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Hyphen Identities

The Hybrid Experience of the Haitian Diaspora in the United States

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UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**Faculty of Humanities****Department:** Department of English**Author:** Laura Sofia Ala-Kokko**Master's Thesis:** Hyphen Identities

The Hybrid Experience of the Haitian Diaspora in the United States

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Tutkielmani aiheena on Yhdysvaltoihin muuttaneiden Haitilaisten ja heidän lastensa kokemus identiteetin asteittaisesta muuttumisesta Haitilaisamerikkalaiseksi. Pääsiällisenä aineistona käytän Edwidge Danticatin romaania *Breath, Eyes, Memory* ja novellia "Caroline's Wedding," sekä muiden Haitilaissyntyisten kirjoittajien omiin kokemuksiin perustuvia lyhyitä tarinoita. Teoreettisena ohjenuorana toimii Homi K. Bhabhan "kolmas tila" – teoria sekä Virinder S. Kalran, Raminder Kaurin ja John Hutnykin teos *Diaspora and Hybridity*.

Hypoteesini oli, että ensimmäisen sukupolven edustajat kokevat vähemmän sulautumista kohdemaan kulttuuriin, ja pääsääntöisesti vastustavat myös lastensa, eli toisen sukupolven identiteetissä esiintyviä merkkejä "amerikkalaistumisesta." Toisen sukupolven identiteetin oletin puolestaan rakentuvan sekä haitilaiseen perinteeseen että Yhdysvalloissa opittuihin arvoihin.

Analyysistä selviää, että hypoteesi pitää paikkaansa. Ensimmäinen sukupolvi kokee tärkeänä haitilaisten perinteiden vaalimisen uudessakin ympäristössä, eivätkä tahdo omaksua yhdysvaltalaisen kulttuurin piirteitä. Tämä johtuu siitä, että he pelkäävät menettävänsä kulttuurisen aitoutensa. Heidän elämäänsä Yhdysvalloissa dominoi myös tunne väliaikaisesta maanpaosta, vaikka he eivät tosiasiallisesti suunnittele paluuta kotimaahan. Toinen sukupolvi taas asettuu helpommin Bhabhan teorioimaan "kolmanteen tilaan," jossa oma identiteetti rakentuu molempien kulttuurien aineksista olematta kahtiajakautunut. Samalla he vapautuvat kulttuurisen aitouden vaatimuksesta. He ovat myös niin kutsutun sisäpiirin edustajia molemmissa kulttuureissa, jonka vuoksi heidän on mahdollista tarkastella niiden käytäntöjä kriittisesti sekä hylätä perinteet, jotka ovat tarpeettomia ja vahingollisia.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, hybridity, hyphenation, identity.

1 INTRODUCTION

”Like many children of immigrants born and raised in the United States, I have skated precariously on the hyphen of my Haitian-American identity” writes Francie Latour in her short story ”Made Outside” (125). This statement summarizes the overall feeling in the novels and short stories by the Haitian *diaspora* in the United States. Diaspora is a term used to describe the people from a certain country living outside the original homeland. The writers and the protagonists do not consider themselves Haitian immigrants living in the United States any more than Americans with ancestors in Haiti. They are both Haitian and American at the same time, and while their identity is constructed on both cultures, this duality is also a source of constant confusion.

Haiti is often described in two very different ways. In some texts, the writer mentions the historical fact that the country is the first black republic in the world. Another frequent description is that Haiti is the poorest country on the Western Hemisphere. Two hundred years ago the people of Haiti drove away their oppressors and formed an independent new state. Today, the country is exceptionally poor, filled with political instability and economic inequality.

In addition to the identities of children of Haitian immigrants and the country’s contrasting past and present described above, Haiti is a *hybrid* – a mixture – in many other aspects as well. The island itself is divided in two: The western part is Haiti, while the eastern part is the Dominican Republic. The official languages in Haiti are French and *Kreyól*, the latter being the mother tongue of most Haitians. As the name of the language suggests, *Kreyól* is a Creole language, a hybrid of French and the indigenous languages in the island as well as the languages of the African born slaves brought to the island by the colonizers. Most Haitians also practice the voodoo religion, which is a mixture of Catholicism and indigenous religions. Marie Ketsia Théodore-Pharel comments on this duality in her short story “Haiti: a Cigarette Burning at Both Ends” by saying “*Pray to the Iwas on Saturday, pray to God on Sunday*” (87).

Migration is closely connected to Haiti's past and present, from the colonizers wiping away most of the original inhabitants to Boukman, the rebel slave who started the fight for Haitian independency to the 'boat people,' illegal immigrants fleeing Haiti by boats. This thesis concentrates on the hybrid experience of Haitian-Americans; that is the Haitian diaspora in the United States. The thesis examines this experience as represented in narratives from the Haitian diaspora. The writers of these stories, and the main characters in them, are mostly representatives of the second or third generations of the diaspora, which means they have been born or have lived most of their lives in the United States. The characters examined often show a great deal of hybridity in their identities, but do not have the same feeling of exile as their parents, who have left their homeland in a later stage of their lives.

The first generation, that is the parents in the stories examined, are the ones holding on to Haitian traditions in the family, while the children, the second generation are integrating more easily into the American society. Women have a very important role in passing on the culture to the second generation. It is common to all of the stories examined, that culture is inherited from the mother, much more strongly so than from the father. This is why the thesis also analyzes gender differences in diasporas.

According to Ashcroft et al. the term *hybridity* "refers to the cross-breeding of two species [...] to form a third, 'hybrid' species" (118). Hybridity was originally used in agriculture, but has since become common in describing "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft et al. 118). Although colonization creates hybridity, so do its after-effects. The Haitian migration is in many respects, as discussed below in more detail in section 1.1, affected by its former colonial status. The colonizers in Haiti created hybridity, but the individuals leaving the country become then again hybridized by the host culture. Also, the immigrants have their effect on the host culture.

The term hybridity is used in this thesis to describe a person whose identity has been strongly influenced by two or more cultures. The thesis examines the different ways in which these people with 'hyphen identities' are trying to form new identities as hybrids, mixtures of two cultures, rather than remaining lost somewhere in the middle. The aim is to show that while the first generation immigrants long to return to their homeland and have a mainly Haitian identity, their children are constructing a hybrid identity; while they find their physical belonging in the United States, they are also very strongly Haitian. Thus, they are truly hyphenated individuals, Haitian-American in a deeper sense of the word. The hyphenation gives them a sense of belonging emotionally to the diaspora, since they are not completely accepted as either Haitian or American. Also, the way these individuals are affected by the hybridity in their identities is examined, whether they find this aspect of their identity a burden, or if it can function as an empowering tool is examined in the analysis.

In their book *Diaspora & Hybridity* (2005), Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk consider the terms to be closely related, noting that there is a notion of *dual loyalty* connected to both. They state that there is a supposition that nation-state is the predominant affiliation for people living within its borders (20). Anyone diverging from this norm is easily considered suspicious in character. Hybridity is a "category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing a cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration" (Kalra et al. 70). In the case of a person's identity it is not merely a mixture of two different cultures, but rather, as Homi K. Bhabha has termed it, a *Third Space*. He too finds hybridity in situations where two cultures meet and begin articulating their differences. He states that "these 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity." (Bhabha 1-2). These "new signs of identity" form the new, hyphenated identities.

Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk "relate diaspora and hybridity to some form of social change and to the pursuit of equality" (2). They are interested in the problems connected with

“having multiple belongings or no sense of belonging at all” (4). Roger Bromley, in his study *Narratives for a New Belonging. Diasporic Cultural Fictions* (2001) quotes the Cuban-born novelist Christina Garcia’s novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) to say “it’s [New York] where I belong – not *instead* of here [Cuba] but *more* than here” (qtd. in Bromley 71, original italics). Another aim of this thesis is to show that this “pursuit of equality” is an important motif in the literature by the Haitian diaspora in the United States, and that it is the diaspora where these individuals with hyphenated identities find their belonging, not either the homeland or the host country.

The attempt to find identity and where it is that a person “belongs more” can be seen especially in the young characters of selected texts by Edwidge Danticat; the ones who have lived most of, or perhaps all their lives in the United States. Unlike their parents they often have plenty of contact with the world outside the Haitian community, while they simultaneously have strong connections with everything Haitian through their home, family – usually in the wider meaning of the word – and friends. Francie Latour says her hybridity is “an endless menu of traits and qualities that I access and draw from, mixing and matching to fit the situation” (125). Her short story “Made Outside” is found in an anthology of texts by Haitian-American writers edited by Edwidge Danticat called *The Butterfly’s Way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States* (2001).¹ Selected stories from this anthology, Danticat’s first novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), and her short story “Caroline’s Wedding” from the collection *Krik? Krak!* (1995), are the narratives used as the main material of this thesis.²

Edwidge Danticat is a Haitian-born writer who has lived most of her life in the United States. Her writing is strongly focused on Haiti: it includes stories from the pre-Columbian time to present day Haiti. The stories discussed in this thesis represent the more modern struggles of Haitian immigrants to the United States. *The Butterfly’s Way* is an anthology of short stories, essays and poems by Haitian-American writers. Its

¹ From now on, this work will be referred to as *The Butterfly’s Way* in the text.

² In citations, these titles will be shortened to *Butterfly*, *Breath*, and *Krik*, respectively.

stories express a strong need to tell people about the Haiti that is not found in news stories. For example Joel Dreyfuss embodies his disapproval of what he calls “the Phrase,” the mentioning of Haiti being “the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere” when talked about in the news, by saying that the “seven words represent a classic example of something absolutely true and absolutely meaningless at the same time” (57). The anthology is almost a manifesto of the writers’ pride in being Haitian and a description of their different paths to finding that pride in a world where one is seen as “the just-got-off-the-banana-boat refugee or the *Voudou* queen” (Alexandre 184, original italics). Also the spelling of diaspora as “*dyaspora*”³ in the title of the anthology conveys a message of pride in being Haitian: it is the way the word is spelled in Kreyól, the native language to most Haitians.

While the term *diaspora* can be explained briefly as “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” (Ashcroft et al. 68) the Kreyól word *dyaspora* is also used to refer to any individual representing the Haitian diaspora: a Haitian who no longer lives in Haiti. According to Danticat there is often a grudge against *dyaspora* among the ones still living in Haiti: they are seen as “people who [are] eager to reap the benefits of good jobs and political positions in times of stability in a country that they had fled during difficult times” (*Butterfly* xv). This attitude as well as the feelings of dislocation among the members of the diaspora are analyzed with the help of Trinh T. Minh-ha’s essay “Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference,” a discussion of insider/outsider experience within diasporas. This can also be connected to Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space, through which hyphenated individuals can abandon their feelings of inferiority based on the supposition of cultural authenticity. While a person’s nationality can easily be hyphenated, it often takes an effort to find a true balance between the hyphenated nationalities in one’s identity. These individual journeys are described and analyzed in this thesis.

³ I will use the standard spelling when discussing diaspora theory and the Kreyól spelling only when discussing the meaning of the term in Kreyól.

Haitian immigration to the United States in large numbers is a fairly recent phenomenon; it only started during the Duvalier regime, which began in 1957. Because the Haitian diaspora is relatively young, most of its members still have a powerful bond to Haiti through members of their immediate family, parents and siblings for example, still living there. This makes it natural that the diaspora has strong connections with the country of origin as well as an active interest in its political and economical situation. The writers in *The Butterfly's Way* share a concern in the country's political situation and the welfare of the people living there. Also, they discuss the conditions of Haitian refugees seeking asylum in the United States.

Many of the writers in the source texts voice the problem of being a minority within a minority. They feel that Haitians are not accepted as a part of the African-American community. An example of this is the earlier quote from *The Butterfly's Way*, about being seen as “the *Voudou* queen” (Alexander 184). This comment is made by other African-American classmates of the writer. This rejection is partly because of the refugee status of most Haitian immigrants, and partly for example because of the AIDS epidemic in Haiti in the 1980s. It is no wonder if young school children see all Haitians as carriers of the HI-virus, when in fact during the 1980s all Haitian born individuals and anyone of Haitian decent were banned from donating blood in the United States. The reason to this was the fast growth in HIV infections in Haiti, and the ban was not lifted until December 1990 (Grégoire 161.)

The literature of the Haitian diaspora in the United States is strongly focused on the hybridity of Haitian-American identities. The protagonists are constantly reminded of their being Haitian in the United States, while in Haiti they are seen as American. While no one can claim a single, unified identity, living, and even more so, growing up, between two or more different cultures makes it more difficult to define oneself. This is perhaps best seen in the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and the fictional short stories by Danticat in *Krik? Krak!* In one of the stories a daughter describes her mother's attitude: “when ever we rejected symbols of Haitian culture, Ma used to excuse us with great

embarrassment and say. “You know, they are American.” (Danticat, *Krik* 214–5). In addition to being seen as *dyaspora* by Haitians still living in Haiti, there is also a generation gap between the first generation of immigrants; those who have left the country as adults, and the second and perhaps third generations, the ones who have lived most or all of their lives in the United States.

The thesis continues with the theory section; Chapter two expands on the concepts of hybridity and diaspora. Diaspora is discussed from the viewpoint of gender in 2.1.1 and, as the heading of the section 2.1.2 suggests, women as transmitters of culture in diasporas. Diasporas in relation to generational differences will be discussed in the final section, 2.1.3. The concept of hybridity is expanded upon in chapter 2.2. This is where Homi K. Bhabha’s and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s ideas are discussed in more detail.

In chapter 3, the analysis concentrates on the aspects of diaspora and hybridity discussed in chapter two. Different viewpoints of diaspora and hybridity studies are taken: generational and gender issues of diasporas, the problems diasporas face in the host country, the importance of name in defining one’s identity and the status of diasporas in the original homeland. The generational differences of diasporas and in the hybridity of a diasporic individual’s identity are discussed in connection with Danticat’s short story “Caroline’s Wedding” in section 3.1. The way diasporas are often stereotyped and how this affects those who bring to public knowledge the problems inside the community, are the subjects of section 3.2, which analyzes Danticat’s novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. This discussion also takes into account the gender issues of diasporas examined above in 2.1.1. and discusses the special role of women as cultural transmitters discussed in 2.1.2, which is another important subject in both of Danticat’s stories, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and “Caroline’s Wedding.”

