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A Journey Toward Self-Awareness and Restoration in *No Telephone to Heaven**

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Yook, Sung Hee. "A Journey Toward Self-Awareness and Restoration in *No Telephone to Heaven.*" *Studies in English Language & Literature* 48.1 (2022): 83-100. This paper explores Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) with a focus on the protagonist Clare Savage's migratory journey and her attempt to restore and rebuild her self and homeland. A sequel to *Abeng* (1984), *No Telephone to Heaven* portrays the racially and economically divided condition of postcolonial Jamaica and its people through the theme of self-exploration via migration and reclaiming. This paper examines how the migration of Clare, a light-skinned Creole girl, departing from and returning to Jamaica through the U.S., England, and Europe affects her self-identification. The racial discrimination Clare and her parents encounter through dislocation brings about epiphanic moments in which all three must confront their choices of identification. For Clare, her realization of her Otherness outside of Jamaica leads to new self-awareness of identity as an ongoing holistic process; this, in turn, drives her 'spiral' return to Jamaica and subsequent participation in a guerilla group, an act of self-identification geared toward restoring and reclaiming Jamaica and Jamaican-ness. (Sookmyung Women's University)

Key Words: Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*, Postcolonial Jamaica, Self-Awareness, Reclaiming and Restoring African Identity

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I. Introduction

The racially and economically derelict condition of postcolonial Jamaica is both theme and backdrop for the novel *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) by Michelle Cliff (1946-2016). Independence from British rule in 1962 has not automatically brought a prosperous and peaceful future to Jamaicans. Although renowned for its reggae music, world champion athletes, and paradisical nature, Jamaica continues to suffer from a postcolonial political structure, poor economic development, and chronic domestic violence, among other problems. Originating from and simultaneously exacerbated by the history of colonialism, these founding realities of Jamaica are presented in Cliff's novels through the unfolding of a host of conflicts: the Creoles' internalization of the colonial mindset regarding dark-skinned people, the hierarchy among Jamaicans according to colorism, widespread impoverishment, rampant violence, the administration's inability to respond to and control crime, and the continuous influx of tourists and foreign capital that exploit the country and its people for their own ends.

A sequel to Cliff's *Abeng* (1984), the story of the character Clare Savage's early adolescence, *No Telephone to Heaven* traces her movements in the diaspora from age 14, in 1960, until her death at age 36 while participating in guerrilla warfare. A light-skinned Jamaican Creole, Clare migrates from Jamaica, through the U.S., to Europe. Moving from one majority-white country to another, she repeatedly finds herself positioned as the Other, giving rise to a sense of isolation and alienation that underlies her continual drifting. The disintegration of the Savage family accelerated by their migration functions as a synecdoche reflecting the ramshackle condition of Jamaica. Other characters like Christopher, Mavis, and Harry/Harriet similarly feel unmoored and unsubstantial, continually being uprooted by the internal conditions of Jamaica.

Cliff's thematic exploration of postcolonial Jamaica is further elaborated by the narrative structure of the novel. Alternating the present – Clare's time with a

guerrilla group in Jamaica – with her past diasporic experiences, the narrative becomes nonlinear and fragmented, as if reflecting the dislocated history of Jamaica. The "subversion of linear time," as Strongman points out, constitutes the "structural complexity of [the] story" (99). The stylistic compounding of poetry, myth, and history, and the mixing of standard English with Jamaican patois, further enhances the structural intricacy, refracting the divided and disrupted realities of the characters and their ambit.

Exploring the precariousness of Jamaica in the 20th century demands the excavation and reclamation of a diasporic African history and identity – a task keenly felt by Cliff, as she explains in *Land of Look Behind* (1985), a collection of her essays and poems.

