12-2017

Postcolonial Intersectional Feminism, Trauma, Whiteness, and Recovery in Michelle Cliff's Novels

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POSTCOLONIAL INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM, TRAUMA, WHITENESS, AND RECOVERY IN MICHELLE CLIFF'S NOVELS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2017

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This dissertation examines two of the most salient characteristics of the Anglophone Caribbean writer Michelle Cliff's work: one, her analysis of a hegemonic colonial system and, two, her exploration of possibilities for resistance. Regarding the first, I argue that Cliff's work should be recognized as a significant postcolonial intersectional feminist project that analyzes the traumas of gender and race, especially whiteness, as manifestations of a colonial/gender modern system in the Caribbean. As such, Cliff's analysis of the impacts of this system's devastations allows readers to enter the worlds of those whose lives have been, and continue to be, deeply affected by its hegemonic impositions. On the second point, I suggest that Cliff's works offer valuable strategies for resistance and recovery from these traumas at the different levels of history, bodies, and communities.

Throughout the chapters, I will look at these issues through the lens of the theoretical framework outlined in the introduction. I put forward a combination of three theoretical frameworks in order to develop an argument for my own version of postcolonial feminist theory, one that calls for historicizing the complexities of Caribbean societies, and for examining the effects of several oppressive hierarchies I see working simultaneously as sources of individual and collective traumas. For that reason, I develop a combined framework of trauma studies, critical whiteness studies, and postcolonial intersectional feminism, in order to look carefully at the significance of Cliff´s works.

This proposal intends to make an intervention in postcolonial feminism, and at the same time, facilitate a multilayered analysis of Michelle Cliff's novels by opening up the possibility to examine more effectively how she explores and represents the damaging consequences of the interlocking hegemonic categories of the colonial system in the lives of women belonging to non-dominant groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, for my parents. For my unforgettable father, who always believed in me more than I ever will. His unconditional love and support have shaped the person I am today. I will forever keep trying to find ways to honor you, mi amigo. For my mother, the bravest person I will ever know. Your resilience and sweetness are always with me, a love that I treasure and a presence I long for, I ache for, every minute.

For my committee members. Dr. Susan Comfort, thank you for your encouragement, your guidance, and your support, but most of all, for all your kindness and understanding. You are the best boss anyone could wish for. To the three of you, I will never forget your willingness and readiness to help when I was going through one of the hardest moments in my life. Your patience gave me room to breathe when I was, in the words of the incomparable Bruce Springsteen, “waiting on a sunny day.”

For my friends, literally everywhere around the world. Your friendship is humbling, amazing, and a gift distance cannot begin to weaken. I include my fabulous cousins here. They are one of the loveliest and funniest group of people I have the joy to be among.

Last but not least, for my husband, who had a pen engraved in 2010 anticipating today, a moment I was not sure was ever going to happen. Most of all, however, for never letting me forget that I am the queen of absolutely everything.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

THEORIZING TRAUMA, WHITENESS, AND GENDER

IN POSTCOLONIAL LIVES

> "I was a girl similar to Clare and have spent most of my life and most of my work exploring my identity as a light-skinned Jamaican, the privilege and the damage that comes from that identity[1]." (Cliff, qtd. in Grimes).

The powerful quotation chosen as an epigraph to this introduction might very well be a description of the most important concerns Michelle Cliff (1947-2016) represented in her four brilliant novels, *Abeng* (1984), *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), *Free Enterprise* (1993) and *Into the Interior* (2010). Throughout her works, she consistently reflects on the difficulties of growing up as a girl in Jamaica at different moments in history and on the traumatic disconnections arising from the racialized and gendered hierarchies imposed by colonialism. It may also be added that these explorations always culminate in a relentless search for ways to heal the damage she discusses, most of the time in the form of reconnections at distinct levels.

In this dissertation, I argue that through her novels and essays, Michelle Cliff is engaged in a project which can be described as postcolonial intersectional feminism that analyzes the traumas of gender and race, particularly whiteness, as manifestations of a colonial/gender modern system, but also one that proposes different strategies for resistance, decolonization, and recovery from these traumas at the different levels of memory, body, and community.

[1] Quoted by William Grimes in "Michelle Cliff, Who Wrote of Colonialism and Racism, Dies at 69."

In my introduction, I put forward a combination of three theoretical frameworks in order to present my own version of postcolonial feminist theory, one that calls for a contextualization and historicization of the complexities of Caribbean societies, and for an examination of the effects of the imposition of several oppressive hierarchies I see working simultaneously as the source of individual and collective traumas. For that reason, I thoroughly describe the rationale for the pertinence of a combined framework of trauma studies, critical whiteness studies, and postcolonial intersectional feminism, in order to look carefully at the significance of Cliff´s oeuvre and its most important concerns. In the introduction I put forward this combined framework as a complex proposal that makes an intervention in postcolonial feminism, and at the same time, facilitates a multilayered analysis of Michelle Cliff's novels by opening up the possibility to examine more effectively how she explores and represents the damaging consequences of the interlocking hegemonic categories of the colonial system in the lives of women belonging to non-dominant groups.

This intervention serves a twofold purpose: on the one hand, it contextualizes the concept of intersectionality and historicizes gender formation in order to understand the mechanisms by which heterosexualism, capitalism, and racial classification, impossible to understand without each other, were co-created as the fundamental norms of organization in societies which had enjoyed much more varied, egalitarian categories. On the other hand, it proposes a movement of decolonization that calls for coalitions of resisters performing a transformation of relationships by historicizing the continuous resistance to the fragmenting, dichotomizing impositions of the colonial system. The aim is to challenge the idea that the oppressive structures of the colonial system were

perpetually successful, but continually interrogated and resisted, even in current times. The decolonizing effort of postcolonial intersectional feminism emphasizes multiplicity, an existence of selves in relation that transforms history, bodies, human organizations, and social organizations. There is a stress on practices and movements that attempt to overturn the fragmenting dichotomies of colonialism and postcolonialism, as well as on work that intends to change the causes of these traumas. Insofar as they are political, social, or economic, this decolonizing project serves the purpose of preventing their reocurrence, as well as enabling forms of renewal at different levels. In my examination of Cliff's engagement with these traumas as manifestations of the colonial system, I am primarily interested in the analysis of three of these different levels: memory, body, and community, as well as in the decolonizing strategies developed by both members of dominant and non-dominant groups.

The main argument of the second chapter of this dissertation is an analysis of *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* as examples of Cliff´s engagement with a decolonization of Afro-Jamaican history and the silenced lives and voices of female resisters. Not only in these two novels, but also in her essays, articles, and interviews Cliff has consistently denounced the forced voicelessness and lack of representation of the colonized, more particularly of Afro-Jamaican female resisters. In her work, Cliff starts a project that writes back to the effects of colonialism and addresses colonial and postcolonial historical traumas. Cliff's analysis emphasizes the importance of history and memory as factors inextricably involved in the construction of individual and collective identities for those belonging to non-dominant groups. Cliff's project of a decolonized history proposes that different memories interacting together, or the idea that more

memory, not less, can help work through the effects of historic traumas by helping generate counterforces enabling a more viable, fair, democratic representation, as well as ethical and sociopolitical agency in the present and in the future. "Multidirectional memory" and "landscapes of memory" will become especially relevant and productive when analyzing these two novels. I argue that *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* represent two different stages in the process of decolonization of a totalizing colonial history that chose to forget entire lives and communities deemed unworthy of representation and thus dehumanized. In order to explore this difference, I resort to two concepts developed by theorists of trauma and memory. *Abeng*, on the one hand, will be analyzed as a representation of a landscape of forgetting, as memory and Afro-Jamaican history must remain hidden and marginalized, as they are seen unacceptable concerns in the life of a light-skinned young girl. For this reason, access to this knowledge is made close to impossible in the Jamaica of the 1950s. *No Telephone to Heaven*, on the other hand, will be analyzed as a representation of a different landscape of memory, as the de facto independence from England and the decolonizing movements in the Caribbean in the 1980s make it easier for postcolonial subjects to openly decolonize, access, spread, and teach Afro-Jamaican history through access to museums and university libraries, and previously disregarded and unknown historical remains.

Through this combined approach of postcolonial intersectional feminism, critical whiteness studies, and trauma studies, I study Cliff's engagement with the effects caused by the homogenizing ideology of the moral and social superiority of those racialized white in chapter three. In my analysis of *Abeng*, *No Telephone to Heaven*, and *Into the Interior*, I look at how being a multiracial, but light-skinned female in Jamaica comes not

only privileges, but also damages related to racial divisions affecting members of colonial and postcolonial societies to the most intimate levels. These traumas are usually caused by the distance, the disconnections, and the alienation provoked by these divisions. In my analysis, I look at how interlocking oppressions of race and gender influence the performances that white-identified members of dominant groups expect of young women, as well as to the punishments that come when these performances are subverted. I also argue that in these three novels Michelle Cliff engages with a recovery from these traumas in the form of a decolonizing process that involves undermining the influence of these racialized and gendered performances. I will analyze this process as it relates to the association with liminal characters who represent new possibilities to challenge the fragmenting boundaries of whiteness and its performances, and open up the possibility of a freer relationship with their own bodies.

In the final chapter, my argument is that two of Michelle Cliff's novels, *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise* propose recovery from the traumas of colonialism through a decolonization of relationships at the community level. In my analysis of the social fragmentation brought about by the interlocking oppressions of colonialism, I look at two different issues and their implications for the lives of members of both dominant and non-dominant groups. First, I look at Cliff's representation of the destruction of families and connections to communities different from one's own as one of the most traumatizing, durable effects of the colonial system. Secondly, I look at how Cliff's novels articulate a vision of resistance to hegemonic formations by emphasizing the possibility of creating unexpected unconventional allegiances and coalitions as strategies to reconstitute individual and collective identities and to restore the social

fabric destroyed by the traumatic events of colonialism. These novels stress the importance of coalition among members of different communities, individuals who have experienced discrimination and disenfranchisement at the interlocked levels of race, color, class, and gender.