Section 3.3 analyzes the importance of one’s name in defining, refining and adjusting one’s identity, or perhaps completely replacing it with another. Naming is an important subject in connection with the characters’ identities and the hybridity they feel. The

final section of chapter three, 3.4 *Diaspora* concentrates on the analysis of those characters who feel like outsiders in both of the countries they call home; in Haiti as well as in the United States. It is based on the characters' feelings of being rejected by the Haitians that have remained in Haiti. These two final sections examine both of Danticat's stories mentioned above, as well as the short stories by different writers in *The Butterfly's Way*. Chapter four operates as a conclusion. It gathers together the ideas and findings and also discusses the possibilities of future studies on the field of hybridity and diaspora.

1.1 Haitian Migration

Haiti occupies the western third of the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea, sharing the island with the Dominican Republic. Haiti's written history begins with a mass migration: The Island was inhabited by an estimated 400 000 to one million Tainos when it was claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The original population was largely destroyed within the following 50 years by enslavement and bad treatment as well as diseases such as smallpox (Arthur 15). France took over the western side of the island in 1697, and because the original population was largely extinct by this point, the colonizers imported an estimated 47 000 slaves of African origin to the island within less than a hundred years (Arthur 17). By this time most of Haiti's original population was replaced by migrants, both colonizers and slaves.

At the end of the 18th century a slave rebellion was started by Jamaican-born Boukman, an immigrant himself. His work was continued by General Toussaint Louverture until he was captured by the French. This did not end the war, but instead inspired Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe to continue the rebellion. They defeated the French colonizers and declared the country an independent republic on January 1st 1804. Dessalines became the first leader of the first black republic in the world, and the second republic in the Western hemisphere. (Arthur 18–21.) Boukman, Louverture,

Dessalines and Christophe are all heroes to the Haitians, and their names and deeds are mentioned in many of the stories discussed.

The newly-founded republic was under constant upheaval for the next century: a succession of leaders were assassinated or thrown out of power. Political instability and violence were a part of everyday life for Haitians. In 1915 the United States sent its troops to Haiti. During the following nineteen years of occupation the U.S. forces made Haitian peasants build roads, schools and hospitals to the Haitian countryside (Arthur 22). Also, according to Aviva Chomsky, with the help of the U.S. and Haitian Governments together with U.S. companies and labor contractors an estimated 25 000 – 35 000 Haitian workers migrated to Cuba each year of the occupation (Chomsky). Arthur suggests that while the United States withdrew its troops from Haiti in 1934, the occupation had long lasting effects. The Haitian army was, during the years of occupation replaced by “a centralized military and rural police corps, specially trained to repress internal dissent and maintain the status quo.” (Arthur 22–23). The nickname of the police organization, *Tonton Macoute* is derived from Haitian folktale; it can be translated as “bogyman.”

In 1957 the first general suffrage election in the country was organized, but even this election was military-controlled. It resulted in the election of Dr. François Duvalier, known to the world also as “Papa Doc.” He and his corrupt regime stayed in power with the help of the Tonton Macoute. Duvalier named himself President-for-Life, and before his death in 1971 he named his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, “Baby Doc,” as his successor. The first Haitian “boat-people” fleeing from the regime landed in Florida the very next year. (Haggerty.) The Tonton Macoute is often described in the literature of the Haitian diaspora in the United States as a cause of fear to anyone suspected of opposing to the leaders of the country.

Although the younger Duvalier fled the country in 1986 after wide protests against him, Haiti’s problems were not over. It was not until 1991 that Haiti’s first democratically-

elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was inaugurated, only to be thrown out of power by an army chief Raoul Cédras later the same year. In 1994 Aristide resumed his position with the help of U.S. troops, and remained in power until his term ended in 1996. (Arthur 23–28.) During the three years of Aristide’s exile “an estimated 5,000 people were killed, some 400,000 were internally displaced, and tens of thousands attempted to escape the country by boat” (Arthur 25). Since 1996 Aristide has taken turns in presidency with René Préval, whose latest term started in 2006 and continues to the present. At the time this thesis is written, Aristide is again in exile.

According to Richard A. Haggerty the first “boat-people” – immigrants reaching the U.S. shores by boat and more importantly, without documentation – arrived in the United States in 1972. Before that people emigrated from Haiti to the United States in vast numbers already during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Between 1972 and 1981 more than 55 000 “boat-people” from Haiti were reported by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The INS also estimated that only half of the people who had arrived in the country were detected, raising the actual number of arrivals to approximately 100 000. Most of the earlier migrants, the ones arriving to the country during the early 1970s, were upper- and middle-class opponents of Duvalier. The mostly rural and poorer emigrants, generally called “the boat-people” started arriving later in the decade. Coincidentally, an agreement was reached in 1981 between the United States and Haiti, to return the illegal immigrants. While more than 3000 Haitians were returned within the next couple of years, many of the boats arrived, as they still do today, to the shores of Miami undetected by U.S. officials. (Haggerty 1989)

The United States is not the only country that attracts Haitian immigrants. Haggerty states that several of the boats leaving Haiti reach the Bahamas, while James Ferguson, in his report on Caribbean Migration, estimates that 65 to 75 per cent of the 250 000 people living in the *bateyes*, slums in the Dominican Republic, are Haitian or of Haitian origin (14). Haitians also migrate inside Haiti: Dorte and Heinemann draw attention to the problem of rapid urbanization resulting from poor conditions in the rural areas, and

creating high rates of unemployment in the urban areas (2). These problems are among the main causes to the constant political and social uneasiness in the country, which, together with the poor conditions, is one of the reasons behind the willingness to leave the country.

Kathleen Newland and Elizabeth Grieco claim that to “prevent “mass-migration” from Haiti” the U.S. Coast Guard returns Haitian refugees without giving them a chance to make an asylum claim. According to Newland and Grieco, even the ones

who reach the United States without being interdicted are put into fast-track removal procedures, during which they are subject to mandatory detention and are not eligible for release on bond. This package of measures is applied only to Haitians. (Newland And Grieco 2004)

When looking at these facts it is easy to agree with Jean-Pierre Benoît when he states:

Americans perceive desperate brown masses swarming at their golden shores, wildly inventing claims of persecution for the opportunity to flourish in this prosperous land. The view from beneath the bridge is somewhat different: reluctant refugees with an aching love of their forsaken homeland, [...] refugees who desire nothing more than to be home again. (32)

The historical facts mentioned above are recurrent themes in literature by Haitian writers. Both the Duvalier regimes (François Duvalier, 1957-71 and Jean-Claude Duvalier, 1971-86) in particular are mentioned by many writers as a time of distress for Haitians, and as the main reason for people to have left the country. Even in such stories as Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* that are not based on stories about the horrors of dictatorship, the threat and insecurity are present at all times. Also, the current conditions of Haitian immigrants to the United States discussed by Newland and Grieco are something the writers are concerned in. In the next and final section of the introduction, the two stories by Edwidge Danticat, the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and short story *Krik? Krak!* as well as the anthology *The Butterfly’s Way*, are introduced in more detail. It is in these stories that the human experience behind the figures and facts is represented.

1.2 Stories of Exile

Edwidge Danticat was born in Haiti in 1969. She was raised by her aunt and uncle after her parents left the country to find a better life in the United States. When Danticat was twelve years old, she was reunited with her parents in Brooklyn. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) is her first novel, which she wrote as her thesis in Brown University. The novel was a magnet for different prizes, including a Granta Regional Award for the Best Young American Novelists, a Pushcart Prize and fiction awards from *Essence* and *Seventeen* magazines (BookBrowse). Danticat's second book *Krik? Krak!* was published only a year later, and since then she has continued to be a productive writer.

Danticat's work is strongly connected to the Haitian Diaspora and Haiti's present struggles as well as history. Her novel *The Farming of Bones* (1998) is a story about the 1937 massacre of Haitian sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic. *The Dew Breaker* (2004) is a novel consisting of separate but connected stories, all dealing with a former prison guard and torturer in Haiti during the Duvalier regimes. Her work also includes books for children, such as *Anacaona: Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490* (2005). Anacaona was a Haitian queen captured and killed by the troops of Columbus. In addition to *The Butterfly's Way* she has edited *The Beacon Best of 2000: Great Writing by Women and Men of All Colors and Cultures* (2000) and written an introduction to *Homelands: Women's Journeys Across Race, Place, and Time* (2006), edited by Patricia Justine Tumang and Jenesha de Rivera. She has also worked on projects on Haitian art and documentaries about Haiti with filmmakers Jonathan Demme and Patricia Benoit. Her work is focused on Haiti and Haitian diaspora in the United States, but she also reflects her themes to more current matters, such as "harsh interrogation tactics" as a weapon in the "war on terror" in her article "Does It Work?" (2006)

Danticat's work is an excellent representation of a diasporic, in this case Haitian-American, identity in literature. The characters in Danticat's literature are finding their own ways to build their identities on both of the cultures they are rooted in. Her variety

of themes attract a wide range of readers, giving first generation immigrants a chance to reminiscence about the Haiti they have once left and compare their experiences of exile to those of others, while the later generations can learn about their almost mythical roots in her historical children's books. The young readers struggling with their identity no doubt also find characters to relate to in many of her stories. It is the younger audience that is most relevant to the thesis. The same themes of identity-building are also found in the stories in *The Butterfly's Way*. The stories discussed in the analysis will be briefly introduced in the following sections.

Danticat's first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is based on a story she started writing as an autobiographical story about leaving Haiti. She says that "the story just grew and grew and as it grew I began to weave more and more fictional elements into it and added some themes that concerned me" (Random House). The novel is a work of fiction, although it corresponds to some episodes in Danticat's own life. The protagonist Sophie was born in Haiti and is raised there by her aunt after her mother's migration to the United States. She leaves Haiti when she is twelve years old, to be reunited with her mother, who has moved to New York soon after Sophie's birth. Sophie was born as a result of a member of the Tonton Macoute raping her mother, which makes their relationship difficult and traumatic. In addition to the different levels of experiencing hybridity in their identities, the novel also deals with both Sophie's and her mother's sexual traumas and the traditional position of women as wives and mothers in Haiti.

According to Danticat, some "Haitian-American women who consider themselves liberated voiced much opposition to the novel" (quoted in Atanasoski 1998). They did not like her bringing out the topic of *testing*, a tradition of making sure young girls remain virgins until marriage. They were afraid it would lead to generalizations about the treatment of women in Haiti (Atanasoski 1998). To the later editions of her novel, Danticat has added an afterword emphasizing that her novel is fictive, not a generalization of all Haitian women. This is a phenomenon Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk discuss in their book *Diaspora & Hybridity* (2005). Bringing out the problems within a

certain diaspora is a double-edged sword: talking about them may increase public condemnation of the respective culture, while ignoring them is yielding to the oppression (Kalra et al. 60). In other words, it is easy to read a story of a middle class white girl who has experienced sexual abuse as a touching story of an individual, while problems concerning minority groups are easily interpreted as a plight of all members of that group.

Krik? Krak! was Danticat's second published book. It is a collection of short stories about life in Haiti, about leaving the country and about living as a Haitian in the United States. The collection consists of nine stories and an epilogue. "Caroline's Wedding" (157–216), the story chosen for examination in this thesis, is a good example of the generational differences in experiencing hybridity, being mainly a story of young people struggling between the traditions of their parents and integrating into American culture. "Caroline's Wedding" is a story of a family of three women, a mother and her two daughters. The older daughter Gracina, the protagonist of the story, was born in Haiti and finally receives her American citizenship at the beginning of the story. Caroline, her sister, was born in the United States and thus has been a citizen all her life. The three characters are representatives of different phases of the continuum of integrating into American society. While the mother is fully Haitian, keeping up Haitian traditions and living according to Haitian beliefs, Caroline refuses to go to church on Sundays and has decided to marry a Bahamian man. Gracina is somewhere in the middle of these two opposites, working also as a diplomat and 'translator' between her mother and sister. While the mother is longing for the "pure" Haitian identity and way of life, both of the daughters are, in their own ways, occupying Bhabha's Third Space.

In addition to Danticat's texts, some stories from the anthology edited by Danticat, *The Butterfly's Way* (2001), a compilation of texts – essays, poems and short stories – by writers of Haitian origin living in the United States are under examination. The anthology is divided into five sections according to the theme of the stories: Childhood, Migration, Half/First Generation, Return and Future. It also includes an introduction by

Danticat. The third section; titled Half/First Generation⁴ is where the most relevant topics to this thesis are found. These stories in particular express the mixed feelings of belonging and loyalty the characters have. Francie Latour's story "Made Outside" is a journal type story of her going back to Haiti to make a one year anniversary report on the U.S. intervention to the country in 1994 to bring Aristide back to power. Latour's themes of frustration over the public image of Haiti are also expressed by Marilene Phipps in her story "Pour Water on My Head: A Meditation on a Life of Painting and Poetry" (115–119) and Joel Dreyfuss in "A Gage of Words" (57–59), whereas Miriam Neptune, in her story "In Search of a Name" (147–151) and Myriam J. A. Chancy in "Lazarus Rising: An Open Letter to My Daughter" (223–239) voice the same longing for a "real and permanent name" (Danticat, *Krik* 213) that Gracina feels in "Caroline's Wedding".

In chapter two, the theories used in the analysis of the books introduced above will be discussed in detail. The section 2.1 guides the reader through diaspora theory as presented by Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk as well as Bromley. The section discusses diaspora especially as a gender and generation specific phenomenon. In section 2.2 the theory of hybridity in identity is discussed, mainly with the help of Bhabha's theory of third space and Min-ha's insider/outsider opposition.

