

**UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI**  
**FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA**  
**Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**



**The Condition of Woman in Selected Caribbean Short Stories**

**Bakalářská práce**

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**Olomouc 2017**

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V Olomouci dne:.....

## **Poděkování**

Chtěl bych poděkovat paní Mgr. Pavlíně Flajšarové, Ph.D. za odborné vedení mé práce, za cenné rady, připomínky a čas, který mi při jejím vypracování věnovala.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In this bachelor thesis, I am going to show the amazing diversity of the Caribbean culture that is reflected into rich literatures that are written mostly in English, French, Dutch and Spanish. Given that the European languages dominate the Caribbean area, it is necessary to provide a historical and literary context for each and every island separately, as these areas were influenced by different mother-countries whose pioneers colonized the islands.

## 1.1. Introduction, Motivation and Research Question

I am going to analyze three short-stories that were published with other works from the West Indies in the Oxford book of Caribbean stories, a selection of works from various authors who are not from the same generation. As these works were translated from different languages into English, this anthology provided me an opportunity to see that there is a great deal of variation in terms of both language use and cultural background. The whole Caribbean region is a great melting pot as the islands often changed rulers. Furthermore, I am going to prove that languages in use in a specific area predetermined the sources of immigration to the isles and targets of emigration.

Namely, I will focus on Maryse Condé, French short story writer of Guadeloupean origin, who made herself visible on the global literary scene by the publication of her two-volume African saga *Ségou* (1984)<sup>1</sup>. Most of her works were translated to English by Richard Philcox, her husband. Giving literature lectures at anglophone universities and living intermittently in New York and Paris, she is a true ambassador of French Caribbean culture to the English-speaking world. I will analyze her short story “The Breadnut and the Breadfruit<sup>2</sup>” which deals with woman hardships, Caribbean childhood and education.

Edwidge Dandicat is the voice of Haiti in the United States. She escaped her motherland to seek a better life overseas. Her mother languages are Haitian French and Haitian Creole, but she decided to write and publish entirely in English because she grew up and made her university studies in New York. She currently works as a professor of French literature in various institutions in the United States and her work is

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<sup>1</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. *Ségou*. Editions Roman Laffont, Paris 1985.

<sup>2</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. ‘The Breadnut and the Breadfruit’. Trad. PHILCOX, Richard. In: *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, edited by Stewart Brown and John Wickham. Oxford University Press 2001.

heavily oriented on the problematics of being Haitian. She regularly contributes to journals about Haiti to highlight the somber history and presence of the oldest independent Caribbean nation (since 1804). Her writing became more known after she published *Breath, Eyes, Memory*<sup>3</sup> – a novel of the Haitian diaspora that is also a memoir of an ethnic group, a bildungsroman, a chronicle of a family – the work of Edwidge Danticat is multifaceted. She draws attention to the women suffering and makes the Haitian troubles in paradise visible to a wider public by writing about delicate topics that other writers fear to cover. I will analyze her short story “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”<sup>4</sup>.

Astrid Roemer is a Surinamese short story writer that lives in Europe and publishes in Dutch. She escaped Suriname because she was widely known for criticizing the local military regime and now she lives hidden, supposedly in Europe. In her work, she is oriented on the depiction of women and their bravery in everyday life. I will analyze her short story “The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for listening”<sup>5</sup>.

The main impetus for writing this bachelor theses was the fact that my supervisor provided me with *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*<sup>6</sup> as a source of primary texts for possible future analysis. This anthology was edited by prominent scholars Stewart Brown and John Wickham, who have, in my opinion, changed the way readers perceive the Caribbean. They have listed English translations from Spanish, Dutch and French writing authors among the Anglophone and hence enabled readers who do not master all these languages not to limit the notion of the Caribbean to the space formerly dominated by the United Kingdom.

## 1.2. Literature Review

Every scholar on the very beginning of their research has to face the task of examining all of the already existing literature and thus, be able to contribute something new that will hopefully enrich the field of study.

Regarding the topic of women in the Caribbean, there are naturally several significant works that focus on this area. Yet, I believe my thesis brings a new

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<sup>3</sup> DANTICAT, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Vintage 1998.

<sup>4</sup> DANTICAT, Edwidge. “Nineteen Thirty-Seven”, In: *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, edited by Stewart Brown and John Wickham. Oxford University Press 2001.

<sup>5</sup> ROEMER, Astrid. “The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for listening” Trad. VAN NECK-YODER, Hilda, In: *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, edited by Stewart Brown and John Wickham. Oxford University Press 2001.

<sup>6</sup> BROWN, Stewart and WICKHAM John. *The Oxford book of Caribbean short stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

perspective to this field. Whereas other authors all tend to focus on one language area only, as former students of French wrote about women in French language area and the students of English covered the same problematics by analysis of Anglophone letters, I strive to cover the whole complexity. Given the fact that I study all the four main languages of the Caribbean region (English, French, Dutch and Spanish), I could reflect the works collected by Wickham and Brown from French, English and Dutch perspective, as the authors contributed to Caribbean literature in their maternal language. I believe strongly that if we limit our reflection of the Caribbean only to English, we are doomed to lose the chance of unveiling the beauty of diversity, for there is no area on the Earth so intricately complicated as the Caribbean.

Still, there are several of the already published studies on the Caribbean that have greatly influenced my research. Alena Brychtová focused her research on Childhood in Anglophone Caribbean Literature<sup>7</sup>. She analyzed the coming of age in the Caribbean by comparing three novels from different authors. Her work was valuable to my understanding of the mother-daughter relations. Hana Lyčková<sup>8</sup> described the importance of education in the writing of V.S. Naipaul, Austin C. Clarke and Earl Lovelace. Her work contributed to my better understanding of Maryse Condé's *The Breadnut and the Breadfruit* where the main characters react on the education imposed by the Europeans. Lucie Pourová<sup>9</sup> wrote a work on race and self-acceptance entitled *Black Is Beautiful: The Notion of Self-Esteem in African-American and African-Caribbean Women's Literature*. Her thesis provided me with answers on the question of color. Alena Drábková wrote a thesis that analyzed all diverse forms of women existent in the region, *The Characters of Women in Caribbean Literature*<sup>10</sup>. She covered both male and female authors (Michelle Cliff, Merle Hodge, Geoffrey Drayton Jean Rhys) and her work helped me to perceive the strictly delimited social roles that assume only

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7 BRYCHTOVÁ, Alena. Dětství v anglofonní karibské literatuře [online]. Brno, 2016 [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available online: [http://is.muni.cz/th/419394/ff\\_b](http://is.muni.cz/th/419394/ff_b). Bachelor thesis. Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta. Thesis supervisor: Milada Franková.

8 LYČKOVÁ, Hana. Téma vzdělání v karibské fikci [online]. Brno, 2006 [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available online: <http://theses.cz/id/88nyt9/>. Bachelor thesis. Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta. Vedoucí práce PhDr. Věra Pálenská, CSc.

9 POUROVÁ, Lucie. Black Is Beautiful: The Notion of Self-Esteem in African-American and African-Caribbean Women's Literature [online]. Brno, 2008 [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available online: <http://theses.cz/id/fb1m9z/>; Master thesis. Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta. Thesis supervisor: Mgr. Kateřina Prajznerová, Ph.D.

10 DRÁBKOVÁ, Alena. The Characters of Women in Caribbean Literature [online]. Brno, 2012 [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available online: [http://is.muni.cz/th/145995/ff\\_m\\_b1/](http://is.muni.cz/th/145995/ff_m_b1/). Master thesis. Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta. Thesis supervisor: Milada Franková.

woman or man as a relic of colonial society that persists in the minds of Caribbeans. More specifically women as hard-working and family-caring, men as member of a leisure class, lazy and absent.

The main work that inspired in me the necessity of writing about the dislocation and relocation of the Caribbean was the work submitted by Pavla Swidrová. Swidrová analyzed the tropical experience that brought immigrants from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom and their struggle to adapt in new environment. I find Swidrová's work especially beneficial because writers analyzed in my thesis are emigrants – Maryse Condé and Edwidge Dandicat relocated to the United States, and Astrid Roemer moved to various places in Europe (Scotland, Belgium and the Netherlands). Dandicat fully abandoned her native language, Condé was aided by her husband Richard Philcox in adapting her work for the Anglo-Saxon market and Roemer still publishes in Dutch and lives in Benelux.

The issue of woman in the French Caribbean was also covered in a master thesis submitted by Pavla Kantová. Similar to the above-mentioned works, again, she opted for a thorough analysis of woman characters in one author's bibliography, as she analyzed all woman characters in Guadeloupean writer Gisele Pineau<sup>11</sup>. This work is traditionally oriented on one region, writer and topic and it enabled me to retrace the origins of French Caribbean literature. The question of minorities and migration was covered by Lucie Marková, whose work *The History of Suriname and Surinamese minority in the Netherlands*<sup>12</sup> aided me to analyze the short-story by Surinamese writer Astrid Roemer 'The family in The Inheritance of my father: A Story for listening' are divided by the Atlantic Ocean – an immigrant from Suriname returns home from the Netherlands with his daughter to let her discover a different way of life.

In conclusion, I believe that my thesis with its innovatory complex approach to the subject will be a contribution to the study of Caribbean literature.

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<sup>11</sup> KANTOVÁ, Pavla. Le motif de la femme dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Gisele Pineau en tant que représentante de la littérature guadeloupéenne [online]. Olomouc, 2015 [cit. 2017-03-19]. Available online: <http://theses.cz/id/x9on31/>>; Master thesis. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, Filozofická fakulta. Thesis supervisor: PhDr. Marie Voždová, Ph.D.

<sup>12</sup> MARKOVÁ, Lucie, Bas HAMERS, Wilken W. K. H. ENGELBRECHT. De geschiedenis van Suriname en de Surinaamse minderheid in Nederland. 2009, 64 p.

## 2. CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

The concept of Caribbean literature is relatively recent, validated by growing awareness in the Caribbean of a common historical, cultural and geopolitical experience that transcends national diversity. To state that there is a Caribbean literature is to recognize the relation with language and the world which constitutes what some have called Caribbean discourse. This discourse as defined by Edouard Glissant is produced within a space which has been shaped by slavery, colonialism, Creolization and insularity, and it also assumes the specific social and political forces within and outside the islands which threaten them with assimilation or annihilation<sup>13</sup>.

### 2.1 Caribbean Francophone Literature

#### 2.1.1. Introduction

Before I start to describe the history of French literature in the West-Indies, it is necessary to delimit the French-speaking<sup>14</sup> area. French language is used in the world in many forms. For example, in several areas it is the official language, as in France, Belgium, Switzerland or Canada. Furthermore, there are regions where French is seen as the language of culture, business and education, but it may not be preferred in casual, everyday use. This occurs in Haiti, whose official language is French, but most of the speakers use French-based Creole. The next group represents territories where French used to be used in the past but today there are only remnants of French culture present on the formerly colonized territory, as in former French Indochina (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia).

The development of literature in the French West Indies can be divided into three<sup>15</sup> periods. First, there was an epoch before Columbus discovered the New World, oral literature predominated. Then began the colonial period marked by the

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<sup>13</sup> GLISSANT, Edouard. *Le discours Antillais* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1981), p.18.

<sup>14</sup> To this relates the concept of *la francophonie*. *There is a difference between la Francophonie – international* organization based in Paris whose role is the promotion of the French language, it is also a political and cultural platform founded in 1970 and la francophonie or 274 million of French speakers distributed on five continents.

<sup>15</sup> BERTIN-ELISABETH, Cécile CONFIAANT, Raphaël Bertho Lavenir, Catherine. *Histoire et littérature dans la Caraïbe*, 2014. Manioc Bibliothèque numérique Caraïbe Amazonie Plateau des Guyanes, Accessed March 6, <http://www.manioc.org/fichiers/V14261>.

plantation systems of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The texts that are preserved until today are mostly journals, notebooks, economical treaties, accounts or records from voyages. First truly literary text in French dealing with the region of our interest is an anonymous manuscript entitled *Account of an unfortunate voyage to the West-Indies by captain Fleury, with description of several islands that he encountered, gathered by one of those who accompanied him during the voyage between 1618 and 1620*<sup>16</sup>.

The influx of work forces from Africa accelerated the modification that French would undergo in the colonial time. The birth of the Créole language caused a situation of diglossia among many inhabitants of the isles. Both colored and white spoke Créole<sup>17</sup>. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a new society to be created in Guadeloupe. A triangle-shaped scheme of overseas commerce assured that more African workers would be shipped to the Americas where the returning ships were loaded with locally produced goods and then sent back to Europe.

A specific slang emerged to describe new kinds of people. Jean Bernabé, Créole language specialist, claims that it is necessary to distinguish three semantically different terms<sup>18</sup>. His distinction helps to clarify the meaning of the word *Créole*. His first group is labeled as *Vyé Blan* or *vieux blancs* – white settlers born in Europe. The second is *bossale*, a black worker living in the Carribean, but born in Africa. And the last group labeled as Créole is anybody born in the Caribbean isles, this word does not have the semantical meaning of ‘colored’ or ‘white’. It can be used as *Créole blanc* (a white born in the West-Indies, *béké* in créole), *Créole noire* (a black born in the West-Indies).

The question of color and the slavery heritage lead to literary movements, which react on the historical events that transformed the archipelago. In the following text, the movements of the colored intellectuals will be described.

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16 Anonymous, in original: *Relation d'un voyage infortuné fait aux Indes Occidentales par le capitaine Fleury, avec la description de quelques îles qu'on y rencontre, recueillie par l'un de ceux de la compagnie qui fit le voyage – entre 1618 et 1620*. In: VERRAND, Laurent. *La vie quotidienne des Indiens caraïbes aux Petites Antilles : XVIIe siècle*. Editions Carthala, p. 165.

17 Today, both French and Haitian Créole Have official status in Haiti.

18 Jean Bernabé clarifies the term *créole* in his article: « De la négritude à la créolité : éléments pour une approche comparée », *Études françaises*, vol. 28, n°2-3, 1992, p. 23-38.

### 2.1.2 La Négritude

To understand the writing of Maryse Condé, I have to describe the main literary stream to which she was in opposition to. La Négritude movement was founded in Paris between the two world wars, in the 1930s, by writers from the Antilles and Africa. The father of this movement was Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal and Léon Damas from French Guyana. Senghor defined once the Négritude movement as: ‘all the cultural features valuable for the black world’<sup>19</sup>, claiming that every black person must be aware of their black valuable features: to be black, to think black, to act black<sup>20</sup>.

The word ‘Négritude’ was coined by Aimé Césaire in 1934, but first it was officially published in print by Léopold Sédar Senghor in his 1939 work *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*<sup>21</sup> (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*). The word Négritude, which clearly reflects the colonial history as the then newly coined word, takes the French word *nègre* as a stem. During the existence of slavery, the term ‘*les nègres*’ or ‘*negroes*’ could be used for black human beings. Of course, not all black people were then slaves, the word Negro gained its pejorative meaning since mostly black people were slaves forced to do hard unqualified jobs mostly for white settlers (there were also black free citizens enslaving other black persons).

To the founding fathers of la Négritude, it was a way to appreciate the history of the black people. It was a search for identity<sup>22</sup>. La Négritude attempted to dissipate “the denigrating myths and stereotypes linked to black people, by acknowledging their culture, history and achievements, as well as reclaiming their contributions to the world and restoring their rightful place within the global community”<sup>23</sup>.

Similar to the Harlem Renaissance phenomenon in the Anglophone literature, La Négritude was supposedly triggered by ongoing colonialism, capitalism and

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<sup>19</sup> CAMARA, Sana. Léopold Sédar Senghor ou L'Art Poétique Nègro-africain. Accessed March 5, 2017, [http://ethiopiennes.refer.sn/spip.php?page=imprimer-article&id\\_article=1490](http://ethiopiennes.refer.sn/spip.php?page=imprimer-article&id_article=1490).

<sup>20</sup> Senghor was the most iconic person of la Francophonie, an organization that defends and promotes the use of the French language.

<sup>21</sup> Maryse Condé wrote a critique on this founding work of La Négritude. In this analysis, Condé values La Négritude movement as a creator of birth of French Caribbean literature, but she has also criticized the obsession of black people by their color and identity, she is also hostile to the idea of returning colored Caribbean to black Africa. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal d'Aimé Césaire, analyse critique*, Paris, Hatier Profils, 1978.