As said earlier, this dissertation develops a critique of postcolonial trauma by analyzing the fiction of Michelle Cliff. I focus on her work because it situates our understanding of postcolonial trauma, especially the traumas of gender and race, in a colonial world-system and their damaging repercussions to this day. Indeed, Cliff's concerns with the "psychic disruptions and historical distortions wrought by postcolonial racism" (qtd. in Grimes) pursuits long recognized by critics, are better understood if we approach her work through the lens of a colonial world-system. To theorize my approach, I turn to a number of theorists working simultaneously in several overlapping fields of postcolonial feminist theory, critical whiteness studies, and trauma theory. I feature the work of María Lugones because her theory of the colonial/modern gender system integrates these different strands of criticism in a manner that allows for a multilayered analysis and understanding of the destruction brought about by the colonial construction and domination of the Americas and the Caribbean from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. At the same time, Lugones postulates the need for liberation and decolonial movements that can only be a result of the analysis of recognition of the deliberated construction of unequal societies, or "fractured loci," where factors such as race, gender, capitalism, or heterosexuality became key in the development of damaging, hierarchical structures that not only destroyed the lives of individuals, but also entire communities and cosmologies. These movements, as theorized by Lugones, propose a logic of coalition

that constructs broad alliances created through a loving perception. This practice, as opposed to "arrogant perception" asks individuals to be aware of their own perspectives and opinions in order to interrogate their conceptions of others. The aim is to be critical of one's own arrogant perceptions and to be able to subvert unequal relationships in order to identify the humanity of inhabitants of different worlds.

Building upon postcolonial theories of gender and race provided by scholars such as María Lugones, Anibal Quijano, Alfred López, Chandra Talpade Mohanty or M. Jacqui Alexander, this dissertation analyzes several persistent gender and race hegemonic formations, especially formations of whiteness, that are the context for postcolonial trauma and resistance. These hegemonic forms attribute universalism to certain individuals, while, at the same time, assigning inferiority to others. The colonizers, who acted as arbiters of the dominant discourse, worked to deny the experiences of the victimized, while imposing an official version of history that exalted the ruling forces and villanized its victims. Cut off from narrative agency, large segments of colonized societies continue to live with the aftermath of colonial injustices and racial and gendered hegemonic formations that devalue their lives. Fiction and poetry for Afro-Jamaican writers offer a public forum for the affirmation of their experiences to confront and to contest these formations and offer a powerful critique of postcolonial trauma. Many postcolonial Caribbean writers address the traumatic aftermath of the epistemological violence of the ideologies of colonialism, including Jamaica Kincaid, Merle Collins, Merle Hodge, or Olive Senior, among many others. In their works, these authors explore the imposition of a monocentric cultural hegemony and as a result, the devaluation and silencing of entire sets of cultural traditions, languages and religious practices deemed to

be inferior and without value. Although colonial discourse is generated within the society of the colonizers, it becomes the discourse within the colonized come to see themselves, creating deep conflicts within their consciousness.

While I broadly address the works of many Caribbean women writers, I focus on the works of Michelle Cliff because they distinctively stress the importance of establishing a critical dialogue between the past and the present as a strategy of resistance against the historic voicelessness of women in postcolonial Caribbean societies. Cliff's analysis of the impact of the devastations caused by the colonial/modern gender system bears witness to the repercussions it has had in a broad spectrum that goes from societies to communities to families to individuals. Cliff does not only describe the pain and the loss of history, but also culture, relationships, modes of living and ways of being in the world. However, at the same time, she consistently reflects on how survival is strongly connected to a fight for recovery from these losses. Rejection of the binaries of the fragmenting logic of the colonial/modern gender system involves the reclamation of forbidden social structures and relations. As will be seen, healing comes in the form of restored connections to history, to land, to people's own bodies, to communities.

Cliff deliberately engages a journey into the past, which becomes, at the same time, a movement of resistance and repossession into the present and the future. Being a particularly rich archive of intertextuality and historical writing, her work, however, does much more than just include the history of the resistance of colonized women. Not only in her fiction, but also in her poetry, her poetic prose and her critical essays, she constantly emphasizes the need to have access to forgotten/obliterated histories of resistant colonized women throughout the history of colonized nations. There is a

constant reference in her fiction to unresolved, traumatic historical loss and the need to intervene in history as a healing strategy. The personal, the political and the historical get continuously intertwined in her work with the use of several narrative techniques such as changes in point of view, intrusive narrators, flashbacks, or stream of consciousness. She has repeatedly used the motto "everything is now," even choosing it as the title of her most recent story collection (Minnesota Press, 2009). Arguably, this phrase alludes to how history persists in the present, and, I want to suggest, Cliff's effort to disrupt the ideologies and the chronology of official history. By subverting official sources of history, Michelle Cliff inserts the stories of those left out, the disenfranchised and the marginalized, and inscribes not only their unknown traumatic experiences, but also their resistance projects. I argue that she postulates not only a rethinking of the history of the colonized, but also an analysis of the structural causes of the traumas of Caribbean female postcolonial subjects in the present. She thoroughly analyzes the societal pressures postcolonial female subjects go through by historicizing the circumstances of the universes her characters inhabit. I want to study the way Cliff represents race, color, class and gender constructions and the distress, the numbness, the paralysis, the alienation and the disconnections they bring about. Michelle Cliff's work enquires into how postcolonial traumas are connected to the individual and the collective. In the process of becoming resistant women, postcolonial female subjects portrayed in her work interrogate previous concepts of the self and their relationship with themselves and with others. In my dissertation, I contend that these trauma fictions show the empowerment of female postcolonial subjects, at three distinct but interrelated levels: history, body, and the community.

My main argument is twofold: first, I analyze Cliff's fiction as an important source not only for understanding the traumatic consequences of modern constructions of race and gender. Secondly, I define these four novels offer modes of resistance against, through, and beyond, postcolonial trauma. It is the contention of this dissertation that Cliff's fiction can be defined as resistance projects that propose alternatives to the construction of the colonized as "pre-modern," "uncivilized," "savages" and in need of being "civilized" by the more "advanced" colonizers and societies. Following Lugones' argument on how the colonial/modern gender system forced a reidentification of the world between modern and pre-modern, I argue that Cliff's proposal undermines this fragmenting dichotomy and proposes other ways of life, modes of being, societal organizations, collectivity formation, spaces and times that oppose the violent, capitalist, fragmenting logic of fragmentation of the colonial/gender modern system.

1.1. Postcolonial Trauma and the Colonial/Modern Gender System

Since colonization has been defined as "the infliction of a collective trauma" (Craps and Bruelen 2) and postcolonialism can be understood as "a traumatic cultural formation" (Craps and Bruelen 3), one of the aims in this dissertation is to explore one of the foundational elements in the construction of the modern world: the construction of a gendered/racialized world through the biopolitical formation of whiteness, that "sustained by imperialism and global capitalism, travelled and culturally and politically impacted the formation of nationhood, class and empire" (Moreton-Robinson 78). The discussion of the traumatic effects of the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system and the resulting cultural loss that it entails can be inscribed in the current aim for "postcolonializing" trauma theory. As theorized by Lugones, the violent imposition of

this new construction of the world meant the destruction, obliteration and disavowal of individual and collective identities, ways of life, traditions and cosmologies of the colonized, affecting every aspect of their lives, from the most public to the most intimate: "The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus peoples' sense of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity and social, ecological, and cosmological organization" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"745). The processes of subjectification and dehumanization of colonial subjects in the colonial/ modern gender system justified physical, psychological and cultural violence at very different levels. Identities, bodies, knowledges, relations and values at odds with the hierarchical European logic of the new system were cruelly reduced to instances of savagery, unworthy of a place in the "legal and moral ethos of white supremacism" (H. Watson 452). Colonial spaces and peoples become, according to Lugones, "fractured [loci], constructed doubly… where the 'sides' of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism" 748). The colonized enter a process of oppressive subjectification that denies their very existence, making them and their communities the "dark" side of the dichotomy.

The psychological effects of extreme experiences have been the object of study of Western psychology throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In fact, theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich and Ann E. Kaplan agree that trauma is a sign of modern times. These investigations, that go back to Freud's interest in shell-shocked combatants, have become the subject of a large body of theoretical and literary works, especially since

1975, when the Vietnam War ended. Western approaches to trauma owe a great debt to the Freudian mode of psychoanalysis: authors such as Robert Lifton, Kali Tal, Judith Herman or Jenny Edkins[2] coincide in stressing the division trauma causes in survivors, a fragmentation that creates a second self, a pathological circumstance that must be overcome to achieve healing.

Some of the central tenets of trauma theory are the effects of trauma in memory, the necessity to effectively and honestly communicate the disturbing experience and the sense of self-division that derives from the traumatic experience. Two of the major concerns regarding the transmission of the traumatic experiences are issues of recording and remembering, and the appropriate modes of doing so. "Bearing witness" and accessing those traumatizing experiences is a key effort, since, according to Cathy Caruth, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). One of the crucial concerns of trauma theory, then, is the articulation of extreme experiences and their consequences effectively. To that effect, in psychoanalysis, the talking cure is perceived as a method to access these shattering experiences: the memory of a traumatic event is dissociated and located in an inaccessible region of the brain. The process of recovery starts by locating the traumatic event with the help of a therapist: the traumatic event is found and telling it in a narrative form to a sympathetic listener helps integrate the experience, reducing the negative symptoms and reestablishing connections with others.

[2] All of them mentioned and discussed in Claire Stocks' article (2007).

The expansion of the focus of trauma studies to attend to the specificities of the violence of the colonial/modern gender system has been reclaimed by theorists such as Ann Cvetkovich[3], Stef Craps and Gert Bruelens[4] or Michael Rothberg[5], among many others. They claim that the study of trauma must move from a neurobiological approach to a sociocultural one. The former understands the subject as fragmented after a major incident or event that shatters the identity of a previously undivided identity (mostly those constructed along Western paradigms of identity), while the latter takes into account subjects belonging to groups and communities that have experienced marginalization, colonization or other experiences that result in hyphenated identities from the very beginning of their existence.