> To write as a complete Caribbean woman, or man for that matter, demands us retracing the African past of ourselves, reclaiming as our own, and as our subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the cane fields, or gone to bush, or trapped in a class system notable for its rigidity and absolute dependence on color stratification. On a past bleached from our minds. It means finding the artforms of these of our ancestors and speaking in the *patois* forbidden us. It means realizing our knowledge will always be wanting. It means also, I think, mixing in the forms taught us by the oppressor, undermining his language and co-opting his style, and turning it to our purpose. (original italic, 14)

To retrace one's roots, history, memories, ancestors, and language – a process of restoring what has been lost, erased, and forgotten – is to decolonize the self and dismantle the shadows and remnants of colonialism. For both the author of *No Telephone to Heaven* and its main character, Clare's meandering journey in the novel is ultimately what Kaisa Ilmonen, in her extended research on Cliff's novels, *Queer Rebellion in the Novels of Michelle Cliff*, calls "textual rebellion" (3): a quest of recollecting what has been shattered and scattered and restoring it to something whole.

Drawing on Ilmonen's concept of textual rebellion, which reads the imagining, creating, and reclaiming of the female protagonist as an act of decolonization as well as resistance, this paper follows the trajectory of Clare's journey from her first realization of her in-betweenness as a Creole woman through her struggle to pull together a unified identity from her multifarious experiences. Clare's migration is an inevitable journey of exploring who she is and what forms her and the quest for and state of her identity directly affects her capacity to resist the postcolonial condition of Jamaica. Thus, this paper will first shed light on the identity formation process in which Clare becomes aware of her Otherness, as well as the hybrid and fluid nature of her identity, tracing the constant changes, revision, and negotiation inherent in the process. Clare's self-awareness as the Other leads her to relocate herself in Jamaica and participate in a guerrilla group, expanding the narrative scope to the level of national history and identity. The second part of this paper will discuss how Clare's return is not the simple resumption of the past at the point of her departure, but a spiral expansion of her history and identity. As a true restoration and reclamation for a postcolonial people cannot simply be a regression to the pre-colonial past – which is indeed impossible – this paper will emphasize Clare's restoration and reclaiming process as one of new-building and new-making, a renewal that responds both to the past and to the future.

II. Clare's Migration and Self-Awareness as the Other

Among Black Jamaicans, relative skin color – "from ace of spades to white cockroach" (Cliff, *No* 153) – is a matter of privilege, granting access to resources and power. Jamaicans are automatically separated at birth, "[slipped] into places where . . . to get out would mean clashing through barriers positioned by people not so unlike yourself" (4-5). Cliff, as Davies points out, "creates the world of the bourgeoise, the Caribbean white vacillating between the metaphoric yard and the big

house" (86). As seen at the lavish and wild party thrown by the landowner Paul Charles, light-skin people have overtaken a degree of the colonial power and mindset since emancipation, accumulating considerable wealth by exploiting opportunities, thriving on their opulent lifestyles, and watching for chances to escape the island for even greater safety and prosperity. Meanwhile, Christopher, who grew up in a shack in the Dungle ("the dung-heap jungle," Cliff, *No* 32), represents the dark-skin people of the island, who remain impoverished and unacknowledged: indeed, Christopher could not get a piece of land for his grandmother's funeral despite his family's long service for the landowners. Turning their backs on each other, both the upper-class bourgeoisie and the poverty-stricken Jamaicans are indifferent to, and thus disconnected from, their respective spheres: thus Paul, finding the dead body of Mavis, who has been his house servant for five years, realizes that he does not even know "her surname, or the name of the place she had come from" (28). Her death, and that of other Black Jamaicans, is no more than an inconvenience for the lighter-skinned elite.

Like the Charles family, the Savages are descendants of Jamaican plantation owners. However, when Clare's parents go to the U.S. − where chattel slavery was maintained in part through the one-drop rule − their privileged status as Creoles in Jamaica is subsumed by their legal status as Black in the U.S. This relocation, and consequent dislocation, is "critical and central to the definition of identity, because [the Savages] become racially somebody else, an 'other' within the contexts of migration and US racial politics" (Davies 116).

The divergent responses of Clare's parents, Boy and Kitty Savage, to this strict U.S. anti-Blackness both ultimately lead to the construction of new identities. Boy, who has light skin, opts to pass for white when he is threatened with lesser treatment; when seeking a room at a segregated motel in Georgia, Boy states that "I am a white man. My ancestors owned sugar plantations" (Cliff, *No* 57). Gayle Wald explains passing as "a historically and socially constructed practice shaped by the exigencies of Jim Crow and by the binary organization of racial discourse" (15).

