

Good example of argumentative essay on the farming of bones, edwidge danticat

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The Parsley Massacre of 1937 has been dramatized in Edwidge Danticat's third book, "The Farming of Bones." Danticat's short story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" was also about this event and was included in her National Book Award finalist collection *Krik? Krak!* (1995). Danticat had actually visited Massacre River in 1995, the site of the massacre, which separates Haiti from the Dominican Republic. According to Danticat herself, writing about the massacre is an act of remembering it as an important part of the history of Haiti and the world. As in the novel's acknowledgements, Danticat claims that "The Farming of Bones" is fictional but based on real events that have left their mark in history (Danticat 311).

It is arguable that history as it has been written is undone by Danticat's novel (Strehle 29). Early official accounts of the Parsley Massacre claimed that the government and the military were not involved, rather a small band of farmers were to blame and some casualties were listed. Danticat's *Farming of Bones* goes against these accounts, focusing on a rising mood of class and race tensions between the Dominicans and the Haitians, uncontrolled military ferocity and torture, and vast casualties and deaths. Additionally, in the aftermath of the massacre in her novel, many Haitians are left crippled, families are broken and no one pays attention to eyewitness accounts, it seems like the damage cannot be undone.

Uniquely, to give a complex account to the events prior to and after the massacre, Danticat positioned a female character, Amabelle, as the novel's heroine and the narrator. The drowning of her parents in the same river where the massacre later takes place leaves her as an orphan child, until a wealthy Dominican, Don Ignacio takes her in, where she begins working at a

sugarcane plantation and becomes Don Ignacio's daughter's companion. The novel's structure reflects the duality of Amabelle's life between those two worlds as she shifts between recounting her dreams, feelings, and memories in the present tense to recounting the events surrounding the massacre in long passages in the past tense.

The way Danticat has treated oppression and violence in her novel tends to implicate language as well (Strehle 29). The captured cane workers were forced by Trujillo's troops to speak the word "perejil," which means parsley in Spanish. Since the Haitians spoke a French Creole, Trujillo's troops identified them from their inability to 'roll' the r in the perejil, and then killed them. This linguistic violence has been pondered by Danticat in the novel, even the poet Rita Dove took up this subject in "Parsley," her renowned poem that she had wrote in 1983. In this sense, it seems that Danticat wrote this novel in order to retake power through language. Nonetheless, despite dramatizing the offenses that had taken place against the Haitian, she still succeeds at keeping their names and story alive.

Works Cited

Strehle, Susan. "History and the End of Romance: Danticat's Farming of Bones." Trans. Array Doubled Plots: Romance and History. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2003. 24-44. Print.