<sup>22</sup> JATOE-KALEO, Baba Abraham. *La Différence Conceptuelle entre la Négritude, L'Antillanité et La Créolité*. European Scientific Journal, February 2013, edition 9, N.5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

imperialism that still favored the white man in the leading positions and decision-making. Both racism and segregation still took place and La Négritude was eventually to propose a unifying platform for all colored persons. This movement was strongly political, Senghor was the first president of Senegal and Césaire was a mayor for merely three decades in Martinique's capital city Fort-de-France.

I have already mentioned the names of the founding father of the La Négritude literary movement. The first writer is Aimé Césaire<sup>24</sup> (1913-2008) who wrote a manifesto for the whole French-speaking black literature, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*<sup>25</sup>, celebrating the beauty of black men. The author celebrates the voyage of a black man from the desolate and degraded Antilles to the pure beauty of Africa. He demanded that black people in diaspora reject Europe as their motherland, he wanted to unite the black people under l'africanité/Africanity a concept of celebrating African values. To name a few of his other fundamental works: *The Discourse on Colonialism*<sup>26</sup> (essay), *The tragedy of king Christophe*<sup>27</sup> and *One Season in Congo*<sup>28</sup>. He is also reputed for his activities such as promoting the independence of his home island, by taking initiative in the Parti progressiste (Progress party) and becoming the mayor of Fort-de-France.

Another representative of the Négritude movement was Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001). First black to become a teacher of literature (agrégé de lettres) working at a French university. He made also a career in high politics, he was member of the Constitutional Assembly (Assemblée Constitutionnelle) he even participated in the constitution of the fourth French republic. In 1960 Senegal became independent from France and Léopold Sédar Senghor became the first president of the republic. His first literary collection was *Chants d'Ombre*<sup>29</sup>. His other works are: *Ethiopiennes*<sup>30</sup> and *Nocturnes*<sup>31</sup>. In his oeuvre, the author celebrates African roots of black people and

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<sup>24</sup> Césaire was born in Martinique and studied in Paris where he met Léopold Sédar Senghor from Dakar, Senegal, the other founding man of La Négritude movement.

<sup>25</sup> Césaire, Aimé. *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land / Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Translated by Mirelle Rosello with Annie Pritchard. Bloodaxe Contemporary French Poets, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> CÉSAIRE, Aimé. *Discours sur le Colonialisme (1950)*, 2e édition Présence africaine, Paris.

<sup>27</sup> CÉSAIRE, Aimé *La tragédie du roi Christophe*. Présence Africaine, Paris, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> CÉSAIRE, Aimé. *Une Saison au Congo*. Aimé Césaire. Editions points, Paris, 1966.

<sup>29</sup> SÉDAR SENGHOR, Léopold. *Chants d'ombre*, Le Seuil, Paris 1945.

<sup>30</sup> SÉDAR SENGHOR, Léopold *Ethiopiennes*, Seuil, Paris 1956.

<sup>31</sup> SÉDAR SENGHOR, Léopold *Nocturnes*, Seuil, Paris 1961.

shows the connections between the African continent and the French-speaking world, la Francophonie.

The last founding father of the Négritude is Léon-Gontran-Damas (1912-1978), born in Cayenne, French Guyana. His parents had European, African and Native American origins. This multicultural background projected in his work<sup>32</sup> as he was both a lawyer and a polyglot (French, Russian, Japanese, Baulé). His first collection of poetry<sup>33</sup>, *Pigments*<sup>34</sup>, is crucial for the development of the colored communities on the isles. He was a friend of Aimé Césaire whom he met during their studies at Lycée Schoeler (grammar school in Martinique). He further educated himself in Paris where Aimé Césaire introduced him to Léopold Sédar Sengor. The movement went officially public in 1935 with the first number of *L'Étudiant Noir* (The Black Student)<sup>35</sup>, journal that promoted black literary creations. This can be seen as the official founding stone of the Négritude movement, the black French-speaking intellectuals openly refused to be dominated by the western imported culture.

Another politically engaged writer was Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Martinician, psychiatrist and writer involved in the combat against colonialism, notably in the Algerian independence war. As a prominent activist of the third-world thinking (*pensée tier-mondiste*) he was in contact with Jean-Paul Sartre who prefaced his 1961 essay *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*<sup>36</sup>). This work gained its celebrity because it was prefaced by a world famous intellectual and it was eventually banned by French authorities because of the anti-colonial and pro-independence ideas. He was strongly leftist and inspired other independence movements in Africa and even Black Panther Party was inspired by him. He searched for his own personality: born in Martinique he studied in Lyon to become a psychiatrist and then he worked in an Algerian hospital where he racism raged. The Algerians were seen by the French rulers as an inferior group whose mental capacities are not equal to the European. Fanon decided then to break with his French identity and he proclaimed himself Algerian and even became ambassador of his new country in Ghana.

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<sup>32</sup> After WW2, he became the deputy of the French National Assembly, where he represented his homeland Guyana.

<sup>33</sup> DAMAS, Léon Gontran. *Pigments*. Editions Présence Africaine, Paris 2003.

<sup>34</sup> The author of *Pigments*, Léon Damas, also used the pseudonym Lionel Georges André Cabassou.

<sup>35</sup> Léon Damas became also a lecturer, giving speeches all around the world, promoting the Black studies. He collaborated with the *Présence Africaine* journal that promoted black writers in Europe.

<sup>36</sup> FANON, Frantz. *Les Damnés de la Terre*, Paris 1961.

Joseph Zobel (1915-2006), Martinican, is author of short stories with social topics. His most notable work is 1950 novel *Sugar Cane Alley (La Rue Cases-Nègres*<sup>37</sup>) that depicts the struggle of the sugar-cane plantation workers in the very poor beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His own family was involved in a system that was not too far from a slavery – his mother served as a nurse to a white Des Grottes family who employed his father and grandmother as plantation workers). As a brilliant student, he had chance to study at Lycée Schoeler where he studied under Aimé Césaire. For university studies, he came to Paris where he met Léopold Sédar Senghor who later helped him to establish regular broadcasting to whole francophone Africa from a radio station based in Dakar.

### **2.1.3 Antillanité and Créolité Movement**

La Négritude movement seemed to work in more racially homogeneous African environment, but in the New World it appeared obsolete. La Négritude movement was the substrate that made the growth of the movements possible. Given that the Antillean archipelago is a region of ethnic fusion, there groups of inhabitants that did not fit in ‘black’ or ‘white’ category.

*Antillanité* as intellectual concept was introduced to solve the problem among literary people in the eponymous region, it prepared grounds to La Créolité movement that transcended from literary theory into political practice. Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant and Jean Bernabé invented the terms<sup>38</sup> *antillanité* and *créolité* to update and upgrade the obsolete Négritude concept invented and promoted by the previous generation of colored intellectuals in 1930’s.

The political and literary requirements La Négritude movement and La Créolité superpose in great parts as the latter two can be seen as actualization of the preceding concepts. It has been attested that without La Négritude, there could not be Antillanité. The main difference is that Antillanité is focused on the cultural issues that occur in the Carribeans, whereas La Négritue was originally designed to unify all black people.

It is also possible to grasp the Antillanité concept as a second step in the transition from La Négritude to Créolité, as it focuses on the Carribbean but does not forward the use of French-based creoles. To be more precise, Créolité movement was

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<sup>37</sup> ZOBEL, Joseph. *La Rue Cases-Nègres*, Editions Présence Africaine, Paris 1950.

<sup>38</sup> Some writers prefer to write antillanité and créolité, whereas the partisans of Créolité movement (Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant strictly use Créolité and Antillanité, as it designs the name of their movement.

officially proclaimed in 1989 by the essay “In Praise of Creolness”<sup>39</sup>, co-authored by Bernabé, Confiant and Chamoiseau and manifested during the 1989 literary festival in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves to be Creoles. For us this will be a state of mind, or, rather, a state of vigilance, or, better still, a sort of mental envelope within which we will build our world, in full awareness of the world.<sup>40</sup>

Edouard Glissant (1928-2011) from Martinique is attached to Créolité group because he fought against the colonialism, he was hostile to the idea of creating departments from French overseas territories. He considered the insular society stricken by a malady caused by successful colonization. He was an ethnologist and a philosopher, published pro-revolutionary roman *The lizard (La Lézarde*, in 1958 won French literary prize Prix Renaudot). He invented the *antillanité* concept that would defend the interests of the Antilleans. The main idea was to promote culture original to this region and promote decentralization. He is considered as a grandfather of the Créolité movement for he had coined the ‘Tout-monde’ (Everybody) concept that would unite all humans disrespectful to their race or origin.

The word ‘*métissage*’<sup>41</sup> should be changed to ‘*créolité*’ as it describes better the syntheses of cultures, identities and history that is the everyday reality in the archipelago. It is controversial and paradoxical, because *créolité* favors the idea of synthesis and assimilation. *Créolité* also means return to roots, to the African ones.

The critiques of La Créolité assume that the movement discriminates the Amerindian, Asian, Arab and European elements in the mosaic in favor of the Africans – a tradition inherited from La Négritude.

## 2.2. Surinamese Literature

Given the size of land and number of the population, the Surinamese book market is considerably smaller in comparison with the markets where are commercialized the

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<sup>39</sup> BERNABÉ, Jean, CHAMOISEAU Patrick, CONFIANT, Raphael. “*Eloge de la Créolité*”, Gallimard, Paris 1989.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> French term ‘*métissage*’ is translated as ‘*interbreeding*’, ‘*race-mixing*’ or ‘*blending*’.

books published by Maryse Condé (mainly mainland France and French-speaking parts of Canada) and Edwidge Danticat (United States). The dominating literary language in Suriname is Dutch, but writers also publish in Sranan Tongo<sup>42</sup>. The Surinamese national anthem is written in Dutch, but there is a second, official version in Sranan Tongo, composed by Henri Frans de Ziel (his pen name was Trefossa) who is also the major poet in that language. The Sranan Tongo unifies the Surinamese and is far more popular in daily use than other languages spoken in Suriname – the Aukan/Ndyuka language<sup>43</sup>, Saramaccan<sup>44</sup>, Caribbean Hindustani<sup>45</sup>. To make things more complex, English is also popular because of tourism and the fastest-growing number immigrant group are Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. A poet in Sranan Tongo creole, Paul Middellijn, adds to this issue:

We shook off the chains of Dutch colonialism in the 1970s, but our consciousness remains colonized by the Dutch language [...] Sranan will survive because nothing can replace it as the language of the street ... It is a form of communication perfect not just for poets but for the Chinese groceryman or Brazilian miner who arrived a few months ago [...] Are they going to go through the trouble of learning Dutch? No way.<sup>46</sup>

The problem of Sranan Tongo in literature is the limited number of readers who could read a publication in this creole. Due to strong economic bounds with the former European sovereign, the majority of Surinamese writers publish in Dutch, or make two language versions of their same book, to minimize the chance of commercial success.

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<sup>42</sup> Sranan Tongo – the name comes from corrupting the designation ‘*Surinamese tongue*’. It has about 150.000 native speakers in Suriname and about half of the Surinamese population can speak it. It is sometimes referred to this creole language as *lingua franca* as it unites the diverse ethnic groups found in Suriname – the Javanese, Dutch, Chinese minorities use it in daily communication across the ethnic spectrum, but at home each minority prefers their own language. This means that Sranan Tongo is used in total by about 500.000 speakers.

<sup>43</sup> Aukan (or Ndyuka) is a creole language which developed out of west and west central African roots and incorporated a great deal of vocabulary and other features from its association with English and Dutch. It is estimated that there are about 25,000 to 30,000 speakers of the Aukan language.

<sup>44</sup> Saramaccan is Portuguese and English based creole with features from several Niger-Congo languages spoken by some 58.000 people in Suriname, 25.000 in French Guyana and about 8.000 in the Netherlands.

<sup>45</sup> Caribbean Hindustani/Sranan Hindustani is the third most used language in Suriname. It is the vernacular for descendants of workers who came to Suriname from India, spoken by approximately 150.000 people in Suriname and 15.000 in Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>46</sup> ROMERO, Simon. “In Debate Over Official Language, Suriname Seeks Itself”. Accessed January 10, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/23/world/americas/23iht-23suriname.11335008.html>.

Sranan Tongo is also associated with the Bouterse dictatorship, he used this language in his speeches<sup>47</sup>. The importance of Sranan Tongo in Surinamese everyday life is manifested in writing texts in Dutch that follow Sranan Tongo syntax rules. We can trace such case in the work of P. Schingel, whose 1943 short-story *Wiesje* had Surinamese-Dutch Syntax. Albert Helman experimented in his work in the 1950s with Surinamese Dutch and he was followed by R. Dobru and Neil Bradley in the 1960s who produced short stories in Surinamese Dutch. A poet named Rappa attempted a breakthrough in perception of Surinamese literature when he published works entirely written in Surinamese vernacular.<sup>48</sup>

Oral literature dominated in Suriname until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when autochthonous Surinamese literary work appeared. The oral character of literature is often transmitted to the written texts. The stories were passed from generation to generation in oral form, until somebody<sup>49</sup> captured them in written form and/or modified<sup>50</sup> their content.

According to Michael van Kempen, Surinamese literature specialist from the University of Amsterdam, only authors R. Dobru, Rappa, Albert Helman, Hugo Pos, Astrid Roemer Anis, Andas and Ellen Ombre have published more than one collection of short-stories. Van Kempen states that the following about the Surinamese literary production:

[...] the major Surinamese literature output concerning short-stories are anthologies (of Surinamese writing, of Dutch-language writing and of writing from all over the Caribbean) and periodicals<sup>51</sup> (both Surinamese and Dutch) that enable the publication of several authors... Given the restricted possibilities for publishing and – even taking Surinamese narrative published in Holland into account – collections of short stories by a single author and novellas are both comparatively rare. This means

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<sup>47</sup> Dutch is more often taught in schools than Sranan Tongo, but curiously, it was also only in 2004 that Suriname entered the Dutch language organization Taalunie.

ROMERO, Simon. "In Debate Over Official Language, Suriname Seeks Itself". Accessed January 10, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/23/world/americas/23iht-23suriname.11335008.html>.

<sup>48</sup> VAN KEMPEN, Michiel. "History of Literature in the Caribbean.", edited by A. James Arnold, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> For example, *Michiel van Kempen* publishes collections of literary works from Suriname. The first was *New Surinamese short stories (Nieuwe surinaamse verhalen, 1981)*, the second was *Verhalen van surinaamse schrijvers* (Short stories by Surinamese writers), in 1990 followed *Listen to the Story! (Hoor die tori!)*.

<sup>50</sup> Van Kempen mentions for example a bundle of stories named *Devil's tales from 1970*. They were collected and edited by Father A. de Groot, then published in Sranan, Dutch and Creole.

<sup>51</sup> For example, this is the case of *The mark and other stories (Het merkteken en andere verhalen)* by Orlando Emanuels. *De Ware Tijd*, Surinamese newspaper, funded a literary competition in 1997 that made the creation of possible.

that in Suriname there are some twenty writers that have published their own collection of short-stories [...] <sup>52</sup>

Hereunder <sup>53</sup> follows an overview of short-story bundles from Suriname:

In 1972 Thea Doelwijt and Benny Ooft published *Would it be possible the day after tomorrow?* (in original *I sa man tra tamara!?*) that was written for a short story competition. In 1972, Thea Doelwijt published *Krik! Krak! Prose from Suriname as an overview of Surinamese literary production*. In 1981 Thea Doelwijt collaborated with Shrinivasi to publish collection *Rebirth in words: Poetry and prose from Suriname*.

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<sup>52</sup> VAN KEMPEN, Michiel. "History of Literature in the Caribbean.", edited by A. James Arnold, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 2001, p. 353

<sup>53</sup> The Surinamese short-story is a very specific topic that is does not attract a great deal of scholarly attention. The most consistent panorama of Surinamese literature is developed by Michiel van Kampen. All references concerning the history of Surinamese literature are sourced in his 2002 publication *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur*. See VAN KEMPEN, Michiel. Een Geschiedenis van de Surinaamse Literatuur. Accessed May 2, 2017, [http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/kemp009gesc02\\_01/](http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/kemp009gesc02_01/).

## **3. ANALYTICAL PART**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In order to better convey the complexity of Caribbean literature and its themes, I have decided to approach the analytical part of my thesis from the geographical standpoint and thus divide it into three separate sub-chapters Guadeloupe, Haiti and Suriname, which are represented by key authors Maryse Condé, Edwinge Dandicat and Astrid Roemer.