Boy has chosen to wear this white mask and become a new man on his first encounter of the fully-segregated racism not present in Jamaica, taking advantage of "invisibility and secrets. Self-effacement. Blending in. The use of camouflage" (Cliff, *No* 100) to assimilate into American society.

Being darker than her husband, Kitty Savage does not have the ability to physically pass for white, and thus finds a hard time in the U.S. Yet part of her work at a laundry involves "[sending] out 'helpful hints' to the laundry's customers" (72) under the moniker of an imaginary housewife, Mrs. White. Mr. B., the owner of the laundry, emphasizes the importance of keeping things "sanitary," as underscored by the name "Mrs. White" and the accompanying image of an elderly white lady. The surface-level advice on how to do laundry indeed presents the opportunity for Kitty to undergo racial whitening: a transformative process in which Kitty, like her nom de plume, encourages users to get rid of dark stains, smells, and traces. Nonetheless, Kitty refuses to metamorphose herself, which she sees as a path to becoming a faithful servant like her ancestor Marcus, a Jamaica-born man and "slave to some family" (63).

After sending out several critical messages concerning racist society, Kitty's refusal culminates with her written proclamation, "HELLO. MRS. WHITE IS DEAD. MY NAME IS MRS. BLACK. I KILLED HER" (original capitals, 83). She literally and metaphorically refuses to take up her possible identity as Mrs. White and instead declares herself Mrs. Black, and subsequently reclaims her Jamaican Creole identity. Ironically, however, Kitty's personal reclamation and resistance trickle down negatively to two of her darker Black coworkers: Mr. B. suspects his darker-skinned employees of the sabotage because of their Blackness, and summarily fires them. Disillusioned by Mr. B.'s harsh response, stemming from his disbelief that Kitty could not be the one who sent the messages because she is lighter and thus, in his mind, "nicer" than the other workers, Kitty decides to return to Jamaica where she can live with a strong sense of Black identity.

Clare becomes a figure at the crossroads, torn between Boy's encouragement to

adapt to U.S. racial identities and Kitty's refusal to lose her identity and return to Jamaica. Clare is unsustainably balanced between the forces of father and mother, White and Black, native land and adopted country. According to Helen Tiffin, "the white Creole is, as a double outsider, condemned to self-consciousness, a sense of inescapable difference and even deformity in the two societies by whose judgements she always condemns herself" (328). At the time of the narrative, Clare knows that "She is white. Black. Female. Lover. Beloved. Daughter. Traveler. Friend. Scholar. Terrorist. Farmer" (Cliff, *No* 91): all are components of her self-identity, perpetually subject to her continuing experiences. However, this realization does not come easy; Clare first needs to migrate from one place to another, experiencing herself and her identity within different frames. As with the narrator of *Invisible Man*, before fully understanding what constructs her identity, Clare needs to undergo a process in which she becomes sharply aware of her Otherness.

Like her parents, Clare faces official bias as soon as she tries to take part in U.S. institutions. Boy takes her to meet the principal of a high school, who tells them that "it was a matter of course in New York City schools to have foreign students begin a year behind so they wouldn't get 'lost'" (97). To challenge this perceived intellectual inferiority, Boy again attempts to pass for white, but the principal merely labels them "white chocolate," her physician husband's term, and makes it clear that there is "[no] place for in-betweens" (99). Moving to yet another country does not allow Clare to avoid the discrimination either; she becomes the racial Other in England as well, a target of the National Front's campaign to "KEEP BRITAIN WHITE!" (original capitals, 137). Yet ultimately, Clare is forced to be grateful to these people in a way, as their exclusionism helps her realize that she has been taught to "worship something [she] could never really be a part of" (Adisa 6).

