ثنائية الشهادة في *نهر المذبحة* (1989) لرينيه فيلوكتيت

Duality of Testimony in

René Philoctète's *Massacre River* (1989)

By

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Abstract:

Through a most healing testimonial narrative, Haitian writer René Philoctète presents the 1937 Parsley massacre in a new light. The massacre takes place on the border dividing Haiti and the Dominican Republic that form together the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Duality of testimony asserts the Haitian writer's perspective of the massacre as an action of senseless violence as well as a reaction of humanity and communality of the border people. This duality is highlighted through a testimony that is, at once, hurting yet illuminating. The writer utilizes the dual and recuperative potential of testimony to engage the reader in a new beginning. He liberates his text from closure and provides deep insights into the possibility of negotiating the future even when testifying to a most traumatising event. The paper aims to show how the novel manages to reconceptualise the tragic event and confront violence in re-presentation; thus attaining, through testimony, a new interpretation of the massacre.

Keywords: The Parsley massacre, Hispaniola, testimony, magical realism, duality.

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"borders unify and divide, include and exclude." (Haselsberger 505) It almost goes without saying that the Parsley massacre is a landmark in the history of the island of Hispaniola. A tragic event that both inspires and torments, the massacre manifests itself in most of Haitian writings. In *Massacre River* (1989), Haitian writer René Philoctète revisits the time, place and events of the massacre. The testimonial aspect is inescapable in the novel and the writer revives an act of mass violence. However, the strong point about Philoctète is that he has managed to write a novel about the massacre but without being limited to its direct discourse. In other words, he has succeeded in dealing with the event without reducing the text to a mere description of a genocide or being himself entrapped by racial hatred. To achieve this, he resorts to the power of narration in approaching a new engagement with the event. Philoctète is a writer who "through words, faced the worst and dared to dream of the triumph of goodness. And of beauty, too" (Trouillot 15). Telling the tale of his people, he is able to "speak with a Haitian voice to the hearts of all humanity" (15).

This paper studies René Philoctète's *Massacre River* (1989) exploring the duality that constructs the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In the light of testimony, the novel interweaves events of the 1937 Parsley massacre into the fictional narrative asserting, in the process, that the border that witnessed the massacre is a dual border and carries a double meaning of the traumatic event. It is a border of violence and humanity; of totalitarianism and communality; of looming death and struggle for survival. Most importantly, it is a border of a Haitian and Dominican existence; with Haitians seeking work with Dominicans in sugarcane fields. The narrative promotes, therefore, all meanings of integration and disintegration that a border might signify. This is because Haitians are

black, speak Creole and have African roots. Dominicans, on the other hand, are white, speak Spanish and cling to their Spanish origins.

Further, if a border indicates "both inescapable nearness and unavoidable (or perhaps unbridgeable) separateness" (Moroz and Partyka vii), Philoctète's characters believe that "[t]hey have so many things in common, share so many similar wounds and joys that trying to distinguish between the two peoples violates their tacit understanding to live as one" (214). This study opens up the text to achieve a more illuminating kind of testimony; one that significantly evades and challenges the understanding of the massacre as onefold, closed and over. The paper aims to show how the novel manages to reconceptualise the traumatic event and confront violence in re-presentation; thus attaining, through testimony, a new interpretation of the massacre. This includes the importance to highlight the opposing forces that dominate the text/border both thematically and technically. Blurring the boundary between blood and passion; the living and the dead; realism and magical realism reinforces the duality of testimony as well as the possibility to fulfil, the novel reads, "the dream of creating one people from two lands mixed together" (214)

The place is Elías Piña, a small Dominican town near the border where Haitians intermingle with the Dominican society. The time is immediately before the massacre ordered by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo of thousands of Haitian workers. The characters are ordinary Haitian and Dominican people; "the warm-hearted people of the border" (53). The novel unfolds in two narrative lines that entwine together in counterpoint engaging the reader in the re-reading of the massacre. At the heart of the narrative of dehumanised violence lies the humanised love story of a married couple; one is Dominican, the other is Haitian. Paradoxically, the setting of a homely happy life is the same setting of the approaching tragedy. The testimonial narrative establishes the border as a focal point of human horror and its duality as a counterpoint of human bonding. The testimony in question embraces rather than denies the impossibility/open-endedness of the traumatising event.

