells Amabelle the reason she named her son Sebastien, "...Saint Sebastien, who died not once, but twice." [...] "I named him Sebastien", she said, 'because I knew it would be wise if a man could have two deaths.'" (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 240).

While I was re-reading *The Farming of Bones*, regarding the meaning of the name Sebastien and its inscription in the very first paragraph made me wonder about the possibility of admitting that the fictionalized name Sebastien Onius is the representation of all the "nameless and faceless" who vanished during the slaughter. And although almost 30,000 "Sebastiens" disappeared in the Massacre River and were hidden from the official history once, now they have their second chance, through literature, to have their identities and (hi)stories uncovered in order to make them "Live In Peace" in our memories and hearts. Taking into account that *testimonio* is a story "that needs to be told", Danticat's novel is itself the *testimonio* of 30,000 "Sebastiens Onius", which is instructive and cathartic for a nation that due to a series of continuous struggles has never really had time to pause and grieve any single tragedy for so long. Moreover, by contrast of Sylvie, who is the new maid at Señora Valencia's house, who states that "I have always wished Madame [...] for an answer." (DANTICAT: 1998, p. 305), Danticat brings us, as an answer, the "Other"(hi)story. What makes Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* special and its telling so valuable is its attempt to turn a history which was once forgotten into an unforgettable 30,000 "Sebastien Onius's" (His)story,

its recounting experiences that are not only segments of individual lives but also vital segments of Haitian History.

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