The Liminality of a Hybrid Existence: The Relationship Between Colonizer and Colonized in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*

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ABSTRACT

Colonization of other countries has spawned a dualistic identity among those that have identified as the colonized. Out of this experience came postcolonialism, which deals with the consciousness and the consequences of colonization. In postcolonial literature a prevailing theme appears to be a search for an identity in relationship to others, whether they are categorized as the colonizer or the colonized. Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!* Delves into the relationships and power struggle between colonized and colonizer. Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity showcase this in-between space that the hybrid must exist in order to prosper. These characters live in a hybrid existence because of the influences of the colonizer. As a result, the characters live in a liminal space that does not allow for an existence in or claim to either identity. The characters find solace in hybrid spaces because they allow the hybrid to claim an identity that is outside of the binaries presented by society. This liminal existence is also shown through the philosophies of Friedrich Hegel. The Hegelian Dialectic shows how two opposing forces, such as the colonizer and colonized, come together to create a new entity, such as the hybrid. Through the philosophies of Hegel and the theories of Homi Bhaba, the hybrid in postcolonial short story cycles becomes and exists in his or her own liminal space. The text explores relationships as a liminal space within a hybrid culture.

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Chapter I

History of the Hybrid

Colonization of other countries has spawned a dualistic identity among those that were colonized. Out of this experience came postcolonialism, which deals with the aftermath of colonization. In postcolonial literature, a prevailing theme appears to be a search for an identity in relationship to others, whether they are initially categorized as the colonizer or the colonized. Characters in postcolonial literature live in a hybrid existence because of the influences of the colonizer. As a result, the characters live in a liminal space that does not allow for an existence in or claim to either identity. The liminality of relationships in the postcolonial short story is shown through Edwidge Danticat's *Krik?Krak!* The relationships between characters and places bring about a liminal space that integrates the characters but ultimately segregates them from each other by the realization of their differences, and the hybrid must seek solace in physical liminal spaces.

One of the prevailing theorists of postcolonialism is Homi Bhabha, and his theories of cultural and individual hybridity will be used as a lens in this thesis. In Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture,* he discusses how people identify in a postcolonial world. In one passage he states, "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood— singular or communal— that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (2). The colonized have to deal with this in-between space, because they

have the ideas of both the colonizer and the colonized attached to their history, so how do they reconcile these two opposing ideas? Well, the hybrid identity allows them to take parts of each in order to make up their own identity. The act of identification becomes more complex than national identity because the colonized has now been influenced by an outside force. Bhabha discusses that there is an "on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (3). The events and aftermath of colonization is the reason there is a need for a hybrid. The hybrid is trying to navigate the shifting cultural space that he or she has been designated to live in. For Danticat's short story cycle, the hybrid characters are dealing with the regime change that has recently taken place in Haiti. Moreover, there is also a hierarchy in this divide. One is considered preferable over the other. In fact, they can be broken down into the concept of good vs. bad. One of the categories is seen as positive, while the other is seen in a more negative light. In relation to postcolonialism the binary is colonizer and colonized. The colonizer is perceived as being the one exerting influence over the other. Now the hybrid allows for a median or even a melding of the two contrasting forces. The hybrid is both good and bad, because it identifies with both personalities. The hybrid may be initially referred to as the colonized, but he or she has the remnants of the colonizer's influence of the past and even present.

Additionally, Bhabha's idea of the hybrid is discussed in Cameron McCarthy's "The Hypocrisy of Completeness: Toni Morrison and the Conception of the Other." When defining hybridity McCarthy states, "According to Bhabha, it is 'less than one', a full presence, and 'double', as it has no choice in its exercise of power but to include that which it discriminates against" (3). To Bhabha the identity of the hybrid is complex

because the hybrid is a colonized identity that is seen as inferior to the colonizer, the hybrid is an identity that can stand alone, and the hybrid is both colonizer and colonized through a blending of cultures. The hybrid must reconcile his or her own cultural background with the one that has been imposed on them as well.

The hybrid has to find his or her own place in the world, because he or she is rejected by both sides of the binary for not being fully immersed in one or the other. In this case, the hybrid must find comfort in liminal spaces. Now liminal spaces are in-between places that are more accommodating to the nature of the hybrid. Some instances of liminal space would be water, graveyards, and any other space that has a dualistic nature. Water is a recurring space when referring to the liminal. Water is fluid and constantly in motion; it is not stagnant. Water's ever shifting atmosphere allows the hybrid to grow as an individual and flourish as a hybrid instead of being crushed by the notions of the binary oppositions. Bhabha also discusses this idea of liminality when he states,

> liminal space, in-between the designation of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. . . .This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (5).

The liminal space between these binaries is a state in which these two ideas can communicate with each other. This hybrid state puts the two ideas on equal ground when normally one would be considered higher than the other. Normally there would be a boundary separating these two ideas, but "the boundary becomes the place from which

something begins its presencing" (7). This becomes the moment in which the hybrid is created, because the boundary becomes the intersection of the two ideas.

One of the liminal spaces that will be explored in this thesis is the concept of "a year and a day" and this idea in relation to Haitian beliefs of death. Edwidge Danticat discusses this phenomenon in a piece she wrote for *The New Yorker* entitled "A Year and a Day." In this article, she states, "In the Haitian vodou tradition, it is believed by some that the souls of the newly dead slip into rivers and streams and remain there, under the water, for a year and a day. Then, lured by ritual prayer and song, the souls emerge from the water and the spirits are reborn. These reincarnated spirits go on to occupy trees, and, if you listen closely, you may hear their hushed whispers in the wind" (1). A year and a day is an experience that happens in relation to liminal spaces, such as water and other elements of nature. This time period becomes a transitional period for the dead, and hybrid characters in Danticat's short story cycle experience this through their relationships to people who have died and how these natural elements have provided a sort of safe space for the liminal characters to navigate their transition into a hybrid state.

Water appears to be an important aspect in Haitian culture, and this is also shown through some of the vodou myths they have in their culture as well. One in particular that will be pertinent in looking at Danticat's work is the myth of Lwa Lasirenn, a gender fluid water spirit. The spirit is discussed thoroughly in Ursula Szeles' "Sea Secret Rising: The Lwa Lasirenn in Haitian Vodou." She dissects how the figure has seen many different interpretations over the years, and "this fluidity is also emblematic of the ease with which one can apply her lessons of survival, introspection, and self-acceptance into various realms of existence" (193). Lwa is relatable to everyone, because they have been

conceived in multiple ways throughout the years. Lwa has a hybrid nature like many of the characters in *Krik?Krak!*, and in a way they become a symbol for the characters as well. Lwa is described as being half human/fish and presents as both masculine and feminine (194). They straddle the lines of species and gender performance, and they embrace their own hybrid state of being. This water spirit is just one of the many ways that the characters in the novel are drawn to liminal spaces, such as water. Lwa allows the Haitian people as hybrids to find solace and identification in one being that encompasses multiple ways of being.

To expand on the ideas of Bhabha this thesis will discuss *The Black Atlantic* by Paul Gilroy. He discusses the idea of double consciousness in his work, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity." When defining double consciousness Gilroy states, "these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination" (1). Double consciousness is experienced by the characters in the short story cycle because of their hybrid identity. Also, it acknowledges that a person can identify with multiple cultures and attempts to reconcile them.

This article also deals with the idea of liminal spaces related to double consciousness. He says, "It should be emphasized that ships were the living means by which the points within the Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected" (16). Here Gilroy is showing how the ships and the water itself has become a liminal space through the slave trade. This instance shows how the water has both positive and negative

elements to it. Water is considered sustenance, but in this case, it is also being used as a way to transport people forcefully to other parts of the world. Water, in general, is a force that can shift from calm to turbulent. Gilroy continues and critiques the idea of defining one's identity in a place when he states, "modern black culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation" (19). Identity can be fluid instead of being designated entirely to one location. Culture can shift from one place to the next, and this can cause a type of diaspora as well. Gilroy's point seems to be that there is more emphasis on being defined by a place, but this is not possible with hybridity and double consciousness because there is not one single place for them to identify.

In considering postcolonial theory, it is important to look at the rise of Orientalism as well, and this thesis will use Edward Said's *Orientalism* to explore this topic. One main concern of Orientalism for Said is as follows:

> Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into "us" (Westerners) and "they" (Orientals). (45)

Said is questioning this binary that has been established as us and them. The divide has caused humanity to place one existence over that of another. Danticat's short story cycle seeks to show these divides, both physical and mental, and how the hybrid navigates through these interactions in his or her life.

Now in addition to Bhabha's theory of the hybrid, this thesis will also focus on Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic and process of Recognition, which can accommodate this theory of the hybrids space in society. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel elaborates, "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (111). Hegel believes that in order for one to understand themselves they have to look through the eyes of the Other, which is the process of recognition. The Other is anything that we deem to be foreign to our own existence. Hegel recognizes a dilemma in this dialectic when he states that, "one being [is] only *recognized*, the other [is] only *recognizing*" (113). The other allows for one to be acknowledged and understood, but this process does not work both ways. There is no attempt to recognize the other's existence if it does not correlate to the existence of the one. Now the Master/Slave Dialectic brings up another binary that can in this case also be acquainted with colonizer and colonized. The master has a position of power that the slave does not have, so the relationship is still not one of equality.