⁴ In the anthology, this section consists of stories written by people that in the theories by Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk (2005), as well as other authorities used, are considered second generation. In this thesis, the prevailing term for this group will be *second generation*.

2 DIASPORA THEORY AND THE CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY

This thesis analyzes stories by Haitian-born writers through diaspora and hybridity theories. The main authorities are Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk's book *Diaspora & Hybridity* (2005) and Roger Bromley's *Narratives for a New Belonging. Diasporic Cultural Fictions* (2001). Gabriel Sheffer's, William Saffran's and Robin Cohen's respective definitions of diaspora, all quoted in Sudesh Mishra's *Diaspora Criticism* (2006), are used to introduce earlier studies of diaspora and in discussing generational differences within diasporas. Diaspora theory is first introduced on a more general level, but the main interest in this thesis is how generational and gender differences affect the diasporic experience. The aim, as stated in the introduction, is to find out the ways the experience of hybridity differs between earlier and later generations of a diaspora. As the sections below will demonstrate, women have a strong role in carrying culture to the younger generation. This, and the fact that the material studied is dominated by female characters, is why special interest is shown towards the gender differences of diaspora. The following section also sheds light on the idea of hybridity. Homi Bhabha's Third Space and Trinh T. Minh-ha's insider-outsider opposition are explained, and their role as empowering tools for hybrid individuals is introduced.

2.1 Theories of Diaspora

The term *diaspora* originates from Greek, and was originally used to describe people who left their native country in order to colonize a land and make it a part of the empire. It is still commonly used to describe the exile of the Jews from Judea, and when talking about the nation of Israel and its development. Although the word has strong connotations with the Jews, its meaning has been extended to refer to all ethnic populations that have left their homelands, whether they have been forced to leave or left willingly (Kalra et al. 9–10). People leave their countries for several different

reasons. In some cases they wish to improve their economic situation, while in other cases people are forced to leave their homes in order to save their lives because of for example political persecution or a natural disaster. Sometimes these different reasons are combined: although a person's life might not be directly threatened by a political power, the situation in the country may be so bad economically, that individuals are unable to provide for themselves and their families. It is important to remember that even the people who are considered to be economic refugees do not always leave their country willingly, even when they are not escaping from an immediate threat.

According to Gabriel Sheffer, diasporas are “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their [...] homelands” (qtd in Mishra 26). Diasporas are traditionally seen as a threefold concept of *homelands*, the lands of origin, *hostlands*,⁵ the receiving countries, and the diasporas, the groups of people who have left their country in order to live in another. Diasporas are then divided into voluntary and involuntary ones (Mishra 27). The relationships between homeland, hostland and diaspora are problematic because of the “dual loyalty to dual authorities” (Mishra 28) discussed in the introduction. This in fact ties the term to hybridity, discussed in the last section of this chapter, which is also based on duality.

It is assumed in Sheffer's definition of the term *diaspora*, that one of the following situations is always prevalent: the diaspora for or against the hostland; the hostland for or against the diaspora; the diaspora for or against the homeland; and the homeland for or against the diaspora (Mishra 28). According to this definition, the hostland and the homeland are neutral towards each other, which is perhaps not the case. Also, being ‘for or against’ is not a simple question of alternatives: these attitudes may very well overlap. As the word itself suggests, diasporas are dispersed from the homeland to several different countries and cities. This is why, although the original homeland

⁵ This is the spelling used by Mishra, and will be used in this thesis as well when discussing Mishra's work.

functions as a powerful link between diasporized individuals, the diasporas may not be, or in fact probably are not united and homogeneous.

Sheffer's definition also emphasizes the words "migrant" and "minority." Although the original word in Greek was associated with colonization, it has now widely become a description for those once colonized in their own country. These people are now dispersed especially into the countries of the former colonizers, such as Britain, or countries that have had a colonial power like status in the past, e.g. United States in Puerto Rico. Although Ashcroft et al. recognize this in their definition of diaspora, saying "Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world" (69), the word is now "commonly used to address racially marked people, often viewed as minorities in the countries where they settle" (Kalra et al. 105). In the Eurocentric world whiteness is often integrated to the mainstream population, and is seen to "present no major problems" (Kalra et al. 105). The economic situation of the people in question is also important: it is easier for the middle class to be accepted by the surrounding people than for the poor. This is also evident when discussing Haitian migration to the United States: as stated earlier, the U.S. Government only started to return Haitian people when it was no longer only the well-to-do Haitians reaching the country (Haggerty 1989).

Diasporas can also be seen not only as a way of categorizing people, but as a new "way of looking at the world which disrupts homogeneous ideas of nationality" (Kalra et al. 28). This homogeneity includes whiteness in the western world, and it is perhaps because of this "disruption" that all other colors and cultures very different from the western are considered a threat. The status quo is important to some people, and the "ideas of nationality" Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk mention are preferred to remain the same. Diasporas often threaten this status quo by bringing in new, strong cultures that do not wish to assimilate to the mainstream population. It is hardly the security risks that the new arrivals (Kalra et al. 105) pose that are the main concern, but the risk that

the non-white groups gain majority status. In their book Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk want to “view people like Columbus and his shipmates as migrants rather than ‘discoverers’, and the community of travelers that Davy Crocket represents as diasporic rather than pioneers” (106). They also state that, while diasporic men are merely “demonized” (55) and otherwise ignored, it is often the women that represent the diaspora. The position of women in a community marks its difference in relation to the western culture. Diasporic women too are stereotyped, from “Black African-Caribbean women seen as ‘female castrators’ – feared yet desired – [while] South Asian women [are] largely deemed as passive or subordinate” (Kalra et al. 55). The next section will concentrate on the gender issues of diasporas, especially on the ways in which patriarchal traditions oppress women.

2.1.1 Gender in Diasporas

Diasporas often have the face of a woman: for example what most visibly separates Muslims from Christians is that Muslim women cover their heads. It is not only whiteness that assimilates more easily; maleness does too. Women in non-western cultures are seen as subordinate, “perceived as repositories of a culture that is seen as holding them back [...] and only modernity can save them” (Kalra et al. 58). When a person grows up within the influence of two cultures, they have to choose which one they wish to follow in their own life. This is likely to give her a sense of hybridity; they need to choose between different identities. In many of the texts analyzed, this struggle is present in the way women are perceived differently by the two different cultures.

Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk state in *Diaspora & Hybridity* that “diasporic contexts provide fertile [...] sites from which to resist practices that oppress women” (58). They take as an example the case of female genital mutilation and the fact that several people, especially women, within diasporic communities have risen to oppose it. This opposition naturally involves telling about the practices outside the communities, which, as stated before, is often disapproved of within them (Kalra et al. 59). The desire

to keep some of the diaspora's problems within the diaspora is in some respects understandable: people who already face discrimination from the mainstream population do not wish to give them any more reasons to stereotype them. Yet to bring these practices to light is perhaps the only way to really fight against the patriarchal structures that keep them alive.

Female genital mutilation and the practice of *testing* young girls to see if they are still virgins are good examples of hegemony in diasporic communities. It is very often the women themselves who keep up the traditions that oppress them. This is of course not unique to diasporas, but also happens in the mainstream population, albeit less obviously; it might be considered an act of free will for a woman to go through painful and risky surgical operations to “improve” her looks. In the same way, the grandmothers who take their granddaughters to be circumcised and the mothers testing their daughter’s virginity seem to be doing this willingly, but it all nevertheless happens to maintain the girl’s chastity until marriage. This is done to assure the continuance of the patriarchal family line. Although it is the male family line that needs to be preserved, it is the women who are often seen as the “main transmitters of culture” (Kalra et al. 56). This is particularly the case in those diasporic communities that have traditions very different from the ones in the mainstream.

Although women in some diasporic communities have decided to fight against oppression such as female circumcision and virginity testing, some women choose to continue these traditions. Tradition and the expectations of the surrounding culture explain the actions of these women, but fail to justify them. Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk believe these traditions are mainly followed because women “are denounced as ‘misguided’ or ‘inauthentic’ if they wish to challenge their role as “controllers of female sexuality, and as mediators between patriarchs and children” (57).

In the stories analyzed, both sides of this phenomenon are visible. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the position of women in maintaining patriarchal structures is very clear in the

form of testing young girls for virginity, whereas the main character's decision not to continue the tradition is empowering to her.

When studying the way women carry culture to the next generation, it is important to take into account the concept of homeland to understand why culture is carried between generations at all. William Safran has extended Sheffer's definitions of diaspora to

be applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (qtd. in Mishra 37).

These characteristics especially apply to the early generations of immigrants. The problem is that according to this definition a diaspora would no longer be a diaspora, once there no longer is a hope of return to the original homeland. While the hope of return explains the need to follow the traditions of the homeland, these traditions are also a sign of wanting to relate to the culture, as pointed out in definition 6. To the people following these traditions they also work as proof of their home culture being superior. Virginity testing for example creates an image of the pure woman, considered in many cultures superior to the impure woman.

Sheffer's definition can also be interpreted as an excuse for calling only non-white communities in the west diasporas, because he believes they are supposed to feel unwanted by the surrounding society. Also, many white groups of migrants do not qualify as diasporas for the same reason. As noted earlier in 3.1, whiteness often

assimilates to the mainstream culture easier. It is important not to restrict the word to communities unaccepted by the mainstream population, even though this is often the case.

Safran's definition, like Sheffer's before him, is meant to work as a tool to identify diasporas. Mishra notes that none of them have felt "the need to reflect on the pitfalls of representing diasporas as class-neutral, gender-neutral and generation-neutral" (48). Although Safran's and Sheffer's definitions are revised by Mishra as well as Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk, Safran's and Sheffer's definitions are useful to this thesis, especially when looking at the differences between the first and later generations of diasporas. The definitions take into account the way the earlier generations of diasporas idealize the homeland. This generation-specific aspect of diasporas is discussed in more detail in the next paragraphs.

2.1.2 Generational Differences in Diasporas

Those people who leave their country become the first generation of a diaspora. Whether or not there are people from their homeland in the host country already is irrelevant: the first generation of that particular family moving into the country is where the counting begins. These first generation immigrants are not perhaps as hybridized as their children will be, since they have a tendency to hold on to the culture and traditions of the homeland very strongly. They are the ones that are most likely to persist with the thought of return to the homeland, while their children are likely not to think of it as a real physical home. This way, the homeland becomes idealized for the first generation; it becomes the palace where everything is better, if not financially, at least culturally.

Safran's definition of a diaspora, quoted above in 2.1.2, implies that members of the diaspora create an idealized homeland. According to him they regard their homeland as the "true, *ideal* home" and a place of return – if not for themselves, then for the next

generation – in the future. This aspect is clearly stated in Robin Cohen's *tabula*.

According to him, diasporas usually

exhibit several of the following features: (1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members of other countries; and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries. (qtd. in Mishra 47)

It is this *idea* of homeland that the parents, the first generation, are trying to carry through to the next generation. The parents hold on to the idealized and rigidified version of the homeland that their children have perhaps never seen, while they themselves might have left the country decades ago. This makes the generational gap even deeper, since the ideals and traditions present in the homeland when the parents left it may well no longer be valid there either. The famous parental phase “when I was young” is not likely to cause profound thoughts of not being good enough in their offspring, while saying “a real Haitian would never do that” may cause feelings of being inauthentic.

The idealization of the homeland and the parents' strong dedication to teaching their children the values of *their* culture instead of the one of the host culture increases the hybridity the children feel. Since it is impossible to ignore either the culture of their parents or the one surrounding them in the world outside their home, they need to construct an identity of their own, “mixing and matching” them to their own needs, even according to the situation, as the character states in Francie Latour's short story “Made Outside” (Latour 125).

As noted in the Introduction, individuals in a diaspora, especially ones within the later generations, easily develop a sense of belonging “more” to the host culture. This does not mean that they feel they belong to its mainstream population, but rather to the

diaspora itself. As Cohen mentions on his tabula, other diasporic groups are important as well, especially ones coming from countries close to the original homeland. For example Latin-American diasporic groups are often important to one another. Identifying to the hostland rather than the homeland gives the individual a feeling of hybridity, being a mixture of both the cultures. These issues will be discussed in more detail with reference to the narratives studied in the analysis section of the thesis. Before moving on to these analyses, the next section elaborates on the subject of hybridity.

2.2 Hybridity and the Third Space

This thesis deals with hybridity as a way of defining a person's identity. There are very few, if any, people in the world who can claim they are not in any way hybrid. The cultural differences even between different parts of one country may be surprisingly significant. Most people find themselves in situations where they have to redefine themselves, or at least make some fine adjustments to how they see themselves, a few times in their lives. Although this thesis treats hybridity as merely a cultural phenomenon, these situations may occur also when one becomes a member of a new family through marriage or becomes a parent. In the mobile world of today people meet representatives of different cultures more easily than before, and in the western world it is considered a requirement rather than something special to have traveled outside one's own country.

Nevertheless there are some people who experience this hybridity on a more powerful level. Cultural hybridity is perhaps one of its most forceful examples. Individuals who need to struggle to build their own identity between the strong influences of more than one culture are likely to become hybridized. This is very often the case with second generation immigrants, that is, the children of the people who have left the homeland. First generation immigrants tend to carry an image of the homeland in their minds, and, as explained in detail in the chapters above, this ideal homeland then becomes the

measure with which the second generation's authenticity is weighed. The first generation is likely to preserve the homeland culture in the home and remain in communities dominated by it. The children are often the ones who have more contacts to the mainstream culture as well, and are thus affected by both.

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the Third Space can be applied to hybrid individuals. He describes the Third Space as an intervention that "challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture" (37). This intervention is visible throughout Danticat's work and in the stories in *The Butterfly's Way*. According to Bhabha, it is the people with hybrid identities that "initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change" (38). This cultural change includes freeing people from the suppositions of cultural purity. Bhabha believes it is important to focus not on the "*diversity* of cultures but on [...] culture's *hybridity*" (38, original italics). He says that it is the in-between space that carries the meaning of culture in itself, and this is very much visible in the works examined in this thesis. The Third Space is a place where identity is negotiated not into something already existent but one's own. Bhabha states that "hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (Rutherford 216). As the narratives studied suggest, this is easier said than done. Nevertheless, this rethinking of principles is something crucial to the relationship between the different generations of diasporas, as well as to the relationship between the host culture and diasporas.