### **3.2. Guadeloupe**

The Antilles archipelago and the Caribbean are in fact terms that overlap greatly. We distinguish Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola divided into Haiti and the Dominican republic and the Cayman islands) and Lesser Antilles, also known as Caribees, which are formed by the following sovereign states: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and non-sovereign territories: Aruba (NL), Anguilla (UK), Bonaire (NL), British Virgin Islands (UK), Curacao (NL), Guadeloupe (F), Montserrat (UK), Saba (NL), Saint Martin/Sint Maarten (F/NL), Sint Eustatius, United States Virgin Islands (US), Nueva Esaparta (VE), Federal Dependencies of Venezuela (VE).

The archipelago where Guadeloupe is located, is an over-seas department under the rule of the French republic, located approximately 7500 kilometers from Paris, in the Caribbean Sea, in the center of the Lesser Antilles. The archipelago is formed by many isles and islets, the principal ones being Guadeloupe that is itself formed by parts named La Grande-Terre and La Basse-Terre<sup>54</sup>. Then there is the archipelago Les Saintes and the isle Désirade. All these areas are attached to the Guadeloupe department.

This region was originally inhabited by the Amerindian tribes, the Europeans claim that the ‘official discovery’ of these territories in the New World was conducted on November 4th, 1493 by Christophe Colomb during his expedition. In 1635, these territories came under the French rule, from this moment the archipelago became colonized by the Europeans. In the XVII century, the culture of sugar cane was

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<sup>54</sup> Literally ‘Great country’ and ‘Low Country’.

introduced to the region, and thus the isles were taken gradually to the age of the plantation economy. Cheap labor was needed to produce sugar. Between 1650 and 1848 a great deal of African slave manpower was shipped to Guadeloupe in order to cultivate the plantation mono-cultures. In fact, the French profited from a triangular-shaped business: the naval commerce involved three continents – Europe, Africa and The New World. It was a highly profitable barter: African slaves were exchanged for goods. These actions were supported by legal documents in France, Jean-Baptiste Colbert published *Le Code Noir* (or the Negro Act), guidelines were given to master the slave trade<sup>55</sup>. Unfortunately, the slavery was only abolished on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1848 by the government.

### 3.2.1. Author: Maryse Condé

Thanks to literature, I believe, I could understand and demonstrate a certain number of myths and mechanism and I believe that literature helped me to apprehend the complexity of the world and the society that surrounds me. It is certain, that for me, Maryse Condé, the fact that I could experience all that I feel and the evolution of what I feel has finally helped me to be a woman liberated from prejudice and tension.<sup>56</sup>

Maryse Condé refuses to support the ideas of la Négritude movement because she sees the concept of '*negro*' to be a lie created and perpetrated by the Europeans. She argues that Aimé Césaire was influenced too much by the European vision precolonial history, as he over romanticized Africa in his poems<sup>57</sup>. Her attitude to the black continent has undergone a substantial change during her career as a writer. Some of her works do fit the La Négritude concept.

Condé has a very specific relation to Africa, she lived in there and she is a professor of black African literature at Paris IV university. She decided to write the first '*great African saga*' that would truly depict the history of Sahel region where she also once lived. *Ségou* (1984) is a roman that describes one century of a 'truly African'

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<sup>55</sup> For example, any child born to a slave mother was automatically enslaved even though the father was a free citizen.

<sup>56</sup> DORCE, Mylène. Interview with Maryse Condé. In: *L'Afrique Noire dans les Imaginaires Antillais*, edited by Obed Nkuzimana, Marie-Christine Rochmann and Françoise Rochmann. Editions Karthala, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> This very romantic depictions are to be found, for example in poems contained in *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (Return to the Native Land) by Aimé Césaire.

family in the eponymous city. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the capital of the Bambara empire lives under a native African slavery regime. The French colonists arrive only one hundred years later, time when both the dynasty and the Bambara collapse. Again, this roman is to be perceived as a reaction to the La Négritude unrealistic depictions of Africa.

This works was created during her African experience, when she celebrated the African past by creating a vast, two-piece epic novel (Ségou, 1984) focusing on the history of the Bambara empire in present-day Mali. Interestingly, Maryse Condé gives often topographical names to her novels and puts feminine heroes to the center of her stories. The author should be perceived as a ‘nomadic intellectual’ that assimilates together many traditions.

If Ségou romanticized the history of Africa, *Héremakhon* and *Une Saison à Rihata* are more bitter, focused on the ‘return to Africa’ - women follow their men to the black continent and they suffer, because they cannot fully integrate in the society. The search of country of origin is frequently transformed into searching for a legitimate African ancestor the ‘African father’. *The Last Magical Kings*<sup>58</sup> (*Les derniers rois mages*; 1992) focuses on the search of a legitimate African<sup>59</sup> mystical father. The king-hero of the story is obliged to live in exile because he opposes the new French rule. The story may be based on real king Béhanzin (1844-1906) who had ruled the kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin) and was forced to live in exile in Martinique.

*Heréremakhonon*<sup>60</sup> (1976) presents us a story of a Guadeloupean woman educated in mainland France who is already assimilated in the European society and only then she travels to Africa. The word *Heréremakhonon* itself means both ‘wait for happiness’ and ‘welcome home’ and fits perfectly in a fictional autobiography of the main protagonist Véronica Mercier who seems to be resembling Maryse Condé herself.

Condés’s works are dominated by the search for identity by women. Her depiction of the Caribbean is close to the one of Franz Fanon<sup>61</sup> – the women heroines that she created live in dictatorships, brutal environment of women exploitation by men and fear. She refuses La Négritude concept of color specificity. The fact that la Négritude celebrated blackness only justified the European distinction of people according to their

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<sup>58</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. *Les Derniers Rois Mages*. Gallimard, 1992.

<sup>59</sup> Also, Simone Schwarz-Bart examines the search of original father in her novel *Ti Jean L’horizon*.

<sup>60</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. *Heremakhonon*, Union générale d’éditions. Paris 1976.

<sup>61</sup> Franz Fanon published in 1952 his influential study *Black Skin, White masks*. It is a psychological study on racism. FANON, Franz. *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. Editions du Seuil, Paris 1952.

color. Condé is fiercely opposed to the colonial racial segregation of people to black or white. She argues that La Négritude only accepts the racial prejudices when they used the sememe *nègre* in the name of the movement.

But what kind of refusal is it...? It is because Europe has created all the pieces of Negro myth, to claim that myth, to glorify it as an expression of one's true personality ends as the acceptance of Europe in its own worst failure. Refusal? I see only extreme acceptance<sup>62</sup>.

La Négritude focused in principle on the rediscovery of African motherland. Condé says that in the New World the identities of the incoming person are lost as the different ethnics were separated by the ruling European in order to maintain ethnic and racial purity. She disliked the perception of Africa of mother and the fact that Aimé Césaire viewed himself and other black people in the Carribean as exiled 'sons'. She argued that in La Négritude is involved a great deal of sexism that focuses on men and disregards women. The return to Africa according to La Négritude is idealized and represents a relation of a stranded black son with a black woman that represents all the virtues and traditions of Africa. The women were excluded from the effort of the liberation of the Antilles from the colonial power.

Condé examines the consequences of reversed sexism – she reacts thus on the mainstream perception of women in the society and the predominance of masculine writing in her native island. The rediscovery of Césaire's *Mère Afrique* is transformed to *Père-Afrique* that is based on the relation between a Negro and his ancestor<sup>63</sup>.

Condé reverts also the idea of returning to some kind of 'promised fatherland' in her 1997 novel *A Season in Rihata* (*Une Saison à Rihata*). Rihata is a river that crosses the nearly abandoned colonial city in Africa. Among the only few remaining inhabitants are Marie-Hellène from the Antilles and her husband Zek. They are the '*déracinés*' or uprooted as they both miss their home country and are unable to return. They met during their studies in Paris, Marie-Hellène only followed her husband to a newly independent black republic ruled by a despotic tyrant. Furthermore, she loves the

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<sup>62</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. 'Pourquoi la Négritude ? Négritude ou révolution ?' In : Goré, Jeanne-Lydie, ed. *Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe*, Université de Paris-Nord (Centre d'études Francophones) Editions de la Francité, pp. 150-154, Paris 1973.

<sup>63</sup> In original 'un nègre avec ses aïeux'. Mentioned in : CONDÉ, Maryse. *Heremakhonon*, Union générale d'éditions. Paris 1976.

younger brother of her husband. She finds herself finally in a twofold desperate situation when she realizes that her life in Africa is physical and psychical escape. Unable to adapt to the new African society as the native Africans do not perceive her African enough because of her Antillean origin. The heroine does not fit in her new society and is stranded between Africa, racial Europe where she is seen as a Negro and her native island where she cannot return because of her husband whom she does not love. The fascination by African past is a common feature that share many black intellectuals, Gilbert Gratiant explains the paradox of belonging 'nowhere' by examination the myths of origin, crucial to any society in forming and explaining its history and existence:

One community, without knowing that, unconsciously, and because it has live somewhere, to exist in an epoch where the existence of one community was opposed to the one of the other, invents reasons for existing on a specific area and thus this land becomes their territory.<sup>64</sup>

The search for a common Antillean father is not only limited to Maryse Condé, as Michèle Lacrosil (1911-2012, Guadeloupe) in her 1967 novel *Demain Jab-Herma*<sup>65</sup> focuses on the search of a common Antillean father of the insular people who are obsessed by the legacy of Louis Delgrès whom the 'official history' imposed by the Europeans wanted to be forgotten. The hero of the story Louis Delgrès was a mulatto, who suicided himself with three honored of his adherents in protest to the reestablishment of slavery in 1802. The Antillean people lacked the foundation myth, because the traditional indigenous literature was destroyed by the colonialism, workers from different places were imported, so the fusion society needed a unifying element that would justify their existence on the islands.

Condé's novel from 1989, *Crossing the mangrove*<sup>66</sup>, also shows the search for ancestors. If the previously mentioned novels by other woman writers commemorated or even invented a common ancestor, Condé goes further in her analysis of the common myths and conscience. She criticizes the adoption of the western models of history. She

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<sup>64</sup> GLISSANT, Edouard. *Le Discours Antillais*, Seuil: Paris 1981.

<sup>65</sup> LACROSIL, Michèle. *Demain Jab-Herma*. Gallimard, 1967.

<sup>66</sup> CONDÉ, Maryse. *Traversée de la mangrove*. Folio, 1989.

argues that it is impossible to limit history of a complex society to one source<sup>67</sup> of origin. She examines the omission of women from the history and opposes herself to the accentuation of masculine supremacy in the past.

The women from a village named Rivière au Sel where the narration takes place are presented as the most important for the development of the Antilles. For a country of mixed origins women are the ones who preserve the family line. In search for common identity or *le Cycle identitaire* in her writing came after a long stay in Africa when she wanted to return to ‘Guadeloupean poetics’.

### **3.2.2 Short Story: “The Breadnut and the Breadfruit”**

Condé is a prominent feminist, so there is no wonder that the main hero in this French Caribbean short story is a woman - young girl. Sent by her rigid mother from one island to another to her father, he is supposed to assume his parenting role by providing care and housing to his own child.

After moving from the poor conditions of her mother’s smaller island to the luxury of a more civilized greater insular world of her father’s, she is confronted with striking difference: her new family is not caring enough – even her own father did not know about her existence, until the mother, former servant at his own house, sent a letter asking for help during the education of their own daughter. Her father, the only direct relative in a new city is a notorious lover, gambler who is always away from the house, ignores also and his other children born out of wedlock visiting his house to ask money. The father neglects the girl until he finds out that her formal education involves only facts from metropolitan France – the colonial power. Their relationship changes after he proposes her to show her the beauty of their insular world. This coming-of-age story clearly celebrates the strength of women and gives moral examples.

Condé uses the insular reality of her native tropical paradise to redistribute the characters of her narration into clearly delimited spaces so that the reader finds the contrast with ease – the ethics varies from one island to another. This represents the clash between the man and the woman worlds. Condé’s work is full of themes that I attempted to analyze into more depth in the following passages. Specifically, I will analyze the theme of a girl, a mother, a father, gender, race, social status, religion and last, but not least, nature.

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<sup>67</sup> It is useful to remind that the French education system still mentions only the Gauls as the oldest ancestors of the nation, even though the French society is culturally mixed.

## The Girl

The girl is a witty narrator and the assessor of the historical events as her point-of-view is central to the story. She evaluates the qualities of all characters. Her skin is black and she comes from mixed social background. Her own poverty is compensated by intelligence - she is intellectually ahead of her age and time. In her narration, she revokes peculiar details from her own past. "I did not mix with other children as I thought their games quite insipid. I preferred to listen in on the conversation of the grown-ups whose coarse jokes I guessed without understanding them."<sup>68</sup> She lived a simple life with her mother until the need of formal education triggered her relocation from the mother's Christian space of her to the pagan of her father's. The moralism contrasted with debauchery. Peculiarly, the hard but morally perfect life of her mother is perceived as a burden to the development of the daughter. She disdains her because of the rigid, dull and drowsy life that they share together. She is thus very happy to leave the drowsy '*island backwater*' to move to a greater island where her further education will take place. Not appreciating enough her current rigid catholic upbringing she is happy to accept that only her father broadens her horizons.

A curious girl was bored with her monotonous life filled with church services and Sunday catechism lesson. Her father is the true devil who spreads the knowledge of good and evil: "If it had not been for him I would have never known that mangoes grow on mango trees, that ackees grow at ackee trees, and the tamarinds grow on tamarind trees for the delight of our palates."<sup>69</sup>

The imported European Imported culture is an impetus for discovery of her own Caribbean culture, facilitated by her father. "The teachers who had us recite 'the River Loire has its source in the Mont Gerbier-de-Jonc [...]'"<sup>70</sup> The girl's fate is associated with race and social class - her ignorant half-sister, 'who was almost blonde' lives in much better condition than she does. The girl's social conditions are demonstrated in her appearance as she wears '*cinderella rags*' and wishes. "I was doomed to gaze from afar at the books in the bookshops, the perfume in the perfume shops, and the ice cream at the ice-cream parlor."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Maryse Condé, 240.

<sup>69</sup> Maryse Condé, 239.

<sup>70</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>71</sup> Maryse Condé, 243.

After being shown some parts of the island's nature, she is very attached to her father. He uses her sympathies to involve her in his immoral distribution of love letters to other women, especially to minors at her school. "I devised a daring technique. I would approach the coveted prey while she was chatting with her classmates [...]"<sup>72</sup>

The problem of morality is a core topic of the story. The girl herself experiences troubles with ethical issues. She later regrets the co-committing of a crime against the Christian morality that involved disdaining the rigidity of her hard-working mother and preferring the corrupted liberty of her father. She is tormented by regrets. The Christian moral reaches later its climax when her father is beaten and maimed.

[...] and instead of rebelling against the cavalry of my poor ravished albeit raped mother, I uttered a raucous laugh. I laughed chickenheartedly. [...] Another crime to add to my list: I showed no sign of pity for my mother, neither for the terror of her discovery and her flight to her native island, nor for the family lamentations, the neighbors' malicious gossip [...]"<sup>73</sup>

Even though she disdains her mother in the beginning and prefers her father, but later turns her back also to him as he lost his social status and beauty. "As for me, with a typical cruelty of teenagers, I hastened to keep my distance from the hero who no longer was a hero"<sup>74</sup>. Her father is first described as 'handsome' and 'able-bodied', but he is finally stricken by the force of justice that mutilates his body.

### **The Mother**

The mother in Condé's short story is a hard – working woman that attached herself to religion after she was seduced and raped by a handsome man, her former master, who has always a lot of mistresses. She has a difficult relation with her daughter who is unable to fully appreciate all the hardships that her mother does for her "[...] she only strayed once to follow the unknown face of my father, who managed to seduce her before handing her back to a life of duty and religion"<sup>75</sup>.

She is committed to work hard to sustain herself and her daughter independently, but she fails to cover all expenditures as her social status is low in comparison to the

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<sup>72</sup> Maryse Condé, 242.

<sup>73</sup> Maryse Condé, 241.

<sup>74</sup> Maryse Condé, 244.