In "Tourism, Hybridity, and Ambiguity: The Relevance of Bhabha's 'Third Place' Cultures," Dr. Keith Hollinshead elaborates on Bhabha's notion of the blending of the colonizer and colonized when he states, "of each and every culture, it is *not* the *negation* of the Other that counts, but the negotiation and renegotiation of spaces and temporality between Others" (129). The colonized and the colonizer work together to define their roles through the process of communication and recognition of each other. Hollinshead's article shows the crossover between Hegel and Bhabha. They both view this melding as a process of communication between two opposite sides of the binary. McCarthy's essay also discusses the Hegelian Dialectic that is based on the binary between thesis and

antithesis, which will produce a synthesis (2). The two opposing forces cannot coexist together without changing to accommodate for the other. In this case, the colonizer and the colonized come together and clash to create what is known as the hybrid.

This Hegelian Dialectic is also seen through Haiti specifically in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* written by Susan Buck-Morss. In her book, she discusses how the master/ slave dialectic can be looked at and applied to the Haitian Revolution. Hegel shows that the slave's identity is in relation to the master, but in addition to this Morss states, "the apparent dominance of the master reverses itself with his awareness that he is in fact totally dependent on the slave" (54). This shows how the perceived boundary set up between the two is crossed, because one is needed for the other to have an identity. They must recognize the existence of each other in order to justify their own.

Additionally, the idea of "a year and a day" shows how the Haitian culture has ties to death, and Buck-Morss delves into this as well when she says, "Those who once acquiesced to slavery demonstrate their humanity when they are willing to risk death rather than remain subjugated....The self-liberation of the slave is required through a 'trial by death'" (55). The characters in this short story collection are heavily attached to the concept of death, and it influences their stories greatly. Death for the characters is not perceived as a negative though, because it has these connections to liberation for them. They use death as a means of freedom and escape into the liminal realms.

Another aspect of *Krik? Krak!* that will be explored in these chapters will be how the work is a hybrid itself. While reading the work, one might ask is it a continuous novel or a collection of short stories. The answer is that it is both. Danticat's work explores the liminal, which does not exclude with "either/or" but instead asserts that it is "both/and."

The work itself is a hybrid; therefore, it creates its own liminal space as well in which these characters can thrive and tell their own stories. This idea is explored in Rocio G. Davis' "Oral Narratives as Short Story Cycle: Forging Community in Edwidge Danticat's 'Krik? Krak!'" Davis discusses how *Krik?Krak!* is actually a short story cycle and how it "must assert the individuality and independence of each of the component parts while creating a necessary interdependence that emphasizes the wholeness and unity of the work" (66). This is what Danticat's work has achieved. The stories could stand alone by themselves as individual works, but they also work together in a bigger context. The author also mentions how the short story cycle is a remnant of "oral traditions of narrative" (66). Danticat's work thrives on the basis of an oral tradition. The title of the work itself is a call for someone to tell a story and an answer to said call.

Davis continues this idea of the oral tradition and the short story cycle by discussing the parameter or guidelines that this type of writing follows. One of the requirements are as follows:

> Moreover, the narrative structure of short story cycles mirrors the episodic and unchronological method of oral narration. Most cycles do not have a linear plot, emerging rather as portraits of persons or communities pieced together from the diverse elements offered in the individual stories. (77)

The stories in *Krik?Krak!* follow the idea that one individual is relaying each story to the audience, but these stories are either happening around the same time or even being influenced by past stories that have been told in the series. Some of the stories in this work are related to each other through familial bonds or at the very least through similar struggles and experiences they are all going through during this time.

Lastly, these concepts will help to further explain *Krik?Krack!* by Edwidge Danticat. This short story collection consists of several short stories during and after the Haitian Revolution. The characters are going through political changes in their society, and this and past events of colonization have created a hybrid existence for some of these characters. These stories show struggles with family, relationships, religion, and death. All of these aspects lead back to the characters need for identification. The hybrid character has a different relationship to these because he or she can experience them from a different perspective. This perspective allows for an inclusion in liminal matters, such as death, and an understanding of both the colonizer and the colonized. The hybrids in these stories oppose the view of identity being singular and embrace the multiple aspects of his or her own existence.

The next few chapters will explore the ideas expressed about the nature of being hybrid, the binary set up between colonizer and colonized, and how this affects their relationships with one another. This thesis will go further into the relationships that have been addressed in these stories to discover the binary between the two in relation to the ideas expressed by Homi Bhabha and the Hegelian Dialectic. It will also further explore the liminal space that comes with being identified as a hybrid and how this liminal space is created between relationships to people and places. The liminality of their relationships creates a space for the colonized and the colonizer to come together. The hybrid must walk between two worlds, and the hybrid expresses his or her dual nature through the boundaries between colonizer and colonized.

The next chapter will deal with the liminal spaces presented to the hybrid characters whether they be physical or imaginary. These spaces showcase the hybrid's

existence and allows the hybrid a safe place in which to thrive. Then, the third chapter will discuss how ISAs, such as the Haitian government and religion, affect the hybrid's physical and emotional state. These aspects of their culture influence them in negative and positive ways. There is also a blending process going on as well, such as the blending of Catholicism and Haitian vodou. The fourth chapter will delve into the mother/daughter relationship that has been a main topic of discussion in relation to this short story cycle. This thesis will look at the relationship between the two and how it affects the daughters' relation to being a hybrid figure. The boundaries and connections between the two produce a liminal space similar to other spaces, such as water. The last chapter will conclude the ideas presented in this thesis, and it will also showcase future developments of it as well.

Chapter II

The Liminal Spaces Between Life and Death

The hybrid's internal and external existence is a liminal one. External spaces allow the hybrid to reconcile their own nature with something that is concrete and can be interacted with. The hybrid has relationships with people, but the hybrid's relationship to physical spaces is also an important aspect of his or her attempt to find a space that they are welcomed in. The hybrid can move in and out without the encumbrance of the barrier between colonizer and colonized. There are liminal spaces presented in Danticat's three stories in *Krik? Krak!,* named, "Children of the Sea," "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," and "The Missing Peace" that some characters interact with and are more comfortable in than other characters, and these spaces allow them to transform and transcend through boundaries.

These three stories demonstrate the physical spaces that one encounters when transitioning from life to death. Because these characters are hybrids they are able to understand the space between the two. Life and death are spaces in which people receive anxiety, but the hybrid is able to overcome this anxiety because the space is welcoming to them. While others have an identified existence and/or space to rely on, the hybrid finds comfort in the borders that others are afraid to encounter. The characters in these short stories are faced with the death of their loved ones and themselves. They are not as afraid of these spaces because they have been inaugurated into them through similar liminal spaces, such as water. Homi Bhabha discusses the feeling of being connected to something but also being distant through the idea of unhomeliness in *The Location of Culture*. He states:

> The negating activity is, indeed the intervention of the 'beyond' that establishes a boundary: a bridge where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world— the unhomeliness—that is the condition of extra-terrestrial and cross-cultural initiations. (13)

This idea is uncanny in the fact that the hybrid deals with the familiar and the unfamiliar. The spaces presented to the hybrid are odd but also familiar, and this is also true of the existence of the hybrid. There is a connection to the world but also an abjection from it as well. Like the passage mentions the hybrid comes into being through these in-between places because they are allowed to flourish in this space.

Some research specific to these stories is the research done by Jane Evans Braziel. In Braziel's "Défilée Diasporic Daughters: Revolutionary Narratives of Ayiti (Haiti), Nanchon (Nation), and Dyaspora (Diaspora) in Edwidge Danticat's Krik? Krak!" she discusses how women in Haiti became the symbol of the nation after events such as the Massacres of 1937 (80). The people of Haiti have gone through a traumatic incident that has led them to rebuilding their lives, country, and culture. The women became their hope for a new generation of children that would help bring about change and reform in Haiti. The women are seen as an act of reclaiming identity and land that is present in a hybrid culture. They were considered the future of the nation. Women became a symbol for the future because they are the ones that are creating the next generation, and this becomes the rebirth of a nation.

Braziel's article also examines the relationship between characters through traditions and historical context of Haiti. The article shows how these massacres and

revolution have impacted the population. Braziel discusses how in Haiti "unburied body parts were believed to be used as corporeal fragments for bringing the dead back to haunt the living" (80). She explores how traditions such as this play a part in how "daughters are searching for their lost historical mothers" (81). The deceased characters in the story are either with the hybrid characters or ever are the hybrid characters themselves. Death in itself is a liminal space between life and the afterlife. The hybrid characters seem to have a connection to death that others do not possess. This is because they also are influenced by liminal spaces, so they understand the space in which the dead inhabit.