Like Kitty, Clare makes a migration upon the news of her mother's death: Kitty departs Jamaica right after her mother, Miss Mattie, dies, while Clare leaves America upon the news of Kitty's death. The characters' diasporic experiences are therefore spurred in part by their sense of orphanhood. The death of the mother

presents the ultimate loss of connection; the daughter drifts in search of a place where she can root herself anew. In Clare's case, this loss is twofold, for she is first abandoned when Kitty returns to Jamaica with her younger daughter, as Kitty believes that Clare will be able to adapt to a new life without her because of her light skin. Yet Clare cannot find her place in the U.S., and likewise, when she leaves for England after Kitty's death, her migration does not avail her. Kitty "felt but homeless" (54) in the U.S.; her daughter in turn feels only isolation and disconnection in what the rhetoric of the 'colonial mother country' declares to be "the true place for her" (110).

According to Clare's analysis of Aristotle's definition of place, "[each] thing exists in place. Each thing is described by place" (117). 'Place' is a determinant that defines the existence of a person. If a person can find their identity when existing in a specific location, place is a critical component in the process of forming that person's subjectivity. Furthermore, one's identity is negotiated as they move from one place to another. The relationship between place and identity is thus essentially entwined. But, having no place, Clare cannot be "described," and thus, identified. Consequently, moving or crossing-over boundaries drives Clare to question her ontological condition, especially the Africanness which she "has been taught to despise" (Goldberg 112).

Clare comes to realize her position as the Other more strongly by her identification with both Bertha in *Jane Eyre* and Pocahontas. As an orphan migrating to England, Clare initially considers herself similar to the heroic Jane: "[b]etrayed. Left to wander. Solitary. Motherless" (Cliff, *No* 116). However, it does not take long before she realizes that her racial Otherness precludes her being the protagonist.

> No, she told herself. No, she could not be Jane. Small and pale. English. No, she paused. No, my girl, try Bertha. Wild-maned Bertha. Clare thought of her father. Forever after her to train her hair. His visions of orderly pageboy. Coming home from

> work with something called Tame. She refused it; he called her Medusa. Do you intend to turn men to stone, daughter? She held to her curls, which turned kinks in the damp of London. Beloved racial characteristic. Her only sign, except for dark spaces here and there where melanin touched her. Yes, Bertha was closer the mark. Captive. Ragout, Mixture. Confused. Jamaican. Caliban. Carib. Cannibal. Cimarron. All Bertha, All Clare. (116)

Clare sees herself in Bertha, a Jamaican Creole woman who serves as the foil to Jane Eyre. Bertha is racially marked by features such as her curly hair; her identity is fragmented due to its formation under colonialism and her spatial displacement. Although Bertha's voice is suppressed and inarticulate in the novel, Clare can read and understand her, through the lens of her own experience as the Other.

Similarly, when she finds the statue of the expropriated Native American Pocahontas at Gravesend, Clare can hear the Other's soundless voice. Pocahontas is "a metaphor for a colonized child," like Victor, "the wild boy/child of Aveyron who, after his 'rescue' from the forest and wildness . . . by a well-meaning doctor of Enlightenment Europe, became tamed, 'civilized,' but never came to speech" (Cliff, "Clare" 263). Clare finds a whitewashed history of Pocahontas in memorials: the Powhatan princess, tamed and renamed, the "[f]riend of the earliest struggling colonists, whom she nobly rescued, protected, and helped" (Cliff, *No* 137). Though the inscription positions Pocahontas as betraying her tribe in the name of "civilization," Clare realized that this record comes through the voice of the colonizer, not the colonized. The filtered and civilized story of the memorials is a voiceover erasing the real woman's 'untamed wildness.' As an outsider in the mother country, Clare sees through the monuments to the hidden and overridden experience of "[Pocahontas's] youth, her color, her strangeness, her unbearable loneliness" (137). Clare's questions about Pocahontas come from her desire to see behind the veil of the woman's colonized identity − and, simultaneously, are the questions Clare asks of herself.