<sup>75</sup> Maryse Condé, 235.

father. There is a contrast between leisure class (father) and working class (mother). “She was laundress in the hospital in Capesterre, Marie-Galante, and every morning she used to get up at four o’clock to clean the house, cook, wash and iron, and goodness knows what else”<sup>76</sup>. Mother’s physical constitutions is also opposed to the appearance of the father who is a well-known handsome. “She was a tall woman and so severe she seemed to me to be devoid of beauty... ‘Her forehead disappeared under a white and violet head tie. Her breasts vanished in a shapeless black dress”. Her character is the embodiment of feminist call for woman independence. She is militant for her independence on man and does not hesitate to express her disdain: “Your father is a dog who’ll die like a dog in the trash heap of his life.’ This mother’s prophecy turns to be true at the end of the story”<sup>77</sup>. Interestingly, this turns to be true at the end of the story when the father is beaten after courting a married woman. The mother’s world is bitter, she seeks moral refuge in religion and sees education as a key to improvement. She wants to pass good moral values on her daughter who is therefore bored. “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday were as alike as two pins. Things were different on Thursdays and Sundays because of catechism and Sunday School”<sup>78</sup>.

The girl does not value the strict love of her mother, she even is disrespectful to the hard, pious and reclusive life of her mother. She shares with her father the opinion that she is too religious. “I know why I thought I hated my mother. Because she was alone. [...]But my mother, she modeled herself along the lines the lines of Sainte Thérèse and Bernadette Soubirou”<sup>79</sup>. The girl realizes very well that education is a way to improve her miserable life conditions. “In one go I learned that I passed my entrance exams, that I was going to leave my island backwater, and that I was going to live far away from my mother”<sup>80</sup>.

Another sign of moral strength is that her mother keeps on supporting her ungrateful daughter even when she is lodged at her father’s, who has other interests than his numerous children.

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<sup>76</sup> Maryse Condé, 235.

<sup>77</sup> Maryse Condé, 235.

<sup>78</sup> Maryse Condé, 235.

<sup>79</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>80</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

[...] my mother sent me two or three dirty<sup>81</sup> banknotes with a note that always read: ‘I hope you are keeping well, your affectionate mother, Nisida.’ [...] ‘It was true that for the three years or so I had been living with my father I had never seen the color of his money, except for Larissa’s<sup>82</sup> two little brand-new notes<sup>83</sup>.

The two women with the father has a relation are similar in their rigidity, but different in their social class, as Larissa has servants to help her in the house and the mother was once one of them. She is also more positively depicted as a woman.

In his absence, I got to know my stepmother (Larissa), a small woman draped with jewelry and as rigid as my mother. [...] Larissa must have been very lovely. Now gone to seed, there remained the fern-colored eyes behind her glasses and teeth of pearl that her smile sometimes revealed<sup>84</sup>.

The contrast between the mother Nisida and the step-mother Larissa is accentuated by the criticism of patriarchal society. The man joins the two separate insular worlds together as he three women are dependent on him (both directly and indirectly) – the mother needs him to lodge their daughter, the girl wants to escape boredom and needs him to rediscover her own region and finally there is Larissa, the housewife, who lives an easy life in a great house with servants. “Up at four like my mother, Larissa, who had three domestics, would let no one iron her husband’s drill suits, shirts and socks. She polished his shoes herself”<sup>85</sup>. She is an example of a woman who sold her freedom to a rich man in exchange for a simple and pleasant life.

### **The Father**

It may seem first that the girl is the most important character of the story, but it is the father whose bad habits are central to the feminist writing. He is depicted as a prototypical man who has a lot of mistresses. Ronda Cobham from the Amherst college explains such behavior:

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<sup>81</sup> Note the symbolism of colors – the girl regularly receives dirty banknotes from hard-working mother. During her stay on the other island she received only few brand-new banknotes from her more well-off step-mother Larissa.

<sup>82</sup> Larissa is the wife of the father, a minor character in the short story.

<sup>83</sup> Maryse Condé, 243.

<sup>84</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>85</sup> Maryse Condé, 238.

Such fictive scenarios coincide closely with the reality of the extended family as it exists in New World Black communities, where migration, crowded living conditions, long working hours for women and relatively high rates of death at childbirth severely limit the probability that any child grows up in a one-to-one relationship with both its biological parents. In addition, children must often live away from home to attend school and the notion of kin is less a matter of blood ties than of shared exigency<sup>86</sup>

Given that Condé is a feminist author, it is no wonder that in the character of the father are condensed all the bad stereotypes of a man. Always absent from home on his secret business, he ignores his parental responsibilities. He is obsessed by women, spends a lot of money. However, his strict opposition to imposed European culture and values proves to be for the evolution of the girl's own identity – she discovers her native land.

The moment when the father is no longer absent from the life of the girl is the tipping point of the whole story. If the mother's world is catholic and limited by conventions, the father's world is freed from burdens of western civilization. The father appears out-of-a-blue – his coming changes the way the girl views her life. Good as well as bad habits in the depiction of father make the story more realistic, he is valued for introducing the girl to the reality. He is her true coming-of-age. “I met my father when I was ten years old. My Mother had never uttered his name in my presence, and I had ended up thinking that I owed my life to her unbending will-power alone”<sup>87</sup>. “When he leaned against the door of the cubby hole I had been allotted in the attic, it seemed to me that the day began to dawn on my life. He was a fairly dark skinned mulatto [...]”<sup>88</sup>.

The girl despises mother for being too strict, she appreciates the change in her life that brings the act of moving to the other island and becoming friends with her father. The father is otherwise depicted rather negatively. “My father, who never moved from his bed on Sunday, the Lord's day, kept his bedroom door firmly closed, never letting a smile or a caress filter through”<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> COBHAM, Ronda, “Revisioning our Cumblas: Transforming Feminist and Nationalist Agendas in Three Caribbean Women's texts”, ‘Calaloo’ 16, no.1 (Winter 1993): 57.

<sup>87</sup> Maryse Condé, 235.

<sup>88</sup> Maryse Condé, 237.

<sup>89</sup> Maryse Condé, 237.

The father is a real-life embodiment of vanity, has a lot of children and side activities off the house. The girl herself admits that ‘I was not the only illegitimate child of Etienne’s, even though I was the only resident one.’ This is again contrasting with the mother’s dedication to support her only daughter despite her own modest conditions. The father comes from a well-off family and his way of life hinders the activity of other to create values. “It was soon discovered that the daily taking of the ironmongery, substantial as they were, vanished into thin air among the men with whom he lost at cards in the bars of the Carenage district, the women he bedded just about everywhere, and the professional cadgers”<sup>90</sup>.

The mother hopes to assure a better life for her daughter by supporting her studies on the other island, but the father sabotages her study ardor by distracting her from reading European books. He immersed her into the Caribbean reality and acted against the ‘church values’.

We don’t get two lives Etiennise. Down under the ground there are no wooden horses and the merry go round has stopped turning. We are all alone, cramped in our coffins, and the worms are having a fest day. So, as long as your heart keeps beating make the most of it.<sup>91</sup>

His two women, Nissida and Larissa, are in inferior position to him. Nisida, the mother of the narrator, was formerly a servant at his house, but she left after she was raped by the father, master of the house.

[The mother] used to sleep in the attic. The afternoon I set upon her like poverty laying hands on the pauper she was reading ‘The Imitation of our lord Jesus Christ’<sup>92</sup>. [...]. She (Larissa) prepared his coffee and served him his breakfast, the only meal he took at fixed time<sup>93</sup>.

Even his own daughter serves to his deviant plans. She hands love letters to her underage classmates, becoming partly responsible for the crimes against moral. The father is a dandy examining his capabilities of a seducer. His physical appearance makes him rather successful.

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<sup>90</sup> Maryse Condé, 237.

<sup>91</sup> Maryse Condé, 240.

<sup>92</sup> Maryse Condé, 241.

<sup>93</sup> Maryse Condé, 238.

You would never imagine how ready they were, these young girls from a reputable family seen at church at church at Sundays, closely chaperoned by father, brother and mother and stumbling with beatitude on their return from the altar, how ready they were to listen to the improper propositions of a married man with a reputation<sup>94</sup>.

The superiority of Christian moral over pagan debauchery is demonstrated in the final section of the story when the father, a notorious lover, is devastated physically and psychically – after courting a married woman, he is beaten by the angry husband and no more handsome. Laughed by everybody, even his daughter whom she once admired him turns away.

### **Gender, Race and Social Status**

Condé uses colors abundantly to depict the racial diversity of her home land. The description of a character often involves a mention of color.

In fact, nobody found grace in his heart except for Jessica, my almost blonde half-sister whose grey eyes, the very image of her father's<sup>95</sup> [...] A woman was waiting for him on the other side of Place de la Victoire: jet black with her lips daubed bright red and loops dancing in her ears<sup>96</sup>.

The quality of a person is assessed by their wealth, by the color of skin and/or ethnicity. Race and social class are close concepts. White creole people are supposed to be richer than the colored ones – a relic from the colonial times. The society has installed auto-segregation rules when only people of the same race can marry. The father breaks social conventions regularly and is opposed to the idea of segregation. In his own words: “My parents used to tell me: ‘We are mulattoes. We do not frequent niggers’. I have never understood why. My best friends are niggers you know”<sup>97</sup>.

The latent racism in the society is represented by the shock that neighbors experience when a cross-racial marriage is announced.

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<sup>94</sup> Maryse Condé, 241.

<sup>95</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>96</sup> Maryse Condé, 239.

<sup>97</sup> Maryse Condé, 240.

A few weeks later we learned she was to marry Jean Burin des Rosiers, the fourth son of a rich white creole factory owner. Great was the stupor! What! A white creole to marry a colored girl? And not even a mulatto into the bargain! For although has a magistrate, Mr Savigny was but a common copper-colored nigger! As for the mother, she was a white coolie! Such an event had not occurred since 1928, the year of the terrible hurricane when a Martin Saint Aurele had married a negress. But the family had turned their backs on him and the couple had lived in poverty.<sup>98</sup>

Given that Condé is a feminist writer, she wanted to highlight the condition of women and celebrate those who can make their ends meet in uneasy situations. Basically, we can find only one type of women here -the dependent ones. Home-bound and not achieving particularly high goals in their lives. They rely on their husbands, serve them and accept their requirements. The women are those who work hard to care for the family, whereas the men are resting. Especially the character of the father is depicted as a pagan god-creator who brings his children to life effortlessly without caring much about their destiny – the girl/narrator was introduced to her father by a post message at the age of ten and later ignored until he found the books that triggered an upheaval. His other children come to his house in specific time to collect money, but he is locked upstairs ignoring the whole situation and letting Larissa, his wife, to handle the situation. Only the men in the story is depicted as a creator, originator of everything. Condé uses euphemisms and hyperboles to demonstrate the dependence of a woman's fate on a man. "Sabrina, who was heavy with child through the doings of Dieudonné, master sail-maker, was being married off. The priest, who was a good old devil, had closed his eyes to the bride's 'hummock of truth' and agreed to give nuptial blessing"<sup>99</sup>.

The dependent women are further to be sorted in two groups – the peaceful and the resistant. For example, Nisida, the mother, carries her cross of poverty and loneliness and prays to saint Mary for help. Larissa, the wife, lives in relative luxury, she has her servants and accepts to be inferior and dependent on her husband. The girl wants to revolt against the monotonous life with her pious mother. As an adolescent, she is not stable in her attitudes. At first, it seems that she was understood that only

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<sup>98</sup> Maryse Condé, 243.

<sup>99</sup> Maryse Condé, 240.

education can change her social status, but after meeting her father, she further develops aversion to traditional Christian values as her father convinces her that man should experience freedom and live for the moment.

The father's conception of life proves to be right until he is beaten and mutilated by a man called Artemio who does not tolerate his woman being courted by the father. The story would not have its final moral point if the courted women would not announce it to her husband. "She talked freely to her husband of these constant advances that troubled her, and the husband, hotheaded as Latins are wont to be resolved to give the brazen fellow a lesson he would never forget"<sup>100</sup>The courted woman resists the temptation and brings finally order to the life of her suitor by the actual fist of her husband.

## **Religion**

The final deformation of father make us think about Bible and its stories about notorious sinners. The religion is a complex question – the mother being an absolute follower of saint Mary but the father' confession is not certain. The local society requires active adherence to Christianity – the community gathers in church. It is visible that the father opposes to the ideas of Christianity and honoring saints, because he perceives it as something unnatural to his identity. The believe in traditional spirit is present also with the character of the girl, but only indirectly. "One afternoon.... I was languishing away with one of the girl domestics who was scared as I was in this old wooden house where the spirits were simply waiting for nightfall to haunt our sleep"<sup>101</sup>.

The underlying animism in the local society is represented by an obeah who came to heal father's wounds after he had been beaten. "Once the doctor had turned his back carrying turned his back carrying off his sulfinilamides, in came the obeah man with his roots"<sup>102</sup>. Father's island is a space where Christianity and traditional beliefs overlap.

The father being complete opposite of the mother, he is finally humiliated for his sinful way of life and the girl feels at least some pity for her suffering mother. The father was strictly opposed to the way of life imposed by the Church, but after he is beaten there came a priest to his house. The main characters in the stories are thus the mother – embodiment of chastity whose perception of the world is limited by the

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<sup>100</sup> Maryse Condé, 244.

<sup>101</sup> Maryse Condé, 239.

<sup>102</sup> Maryse Condé, 244.

constraints of religion and the father who represents the chaotic freedom that reigned on the islands before the arrival of colonists, Christianity, and ‘European values’.

## **Nature**

The animistic religions and indigenous people have common the veneration of mother nature. Condé introduced subtly this topic into her story by paralleling women and natural objects: “Only the sea, a crazed woman with eyes of amethyst, leapt in places over the rocks and tried to take men and animals alike by the throat”<sup>103</sup>. The sea is an unknown monster with feminine traits. It is also an uncertain and dangerous space that divides the girl’s parents.

Hardly have left the jetty on which the crowd grew smaller and smaller than my joy gave way to the feeling of panic. ‘The sea opened up like the jaws of a monster bent on swallowing us. We were sucked into the abyss, then vomited out in disgust before being dragged back again. This merry-go-round lasted an hour and a half. Women with rosaries in hand prayed to the Virgin Mary. Finally, we entered the mauve waters of the harbor with Pointe-à-Pitre shining as a backdrop’<sup>104</sup>.

The water and sea motives appear also in another rather unusual connotation. The water parallels appear through the story abundantly: “After Sunday school, there was a stream of boys and girls of every age and every color [...] The stream dried up for lunch and siesta only to resume in greater force from four o’clock in the afternoon until night fall”<sup>105</sup>. The motives of water, sea and sailing add authenticity to the depiction of the insular everyday life. “Three times a week a boat left Grand Bourg, Marie Galante, for the actual island of Guadeloupe. It was loaded with black piglets, poultry, goats, jerrycans of 55% rum, matrons with huge buttocks and children in tears”<sup>106</sup>.

Condé sometimes shows to the reader amusing details that pokes fun at the dimensions of older women. This adds balance to the distribution of characters – no one

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<sup>103</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>104</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

<sup>105</sup> Maryse Condé, 237.

<sup>106</sup> Maryse Condé, 236.

is perfect, even woman in her feminist writing have flaws. Such depictions of nature are closer to real life and thus more credible.

### 3.3. Haiti

The first European to set his foot on the now Haitian ground was Christopher Columbus who landed to its shores in December 1492 and named the land Española, a name later anglicized to Hispaniola.

The Spanish claimed ownership of the whole island, but they settled mainly in the eastern part (now Dominican Republic) leaving space to French settlers to occupy the western part, that was empty until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The division of the island was codified by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, but the French seized also the other parts of the island after the Peace of Basel in

The French colony was then known under the name Saint-Domingue and covered approximately the western third of the island (today Haiti covers approximately about three eighths of the island). The land was transformed to plantations producing sugar, coffee, cotton, indigo and cocoa. The colony became rich and needed more workers – in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the colony counted 50,000 French people, about 27,000 inhabitants of mixed race and nearly half a million black slaves imported from Africa to work for the profit of white landowners.