While the characters are looking for their own culture, supposing there are several alternatives, they often find themselves lost, whereas the recognition of culture's hybridity helps them see themselves as its representatives. Being in that in-between space gives a person a unique possibility to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha 39). Within the Third Space it is possible to be "free to negotiate and translate [...] cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference" (Bhabha 38). The Third Space blurs the limits of

existing boundaries and questions the categories of identity and culture that are usually taken for granted. In Bhabha's words the Third Space is not so much identity as identification. This identification happens through an intervention of an "object of otherness" and thus the subject of identification, the self, is indeterminate (Rutherford 211). The self is constructed in opposition to the other. For example, the first generation of a diaspora sees the self strongly as a product of the homeland, and the other is the surrounding host country culture. When the second generation shows signs of the host country culture, the self of the first generation is threatened, since one's children are a part of the self. This is why the values and traditions of the homeland culture are accorded strong prestige in diasporic families.

In the same way that Bhabha describes the Third Space as a way to become the other of oneself, Minh-ha states that the notion of identity "supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between I and not-I" (371). To her, in much the same way as to Bhabha, identity is a question of the relationship between the self and the other. The problem of hybridity in one's identity is that "the further one moves from the core the less likely one is thought to be capable of fulfilling the role as the real self, the real Black, Indian or Asian, the real woman" (Minh-ha 371) or, in the case of this thesis, the real Haitian. People with hybridized identities cannot ever completely leave behind either one of the cultures they have grown up with. Because one is supposed to be either one or the other, this leads to being neither an insider nor an outsider in either of the cultures they are rooted in. Minh-ha describes this in the following way:

The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. [...] She is, in other words, this inappropriate other or same who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference and that of reminding 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. (374-5)

This is most clearly noticed on the return to the homeland after a long stay in the host country. While one is considered an outsider in the host country because of one's

diaspora status, the same attitudes are suddenly present in the original homeland as well. The homeland is idealized in the minds of the first generation of diasporas, but also the later generations often consider the ancestral land as home. Because they may never have visited the country, the home is an imagined one. This is why their “return” to the homeland and the feeling of being an outsider may result in strong feelings of not belonging.

From the point of view of the mainstream host country culture the self/other opposition is the elemental reason behind the discrimination of diasporic groups. They are the other, so they must be “submitted to the self’s dominance” (Minh-ha 371). Also, as long as someone is a hybrid instead of a “pure” representation of the self, that someone is considered other rather than self. This is what leads to the insider/outsider opposition Minh-ha discusses. Once a hybrid, one can no longer be an authentic exemplar of a certain culture. To identify oneself with the Third Space thus results in defining oneself as an indeterminate object, and thus giving up the idea of cultural purity. This is why the Third Space can be seen as a space of liberation, since it releases the individual from expectations of a supposed cultural authenticity. When an individual with a hybrid identity does not succeed in finding the Third Space, it may be hard for them to find their belonging as well.

In theory hybridity sometimes seems a position filled with problems. Even when individuals identify themselves with the Third Space, the surrounding culture most likely still has its expectations of cultural purity. This is why individuals of the Third Space are usually seen as representatives of the other rather than the self. This position can cause problems in societies where the other is seen as a threat. One of the most famous examples of this attitude is perhaps George W. Bush’s statement “You’re either with us, or against us” (CNN.com 2001). Although Bush made this statement in reference to the war on terror his administration started, it is not an attitude foreign to people discussing migration and hyphenation. In his article “Why I am NOT a Hyphenated American” by Daneen G. Peterson, Ph.D. states that “We believe it is

divisive, corrupt and unnecessary for those who are TRUE Americans to hyphenate” (2005). In the eyes of people sharing Peterson’s ideals, hyphenated people are not merely “less than American” (ibid.) but also “repugnant and traitorous” (ibid.). Peterson’s ideals are not discussed further here in this thesis, since his writings cannot be considered objective studies by an academic but rather expressions of his personal opinions on the matter. The attitudes Peterson expresses in his article are hardly making life easier for people with hyphenated identities, but they are not the only ones suffering from such glorification of cultural authenticity. They are turned against anyone searching for their identity from outside the boundaries of what is considered normal and acceptable. Also, the attitudes towards hyphenation convey a demand to pick an identity from what already exists, instead of entering the Third Space.

In this thesis hybridity is seen as a position of empowerment. As shown in the analysis of the stories, both the problems the mainstream culture poses on those with hybrid identities and the demands of the diasporic group can be overcome. Through Bhabha’s Third Space theory, as well as Minh-ha’s idea of insider/outsider opposition, it is possible to abandon the need to fulfill a cultural authenticity. Although most of the characters examined deal with problems created by their immigrant status and hyphen identity, they also show a profound pride in their origin. The experience of hybridity of these characters is analyzed next.

3 HYBRID EXPERIENCE IN THE MIGRATION NARRATIVES

In this chapter the narratives chosen for examination will be analyzed in detail. The material – stories by Danticat and other Haitian-American writers – gives a rich basis for analyzing hybridized and exiled characters of different generations and the interaction between these generations. Another central problem in many are gender issues. Especially Danticat's stories are filled with problems sourcing from old Haitian traditions that put women and men in unequal positions. The characters examined here are mostly female, and the emphasis on this thesis is on the way female individuals experience the very different expectations they face from the surrounding cultures. The fictive characters, and in fact whole families in Danticat's novels and stories, are female, with the exception of a few minor male characters. Most of the stories taken into examination from the collection *The Butterfly's Way* are written by female authors, and are clearly autobiographical. Thus, the characters in these stories are female as well.

Danticat's fictive stories are longer than the other stories analyzed, which makes it easier to analyze the hybridity the characters experience. The conversations between characters in her novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as well as in the short story "Caroline's Wedding" make it easier to detect the differences between generations. The stories from *The Butterfly's Way*, on the other hand, reflect more on a particular person's inner thoughts and focus more on the writer's personal experiences as a member of diaspora, or *dyaspora*, on their return to Haiti. Nevertheless, all the stories have proved useful in examining most of the aspects of identity analyzed in this thesis. The analysis begins with a discussion of the generational differences within diasporas and is based on the theories discussed in chapter two, from Safran's, Sheffer's and Cohen's definitions of diasporas, through to Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk's and Bromley's thoughts on generations in diaspora, and with the help of Bhabha's and Minh-ha's discussions of the in-between spaces occupied by these individuals and Rodríguez's analysis of women in exile.

3.1 Three Phases of Hybridity in “Caroline’s Wedding”

Danticat’s short story “Caroline’s Wedding,” from her collection of stories *Krik? Krak!* is a good example of how different generations have different experiences of hybridity. The short story introduces a family of three women, a mother and her two adult daughters. The mother and older daughter Gracina have followed the family’s father, who has later passed away, to the United States. The younger daughter, Caroline, was born in the United States, and thus is automatically a citizen. The story is narrated by Gracina, but the main characters are Caroline and the mother, and the main theme is the tension between them. This tension is a marker of generational differences in diaspora.

The story begins with Gracina’s naturalization; that is, receiving the nationality of the United States. This makes her the second citizen in the family. Not only are Gracina and Caroline citizens of the United States, but they are also Americans in their way of life – at least according to their mother. She is trying her best to maintain Haitian traditions and values in the family. These three women represent three different generations of hybridity: the mother is a member of the first generation, Gracina second generation and Caroline third generation. While the mother feels displaced in her exile from Haiti, her daughters feel at home in the United States. The degree of hybridity is what creates tension between the women. The mother is unable to understand her daughters’ assimilation, which she sees – and condemns – as “Americanization.” Caroline, as a third generation representative, identifies to the Third Space, while Gracina in her hybridity tries to find her belonging between the two cultures, clinging on to expectations of cultural purity.

Haitian values are very important to the mother of the story. Although she is happy Gracina qualifies for an American passport, she does not approve of her younger daughter’s choice of fiancé. Not only is the fiancé, Eric, Bahamian, but he also fails to ask for her daughter’s hand from her, which according to the mother is an important tradition in Haiti. What she does not take into account is that since she has left the

country, Haiti too has changed. This ritual, as many of the other traditions she holds on to, might not be used in Haiti any more either.

This is an example of what Bromley calls her “Haiti of the mind” (73), her “rigidified form” (73) of the country of origin, and the idealized homeland that Safran, Sheffer and Cohen list in their respective definitions of a diaspora. The values she is trying to maintain in her family are the values of the Haiti she left over twenty years ago. She lives in the United States, but her house has become a Haiti for her. She still holds on to the old suitcases she brought with her, as a physical marker of how she wants to preserve the values and traditions of Haiti. This is evidence of her still being in a state of exile; she does not consider the United States her home. The idealized homeland Safran, Sheffer and Cohen discuss means she places Haitian culture and traditions above anything “American.” After a long absence, the homeland becomes something everything is measured against. The traditions are not only idealized, but they have also become rigidified in the mind of the exiled person. As mentioned, it is possible that some of the traditions the mother stresses are no longer in use in Haiti. A person in exile is not aware of these changes; thus the Haiti the mother refers to really is merely her “Haiti of the mind.”

The story gives no indication that the mother is actually planning a return to Haiti. Thus, by not accepting the United States as her home, she has chosen to remain in a state of exile. This is something María Cristina Rodríguez’s discusses in her study. She states that “even when it seems the stay may be permanent, the imaginary homeland reminds them of the possible return” (11–12). It seems that as long as the mother in “Caroline’s Wedding” does not let herself accept the United States as her home, she a return is possible. Accepting the host country as a home might also feel like betraying the homeland. This holding on to the homeland is somewhat paradoxical, since it is evident that she does not plan to return to their roots. Rodríguez states in her study of exiled women that they “go to cities to free themselves from the class/race/family stronghold of the island culture” (15). Still, the exiled wants to maintain a certain distance to the

host country in order to remain purely of the homeland, and demand the same authenticity and following of the traditions of the homeland from their children. A point of some interest that is not discussed in the source studies, is what might happen if a person with a rigidified image of the homeland does return to the idealized country. This theme is examined further in the coming section *Diaspora*, which examines returning to the homeland in general as well.

While Bhabha and Minh-ha think of the hybrid individuals and occupiers of the Third Space as the people “in-between,” Rodríguez uses this term in connection with the first generation female immigrants. She states that they “remain ‘in-between,’ living in the intersection of histories and memories” (11). To these characters their memory is the only link to belonging to their homeland and its culture; “the one thing they can claim as their own” (Rodríguez 19). As stated earlier, belonging also has to do with the notion of cultural purity. To the mother in “Caroline’s Wedding,” to take in characteristics of her host culture would be the same as to be “Americanized.” This would mean losing her cultural and purity, thus making her less Haitian.

The mother seems to be restricted by expectations of cultural authenticity and purity. She believes that to be able to live in the United States and fit into its culture, one must completely leave behind the culture of the ancestral homeland. Rodríguez has also noticed this in the absence of memorabilia in the homes of the female characters of the novels she has studied. She states that by having nothing to remind them of the homeland and family the characters are forced to look ahead (34). This is clearly what has happened to the mother in “Caroline’s Wedding.” She has also realized this herself, since she asks Gracina to destroy all the memories after her death. She says that the past “fades a person” (Danticat, *Krik* 213). She is exhausted by her memories because she has not been able to move on. It is her daughters that need to find a way to hold on to the memories without being controlled by them.

The mother is reluctant to let the surrounding culture affect her identity, and this is a demand she also imposes on her daughters; at least on the surface. She does seem to realize at some level that it is necessary for the girls to be able to live within the host culture. When she shows Gracina the proposal letter the girls' paternal grandfather sent to her own father, she asks Gracina to promise to destroy the letter and other things she has brought with her from Haiti. As noted in the previous paragraph, she thinks of memories as a force that fades a person, keeping them from moving on in their lives. This request nevertheless also shows that the girls have her permission to leave behind their Haitianess,⁶ but only after her death. Clearly, this is not something they wish to do. Gracina refuses to make the promise because she "will want to hold on to things when you die. I will want to hold on to you" (Danticat, *Krik* 213). This also means she wants to hold on to her Haitian identity, which is an important part of her. This shows the different ways the generations see identity. To the mother it is a question of either or, while Gracina and Caroline realize they are able build their identities on both cultures, this is why their memories will not keep them from moving on.

The mother's attitude towards memories and Haitianess is also an indication on how mothers pass on the cultural aspects of the original homeland. To the girls, holding on to their mother is synonymous to holding on to their Haitian origin. The mother has perhaps not realized the possibility this hybridity can give an individual, but there is evidence of the dreaded "Americanization" in her as well. She gives Caroline "a black and gold silk teddy with a plunging neckline" (Danticat, *Krik* 193) for her wedding shower, stating that she "can't live in this country twenty-five years and not have some of it rub off on me" (Danticat, *Krik* 193). Although she thinks the teddy is a "dishonorable thing" (Danticat, *Krik* 193), she is ready to yield somewhat in her principles to make her daughter happy. While there no doubt are tensions between the first and later generations of the characters in these stories, family relations are extremely important to them. The importance of family and the ancestral line is

⁶ This is a word used by both Danticat and many of the other writers discussed, that refers to the Haitian identity of the characters.

especially visible in Danticat's novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, which is analyzed in the following section. The importance of family, name and ancestors is examined in chapter 3.3.