In order to move forward, the characters must conquer their fears of the dead. In some of the stories, these women are searching for their mothers in an attempt to find their place in the changing regime around them. Simone A. James Alexander continues this idea of rebirth in her article, "M/othering the Nation: Women's Bodies as Nationalist Trope in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory." Alexander showcases how a "woman's body metonymically parallels land and where the desire for land/woman's body is constructed as masculine desire" (375). The author examines how women's bodies are never their own. Their bodies are to be conquered by men physically and then used to create the next generation to continue the cycle. This reaffirms Braziel's argument on how women are the future of Haiti, so they have the power to mold the future generations in hopes of breaking the cycle.

Additionally, this is a type of storytelling that *Krik? Krak!* explores. "Children of the Sea" explains this idea to the audience when one narrates, "We spent most of yesterday telling stories. Someone says, Krik? You answer, Krak! And they say, I have many stories I could tell you, and then they go and tell these stories to you, but mostly to

themselves" (14). The sets of stories in this collection address the act of storytelling and how this becomes an act of communication between people and an act of identification as the hybrid. "Krik?" and "Krak!" are a call and response to storytelling. You need both of them in order to tell the story. They become associated with each other the way a hybrid is with both the colonized and colonizer. The hybrid is also an attempt at communication between two different ideas. The hybrid like in these stories becomes a dialogue between different ideas and experiences.

Krik?Krak! itself can be deemed a liminal space because it does not follow the conventions of literature. It passes between genres (borders) in order to create its own hybrid existence. The work has been divided into multiple short stories, but one could also see them as one continuous story because there are times in which the characters cross paths. For this thesis, I will look at the book being both one continuous and individual narratives in order to show the hybrid nature of the work itself. Like the characters in the stories, *Krik?Krak!* refuses to be categorized, and instead it sits on the border as a way to incorporate more than one means of telling a story. The title of the work itself points to this even being a type of oral history among the people, which has the book balancing between written and spoken word in order to enhance the narrative. This collection is a back and forth between the reader and the narrator. It is a conversation between the two as a way to call back to the idea of communicating as a means of identification.

To begin, "Children of the Sea" revolves around a man and a woman sending letters to each other during the revolution. The narrative switches from one perspective to the next, but they never actually receive the other's letters. The woman is staying home in

Port-au-Prince, while the man is on a boat running away from home because of the revolution. The liminal spaces in this story are mostly associated with the man's storyline. First, the description of the sea through the man's narrative showcases how the water becomes a liminal space that can be used to thrive and to destroy, because it also has a dual nature, such as the characters in the story. The beginning of the narrative states, "I also know there are timeless waters, endless seas, and lots of people in this world whose names don't matter to anyone but themselves" (3). This passage begins to show the nature of water. Time is an abstract concept because the perception of time can change according to the events that are going on. For instance, the man has been at sea for a while now, and he has no perception of time, so it appears to be endless.

This can also be said for the sea. There seems to be no destination in sight, which makes the water seem to go on forever as if there was no end or border to be found. The man later states, "There are no borderlines on the sea" (6). The sea does not choose sides. The water can be both a sanctuary to the hybrid and also lead to destruction. This is because like the hybrid it has both negatives and positives associated with its identity. The addition of the importance of people's names is interesting. Other stories in this short story cycle deal with naming in more detail, but this small section shows how names are not important when confronted with the sea. The vastness of the sea makes the narrator seem as if he is of little importance to the world. His importance is only found in the woman that he is writing these letters to.

The narrator describes the water at multiple times throughout the story, but there is one description that brings in some elements of fantasy that is interesting to understand. He states, "This heaven was nothing like I expected. It was at the bottom of

the sea. There were starfishes and mermaids all around me. The mermaids were dancing and singing in Latin like the priests do at the cathedral during Mass" (12). This depiction allows one to see the water as a type of safe haven for the characters. Then he sees mermaids in this place as well. Mermaids are mystical creatures, and they are also considered hybrids. The mermaid is part human and part sea creature at the same time. The only place for the mermaid to dwell is in the water, because the water is more accepting of liminal creatures. A mermaid would be considered strange and an abomination in a sense if one was above water, but at the same time the creature cannot deny their claim to both existences. Additionally, there are aspects in these stories that relate to the Catholic religion, but they are also infused with Haitian beliefs as well. This is one of the first instances of a character being influenced by the religion of the colonizer. The character creates a type of hybrid religion with Catholicism and Haitian religion, which will be explored further in the third chapter.

The water goes back to being a destructive force of nature when the male narrator and the others on the ship have no more food, and they appear to not be getting anywhere. They are starting to become afraid that they will die on the boat. Their salvation quickly turns to being their downfall. It says, "Think of it. They are fighting about being superior when we all might drown like straw" (21). The sea does not care about the revolution in Haiti or any other endeavor of man. It makes no difference to the sea, and this becomes apparent to the narrator. In this instance the sea seems like a cold villain, but it is merely indifferent.

The narrator's journey is coming to an end, and he is being required to throw his journal overboard. Before he does this he writes one final thing to his lover, and it is as follows:

> I go to them now as though it was always meant to be, as though the very day that my mother birthed me, she had chosen me to live life eternal, among the children of the deep blue sea, those who have escaped the chains of slavery to form a world beneath the heavens and the blood-drenched earth where you live. (27)

The narrator feels a connection to the water because it becomes a safe place for him because he is in this in-between state of being. He calls them "children of the sea" as if he and other hybrids are a byproduct of the ocean. He also mentions slavery, and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* discusses how the ocean calls back to slave ships, and how the water became a vehicle to their new hybrid existence (16). This passage mixes the positive and negative aspects that are associated with the water. The water also leads to death for the characters, but he also sees it as a type of salvation or even liberation. The water is where he can thrive in his hybrid state instead of being crushed by those that inhabit land.

Next is the story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," which centers around a girl who visits her mother in prison, who is being incarcerated on suspicion of being a witch. The story follows the daughter's journey through her mother's past in order to understand her own role in it. The girl, Josephine, reminisces about a river that her mother used to take her to as a child. This river was known as the Massacre River because when her mother was younger, she and others were trying to escape to the other side of the river, and in this process soldiers were killing them to keep them from leaving (40). During one of their

trips to this river when Josephine was a child, her mother says, "Here is my child, Josephine. We were saved from the tomb of this river when she was still in my womb. You spared us both, her and me, from this river where I lost my mother" (40). This story begins off with recognizing the dual nature of water. This river is the one in which multiple people were killed, but it has also become the salvation for some. We also see this link between life and death. They are usually seen as being opposite to one another, but they can actually work in communication with each other. The death of her mother coincides with the birth of her child. Also, this death scene calls back to Danticat's ideas on "a year and a day," which discusses how when someone dies their soul becomes trapped in water as a means to transition into the afterlife. Her soul is engulfed in the river, and it becomes the place where she died and in a sense the place in which she was reborn. The mother has died at the Massacre River, and her family comes back to visit her at the river. The river becomes a transitional period or even space between life and death. It becomes a place in which her spirit dwells according to this phenomenon.

Josephine continues the idea of rebirth through death and the Massacre River. She and other women come to the river to pay their respects to the dead, and in this mourning scene she states:

> We were all daughters of that river, which had taken our mothers from us. Our mothers were the ashes and we were the light. Our mothers were the embers and we were the sparks. Our mothers were the flames and we were the blaze. We came from the bottom of that river where the blood never stops flowing, where my mother's dive towards life—her swim among all those bodies slaughtered in

> flight—gave her those wings of flames. The river was the place where it had all begun. (41)

She is discussing how they have become products of this river because it is a part of their past and has affected their future. They have been born through this traumatic experience, and it has caused them to emerge from the ashes like a phoenix as the text alludes to. The river took the lives of their relatives, but it has also empowered the characters. This is similar to how they have been negatively affected by the colonizers, but the hybrid uses their connection to the colonizer to their advantage in order to walk between the two worlds.

At the end of the story Josephine's mother has been sentenced to die by fire, and her family goes to watch the execution. In that moment Josephine remembers the river, and she recalls:

> Then the story came back to me as my mother had often told it. On that day so long ago, in the year nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, in the Massacre River, my mother did fly. Weighted down by my body inside hers, she leaped from Dominican soil into the water, and out again on the Haitian side of the river. She glowed red when she came out, blood clinging to her skin, which at that moment looked as though it were in flames. (49)

In this section both water and fire become the liminal spaces that her mother has passed through. They are both salvation and destruction at times. This passage appears to show the mother going through a type of rebirth or even baptism. Josephine and her mother have leanings to Catholicism as we see that they carry around a Madonna throughout the story (33). Another religious meaning to this scene is the use of water and fire. As per

Catholicism, both of these elements are ways that God has or will destroy the world with, but these destructions also lead to a rebirth. The mother was tested through water, and now she is being tested with fire. While society sees her as a witch, the execution becomes a transformation for her character.