The French revolution of 1789 spread the ideas of liberty and equality and opened the way to the end of slavery in 1794 in France (slave rebellions preceded, devastating the colony in 1791). One of the slave leaders was Toussaint L'Ouverture who fought for freedom against the Europeans. He controlled the French part of Hispaniola as early as in 1801 but the colony, now renamed to Haiti, was not independent until 1. January 1804. L'Ouverture was followed by Jean-Jacques Dessalines who named himself emperor and was the first ruler of independent Haiti. He was murdered in 1806 and then Haiti was divided into kingdom in the north and republic in the south. The instability let the Spanish to reconquer land on Hispaniola in 1809. The situation was instable, the island was even united under Haitian rule of president Jean-Pierre Boyer<sup>107</sup> 1822-1844. The Haitians reduced the use of Spanish, imposed a strong military regime forcing the population to work in agriculture. Here can be traced the rivalry between the two nations. Haiti was thrown into chaos and in the period 1843-1911 there were 16 rulers – 11 of them removed from their power by force. The United States had economic

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107 Boyer fought in the French revolution and in the Haitian revolution he was opposed to Toussaint L'Ouverture. He first sided with the French against the Haitians, but after the slavery was to be reinstated (he was black) he changed the camp and fought against the French.

interests in Haiti and in 1915 they sent marines to peace the situation. The troops remained until 1934. A series of coups d'etat followed – in 1946 the was the president was removed by a military coup. He was replaced by Dumarsais Estime who was in turn overthrown by the military in 1950. He was replaced by Paul Malgoire, who resigned in 1956. Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc) was elected in 1957 after a series of provisional leaders. Voted in general elections, paradoxically, Duvalier soon became a brutal dictator ruling Haiti with the help of his infamous secret police, the Tontons Macoutes<sup>108</sup>. He introduced press control and prohibited the worker's unions. The dissatisfaction with his despotic reign grew, but he was re-elected in manipulated 1961 elections, he ensured in 1964 to be in reign until death. He died shortly after the Constitution was amended to enable the succession of his own son. In 1971 Jean-Claude Duvalier (Baby Doc) came to power and his reign was even as unbearable as his father's. The waves of immigrants from Haiti between 1970-1980 were caused by the horrific condition that the Duvalier family reinstated. The most important public demonstrations against the regime took place in 1984, but were quenched by the military forces until 1986 when Duvalier was finally forced to flee to exile abroad.

The army filled the vacuum after Duvalier and the military ran the land until 1990 when democratic elections brought new leader - Jean-Bertrand Aristide, catholic priest who was to be elected for three times in total. In 1991, he had to flee a military coup, but he could return back to Haiti to disband the Haitian military – the unemployed troops terrorized the inhabitants. The Haitians elected in 1996 René Preval, a political opponent to Aristide. The latter was re-elected in 2000, but the opposition did not recognize the victory of Aristide over Preval. The rebellions against Aristide reached its climax in 2004 and he was forced to leave Haiti again. There was a reign intermezzo until 2006 when Preval was re-elected president and democratic elections take place since then regularly.

In January 2010 Haiti suffered a terrible earthquake, which left vast numbers of people dead or injured. Many more were left homeless. Already a very poor country Haiti was left with the monumental task of recovering from the earthquake and it is still the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, inhabited by 10.71 million people.

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108 Tonton Macoute crimes are central to Dandicat's 2004 novel *The Dew Breaker*.

### 3.3.1. Author: Edwidge Danticat

Edwidge Danticat (born in 1969 in Port-au-Prince) is one foot on the American soil and the other on her homeland in Haiti. The supposedly first chronicle of the Haitian diaspora came from her pen. In her other texts, she informs the world about the chaotic reality in her native Hispaniola, an island that is divided between the former French colony Haiti and the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic. In 1995, when her first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* was published, there was approximately one million of Haitian emigrant living permanently in the United States, centered in Miami and New York (Danticat herself lives in Brooklyn).

She explores the themes of physical control that lead to self-refusal, her writing is specifically oriented to the suffering of women. Her publications help to identify the queer traditions of her native country (such as the fact that the virginity of young Haitian women is regularly checked by the family relatives<sup>109</sup>, the widespread believe in traditional spirits<sup>110</sup> or witchery). In her native country, national and personal history is strongly tied together as the Duvalier regime turn the whole insular nation into desperate poverty after the regime of the Dominican Republic enacted race purges on its own territory to eradicate or expulse all Haitians present on the other side of the state border.

Danticat shares with Condé the criticism of patriarchal culture and the both celebrate the endurance of women in difficult conditions. The writing of Danticat is very much inspired by the real tragical history and present of Haiti. In her fictional stories, she is inspired by the atrocities that really happened and must not be forgotten. The author uses a very poetic language<sup>111</sup> that corresponds to the natural beauty of her beloved island. This contrasts with the man-made hell of rapes, massacres and general ignoring of civil rights that is Haiti widely known for.

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109 Edwidge Danticat claims ironically the following: 'Haitian men, the insist that their women are virgins and have their 10 fingers'. The testing is conducted by family relatives on young girls mostly in the rural areas of Haiti. Her books caused upheaval in greater Haitian cities where the more advanced women could not believe that this tradition still in Haiti exists. PIERRE-PIERRE, Garry. "At Home With Edwidge Danticat; Haitian Tales, Flatbush Scenes". Accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/26/garden/at-home-with-edwidge-danticathaitiantalesflatbushscenes.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDanticat%2C%20Edwidg>.

110 Voodoo is made an official religion in Haiti in 2003.

111 According to the The New York Times Book Review her books "achieves an emotional complexity that lifts it out of the realm of the potboiler and into that of poetry." Ibid.

The author spent twelve years in Bel Air, the slum located nearby the Haiti capital city Port-au-Prince. She knows poverty in her home country from her own experience, but she still tries to depict the nature of her native island positively<sup>112</sup>.

One of her favorite topics are also the issues that experience those who managed to escape the crisis and made their way to the United states to seek the American dream. Her fellow nationals were called 'Frenchies' or 'boat people' and the adjective Haitian gained very bad connotations. Claiming that her books are not autobiographical, she introduced some pieces of her life experience to the writing – her own difficult integration to a new society.

Haitian' was like a curse. People were calling you, 'Frenchy, go back to the banana boat,' and a lot of the kids would lie about where they came from. They would say anything but Haitian<sup>113</sup>.'

The U.S. immigration procedure cost life to her uncle, Joseph Dandica<sup>114</sup>, but the writer claims 'New York City was our city on the hill'<sup>115</sup>. The humble origins of her family in New York were inspirational for Dandicat, who felt that she needs to tell the world the stories of her people. After a short period of medical studies, she dedicated herself fully to teaching a writing. Her career was no fully appreciated by her family until she published in her 25 years her first book in 1995, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. This book was in Oprah Winfrey Book Club selection, this facilitated advertising and the novel became a bestseller. Only partly biographical, she was inspired by her childhood in Haiti and difficult moving to New York. The used here for the first time a young girl who was born from a rape. A narrator of her own story, she lives with her aunt until invited by her mother who escaped Haiti in advance to find a better life. Her mother was raped at the age of 16 and her girl is the most visible memento of her suffering. Living in a new country and stress from the past events lead the mother to a superstitious fear – she tests the virginity of

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<sup>112</sup> Her depictions of natural beauty and moral strength are strikingly incoherent to the human material misery and pain. For example, she uses the following attributes to write about her fictional city on Haitian coast: 'Ville Rose, the city of painters, poets, and coffee'.

<sup>113</sup> PIERRE-PIERRE, Garry. "At Home With Edwidge Dandicat; Haitian Tales, Flatbush Scenes". Accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/26/garden/at-home-with-edwidge-danticathaitiantalesflatbushscenes.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDanticat%2C%20Edwidg>.

<sup>114</sup> Her family surname was always spelled Dandica – Dandicat

<sup>115</sup> DANDICAT, Edwidge. "New York Was Our City on the Hill". Accessed November 8, 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/21/nyregion/thecity/21dant.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/21/nyregion/thecity/21dant.html?_r=0).

her own daughter, who is in turn, in depressions and experiences an inner battle with her womanhood. To end the tests that ruin her mind, she impales herself with a spice pestle and is thrown out of the house by her mother (who commits a suicide).

The debut was followed in 1995 a collection of short stories *Krik? Krak!*<sup>116</sup> that was finalist in the National Book Award. In this time, she became to be seen as the main advocate of Haiti in the United States. Danticat forward here the idea of woman sisterhood – the Haitian woman are connected by shared past and suffering. In the prologue to the collection, the woman-narrator states that her life is similarly miserable to the ones of her mother, grandmother and other ancestors. In the story ‘Children of the sea’ there is a female character who ends her sorrowful life by jumping to the sea. The sea and water is a recurrent motive of life and death in her work. ‘New York Day Woman’ features a Haitian woman who is unhappy with her new life in the United States, because she left everything behind in Haiti.

In 1998, she published *The Farming of Bones*, a novel topicalizing the 1937 massacre of Haitian agricultural workers by the Dominican during the ethnic purifications of Parsley massacre. An orphan from Haiti, Amabelle Desir, growing at the other side of border, narrates her nightmare story – she must flee for her life, leaving her beloved man behind. The massacre is little known by world public and Danticat considers it: "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<sup>117</sup>." It seems that women in Danticat's works cannot escape their sorrow – the woman hero escapes from servitude in Dominican Republic to slaughters that she witnesses on her road to a poor country – Haiti.

*Behind the Mountains* from 2002 represent the experience of another woman hero – Celiane Esperance. Written in a form of a diary, the novel treats the topic of a family split between Haiti and the United States. Due to prolonged visa application proceedings, the family reunites only after eight years of waiting. Unfortunately, the new environment and stress from relocation creates family frictions as the children grow up, face study difficulties and hard winters. By relocation, the exiled Haitians are

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<sup>116</sup> The name came from the creole tradition of oral narration. The narrator asks Krik? and if the audience is ready to listen they respond Krak!

<sup>117</sup> See *Notable Biographies online*, accessed March 14, 2017, [www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-A-Fi/Danticat-Edwidge.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-A-Fi/Danticat-Edwidge.html).

unable to integrate in the new community and in the meantime, they lose contact with their homes, making them twofold outsiders<sup>118</sup>.

*The Dew Breaker* was published in 2004, featuring nine interrelated short-stories that are not in chronological order. The name of the book comes from the torturer of Haitians that were punished by the Duvalier regime. The agent sought and destroyed its victims before the same came out. Later, he moves to the United States, founds his own family and feels finally guilty for his crimes.

Danticat's last publication is a novel from 2005 *Anaconda, Golden Flower* was written for young readers. Inspired by the Spanish possession of Hispaniola, the author develops a story of Queen Anaconda, a person that represents the joining of European culture with the Amer-Indian, as she was wife of the island ruler before the Europeans arrived and she assisted the collapse of her old civilization and expansion of the Europeans.

From Danticat's non-fictional publications, 2002 *After the Dance: A Walk through Carnival in Haiti* deals with her own experience of witnessing the dangerous folk celebrations in her old homeland. She claims that these carnivals were unsafe for the inhabitants, as the participants were often beaten by the police at the times of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier terror. She analyzes the origins of the festivities that is mixing together traditions of voodoo, European customs, Christianity and slave history.

Danticat also edited collection of stories from other authors, in 2001 she participated on *The Butterfly s way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States*.

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<sup>118</sup> See *Notable Biographies online*, accessed March 14, 2017, [www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-A-Fi/Danticat-Edwidge.html](http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2005-A-Fi/Danticat-Edwidge.html).

### 3.3.2 Short Story: Nineteen Thirty-Seven

[...] Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon... Its usual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this exchange exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized<sup>119</sup>.

Similarly to Maryse Condé, Edwidge Danticat uses in her short-story a young woman to narrate the story from her perspective. This retrospective story deals with the difficult Haitian past – in 1937 the troops from the Dominican Republic massacred Haitians living on the other side of the border.

The total number of casualties differ from 9,000 and 20,000 according to sources, but it is certain that this mass murder (or genocide) was order by Rafael Trujillo<sup>120</sup>, the then president of the Dominican Republic. This racial and ethnic purge came to the history under the name Parsley massacre<sup>121</sup>.

The border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic was the scene of a mass slaughter that has long burned in Haitians' collective memory but was either unknown or forgotten in the wider world<sup>122</sup>.

The Haitians lived and across the border because of overpopulation and lack of resources on their side of the border. They worked mostly on the Dominican cane fields, but the official argument for their extermination was that they were suspected from stealing crops and cattle. The Artibonite river separates Haiti form the Dominican Republic and has an important position in the short story. Myriam Moise notices that the

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<sup>119</sup> FANON, Frantz, *The wretched of the Earth/Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1965, p.29.

<sup>120</sup> Rafel Trujillo reigned in the Dominican Republic from 1930 until his assassination in 19161

<sup>121</sup> Haitian languages, French and Haitian Creole, pronounce the r as a uvular approximant or a voiced velar fricative, respectively so their speakers can have difficulty pronouncing the alveolar tap or the alveolar trill of Spanish, the language of the Dominican Republic.

<sup>122</sup> DAVIS, Nick. "The Massacre that Marked Haiti-Dominican Republic ties". Accessed November 12, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19880967>.

water element goes through the entire story – from the ‘miniature raindrop’ to the blood flowing down the Massacre river at the end of the story’. Moise further states:

The predominance of fluid spaces is noticeable in Dandicat’s work overall and her depiction of the sea as reproductive, re-creative, and liberating for her foremothers is central to understanding the link that she constantly draws between motherhood, memory and identity [...] Her representation of sea embraces the construction and reconstructions of female selves as a road to freedom and the beginning and end of all things.<sup>123</sup>

In *Nineteen Thirty-Seven*, the concepts of life and death are blurred, as her self-reflection fuses with her mother’s within the river water where the soul of her grandmother rests. Through the water, their faces become ‘indistinguishable’ and the river allows their sacred trinity to exist beyond the limits of life and death.

If *La Négritude* searched for a common, yet African father, the characters that Dandicat created search for their ancestral mothers. “Through her vision of the sea as feminized or female-constituted or reconstituted, the water elements embody the fluidity of diasporic identities and also represent the female figure as a crossroad character allowing cultural continuity and collective female empowerment”<sup>124</sup>. The fleeing Haitians who managed to cross the river reached safe ground and escaped sure death. The river became thus a memorial place there those who survive gather to commemorate the events and initialize younger Haitians to the secret of the river.

The story is unraveled through the narration of Josephine, young woman, who enters to the story sitting chair with a Madonna doll, a relic inherited from her mother. “I remained in the rocking chair until it was nightfall my bones aching from the thought of another trip to the prison in Port-au-Prince. But of course, I had to go”<sup>125</sup>. The Madonna seems to be a saint object as it emits a real tear from its porcelain face. This makes Josephine think about the death of her mother. “My Madonna cried. A miniature

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<sup>123</sup> MOISE, Miariam, *Vorou Symbolism and ‘Poto Mitan’ Women in Edwidge Dandicat’s Work*. Accessed March 13, 2017, [https://www.academia.edu/28576770/Vodou\\_Symbolism\\_and\\_Poto\\_Mitan\\_Women\\_in\\_Edwidge\\_Dandicat's\\_Work](https://www.academia.edu/28576770/Vodou_Symbolism_and_Poto_Mitan_Women_in_Edwidge_Dandicat's_Work).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Edwidge Dandicat, 447.

teardrop traveled down her white porcelain face, like dew on the tip of early morning grass. When I saw the tear, I thought, surely that my mother had died”<sup>126</sup>.

Another sign of troubles her mother faces are her own aching bones. All her strength and dedication gathered, Josefine decides to pay a visit to the prison on the city, where her mother is imprisoned for her supposed witchery. This does not correspond with the humble description of the mother. The girl set off to a pilgrimage:

The roads to the city were covered with sharp pebbles only half buried in the thick dust. I choose to go barefoot, as my mother has always done on her visits to the Massacre river, the river separating Haiti from the Spanish-speaking country that she had never allowed me to name because I had been born on the night that El Generalissimo, Dios Trujillo, the honorable chief of state, had ordered to massacre all Haitians living there<sup>127</sup>.

On her way, the daughter encounters an old woman who anticipates that Josephine is willing to see somebody in prison. She is shown where to buy some fruit for the inmate. In this sequence, Haitian pride for the country’s beauty is most visible. Josephine is questioned from where she is from, and answers proudly, giving her city positive attributes: “I am from Ville Rose, I said, the city of painters and poets, the coffee city, with beaches where the sand is either black or white, but never mixed together, where fields are endless and sometimes the cows are yellow like cornmeal”<sup>128</sup>.