The mother's need to hold on to her memories of Haiti was discussed above. Gracina too has this need; she especially wants to remember her father, dead for over ten years. She has vivid dreams of the father, but is nevertheless afraid she might forget him – and with him, the Haiti of her childhood. To her father, remembering was important, and Gracina recalls him telling her that “You have memory of walking in a mist at dawn in a banana jungle that no longer exists. You have lived this long in this strange world, so far from home, because you remember” (Danticat, *Krik* 177). The girls' late father has clearly had a very different view of remembering from their mother, who sees memories as a suppressing force. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the mother's take on Haitianess is a double edged sword. While she refuses to let her identity be influenced by American culture, she also finds the memories hard to carry. Because she has not found a Third Space of her own, she cannot think her daughters could find it either, and is therefore worried they too will carry the heavy load of memories with them.

The fact that the girls' mother is less influenced by American culture than the father might have to do with the fact that he was more active, as the girls are, in the surrounding culture than the mother. The mother has indeed worked outside the home in a sweatshop (Danticat, *Krik* 158) before Caroline was born, but it is indicated that most of the workers were immigrants: one of the important past events in the family is the mother's arrest in one of the sweatshop immigration raids. The family believes the arrest is the reason for Caroline being born without one forearm, since the mother was given an injection to calm down. This indicates that the mother, although she has had connections with outside the family, has mostly acquainted herself with other Haitians or immigrants from elsewhere, not so much with the host country culture. It is stressed in the story that her connections with the Haitian community are strong: she attends mass in Creole (Danticat, *Krik* 166) and the neighborhood the family lives in is mostly

populated by other diasporic families, such as the Cuban Ruiz family (Danticat, *Krik* 173). The father of the family perhaps had a more hybridized identity than the mother does. Because he is only existent in the girls' memories, and a rather minor character especially in connection with hybridity, he will not be analyzed further in this thesis. He is nevertheless significant in being perhaps the first hybridized person in the family, and thus functioning in juxtaposition to the girls' mother.

Gracina, as the "in-between" child born in Haiti but raised in America since the age of five, can be seen as a second generation immigrant. She is still very much surrounded by Haiti; she lives at home with her mother and sister, and teaches English as a second language to Haitian students. She also attends mass in Creole in a church where the names of Haitians drowned at sea while trying to reach the United States are called. However, she is a young American woman; she makes wearing black after her father dies a fashion statement (Danticat, *Krik* 170) and wants to throw her sister a wedding shower, something not done in Haiti because, according to the girls' mother, "[i]n Haiti we are poor, [...] but we do not beg" (Danticat, *Krik* 182).

Gracina is the protagonist of the story, but her role as the mediator between her mother and sister becomes evident also in the way she tells the story; on a superficial level the story is about the mother and Caroline, not so much about Gracina. Her role in the family is one of a translator, trying to make one see the other's point of view. This is what makes the story a narrative about finding identity. Gracina is measuring herself against her mother's Haitian identity and her sister's identity which is, in many ways, tilted more to the direction of American culture. She finds herself somewhere in between. Although she too becomes an American citizen, she is not willing to leave the Haiti of her childhood and parents completely behind. Gracina's identity is clearly hybridized, but she has not yet found her way to the Third Space Bhabha talks about, and thus has not yet freed herself from looking for cultural purity.

The story has several references to Gracina's role between her mother and sister. The mother and Caroline seem to be barely talking to each other. It is Gracina that follows their mother to mass and listens to her stories about neighbors and times back in Haiti. The sisters have a close relationship; they share dreams about their dead father and make alliances against the mother, for example when Caroline wants to sneak up to her fiancé's house for the night (Danticat, *Krik* 186). One of the best examples of Gracina's need to please both her sister and mother is her choice of dress to the wedding. Caroline is determined to have a simple ceremony at the court house, while her mother thinks she should have a big church wedding and "would have liked to have sewn Caroline's wedding dress from ten different patterns in a bridal magazine, taking the sleeves from one dress, the collar from another, and the skirt from another" (Danticat, *Krik* 181). While Caroline decides on a short dress she has found from a thrift store, and their mother has a pink lace evening gown, Gracina wears a green suit (Danticat, *Krik* 181). Before the wedding the mother has told Gracina about how her father proposed to her, the proposal letter sewn in pink and green handkerchiefs, "pink because it is the color of romance and green for hope" (Danticat, *Krik* 162). Knowing this, Gracina's choice of dress both respects her sister's wish to have a simple wedding by choosing to wear a suit and her mother's need for tradition by the choice of color.

The choice also has a metaphoric function to emphasize Gracina's role between her mother and sister. The surface meaning may be that she tries her best to please both in some way but metaphorically the action shows that tradition can be combined with modernity: striving for modernity does not mean all traditions should be forgotten; wanting to hold on to the traditions does not mean one has to reject all that is new. This is Gracina's role in the family; she holds on to traditions while living within the American culture.

Caroline was born in the United States, which makes her the family's "child of the promised land" (Danticat, *Krik* 189). But she is also born without her left forearm, which makes her not whole. The forearm is not the only thing she is missing; she is also

less Haitian than the rest of the family. Bromley says the mother's "life in America is an amputation" and that the Haitian memorabilia she has saved has a "prosthetic function" (75). In the same way, although reversed, Caroline's missing arm works in the story as a metaphor for the piece of Haiti missing from her. The lack of Haiti in her is emphasized by having a physical part of her missing as well. This is a powerful way of saying what was discussed before in the case of the mother: taking in features of the new culture makes one "Americanized" and less Haitian. These ideas of the first generation diaspora are emphasized through the physical and mental "lack" in Caroline. Although being talked about as the child of the promised land, Caroline feels different from the rest of the family because she is considered less Haitian. This influences her need to identify with American culture: she seems to think she will never be Haitian enough, however she might try. She fights her mother's expectations and suffocates the Haitian inside herself.

It is here that Bhabha's term Third Space becomes relevant. The mother is trying her best to keep her daughters' Haitian identities uninfluenced by the surrounded American society, because she is unable to see beyond the norms of cultural purity. The daughters, especially Caroline, with her Bahamian fiancé, are constructing their own identities as "in-between" people (Bhabha 38). Gracina is perhaps more torn between the two cultures, while on the surface, Caroline seems to have freed herself from her mother's expectations. The expectations also have an effect on the relationship between Caroline and her mother. Although they are still living in the same house and acting civilly towards each other, they seem to have lost their ability to communicate. It is Gracina who functions as a translator between them.

Caroline finds her Third Space on the morning of her wedding. She suffers a sudden anxiety attack, waking up with a phantom pain in her missing forearm, and not wanting to get married. At the moment when she is about to completely leave her Haitian identity behind, the part of her that is Haitian, symbolized by her missing forearm, reminds her of its existence. This pain is a metaphor for her feeling uncertain and

needing the approval of her mother. This is the point of reconciliation between the mother and Caroline: against all odds it is the mother who encourages Caroline to go through with the wedding. She gives Caroline a bath with healing leaves and tells her about her own similar experiences on her own wedding day. (Danticat, *Krik* 200-202). The pain in Caroline's forearm and her sudden willingness to stay with her family is an indicator to the mother that she is not completely losing her daughter, and proves to her that Haitianness remains an important part of her identity. This is also when Caroline realizes she does not need to abandon the culture of her parents in order to be a whole person, but instead, she needs both sides of her identity.

Although Caroline feels momentarily unwilling to marry, it does not negate the fact that the marriage is – not only to her but to all the women in the family – a moment of becoming whole. This is also shown in the story with the help of Caroline's physical body: she has bought herself a prosthetic arm. It is also significant that no divine intervention has made her wake up one morning with a whole arm: she has had to bring her life under her own control. It is stressed here that a person with a hybrid identity may have to take matters into their own hands instead of expecting to simply have their problems involving their identities disappear. Finding one's hybridity and position in the Third Space is more often a concrete decision to free oneself of expectations of cultural authenticity and purity than a sudden epiphany of something achieved automatically.

On the steps of the courthouse where Caroline and Eric are married, Gracina compares the situation to “going to a graduation ceremony” (Danticat, *Krik* 203). Bromley points to this symbolism, saying the whole story in itself is one of “displacement and re-creation, reinvention” (77), something a graduation symbolizes. Graduation, like the prosthetic arm discussed above, indicates something reached by work rather than given for free. Bromley also suggests that the story itself occupies the Third Space, “as a space of *possibility*, not something achieved” (77, original italics). This also links it to graduation; after all, it is a point of beginning rather than an end. Possibilities are indeed

very much present at the end of the story. While the mother's actions throughout the story speak against the marriage that she, according to Bromley, sees as “yet another stage in the erosion of her secure, Haitian internal space” (75), the change in her behavior at the end of the story opens the possibility of her finding the hybridity of her daughter’s identity acceptable. For Gracina the possibilities lie in the finally achieved nationality of the United States, whereas Caroline and Eric together have the possibility of finding their identity in a hybrid culture.

“Caroline’s Wedding” is a story of growth, although more concretely in the case of Caroline and the mother than Gracina. The mother and Caroline are at the opposite ends of a continuum at the beginning of the story, and by the end they have come to see the other end as well. The mother has accepted her daughters’ hybridity and perhaps realized that it is not something that makes her *less* Haitian. She realizes that hybridity does not need to disrupt the internal Haiti that, according to Bromley, is her safe haven (73). She nevertheless feels it is too late for her to change her ways, but is more open to seeing aspects of American culture in her daughters’ behavior. Gracina’s role in the family is perhaps more of an observer and a translator. Although she is the narrator, she is the one that remains mostly the same through the story. Nevertheless, she is relieved at the reconciliation between her sister and mother; she will not need to go through the battle, it is fought and won for her. For Gracina the growth takes place more through what happens to her sister and mother in the story. Because Caroline’s actions have forced the mother to refine her thoughts on identity, Gracina may not need to struggle so much for her mother’s approval in future.

“Caroline’s Wedding” is a good example of a narrative that sheds light on the generational differences in diasporas. The mother in the story never becomes a Haitian-American emotionally, but some degree of feeling of belonging to the host country is possible for the first generation as well. Danticat’s article about living as an immigrant family in the United States describes a different attitude towards remaining in the host country. She states that her parents’ dream, until they reached middle age, was to

become transnationals; people “with voting privileges and living quarters not just in one country but in two,” (New York) until they, in middle age, noticed that their decades in New York had reduces their need to return. She also states that she has finally come to understand her parents’ need to see their children financially stable, after all that is why they have left their homeland and continued to struggle in New York (Danticat, New York). The first generation has paved the way for the second and third. They perhaps once left their homeland in hope of return when the situation allowed it, but have over the years come to accept that their homes are in the host country, whether it is where they find their true belonging or not. As their children and grandchildren become more and more rooted in the new country, the first generation can only hope they have passed on some features of the old culture to them. This moment of realizing that return is no longer what one is hoping for, is a moment of yet another departure from the homeland, but also in a way a new arrival to the host culture. Perhaps the mother in “Caroline’s Wedding” is moving towards this phase of hybridity as well.

Although the second generation needs to fight for its right to hyphenated identity, the role of the first generation as the guardians of “Haitianness” is not completely condemned by later generations. Especially after the characters have found their Third Space and are feeling secure in their new identities as Haitian-American, the second generation is able to see the importance of the first generation’s role in keeping the Haitian culture alive in the new homeland. As Sandy Alexandre states in her story, “In a world where fitting in may mean selling out, there must be keepers of the past, reminders of the ancient ways” (186–187).

The theme of hybridity and generations continues in the next section, although the emphasis is more on the dilemma of exposing problems within diasporas to the surrounding communities. The next chapter will also concentrate more on gender issues within diasporas. Danticat’s novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* with the theme of testing brought up in is analyzed in connection to the aspect mentioned above, but links to

“Caroline’s Wedding” are also made in the analysis. The relationships between mothers and daughters continue as the basis of the discussion.

3.2 Mothers Bearing Culture

In Danticat’s novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and short story “Caroline’s Wedding” it is the mothers who function as the “transmitters of culture” (Kalra et al. 56), a subject discussed above in section 2.1.2. In both of these families, all the members are female, so there is no chance for a male character to take on the role of the transmitter. As shown below, the absence of male characters – fathers, uncles, husbands – is not the only reason why it is the women who pass on the homeland culture to the next generation. Also, the fact that both families consist of only women is hardly a coincidence, but rather a literary device emphasizing the role of women as cultural transmitters, in this case the ones to pass on Haitian identity.

In “Caroline’s Wedding” the mother is the one who takes care of the daughters being brought up as proper Haitian girls. She is the one preparing bone soup to “magic” Caroline out of marrying a Bahamian man, while the girls remember their father waking them up after a night shift and taking them “out for Taste of the Tropics ice cream, Sicilian pizza, or Kentucky Fried Chicken” (Danticat, *Krik* 171). Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk discuss the women’s role as the “carriers of culture” (52), and this is what clearly happens in “Caroline’s Wedding,” not only because the father of the family is dead. Although the girls remember their father telling them stories about Haiti, it is the mother that *is* Haiti to them. She also considers this to be her perhaps most important role in the lives of her daughters: she feels it is her responsibility to keep up the Haitian traditions in order to make her daughters remain Haitian instead of becoming American.

The mother in “Caroline’s Wedding” is in no way against Gracina’s naturalization; to her, “Americanization” is something very different. As stated before, the first

generation, the generation the mother symbolizes in this story, may not think of returning to the homeland in reality. To them, a physical return is replaced by remaining authentic. This leaves a possibility to return; remaining unattached to the mainstream culture makes it possible to preserve the original homeland as the true home, the place of belonging. This is why to become American in the cultural sense of the word is not acceptable, while the chances of survival and reaching a higher standard of living may be improved by receiving citizenship.