In her book *Trauma, Taboo, and Truth-Telling*, Nancy J. Gates-Madsen asserts, "just as testimony is always "haunted" by fiction, fictional representations of historical trauma are, in turn, "haunted" by

testimony" (18). By the same token, *Massacre River* is "haunted" by testimony of the 1937 massacre. However, fictionalising the massacre, Philoctète presents anew the violent event that shapes the history of Hispaniola. The writer takes the difficult route of taming the testimony of a most nefarious event by shards of tolerance and humanity. In an attempt of looking beyond the ugly face of that portion of time, the writer undertakes the approach of fighting the grip of violence with the grace of love.

Writing his testimony, Philoctète seems to be in full agreement with Haitian scholar, John Beverley, who states that "[t]estimonio … always signifies … change in which the stability of the reader's world must be brought into question" (41). The change Philoctète aims at is, as the novel reads, "to safeguard love, to keep the connection between the two peoples" (208). Beverley further claims, "[t]estimonio represents an affirmation of … growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle" (41). In the shadow of a gory history that haunts the people of the two lands rises Philoctète's testimony to "struggle" against violence and carry all meanings of "growth" and "transformation."

In this respect, Kimberly Nance asserts, "[t]estimonio is not only a text. It is a project of social justice in which text is an instrument" (19). In other words, if testimony represents an experience of injustice, it is usually "with the goal of inducing readers to participate in a project of social justice" (Nance 7). In a similar vein, in her book *Transnational Testimonios*, Patricia DeRocher states, "[a]s a culturally resistant writing project, testimonio recognizes creative writing as vital to social justice projects. It … inspires its readers … to open up to the possibility of a more just world" (15-16). The idea of "social justice" is therefore rooted in the workings of testimonio. It is the idea that readers of testimonio are accountable to hold and act accordingly. Best of all, part of testimonios function is that they capture, as Dinis Frederico puts it, "the complexities of human existence beyond mere facts or statistics" (41). This is because testimonios "convey factual information and embodied emotions" (41). This emotional dimension enriches the workings of testimonios which, for Frederico, do not only "foster dialogue, build bridges between communities, and promote

understanding, and empathy," but also "serve as a catharsis as well as a decoloniality process" (40).

Following these views, the testimony in question acts against a reading practice that is informed by hatred, exclusion and injustice. Importantly, it underpins an orientation towards creating change and engages the reader in a re-evaluation of what s/he knows or assumes to know: "testimonio evokes a sense of social responsibility in its readership" (DeRocher 20). A moral and human demand is heavily set upon the reader to intervene in a process of deducing new meaning. On this account, the idea of duality is very much in line with the testimony's fundamental message/morale of reconstruction and re-presentation.

In *Massacre River*, the writer chooses to use testimony more as a therapy than as a form of documentation. Therefore, he utilises a narrative technique characterised by literary devices that, at once, intensify the sense of duality and help him create an alternative dimension of reality. These mainly include magical realism and juxtaposition. Along with the testimonial aspect, they are used to imply the main themes of the novel and elevate the massacre over being an all-evil act of inhumanity. In his quest for solace and coexistence, the writer employs theme and technique to develop the reader's empathy and create a beautiful tapestry of Haitian and Dominican existence even in a bleak time of crisis.

With the very first lines of the novel, magical realism is strongly present. A strange fearful bird, "to be honest, no one knows what it is," (19) appears wheeling in the sky of Elías Piña. The bird "has taught the sky to scream" as its wingspan and shadow have been "in lieu of pity, and peace" (31) of the town. In magical realism, "the magical and the real come into contact and a confrontation befalls" (Benito et al. 47). When it plummets on trees, "[l]eaves go flying, branches break, flowers catch fire. … Everything collapses in its wake, leaving it free to maneuver" (21). It is "mute," (19) "blind" (21) and "deaf" (23). Deformity of the bird signifies the "unimaginable moment of life on the border" (118). Representation of unspeakable violence defies a normal mode of expression: "a representation need not be "realistic" to portray an event "realistically"' (Gates-Madsen 17). While people of the border hope "the thingamajig" (19) will go away, the bird's shadow "carves a

cross that cuts Elías Piña into quarters" (19). A sense of division or rather destruction is generated with the appearance of the bird which "[n]o one knows where it comes from" (23).