The prison where her mother is held was constructed during the occupation of the country by the United States – the author uses this as a reminder of past when her country was often subjugated to other countries, and probably also as a metaphor that represents the Haitian diaspora in the United States, its struggle to survive there. “By the end of the 1915 occupation the police in the city really knew how to hold human beings trapped in cages, even women like Manman who was accused of having wings of flame [...]”<sup>129</sup>. The mother is supposed to die in the prison, her body is to be burned so that her soul does not enter another body, but the mother is not vindictive – she claims that the

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<sup>126</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 447.

<sup>127</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 447.

<sup>128</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 447.

<sup>129</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 448.

guards did not treat her badly. This is a clear sign of Christian forgiveness – she is paradoxically imprisoned for alleged pagan witchery. Her head is shaved every week, even though the girl says that she had layers of *respectable* wrinkles on her eyes. The inmates are forced to throw buckets of ice-cold water at each other as a prevention to the apparition of flame wings who could facilitate their escape from prison. The mother is resilient, but her body is weak and she starts to cry – this emotion is forbidden by the guards.

A flashback follows, clarifying earlier events for the reader. Josephine and her mother were in Port-au-Prince, accommodated by the mother's friend. The baby that Josephine's mother was looking after suffered from colic. The mother was accused by her own friend of witchery. An angry mob arrived at the door of the house accompanied by the police. The chasing of the mother recalls another flashback – the girl remember that she was one with her mother at the Artibonite river (in the story named the Massacre river) where the Josephine's grandmother was slaughtered by the Dominican troops. They were all three at the river that day – the grandmother died, but mother made it to the other riverbank and saved herself and her daughter that was to be born soon.

When I was five years old, we went on pilgrimage to the Massacre River, which I had expected to be still crimson with blood, but which was as clear as any water that I had ever seen. Manman had taken my hand and pushed it into the river, no further than my wrist. When we dipped out our hands, I thought that the dead would reach out and haul us in, but only our faces stared back to us, one indistinguishable from the other.<sup>130</sup>

The timeline shifts back to the present. The mother is visited several times by her daughter. Still speechless, her mother pushes her back to avoid spreading of her prison illness – cough. Back home in Ville Rose, Josephine is visited by a mysterious woman in white cloth, claiming to be part of the sisterhood that was formed by the shared past at the river. Not certain if this is not a scam, the girl asks a series of questions that only the women from the river could answer. They haste to the prison; the mother is dying.

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<sup>130</sup> Edwidge Dandicat, 450.

The river is both the end and the beginning. This mystical dialogue is a testimony that the sisterhood from the Massacre is closely attached to the nature.

‘Who are you?’, I asked her.

‘I am a child of that place’, she answered. ‘I come from that long trail of blood’.

‘Where are you going?’

‘I am walking into the dawn’.

‘Who are you?’

‘I am the first daughter of the first star.’

‘Where do you drink when you are thirsty?’

‘I drink from the Madonna’s eyes.’

‘And if not there?’

‘I drink the dew.’

‘And if you can’t find dew?’

‘I drink from the rain before it falls.’

‘If you can’t drink there?’

‘I drink from the turtle’s hide.’

‘How did you find your way to me?’

‘By the light of the mermaid’s comb.’

‘Where does your mother come from?’

‘Thunderbolts, lightning, and all things that soar.’

‘Who are you?’

‘I am the flame and the spark by which my mother lived.’

‘Where do you come from?’

‘I come from the puddle of that river.’

‘Speak to me.’

‘You hear my mother who speaks through me. She is the shadow that follows my shadow. The flame at the tip of my candle. The ripple in the stream where I wash my face. Yes. I will eat my tongue if ever I whisper that name, the name of that place across the river that took my mother from me’<sup>131</sup>.

The massacre is forever bound with the river. The surviving women form a sisterhood and support themselves. This is demonstrated by Jacqueline helping

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<sup>131</sup> Edwidge Dandicat, 453.

Josephine with overcoming the uneasy last moments of her mother who was beaten to death, because she was unable to cure her cough. In the prison cell, the inmates have already redistributed her private belongings, Josephine only receives a pillow with her mother's hair. She was then burned.

Josephine has another vision from the past – the river crossing in 1937 is reenacted. No born yet, her mother made it to the other side of the river. The Haitian blood in the river colored the mother's body and it seemed she had red flames. *In Nineteen Thirty-Seven*, Dandicat used flashbacks to highlight the collective memory. The author highlights that their suffering will never be forgotten, the story is passed from generation to generation. There are two false accusations present in the story. The first is the mother's responsibility for the baby. The second is that she could fly. Seemingly, the massacre at the river was so brutal, that anyone who managed to escape had supernatural forces at their side. The mob justice does not require direct evidence, possible connection is enough. "They were said to have been seen at night rising from the ground like birds on fire. A loved one, a friend, or neighbor had accused them of causing the death of a child. A few other people agreeing with these stories was all that was needed to have them arrested. And sometimes even arrested"<sup>132</sup>

Josephine and her mother cannot defend themselves, they are the most vulnerable group in the story. The society is represented by prison guards who want to break the spirit of the inmates by forcing them to throw ice-cold water at each other. They also cut their hair. When Josephine asks her mother if it is true that she can fly, she responds by silence, not answering directly. Sure, those who escaped *flew* metaphorically, it was their flight to freedom. The mother venerates the river that let her survive.

With our hands in the water, Manman spoke to the sun. 'Here is my child, Josephine. We were saved from the tomb of this river when she was still in my womb. You spared us both, her and me, from the river when I lost my mother. ... We were all daughters of that river, which had taken our mothers from us. Our mothers were the ashes and we were the light. Our mothers were the embers and we were the sparks. Our mothers were the flames and we were the blaze. We came from the bottom of that river where the blood never stops flowing, where my

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<sup>132</sup> Edwidge Dandicat, 449.

mother's dive towards life – her swim among these bodies slaughtered in flight – gave her those wings of flames<sup>133</sup>.

The mother's association with witchery is purely hypothetical. She modified the Saint Mary doll in a voodoo artefact that is bound with her own life condition – the Madonna's cry is signaling the mother's deterioration. Other connections are more salient than her mysticism – the womanhood and her family.

The strongest binding is between the mother and the daughter. Not talking much with each other, they are connected forever by the river incident. The grandmother scarified herself to let her daughter survive and the unborn grand-daughter gave strength and will to run, fly, to cross the border and to save two lives at a time. One woman ceded place to another. If not, they would probably perish all. She came out at the right moment to take her mother's place. Also, the Madonna represents a link from one woman to another – it is passed from generation to generation.

I held the small statue that had been owned by my family ever since it was given to my great-great-great-grandmother Défilé by a French man who had kept her as a slave [...] 'Keep the Madonna when I am gone', she said. 'When I am completely gone, maybe you will have someone to take my place. Maybe you will have a person. Maybe you will have some flesh to console you. But if you don't, you will always have the Madonna'<sup>134</sup>.

The mother burned because the superstitious society wanted her death. She escaped the Dominican Republic and thought to be safe, but she was betrayed by her friend whom she helped. The sisterhood from the river compensates the missing structures of the state itself. If one member dies, the other take care of the other members. "Sister, she said, 'life is never lost, another one always comes up to replace the last. Will you come watch when they burn the body?' 'What would be the use?' I said. 'They will make these women watch, and we can keep them company'"<sup>135</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 451.

<sup>134</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 452.

<sup>135</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 455.

In a state, society and time where all conditions seem unfavorable to women, the author celebrates their endurance and will to life. Haiti is the country the troubles in paradise happen. The beauty of the nature contrast with human cruelty. Strong women face barbarian men. The sisterhood of the Massacre river multiplies the dedication of each woman to survive. Jacqueline assures Josephine that they are resilient: *“Perhaps you don’t remember. All the women who came with us to the river; they could go to the moon and back if that is what they wanted”*<sup>136</sup>.

Haiti definitely needs more writers like Edwidge Danticat, because the world news depict this country mostly negatively. We hear almost exclusively about hurricanes, disorder, famine, violence. The island of Hispaniola was a tropical paradise until corrupted governments and violent dictators ruined the Haitian part. Danticat gives hope to Haitians. She is proud to describe the natural beauties of her native land as well as hardened to handle the bitter reality of her country. She is the voice of the voiceless.

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<sup>136</sup> Edwidge Danticat, 455.

### **3.4 Suriname**

Suriname was from 1667-1954 a Dutch plantation colony. The Dutch gained the colony in the Second Anglo Dutch War. The Dutch presence in the Guyana plateau was even larger, but the colonies that originally formed Dutch Guiana (Berbice, Essequibo, Demerara and Pomeroun) were lost to the British in 1814.

The Dutch West India Company provided slaves to the cotton, sugar and indigo fields, later were also coffee plantations exploited. The Amsterdam stock market collapsed in 1773, causing economic troubles for the regions where the commodities were produced. In 1807 was slavery abolished in the British realms, but only in 1863 in the Dutch colonies (with ten years of transition period). This caused immigration of indentured laborers from British India and also from the Dutch East Indies (modern-day Indonesia), mainly from Java. This are the main causes for the racial diversity of Suriname. The influx of black slaves from the West Africa created a specific group of semi-independent Maroon settlements that were created by the freed slaves in remote areas of the land.

In 1941, the Netherlands signed the Atlantic Charter that proclaimed the right of all people to self-determination. In 1954, it was transformed into a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. There was a principle of equality among the Netherlands itself and the Netherlands Antilles that also formed the kingdom.

Suriname remained under the Dutch rule until 1975 when it became fully independent. On 25 February 1980 was conducted a coup d'état by Desi Bouterse who suspended the constitution, forbade political parties and introduced a dictatorship supported by the military. Bouterse is assumed to be responsible for the 1982 December Murders when fifteen prominent intellectuals were tortured to death. The Netherlands suspended their developmental aid. Bouterse had a lot of opponents. One of them, Ronnie Transwijk, former life-guard of Bouterse, was suspected to be on November 29th in a small Creole village of Moiwana. 39 civilians were killed by the Bouterse's military group because they did not collaborate in finding Ronnie Tranwijk. He formed maroon Jungle Commandos, using guerrilla tactics and hiding themselves in the regions covered by rain forest remote from the coast. This period is known as Interior War, the fighting continued until 1992.

From 1980 until 1987 Bouterse was leader of the country backed by the army and puppet presidents were installed by him. Suriname was in isolation and even the Netherlands turned away from the country. New elections were held and the president Roald Venetiaan normalized the relation to the Netherlands. The military regime was disbanded in 1991 and new president Roald Venetiaan was elected in free elections, but Bouterse returned to power in 2010.

### **3.4.1. Author: Astrid Roemer**

De P.C. Hooftprijs, that has the role of the Pulitzer prize in the Dutch-speaking world, was awarded in 2016 to Astrid Heligonda Roemer. Born in 1947 in Paramaribo, Suriname to a middle-class creole family. The fact that the prize was awarded to a person of Surinamese origin was accepted with surprise, because her work prevailed over Arnon Grundberg or Jeroen Brouwers – writers more widely known and read in the Netherlands. Her work is considered in Suriname to be highly controversial as she criticized the post-colonial disruption of the society and the despotic reign of Bouterse regime<sup>137</sup> that earned her that acclamation.

The degradation of Surinamese politics is central to the narrative of Astrid Roemer. She largely blames the colonialism for creating chaos in her country, but also criticizes the Surinamese people who were not ready to accept independence. Her writing focuses on the military dictatorship above mentioned. Her work can be understood as a documentation of her native country after the independence in 1975. She points the squandering of the 3,5 billion Dutch gulden that were allocated by the Dutch to the newly formed republic to help with overcoming the independence turmoil. Poor management of the country's resources joined by civil war hindered the development of the country. Astrid Roemer anchored her work of fiction into vivid depictions of real history, she provides the readers with broader context constantly provoking their thoughts.

After finishing her studies at a church school in her native country, she relocated in 1966 to the Netherlands to study for a teacher career (that was short). She worked then for the Cultural and Press department of the Surinamese embassy. She was

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137 The committee selected her oeuvre because her novels both 'are sharp interventions into the public debate and represent complex images from the history of Suriname'. It was undoubtedly her trilogy *Impossible Motherland*. She named this series 'dekolonisatieromans'.

ROEMER, Astrid H. *Gewaagd leven*, Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam, 1996.

ROEMER, Astrid H. *Lijken op liefde*, Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam, 1997.

ROEMER, Astrid H. *Was getekend*, Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam, 1998.

a member of leftist newspapers Fri Sranan that were distributed in Suriname and between 1973-1977 she was redactor-in-chief in the diplomacy-oriented magazine Nieuw Suriname.

Aged 23 in 1970, she debuted with her poetry collection *Sasa*, my actual being<sup>138</sup>. In this collection are presented for the first-time topics that will reappear across her work. The titles of her poems reveal it directly: For Suriname ('Voor Suriname'), The Earth Bleeded ('De Aarde Bloedde'), 'winti', two tongues 'twee tongen', 'koloniaal souvenir'. This poetic bundle expressed the authors experience of being black and the sadness that comes from the colonial experience.

Her next work was her first novel *Take me back Suriname (Neem Mij Terug Suriname*<sup>139</sup>), that became enormously popular in Suriname, but she rewrote this novel in 1983 to *Somewhere Nowhere (Ergens Nergens*<sup>140</sup>), as she considered the original work not well-made. She made a real break-through into more common literature with her work *About the Folly of a Woman (Over de Gekte van een Vrouw*<sup>141</sup>). This fragmentary biography was published in 1982 and compares marriage of a woman to slavery. The main character is Noenka, a black poor woman that escapes her own husband who violates her.

Her most creative period was between 1996 -1998 when she dedicated herself on creation of the thousand-page cycle of novels that depicted her fatherland where she did not live in that time for about thirty years. This work captures the dreams, imagination and condition of the Surinamese people with a post-colonial background that is still reflected today in very specific relation between the Netherlands and the Suriname. She lives intermittently in Suriname, Den Haag and in Ghent abbey seclusion.

Considered to be a difficult author, it is highly desirable to perceive her work in wider context. This means to browse through her other works. If we do so, some we would more likely be able to understand her writing. Roemer describes a panorama of her native land, she depicts the past by mixing dreams, sentiments, sounds, fantasies, pictures and scents into flashbacks. She analyzes the changes in the Surinamese society by focusing on several individuals. The history of a recent-born nation is also a family history. This shows us how much the state and the individuals are connected. Her

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138 ROEMER, Astrid H. *Sasa, mijn actuele zijn*. Uitgeverij Eldorado, Paramaribo, 1970. Published originally under her early pseudonym Zamani.

139 ROEMER, Astrid H. *Neem mij terug Suriname*. Uitgeverij Conserve, Amsterdam, 2016.

140 ROEMER, Astrid H. *Nergens ergens*. Uitgeverij In de Knipscher, Amsterdam, 1983.

141 ROEMER, Astrid H. *Over the gekte van een vrouw*. Uitgeverij Prometheus.

characters appear and disappear, travel to the land of the former colonizer and back again. Roemer's characters are racially mixed, a feature that reflects Surinamese national identity. Her stories often contain mysteries, lapses of memory and riddles.

*Impossible Motherland (Onmogelijke Moederland)* is probably her most famous work. A thousand-page opus magnum shares several topics and techniques with the short story analyzed in this work. Each novel in the trilogy features a main person who recounts the history of their life. That person also appears in the other two novels.

The time of the series spans from the colonial period, as in the seventies of the twentieth century is a white woman found murdered. This mysterious act is followed by another murder, as one of her lovers is later found dead. The trilogy is not built chronologically. The first part is set in the eighties, the second from the seventies until the millennium and the third covers the sixties to the eighties.

*Gewaagd leven (Risky Life)* is the first of the three books it uses a puzzle structure - nine stories are followed by a collection of messages between Roemer created characters of two brothers, sixteen-year-old Onno and Hagith Mus who exchange messages where the history of Suriname and the Caribbean are mentioned. In the brief part, the history is narrated from the perspective of fictional character Onno, but in the stories that bind the achronological exchanged messages together is Roemer herself the chronicler of the centuries of the Surinamese nation. She gives pure facts to the reader and does not show as an engaged writer.