How to represent traumatic experiences, then? Two approaches to the representation of traumatic experiences are possible: using literal or figurative language, a positivist or a symbolic approach to the narration of trauma. On one hand, historians like Dominick LaCapra and Eric Santner believe that objectivity is essential to the representation of trauma. By objectivity they mean "a mode of writing that allows access to the experience of trauma without [generalizing] trauma as a trope, turns traumatic experience into an impossible, unreadable sign…or displaces trauma onto other genres" (Di Prete 4). They argue for a mode of writing that does not block the possibility of working through (remembering) trauma[6]. By contrast, for theorists such as Shoshana

[3] *An Archive of Feelings. Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*.
[4] "Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels."
[5] "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response."
6 LaCapra makes a distinction between "acting out" (compulsively repeating traumatic scenes) and "working through:" "Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transferential relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one(or one's people) back then while realizing that one is here and now with opening to the future." (21-22)

Felman or Ronald Granofski the use of symbolism and the use of figurative language allow the possibility of making the traumatic experience available to an audience and, at the same time, distancing the reader from events that may be difficult to accommodate. This approach is opposed by Kalí Tal, who affirms that the problem of witnessing is complicated by the use of symbols, which run the risk of appropriating the experience of trauma and dislocating the meaning of the traumatic experience. For Cathy Caruth, literature provides the appropriate environment to reflect the effects on trauma, a field Freud himself used: "If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis is interested in the complex relationships between knowing and not knowing. And it is indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature precisely meet" (3). For Caruth, fiction offers the possibility of exploring the intensity of emotional and psychological responses and consequences of traumatic experiences better than fields such as history and theory in more complexity.

One of the most important flaws in the neurobiological approach, according to sociocultural theorists of trauma, is the failure to account for the traumas of those who are born in fragmented societies, families or cultural formations such as postcolonial countries or marginalized cultures. Being a highly individualistic one, this model does not account for those who, in Edward Said's words, "bear their past with them, as scars or humiliating wounds" (212). Western or European models of identity, in that sense, pay a much more reduced attention to the relational aspects of subjectivity and, for that reason, do not recognize the significance of cultural and social hegemonic formations, which influence the effects of trauma on identity. The Western paradigm deals mostly with the

traumas resulting from "accidents" (unusual events) and the reactions generated in the brain because of those events. Authors such as Ann Cvetkovich find the Westerparadigm universalizing and abstract, because of the continuous stress neurobiological theorists place on trauma as unknowable, unspeakable and inaccessible. The Western paradigm, according to the sociocultural approach, strips traumas from their specificity both in time and place, and the aforementioned desire to politicize and historicize trauma partakes of the necessity to locate trauma in time and space: "The sociocultural approach understands trauma as an everyday occurrence in the life of individuals and "'emerging from systemic contexts'" (19). Claire Stocks believes that canonical authors of trauma theory tend to concentrate on the study of the effects of trauma only on Western subjects, and specifically Western conceptions of the self as a unified, singular subject (74). Laura S. Brown agrees in critiquing this construction of trauma:

> "Human experience" as referred to in our diagnostic manuals and as the subject for much of the important writing on trauma often means "male human experience" or, at the least, an experience common to both women and men. The range of human experience becomes the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men. Trauma is thus which disrupts these particular human lives, but no other. War and genocide, which are the work of men and male-dominated culture are agreed-upon traumas; so are natural disasters, vehicle crashes, boats sinking in the freezing ocean. (101)

Along the same lines, Cvetkovich asserts that there is a necessity to take into account aspects of the historical, social and cultural conditions of domination when analyzing the

effects of trauma on those whose identity is not constructed following Western lines: "Once the causes of trauma become more diffuse, so too do the cures. Opening up the need to change social structures more broadly rather than just fix the individual people" (33). The specificity of collective traumas and the act of literary representation of trauma needs to be considered. For this reason, complementary conceptions of trauma and its textual inscription are necessary to address these issues:

> The assumed homogeneity of the survivor group implies that methods employed for healing raised in relation to the traumatised combatant are equally applicable to the survivors of other traumatic encounters. The debt that much trauma theory owes to both Freudian psychoanalysis and the study of the combat veteran thus focuses interest on specifically Western notions of identity formation, subjectivity and narrative. (76)

Other traumas exist, and need to be acknowledged; an effort to decenter the canonical, Western model of trauma needs to be made.

Theorists such as Judith Butler reclaim a shift in the focus of attention for the experiences of minorities that are not included in the target group of the "Western, white individual" to produce a remapping of trauma theory that brings individuals other than white and male to consideration. At the same time, Butler also alludes to the importance of the collective, contextualized experience and effect of traumas, a key point made by the sociocultural approach. To go beyond the individualized, pathological definition of trauma posited by the neurobiological is a necessary step to help contextualize the realities of the traumatized:

> We have all lost in recent decades from AIDS, but there are other losses that afflict us, from illness and from global conflict; and there is the fact as well that women and minorities, including sexual minorities, are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization. This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies-as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (*Precarious Life* 22)

Postcolonial literary theorists have reacted to this change in focus in trauma studies in a manner that echoes these ideas of exclusion of non-Western subjects, and supports the sociological approach to trauma theory: the emphasis on context is one of the most important aspects to be taken into account when reading works by postcolonial authors through the lens of trauma theory. The pioneering work on Frantz Fanon in his best-known works, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) opened up the field by exploring the damaging effects of colonialism in the psyche of the colonized. Fanon's analyses of the search of recognition of mere existence by the colonized, the different possibilities of self-assertion in front of the colonizer, and the role of violence in the process of getting rid of the inferiority complex resulting from colonization have been key in the initial stages in the field of postcolonial trauma studies.

In the introduction to the special issue of *Studies in the Novel* (2008), Stef Craps and Gert Bruelens insist on the need to contextualize the different circumstances of each

and every traumatized individual and community, trying to avoid the application of individualistic, Eurocentric modes of knowledge such as psychoanalysis. One such circumstance is cultural difference that, according to the authors, is a factor that has not yet been considered in the analysis of traumas:

> The founding texts of the field, however, are almost exclusively concerned with traumatic experiences of white Westerners and solely employ critical methodologies emanating from an Euro-American context…Mental health professionals, for example, are becoming increasingly aware of the need to acknowledge traumatic experiences in non-Western settings and to take account of cultural differences in the treatment of trauma. (2)

At the same time, in the epilogue to that volume, Michael Rothberg reinforces these ideas and the need to decolonize and decentralize trauma studies. Several very significant aspects are mentioned, among them the expansion of canons, not only the literary one, but also the modes of analysis of trauma, and even its own definition:

> In surveying a wide world of trauma literature, they contribute to the creation of an alternative canon of trauma novels that should have significant pedagogical implications–within postcolonial studies, certainly, but also more generally within an English studies curriculum that remains, at least in my experience, too wedded to a relatively narrow range of Anglo-American works. …The necessity of recognizing this contribution to an understanding of our blighted world should not be underestimated in a neoliberal age that produces chronic crisis for the humanities. Finally, and perhaps most centrally, the contributors provide a challenge to dominant modes of theorizing. In particular, all of the essays here

> make a convincing case for the need to supplement the event-based model of trauma that has become dominant over the past fifteen years with a model that can account for ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence as well. ("Decolonizing Trauma Studies" 226)

In another related piece, Rothberg emphasizes this need to analyze the traumatic effects of political violence in different contexts and the need to expand the canon of traumatic events and the forms of their study with his concept of multidirectional memory. He argues that a more inclusive understanding of trauma must take into account other histories of violence, not ignoring the Holocaust, but challenging two of its most important features, its uniqueness and ahistoricity, that is, the fact that no other event can be compared to it, and as a result, its marginality to the rest of the events of human history:

> At the same time that this understanding of the Nazi genocide has emerged, and in direct response to it, intellectuals interested in indigenous, minority, and colonial histories, as well as some involved in Holocaust studies, have challenged the uniqueness of the Holocaust and fostered research into other histories of extreme violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Many of these intellectuals have argued that, while it is essential to understand the specificity of the Nazi genocide (as of all histories), separating it from other histories of collective violence and even from history as such is intellectually and politically dangerous. The dangers of the uniqueness discourse are that it potentially creates a hierarchy of suffering (a morally offensive result) and removes suffering from the field of

> historical agency (a morally and intellectually suspect result). ("The Work of Testimony" 1233)

For that reason, issues related to and derived from the colonizing process and still present in post/neocolonial societies, such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide, also need to be acknowledged as trauma-inducing situations, causing not only the alienation of individuals but also of entire communities. One of the most important issues for these authors is the need to recognize that not all traumatic histories have received the same recognition in the literature. In this sense, Craps and Bruelen agree with the authors of the volume *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, who argue for an effort at postcolonializing trauma theory. They understand that the field of trauma studies is characterized by three major features: its debt to psychoanalysis, its preference for high modernist aesthetics, and its focus on the Holocaust. They argue that this focus on Western experiences damages the ethical commitment that set it apart from the poststructuralism of the 1980s and the 1990s:

> Instead of promoting solidarity between different cultures trauma studies risks producing the opposite effect as a result of this one-sided focus: by ignoring or marginalizing non-Western traumatic events and histories and non-Western theoretical work, trauma studies may actually assist in the perpetuation of Eurocentric values and structures that maintain or widen the gap between the West and the rest of the world. (2)

Their approach to this topic insists on a need for a cultural and social turn, to analyze trauma from across the world, emphasizing cross-cultural connections between

traumatized societies in a more and more globalized world. Theorists such as LaCapra, Summerfield or Herman insist that the study of traumas needs to be historicized and politicized. Derek Summerfield stresses the importance of context in the analysis of trauma and its causes: "victims react to trauma in accordance to what it means to them. Generating these meanings is an activity that is socially, culturally and often politically framed" (20). In this sense, feminist trauma theorist Judith Herman affirms that the study of psychological trauma can only be effective when tied to political efforts or movements that give voice to the disempowered and try to gain political recognition for the suffering of the dispossessed and voiceless, as is the case with postcolonial women.