While the mother senses that the girls belong in the United States rather than Haiti, she does not want them to lose their Haitian identity. A part of this is, as mentioned in the previous chapter, to marry a Haitian man. The mother states that “No one in our family has ever married outside” (Danticat, *Krik* 161). Also, in her world, women’s role is to obey their parents in questions of marriage. She remembers the time before her marriage, saying “I had to act like I didn’t really like your father or that at least I liked him just a tiny little bit” (Danticat, *Krik* 163). This reluctance when it comes to romance is something expected of girls in Haiti, at least in Danticat’s stories. It is also an important theme in her novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. It is not only cultural purity that is expected of the girls in the families, but also sexual “purity” before marriage.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, like “Caroline’s Wedding,” it is the mothers’ responsibility in each family to pass on culture to the next generation. This becomes clearly evident in the way it is their responsibility to make sure their daughters remain “pure” – that is, virgins – until marriage. The book is not only a narrative about finding one’s identity as Haitian-American, but also of recovering from different traumas, both inherited and one’s own. Sophie’s mother Martine was raped as a young girl by a *Tonton Macoute*, a Haitian soldier, and it was the rape that made her pregnant with Sophie. The rape, pregnancy and giving birth to her daughter were very traumatic to Martine, making her nearly lose her mind. She left the country when Sophie was four years old, leaving Sophie to be raised by her aunt Atie. When Sophie is twelve, she is reunited with her mother in New York, and this is when she finds out about the circumstances of her

birth. Sophie ends up having her own sexual traumas as well; when she reaches puberty, her mother starts *testing* her to see if she is still a virgin. This causes her to see sexuality as an unnatural and dirty thing. In this respect she is also torn between the Haitian and the American: she feels that, according to Haitian tradition, a good woman does not enjoy sex or at least does not reveal that she does. In North America, although sex no doubt is still a taboo to ordinary Americans, the media and entertainment industries give an illusion that all women are sexually liberated and take active roles in their sex lives.

Not only is chastity important in the Haitian community of the novel, but so is the rearing of girls to become good wives and mothers. “*The men in this area, they insist that their women are virgins and have ten fingers*” says Tante Atie, Sophie’s aunt, explaining that these ten fingers stand for mothering, boiling, loving, baking, nursing, frying, healing, washing, ironing and scrubbing (Danticat, *Breath* 151, original italics). Tante Atie, wishes she “had six fingers on each hand so she could have two left for herself” (Danticat, *Breath* 151). This emphasizes the fact that girls are raised merely to fill the roles of wives and mothers, leaving no space for their personal development. Tante Atie for example has not had the chance to learn to read. Her responsibility as the oldest daughter is to take care of her mother.

Sophie discusses the testing with her grandmother, who sheds some light on the tradition and how important it is in Haiti. She explains that “If a child dies, you do not die. But if your child is disgraced, you are disgraced. [...] From the time a girl begins to menstruate to the time you turn her over to her husband, the mother is responsible for her purity” (Danticat, *Breath* 156). She also states that without a man in the family a mother has to take special care of the girls’ virginity (Danticat, *Breath* 156). How a house filled with women is a more likely place for a young girl to lose her virginity than a house with a man remains unclear. It is not discussed in the novel further, but like in many patriarchal cultures, it seems to be considered the true nature of women to be unchaste and natural committers of sin. The discussion between Sophie and the

grandmother also indicates that testing is something done in the whole community, not only in this particular family.

While Martine is following the patriarchal tradition by wanting to make sure Sophie remains a virgin until marriage, she wants her to concentrate on her studies instead of merely learning the skills of a good housewife. In her view education is the only way to earn respect in the United States (Danticat, *Breath* 43). She says to Sophie that “You have a chance to become the kind of woman Atie and I have always wanted to be. If you make something of yourself in life, we will all succeed. You can *raise our heads*” (Danticat, *Breath* 44, original italics). As Rodríguez states, Martine nevertheless sees Sophie “as a gendered body whose virginity had to be preserved” (35). Through her stay in the United States she has been working in several jobs to afford Sophie’s education while simultaneously providing for her mother and sister in Haiti to “ensure that she could lead a different life” (Rodríguez 35). After all this hard work she is unable to see that the patriarchal structures that keep the tradition of testing alive in Haiti are also something women need to overcome in order to truly have a different and better life. It is obvious she hated the tradition herself as a young girl, but however agrees with the idea that “a mother is supposed to do that [the tests] to her daughter until the daughter is married. It is her responsibility to keep her pure” (Danticat, *Breath* 61), even though she states that “The one good thing about my being raped was that it made the *testing* stop” (Danticat, *Breath* 170, original italics). Martine returns to this old tradition when she feels she is losing control over Sophie. It is, to her, the one way she knows to protect her daughter.

Later on in the story Sophie has her own daughter, to whom she, like her mother to her, wants to pass on her Haitian heritage. However, she wants to do it without making the baby inherit the trauma her mother gave her. Sophie needs to find a way to raise her daughter without imposing the patriarchal structures of Haitian culture on her. Sophie, her mother, Tante Atie and Sophie’s grandmother – as well, no doubt, as women in their family line before them – were victims of a patriarchal society and its rules imposed to

young women by other women in their families. Sophie's role in this circle is to be the one who finally breaks it. Sophie's position is a textbook example of how Minh-ha's insider/outsider opposition can function as an empowering mechanism. Because Sophie is not merely an insider in Haitian culture, although it is the corner stone of her identity, she is able to see that its traditions do not always provide the right answers. The simultaneous insider/outsider position of a person with hybrid identity gives them enough distance to enable them to recognize the structures that may be unnecessary and oppressive. She has found a way to free herself from the "stronghold of the island culture" Rodríguez named the goal of the women leaving their homelands (15). This stage of hybridity is not yet reached by Martine. Although she is able to reason to herself that women can be more than wives and mothers, she is not able to see that a girl's value is not dependant on the existence of her hymen.

Protecting a girl's virginity is merely the tip of the iceberg when looking at the reasons behind testing. The testing itself functions as a tool to preserve the traditional roles of women in the society. The tradition has an important role in maintaining the parents' control over their children, and, like many other traditions that oppress women discussed earlier in the thesis, the control of men over women. Martine too thinks that by testing she can control Sophie, or rather regain her control over her. Martine remains the sole influence in Sophie's life until Joseph, Sophie's future husband, enters the scene. As noted earlier, Martine is determined Sophie will concentrate on education. It is clear that to Martine, who herself hated being tested as a young girl, testing Sophie also functions as a revenge for not following her rules. Her return to this old tradition stems from her frustration at Sophie's betrayal of her trust by spending time with a man. To Martine as well as to the mother in "Caroline's Wedding" it is highly important for a possible son-in-law to be Haitian. It is hard to imagine Martine would not have difficulties accepting a man from Haiti to be with Sophie. Her disapproval of Joseph has truly more to do with her disapproval of men in general, something that stems from the trauma of her rape.

Martine begins testing Sophie after she is caught returning home late at night. Finally Sophie decides to put an end to the testing by breaking her own hymen with a pestle, which severely injures her internally. This causes her lifelong physical trauma, in addition to the mental trauma caused by the testing itself. Although self-inflicted, it can be compared to the trauma the rape has caused to Martine. When Sophie fails the test, Martine sends her away believing she has abandoned her to be with Joseph. The separation too is traumatic to both women. Another point that proves testing as also a tool for controlling a daughter is the way Sophie relates to breaking her hymen. She explains to her husband, who does not understand why she would harm herself in such a way, that it was an act of freedom, “like breaking manacles” (Danticat, *Breath* 130). The testing and its violent ending for both Martine and Sophie are important reasons why hybridity is such a problematic issue for Sophie. She is living in a country where sexuality is highly visible. In her upbringing, because her mother was raped, she has learned to think of sex as a cause of pain and lifelong traumas. Martine’s rape has certainly influenced her strict attitude towards sex and sexuality in general. This is why she emphasizes the Haitian view of the necessity that women are chaste and “pure” until marriage, although her views on the role of women are more modern than in the Haiti of her childhood and youth.

It becomes clear in Danticat’s novel that testing is exclusively done by women to their daughters. Making sure young girls are virgins until marriage used to be the only way to be sure the husband is the father of all children. Within patriarchal societies a girl’s chastity has become a matter of pride to the whole family, while the reputation of the family is lost in an opposite situation. While the mothers make sure their daughters can cook and keep a house clean, they also guard their virginity. The women are maintaining the male power in the society by doing this. No doubt they have the best intentions: they are making sure their daughters are eligible for a good marriage and thus a good life.

For Sophie it is easier to break these manacles than for a girl who has only seen the Haitian way of life. I do not wish to agree with the idea that western cultures are a safe haven to diasporic women, releasing them from their oppressors. What I wish to debate is that Sophie has entered the Third Space that gives her the freedom to choose the aspects of Haitianness she enjoys while letting go the traditions that make her unhappy. This also demonstrates my idea of being a double insider, developed from Minh-ha's thoughts of double outsider. Sophie is inside the other enough to see the faults in her native culture, while her Haitianness gives her the chance to make a change from the inside. She will pass on a different kind of Haitian culture to her daughter.

With her novel *Danticat* has decided to openly discuss a negative aspect within her own diaspora by bringing into the daylight the practice of virginity testing. By doing this she has faced the risk of negative, even hostile reactions from within the diaspora. The individuals who decide to do this of course also risk the mainstream population stamping another stereotype on the diaspora, instead of reacting to the problem in a constructive manner; trying to solve it together with the diaspora. This is what happened to *Danticat* after the publication of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. *Danticat* herself has been very careful in her comments on testing. She emphasizes that she does not consider herself or Sophie and her family to be a representative of all Haitian-Americans (Atanasoski). This does not undermine the fact that the issues in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are important to the whole Haitian-American community, and discussion should be raised about women's position in Haiti. Testing is a gendered tradition practiced to maintain the patriarchal values of the society in question.

Rodríguez states that a diaspora easily attracts stereotypes, especially when it differs from the surrounding population in a marked way, for example skin color or religion (17). This is why it is only natural that diasporas feel the need to keep their cultural practices hidden from the surrounding population in order to minimize the discrimination. Whether the desired effects are achieved or not, is disputable. Some information is likely to reach the ears of outsiders, and trying to remain closed in such

cases is likely to cause more suspicion than might be necessary. Because they easily attract stereotypes, they are often treated as such. Considering for example the ban on donating blood posed on all Haitians in the 1980s, (Grégoire 161) discussed in the introduction, it is understandable that members of a diaspora want to protect themselves from negative publicity. While some people want to keep traditions hidden from the mainstream population, some diaspora members consider it important to raise awareness of these practices outside the diaspora. This is especially the case when the tradition in question is considered harmful to the diaspora itself, or a part of its members.

The people offended by Danticat bringing out the issue of testing were – at least according to Danticat herself – women who had perhaps never even heard of the practice, and who were worried about the reputation of the entire Haitian-American community (Atanasoski). According to Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk, the reason behind the opposition may not be the preservation of the diasporic group’s reputation, but rather the interests of a group of people who want to maintain the “conventional patriarchal structures, which may well involve elderly women as well as men in the control of young women” (59). It is not easy to find the balance in fighting “against community cultural orthodoxy and mainstream prejudice” (Kalra et al. 58). Thus the dispute within the diaspora is not only about whether problems are solved inside the diaspora or brought to the attention of outsiders, but also whether the traditions are to be thought of as problems in the first place.

This is why discussing these problems openly and exposing the diaspora even to negative publicity is crucially important. Raising awareness of problems such as virginity testing in the mainstream population is an effective way to fight against these problems. This is where individuals with hyphen identities become necessary. As noted before in the case of Sophie, their experiences of different cultures give them a tool to evaluate the traditions of *both* cultures with a fresh view, instead of merely taking the traditions for granted. It is important to note that although this thesis, like Danticat’s

novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, concentrates on a problem within the diaspora, the hybridized position can also help an individual see the problems in the mainstream community. Ways of thinking that are taken for granted in the mainstream population can be challenged by diasporic groups. Unfortunately, the mainstream population's feelings of superiority may cause instant rejection to ideas presented by representatives of diasporic groups.

As shown in the way Sophie struggles with her sexuality, hybridity can also cause problems in a person's identity. In Sophie's case the problem is mainly to do with her mother's exceptionally strict attitudes and the trauma caused by the rape, but more generally, a hybrid individual is often forced to view their actions through two very different norms. However, as mentioned before, hybridity can be empowering in the sense that it gives one a chance to see the traditions and structures of the homeland culture – as well as the culture of the host country – from a different point of view. This allows one to make changes in one's own life and to change the lives of the future generations as well. The problems and the possibilities of hybridity are also visible in the next section of the thesis, concentrating on the importance of name in constructing one's identity.

3.3 Looking for a Name

Finding one's own name is used as a metaphor for finding one's identity in several of the stories analyzed. It is significant in both of the narratives already examined: in Danticat's novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie's family name, Caco, has a strong meaning to all of the women, and also their first names are inherited from women before them in the family line. The personal name – and changing it – is also important to Gracina, Caroline and their mother in "Caroline's Wedding". It is important enough to Miriam Neptune to make it the title of her short story "In Search of a Name" while

Myriam J. A. Chancy worries about the meaning of name to her unborn daughter in her story “Lazarus Rising: An Open Letter to My Daughter.”

Neptune’s story is of trying to find her family name. Unlike Danticat’s stories discussed before, her story is autobiographical, but like the fictional daughters in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and “Caroline’s Wedding”, she too is raised by her mother and aunts, only meeting her father occasionally. She asks: “Does name determine lineage? The only lineage I embrace is the one that raised me: my mother, her mother, and the mothers who created her” (Neptune 151). She does not consider the name inherited from her father a part of her, neither does she feel connected to her mother’s name, because “How could I take that name when even she chooses not to associate with the father who gave it to her?” (Neptune 150). Her trip to Haiti only strengthens her feeling of not belonging. There she is seen as an American, as an outsider, not only by others, but by herself too. To her, name is “only a name, not a family” (Neptune 151). Although Neptune sees her name more as a coincidence, not something that connects her to other people with the same name, it is not indifferent to her. She is searching for a name because she needs to find the belonging that has been absent all her life.