The answers are evident in Clare's identification with an albino gorilla who has

been captured in a packing crate by poachers. As with Bertha and Pocahontas, the comparison provides a metaphor of 'untamed' and 'primitive' peoples unnaturally controlled by the civilized colonialists. Colonialism in this metaphor deprives the albino gorilla of its language and emotion: "[she] cowers in the bush fearing capture . . . Not speaking for years. Not feeling much of anything, except a vague dread that she belongs nowhere" (91). Likewise, in the U.S. and Europe, Clare feels "like a shadow . . . like a ghost . . . like [she] could float through [her] days without ever touching . . . anyone" (154). Clare is disconnected from her roots and abandoned in the U.S. She cannot root herself anew in London because it has no significance to her beyond its geographic location and superficialities. Such insubstantiality runs through Clare's identification with Bertha, Pocahontas, and the albino gorilla. Clare must then ask herself where she is now; this question of place is that of who she is, a matter of substantiating herself through subjectivization.

III. Clare's Return and Restoration of Wholeness

Clare's encounter with the albino gorilla stirs up her latent sense of place and being.

> The longing for tribe surfaces . . . She remembers the jungle. The contours of wildness. The skills are deep within her. Buried so long, she fears they may have atrophied. Distant treks with her dark-pelted mother. With a solid urgency they may emerge but she must also give herself to the struggle. She belongs in these hills. And she knows this choice is irrevocable and she will never be the same. (91)

Realizing that she "could live no longer in borrowed countries, on borrowed time" (193), Clare decides to return to her native country. Yet migration was a process necessary for her to understand herself from a broader perspective, reassessing the privileges that her family enjoyed as Caribbean bourgeoise and their vulnerability in

more strictly anti-Black societies. Clare's self-awareness of being the Other helps her reconsider and revisit these origins. The crossing-over from one position to another, and the subtle distinctions in the racism she experiences in different countries, enable her to perceive the absurdity of racial stratification both generally and in its specifically Jamaican iteration. Her identity as Jamaican now contains awareness of her own Blackness outside the Jamaican context.

The Jamaica depicted in the novel is, like the memorial to Pocahontas, a fictionalized version imagined by postcolonial ideologies: "[t]here are no facts in Jamaica. Not one single fact. Nothing to join us to the real. Facts move around you. Magic moves through you. This we have been taught. This fact that there are no facts" (92). With nothing fully substantiated to latch on to, Jamaica exists only as it is imagined under postcolonial relations and transnational capital. As the personified Other, its beauty exists for foreign tourists or visitors, not its own people, and the Jamaica depicted in advertisements as a paradise for travelers is a fictional image of a superficial landscape, dismissing the chronic troubles of its citizens. Indeed, for tourists, the native people are no more than a backdrop, "never fully thinking, acting beings" (Davies 23).

Yet this kind of distorted representation is not solely the responsibility of foreigners. Jamaicans have also bought and played into the colonized mindset, resulting in both indifference and powerlessness: on the part of the rich, secure enough in their privilege, ignoring the social ills caused by class and wealth inequity; for the poor, subjected to a position of chronic dependence, unwilling to challenge the way things are. Under the constant oppression of colonization and its fallout, these Jamaicans have unwittingly given up on their own agency. The stagnation inherent in this social structure leads the nation into a state of impotence – which inexorably descends into ruination. The ruination encompasses both the mentally and physically devastated citizenry, and the Jamaican landscape, neglected to the point that it has lost its carefully cultivated ability to produce and "lapsed back into 'bush'" (Cliff, *No* 1).

But this ruination also symbolically suggests the subversive and thereby restorative power it can generate by replacing the traces and remnants of Western colonialization with a wild – unimposed – natural state. To Cliff,

> *Ruinate*, the adjective, and *ruination*, the noun, are Jamaican inventions. Each word signifies the reclamation of land, the disruption of cultivation, civilization, by the uncontrolled, uncontrollable forest. When a landscape becomes ruinate, carefully designed aisles of cane are envined, strangled, the order of empire is replaced by the chaotic forest. The word ruination (especially) signifies this immediately; it contains both the word ruin and nation. A landscape in ruination means one in which the imposed nation is overcome by the naturalness of ruin. (original italics, Cliff, "Caliban's" 40)

Through the ruination of the values imprinted by colonialism upon the landscape and the minds of the colonized, the potential for rebirth and wholeness arises for the unnaturally divided nation. Restoration through ruination thus functions as an antidote to the colonial "imposed nation."