Comparatively, "The Missing Peace" is about Lamort, a young girl, who is trying to help Emilie find her mother after a military coup in Haiti. This story does have the aspect of the colonizer and colonized, but they both have a common goal, which is finding and understanding their mothers thereby understanding who they are. This story explores the meaning of Lamort's name and how it leads to the reclaiming of her womanhood. In one of their conversations they discuss how Lamort was given her name:

> "How did your name come to be 'death'?"
>
> "My mother died while I was being born," I explained. "My grandmother was really mad at me for that."
>
> "They should have given you your mother's name," she said, taking the pouch of needles, thread, and thimbles from me. "That is the way it should have been done." (109)

Her name is death, but she is still among the living. Like all children, Lamort did not choose her name, but her name was also brought about by circumstances beyond her control. She was born into a liminal existence by being present during both life and death. She is a living human being with the name of death, so she has the presence of both in her being. She inhabits both spaces at once, which creates a dual persona. In addition, at the end of the story, Lamort approaches her grandmother and declares:

> "Today I want you to call me by another name," I said.

"Haughty girls don't get far," she said, rising from the chair.

"I want you to call me by her name," I said.

She looked pained as she watched me moving closer to her.

"Marie Magdalene?"

"Yes, Marie Magdalene," I said. "I want you to call me Marie Magdalene." I liked the sound of that. (122)

She chooses to take on her mother's name thereby becoming a woman in her own right. She will no longer let death or her grandmother define who she is. Her new name still comes with a sort of hybrid connotation of both positive and negative. Mary Magdalene was originally viewed as a promiscuous woman in the Bible, but later she becomes one of the followers of Jesus. Lamort embraces this hybrid identity of not only her mother but of a promiscuous woman turned religious. Death came with a negative connotation, so she replaced it with a name that is liminal in meaning.

Similarly, "The Missing Peace" mainly discusses the relationship of Lamort and Emilie, but one should also add Lamort's grandmother to the conversation of liminal relationships. In the story, there are times that Lamort and her grandmother's dialogue overlap. As if a mantra to be rehearsed, Lamort states, "'Things you say. Thoughts you have, will decide how people treat you'" (110). This is just one of the phrases that she parrots back to Emilie. Her grandmother is teaching her how the world thinks, and because of that Lamort needs to stay within the boundaries that have been set up by her, which she can remember by repeating phrases such as this one. Her grandmother is restricting the language that she uses, and this also restricts the freedom she has being a hybrid identity. The grandmother tries to crush liminality through her sayings. The

relationship between Lamort and her grandmother becomes further complicated by the presence of Emilie. Emilie attempts to break the boundaries set up by the grandmother in the following conversation:

"We were babies and we grew old."

"You're still young," she said. "You're not old."

"My grandmother is old for me."

"You can't say that. You can't just say what she wants for you to say." (120-121)

Lamort believes she has to follow the guidelines presented by her grandmother, but she is shown that she must exist on her own terms and in her own space. As the hybrid, she is pushing away from the boundaries of society and finding her own place and language. Lamort is able to reclaim her identity to become Marie, but she also must create her own language. Emilie encourages Lamort to live her life the way she would want to instead of through the safety of her grandmother's opinions and experience.

Moreover, "The Missing Peace" centers on the interactions between Emilie and Lamort. They are both on a journey to find themselves through the act of discovering their mothers. This story contains two liminal spaces: water and the graveyard. The two protagonists enter a graveyard in hopes of finding Emilie's mother. Lamort describes this scene with "[t]he night air blew of rotting flesh to my nose. We circled the churchyard carefully before finding an entrance route" (116). The graveyard is liminal because it is where the living comes to communicate with the dead. It is considered a sacred place of rest. It is also a place where some souls have not received proper burial because of the military coup, and their corpses are still sticking out of the ground (106). This is an

appropriate setting for Lamort because her entire life has been associated with death. She occupies the liminal space of death both figuratively and literally.

Later while walking through the graveyard, "Two other soldiers passed us [Lamort and Emilie] on their way to the field. They were dragging the blood-soaked body of a bearded man with an old election slogan written on a T-shirt across his chest: ALONE WE ARE WEAK. TOGETHER WE ARE A FLOOD" (117). The shirt refers to the uprising and the change in regime in Haiti. As hybrids, the people of Haiti have a connection to the liminality of water. The Haitian people could be considered a type of hybrid because of the transitional historical movement that they are going through. They have just been through a coup, and now their government is changing around them. They are between the old and the new regime, and because of this they become a hybridization of the two. Together they become a larger more destructive force that can take back their power. This is also true of Lamort. In the beginning, she is very subservient to others, but as the story progresses she claims her name and her right as a woman; therefore, becoming a force of nature herself.

The hybrid is expressed as a liminal being. Liminality allows for something or someone to flow between the boundaries that have been put in place by society. The hybrid cannot find his or her place on either side of the boundary, so he or she makes a home in the in-between. A hybrid dwells in liminal spaces because it accepts the duality of his or her existence. An identity is usually seen as a singular entity, but in the case of the hybrid it is more than that. A hybrid is a singular person, but that person is made up of two or more identities that have come before its time. It is the melding of two opposing ideas, cultures, personalities, etc. The hybrid does not allow herself or himself to be

limited by the constraints expressed by the binary opposition. Binaries create a conflict between perceived positive and negative ideas, but hybridity allows for both to come together and accept both as equals. This allows for a harmony between two opposing factors.

In this chapter, the hybrids encountered physical spaces that contributed to their hybrid nature. These spaces, such as water, fire, and graveyards, are all spaces that sit between life and death, and because of this they become a type of transitional space. The characters were all dealing with either their own death or that of a family member. They are confronted with death, but they are not crippled by it like others. The characters have a connection to life and death that allows them to be more understanding and comfortable confronting the issue of death.

The next chapter will deal with how the hybrid characters in this short story collection deal with institutions, such as religion and the government. As shown briefly in this section the characters have a mix of Christianity and Haitian traditions. In doing so they create a type of hybrid religion. Additionally, their government and country are going through a regime change and this has left them in a liminal space. Also, the country has been affected by colonization in the past which also contributes to this hybrid culture they have developed for themselves.

Chapter III

The Rebirth of Institutions and Zombies

The hybrid has to work his or her way through multiple situations throughout his or her life. This chapter will explore how the hybrid reacts to institutions of society, such as state, education, and religion. The hybrid finds liminal ways to deal with these binary struggles, such as mixing Christian ideology with that of Haitian ideology. The hybrid has trouble existing in these institutions because he or she does not fall into one specific category of definition, so he or she needs to stay on the outskirts or the liminal in order to survive.

In *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays,* Louis Althusser discusses the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that affect society. In regards to ISAs, Althusser states, "Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly *by ideology*, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic" (98). The ideology is used as a way to control the state and the people. Repression is also used as a means for keeping the people settled in their stations in society and life.

To begin, "A Wall of Fire Rising" centers around Guy and his son little Guy. Little Guy is performing in a play as Boukman, who is a figure during the Haitian revolution. The boy begins to learn his lines for the plays, and the first part is as follows:

> *A wall of fire is rising and in the ashes, I see the bones of my people. Not only those people whose dark hollow faces I see daily in the fields, but all those souls*

who have gone ahead to haunt my dreams. At night I relive once more the last caresses from the hand of a loving father, a valiant love, a beloved friend.(56)

In this passage Boukman is discussing the people that Haiti has lost before and during the Revolution. The idea of fire presented in this passage is similar to how fire was discussed in the previous chapter. The fire can be seen as a liminal space between life and death, but in this passage fire is also a type of cleansing force. The people of Haiti will rise up from the ashes that their home has been reduced to. Additionally, there is this sense of poetry to the passage, but there is also delusion when the father mentions, "It was obvious that this was a speech written by a European man, who gave to the slave revolutionary Boukman the kind of European phrasing that might have sent the real Boukman turning in his grace" (56). Boukman was a vodou priest that was crucial in the Haiti's fight for independence from the colonizers (Dayan 29). It is revealed that this may not even be the words that Boukman spoke to the people and that these words were influenced by someone from another country. In a sense someone else is speaking for Haiti. Additionally, we have two ISAs mixing with each other. Education and religion, vodou, are being intertwined to tell a story to the children that they will believe as truth, whether or not it is.

Later that night the family walked by to see the Assad's air balloon. The Assad family were the ones that were in charge of the sugar mill that most of the people in town worked at. When seeing the air balloon, the mother, Lili, states, "she had been feeling as though Guy was lost to her each time he reached this point. . .Guy would walk up to the basket, staring at it with the same kind of longing that most men display when they admire very pretty girls" (61). This is the first instance in which Guy is shown to have a

desire to exceed the station that he has been placed in life. Later Guy discusses how he was able to get some work at the mill but nothing permanent, because he was still on the waiting list (66). Guy is trapped in his job because he believes in the idea that he is unable to advance through his societies' ideology. He appears to be a disheartened man who is frustrated with his current status in life.

He wants to transcends his status, which is why he is attracted to the air balloon. The air balloon is interesting because of this sense of freedom it would give Guy. Also, air is liminal in the sense that it inhabits both the physical and non-physical. Air is something that can be felt but not seen. Additionally, Guy is obsessing with this idea of air and flying when he declares, "He gave us reasons to want to fly. He gave us the air, the birds, our son" (68). Guy wishes to one day fly like the birds, because they have freedom that he does not have. He is stuck in this system that has forced him and his father to work for places like the sugar mill with no attempt at progressing. He does not want this for his son, but he also believes that he should go ahead and put his son on the waiting list for the mill (66). He does this because he knows the institutions set up in his society will not give his son a chance to overcome the status that he has already been born into.