To the Haitian-American characters in the stories, a name denotes one’s origin, and is a strong indication of their Haitian roots. Being called a different name can also lead to feelings of hybridity: for example Gracina in “Caroline’s Wedding” is called Grace outside the home. The arrival of her American passport is significant, as it is “addressed to Gracina Azile, my real and permanent name” (Danticat, *Krik* 213). This is the name her father calls her by in her dreams, and the one her mother uses. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the story that being called Grace is a problem to her, it is clear that now, because it is printed on the passport, Gracina has truly taken its place as her real name. With her Haitian name on it, she finally feels she has regained her Haitian roots and identity, while simultaneously becoming an American. Thus her passport, although it makes her a citizen of the United States, also stresses her Haitian roots. It

has to be said this is probably the most exquisite and beautiful way hybridity is declared in the narratives studied for this thesis.

The mother in “Caroline’s Wedding,” unlike Gracina, remains nearly nameless; her name is only mentioned on the proposal letter she shows Gracina. Her (maiden) name, Hermine Françoise Génie, is part of her Haitian identity, and only remains in her memories of the country. The fact that her name is only mentioned in connection with her past in Haiti underlines the fact that she has lost her name, that is, her identity, when she came to America. She is afraid this will also happen to her daughter Caroline, when she takes her husband’s Bahamian name Abrahams. She says, “this will never be my daughter’s name, [...] because it was not the way I intended her name to be said” (Danticat, *Krik* 187). Bromley sees the whole story as a “re-creation, reinvention” (77), stating that “it would be simplistic and sentimental to conclude that Caroline and Eric occupy that ‘third space’ of which Bhabha, Hall and others speak, but the whole narrative, in a sense, inhabits that space” (77). Keeping in mind that Caroline and Eric are fictive characters it is difficult to consider it “simplistic and sentimental” to think of them as occupying the Third Space, since it is more a metaphorical tool used by the writer. These two characters identify themselves with the Third Space by not feeling the need to prove themselves culturally authentic. Their marriage in fact accentuates their freedom from these expectations. Even the fact that Caroline decides to change her name can be considered as a sign of wanting to highlight her hybridity, not necessarily as a way of negating her Haitian roots.

It was noted before that Gracina clearly thinks of her name being shortened from Gracina to Grace as something diminishing the fact that her roots are in Haiti. Keeping in mind the way the girls’ mother reacts to Caroline’s change of name, it is only likely she is not thrilled about her older daughter’s pet name either. This is something one of the writers in *The Butterfly’s Way* discusses as well. Myriam J. A. Chancy has entitled her essay “Lazarus Rising: An Open Letter to My Daughter.” In the letter she already

worries about the name of her unborn daughter and the consequences the American tendency to domesticate names will have on her:

No one will know how to pronounce your name. Aimée, like the pan-Africanist Martinican writer Aimé Césaire, but named for love. Aimée: French for beloved. Will you know to tell your teachers and schoolmates how to pronounce it correctly? They will insist on transforming it into “Amy.” Will you wince, misrecognise yourself, crawl into your infantile shell and reemerge as something closer to their expectations[?] (Chancy 223)

Chancy’s concern is that her daughter’s identity will be affected more by teachers and schoolmates calling her Amy than her family’s choice of name, Aimée. The name will no doubt increase her feeling of hybridity, by being an indicator of difference. However, to compare her situation to Gracina’s fictional one, she might very well not “misrecognize” herself but consider her original name her true self and a declaration of her ancestral line.

Here a cross-reference to the generational differences within a diaspora discussed above is relevant: is it necessarily “misrecognition” if an individual does not evolve into the person their parents have planned them to? Chancy’s worry is understandable, but does underline the fact that parents, the first generation, generally do not want their children to re-emerge as something very different from themselves. This seems to be something all people with children worry about, not only those of diasporic origins. Considering Chancy is not first, but second generation diaspora, her worry perhaps stems from her own experiences. The same way that Caroline’s struggle in “Caroline’s Wedding” makes the mother understand both her daughters’ hybrid identities better, Chancy wishes her daughter will not have to go through the same battles she had to. Although hybridity studies stress the absence of cultural purity and authenticity, the individuals with hybrid identities, at least in the stories examined, often do see the identity of the homeland as the more pure and authentic self. This is why the thought of one’s children losing this part of their identity is a source of constant worry.

Chancy's concern is surprisingly close to Caroline and Gracina's mother's worry over not having her daughters' names pronounced the way she intended them to be pronounced (Danticat, *Krik* 187). One's name is an important part of one's identity, and a powerful tool in the re-creation of self. In "Caroline's Wedding" the mother's name is only mentioned in connection with change; she too has changed her name, and considering the emphasis the Haitian culture portrayed in Danticat's stories puts on marriage, perhaps also her identity in marriage. Gracina "recovers her 'real and permanent name' [...] when she finally qualifies for an American passport" (Bromley 74). This is to her a moment of both change (new nationality) and return to her roots (her original name). Caroline, on the other hand, releases herself from her mother, who, as Bromley states, "sees them both [her daughters] in terms of ownership" (77). For all of these three women the change of name, or returning to the original name, is a moment of hybridity; of becoming something new. By choosing their names they also choose their loyalties: the mother and Caroline to their new husbands instead of family, and Gracina to her Haitian heritage.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory* the family name, Caco, is the name of a bright red bird. Tante Atie tells Sophie it is "a bird so crimson, it makes the reddest hibiscus or the brightest flame trees seem white. The Caco bird, when it dies, there is always a rush of blood that rises to its neck and the wings, they look so bright, you would think them on fire" (Danticat, *Breath* 150). The color red is also the favorite color of Sophie's mother Martine, and the color Sophie decides to bury her in, although she thinks it is a color too loud for a funeral. "She would look like a Jezebel, a hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped *them*, and killed *them*" (Danticat, *Breath* 227, original italics). The name represents something the women in the family wanted to be, but never quite had the chance to become. Sophie, after her mother's death, makes a decision to become that woman. She appreciates the line of women she has come from, but also wants to free herself from the past. The way the ancestral line is dominated by women becomes clear in the section where Martine's funeral is portrayed:

My grandmother threw the first handful of dirt on the coffin as it was lowered into the ground. Then Tante Atie, and then me. I threw another handful for my daughter who was not there, but was part of this circle of women from whose gravestones our names had been chosen. (Danticat, *Breath* 232–233)

This quote indicates that first names are no less important to the characters than the family name. To be named after an ancestor influences their feeling of belonging to the family in a positive way. For Sophie and her daughter Brigitte, their first names are an important link to their Haitian identity.

It is also noteworthy that first names are often the only way to remember one's maternal origin. Sophie's daughter too is baptized after her maternal ancestors: Brigitte Ifé after Sophie's great grandmother and grandmother, respectively. Her family name Woods, comes from the father. To Sophie, it is possible to maintain the respect to her ancestral culture while moving on from unnecessary traditions with the help of her hybridity. She is clearly occupying Bhabha's Third Space, as she can see the cultures of her past, present and future not as something she has to choose one from, but rather as something unique to her; her own culture. To borrow Bhabha's words (38) she represents the hybridity of culture, not the diversity of cultures. As she is liberating herself from her past agony, as her grandmother tells her to do (Danticat, *Breath* 157), she sees no contradiction in keeping her ancestral line as the source of her identity, even though it is the maternal line that has caused her such trauma.

Names are also important when returning to the original homeland. In several of the stories even the characters that have lived their whole lives in the United States are easily recognized by Haitians as a part of a certain family and location in Haiti. This means that the visitor is accepted as a Haitian. As the name denotes one's belonging to a certain family, it also denotes that the person belongs to Haiti; they are authentically Haitian. In some cases returning to the homeland is not as easy. Many of the characters face not only instant recognition and welcome, but feelings of resentment from those

still living in Haiti. These experiences and their influence on the characters' hybridity are the main theme in the following section.

3.4 *Diaspora*

The two main preoccupations of the Haitian-American writers in the anthology *The Butterfly's Way*, are the public image of Haiti in the United States and their own position in changing it as *diaspora*. As mentioned in the introduction, diaspora is the Kreyól spelling of diaspora. In Haiti the word is not, however, only used in theoretical contexts, but in everyday life, referring to those Haitians that have left the country, as well as their descendants. Diaspora are the people who have their "feet planted in both worlds" (Danticat, *Butterfly* xv). Being diaspora is a double edged sword. As shown below, they are seen as both the people who have flourished outside Haiti, evoking a sense of pride especially among the relatives remaining in Haiti, while simultaneously their absence is seen as a traitorous act. Thus a third worry to be added to the ones mentioned above is the way the individuals in the diaspora are seen by the ones left in the homeland.

The diaspora are struggling with their image among Haitians remaining in Haiti. The ones who have left the country in times of trouble easily feel guilt; they feel they have betrayed their fellow Haitians by merely having better conditions in the host country. They have perhaps left the country in immediate fear for their lives, but this fact does not lessen the reality that their lives and the lives of their children are easier, at least when it comes to economic issues and education. This is why they are often greeted with bitterness on their return. This feeling of guilt is not unknown for the later generations of diasporic families either, no matter how young they might have been when leaving Haiti. It is visible even in the cases of those individuals that are born in the United States, such as Sandy Alexandre, who published a story from her childhood in *The Butterfly's Way*.

Sandy Alexandre was born in the United States, thus her story with the title “Exiled” tells not of her exile from Haiti but to Haiti. She is twelve years old when her mother decides she has become “too Americanized – too saucy – to handle” (Alexandre 175). She is sent to Haiti to learn how proper Haitian children behave towards their parents. She receives a warm welcome by her relatives in Haiti, but she also has experiences of being considered a spoiled child from the land of plenty: “Even during the night, surrounded and disguised by utter darkness as I was, I was every bit a foreigner” (Alexandre 182). The feelings of being considered “the corrupt, and now contagious, American exile” (Alexandre 182) stem from her own mind, but certainly are not completely strange to the parents of the children she “corrupts” with her foul words. She also states that “whenever the sun set, I felt taunted by a darkness that knew me as a foreigner... a Haitian darkness that sensed my fears and had no pity for the American me” (Alexandre 183). While these thoughts originate from the child’s own imagination, they are no doubt also a reflection of her own feelings of inauthenticity, as well as of what is thought of her by Haitians.

Nevertheless, her “stint of an exile” (Alexandre 183) has a positive effect on her identity as Haitian-American. She says that before the trip

I denied, attacked, and decried everything my mother understood to be Haitian. I was a Haitian American trying to suffocate (whether consciously or not) the Haitian part of my identity. My mother would not tolerate this murder of both her culture and my identity. (Alexandre 185)

The exile does not by any means make her free of being insecure of her Haitian-American identity throughout her teenage years, when she is called “the *Vodou*-queen” or, when visiting China, “Kunta Kinte” (Alexandre 184) after the protagonist of the popular television series *Roots*. These examples have made her question her identity: is she American, Haitian, or perhaps African? She states that

when you come to know and embrace yourself – whether you have two, three or four identities to reconcile – you understand that you have everything to gain from those experiences that challenge your

justifications for being who you say and think you are. In fact, the lessons learned from these experiences help you achieve the power to shape rather than be shaped by your own future experiences. (Alexandre 184–185)

Alexandre's experience of feeling like a foreigner in her mother's homeland at a very young age could have made her feel more American, but instead strengthens her feeling of belonging to both cultures. This is because she is treated as a part of the family; as someone who is there to learn how to be Haitian. In her case the guilt of being American stems more from her own mind and from the fact that she has been sent to the country to learn how to behave like a proper Haitian child. Most of the authors recounting their experiences of returning to Haiti have been much older at the time of their return. Also, most of them have already built their identities on being Haitian-American, and even consider themselves more Haitian than American. Thus, their experiences of being rejected as foreigners and too Americanized come as a surprise rather than something expected, as in Alexandre's case.

Trinh T. Minh-ha describes the search for an identity as being "usually a search for that lost, pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic self, often situated within a process of elimination of all that is considered other, superfluous, fake, corrupted or Westernized" (371). This is how the diaspora is seen in Haiti, and also in the way the first generation sees the effect of the other in their children. Alexandre was sent to Haiti to pull out all that presumably corrupted and fake otherness by the root, but the objective is not completely achieved. She does not return to the United States a pure and authentic Haitian, but more strongly than ever, a Haitian-American.

In "Made Outside," the reporter Latour is frustrated by the near-impossibility of making other people see what she sees. She has decided to return to Haiti to make a report on the situation in the country, meaning to let Americans learn more about their close neighbor. Nine years before, she has been appalled by the images of Haitians given to Americans through television; she remembers an episode of *Miami Vice* in which "Voodoo serum had turned Detective Tubbs into a zombie. Dazed by the pounding

chants of grazed Haitian worshippers” (Latour 129). She is angered by the fact that the television series “invoked pretty much every stereotype of *Voudou* and the Haitians who practice it” (Latour 129) because she realizes people watching the series will not think of Voodoo as a religion based on the religions of the African ancestors of Haitians, but rather a cruel cult.

What makes her present situation overwhelming to her is that she too feels unable to convey how complex and multi-faceted Haitian culture is. Feeling like an outsider in Haiti, “a traitor” and “an American stranger” (Latour 127), she wonders “how is what comes through my lens any different than [*sic*] the view from Hollywood cameras that once enraged me” (Latour 130). Through her journey she is reminded of not belonging to Haiti, however much it is her ancestral home. Even before the trip she realizes that in Haiti, her identity will be determined by those around her, no longer by herself alone: as she states, her “claim to Haitianness was about to be tested” (Latour 125–6). Latour’s intentions to give the American audience a new, more multifaceted view of Haiti are benign, but she is torn by her own feelings of powerlessness. As a Haitian, especially as part of the diaspora, she is afraid of the consequences in case her story about the country turns out to be as stereotypical as the others. By succeeding she proves her “Haitianness” has not disappeared; she may be hybridized, but she is not completely “Americanized.”