The main story narrates about a car accident with a death toll that is caused by Onno, but his brother Hagith Mus chooses to save his brother and bears his crime. Onno hides in a church and there comes his life back to him. The family Mus is dominated by father of the family, Michaël. As the story develops, he is progressively called M.M. who is a pastor but mishandles his woman and children and has a lot of bastard children and is involved into drug trafficking. Onno's mother, although humiliated is strong enough to attempt to break up with her husband and stay away from him, so she flees to the Netherlands. Also, Onno is tormented inside – he is torn between belonging fully to his family and father (whom he hates) and freedom. In contrast to the brutality of everyday life, Onno becomes a day-dreamer and drifts between the manhood and womanhood as his identity proves to be unstable. He accepts thus feminist visions of the world. Roemer thus examines different concepts of the word truth. The uneven distribution of masculine and feminine elements in the society is her frequent topic.

*Lijken op liefde (It seems to be love)* is the second novel. The main character of this novel is Cora Sewa, aged 65 that has both Creole and Hindustani background who sets out to search answers for life questions. The plot takes place in December 1999 when the High tribunal in Paramaribo was created after national referendum that should settle down the 1982 December Murders organized by Bouterese, military leader of the country. Cora works all her life as a servant to a prominent politician that has a mistress. Hiding pregnancy, she is found one day murdered with her belly ripped up so that the baby is visible. Crommeling, her employer, asks her to clean the scene and she is given money not to speak up. Also, Onno, who adored Cora, is murdered. He came from a racially mixed family, his mother being British and father Portuguese Jew. Shortly before his own death, Onno gives Cora keys to a safe box deposit that is located somewhere in London. The box may provide information about planned murders. Only 25 years after the murders decides Cora to wash the blood of her hands and undertakes a great investigation trip in Europe to find the truth.

*Lijken op liefde* is thus a passionate thriller with political undertones of the murders planned by the regime in Suriname. The character of Cora can be understood as a detective searching for truth because in real Suriname there was an investigation planned to be conducted but the dictator Bouterese canceled it, supposedly because he organized the December 1980 murders himself. Roemer shows here her craft of suspension: by the end of the novel it may seem that Cora is also partly responsible for the crime, the reader is surer that she is somehow involved in the crime.

*Was getekend (It was written)* is the last novel of the series and it features a much simpler structure than the two prequels, even though the storyline is not always chronologically linear. It is set in time before the other novels, in 1950 -1989. The character of Pedrick de Derde Abracadabra is introduced, who is married to Sofia, the sister of M.M. from *Gewaagd leven (Risky life)*. They have two children, but she decides to escape with them to the Netherlands. Pedrick remains in Suriname and awaits a visit of his children. In the meantime, he reads the letters that they exchanged again. The core of the story is the dual interpretation of Pedrick's past. Stories from mother and father told the children differ, but the reality is also different.

The political situation of Suriname is represented by the crushing of an airplane near Paramaribo airport –Zanderij in the story. This attack is probably a counter-action

to the Bouterese's December Murders<sup>142</sup>. Pedrick hopes that his children were not on the plane, finally it turns out that he lost his mother and a friend from youth in the crash. Roemer says that the scorch-mark created by the impact is Suriname – the land where Pedrick lives delimited by cherished memories from the past. Even the personality of Pedrick de Derde is accidental. He is an adoptive child of Pedrick de Tweede, son of an engineer from Boston and Dutch nurse. He is a foundling, stricken by leprosy, found by the indigenous people in the jungle and given to the hands of missionaries. His original name was Ilya, French for Il y a – there it is.

The main hero is thus the perfect Surinamese man. Young and with leprosy when found, his age and sickness is a metaphor of the recent turmoil in which the whole Suriname was 'found'. He does not know his own past and origins. Roemer says that real Surinamese people do not know their roots<sup>143</sup>. Pedrick does not believe in God and has only himself to rely on. He believes only what he experienced. The land may be ravaged, but there is a strong hope for individual development when his adoptive mother says: 'You are what you want to be'. Astrid Roemer Blames the Europeans for mixing the ethnics and creating an impossible nation. Without them, it would not exist and the Surinamese would not have troubles with finding their own identity.

### **3.4.2 Short Story: "The inheritance of my father: A story for Listening"**

The short-story "The inheritance of my father: A story for Listening" shares several techniques used in the above described trilogy. Again, Roemer introduces us to a family that is stretched between Europe and the New World. Written as a collection of reminiscences to the past, it features several artifacts that help to refresh the memory of "the child of a mother that will be forty tomorrow<sup>144</sup>". There are two narrative perspectives. The first with limited third person perspective (easily identifiable, written in italics, embedded narrative). The second perspective is first person narrative, forming most of the text. The story has a two tense, double-layer structure. Now and then. In the

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<sup>142</sup> Dési Bouterese, the incumbent president of Suriname, ordered the silencing of activists who opposed themselves to the military dictatorship in Suriname (1980-1988). The murders took place on 7,8,9 December 1982. Bouterese ordered to capture his opponents in the night when they were sleeping in their homes. They were brought to Fort Zeelandia and supposedly shot dead when they attempted to escape. The Netherlands canceled the development financial aid that was attributed to Suriname as a partial compensation after its independence in 1975.

<sup>143</sup> LOTENS, Walter. "De Surinaamse 'Dekolonisatieromans' van Astrid Roemer". Accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.uitpers.be/artikel/2017/01/11/surinaamse-dekolonisatieromans-astrid-roemer/>.

<sup>144</sup> Astrid Roemer, 348.

sections written in italics, there is a cassette recording prepared. In non-marked text is the narration itself. The reader is informed about a story that is recorded with the intention to be given to somebody. The girl's voice is a gift both physically and metaphorically -there is a cassette recorder capturing spoken memories. The tape<sup>145</sup> is a gift to next generations that might not know the past. Roemer's use of child narration allows for a fresh perspective of events as seen through the innocent eyes of young girl. Her curiosity is expressed as well as her identity crisis "I began to think about everything, about who my parents were 'I began to think [...] about what I am, about who we are together [...]"<sup>146</sup> The first-person narrative makes the reader think of a life performance. The girl has its own language, idiolect, she reduplicates words everything-everything, uses nonce words, the use of deixis as with pronouns you know... makes her narration more intermediate, as if the reader was close to her, listening to her remembrance.

The narrator of the story, a thirteen-year-old girl reveals that "Before the summer vacation this year, I had never seen my grandma"<sup>147</sup>. The family communicates through post mail and telephones. In one of them Grandma of the narrator wishes 'Bonkoro my half-breed, I would love to see you before I die"<sup>148</sup>. She refers to her grand-daughter with a non-European name (Bonkoro) and points to the fact that her mother is white. The color of the skin is mentioned many times, humorously in the depiction of planning the trip to Grandma. "In the middle of the night they started to quarrel<sup>149</sup>, and it was frightening: Mama kept getting redder and redder, and Papa blacker and blacker"<sup>150</sup>.

If Suriname is always referred to as "a country that is nine-flight-hours and almost three-thousand-guilders-per-person away from here"<sup>151</sup>. it is because the unity of the family was broken due to dysfunctional of parents, with strong racial undertones. The Dutch mother of the narrator whose skin is white refuses to go to Suriname, scared to be

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<sup>145</sup> There is also a second tape. Mother gives a recording of her voice to console her as she leaves without her. The mother feels that in Suriname great changes and discoveries and changes will take place.

<sup>146</sup> Astrid Roemer 349.

<sup>147</sup> Astrid Roemer 348.

<sup>148</sup> Astrid Roemer 348.

<sup>149</sup> In Roemer's work is the marriage seen as an unsuccessful institution. For instance, in the trilogy *Impossible Motherland* we can find white Dutch woman, a nurse, who lives with a racially mixed (thus real Surinamese man) Pedrick de Derde Abracadabra, nicknamed Ilya. They abandon the city on the coast to live a simpler life in in the hinterland. The nurse and the teacher are now fishers and fruit pickers. Their marriage eventually collapses and Sofia returns with children to the Netherlands, her country of origin.

<sup>150</sup> Astrid Roemer, 348.

<sup>151</sup> Astrid Roemer 348.

unaccepted in the colored society. “She would stay home. She did not want to run the risk of being treated like an undesirable stranger in his country or in his family”<sup>152</sup>.

During the preparation of the voyage, the parents keep on arguing, and the youngest part of the family stays above the open racism in the family.

Because these two could not care less about that, their own fights are loaded with the nasty words that people yell at me in the street – honky, nigger, and the whole alphabet of insults. That is why I never complain to them about what happens to me outside, like lumps of oatmeal I keep swallowing all this teasing, bah!<sup>153</sup>

The girl ponders frequently about her skin and origin. She is obsessed by questioning the identity of her and her parents, psychical torments caused by frequent disputes of her parents turn into physical nausea, making her puke – she swallowed silently all the bad words and now it wants to explode inside her:

It is as if I have to throw up but cannot. When we three are eating. I look carefully at the people who are my parents and then it starts. The I hate rice and cauliflower. Then I hate meat and fish and how the worry about my appetite. Then I hope that someday I will puke so much that the whole table and their faces will be covered with the mess<sup>154</sup>.

Bokoro has a dream that corresponds to her own blurred identity. The girl that she sees in her dream has no name and no family. It a projection of the girl’s own chaotic life. Later in the story, she is labelled as *half-breed* by her own grand-mother and on the contrary, her mother is terrified that she becomes both blond and brown (350). In addition, Bonkoro hears racial insults that refer to both her blackness (*nigger*) and whiteness (*honky*.) The girl wishes a mother with black skin, so that she would not have to fear sunburn. Not only fears are projected into the dream – the girl wants to be accepted. The girl she sees in her vision is widely admired. “Boys daydreamed about her. Men stayed in love with her. Girls wanted to know her”<sup>155</sup>. Furthermore, Bonkoro

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<sup>152</sup> Astrid Roemer 350.

<sup>153</sup> Astrid Roemer 350.

<sup>154</sup> Astrid Roemer 350.

<sup>155</sup> Astrid Roemer 351.

often had difficulties with expressing her thoughts – the girl in her dream had “a voice”<sup>156</sup>.

The crisis of belonging is the leitmotiv of the whole story. The father, colored, born in Suriname escaped his native land to live in Europe with a white woman. We know from hints that their marriage is not happy: “She had driven us to the airport and said a friendly goodbye, long before it was time to go to the departure hall. It hurt to see her walk away alone, not turning around again, disappearing among the people”<sup>157</sup>.

Romer doses the information at a slow pace, so that we only later understand the real purpose of the whole transcontinental journey. Paradoxically, the father lost the right to inherit the real estate from his real mother, because he left her with a white woman. But that we learn only later the key information that the visit is paired with the cession of real estate from grandmother to grand-daughter and her coming-of-age ritual. The father betrayed his own race according to the values of the Surinamese grandmother that Bonkoro visits. “I heard from the mouth of my father that he had to hand over his right to his inheritance because he had turned his back on his mother for over thirty years, because he was married to a woman of another race”<sup>158</sup>.

Her father, who was born black, transformed to a European in the Netherlands, but becomes some sort of a barbarian back in his home Suriname: “Henry, as she called my father, walked around the whole day in miserable short pants – barefoot. He did all kind of jobs for his mother. After a few days, with beard and moustache, he looked as wild as the other men<sup>159</sup>”. The Afro-Caribbean elements are strictly opposed to the life in The Netherlands. Roemer is interested in the search for truth and decision-making. Her characters search for their own origin. Many of her characters are involved with African spirit *winti* that means wind, but it can also be understood as a figural representation of breath or strength of the soul. The spirit *winti* interacts positively or negatively with humans. The Bonkoro’s dream is strongly idealistic – the girl can express herself freely, she is not judged, insulted and even she is admired. The girl’s appearance is more European than Surinamese, she is ashamed that she is the child of a woman with blond hair and gray eyes and a voice that sounds just like of people who are not black. If *winti* in indigenous religion represents wind or soul, that means Bonkoro can be only free

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<sup>156</sup> Astrid Roemer 351.

<sup>157</sup> Astrid Roemer 352.

<sup>158</sup> Astrid Roemer 358.

<sup>159</sup> Astrid Roemer 357.

where her true soul is – in Suriname. Creole and Maroon people believe that the winti spirits were imported with slaves from Africa: “Winti is an Afro-American religion that worships the eponymous spirits that are supernatural beings that can obsess humans and extend their consciousness, so that they can see past, present and future”<sup>160</sup>. Roemer says that “The winti religion is the ground water that streamlines the human and his worldview<sup>161</sup>”. She points repeatedly to the winti elements as factors that enabled the preservation of conservatism in the Surinamese society.

Her arrival to Suriname is announced these pagan pantheistic visions in the night and the girl suffers until she enters Suriname – her ‘promised land’. The monotonous boredom of Europe contrasts clearly with the vivid colors of the New World. I knew that we were flying away from the country of my mother and – to rid me of my frightening dreams – toward the land of my father<sup>162</sup>.

The dream that she experiences because of the furious preparation for the journey has qualities of a vision. Roemer was interested in religions original to Suriname. The dream is a story-in-a story digression from the main plot that helps to see Suriname from at least two different perspectives. We know that the girl has not visited Suriname before her dreams occur. This allows me to assume the first part of the dream represents Suriname from the typically European perspective – pristine, beautiful, exotic, romanticized just like *in a dream*, and with enumerations of random objects:

In a country where the sun is so close that everyone can touch it, in a country where everything is green and the corn constantly waves to the heavens, in a country where everything is green, and the corn constantly waves to the heavens, in a country where pumpkins glitter like clumps of gold on the ground, in a country where the wind awakes the morning with giggles and the rain hums to the night to sleep, in a night where clothes are made of pieces of cloud and jewelry of drops of stars, in a country where beetles, donkeys, elephants, rhinoceros, serpents, hawks, dolphins and herrings crawl over each other around everywhere

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<sup>160</sup> LOTENS, Walter. “De Surinaamse ‘Dekolonisatieromans’ van Astrid Roemer”. Accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.uitpers.be/artikel/2017/01/11/surinaamse-dekolonisatieromans-astrid-roemer/>.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Astrid Roemer, 352.

and no one, no one knows who all this belongs to and how all that came about – in that country lives a young girl in a place that even the wind cannot reach<sup>163</sup>.

The dream is located in the beginning of the short story – this part are possible representations of a future experience. Notice that in the dream there is ‘a country where everything is real green<sup>164</sup>’ and when the girl sees the house of her Grandmother, as romantic as it can be in the middle of nowhere, the girl is happy that “Around the house everything is real green: trees, bushes, grass”<sup>165</sup> It can be assumed that this part of the dream predicts the natural beauty of Suriname that is represented by the property of the Grandmother.

The dream is a space where European and Surinamese perception of the Suriname merge into one, impossible in real life due to enduring racism. If the two cultures merged hypothetically in the dream vision, we can also assume, that the Ouma, the Surinamese granddaughter, experienced most heavily the clash of the cultures, for selects the best of both worlds. Pagan religion and Christianity merge in the personality of Ouma. She is the one who initiates the girl to the Surinamese culture and local community. The plantation is a symbol of former slavery and the fact that Ouma is about to transfer her land to her granddaughter makes the reader think about the white masters who gained the land effortlessly and lived from the suffering of their slaves. “Everything that our eye looks at on this plantation and everything our ear hears on this plantation and everything our hand touches on this plantation is my grandchild’s, and therefore my grandchild has to learn our secrets as well”<sup>166</sup>. Both a lawyer and a medicinman are called when Grandma gives her property to her granddaughter. “My father told me that the first one would come from the city, but that the medicine man had to travel for days before he would get to Ouma”<sup>167</sup>.

The boundaries of the concept ‘religion’ seem vague in the Surinamese hinterland as grandma is both pagan and Christian. The Surinamese hinterland is a place where the Surinamese traditions survive. The grandma is the fusion of paganism and Christianity, the best from both of them. Her home is an oasis of green peace and abundance of

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<sup>163</sup> Astrid Roemer 350.

<sup>164</sup> Astrid Roemer 350.

<sup>165</sup> Astrid Roemer 356.

<sup>166</sup> Astrid Roemer 357.

<sup>167</sup> Astrid Roemer 357.

resources. “She showed me her koto-dress, her jewelry, her Bibles, her money and she said again-and-again will be mine from now on”<sup>168</sup>.