In this regard, an imaginary mode intersects with the testimony. Within the framework of the testimony, a realistic setting is seized by a magical element: "magical realism … blurs the boundary between fact and fiction" (Faris 22). This is one way through which the text emphasizes the dual nature of the border and the fragmented structure of the narrative. Magical realism calls into question the only one interpretation of a real event because as, Wendy B. Faris asserts, "its narrative mode destabilizes the dominant mode of realism" (4). This makes the reader more open for perceiving events from a different angle. Remarkably, magical realism is strongly functional once again at the end of the novel as if it puts the text between brackets of the uncanny.

With a feeling of uncertainty, the reader meets with the two main characters in the novel; the Dominican cane factory worker Pedro Brito and the beautiful Haitian wife, Adèle. The first time the reader listens to Adèle, she is predicting the massacre: "[t]he day of blood is coming closer" (27). In a state of disbelief, the Haitian wife asks her husband: "[i]s it possible to separate us when I have become flesh of your flesh" (34)? In response, Pedro articulates the core of Philoctète's testimony: "[d]on't forget our common humanity, sweetheart" (27)! However, the Haitian voice rises again, maybe addressing the reader this time, to pose an important question: "[w]hat isn't possible when power turns stupid" (27)?

To answer Adèle's question, the second narrative line starts to function with the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo giving orders of the decapitation of Haitians. The writer's camera rolls from the home of "the lovers of the border" (126) to the National Palace. Trujillo reveals to the Dominican nation its true anthropological root: "[w]e are the *blancos de la tierra* … the pure whites of the earth" (83)! The power-mad dictator dreams of a national "myth" and creates one about the threat of the black Haitians to the order and security of the white Dominican people. The novel reads: "the monopoly of power demanded a myth that would not focus solely on his person, but would also affect both the political and sociological majorities of his entire

country" (82). In this regard, Ernesto Sagás, scholar of political science, states that Trujillo's national myth "concocted the hitherto loose and unorganized ideas of antihaitianismo into a full-fledged ideology that perceived Haitians as inferior beings and enemies of the Dominican nation" (45). In the name of national hegemony, the dictator wants to defend the republic against the Haitian "enemy" and save more jobs for the Dominicans. His duty as a leader, therefore, is to rid the nation from the foreign contaminant.

In his book, *Foundations of Despotism*, Historian Richard Turtis asserts, "state officials created the possibility of legitimating the slaughter as the realization of a supposedly patriotic project to "Dominicanize the frontier"' (146). Hence, decapitation of Haitian workers in the cane fields is a must and is justified. Racial prejudice against Haitians as blacker, poorer and less developed fuels Trujillo's reasoning for the genocide. Leaving the palace, the gathering Dominicans wonder: "[*b*]*lancos de la tierra*—just what does it mean" (85)? Satirically, oppression expands in its ripple effects to include Dominicans as well. The poor people continue to look at themselves in mirrors day and night until a firm proposal is made: "from then on they would powder themselves with wheat flour" (112). In a tone of pity and/or sarcasm, the novel reads: "[t]hus did Trujillo's racism turn joyous Dominicans, for a long time, into ghosts" (112). In Philoctète's testimony, racism squeezes happiness from the life of people of the two nations.

Significantly, part and parcel of the testimony in question is to juxtapose values of peace and egalitarianism with deficiencies of hatred and divisiveness. Thematically, the novel departs from the heart of darkness and death to the expansion of light, love and continuity. To achieve this, juxtaposition becomes a powerful technique to highlight duality and evoke the reader's empathy. The border is caught between extremes and so is the title of the novel. While the word "massacre" indicates mercilessness and mortality, the word "river" attests to abundance and survival. In his re-presentation of the massacre, the writer dexterously sets apart the madness of power, exemplified in dictator Rafael Trujillo, from the serenity of love exemplified in people of the border. As the novel reads, "[t]here is no possible comparison between Trujillo and the workers. He is the System …. They are the flesh the System chews into shreds. … He is the tunnel, they are the

light at the end" (117). In his attempt to broaden the scope of testimony, Philoctète is not trapped in a loop of fruitless struggle with traumatising memories. He juxtaposes the totalitarian regime with the border community in a way that foregrounds the human and social approach shaping the testimony. In doing so, the writer delivers the reader neither to futile disparity nor to deceptive peace of mind; but to a sense of redemption and re-interpretation.