Two very useful concepts in this postcolonial trauma approach to Michelle Cliff's work are "insidious trauma," and "collective trauma," as defined by Laura Brown and Kai Erikson, respectively. In both cases, their complication of the idea of what trauma is is related to contextual circumstances. They redefine trauma with attention to aspects and factors that are ignored in the neurobiological approach. Laura Brown modifies and also complements the Western conception of trauma has been developed by Laura Brown: insidious trauma is explained as "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and the spirit" (107). Brown claims that it is necessary to expand the definition of trauma: she argues that the traumatic experiences of people of color, women, gays and lesbians, lower-class people and people with disabilities are "outside the range of human experience," (101) because current definitions of trauma have been constructed from the experiences of dominant groups in Western society. Insidious trauma and its consequences as experienced by members of the society that are

reduced to the margins need be considered along with those suffered by the aforementioned central groups. Kai Erikson's "collective trauma" also expands the traditional, Western concept of trauma, by creating a definition that takes into account the effects of historical events such as the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system on the societies of non-Western subjects. She stresses the effects of such events in entire groups of people:

> By collective trauma, on the other hand I mean a blow at the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community. … I continue to exist though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. You continue to exist though distant and hard to relate to. But we no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (194)

As will be seen in the following chapters, taking into account the collective experience of trauma can be useful when confronting narratives dealing with the destruction of the ways of life and the connections of entire communities and families brought about by the impositions of the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system.

The effects of different traumas, whether they are defined as insidious, personal or collective, affect the powerless members of society, those that have been forgotten by canonical approaches to trauma, or canonical histories in general. Besides, the all-encompassing influence of homogenizing cultural dominations has been shown to still exert a powerful traumatogenic influence in the way postcolonial/multicutural subjects see themselves and their culture as inferior and needing to imitate cultural canons and rules. For those reasons, this dissertation positions itself along the lines of the

sociocultural approach to trauma studies: the conditions resulting from the imposition of the homogenizing discourses of postcolonialism need to be studied, contextualized, and historicized in the circumstances and the time and place of their occurrence.

1.2. Whiteness and the Colonial/Modern Gender System

Critical whiteness studies can be defined as a counterhegemonic theory that seeks to dismantle the master narrative of whiteness as a universal signifier of all that is aesthetically desirable as well as the pinnacle of authority, privilege, and power. The most powerful feature of whiteness is its association with normality, with the unmarked, the unspecific, or the invisible. Being white means not belonging to any race: this concept is only applied to non-whites, while whites, not racially seen or named, are considered the norm. In the words of Richard Dyer, whites are "just people" (1). Not only do white people become the norm, the positive side of a dichotomy, but also the come to represent the "human" pole of the human/non-human one: "At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they are just the human race" (3). Social and economic hegemony are still to this day associated with whiteness, and because of these circumstances the processes of identity formation of dominants and non-dominants are differently affected. Those racialized as non-white often internalize a sense of inferiority, while whiteness bestows a sense of power, privilege, freedom, endless possibilities, choices and chances for those racialized white. Author Alastair Bonnett agrees in this assessment of the powerful and still standing prevalence of whiteness as a signifier of privilege and superiority, still very much with us in the world of the twenty-first century:

> The power of whiteness continues to be generated by its relationship with social and economic hegemony. As with many of the most successful forms of

> oppression, whiteness has been internalized not merely as a sense of inferiority, but as a symbol of freedom, of excitement, of the possibilities that life can offer. (100)

Privilege, then, becomes the power to choose, a freedom that allows whites, for example, to go places freely without their choices being constantly interrogated. The experiences of the privileged are considered universal, and that puts them in a position of power to dictate what can be considered normal and what cannot, what/who belongs in the center and what/who belongs in the margins, what is acceptable and what is not. George Yancy highlights this homogenizing feature as one of the central features that help it hide as transparent and non-existent ideology: "whiteness masquerades as a universal code of beauty, intelligence, superiority, cleanliness, and purity; it functions as a master sign" (108). Whiteness and white bodies are associated with perfection, desirable, and with an elevated vision of superiority. Richard White addresses this hierarchical construction of white as an explicit idea related to the philosophy of the Enlightenment era:

> White peoples' whiteness enables them to inhabit without visible contradiction the highest point in the Enlightenment's understanding of human development, that of the subject without properties; the beauty of their skin, just because it is nothing particular and positive, is the beauty of this intellectual ideal (70).

Along the same lines, George Lipsitz also recognizes the power of its transparency as a "construct that is very hard to see" because it has been conceptualized as "the unmarked category against which difference is constructed," and for that reason, "[it] never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (369). The power of whiteness comes also from its rhetorical

construction, one that needs to be addressed so as to recenter the category and make it visible. Nakayama and Krizek identify six ways in which whiteness constructs its invisibility as racial category: whiteness as power, as a naturalized dominance; defined negatively, as non-color because of its denial of racial and ethnic features; naturalized through a scientific definition, drained of its history and social status; conflated with nationality, bounded by national borders that relegate other races to a marginal role in national life; unlabeled, and as a result, identifying race with ethnicity; seen only as symbolic ethnicity associated with those of European descent (299). These strategies help whiteness hegemonic ideology to be seen as a non-existent category that skips analysis. Robert E. Birt categorizes this rhetorical discourse as "bad faith," because it denies its own existence and identifies itself with pure transcendence, not acknowledging the situatedness of existence and human relationships:

> Whiteness is the bad faith identity of the racially dominant. The bad-faith of whiteness is the self-deception of the privileged, the inauthenticity of dominant people within a racialized social hierarchy. To embrace whiteness is to embrace the bad faith of privilege. Whiteness is the privilege of *exclusive transcendence.* But it can live as such only through the denial of the transcendence of an Other, the reduction of that Other to an object, to pure facticity. (75)

In the same vein, Richard Dyer warns against the un-categorization of white as race. One of the main dangers of leaving the construct out is its construction as the norm for "human:"

> There is no more powerful position than that of being just "human." The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people

> cannot do that – they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can, for they don't represent the interests of a race. The point of seeing the racing of whites is to dislodge them / us from the position of power, with all the inequities, oppression, privileges, and sufferings in its train, dislodging them / us by undercutting the authority with which they / we speak and act in and on the world (24).

As a response to the construction of pure transcendence, critical whiteness scholars argue for an analysis of this hegemonic construct in context, a need to situate it not only in specific times and cultural contexts, but also in relation to categories such as class and gender. However, one of the criticisms that has sprung in the field is the narrowness of analyses of the construction of whiteness in only an American context[7] and its attention to peculiarly American historical events such as black chattel slavery and mass immigration. In the introduction to *Re-Orienting Whiteness*, Jane Carey, Leigh Boucher and Katherine Ellinghaus emphasize the need to historicize whiteness in a transnational context, "by pushing 'whiteness studies' toward a more sustained engagement with critical postcolonial thought and the history of colonialism" (1). The emphasis on the transnational study of whiteness stems from the necessity to analyze the hegemonic formations of race, class and gender that helped to the globalizing expansion of the colonial/modern gender system. Through colonialism, imperialism and neocolonial

[7] Other authors that have argued for the historicization of whiteness are Vron Ware and Les Back in *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture (*University of Chicago Press, 2002), Antoinette Burton in *Empire in Question. Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Duke University Press, 2011) or Louise Newman in "The Strange Career of Whiteness: Miscegenation, Assimilation, Abdication," (*Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, edited by Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey and Katherine Ellinghaus, The Department of History, University of Melbourne in association with RMIT University Press, 2009).
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domination, whiteness has attained a global reach that needs to be addressed beyond the frontiers of the United States. Alfred López points to the most important connections that can be made between postcolonial theory and critical whiteness studies:

> …we may identify at least such points of convergence: (1) the concept of whiteness as a cultural hegemon, (2) the history of the spread of hegemonic whiteness through colonialism, (3) a broadening of the comparative focus of the debate on whiteness beyond a strictly U.S. model, and (4) a growing awareness of the United States itself as an imperial power. (16-17)

Especially interesting for the purposes of this dissertation are the connections that López makes between the construction of whiteness as "both desirable and pragmatically necessary" (18). For postcolonial subjects and the resulting alienation and marginalization of entire collectivities throughout the British Empire:

> the collective result in the colonial context is a hegemonic cultural inscription that would systematically suppress and marginalize the cultural values of the colonized population. …to gain access in this scenario to the social, economic and political power of the colonial or neocolonial state requires that the colonized subject suppress his or her own cultural practices and beliefs and learn to live "like a white man" (18).

As a result, López continues, members of privileged groups in colonial societies share a common feature: "an investment in whiteness," (20) that is, a view of this construct as an essential element specific to different contexts and societies as key in the possibility of climbing the social ladder. Lopez insists on this connection as arguably the most important one that can be made "between whiteness and postcolonial studies: the

example of nonwhites not looking white but nevertheless believing [they] are white, claiming superiority by virtue of their relative whiteness and establishing economic and cultural hegemony over other less-privileged groups on racial grounds" (20). The convergence of "ideal" and "real," and the imposition of a model of prestige in the lives of the colonized that ends up affecting all their realms of existence, from the most public to the most private.

I propose that the project to engage Critical Whiteness Studies with postcolonial theory has been already accomplished by the work of Aníbal Quijano and María Lugones through the development of the colonial/modern gender system concept. The coloniality of power, as defined by Aníbal Quijano describes the racialization of the world as the process whereby the population of the planet was organized and hierarchized in terms of the idea of race. What Quijano terms defines as "coloniality of power" is still a powerful narrative in our days in the form of different forms of oppression, domination, violence, and dispossession: "This racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality" ("Coloniality of Power" 181). This approach provides a very useful framework for the purposes of this dissertation, as its one of its main purposes is to analyze how race, and whiteness more particularly, becomes an uncontested, prevalent marker of privilege in the colonial/modern gender system, an ideal to be pursued and imitated.