Furthermore, at the end of the story Guy is able to ride in the air balloon, but crashes not to long after getting it in the air, which results in his death. When seeing his father Little Guy recites his lines:

> *There is so much sadness in the faces of my people. I have called on their gods, now I call on our gods, now I call on our gods. I call on our young. I call on our old. I call on our mighty and the weak. I call on everyone and anyone so that we*

shall all let out one piercing cry that we may either live freely or we should die. (80)

In this passage the boy recites the lines from his play as a way of mimicry. Earlier it mentioned that the words of Boukman had been corrupted by another source, so his voice was taken away. The boy uses these words as a way of mocking and reclaiming his own voice in this instance. Additionally, Little Guy is being influenced by an ISA, education. He is being influenced by the teachings of his school, specifically the play that he is performing. His own ideals are being influenced by what he has learned from this play. The ISA also becomes repressive because the information could be tampered with. Boukman's words could have been changed, and this shows how their words and beliefs can be repressed through society pushing their own ideas and agenda onto the students. The words have a different meaning at the end of the story than they did in the actual play that he was performing them for. Also, this quote is appropriate for this scene because it is a kind of battle cry for freedom. The characters in this story are repressed by their societal institutions, and they needed to use liminal and hybrid ways of moving through this society. This does not always work out for some characters as we see with Guy, but as the boy mentions that they should "*live freely or we should die,*" and this is what Guy realizes as well. He reaches for something greater, but he is unable to obtain it, so the next solace for him is death. In the beginning the boy states, " 'Freedom is on my mind!'" (56). These stories take place while Haiti is going through a regime shift in their history, and this story calls back to the time of the Haitian revolution. The boy and his father become liminal characters because they are caught between this idea of freedom or death. They are not entirely free, because they are still being oppressed by their society.

In discussing mimicry, it is important to mention Bhabha's ideas on the subject. In his book, *The Location of Culture*, he states:

> Mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise. . .the colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.* Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of the colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (122)

Mimicry is a way for the colonized to survive in the colonizer's world. It becomes a method of survival in a sense, but mimicry is also a way of rebellion. The colonized is imitating the colonizer, but at the same time they are using that imitation and using it to mock in a sense. It is also a way of reclaiming their own identity in front of the colonizer. The boy in this story is learning lines from a Haitian revolutionary, but those lines have been changed by the colonizer. The boy earnestly learns these lines, but in the end we do not see him perform them in the play. Instead he recites these lines when his father dies. He uses theses lines for himself instead of the use of others.

Next, "Between the Pool and the Gardenias" delves into the ideas of the afterlife and its relationship to Haitian vodou and Christianity. The story centers on a woman who finds a baby in the streets that she carries around. When the woman first sees the baby, she describes her as follows:

> She was like Baby Moses in the Bible stories they read to us at the Baptist Literary Class. Or Baby Jesus, who was born in a barn and died on a cross, with

nobody's lips to kiss before he went. She was just like that. Her still round face. Her eyes closed as though she was dreaming of a far other place. (91)

This passage shows the colonial influences in her life. She mentions that she has been to a Bible class that has taught her about Moses and Jesus. Like other characters she is imbued with Christian beliefs and those of her own country as well. She draws similarities to Moses and Jesus in this section, as if she is thinking of the child as a savior like figure for the people. Now the allusion to Jesus could also place the child as a type of "sacrificial lamb" in the story. It is not sure what has happened to her family, but it appears that she could have been thrown away because she was found near the sewers. Before the woman actually decides to take the child with her, she becomes suspicious of her when she mentions, "She might have been some kind of *wanga*, a charm sent to trap me. My enemies were many and crafty. The girls who slept with my husband while I was still grieving over my miscarriages" (92). Here we can see how Haitian practices of vodou have intertwined into her personality as well. She is afraid that the child is something that was meant to harm her. She has two conflicting religious views in her head when thinking of this child, and both of them are present in making her decision.

It is later shown that the people that she works for do not agree with her Haitian believes when they say:

> 'She's probably one of those stupid people who think that they have a spell to make themselves invisible and hurt other people. Why can't none of them get a spell to make themselves rich? It's that voodoo nonsense that's holding us Haitians back' (95).

Here we see that her practices are looked down upon and seen as something that is hindering the Haitian people as a whole. She has grown up with Haitian vodou and through colonization she has also encountered Christian ideology, but these people do not help her find a way to reconcile the two beliefs.

Additionally, the child herself brings about a type of Haitian vodou as well. It is finally revealed that the child she has taken from the sewer was actually dead from the beginning, but she continuously treats the baby as if she is still alive. The girl recounts:

> I bathed her more and more often, sometimes three or four times a day in the pool. I used some of Madame's perfume, but it was not helping. I wanted to take her back to the street where I had found her, but I'de already disturbed her rest and had taken on her soul as my own personal responsibility. (98)

The woman is trying to get rid of the smell of the dead child, and now she wishes that she had never taken the child from the sewer. It is interesting how this baby becomes her salvation and her damnation at the same time, which we can also see from her first experience with the child. She sees the child as a savior figure that could help her in healing from the miscarriages that she has had in the past, but she also fears that the child has been charmed as a trick for her. Now it seems as if she is being burdened with the child. She also seems to think that she is now responsible for the soul of the child.

The idea of the soul and the body is interesting when it is seen through one Haitian tradition of vodou, which is the origin of the zombie. The history of Haitian zombies and their relationship to the revolution is explored in Raphael Hoermann's "Figures of Terror: The "Zombie" and the Haitian Revolution." To begin, Hoermann states, "The figure of the zombie— in combination with allegations of cannibalism— has

been prominently employed as such a Gothic trope of horror and terror to demonize Haiti and particularly its African Caribbean religion as black savage practice" (153). This can be seen in "Between the Pool and Gardenias" when the woman is being scolded by the people she works under for her religious practices. When thinking of the zombie one may think of the walking dead coming to devour one's flesh, but there is more to the creature than this in Haitian vodou. The zombie is a liminal being between life and death, because the creature walks between the lines of both of them. He continues his argument and declares, "The zombie embodies the slaves' utter alienation, their total lack of freedom and the loss of all of their rights" (156). In other words, the zombie becomes a metaphor for the lack of freedom that the Haitian people had, which lead to the revolution. The zombie is viewed in a more negative light in this article.

In fact, the zombie is viewed as being "anti-revolutionary" to this author (166). He does allow one instance in which the zombie can become positive when he states, "A revolutionary use of the figure of the zombie, beyond its function as a troupe of terror, only works if its dezombification is simultaneously presented as overcoming its lack of consciousness, its reification and role as a victim and ultimately leads to its resistance" (166). Hoermann believes that the person must be brought back to the living in order to become a powerful resisting force, but in Danticat's stories this is not true. The zombie becomes a powerful figure without returning to the living. In this story, the zombie has a direct link to the dead, and as seen in the previous chapter, the people of Haiti have a strong connection to the dead and the afterlife. The idea of the zombie becomes one of these concepts of the afterlife. Like mimicry, the zombie is being imitated in this story, but the character is not seen as "flesh-eating." In fact, the zombie is presented as a child,

which brings to mind ideas of purity and innocence in order to continue with the hybrid nature of the being.

Furthermore, Kaiama L. Glover's "Exploiting the Undead: the Usefulness of the Zombie in Haitian Literature" delves into how zombies have been used and are crucial to Haitian literature. Glover examines:

> For while it is certainly true that the zombie refuses the notion of the ready-made hero as some sort of whole and transcendent figure destined to lead the masses to revolution, it must also be acknowledged that the hero always remains dormant in the zombie, hence the creature's inherent ambivalence. (106)

The zombie has already been shown as a symbol for rebellion, but Glover adds that the zombie is a heroic character, but the potential is never developed. The author believes that the zombie is "a non-person that has not only lost its humanity, but that has accepted, without protest, the status of victim" (108). Essentially, the author is saying that the zombie has the capability to be a hero, but instead the zombie allows itself to be the victim. It appears that Glover is trying to convey that the zombie is not necessarily the villain, but in doing so has taken away the power of the zombie as well. The zombie is a victim, but it is also the hero. They are liminal beings, and because of this they do not have to be one or the other. The zombie is protesting through its very existence. Life and death are seen as two separate entities, but the zombie contradicts this, and even revolts against the idea by being present.

The liminal space between life and death is presented in another article by Glover entitled, "Zombies Become Warriors Les Affres d'un défi." The author discusses "that the zombie exists, by definition, in a state that as closely resembles the movement of life

as it does the immobility of death" (59). The zombie lies between the dead and the living, and cannot exist as one single entity. It is also said that "[i]t incarnates a condition of perpetual becoming" (60). There is possibility with the zombie. It is able to coexist in life and death, and because of this it is always in a state of "becoming" in a sense. Glover sees this as a way for the zombie to come back to life as fully human and a metaphor for the rebirth of Haiti (60). Danticat's work is not using the zombie as a means for rebirth. Instead, her work is trying to show how the zombie itself is already a rebirth because it is no longer confined to one or the other.