Significantly, dealing with the massacre, the novel reflects on the use of language as a symbolic form of violence employed to oppress and humiliate. Trujillo attempts to use language as a tool of xenophobia believing that "language … is the first and greatest divider" (Žižek 57). Language becomes a marker of difference creating a psychological border to subjugate and divide in concrete physical terms as well. As the massacre unfolds, colour of skin is not distinctive enough for Trujillo's soldiers to differentiate between the two people. Only a linguistic test helps the soldiers recognise Haitians and exclude Dominicans. Trujillo suggests the word "perejil" to be used, the novel reads, "as a weapon against the border people" (154). "Perejil" is the Spanish word for "parsley." For Creole-speaking Haitians, the "r" sound is difficult to pronounce: "[a] banal word. A kitchen herb. That can cost a life" (119). Victims are shown a sprig of parsley and asked what it is. Failing the test becomes a death sentence. Unable to say the word correctly, a victim is immediately beheaded.

In this regard, Salvoj Žižek asserts, "language gets infected by violence" (52). Linguistic and physical violence interrelate and the latter feeds off the former: "Perejil … becomes the live and death test for the residence of the border region. Suspect bodies are asked to pronounce the word to determine their belonging to either side of the Spanish or French/Kreyol linguistic border" (Rivera-Servera 110). A linguistic difference therefore marks those who are allowed to live and those who are to die. In this testimonial narrative, even language acquires a dual meaning. It is an empowering token not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressors. While it is a means of communication, it can also function as a destructive tool. Satirically, one word is employed as a signifier of difference and its pronunciation constructs racial division.

In this respect, juxtaposition is effectively at paly as the writer highlights a ruler's aggression side by side with people's solidarity. For

Philoctète, the two people speak to one another "in a language that only they can understand—the language of the border, nourished by local customs, history, and the human heart" (150). Shaken with fear, a Haitian woman repeats the test word tirelessly but wrongly: "[t]he l has sucked up the i. The e has kicked out the r. The word has stuck in her throat. … The word is about to commit outright murder, all by itself" (115). Pedro tries patiently to help the woman but: "[t]he word gets away from her" (118). Though desperately, "the Dominican people of both lands" strive to teach "the Haitian people of both lands" (143) the proper pronunciation of perejil. The word, therefore, rises immediately from "thousands of Haitian and Dominican throats … so that one people may not be the other's guilty conscience" (144-45). The writer sets apart two peoples' communality from madness of power and entwines voices of both Haitians and Dominicans. Juxtaposition highlights the conflict between one entity and an interrelated whole. It heightens the emotional and dramatic power of "the connection of the border people to the earth and history in which both Haiti and the Dominican Republic are rooted" (Glover 147).

On the fateful day, Pedro leaves to work reassuring Adèle that she is safe at home. Walking at dawn through Dominican canebrakes, with Haiti visible at a distance, Pedro contemplates, "[b]eautiful, beautiful, beautiful, these lands! Both of them together. … The land here bears my footsteps, which can surely be heard on the other side. … A frank and royal early-morning sky spans the two lands, the low one here, the high one over there, strangely serene" (33-34). As such, Pedro acts as a focalizer articulating the aesthetics of the testimony. Remarkably, the Haitian writer chooses the Dominican voice to speak up the beauty of both lands "together". Pedro is impressed by a unique space and therefore expresses "a feeling of organic solidarity sustained by profound appreciation for the physical landscape and its generous offering to those who inhabit it" (Glover 148). As such, the topography is beautiful insomuch as it is undivided and peacefully shared. The novel reads: "[w]e people from here and over there—we are, in the end, the people of a single land" (36). It seems that, in Glover's words, "the land calls for reconciliation refused by the pettiness of men" (149).

Near Adèle's home, the reader witnesses Don Agustín de Cortoba, one of Trujillo's soldiers, starting the massacre with a

machete. Paradoxically, this is the same tool Haitians use to cut the sugarcane harvest. In the hands of people of the border, a machete is a tool of cultivation in the sugarcane fields: "[m]achetes will cut the cane …. The muscles of two peoples will work together to bring forth the goodness of the Dominican earth" (33). However, in the hands of Trujillo's soldiers, a machete is a tool of killing and bloodshed. A signifier of growth turns to be a death signifier. Philoctète's description of the first moments of the massacre is as horrible as the act of beheading itself: "Don Agustín advances boldly. The machete cuts, cleaves, chops, slices, dices. … The machete speeds up. … Take that and that! The machete amputates, mutilates, decapitates. Don Agustín sings, shouts … howls in the battle" (67). Turtis describes the 1937 massacre as "Trujillo's most extensive act of state terror" (6). The killing is so violent that even nature is not safe: "[a] passing sunbeam is promptly chased down by Don Agustín and hanged from the top of a Spanish lime tree" (68).