In broad terms, the idea of the coloniality of power can be defined as the construction of a new world system after 1492. The PMLA journal dedicated a special

issue to the analysis of comparative racialization in 2008. In the volume, authors that include Paul Gilroy, Anibal Quijano, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, David Eng, Shu-Mein Shih, and Arif Dirlik agree on asserting that modern racialization of the world was inaugurated by colonization: "It was capitalist modernity that produced present-day societies, it was Europeans who invented modern racism as they colonized the world" (Dirlik 1367). Racialization as a historical process, as a mode of categorization to establish hierarchies and a hegemonic discourse of superiority started as early as the fifteenth century:

> The origin of racial discourse can be traced back to the dawn of European colonialism in the fifteenth century, the historical moment Wallerstein theorized as the beginning of the capitalist system, a moment that heralded a process of globalization that has intensified throughout the centuries. Race becomes a concept around this time, and it emerges contemporaneously with Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in West Africa and the Americas. … The Spanish and Portuguese empires having been on the wane and overtaken by the French, German, and British empires by the eighteenth century, scholars tie the rise of the discourse of race more assuredly with Enlightenment thought (Shih 1353).

Anne McClintock describes the production of knowledge in the eighteenth century as a process of categorization whereby a discourse of superiority / inferiority was understood as a continuum that had its peak in the perfection of whiteness:

> A host of "inferior" groups could now be mapped, measured and ranked against the "universal standard" of the white male child -within the organic embrace of the family metaphor and the Enlightenment regime of "rational" measurement as

> an optics of truth. In sum, a three-dimensional map of social difference had emerged, in which minute shadings of racial, class and gender hierarchy could be putatively measured across space: the measurable space of the empirical body (51).

The racialized discourse of colonialism constructed difference as hierarchical, transmitting an idea of the superiority of Europe and its culture. Modernity cannot be understood without an acknowledgement of its dependence on the naturalization and embodiment in racial whiteness. Both Anibal Quijano (2008) and Maria Lugones (2007) describe colonization as a process of "historical reidentification" that began in 1492 with the constitution of the American continent. The racialization of different populations was very tightly related to labor relations, social roles, and new geohistorical relations that changed the lives and societies of populations around the world:

> After the colonization of America and the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, the subsequent constitution of Europe as a new *id*-entity needed the elaboration of a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, a theoretical perspective on the idea of race as a naturalization of colonial relations between Europeans and non-Europeans. Historically, this meant a new way of legitimizing the already old ideas and practices of relations of superiority/inferiority between dominant and dominated. From the sixteenth century on, this principle has proven to be the most effective and long-lasting instrument of universal social domination, since the much older principle—gender or intersexual domination—was encroached upon by the inferior/superior racial classifications. So the conquered and dominated peoples were situated in a natural position of inferiority

> and, as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power. ("Coloniality of Power" 6)

This new world system organized social relations around the invented idea of race, which served the purpose to justify the already unequal distribution of labor in colonized societies. The Americas and the Caribbean became part of an interstate system defined by the European-non European binary in an organization of hierarchical layers that had, at its bottom, the formal colonies. In the West Indies in particular the sugar industry produced complete social reorganizations that affected the colonized at multiple levels: "Sugar capital created a world market by bringing the Caribbean into a Europe-centered world, or better yet, by destroying the temporalities of pre-colonial ways of life and opening a world in the Caribbean that runs according to the temporality of capitalist accumulation" (Cheah 221). Incorporating the colonies into this new interstate system involved also the creation of a series of social relations constructed on the grounds of domination. The concept of race was utilized to organize a new system of relationships: "The fact is that from the beginning of the colonization of America, Europeans associated nonpaid or nonwaged labor with the dominated races because they were 'inferior' races" ("Coloniality of Power" 538). Roxann Wheeler's discussion of the role of religion and racialization in *The Complexion of Race* agrees with this same vision, and at the same time, establishes a bridge with Quijano's understanding of the construction of race. She makes a similar argument when she discusses how premodern notions of difference,

based on religion rather than skin color, changed when the capitalist system of slavery started:

> Religion continued to be a significant category in the new colonies to distinguish Europeans from the indigenous people and the slaves. For the early English settlers in America, Jordan contends that the heathen condition of the Negroes seemed of considerable importance (91), so much so that it was initially more important than their skin color, a situation that changed, in his view, by the end of the 17th century in North America, when chattel racial slavery emerges. (98)

In this sense, both Wheeler and Quijano conclude it was the logic of capital that initiated this racial reidentification of entire populations of the world. Quijano argues that this new model of power created a new world intersubjectivity that combined racial classification with ethnocentrism to produce a hierarchy where all things European (and white) occupied the light side of civilization, a hegemonic position of domination that Anibal Quijano defines as "the center of the modern world-system" ("Coloniality of Power" 189), which created new geocultural relations and a web of superior / inferior intersubjective relationships. The colonial/modern gender system transformed phenotypical differences into values by creating a new world intersubjectivity. According to Anibal Quijano, the invention of race replaced the relations of superiority and inferiority derived by processes of domination: being European, and hence white meant that individuals were naturally superior, the apex of modernity, knowledge, morality, and sophistication, unlike those racialized as non-white.

The cultural hegemon of whiteness instituted new intersubjectivities characterized by the historical superiority of Europe and by a view of differences between Europe and

the rest of the world as "natural" instead as a result of the history of power. The naturalization and idealization of whiteness became two of the most important results of modernity. Both were associated with social, economic, and cultural hegemony, and with positions of privilege only a few could aspire to. Anibal Quijano provides a very thorough explanation as to how this new historical reidentification of entire populations worked:

> The racist distribution of new social identities was combined, as had been done so successfully in Anglo-America, with a racist distribution of labor and the forms of exploitation inherent in colonial capitalism. This occurred, above all, through a quasi-exclusive association of whiteness with wages, and of course, with the high-order positions in colonial administration. Thus, each form of labor control was associated with a particular race. Consequently, the control of a specific form of labor could be, at the same time, the control of a specific group of dominated people, A new technology of domination/exploitation, in this case race/labor, was articulated in such a way that the two elements appeared naturally associated. To this day, this strategy has been exceptionally useful. ("Coloniality of Power" 185)

These new identities were identified as racial, colonial, and negative. The new relationships derived from these caused two major consequences, key for the expansion of the colonial project and modernity: first, historical and singular identities were completely erased. Quijano provides some interesting examples to emphasize the obliteration of entire cultures, histories, and identities that became subsumed into a new, and at the same time sweeping, generalizing, colonial, racial, and negative identity:

> To start with, in the moment that the Iberians conquered, named and colonized America (whose northern region, North America, would be colonized by the British a century later), they found a great number of different peoples, each with its own history, language, discoveries, and cultural products, memory, and identity… Three hundred years later, all of them had become merged into a single identity: Indians. …The same happened with the peoples forcefully brought from Africa as slaves… In the span of three hundred years, all of them were Negroes or blacks. ("Coloniality of Power" 199-200)

Secondly, these new identities involved the construction of their place in the history of cultural production of humanity as inferior races only capable of producing inferior cultures. As a result, a dualism or continuum was created, where the members of these new geocultural identities were identified with some state of nature, as opposed to the modern European society. Other poles of this dualism include capital/pre-capital, Europe/non-Europe, civilized/primitive, or modern/pre-modern.

The postcolonial, however, is not simply an economic or historical phenomenon. The imposition of this colonial/modern gender system domination meant much more than economic control: "The hierarchy of coloniality manifested itself in all domains—political, economic and not least of all-cultural" (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). Its ideology affected the mind and the bodies of the colonized: whiteness is defined as the norm, against which all other identities are compared. Its discourse of superiority is also constructed as one of normativity: "whiteness operates by marking the body of the 'other' as a site of difference in the process of constructing itself as the locus of normativity" (Shome 120). As mentioned earlier, Richard Dyer explains the association of whiteness

with beauty and moral superiority as a cultural tradition of white skin as a symbol of an explicit ideal:

> In Western tradition, white is beautiful because it is the colour of virtue. This remarkable equation relates to a particular definition of goodness. All lists of the moral connotations of white as symbol in Western culture are the same: purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity. … The Virgin Mary is the supreme exemplar of this feminine whiteness. Her fair hair and complexion, often white robes and association with lilies and robes all constitute her undisputed virtue in terms of white hue and skin. (92-94)

As will be seen in the analysis of images of whiteness in the third chapter of this dissertation, this image that conflates both aesthetic and moral desirable characteristics has an immense power in the construction of English queens throughout the centuries.

More importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, as an intersubjective relation between citizens, whiteness has effects on the everyday life of (post)colonial subjects, who see themselves as deficient and abnormal in the presence of this dominant discursive formation. The historical construction of these differences is graphically, powerfully, and effectively described by the third-person narrative voice in Cliff's *Abeng*. This supposedly inferior identity of the world populations, performed by the colonial/modern gender system at work from its very beginnings in the 15th century, identified members of the colonized territories using mostly animal imagery purposefully dehumanizing and brutalizing them:

> The question of humanness or the lack of it has been purified in the crucible responsible for the society into which this girl now found herself. The society had

> been built around an absolute definition of who was human and who was not. It really was that simple—except some people were not quite one thing or the other. …When he left on his journeys across the curve of the globe, Columbus carried with him several books in which the white Christian European imagination had carved images of the beings in unknown and unexplored lands. Dog-headed beings with human torsos. Winged people who could not fly. Beings with one foot growing out of the tops of their heads, their only living function to create shade for themselves in the hot tropical sun. People who ate human flesh. All monsters. All inhuman. The people the explorers and the philosophers of exploration envisioned would inhabit the ends of the earth.
>
> In part the Europeans created these fantastic images to render the actual inhabitants harmless. …Imagined inhabitants will have few—if any—individual characteristics. They will have bizarre features by which they are joined to one another, but none which are specific to themselves. Their primary feature is their difference from white and Christian Europeans. It is *that* heart of darkness which has imagined them less than human. Which has limited their movement. (*Abeng* 77-78)

These categories of the colonial/gender modern system, where the dark side is occupied by whole groups of people that are objectified, dehumanized, and animalized, are the reality for members of nondominant groups to this day. In her fiction, Michelle Cliff depicts situations of privilege associated with whiteness, but also how this privilege affects personal relationships by destroying possible connections both at the family and the community levels in the Jamaica of the twentieth century.