Clare's symbolic rebirth at her grandmother's farm represents "the self reverting to the wildness of the forest" (40), restoration-via-ruination for the decolonized citizen. As a kind of ritual of "[rebaptism]," Clare "shut her eyes and let the cool of it wash over her naked body, reaching up into her as she opened her legs" in the river near her grandmother's land (Cliff, *No* 172). With this self-effacement and submersion in place, Clare rebuilds her connection to the island and attempts to root herself, restoring the subjective substance so harshly contested during her spatial displacement.

Clare's growth is not, and cannot be, limited to the private sphere. Kitty left a letter to Clare asking for her to engage in restoration that joined the individual with the communal: "I hope someday you make something of yourself, and someday help your people" (103). Kitty understands that the fates of the individual Jamaican and Jamaica the nation are inextricable: as the omniscient narrator adds, this is "[a]

reminder, daughter – never forget who your people are. Your responsibilities lie beyond me, beyond yourself. There is a space between who you are and who you will become. Fill it" (103). Clara fills this space by transforming herself from a privileged Creole girl, indebted to her bourgeoise background, to a guerrilla fighter paying that debt to her broader society.

The guerrilla group Clara joins works toward a social revolution that will allow holistic reconstruction of the country. Agreement and alignment is "something very needed, which could be important, even vital," to a people used to being "separated at birth" by colonial barriers (4). Divisions based on skin color and wealth produce a polarized society in which Cliff sees the urgent need to unify and integrate – for the wellbeing of both groups. But doing so will be a heavy challenge: as painted on the truck now transporting the guerrilla group, there is "NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN" (original capitals, 16), no absolute power to hear the petitions and solve the chronic problems of Jamaicans. No matter how much the people are "[t]rying to make communion with God almighty" (16), they have to create miracles through their own revolutionary power. Freeing themselves from their colonized state starts with reclaiming their agency and becoming the subject of their own history.

Cliff offers a mythical woman warrior, Nanny, as an agent of such resistance. A legendary Maroon leader of Jamaica during the early 18th century, Nanny is an avatar of the distressed nation, healer of the tortured slaves, punisher to the evildoer, and representative revolutionist of the oppressed people. Yet her "mythical abilities in the areas of hunting and healing, as well as her intimate relationship to Jamaican nature" (Ilmonen 52) have atrophied under the Jamaican colonial and postcolonial conditions. Now, when this magnanimous warrior is needed more than ever, "[s]he has been burned up in an almshouse fire in Kingston. She has starved to death . . . Her powers are known no longer" (Cliff, *No* 164). The evocation of this national hero, "an allegory of protection and nurturing, as well as resistance and survival" (Ilmonen 52), is an attempt to call up the latent spirit of the Jamaican Maroon. The guerrillas as a postcolonial version of Maroons are descendants of Nanny; Clare

thereby regains her status as a daughter through the communal, revolutionary parenthood of the nation. In turn, the author invokes Clare's earlier narrative in *Abeng*: referring in the Twi language (originating in modern-day Ghana) to an animal horn used as a musical instrument – or summons – an abeng carries the implication in Jamaica of a call to resistance, due to its widespread use both "to summon slaves to the fields and to transmit messages among escaped slaves, or Maroon" (Brice-Finch).

Cliff's conceptualization of the revolution is delineated in the interview scene. Roughly two years after her return to Jamaica, Clare is introduced to an anonymous woman who is a leader of the guerilla group. The leader questions Clare as to what made her want to take part in the guerilla group and how serious she is about her participation. This dialogue lays out why revolution is such an urgent issue for Jamaicans, presenting its rationale in terms such as the justification of revolutionists like Nanny, who is liberated from the misogynist 'feminine' role and "has access to self-definition" (Cliff, "Caliban's" 47). Clare too uses the opportunity to speak her complicated thoughts. By emphasizing the restoration of agency and subjectivity, the interviewer speaks for Cliff – and illuminates her mission as a writer.