Inside her house, Adèle is washing her husband's clothes: "[t]hat familiar heady smell of work. How stubborn it is! Honest sweat, bearing witness to our reasons for being, our mighty accomplishments" (74). Significantly, at this point, juxtaposition is at play intensifying the tragedy and engaging the reader in a movement of ebb and flow between different meanings and feelings. Through the Haitian character, the reader then contemplates part of the Haitian writer's testimony: "the sweat that throws bridges over rivers, links town, builds schools, masters energy, from darkness bringing light, from frustration, freedom, and from hatred, love" (74). In the face of a ruthless act of killing, Philoctète valorises ideas of continuity and construction. While the young Haitian wife is busy with the workings of her domestic life, Don Agustín, "the representative of order," (67) is busy with the rape of all values of life. Outside her house, Adèle can hear the pickax blows of Don Agustín "digging a grave for the sunbeam he'd hanged by the neck until dead" (76).

Seized with terror, she rushes out into the courtyard. As Don Agustín looks at her, Adèle wonders, "[c]an any human gaze be so inhuman" (69)? The reader then listens to Adèle calling: "[n]eighbor, tell me! Where is my head" (77)? Like thousands of Haitians, Adèle is beheaded. With the decapitation of Adèle, "[t]he body of the sunbeam drops into the grave. Limp. Pitiful" (77). Ultimately, the image

interweaving Adèle's slaughter with the destruction of nature is highly expressive. The Haitian wife's last call "[n]eighbor, I'm leaving," is accompanied by the complete diminish of light as the pickax "plops the last clods of dirt on the corpse of the sunbeam" (79).

Juxtaposition continues at play with the intensity of the act of killing. On the one hand, state-sponsored media presents the massacre as a simple yet successful event. News reports assure people that "[t]he operation is proceeding smoothly. Definite progress" (78). The only problem facing soldiers is that "[t]he children's flesh is so tender that machetes can't sink in" (79). Satirically, reports of the number of Haitians killed are usually followed by a weather forecast or a commercial: "diligent machetes are cutting a current tally of more than thirty heads a minute …. Be patient. We'll keep you informed of any new developments. … Enjoy refreshing Coca-Cola" (69)! Although senseless violence casts its black shadow over this part of testimony, Philoctète is keen not to engage the reader entirely with mad-power people.

On the other hand, ordinary people meet the news with shock and disbelief. In this regard, Philoctète is mindful of DeRocher's claim that testimony "confronts macrosocial flows of power through the telling of intimate, microsocial details of people's daily lives" (17). The novel tells the story of Urbain and Prospero, two neighbours, one is Dominican, the other is Haitian, who "cultivate" their gardens together "without worrying whether the corn ripens in Haitian territory or the potatoes flourish in the Dominican Republic" (149). The two "bosom friends" are happy and satisfied "as long as the kids have food on the table and clothes on their backs" (150). As the massacre starts, they cannot stand the idea that "by order" of Trujillo, "death will soon come to sit between them" (150). The Dominican tells the Haitian: "[t]he worms in your corpse will eat me up, too, amigo" (150)! Ultimately, for Philoctète, it is love binding people's hearts that eats up the animosity generated by the massacre.

In *Massacre River*, the writer gives voice to the subaltern and presents the tragedy from a different perspective. Pedro and his colleagues at work gather to find out ways of "saving as many Haitian heads as possible" (99). They agree that "[t]he Dominican economy runs on Haitian sweat" (117). Workers are aware that their means are

limited and that their organisation is weak. However, they find their power in their belief that "[t]he flesh of workers is common flesh. … It has the force of law when the law has foundered" (101). The recuperative part of testimony is asserted in the text through the persistent call for people to regroup so that "bread may be blessed for the same mouths, and the same hearts may have a chance at the good fortune of love" (37).