Lastly, the woman must find a way to make peace with and for the child. In the end she decides to bury the child as a way to put her to rest in the scene that follows:

> I took Rose down to a spot in the sun behind the big house. I dug a hole in the garden among all the gardenias. I wrapped her in a little pink blanket that I had found her in, covering everything but her face. She smelled so bad that I couldn't even bring myself to kiss her without choking on my breath. (98)

This scene calls back to an earlier scene when she mentions that there was a ritual that was required of women when they had a miscarriage, and she says, "You have to save every piece of flesh and give it a name and bury it near the roots of a tree that the world won't fall apart around you" (93). She is putting Rose to rest by giving her a name and burying her in the earth. The earth itself is very liminal in the fact that it is associated with nature. Rose is liminal because she falls into this category of the zombie. She is haunting the woman because they are both in a state of living and dead in a sense. The woman believes the soul of the child to still be with them although she is not physically alive.

This is also discussed in Jana Evans Braziel's "Defilee's Diasporic Daughters: Revolutionary Narratives of Ayiti (Haiti), Nanchon (Nation), and Dyaspora (Diaspora) in Edwidge Danticat's *Krik? Krak!*" She discusses how "unburied body parts were believed to be used as corporeal fragments for bringing the dead back to haunt and commit evil against the living" (80). The baby does seem to haunt the woman because she feels burdened by the child at the end of the story, and this is why she gives the child a proper burial. She was not given this when she was dumped into the sewer. The woman believed that the child's soul became her responsibility, and she needed to put her to rest.

Lastly, the "Night Women" focuses on a woman who sells her body for money, but she tells her son that angels visit them in the night instead of men. The mother in this story is a very liminal character because she feels trapped between night and day. She states, "The night is the time I dread most in my life. Yet if I am to live, I must depend on it" (83). Night is when she is able to work because the men are sneaking away from their homes and wives to have sex with her. The night becomes liminal because it is a frightening time in which anything could happen to her or her son, but she has to allow strange men into her house in order to provide for her family. Similarly, to Guy in "A Wall of Fire Rising," she is unable to move beyond her status, which leads to her prostitution. It is possible that this is even the wife of Guy and his son. She later discusses the difference between day and night women when she relates, "There are two kinds of women: day and night women. I am stuck between the day and night in a golden amber bronze" (84). She feels like she is in-between night and day. This could be because she is a mother who wants to take care of her child, but in order to do this she has to succumb to the night and have sex with strangers.

While she is putting her son to bed and discussing the men that come into her house at night she remembers her ancestors and recalls:

> There is a place in Ville Rose where ghost women ride the crests of waves while brushing the stars out of their hair. There they woo strollers and leave the stars on the path for them. There are nights that I believe that those ghost women are with me. As much as I know that there are women who sit up through the night and undo patches of cloth that they have spent the whole day weaving. These women, they destroy their toil so they will always have more to do. And as long as there's work, they will not have to lie next to the lifeless soul of a man whose scent still lingers in another woman's bed. (85)

In this passage the woman is recalling possibly a legend or a story that she has heard or experienced. This scene is very spiritual and liminal at the same time. Ghosts are between life and death the same way that a zombie would be. They are also interacting with the liminal substance of water. She views these women as spirits that watch over her similarly to the women in "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" when they were at the river to visit the spirits of their ancestors. It is also interesting to note how she talks about angels with her son. She does not want him to know what she is doing with those men, so she refers to them as angels. At one point, her son wants to know if the angels have already come to their house that night, and she replies, "Darling, the angels have themselves a lifetime to come to us" (88). She uses angels as a way to distract her son from what is really going on, and this could be a way to shield him from the harsh reality of what their status is in society. Additionally, angels are liminal beings because they have this connection to earth and to heaven. They are also seen as saintly but also cold in some cases. They are in a

hybrid state because they are both abstract and concrete. They are a physical and spiritual manifestations of heaven or the beyond.

In conclusion, these stories dealt with how the hybrid navigates between the institutions set up by society whether that be social or religious. The hybrid encounters prejudice to his or her own beliefs, and this causes the hybrid to live on the outskirts of society. They encounter liminal beings, such as angels, ghosts, and zombies that show them how they differ from the rest of society. They do not define these beings by the normal binaries set up by society, and through this they create an understanding of the beings that others would not. The characters in these stories ultimately witness or seek out a liminal existence between the constraints of society.

The next chapter will explore the complex relationship between mothers and daughters and how they must navigate the boundaries set up between their own identities. The mother and daughter must work through a generational gap that affects their culture, religion, and even national identities. Also, the relationship to past ancestors between women becomes a type of liminal space that allows the women to follow the path of their ancestors or even go beyond that as a means of progression.

Chapter IV

The Generational Bond and Gap Between Mothers and Daughters

The relationships between mothers and daughters is a prominent theme throughout most of the text of *Krik?Krak!* The mothers and daughters in the stories are seen as hybrid characters, and their relationship with each other is hybrid as well. They are separated by a boundary that they seek to cross in order to understand the other more. They appear to be opposites at times, and this is shown through a generational and societal gap between the two women. This chapter will focus on "Caroline's Wedding" and "Epilogue: Women Like Us," but it will also go back to past stories discussed, such as "Children of the Sea."

First, these stories deal with the idea of abjection of the mother. In "Analyzing the Problematic Mother-Daughter Relationship in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory,"* Masoumeh Mehni discusses Kristeva's ideas on identity. In one section, she articulates:

> Kristeva's theory contends that a child must abject itself from its mother, eschew her; put her aside, as an important step within identity formation. This act of abjection never fully expels a mother's heavy influence in her child's life. But the act of abjecting the mother allows the space needed for the child to become its own individual. (79)

The mother is important for the development of the child, but the daughter learns who she is through taking a step back from her mother. This is how she finds what she wants for

herself instead of what her mother wants. For example, the daughters in "Caroline's Wedding" are each still living with their mother, but they are trying to find their own ways of independence. Caroline is planning a wedding in order to start her own family. Grace is trying to get her citizenship and a passport, so she is able to travel. Both of these acts allow the sisters to find their way without their mother. The mother does not approve of all of their decisions, and the sisters must discover how to find their own identity without the influences of their mother. While abjection is important to the growth of these characters, it is not the only means by which they do so. Mehni mainly discusses "rejection of the parents; [as] an expelling of those unwanted parts of the self" (81). This is not completely true as shown through "Epilogue: Women Like Us." The narrator discusses how the women of her past are an essential part to her being, and this has created her hybrid being. Her ancestors have caused her to write these stories. While the mother/daughter relationship is unstable at times, it is also the foundation of the characters being in the past and future.

To begin, let's consider "Caroline's Wedding," which centers around two sisters, Grace and Caroline, as they try to convince their mother to accept the wedding and try to understand each other. Unlike some of the other stories this one is set in Brooklyn, so the characters are already being influenced by two different cultures. Unlike Caroline, Grace was not born in Brooklyn, so in the beginning of the story she has just acquired her citizenship certificate, and she states:

> Without the certificate, I suddenly felt like unclaimed property. When my mother was three months pregnant with my younger sister, Caroline, she was arrested in a

sweatshop raid and spent three days in an immigration jail. In my family, we have always been very anxious about our papers. (158)

Grace appears to have lived in Brooklyn for at least all of her sister's life, but until now she has not felt like she was actually a part of this place. Her mother and father were born and raised in Haiti, while her sister was born in the United States. Grace experiences both Haiti and Brooklyn, and because of this she does not feel like she belongs in either of these places. This is shown through her desire to become an American citizen. She is attempting to find her place in the world. She does not possess a claim to either place, so she is liminal because she moves between two different worlds. She appears to have tendencies from both her sister and mother, and in this way she acts as a medium between the two.

Furthermore, there also appears to be a generational gap between the mother and her daughters, and culture contributes to this. The mother was raised in Haiti, while the daughters have been exposed to both Haitian and American traditions. The differences between Caroline and her mother are shown through their appearances. Her mother seems to dress more traditionally and have more Haitian values, while Caroline has grown accustomed to American traditions and ideas. For instance, it mentions, "Caroline brushed aside a strand of her hair, chemically straightened and streaked bright copper from a peroxide experiment" (160). In American culture, straightened hair is considered to be more desirable, and this could be the reasoning for her doing this to her hair. This example appears to be harmful at the same time through the use of words like "peroxide" and "chemically." She is doing something unnatural to her hair in order to find her place in society.

In response to her daughters, their mother continuously states, " 'You think you are so American'" (160). Now in Caroline's case she is and always has been American, but Grace has recently obtained her citizenship. Their mother is showing how much their surroundings have influenced them over the years. It is also interesting to note when the mother says, " 'There is still a piece of her inside me'" (162). We are all a product of our parents, so there is a piece of them inside of us and vice versa. Every child is essentially a hybrid because of this. They are the molding of two different beings into an entirely different one. Also, not all children are alike and receive the same traits from each of their parents. Children are not carbon copies, but instead they are like rhizomes that grow from the same stem but taper off into multiple directions. Caroline and Grace are sisters, but they have had different experiences that have shaped the way that they see the world.