Many of the representatives of the diaspora, much in the same way as Latour, are frustrated by the fact that Americans see only “the images offered by network television: Haitians as boat-people, as AIDS carriers, as *Voudou*-enthralled zombies” (Latour 126). Their aim is to offer the American public a different kind of image to the world, like the painter and poet Marilene Phipps: when faced with people wondering how she can “paint such a luminous, exuberant and bright Haiti when all news about Haiti abounds with accounts of the distress of the Haitians,” she states that she is “not an illustrator for *Newsweek*” (Phipps 117). They are interested in giving a different picture of Haiti to the people in their new home country in order to not only make Haiti

as such seem a better place to them but also to make the lives of their fellow representatives of the Haitian diaspora easier. The more the media focuses on a detail of a country – such as the riots against rising food prices currently taking place in Haiti and dominating the news as I am writing this paper – the more easily that detail dominates the perception on the people from that particular country.

The feelings of the writers in *The Butterfly's Way* discussed above are examples of the insider/outsider dilemma described by Minh-ha. While the writers consider Haitian culture a strong part of their identities, they all have doubts about their authenticity as Haitians, and feel like intruders in the country. These characters all feel like outsiders in their ancestral homeland. However, they are trying to take advantage of being insiders in both cultures. This position allows them to influence attitudes towards Haiti in the United States as well as attitudes towards the diaspora in Haiti. Although Francie Latour states that being “made outside” is “as much a badge of pride as it is a stinging resentment” (131), the feelings the writers express when returning to Haiti as a part of the diaspora are more often than not those of shame at betrayal. Danticat voices this in her introduction to *The Butterfly's Way*:

Shamefacedly, I would bow my head and accept these judgments [...] feeling guilty for my own physical distance from a country I had left at the age of twelve years during a dictatorship that had forced thousands to choose between exile or death. (xv)

The writers all understand the dilemma of not feeling guilty even though they have not been able to influence the decision of leaving, or feel that their parents or grandparents who left the country have had any other choice. In “Made Outside” Latour sees this position as problematic, but hybridity and the insider/outsider opposition can be considered empowering. Joanne Hyppolite, again one of the writers in *The Butterfly's Way*, says in her story titled “Diaspora,” that the word “connotes both connection and disconnection” (7). Being diaspora also gives Haitians the chance to show the world they can succeed when given the chance, as Latour describes her grandmother’s feelings on her graduation day (131). Haitians in many of the other stories feel empowered by

their diaspora status, and use it to help other Haitians. In *The Butterfly's Way*, Patricia Benoît describes her experiences as a teacher in a detention center in Brooklyn for Haitian refugees looking for asylum in the United States, while Nikòl Payen writes about a translator also working in a detention center for asylum seekers, only in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In Danticat's "Caroline's Wedding," both the daughters teach English to Haitians. Danticat has also written articles about the treatment of Haitian asylum seekers, especially after the death of her uncle Joseph in custody after seeking asylum (Adams). These events are the background to her novel *Brother, I'm Dying* (2007). Some of her articles, such as "New York Was Our City on the Hill," (Nov 21, 2004) simply remind people about what it is like to be an immigrant in the United States. Diasporic individuals can give a fresh point of view to the mainstream population in also in issues that so not directly have to do with their homeland, but express worry about the position of the diaspora in the hostland. Danticat is active in discussions on political issues as well, such as the debate on torture in her article "Does it Work?" (Sept 24, 2006). This is again something that gives light to the way hyphenated individuals can utilize Minh-ha's insider/outsider opposition. The diasporic individual's view from the outside helps them to see the host country's domestic issue in a different light, from a distance so to say. They are simultaneously considered insiders enough for their opinions not to be rejected as outside views. In discussing torture, Danticat in fact utilizes Haitian history, giving a vivid example of a society where torture was commonly used. Her article also reminds the readers that torture, when it happened in Haiti, was widely condemned by the United States.

The cases described above are examples of ways in which individuals in a diaspora can make a difference in everyday life. The individuals can use their hybridity and in a productive way. The hybrid identity that sometimes seems to restrict their position in the surrounding world now gives them a chance to work as a translator – not always literally – between other people from their homeland and the host culture. They function as a link to the homeland for the exiled, while simultaneously enjoying at least some degree of trust from the authorities of the host country. In these situations their hybrid

status is nearly crucial to achieve the trust of the new arrivals, if not for other reasons, then at least because they speak the same language. This situation could be described, revising Minh-ha's term, as a *double insider* situation. A similar revision can be made in the other direction as well.

The insider/outsider opposition is perhaps clearest when discussing the way a member of a diaspora feels about their homeland, but the same feelings may apply also to the host culture. A member of a diaspora is not a complete insider in the host culture either. This creates a feeling of being a *double outsider*, someone who does not completely find their belonging anywhere. The feeling of being a double outsider is evident in Miriam Neptune's story "In Search of a Name." All her youth she has based her identity on being Haitian, and has thus felt like an outsider in the United States. Her mother is actively involved in Haitian politics, although from outside the country and Neptune is raised to think of Haiti as her home. When she finally visits Haiti for the first time as a young adult, she notices she also feels like an outsider in Haiti, in the country she calls home. The first shock is received already at the customs, where the man checking her passport decides to "speak English instead of *Kreyól*" (Neptune 150, original italics). This moment, like the rest of the trip of disappointment to her; she realizes she is not Haitian in the eyes of those living in the country. She suddenly feels as if she does not know who she is anymore. Imaginary and idealized homelands were discussed earlier in connection to the mother in "Caroline's Wedding," and although Neptune has never seen Haiti before, she shows signs of the same phenomena.

Out of the stories examined, Neptune's is the one that describes the feeling of not belonging most. She has never had the need to find the Third Space, because she has always considered herself Haitian. Her trip to Haiti has opened her eyes to see that she is in fact Haitian-American, while she has seen herself as a Haitian residing in the United States. This feeling of being an outsider seems to be, for most of the writers, a moment of disappointment. They consider not having a feeling of instant belonging to the country as proof of not being an authentic Haitian. What they fail to think of is that

they are hybrid individuals and, in as Minh-ha puts it, have ceased being mere insiders just as they are not complete outsiders in either of the cultures they have been raised in.

This is a problem that can be solved with embracing the hyphen in one's identity. The difficulties described in the stories all arise from the expectation of cultural authenticity and the false feeling of being doubly on the outside. It is impossible to be on the outside once an insider. Forgetting these expectations of authenticity and lay the emphasis on being a double insider is a key factor in finding one's identity. Once the hyphenated individuals have recovered from the original shock of feeling displaced and have found their Third Space, they will be able to feel more like double insiders than double outsiders. The position of a double insider is much more positive as well as more productive. It allows the individuals to work for the good of their own diasporic community – and perhaps for other communities as well – inside the host country and to be understood by both the members of the diaspora and the host county, as well as the people in the original homeland.

4 CONCLUSIONS

People with hyphen identities are faced with several different roles in their lives. This thesis begins with a quote from Francie Latour, who describes her hybridity as skating on the hyphen of her Haitian-American identity (125). She also describes hybridity as a seesaw tilting one way or the other, but rather than being swayed by the seesaw, she is in control of choosing which way to tilt in which situation. This seesaw character of hybridity enables the individual to emphasize one part of their identity and to muffle the other one. Nevertheless, being aware of both sides of the seesaw sometimes makes the hybrid individual feel like an insider and outsider at the same time, while in some circumstances the person may feel a double insider or a double outsider, not finding their belonging in either of the cultures in question.

The hypothesis in the introduction states that the first generation has a strong feeling of exile from their homeland, and do not feel they belong in the host country. It was also expected in the introduction that the second generation would find their physical belonging in the United States, but that they consider themselves Haitian-Americans instead of either or. As it was stated, this feeling of *dual loyalty* makes the hyphenated individuals automatically suspicious not only to the mainstream population, but also to the people in the original homeland. When analyzing the characters in the stories discussed, it has become obvious that these hypotheses were true. The first generation has more and stronger experiences of being an outsider in the host culture than the later generations do, and they consider their stay in the host culture to be an exile from home; a temporary state.

It is evident that the second generation finds their physical belonging in the host country. While they are rooted in the host country, they too consider their ancestral homeland their mental home. Although their identities are very much affected by their ancestral homeland due to the traditions and values taught at home, they are not fully

estranged from the culture of the host country the way their parents are. They may not feel completely approved by the mainstream culture, but they make an effort to achieve an equal position.

The first generation may have trouble with the hyphen in their children's identities, but the hybridized second generation embraces it. Once they have laid their identities securely in the Third Space, they no longer consider their authenticity threatened or themselves less culturally pure than their parents. Discovering the Third Space is empowering to hyphenated individuals, and very important to their personal development. Entering the Third Space makes it possible for them to realize their potential as not someone doubly on the outside, but rather doubly on the inside. Through their position of double insiders, the second generation diaspora has the chance to affect on the attitudes of the mainstream population in the host country, as well as to those of the people remaining in the original homeland. They affect the future of the diaspora both on an individual level, like Danticat's character Sophie does by ending the tradition of virginity testing in her own family, as well as on a more general level the way Patricia Benoît and Nikòl Payen do through helping Haitian and refugees in New York and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, respectively.

The actions mentioned above are examples of the pursuit of equality the diaspora is concerned with. Danticat's novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in itself is an act that aims towards a more equal society, as it brings out the issue of virginity testing. As discussed earlier, bringing out these issues requires courage from the individual, since they are often condemned as traitors in the diaspora. Although the mainstream population often condemns not the writer but the whole diaspora in question, these actions are needed to open discussion about practices like virginity testing. There is a smaller chance for change if these traditions stay hidden.

Similarly to *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the other stories included in the thesis can be considered as acts of making society more equal. The less people know about a certain

culture, in this case Haitian, the easier it is to let stereotypes control your view on them. The writers of these stories are hyphenated individuals like their characters, and therefore they also enjoy the double insider status discussed earlier. Their stories make the political personal: it is harder to consider someone merely another refugee hoping to benefit from the riches of your country once you have seen their side of the story, even in fictional form. To the diaspora, the stories give something to relate their own experiences to, but the mainstream population also needs them in order to learn from the stories of refugees reluctantly leaving their countries and families, and the hyphenated individuals struggling to find their place in the sometimes unwelcoming host country.

The hypothesis does need some refinement after the analysis. Although the first generation immigrants feel exiled and away from home, they do not realistically plan a return to the homeland. Nevertheless, they make no effort to become more involved in the culture of the host country. From the stories analyzed it becomes clear that this is because of their feeling of exile; it is easier to preserve the feeling of belonging to the homeland if one does not aim to construct a belonging in the host country. Rodríguez states that the women leave their homelands in order to rid themselves of the homeland traditions that hold them back (15). While this is true considering the first generation female characters studied in this thesis, it is also evident that these women do not completely succeed in their objectives. It seems it is too hard to release oneself from centuries of tradition merely by changing scenery.

One of the homeland traditions the women in the stories analyzed left their homes to escape from was virginity testing. The dislocation of the first generation females in order to achieve a better life is rewarded in the next generation; these women have enough distance from their cultural heritage to release themselves from its stranglehold. Because of the double insider status, hyphenated individuals can fight against these traditions both within the diaspora and in the original homeland. The individuals who wish to affect for example women's position in patriarchal cultures take the risk of being rejected as westernized and thus corrupt by people opposing the changes.

Nevertheless, these risks are usually worth taking. When women truly stand against their oppressors, their objectives are gradually achieved.

Like other traditions that are continued by the oppressed to benefit the oppressor, virginity testing is an example of hegemony. This is a concept left out of the sphere of discussion in this thesis. This is because although hegemony recognized as an underlying force behind the actions of the characters in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the analysis in this thesis is concentrated on how hyphenated individuals can emancipate themselves from these traditions, instead of what causes them. Also, hegemony is a concept so complex that discussing it in sufficient detail would have required perhaps a complete thesis.

It is also found in the study that, although the second generation is not quite as fixed in the homeland culture and traditions as the first, they too have expectations of their own children's, that is, the third generation's, degree of "Haitianness." Myriam J. A. Chancy calls it misrecognizing oneself (223), but would Bhabha call it occupying the Third Space? The parents, both those belonging to the first and second generations, believe they have the right to define the "correct" form of identity their children are to have. Emerging as anything other is seen as misrecognition. Perhaps this is because one's children are, even physically, a part of the self, but for hyphenated individuals they are both the other and the self together. The other is traditionally seen as the not-I, the opposite of the self. Once we lose the self, we become the other, and if we see the other as "superfluous, fake, corrupted or Westernized" (Trinh T. Minh-ha 371), then to find it in one's children is no doubt hard. While the first generation wishes their children to avoid becoming the other by avoiding Westernization and Americanization, it is possible that the second generation will again dictate the rules of authenticity to their own children. If this happens, it leads to a circle of generation after generation trying to fulfill the expectations of cultural authenticity. The problem, nevertheless, has not so much to do with the other, but the way we see ourselves as its complete opposites, as everything that is pure and authentic. This is also why the Third Space is important:

when one reaches the point where seeking cultural authenticity is unnecessary, one can accept both sides of the hyphen as one's identity, instead of markers of either the self or the other. Reaching the Third Space is a moment of recognizing oneself as a whole person; realizing that being hybridized is not about being two different things, but about having an identity built on a more variable base.

Finding the Third Space makes it easier to understand the other, not only as a part of oneself but also in individuals from cultures different from our own. In a perfect world the Third Space is reached by everyone, not merely by the hyphenated individuals. Since the world is not yet a completely equal place where everyone sees the other as a part of the self, the stories by members of diasporas are needed everywhere. In Finland, for example, these stories are rarely heard by the mainstream population. We hear about immigrants mostly through the news, which means their stories are told by a member of the mainstream population. Also, the way they are told is often centered on problems and in a way that emphasizes the outsider status of diasporas in our society. Not hearing their stories through their own words makes it easier to consider the diaspora as a homogenous group instead of individuals. This is why diaspora literature, whether fact or fiction, is needed in the battle against negative attitudes towards people from cultures that differ from our own.

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