1.3. Postcolonial Feminism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System

Feminist resistance to the colonial/modern gender system has gone through different steps and has dealt with very different concerns in different postcolonial nations, but two issues seem to be common to most of the movements: first, a rejection of the sexism of anticolonial national movements, that constructed women as national emblems (Loomba 180), but did not really grant them real agency[8]. In fact, women "disappeared" from discussions of issues that directly affected them, such as the right to education, or practices such as immolation (Loomba 185). The second issue involved a rejection of the work and scope of white feminisms: these took the experiences of white bourgeois women as central and forgot the interlocking oppressions of black women's lives[9].

[8] Even if this is true, Loomba also argues that these national movements also had a positive side, as they helped "re-shape women's understanding of themselves" (189), largely by a legitimization of their public activity. In the last decades of the twentieth century women's activism in postcolonial countries has been largely associated with working-class struggles as the concerns of white feminism seemed foreign to them: " On the whole, the experience of postcolonial women's movements has underlined that the fight against state repression and rape, against racism and patriarchy or for better working conditions and for choice of sexual orientation, cannot be pitted against each other but not to be simultaneously addressed" (191). In more recent years, the dynamics of globalization have become one of the most important concerns for postcolonial feminists as economic exploitation of women's labor has made them "the most exploited of the world's workers today" (Loomba 191).

[9] In the Anglophone Caribbean women identified with feminist politics as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. What is more, this concern for the rights of women was directly related to a preoccupation with racialized structures and conceptions of gender. Rhoda Reddock (7) discusses how the PanAfricanist movement of the 1920s offered the women's movement an opportunity to fight for equality. Garveyism, however, did not challenge the idea that women's roles were reduced to wives or social workers. Despite its contradictions, Reddock continues, it served as the platform from which the work of working and middle-class activities such as Jamaicans Adina Spencer and Una Marson or Trinidadian Audrey Jeffers (8). These early Caribbean feminists fought against discrimination in education, marriage and divorce inequalities, discrimination in education and working conditions, or body politics.
The civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s spurred the creation of CAFRA (Caribbean Association for Feminist Association and Research) was founded in the 1970s as an organization that aimed to develop a feminist movement in the Caribbean region, to enact a research of the inequality of women as race, class, and gender oppressions interlocked, and to promote connections between research and action. CAFRA became the environment for discussions such as the relevance of feminism and Marxism as fundamentally Western ideologies, race and ethnicity, the valorization of blackness as opposed to white cultural hegemony, or the underrepresentation of Indo-Caribbean women's concerns. More recently organizations such as Working women in Trinidad and Tobago have worked against the racism of calypso lyrics or for the strengthening of ties among women of different ethnicities (Reddock 18). Similarly, Red Thread, a Guyanese organization started its work in the 1980s and has continued on until the 2000s as an organization fighting to foster cooperation between women of different ethnicities.

The colonial/modern gender system, as developed by María Lugones, describes colonization and the coloniality of gender as a historical process of domination that denied colonized women of their humanity. Their identity was constructed as lacking, since only the "civilized" acquired the status of "human:" "The semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that 'colonized woman' is an empty category: no women are colonized; no colonized females are women. Thus, the colonial answer to Sojourner Truth is clearly, 'no.'" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism" 745)

Lugones' articulation of the colonial/modern gender system as a new framework of analysis springs directly from the claims made by Third World feminisms and feminisms of color. These movements react against the universalisms of white feminism that have excluded nonwhite women from the struggle for liberation. To pursue this investigation, postcolonial feminists consider it fundamental to assert the need for a study of interlocking systems of oppression that characterize the lives of postcolonial female subjects. Postcolonial feminism has resisted the theoretical practices of prevailing forms of Western feminism by asserting the necessity to address different, varied and interlocking systems of oppression that affect the lives of postcolonial women. Authors such as Kimberlee Crenshaw, María Lugones, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, bell hooks, or Gloria Anzaldúa consider mainstream feminism has established a hegemonic, universal category "woman" that fails to deal with race, class, and gender issues that complicate the lives of women in multiethnic postcolonial societies around the world. María Lugones characterizes white feminist struggle as "indifferent" to the specificity of the lives of postcolonial female subjects:

> White feminist struggle became one against the positions, roles, stereotypes, traits, and desires, imposed on white bourgeois women's subordination. They countenanced no one else's gender oppression. They understood women as inhabiting white bodies but did not bring the racial qualification to articulation or clear awareness. That is, they did not understand themselves in intersectional terms at the intersection of race, gender, and other forceful marks of subjection or domination. Because they did not perceive these deep differences they saw no need to create coalitions. They presumed a sisterhood, a bond given with the subjection of gender. (2002:203)

Postcolonial feminist theorists challenge mainstream feminists to examine their practices. In her analysis of the Combahee River manifesto, Breines lists some of the most important proposals for change in the feminist movement: "They challenged white feminists to … convert the feminist movement into one in which women of all races and ethnicities are recognized, affirmed, and can operate fully; they demand an analysis and a movement that confirm not only the importance of race and class as well as gender…" (151). What is more, it is also important to examine the traumatic aftermath of the hegemonies of colonialism and imperialism, nation, and decolonization in the lives of women, with a special emphasis on specific contexts and histories.

Several Third World feminists' theoretical texts agree on the problematic approaches of hegemonic positions in prevailing forms of Western feminism and propose different practices that acknowledge the heterogeneous experiences of Third World women in context. One of the issues that they agree it needs to be challenged is the construction by major Western feminists of "Third World Woman" as a unitary category,

without taking into account the different aspects in the construction of their identities, the category thus becoming a frozen, ahistorical one, lacking connection with the particular social and economic conditions of their existence. Another of the aspects where Third World feminists criticize prevailing forms Western feminism is their appropriation of the voice of the Third World Woman, thus interpreting and representing their experiences without attending to different aspects of oppression at work. Mohanty refers to this situation as the "objectification" of Third World women in prevalent Western feminist discourse. By constructing themselves as the norm, major Western feminists create a binary opposition whereby they become the norm that feminists of color must pursue:

> This average Third World woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being "Third World" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This is, I suggest, in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions. (22)

Gayatri Spivak considers the issue as prevailing Western feminisms imposing their voices on the experiences of Third World Women. In "French Feminism in an International Frame," she critiques authors such as Julia Kristeva for their privileged ethnocentrism: "This is not the tired nationalist claim that only a native can know the scene. The point that I am trying to make is that, in order to learn enough about Third World Women and to develop a different readership, the immense heterogeneity of the field must be appreciated and the First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a *woman*" (136). Similarly, Mohanty addresses the question of the

relationship between major forms of Western feminism and Third World feminisms, one she characterizes as being "monolithic," "arbitrary," and "ethnocentric" ("Under Western Eyes" 19). For Mohanty, Third World feminists must struggle against the domination and homogeneity of prevailing Western feminism, which, in the construction of the "Third World difference" homogenizes and misrepresents the lives of Third World and American multiethnic women. Such a vision needs to be challenged with the aim of historicizing and contextualizing the social, economic and political conditions that affect postcolonial female subjects' lives.

Mohanty argues for an imagined community of Third World feminists or communities of resistance with the objective of analyzing and politicizing their struggles, acknowledging, at the same time, their different histories, locations and sociopolitical and economic conditions: "This, then, is what indelibly marks this discussion of Third World Women and the politics of feminism together: imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic" (1991: 46-47). In the same vein, bell hooks stresses the necessity to create a solidarity community among feminists: "Only when we confront the realities of race, sex and class, the way they divide us, make us different, stand us in opposition, and work to reconcile and resolve these issues will we be able to participate in the making of feminist revolution, in the transformation of the world" (25). bell hooks coincides in this view with the previous authors, asserting that the main problem with feminist movement in the West is its claim that the struggle against class and race exploitation should be subordinated to the fight against patriarchal exploitation, from where the other two

spring. hooks argues for a revision of the practices of Western feminism. With her views, hooks challenges Western feminist theory and the feminist movement to revise what she calls "racism and elitism" (22) and calls for a more heterogeneous feminist movement that strives to eradicate domination, not only patriarchal, but also from other systems of oppression that affect postcolonial and multiethnic women of color: "By calling attention to interlocking systems of domination—sex, race and class—black women and many other groups of women acknowledge the diversity and complexity of female experience, of our relationship to power and domination" (21). Gloria Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness" also springs from the recognition of the power that exists in the borderland, a perspective that acknowledges the existence of multiple positions: there is a need to leave what she calls "the opposite bank," to go beyond the counterstance represented by the refutation of the views of the dominant culture. People marked by difference, those who must live in the fractured loci the colonies become, are now creating a new space: the aim is to "shift out of habitual formations, from convergent thinking to divergent thinking, characterized by a movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (79). All of these authors argue for a more democratic perspective of solidarity in the approach to feminism. . Directly indebted to Anzaldúa's theory of resistance is María Lugones's proposal of resistance movements that stress memory and collectivity as two major components:

> From the fractured locus, the movement succeeds in retaining creative ways of thinking, behaving and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital. Subject, relations, ground, and possibilities, are continually transformed, incarnating a

> weave from the fractured locus that constitutes a creative, peopled re-creation… I want to see the multiplicity in the fracture of the locus: both the enactment of the coloniality of gender and the resistant response from a subaltern sense of self, of the social, of the self-in-relation, of the cosmos, all grounded in peopled memory. ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754)

Defying the logic of the colonial/modern gender system, resistant subjects from the fractured locus subvert cultural and material dispossession and respond to power by affirming the negated, the obliterated, the despised.