Later in the story, Grace and her mother go to a ceremony that is being held for an unknown pregnant woman, who died at sea. It appears as if she is the same woman from "Children of the Sea." During the ceremony the priest declares, " 'At the mercy of the winds, at the mercy of the sea, to the quarters of the New World, we came. Transients. Nomads. I bid you welcome'" (167). As hybrids, the characters feel comfortable in liminal spaces, such as the sea, as we have seen in previous chapters. They have come to America for a new start, but they still have not found their place in the world as shown through the reference of "nomads." They are still wandering around trying to find a place in which they can settle. The problem is that liminal beings move between worlds, so there is not really a chance to settle into one place or one being. Because of this, hybrids are unable to claim their own territory but move through various ones.

As shown earlier the two daughters are struggling with both their Haitian and American culture, and there are times in which they have opposed or even altered the traditions that their mother has set out for them. For instance, it is mentioned that when a husband/father dies the mother and her daughters should wear red underwear as a means to protect themselves from the ghosts of their husband/father (170). The mother appears to be very persistent about this, but her daughters do the exact opposite as is shown in the following passage:

> We had *never* worn the red panties that Ma had bought for us over the years to keep our dead father's spirit away. We had always worn our black panties instead, to tell him that he would be welcome to visit us. Even though we no longer wore black outer clothes, we continued to wear black underpants as a sign of lingering grief. (172)

Caroline and Grace create their own tradition that has remnants from the Haitian tradition. Their mother was afraid of their father coming back for fear that he would harm them, so she takes precaution against this superstition. Now, her daughters also believe in this superstition, but they think that by doing the opposite they can bring him back to them. Also, they mention how it was their own way of dealing with the death of their father. They have adapted the tradition to accommodate their own understanding of the situation.

Additionally, the sisters themselves represent two different sides of a binary. They may represent the generation gap between them and their mother, but there is also a gap between them because their upbringing has been different. Grace seems to think that her sister is more important to her parents than she is. She thinks this because her father says,

" 'So young. Just look at her, our child of the promised land, our New York child, the child who has never known Haiti'" (189). This shows how the father believed that Caroline was special because she did not have to go through the same troubles that they had to in Haiti. It even mentions that she is a product of the "promise land." Now, Grace seems to view herself differently as shown in the following passage, "I, on the other hand, was the first child, the one they called their "misery baby," the offspring of my parents' lean years. I was born to them at a time when they were living in a shantytown in Port-au-Prince and had nothing" (189). This is a strikingly different description from that of her sister. Grace is considered more of a burden in some ways or at the least a reminder of when they did not have the same things that they do now. One sister is associated with the promise land, while the other is misery to them. This contrasts the two sisters as being two different sides of an opposition. Grace feels that she is considered less than her sister in this case, but Caroline also has her own feelings of inadequacy, which is seen through her appearance.

The night before Caroline's wedding her mother asks her to try on her dress, and it states, "Caroline went to our room and came back wearing her wedding dress *and* a false arm…It was a robotic arm with two shoulder straps that controlled the motion of the plastic fingers" (198). Caroline was born with only one complete arm, and on her wedding day she seems to want to appear as if she looks like everyone else. She does mention that she has been experiencing some phantom limb pain, and she believes the prosthetic will help the pain to go away (198). It is interesting to note that this is another aspect that allows Caroline to be a hybrid.

Hybridity involves the mixing of two seemingly opposing forces or ideas. In this sense, there is a mixing of the organic and mechanical. Donna Haraway wrote an article entitled, "A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," that contemplates this concept in relation to the idea of cyborgs. For example, this article discusses the idea that everyone is a type of hybrid known as a cyborg. Haraway states, "[We] are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (150). A cyborg is a mixture of organic material and something non-organic, such as technology. For instance, a person who wears glasses can be considered a cyborg, because they have something that enhances their natural senses. A binary has been placed between the two, and one is considered natural, while the other is not. Haraway mentions that people "insist on the organic, opposing it to the technological" (166). In previous stories, we have seen how liminal characters are attracted to more natural surroundings, such as the sea, but Caroline's hybridity has to deal with technology. She uses technology to help her with her pains, and it is also a way to cope with her being denied something that is organic and natural to others. This allows her to straddle between the two worlds of mechanical and organic.

On another note, Grace has always perceived herself as a hybrid and an outsider, and because of this she has longed to belong to a country the way that Caroline has. At the end of the story Grace finally receives her passport, and these are her thoughts on the matter:

> We had all paid dearly for this piece of paper, this final assurance that I belonged in the club. It had cost my parent's marriage, my mother's spirit, my sister's arm.

I felt like an indentured servant who had finally been allowed to join the family. (214)

This shows how Grace has felt like an outsider in this country despite being in it for a majority of her life. Her sense of place had cost her so much as she relates. She also mentions being an "indentured servant" because she was never embraced as a member of society. It is also interesting to remember that her family moved to New York where the Statue of Liberty is, and on the statue is inscribed, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore." The statue becomes a calling for all those who want to be free, but Grace was not given that in the beginning. She felt as if she was in some form of slavery until she was given her passport. Now she feels as if she has been accepted, but she will always have the feeling of being liminal because of her experiences in Haiti.

The last story in this book is "Epilogue: Women Like Us." This story discusses the lives of previous generations of women and how they have affected the narrator's view on writing and other forms of rebellion. The story starts off by saying, "You remember thinking while braiding your hair that you look a lot like your mother. Your mother who looked like your grandmother and her grandmother before her" (219). Like previously mentioned children are a hybrid of their parents, and they can even be a hybrid of even further generations. The narrator is a product of how the women before her had lived, and she will be the same for the next generation.

The narrator discusses how women were not allowed to write, but they were able to find ways around this. She mentions, "Are there women who both cook and write? Kitchen poets, they call them. They slip phrases into their stew and wrap meaning around

their pork before frying it. They make narrative dumplings and stuff their daughters' mouths so they say nothing more" (220). This shows how there were alternative ways of telling one's story when writing was not an option for these women. They communicated in other ways, and it was passed down through generations, such as cooking and braiding hair. She says, "When you write, it's like braiding your hair. Taking a handful of coarse unruly strands and attempting to bring them unity" (220). This was something that they taught their daughters, and it became an empowering force for them as well. The interaction between generations is a type of call and response similar to the idea of "Krik?Krak!" This collection of short stories itself is based on the idea of a verbal communication over the written. Now the book is also a form of written communication, so this is also when the ideas of verbal and written language coincide into becoming a hybrid sort of text.

There is also this sense of supernatural presence from one generation to the next as if the narrator is being watched over and guided by the women of her past. The narrator believes that these women want her to write, because they were unable to do so. She declares:

> A thousand women urging you to speak through the blunt tip of your pencil. Kitchen poets, you call them. Ghosts like burnished branches on a flame tree. These women, they asked for your voice so that they could tell your mother in your place that yes, women like you do speak, even if they speak in a tongue that is hard to understand. Even if it's patois, dialect, Creole. (222)

She seems to be experiencing this kind of collective memory. She is able to speak for the women in her family when they were unable to do so. She is taking back her right to a narrative.

The narrator feels like she is being protected by these women when she says, "Death is a path we take to meet on the other side. What goddesses have joined, let no one cast asunder. With every step you take, there is an army of women watching over you" (222). Death is mentioned throughout this novel, and it is perceived as both being good and bad. In this case, death is not the end, but a means to reconnect with others. There is no fear of death because she already has a connection to death, which is why she has such a strong connection to her ancestors. Death is something that she views as a transitional period instead of a destination.

Also, there is this hybrid sense of religion and mimicry in her words. She references Mark 10:7-9, which states, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This passage discusses how when a man and woman are married to each other they become one being, because they are a mix of two separate entities. The hybrid is celebrated in this instance because two different things come together as one and are put under the protection of God. Now, the narrator in this epilogue refers to a goddess, and this is probably her ancestors who are protecting her hybrid identity. She is showing how the women in her family have given her strength.

Moreover, nature and writing are put into communication with each other. The narrator states:

> You thought that if you didn't tell the stories, the sky would fall on your head. You often thought that without the trees, the sky would fall on your head. You learned in school that you have pencils and paper only because the trees gave themselves in unconditional sacrifice. (223)

Many of these characters in these stories have been connected to nature in some way, and this is also true of the narrator. Her writing itself is connected through nature by the very act that she uses pen and paper. Nature dies in order for her voice to be heard. Women are also associated with nature, and in this passage the references to nature are also a metaphor for her ancestors. They have sacrificed themselves, so she could be able to write this down one day without the fear of persecution. Nature is working in communication with her even if that means death, but one must remember that they do not view death as an ending. Their mortal lives are over, but they are living through the narrator herself. At the very end, the narrator reminds the audience, "And this was your testament to the way that these women lived and died and lived again" (224). The narrator has compiled all of these stories through the process of "Krik? Krak!," and this has given another life to those characters. They live through the narrator, the written word, and through the audience. Narration becomes a means of joining multiple voices through time and space.