As such, testimony in the text glorifies people of the border in their simplicity, solidarity, and relentless spirit: "testimonio is a spirit of resistance in textual form; it embodies the creativity and ingenuity of social actors who hold little formal power and yet who actively reject a vision of themselves as powerless" (DeRocher 16). Voices of workers entwine; "the voices flew off over the cane fields," (117) to tell the story of the two people: "[w]e all know the song of the cane. … We are the children of the cane. We share its harsh flaws as well as its succulent goodness" (99). For Philoctète, "[t]hat's what workers are like" (101). In *Massacre River*, that is what Haitians and Dominicans are like.

The Dominican Palace announces to "the Dominican nation at large, and to the border people in particular" that the operation "has gone precisely as planned" (174). Richard Turtis states, "Trujillo thus turned a moment of international scandal and arbitration … into the foundation event for the regime's legitimation via an anti-Haitian nationalism" (169). The announcement gives another piece of "good" news: "Port-au-Prince is not planning any retaliation" (174). Just as the novel shows the despotism of the Dominican dictator, so does it refer to the inability of the Haitian government to defend its citizens. The novel engages with, as Glover states, "a recognizable but widely disavowed event in (New) World History" (144). Caught between a barbarian action and complete lack of action, people of the border are overwhelmed with grief and shame. The novel reads: "[e]veryone is ashamed. As if the most loathsome murder were within oneself" (160). The mad-power dictator cannot perceive the reality people live on: "[t]he two people of Hispaniola shared the common identity of peoples sharing the same bounded territory of the island" (Matibag 214).

However, while the massacre proceeds in all its bleakness, the Haitian writer persists to generate a glimmer of hope. Duality of testimony is strikingly at play. In a highly expressive scene, the reader

is impressed by a little girl of five and a little boy of four standing beneath an orange tree. In the dirt, they draw "the stippled image of a machete. Life-size" (202). Then they dance beautifully "to a profound and inaccessible inner rhythm" (202). In their own way, they challenge violence "as if they were beyond everything happening around them" (202). Innocently, they think that after their "majestic dance," (202) they will fall asleep. The reader is then assured, "[w]hile they slumber, the orange tree will bear all its fruits" (202). The text conjures up a possibility for growth and survival.

This possibility is further affirmed by the end of the novel when the reader listens to Adèle's head stating, "[m]e, Adèle's head … in the name of conscience, I protest! … In the name of national dignity …. Of human rights. … Of democracy" (167). As such, it is clear that testimonio is a kind of narrative that allow authors "to depict the individual and collective experiences of marginalized and oppressed people" (Lu and Camps 10-11). In his testimony, Philoctète gives a way back to humanness and tolerance but at the same time gives a bitter cry against injustice: "testimonio … seeks to break a repressive silence regarding a traumatic event in the spirit of Never Again" (Gates-Madsen 17). Adèle's head meets another head and people of the border witness Haitian heads "marching silently through villages as a form of peaceful, unarmed protest" (158-59). Testimonio also allows for "the powerful articulation of resistance, protest, and demands for social change" (Lu and Camps 11).

In this regard, magical realism is again at play to affirm the idea that testimonio does not tolerate closure and that the act of reunion between Haitians and Dominicans is inevitable. It is a reunion that transcends all barriers of hatred and every trace of death. As Faris puts it, "[m]agical realist narratives almost seem to bring up the possibility of interpreting what they chronicle as a dream in order to forestall that interpretation, after having aired it as a possibility" (18). In this sense, magical realism is highly important to affirm duality of the text as both a testimonial narrative and a literary re-presentation of the massacre. Because of its transgressive ability, magical realism "has all the potential to represent violent historical events" (Abdullah 4).

In the same vein, the novel's aesthetic interweaving of historical, fictional and imaginary modes enriches the narrative: "[a]s a narrative

surplus, magical realism broadens the view into the future beyond the concrete architecture of … realities" (Perez and Chevalier 2). Haitians and Dominicans re-unite to negotiate the future. Magical realism, in this regard, is very functional. It is, as Tina Campt argues, "the power to imagine beyond current fact and envision that which is not, but must be. It is a politics of prefiguration that involves living the future now … as a striving for the future you want to see, right now, in the present" (17). Negotiating the future strengthens the transformative aspect of testimony.