Bokoro was a child during her visit to Suriname. The most interesting events remain in her memory. For this reason, the narration is more subjective than matter-of-fact. Her grandmother is the most detailed character in the story. Simply because the fact that she is the narrator’s favorite: “I immediately loved her, so totally different from my Grandma in my mother’s country”<sup>169</sup>. We have the biggest volume of information at our disposition when we want to imagine her. The other characters are blurred, mainly because they did not represent anything new to the observer. Therefore, we cannot fully imagine the Dutch mother, but we can find vivid descriptions of the grandmother: “In the picture, she wears a huge, wide skirt almost to her feet, made of very stiff material that stands straight out”<sup>170</sup>. This stands in contrast to quickly forgotten faces of other people that the narrator did not know or was not interested about, as in: “Already at breakfast Papa would be picked up and we would be driven to different faces once more”<sup>171</sup>.

The frequent usage of peculiar, random details from the past that is more likely to catch the attention of a child than an adult proves that Astrid Roemer is interested in the working of the memory – the brain is unable to remember everything, she adds small details into the narration to gain in credibility. Instead of depicting all objects in great detail, she presents the more salient or peculiar traits of object from the point of view of a young girl. It is the very selective memory of the young narrator who states clearly that: “I do not remember much about the first days in the country of my father’s birth. It is as if so much happened at the same time, that I barely can retain anything – like dizzying ride in a race car at the fair”<sup>172</sup>. She commemorates both real objects and feelings. Adults try to hide their emotions, the girl openly describes her inner feelings and moods: “Champagne sprayed on the floor. Glasses were filled. I hear how too many dogs cried”<sup>173</sup>. Her child-like memory is also shown by repetition – more linguistic material means here more importance. An adult would use in narration synonyms to avoid repetition: “Although there were more and more people and more and more

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<sup>168</sup> Astrid Roemer 357.

<sup>169</sup> Astrid Roemer 356.

<sup>170</sup> Astrid Roemer 348.

<sup>171</sup> Astrid Roemer 353.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Astrid Roemer 359.

flowers I began to feel more and more alone. Further-further I walked, against the stream of people, just to be alone”<sup>174</sup>. Before the discovery of Suriname, Bokoro was a timid girl tormented inside by the lack of care and recognition. Unsure about herself and her identity, she had nightmares and wanted to vomit. The journey is the only remedy to her problems. Bokoro discovered her roots. She now knows where she belongs. Only in Suriname she realized her cultural identity: “Even if I had to suffer my whole long life, all my heart and all my body would belong to a black person – just like you Mama, Amen”. Finally, when she found her roots, she clarified her values in life.’ From the disgusted, sick and timid girl in the beginning is a young woman, confident and very rich: “While everyone closed their eyes for prayer, I slipped outside. I walked on to the path along the estate that is mine”<sup>175</sup>. By the end of the story, she knows the secret of the soil, her own land: “Only the person who joins someone from the original African race will have a fertile life on his plantation because too much still breathes in her soil”<sup>176</sup>.

The title of the short-story becomes evident only by the end of it. “A Story for Listening” refers to the voice that mother passes to her daughter in form of a tape recording. It is also a symbol of women confidence, their right to express themselves without fear. While “An Inheritance from my Father” refers to the seeking of woman’s identity that is deformed in this case by colonialism, migration and complex family constellations.

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<sup>174</sup> Astrid Roemer 360.

<sup>175</sup> Astrid Roemer 360.

<sup>176</sup> Astrid Roemer 360.

## CONCLUSION

The primary objective of my thesis was to show how the writers from various parts of the Caribbean treat the motive of women in their work.

The diversity of the Caribbean macroregion is given by its colonial history. The Europeans sought prestige and profit in discovering new lands and the New World gave them the opportunity to gain new land and cultivate tropical commodities. The opportunities of work brought workers to the Caribbean. The slavery facilitated the transfer of ethnical groups from Africa to the American continent. After the abolition of slavery, the stream of new workers from diverse locations continued, also the people from the Caribbean migrated to seek better work conditions. Guadeloupeans and Haitians migrate to mainland France and to the United States or Canada, Surinamese people relocate to the Netherlands.

In the three analyzed short-stories, the main protagonists are almost exclusively female and what is more important, the narrators are women. The intimate and private topics blend with distorted family bonds and with the local histories that happen on the background of former exploitation of their ancestors by the Europeans. The colonialism introduced new values that do not correspond with the Caribbean reality, as seen in the 'The Breadnut and The Breadfruit' by Guadeloupean author Maryse Condé. There is a strong contrast between the poor, caring mother and the rich, yet ignorant father. The daughter and her father only became colonizer to each other after the father became shocked by the European values that exclude Caribbean values.

'Nineteen Thirty-Seven', Edwidge Danticat described the suffering of Haitian people during the 1937 Parsley Massacres. The division of Hispaniola into two nations was caused by the French and the Spanish who divided the island and gave cause to the rivalry between the two countries that emerged after the independence in the 19th century. The competition between the ethnic groups combined with poverty and ignorance enabled the race purges during which the Haitians were slaughtered by the Dominicans. A key role has the river separating Haiti from the Dominican Republic as this place commemorates the massacre. Anyone who managed to cross the river was safe – the Dominican troops did not kill on the Haitian side. The women who survived created a sisterhood of the river. They are forever connected, they help each other and introduce new female members to the group so that the history is never forgotten.

The typically post-colonial family is depicted in 'The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for Listening' by Astrid Roemer from Suriname. A black man flees from Suriname to the Netherlands. The couple meets when the Dutch, blond woman visits Suriname. They settle in the Netherlands and have a racially mixed girl who often hears insults from racists because of her colored skin. She suffers from nightmares because she is unsure about her own identity and it continues until she sees her Surinamese grandmother for the first time. The father betrayed his own people because he married a white woman and he is disinherited in favor of his own daughter who is in turn introduced to the Surinamese community and claimed inheritor of the land. The transmission of the land from the grandmother to her granddaughter is the girl's coming of age.

## 4. SHRnutí

V mé bakalářské práci jsem analyzoval tři povídky současných karibských spisovatelek, které se v tvorbě zaměřují na motiv ženy. Tyto povídky byly vydány v anglickém jazyce ve sbírce povídek *The Oxford book of Caribbean short stories*, kterou společně editovali Steward Brown a John Wickham. Konkrétně jsme pracovali s překladem původně francouzsky publikované povídky “The Breadnut and the Breadfruit”, od Maryse Condé. Do angličtiny ji přeložil její manžel Richard Philcox. Dále jsem analyzoval povídku “Nineteen-Thirty-Seven”, kterou publikovala již původně v angličtině haitská autorka Edwidge Dandicat. A jako třetí povídku jsem rozebíral “The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for Listening”, kterou původně publikovala surinamská spisovatelka Astrid Roemer nizozemsky a následně povídku do angličtiny přeložila Hilda van Neck-Yoder. V první kapitole s názvem Úvod jsem tedy představil práci – její přínosy, opodstatnění a také jsem uvedl literaturu, která byla na toto téma publikována.

Ve druhé kapitole s názvem Karibská literatura jsem stručně vymezil pojem Karibik a představil jsem rozmanitost a rozsáhlost karibské literatury. Zejména jsem se snažil zdůraznit, že Karibik je mnohojazyčný prostor, tvořený mnoha nezávislými i závislými státy a je stále silně ovlivněn evropským kolonialismem. Je nutné si uvědomit, že mnohé státy by bez přičinění evropských kolonizátorů vůbec nevznikly – byli to právě oni, kdo hledal v Novém Světě ekonomický prospěch budováním plantáží a následným násilným zavlečením pracovní síly z Afriky.

V této teoretické části jsem se nejvíce zaměřil na vývoj frankofonní literatury v karibské oblasti. Uvedl jsem nejzásadnější proudy v místní Francouzky psané literatuře, pro kterou bylo nejzásadnější hnutí Négritude (do češtiny překládáno jako černošskost), které se zformovalo mezi černošskou elitou již ve 30. letech minulého století a projevilo se v literatuře i v politice. Nejznámějšími představiteli tohoto hnutí jsou Léopold Sédar Senghor (první prezident nezávislého Senegalu) a Aimé Césaire (Poslanec za ostrov Martinik). Toto hnutí idealizovalo černošství a zdůrazňovalo spojení černošů s přírodou. Pokusil jsem se také vysvětlit souvislost hnutí Négritude s hnutími Créolité, případně jeho verzí Antillanité, protože Maryse Condé vede s těmito nástupci Négritude dialog. Kromě frankofonní literatury byla ve druhé teoretické kapitole zmíněna také literatura státu Surinam, dřívější kolonie Nizozemí. Z důvodu nedostatku prostoru byla stručně nastíněna literární situace takřka půlmilionového multietnického národa, který

je od nezávislosti v roce 1975 střídavě veden armádou, nebo diktátory, z nichž se nejvíce do historie zapsal Dési Bouterese, který má například na svědomí vraždy opozičních aktivistů z 8. prosince 1982. Nestabilní politické prostředí, mnohojazyčné, etnicky nehomogenní obyvatelstvo omezuje růst knižní produkce v Surinamu. Vzhledem k tomu, že mnoho knih je publikováno nizozemsky nebo dvojjazyčně, nejčastěji v kombinaci se Sranan Tongo, je knižní trh Surinami úzce spojen s trhem v Nizozemí, potažmo s vlámskou částí Belgie. V této kapitole jsem se také pokusil zdůraznit, že Surinamská literatura je tradičně předávána ústně – mnoho dnes již knižně vydaných povídek bylo dřív uchováváno a šířeno vyprávěním. Toto se velmi silně projevilo v analyzované povídce autorky Astrid Roemer, kde bylo použito dokonce dvojí vyprávění – jedno přímé, pomocí dívky-vypravěčky která se nezvykle často obracela ke čtenáři (ústní tradice vyprávění) a druhé reprodukováno z magnetofonové pásky. V Karibiku se jazyky mísí stejně tak jako kultury – v každé části Karibiku původní národy byly podmaněny Evropany různou mírou a z tohoto důvodu máme zde mnohojazyčný Surinam, kde v psaném projevu dominuje nizozemština, jako lingua franca se však často užívá tak Sranan Tongo, který je snáze naučitelný a spojuje multietnickou společnost Surinamu spíše než hůře zvládnutelní nizozemština.

Jádrem mé bakalářské práce je však detailní rozbor výše zmíněných povídek neboli Analytická část. Ke každé povídce jsem uvedl doplňující historické pozadí událostí, aby bylo snazší analyzovaná díla pochopit. Autorky Maryse Condé a Edwidge Danticat jsou velké zastánkyně žen, a obzvláště Maryse Condé reaguje ve svém díle na silně maskulinní historii karibské literatury, nejvíce se vymezuje proti tomu, že mužští autoři černošského hnutí Négritude usilují o hledání mužských předků v Africe, v historii lidstva a civilizace zapomínají na ženy a sami přejímají od bývalých evropských kolonizátorů černo-bílé vnímání světa už jen v tom, že oslavují svoji tmavou kůži, čímž dle Condé jen podporují rasistické vnímání jich samotných.

Maryse Condé se vymezuje proti přílišnému romantizování minulosti černochoů v Africe. Je však nutno podotknout, že i její názor se vyvíjí – od Africké historické ságy jménem Ségou se postupem času dostala ve své tvorbě spíše do literárního prostoru Karibiku. V každém případě ale platí, že drtivá většina jejich postav jsou ženy – Maryse Condé je silně feministická autorka, ženy mají v jejím díle centrální pozici – jsou silné, odhodlané a morálně mnohem vyspělejší než muži. Například v povídce od Maryse Condé, kterou jsem analyzoval v této práci, figuruje ženský prvek vypravěče – dívka a

hlavním nositelem morálních zásad je žena – matka. Naopak otec je vykreslen jako chlípny zhýralec, který byl v dětství rozmazlen a nyní jen všechny využívá, včetně své dcery, o kterou nejeví příliš zájem – pouze rozhořčení z toho, že se jeho dcera ve škole učí o Alpách ho donutí zasvětit vlastní dítě do místní reality a kultury.

Edwidge Dandicat sice publikuje v anglickém jazyce, avšak sama francouzskou literaturu vystudovala na univerzitě, a kromě haitské kreolštiny je to jeden z jejích dvou mateřských jazyků. Pokud hnutí Négritude reagovalo smířlivě na post-koloniální minulost, oslavovalo přírodu a kvality člověka, tak Edwidge Dandicat také poeticky píše o přírodě. Člověka však vykresluje více realisticky popisuje bídu existence lidí, stejně tak jako dává naději tím, že vytváří morálně silné osobnosti, které mají nezlomnou vůli přežít v těžkých situacích. V její povídce, kterou jsem analyzoval v této práci, figuruje sesterství přeživších masakru. Haiti ležící na ostrově Hispaniola se o tento ostrov dělí se španělsky hovořící Dominikánskou republikou. Tyto státy spolu soupeří již od dob nezávislosti na svých evropských kolonizátorech. Evropané si zde rozdělili politicky ostrov, avšak lidé z více zalidněného Haiti žili odjakživa i na druhé straně hranice. Bohužel vzájemná nevráživost přerostla ve státě podporovaný teror ze strany Dominikánské republiky, která použila vojsko pro rasovou čistku pohraničního pásma, které bylo obydleno Hait'ainy. Události z roku 1937 na ostrově Hispaniola vešly do dějin jako tzv. Petrželový masakr (Parsley Massacre), protože vojáci použili španělské slovo *perejil* jako rozlišovací faktor – ten, kdo toto slovo neuměl vyslovit správně španělsky, byl zabit. Překročení řeky Artibonite, která je přirozenou hranicí mezi těmito státy, znamenalo záchranu. Bohužel dnes je tato událost veřejnosti naprosto neznámá a pouze díky Edwidge Dandicat nebude tento zločin světem zapomenut.

Zmatení jazyků a kulturní šok, který zažívá evropská část Surinamsko-nizozemské rodiny, popsala ve své povídce Astrid Roemer. Po nezávislosti Surinamu na Nizozemí se mnoho rodin vystěhovalo do Nizozemí. Surinamci patří dokonce k velmi zastoupené menšině (do trojice velkých menšin patří ještě Marokánci a Indonésané). V povídce Astrid Roemer vystupuje vypravěč-dívka, která nemá sebevědomí, protože si není jistá sama sebou. Na ulici slyší nadávky, i doma se rodiče hádají. Trpí nevolností. Část její rodiny žije v Surinamu, protože její otec utekl s turistkou z Evropy. První setkání s babičkou zbaví dívku zlých snů, zdědí majetek místo vlastního otce (zradil svou matku, protože utekl s běloškou). Příběh končí idylicky a v podstatě glorifikuje

přírodu Surinamu, protože babička žije sice jednoduchý život daleko od města, ale má mnohem milejší charakter, než evropská matka malé vypravěčky.

## **Anotace**

Bakalářská práce analyzuje tři povídky karibských autorek, které se v tvorbě zaměřují na osudy žen v post-koloniálních oblastech Karibiku. Tyto tři povídky z různých jazykových oblastí byly publikovány v angličtině ve sborníku Karibských povídek pod názvem *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*. Konkrétně jsem rozebral povídku „The Breadnut and The Breadfruit“ od Guadeloupské frankofonní spisovatelky Maryse Condé, dále pak jsem se věnoval analýze povídky „Nineteen Thirty-Seven“ od Haitské anglofonní spisovatelky Edwidge Dandicat a třetí povídka, na kterou jsem se zaměřil byla „The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for Listening“ od Surinamské autorky Astrid Roemer, která publikuje v nizozemštině. Práce poskytuje literární a historický kontext analyzovaných povídek, jelikož všechny tři autorky reagují různým způsobem ve svých dílech na koloniální minulost. Všechny analyzované povídky mohou být považovány za feministické, jelikož jejich děj popisuje nesnadnou pozici žen ve společnosti a jejich snahu se s tím vyrovnat.

## **Summary**

This thesis analyzes three short stories from the Caribbean authors who focus on the condition of women in the post-colonial parts of the Caribbean, namely “The Breadnut and the Breadfruit” from Guadeloupean Maryse Condé who writes in French, ‘Nineteen Thirty-Seven’ by Haitian American Edwidge Dandicat and “The Inheritance of my Father: A Story for Listening” by Surinamese Astrid Roemer who publishes in Dutch. All these short stories from various regions were published in English in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*. The thesis provides literary and historical context for each of the analyzed short stories because their respective authors react on the colonial history of their native lands. Their short stories can be considered as feminist as they show the uneasy position of women in the society and their struggle to deal with it.

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