To summarize, the relationship between mothers and daughters is a complicated one. Caroline and Grace needed to find their own way of being through taking a different path than their mother. They have different experiences that have led them to lead a hybrid existence, and this causes them to turn away or even alter some of the beliefs of their mother. While this is a form of abjection, they still use their mother's beliefs as a

background or starting point for their own ideas. The narrator from the epilogue sees her mother and ancestors as a means for guiding her future. She believes that her ancestors created a part of who she is, and in this sense she becomes a hybrid figure of the past and present.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This thesis has examined Edwidge Danticat's *Krik?Krak!* through the critical lens of Homi Bhabha and his theory associated with hybridity. As mentioned throughout this thesis, a hybrid is someone or something that does not conform to a binary system, such as class, nationality, and culture. The binaries are restrictive and require someone to adhere to one essential way of being, while a hybrid's identity bleeds between the lines. The main binary presented throughout Edwidge Danticat's work is between the colonizer and the colonized. The hybrid has been raised a member of the colonized, but because of the influences of the colonizers, the hybrid identifies with both sides of the binary. This creates turmoil within the hybrid and those around them. The hybrid is not accepted into the society of either group, so this requires the hybrid to seek comfort in liminal spaces and ways of being. The hybrid itself is liminal because it lives between the lines. The liminal spaces provide a condition in which the hybrid is embraced and allowed to flourish.

The main theorist for this thesis has been Homi Bhabha and his text, *The Location of Culture*. In this work, he discusses the nature of the hybrid and how the hybrid moves around in society. One of the terms introduced in his work is the concept of mimicry. Mimicry is when a member of the colonized must adapt the mannerisms of that of the colonizers in order to move within that society (122). Mimicry can be seen as a means for survival, but it is also a form of resistance. With mimicry also comes the idea of

mockery. While the hybrid is displaying the attributes of the colonizer, he or she is also making fun of those mannerisms as well. It becomes a way of reclaiming their space in the society.

Now Paul Gilroy expands on some of Bhabha's ideas in his work, *Black Atlantic.* He discusses the significance that water and ships have to the identity crisis of a hybrid being. He looks at it in relation to how slaves were brought over on ships, and because of this they have no place to call home. They are moving from one space to the other, which creates a hybrid being. The ship and the water are even liminal avenues that they must travel through in order to make the journey from one patch of land to the next.

In addition to Bhabha's theories, some of Hegel's theories can also be helpful when looking at the hybrid. Hegel discusses that there is a thesis and an antithesis, which in this case would be the colonizer and the colonized. These are two seemingly opposing views, ideas, or attributes that must come together and create a synthesis or a hybrid. This is also seen through the Master/Slave dialectic. This shows how the colonizer and the colonized interact with each other. There is a give and take to the relationship, and this bond can create a hybrid being that can inhabit the space between the two.

Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History written by Susan Buck-Morss discusses how the Master/Slave dialectic works through the Haitian Revolution. In this case, the slave is empowered because he or she realizes that they are giving the master the power. Because of this, the slave is able to take this power away as well. The master is dependent on the slave being subject to him or her, but once the slave realizes they are a slave no longer the power dynamic begins to shift. This results in occurrences such as the Haitian Revolution. This is shown in the zombie nature of the child from "Between the Pool and

the Gardenias." The child and zombie are seen as being subjects, but in reality they actually hold a potential for power that will manifest in their hybrid nature.

Another term that impacted Edwidge Danticat's work was that of "a year and a day." This concept has been used in other literature, such as during the Medieval Period of England and France. Now France was one of the colonizing countries of Haiti, so this could have come about through this colonization, and it could have been a way for the hybrid to reclaim the concept for themselves. In Medieval Literature, the idea was used as a time frame for the chivalric journey of a knight. The knight would have exactly a year and a day to complete his quest. This can also be said about the characters in Danticat's short story cycle. The characters do not go through a shift in time, but they do experience this through liminal spaces. The concept showcases how "a year and a day" becomes a transitional period in which there is progression of character or even the time in which a spirit is able to cross between the barrier of the living and the dead. These events usually occur within a liminal space, such as water.

Krik? Krak! Itself can be seen as a hybrid work. It could be categorized as a novel or as a collection of short stories, but neither one of them actually describes what the work is completely. The work is both a novel and a collection of short stories. Because of this I have referred to it as a short story cycle, which comes from the ideas presented in Rocio G. Davis' "Oral Narratives as Short Story Cycle: Forging Community in Edwidge Danticat's 'Krik? Krak!" This is another concept that comes up within the chivalric knight stories of King Arthur and his round table. It is a collection of short stories that could also work together as a novel to progress a story along. The stories can stand alone,

but they can interact with each other as well. Some of the characters even overlap in the stories, which creates a connection between each story.

To begin, the hybrid seeks out and connects with liminal spaces in the short stories "Children of the Sea," "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," and "The Missing Peace." These stories showcase characters that must embrace liminal spaces as a way to survive and even thrive in their society and environment. "Children of the Sea" centers around two lovers sending correspondence to each other that the other will most likely never receive. The man is on a ship leaving Haiti. The water itself is liminal, but the ship is also relevant to the man's journey. The ship is a liminal object that exists both on land and water and moves through other territories and borders. Ultimately, the man does not appear to survive his journey, instead he is claimed by the sea. This may seem to be tragic, but it can also be viewed another way. The man has now become one of the "children of the sea," and he has found his place through a liminal avenue. He was unable to exist on land because of the binaries set up against him, but the water allowed for his hybrid identity to emerge. "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" deals with a similar relation to water. The protagonist finds solace in the Massacre River where her ancestors were killed. She does this because her ancestors still inhabit the water similarly to that of the man from "Children of the Sea." She finds comfort in the river because she is now intertwined with her family once again. Now "The Missing Peace" deals some with water, but it is mainly set up on the liminal grounds of a cemetery. This is a space in which the living and the dead can communicate like the woman who visited the Massacre River to be close to her family. Lamort feels secure in the cemetery because she is a hybrid character that can move in

and out of liminal spaces. Essentially, the characters from these stories find hybrid spaces that allow them to exist and claim their identity of hybrids.

Next, the hybrid is not always accepted into society, which is why the liminal spaces are needed. In "A Wall of Fire Rising," "Between the Pool and the Gardenias," and "Night Women," the characters realize they are outside the societal norms placed on them by Ideological State Apparatus. For instance, Guy in "A Wall of Fire Rising" is unable to improve his station in life because the system does not allow for much if any advancement in his career. He dreams of transcending that boundary, but he is unable to do so through acceptable means that are deemed so by society. In the end, he dies in a balloon accident because he tries to seek his hybrid existence through his own means. The hybrid characters in this novel have a relationship to death that may appear to be tragic, but it is also a liminal space and presence that they can maneuver through more sufficiently than normal society. This is also true of the woman and baby in "Between the Pool and the Gardenias." She is carrying a dead baby, and the people in her town believe she practices vodou. The baby was discarded and is a metaphorical zombie throughout the work. The child becomes a symbol for resistance to society, because the child was disregarded by society. "Night Women" centers around a woman and her child, who might possibly be the wife and son of Guy after his death. The mom has now been outcasted by society because she must sell her body as a means to support her family after her husband's death. She is put into the same situation as her husband, because she is no longer accepted into society. The characters in these works have been deemed unacceptable in society in some way, and they have been repressed by the dominant ideals of that society.

Lastly, this short story collection showcases the relationships between mothers and daughters and how this affects the hybrid characters. The mother and daughter relationships have been explored extensively concerning this short story cycle. "Caroline's Wedding" and "Epilogue: Women Like Us" showcases how the mother/daughter relationship exists in a liminal space of hybridity. In "Caroline's Wedding" the two daughters have to navigate their hybrid nationalities of Haitian and American, while also navigating their way through their relationship with their mother. Their mother is a representation of their Haitian culture, and they must find a way to incorporate their ancestors into their current culture as well. They struggle with this through acts such as citizenship and marriage, but they ultimately create a connection to both identities. "Epilogue: Women Like Us" ends the short story cycle with a look into how ancestral relationships influence the current generation. The narrator of this section relates to the audience events of her life that involved her mother. She discusses how she is influenced by her mother and the women who came before her. She has a spiritual connection with them like the women who went to the Massacre River. The bonds between mother and daughter transcend the binaries of time and space.

Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle encompasses many themes, and if explored more in the future, I will explore the remaining stories and other avenues of hybridity. This thesis has explored areas of vodou and zombies, and if pursued further would delve deeper into this religion and other phenomenon that have influenced the Haitian society, such as "a year and a day." Additionally, I would like to explore more history, past literature, and religious ideals concerning liminal spaces and how they have been

incorporated. It would also be interesting to see how these themes play out in other works by Edwidge Danticat as well.

In conclusion, Edwidge Danticat's short story cycle, *Krik? Krak!*, presents hybrid characters that are trying to find their identity, but one thing does not define them. Because of this, they are not accepted into society and must find their own space in the in-between places, like water. The hybrid moves throughout the binaries presented in society, but when he or she is unable to do so, he or she must seek a place of shelter through liminal spaces. The hybrid is a free being because there are no limitations placed on them, but they are also under scrutiny for this sense of freedom that they possess.

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