Pedro meets with Adèle's head: "[w]ith infinite care, he approaches his wife. Adèle tries and tries to recover her head, but her mind skips, slips away" (201). Adèle warns her husband that Don Agustín is coming back. Filled with hope, Pedro fights with Adèle's fear and urges her to run: "[n]o, Adèle, it's nothing. Just run …. Run. … Run faster, Adèle" (207). As Eugene L. Arva asserts, "[B]y transgressing the boundaries of verisimilitude, the magical realist text may both *convey* the authors' empathy (through their narrators and/or characters) and at the same time *induce* empathy on part of the readers (6)". In this novel, the writer aims not to give an accurate account of a gruesome historical event, but rather to respond to it in his own way. This ultimately includes evoking empathy in the reader, changing his/her negative perspective towards the event and creating, in the process, a more illuminating one.

Further, bringing dead Haitians back to life asserts the circularity of time in the novel and detaches the reader from the influence of linear progression and spatio concreteness: "magical realism disturbs received ideas about time [and] space" (Faris 7). Accordingly, if "trauma is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or a truth that is not otherwise available," (Caruth, 4) then disruption of time and space helps the writer to make re/telling possible and available. Eroding the demarcation between the living and the dead, the present and the future, the possible and the impossible binds together theme and technique to assert duality of the testimony and the possibility of re-interpretation.

Pedro and Adèle run towards justice and communality; they run towards the future; they run "until they reach the enormous swarming

mass – of men, shovels … hoes … women … pitchforks … goats … ermine-whites, rattlings, poultry … murmurs, oranges, children … donkeys … trowels, olive-greens, shears, creakings … garden forks" (208). Notably, the writer is keen to mention a plethora of people, animals, farming tools, sounds and colours. It seems as if all aspects of life gather, join each other and, in a new space, unite against violence: "[i]n magic, an animative force compels … change by imagining a different future in the present" (Perez and Chevalier 9). Testimony of the massacre turns out to be a "life" story characterised not solely by violence and injustice but also by strength and resilience. Herein lies the significance of magical realism as a mode of writing most suitable to represent traumatic events: "By using magical realism, authors turn unspeakable events into speakable tales and reconstruct events which would be as agonising to forget as to remember" (Abdullah 1). Pedro assures Adèle that "[w]e've joined the others" (209). In their collectivity, the victimised are strong and their voices are heard. In his novel, Philoctète seems to anchor Dinis Frederico's view that testimonios are "widely supported for collective healing and growth, amplifying the voices of the unheard" (40).

Significantly, the sense of collectivity runs, throughout the text, in parallel with the sense of violence. In the end of the novel, however, it functions in supremacy; in triumph; collectivity overruns mad-power individuality. The novel reads: "[t]hey came to join their lives, one side with the other, with the dream of creating one people from two lands mixed together" (204). This is a dream that signifies the future. Philoctète's dream reconciles with that of his characters as he has been always seeking "in everyday life and in dreams of the future, the goodness of the world" (Trouillot 16). In the portrait of the collective, light is thrown on the two lovers. Pedro hugs Adèle, "squeezes her, envelops her. And begins to hope that one day, she will recover the light of her mind with the promise of new life stirring in her young body" (209-10). With the intensity of emotions, the glimmer of hope is intensified and a sense of healing is strongly established. In this, perhaps, Philoctète tends to answer Shoshana Felman's question about the true nature of testimony: "[i]s the testimony, therefore, a simple medium of historical transmission, or is it … the unsuspected medium of a healing" ("Education and Crisis" 9)? Or, perhaps, he tends to wipe away the tears of the island of Hispaniola in response to the metaphor in Lucía Suárez's book title *The Tears of Hispaniola*.

In the end of the novel, the writer stresses the core of his testimony liberating the text from specifying one people or distinguishing one from the other: "[t]hey are of every colour, every walk of life, every belief, every character, every kind of memory and beauty" (214). The writer poses the question: "[a]re they Haitians? Are they Dominicans?" (214). The text testifies to the massacre through the eyes of Haitians and Dominicans alike. To answer, Philoctète stresses tirelessly that "[t]ogether they hoped for good harvests … sang the same refrains with the same musical instruments, danced to the same rhythms … sowed the seeds of love in the same voluptuous earth" (213-14). The reader is engaged in this symphony of forgiveness and co-existence. Significantly, it is this duality of survival and death, violence and love, fact and fiction, documentation and magical realism that gives Philoctète's testimony the power to "challenge the meaning of community and humanity in all of us" (Danticat 9).