Critical whiteness studies and trauma studies converge the moment that whiteness as a discourse of power and privilege affects the everyday of multicultural / postcolonial subjects who see their world, their culture and the color of their skin disappear, or be devalued by the hegemonic discourse of whiteness. The Eurocentric myth of the colonizer's racial superiority defines borders for what is conceived as natural (pure, whiteness, non-race) or unnatural (blackness, colorness, hybridity). Combining postcolonial feminism, trauma theory and critical whiteness is not only an analysis of traumatic experiences not being assimilated at the time of their occurrence, it is complicated by the cultural inequalities related to psychic and material domination associated by the invisible whiteness of power structures, the differences between the ruler and the ruled in a specific socio-cultural context. Such a combination offers the opportunity to explore relationships of power and their effects: trauma narratives highlight postcolonial / multicultural concerns by rearticulating the lives and voices of marginal people, and reveal trauma as an indicative of social injustices, inequalities and oppressions as the ultimate cost of destructive sociocultural institutions.

1.4. The Colonial/Modern Gender System as Theorized by María Lugones

A postcolonial analysis of the traumas provoked by the colonial imposition of sixteenth-century European hegemonic formations cannot forget to examine the deep imbrications of race class, gender, and sexuality in the analysis of the construction of the modern world. For that reason, María Lugones's "colonial / modern gender system" concept becomes central for the purposes of this dissertation. This approach builds upon the work of other theorists, especially Aníbal Quijano's "coloniality of power," a concept that is used to explain the basic and universal organization of the world's peoples solely in terms of the idea of "race," to incorporate a discussion of gender and sexuality in said analysis. By grounding her work in the theories of feminists of color and Third World feminists, she complicates a discussion that, in her opinion, does not articulate the consequences of subjection, disempowerment and denial of agency for colonized women:

> The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender—both are powerful fictions ("Heterosexualism" 202).

María Lugones expands this concept of coloniality of power with the aim of introducing gender and sexuality as well as race in the discussion, also as determining factors in the construction of whiteness as a hegemonic formation. Lugones aims to complicate Aníbal Quijano's concept of "the coloniality of power" as she understands that his approach to the idea of gender as too narrow, focusing only on biological aspects, thus simplifying the

concept of gender in terms of the sexual: “Quijano’s framework restricts gender to the organization of sex, its resources, and products and he seems to make a presupposition as to who controls access and who become constituted as sources” (“Heterosexualism” 194). Lugones interprets gender differently, as an imposition of the colonial/gender modern system that changed societal organizations in the colonized territories forever:

> …gender is a colonial imposition, not just as it imposes itself on life lived in tune with cosmologies incompatible with the modern logic of dichotomies, but also that inhabitations of worlds understood, constructed, and in accordance with such cosmologies animated the self-among-others in resistance from and at the extreme tension of colonial difference (“Toward a Decolonial Feminism”748).

Gender differences and heterosexualism, Lugones argues, were introduced in societies that lacked those. Consequently, the lives of the colonized were transformed into the English, Western to fit its sanctioned patterns. Gender, then, came to designate “binarily opposed and hierarchical social categories” (“Heterosexualism” 197). Lugones supports her argument with several studies of gender structures or lack thereof in different societies and tribal organizations from Africa and the Americas before the imposition of the colonial/gender modern system. With these descriptions, she demonstrates that intersexual and third-gender individuals were recognized in many tribal societies before colonization without a forceful assimilation in the binary system of gender (“Heterosexualism” 195). She also argues that the idea of sodomy was constructed as a sin by the Spanish in its territories in the Americas, leading to the corresponding punishment by the authorities. Moreover, sodomites were also racialized into groups considered inferior: “In Spanish popular culture, sodomy was racialized by connecting

the practice to the Moors and the passive partner was condemned as seen as equal to a Moor" ("Heterosexualism" 201).

Through a careful description of Yoruba and Native American societies, she shows how no gender system existed, or that they had a more egalitarian setup. In the former, for example, anatomically female or male were categories not understood as opposed. In the latter, gynecratic egalitarian structures were in place, with women at their center. Decisions were never made without women's contribution and blessing. Lugones also points out to a key element in the introduction of gender in these societies: co-optation of men into patriarchal roles: males in these societies accepted the introduction of gender as a tool of domination ("Heterosexualism" 199). The same was true of some Native American societies:

> Cherokee women lost all of these powers and rights, as the Cherokee were removed and patriarchal arrangements were introduced. The Iroquois shifted from a Mother-centered, Mother-right people organized politically under the authority of the Matrons to a patriarchal society when the Iruquois became a subject people. The feat was accomplished with the collaboration of Handsome Lake and his followers ("Heterosexualism" 200).

All these examples help understand how the colonial/modern gender system violently inferiorized colonized women by constructing their identity as inferior. In these societies, then, being a female became an identifiable category: anatomy defined women and subordinated them in all contexts and circumstances. Some of the most important consequences for colonial women included racial inferiorization and gender subordination. At a more material level, this meant they were systematically excluded

from the newly created colonial public sphere, and made them ineligible for public roles. Maria Lugones' complicates the concept of the coloniality of power by adding that the global, Eurocentered capitalism Quijano describes becomes now a global, Eurocentered heterosexualist system after the imposition of a patriarchal, colonial state. One of the main features of the co-construction of the coloniality of power and the colonial/gender modern system is the existence of a light and a dark side:

> the sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender—both are powerful fictions. ("Heterosexualism" 202)

The imposition of this gendered, racialized, heterosexualist, capitalist system dominated and devastated entire world populations, their communities and social relations, their cultural forms and history, and their personal and family relationships. Lugones asserts one of its most harmful effects was the creation of an indifference towards the pain and conditions of others, especially colonized women of color. As will be seen, this system denied them of humanity and created them as sexualized animals with unlimited capacity to work and procreate, among other assumptions. They occupied the "dark" position in this system, while bourgeois white woman occupied the light one. The dark side of the colonial/modern gender system is its lack of interest for diversity. Lugones believes only white bourgeois women counted as such, while nonwhite women fell out of the category, and were animalized, sexualized, and lacking femininity. In the

construction of women of non-dominant groups there was a continuum that went from "animals" to different gradations of "woman: "Thus, heterosexual rape of Indian or African slave women coexisted with concubinage, as well as the imposition of the heterosexual understanding of gender relations among the colonized—when and as it suited global, Eurocentered capitalism, and heterosexual domination of white women" ("Heterosexualism" 203).

Being able to understand the historic construction of gendered and racialized hegemonic categories opens up new liberatory and decolonial possibilities since white feminist theories and practices have focused only on one very specific sense of gender and gendered sexuality, but forgotten the deep imbrications of race in the analysis. Lugones contends that white feminisms, with their view of woman as a single category have failed to see the intersectionality of nonwhite women's lives. Her main argument is that this historic oversight failed to see that their category of woman only included white bourgeois women, assuming an inexistent solidarity that came with the gender bond. Lugones and the feminisms of women of color reject the limitations of white feminisms as they ignored the circumstances of colonized women and understood their own as universal, and assumed an inexistent solidarity, a reality of bonds with the experiences and concerns of other women. This "feminist universalism" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"742) ignored the reality of interlocking oppressions in the lives of non-white women, of the intersectionalities of their lives. Lugones' decolonial feminism builds on the work of Third World feminisms as she complicates the concept of intersectionality. In her work, she establishes a significant difference between the feminisms of women and color and her proposal: intersectionality looks at absences, "at the failures of institutions

to include discrimination or oppression of women of color" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"757), while decolonial feminism also thinks of their presence, as being able to being both oppressed and resisting at the same time ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"758). It intervenes in postcolonial feminism by enacting a historicization of the imposition of the fictionalities of race and gender that dehumanized the colonized, turned them against themselves, and destroyed communities. Besides, this intervention proposes a logic of coalition that resists this destruction of multiplicity and communal relations, and foregrounds the continued resistance to the logic of the colonial/modern gender system. Lugones also stresses this resistance is performed at the level of the community, calling for a transformation of communal relations:

> The long process of subjectification of the colonized toward adoption/internalization of the men/women dichotomy as a normative construction of the social—a mark of civilization, citizenship, and membership in civil society—was and is constantly renewed. It is met in the flesh over and over by oppositional responses grounded in a long history of oppositional responses and lived as sensical in alternative, resistant socialties, in the colonial difference. It is movement toward coalition that impels us to know each other as selves that are thick, in relation, in alternative socialties, and grounded in tense, creative inhabitations of the colonial difference ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"748).

The logic of coalitions stresses the existence of selves in relation, as they maintain and cultivate multiplicity, and resist the logic of the colonial/modern gender system. For the purposes of this dissertation, decolonial feminism will be a helpful tool to analyze Michelle Cliff's fiction as a resistance project that proposes to return, to create, or to live

in alternative structures that defy the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system. As will be seen through this analysis, Cliff's fiction subverts this logic and responds to this organization of the world by presenting knowledges, social organizations and behaviors that resist the logic of capitalist modernity and its fragmenting, homogeneous categories.

1.5. The Colonial/Modern Gender System in Cliff´s Works

Vilouta-Vázquez describes Cliff's works as a response "to the imposition of a set of pre-established, hegemonic, European, prestigious patterns of behavior and cultural norms that were imposed and felt as lacking connection with the everyday reality of the colonized subject" (11). Cliff's fiction, Vilouta-Vázquez continues, serves the purpose to "subvert the inequalities affecting their societies" (11).