The narrative climaxes with the messy attack on the guerrillas at an American film set. As with the Jamaica imagined by colonists, the film – and the film industry as a whole – produces a fictionalized reality whose propagation as authentic truth "mak[es] it real" (Cliff, *No* 206). Even when filming on location, the creators of the narrative retain control, manipulating the real citizens out of their autonomy. The guerrillas themselves embrace the fantasy of cinematic imagery by wearing camouflage jackets, "a touch of realism, cinematic verite" (7), that makes them look real soldiers; even when the fantasy turns against them, it is a sweeping yet cliched film stunt of helicopters appearing from nowhere and raining down bullets. Despite their real warfare, the guerrillas are again used as backdrops or extras, the real freedom fighters slipping away into Hollywood spectacle.

The failure of the attack is sobering. "Somebody betrays them because they've

been colonized to be betrayers of one another" (Raiskin 64). Nobody knows who sabotages the revolution; Jamaicans are so fragmented and disintegrated that they cannot trust one another. This is true for Clare on a personal level as well: although she rejects her light skin privilege and embraces her African identity with the revolutionaries, she never feels that "she's really part of it, and they will never quite accept her either" (64). Clare's uncertain feelings about her rootedness reflect the extent to which Jamaica and Jamaicans are broken down, overwhelmed by their past. Their pursuit of wholeness and integrity for the future will not be accomplished as neatly as a Hollywood ending.

This pessimistic outcome, the deaths of Clare and her comrades, is not however a call to give up the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, Cliff reveals in an interview that she seeks to spark rebellion in the reader, using the discouraging conclusion to "[motivate] them to continue the struggle in which Clare was engaged" (Schwartz 602). The novel's narrative ends, but the history it recalls does not: that history is not fixed and closed, but continuously flowing onward, beyond the last page of the novel. The land and the cause continue. The closure of Clare's story thus functions as a catalyst to begin a new history, for other revolutionists and the reader. The burst of English, patois, and birdsong following the guerrillas' deaths thereby prefigures how a dynamic and hybrid history will nonetheless follow in the wake of the lost battle. The trial of the revolution will shake the white European narrative and culture, restoring the voices and uncolonized nature of Jamaicans. Clare, and her guerrilla effort, dies; nonetheless, or even because of this, "Day broke" (Cliff, *No* 208).

IV. Conclusion

If the foreground of the narrative is primarily what the race, class, and wealth conflicts have wrought on Jamaicans, Cliff's overriding purpose is urging people – her people – to reclaim and restore their substance through an integrated Jamaica.

The process in which Clare attempts to do this, by searching for her Afrocentric identity and contributing to a new history of Jamaica, is rooted in her recognition of herself as the Other through the narrative journey. As Davies aptly points out, migration and boundary-crossing are central to Clare's self-identification process (86). The uneasy internal dislocations of her home country situate Clare in between two incompatible systems: the colorism organizing her existence as part of the Caribbean upper-class, and the anti-Blackness situating Jamaica as a whole as a Black colony subject to white overseers. The process of constructing her identity is not a matter of either-or choices; what Clare goes through over the course of her journey is her present identity.

The narrative of return, from a drifting journey inextricably bound up with the experience of institutionalized racism, therefore cannot be read as Clare merely coming back to the place from which she departed. As Edmonson states, Clare's return "should not be read as circular but rather as a spiral, not a repetition but rather an extension" (186). The present Clare is not the same as the Clare of the past, and upon her return to Jamaica, she is choosing not to repeat history, but to reclaim and restore it.

Although Clare's narrative fails – for the moment – to liberate Jamaica, Cliff's presentation of hard-won, epiphanic identity and awareness succeeds in awakening the mind of the reader. Clare's new recognition of herself is the recognition Cliff wants readers to grasp for themselves. Cliff does not suggest an idealistic vision in which things change and improve easily. Rather, she speaks in the revolutionist's voice, urging people to action in pursuit of restoring their history/voice/nation, so that they will no longer be the servant "dressed in white shirts and black pants standing at attention on a hotel veranda waiting for some tourist's order" (Cliff, *No* 19). She knows that acts of resistance can free people from helplessness, restore their silenced voices, and build a better society from ruination, thus writing a new history centering on Jamaica's substantial facts and people.

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