Pedro and Adèle "leap, bound, fly" (206). They fly over the topography of past chaotic violence to spread their own tonality of love: "[w]ith their fingers, they draw, on the dark earth … a wing, perhaps? And then, they smile as if they were singing" (214). Interestingly, the text ends with the word "singing" to indicate that tonality of love, in Philoctète's testimony, has the upper hand and the louder echo. In this respect, Maria Cristina Fumagalli states, "[i]n Philoctète's novel, therefore, the massacre does not abolish, once and for all, the deep connections which characterized the people of the borderland but brings about the promise of a new beginning" (184). Like all Haitians and Dominicans, Pedro and Adèle aspire to the future; "they know they have a world to build" (214). This is a world that is shaped by Kimberly Nance's claim of justice; John Beverley's claim of social change and Maria Fumagalli's belief in a new beginning.

To conclude, through a testimonial narrative that depends on duality of signification, René Philoctète manages to step out of his country's trauma, find solace and defy oppression. Philoctète confronts the unspeakable violence of the event with a highly evocative delineation of the connections between people from both lands. Further, magical realism, juxtapositions, and circularity of time build a disjointed narrative structure that remains a sign of abundance rather than lack of meaning. In the light of testimony, the writer glisters into pieces the effable violence of a historical event challenging, in the

process, the mere recording of a tragic reality. It is highlighted how emotional intensity seeps into a narrative entrapped by racial hatred and genocidal execution destabilising, in the process, the strong documentary impulse of a testimony. The writer does not minimise the text to recounting the horrors of a devastating event. Neither does the text unearth a portion of silenced history as a one-sided manifestation of horror, killing and injustice. On this account, the novel offers a way back to humanness in the heart of darkness. A great sense of empathy challenges the reader's expectation of an all-horrific, all-evil act of testifying. The reader, therefore, is deprived of a secure assessment of the text as characterised by closure and is more than less powerfully engaged in a new interpretation of the event and an alternative approach to reality.

Testifying to the past does not impede negotiating the future. The writer represents the traumatic event in a new light liberating his testimony from the deep-seated perspective of violence as entirely dominant and providing deep insight into the act of retelling his country's (hi)story: "[w]hile the story we inherit discloses the inequities of the past, it should also open a horizon from which we may create, imagine, and conjure a future where violence loses its grip on our capacity to be" (Perez and Chevalier 7). Therefore, the novel asserts the transformative, recuperative and dual potential of a testimonial narrative that can be presented not only as a site of past hatred but also of future communality. Finally, in *Massacre River*, a sweet tonality of love, though fragile, conquers a tough topography of violence and the writer's testimony succeeds, at the end, to deliver the reader to the shore of humanity. In the light of testimony, the Haitian writer transcends the awe of the trauma through a sense of attachment between the two people that does not dissolve in the massacre river.

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ثنائية الشهادة في *نهر المذبحة* (1989) لرينيه فيلوكتيت

المستخلص :

من خلال رواية شهادة شافية للغاية، يقدم الكاتب الهايتي رينيه فيلوكتيت مذبحة بارسلي عام 1937 في ضوء جديد. وتحدث المذبحة على الحدود الفاصلة بين هايتي وجمهورية الدومينيكان اللتين تشكلان معًا جزيرة هيسبانيولا الكاريبية. تؤكد ازدواجية الشهادة وجهة نظر الكاتب الهايتي للمذبحة باعتبارها عملاً من أعمال العنف التي لا معنى لها بالإضافة إلى رد فعل إنساني وجماعي لسكان الحدود. يتم تسليط الضوء على هذه الازدواجية من خلال شهادة مؤلمة ولكنها مضيئة في نفس الوقت. يستخدم الكاتب الإمكانات المزدوجة والتعافية للشهادة لإشراك القارئ في بداية جديدة. إنه يحرر نصه من الإغلاق ويقدم رؤى عميقة حول إمكانية التفاوض على المستقبل حتى عند الإدلاء بشهادته على حدث أكثر صدمة. يهدف البحث إلى إظهار كيف تمكنت الرواية من إعادة تصور الحدث التراجيدي ومواجهة العنف في إعادة تقديمه؛ وبذلك يتم التوصل، من خلال الشهادة، إلى تفسير جديد للمجزرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

مذبحة البقدونس، هيسبانيولا، الشهادة، الواقعية السحرية، الازدواجية.