Cliff's fiction can be grouped with a numerous group of novels, short stories, and documentaries by authors from the Americas and other postcolonial nations that have engaged the alienating disconnections of the colonial/modern gender system, as well as resistance projects against it. Rosario Castellanos, from Mexico, explored questions of privilege through the relationship of the daughter of a plantation owner and her Nana in *Balún Canán*, (1957). In *The Hills of Hebron* (1962), Sylvia Wynter addressed how of a group of previously enslaved Jamaicans attempt to create different ways of living by asserting themselves against the hegemonies of the system. There is a well-known connection with Dominican Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) that Michelle Cliff herself makes in *No Telephone to Heaven*: the former is a rewriting of the story of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys composes the story of unbelonging of Antoinette Cosway, a Creole heiress, her unhappy marriage and life as she is torn away from her life in Jamaica

after getting married to Mr. Rochester. American-born, but of Barbadian descent, Paule Marshall describes the birth of a revolutionary movement in Bourne Island, a Caribbean imaginary island with a population mostly composed of impoverished people, descendants of enslaved persons of African descent in *The Timeless Place, the Chosen People* (1969). Conflict bursts when an American company initiates a project to improve the conditions of what they define as a backward community. *Jane and Louisa will Soon Come Home* (1980) by Jamaican Erna Brodber, explores different aspects of the traumatic past of Jamaica as it affects the construction of identity of Nellie, its main character. South African Zoë Wicomb's collection of short stories *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1981) follow the evolution of a young colored girl trapped by her mixed heritage. Chilean Isabel Allende's *Of Love and Shadows* recounts the story of the unexpected interest for underground resistance of Irene Beltrán, a young woman of privileged upbringing, in the years of Pinochet's oppressive regime. Puerto Rican Rosario Ferré's *Maldito Amor* (1986) reflects on the prejudices that destroy the life of a mestiza in a religious school in Puerto Rico. Merle Collins' *Angel* (1987) portrays the birth and failure of the New Jewel Movement in the Grenada of the early 1980s. Dominican Julia Álvarez's *In the Name of Salomé* (2000) portrays the liberation of a New Cubana from gender and racial oppression of the colonial/modern gender system. Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa's *Daughters of the Stone* (2009) tells the story of a resistant line of mothers and daughters in the mid-1800s in a sugar plantation in Puerto Rico. In *The Book of Night Women* (2009), Marlon James, from Jamaica, narrates the story of Lilith, a light-skinned, green-eyed enslaved young woman who debates whether to join the Night Women, a resistance group that plans a slave revolt, or stay in a comfortable position as the plantation overseer's lover.

Aside from fiction projects, *A Small Place,* a book-length essay by Antiguan Jamaica Kincaid (1988) develops a critique of tourism as a neocolonial industry characterized by escapism and the distance established with the reality of the countries / places visited. In the essay, Kincaid explores the legacies of the colonial/modern gender system. Stephanie Black's *Life and Debt* (2001) documentary uses excerpts from Kincaid's essay as a springboard to analyze the impact of IMF policies in the Jamaica of the final decades of the twentieth century. *Adio Kerida* (2002) by Ruth Behar is another documentary that records its author's return to Cuba after having lived in the United States for several decades. With the aim to recover her ties with the Sephardic community in Havana, Behar's project intends to answer individual and collective identity questions. One of Michelle Cliff's works' purposes, Vilouta-Vázquez explains, is to "deconstruct the "rightness" of the pre-modern/modern paradigm—constructed as an exclusionary opposition — looking beyond the colonial institutions that impose the normative whiteness of Christian and Victorian education to the alternative wisdom of those who represent non-European resources" (11).

Michelle Cliff's fiction not only reflects the different layers of interlocking oppressions that affect the lives of women but also the different ways in which how they resist and empower themselves, especially by resorting to alternative communities. With female protagonists at the center of their narratives, *Abeng, No Telephone to Heaven, Free Enterprise and Into the Interior* analyze how the construction of the identity postcolonial female subjects is affected by the intersecting oppressive racialized/gendered formations of the colonial/modern gender system.

The chapters of this dissertation will analyze, on the one hand, the impact of the violent imposition of the hegemonic formations of the colonial/modern gender system at three different levels: history, the body and the community. On the other hand, the second half of each chapter analyzes the different responses to these traumatizing constructions by different characters. I will examine several strategies of recovery and their importance for the reformulation of the identities of postcolonial traumatized subjects and communities, and how they subvert the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system by resorting to silenced history, forbidden ways of being, relationships and collectivizing efforts. Michelle Cliff's fiction proposes that individual and collective traumas can only be healed through a profound transformation of the categories of the colonial/modern gender system resulting from an analysis and examination of its hegemonies. Re-establishing the connections disrupted by the influence of the hierarchical structures of the colonial/modern gender system, and the creation of alternative communities of resistance are two of the means of recovery that Cliff explores. In the second half of these upcoming chapters, I examine different ways of resisting hegemonic cultural formations. Recovery of history, the body, and the community are strategies that postcolonial female subjects resort to as a way out of the traumatic web of disjointed relationships, alienation and loneliness brought about by the colonial/ modern gender system

Lugones' conceptual framework of "decolonial feminism" puts forward a combined, complex response to the colonial/modern gender system that makes an intervention in postcolonial feminism, and at the same time, facilitates a multilayered analysis of Michelle Cliff's novels. Lugones' proposal opens up the possibility to effectively examine how the Jamaican writer explores and reflects the damaging

consequences of the colonial/modern gender system in the lives of colonized women. "Decolonial feminism" intervenes in this field through a twofold approach. On the one hand, it emphasizes the importance of a historicization of the creation of the category of gender and the subsequent introduction of heterosexualism as the fundamental norm of organization in societies which enjoyed much more varied, egalitarian categories. On the other hand, it calls for coalitions of resisters that perform a transformation of communal relationships by historicizing the continuous resistance to the fragmenting, dichotomizing logic of the colonial/modern gender system. The aim is to challenge the idea that this system was perpetually successful, but as continually resisted, including today. Besides, Lugones' proposal emphasizes multiplicity, an existence of selves in relation that transforms social organizations, human relationships, history and culture. There is a stress on practices and movements that attempt to overturn the dichotomies of the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system.

Chapter two, entitled "Unburying the Silenced Lives and Voices of Female Resisters: Decolonization of History in *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*" has two objectives. I will study how Cliff represents the loss of history as a collective trauma. She has been called "The Historical Re-visionary," as she consistently excavates the histories of suffering of those left out by the dominant discourse. The denial, silence, and obliteration of the Afro-Jamaican side of the main characters' identities mark their development, making the negotiation between the two main parts of her identity very difficult, even traumatic. Being denied the ties to culture and the memories related to it produces traumatic results and involves a radical sense of disconnection and isolation. In these novels, the reclamation of the buried history of resistant women can be defined as a

counterhegemonic project that defies the false stability of the hegemony of the colonial/modern gender system and its impositions. The initial section of the chapter looks at *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* as historiographic resistance projects that revise its obliteration and destruction of history. Besides, it studies these novels as projects that recover the history of colonial and postcolonial female subjects in a constant movement of resistance against the hegemonies of the colonial system.

In the second half of the chapter, I explore issues of memory and its recovery as a powerful agent of reformulation of the identities of postcolonial traumatized subjects. Recovery of the collectively shared past provides individuals with a healing strategy for both the present and the future. Two concepts, "world memory" as proposed by Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy, and "multidirectional memory," as described by Michael Rothberg, are especially important in the development of this chapter, as they help to establish connections between traumatized communities and their members. They both expand the notion of memory as an individual experience, and emphasize the importance of connections between individuals and communities. As will be seen, memory plays a major role in the reconstruction of the history of cultural loss brought about by the overwhelming power of a culture of whiteness. I will analyze how reclaiming the past helps the rearticulation of their identities with the aim of reformulating the conceptions of the world that have been transmitted to them. Forgetting as well as remembering are considered a social act and for that reason, reconnecting with the erased side of themselves and other members of the traumatized community proves to be an effort that emphasizes the need to re-create collective and personal stories / histories. Reestablishing / maintaining / unearthing the connections with those cultural traditions and

manifestations prove essential in the reconstruction of (post)colonial identities away from the impositions of the ideology of whiteness. The recovery of cultural memory they reclaim becomes the mechanism through with they can make sense of themselves and their collective traumas. Recovery of history as performed by postcolonial subjects in these novels is articulated around two different axes that serve as modes of empowerment: first, the reclamation of the figure of Nanny of the Maroons; second, the creation of counterhistorical spaces that allow for an unconventional construction of history.

Chapter three, entitled "Resisting the Traumatic Performances of Whiteness: Decolonizing Foreign Bodies in *Abeng* and *Into the Interior*" will analyze one of the most significant issues in the traumatic experience of female postcolonial subjects when faced with the power of whiteness ideology: the construction of bodies as racial signifier of privilege/disempowerment, primarily focusing on *Abeng* and *Into the Interior*. The novels to be analyzed can be defined as corporeal trauma narratives because the body of (post)colonial subjects is inscribed in different cultural positions within society because gender and color formations demarcate fixed positions of privilege or inferiority. Even if this dichotomy appears to be paradoxical, this chapter analyzes it as a reality in the upbringing of light-skinned, multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multiethnic postcolonial subjects. The promising future of privilege of their phenotypical characteristics takes precedence over all the other components of their multiple identities, and attempts to obliterate all of them but one. What is more, this chapter will investigate how these light-skinned bodies are appropriated by white-identified members of these girls' families. The belief that "you look x, so you must be x," imposes a series imposes a series of race and

gender performances that will be analyzed as a sign of the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system. Its logic of fragmentation impacts these characters from a very early age, restricting their relationship at multiple levels of family, school, and friendships. “Social distance” will become of the key concepts to study the consequences of the imposition of these performances. It will help understand the effects of whiteness, as subjects who are racialized white become insensitive to the injustices of the system for those who do not belong to dominant groups.

In these novels, Cliff denounces the traumas of hegemonic whiteness, not only on light-skinned subjects but also on darker-skinned subjects, those utterly negated and marginalized by hegemonic whiteness. Throughout this chapter, I will analyze how race and color differences not only in the family environment, but also among the members of the community (especially at school, church, and among friends and extended family) provoke everyday conflict because of the privileges/demands reserved for lighter-skinned colonized subjects, who see their bodies as obstacles for the formation of social connections in their own families and communities. An analysis of the construction of the identities and the disjointed relationships subjects sustain is a powerful example of the different traumatizing consequences of the hierarchical structures of whiteness for privileged and unprivileged members of society; the relationship between the members of the community is constructed along the lines of, and deeply affected by, Western hegemony. The different performances (both race and gender-related) that the hegemony of whiteness expects of them invade their relationships, which are never really free from these constraints and end up being alienating. Cultural and racial shame and the over-encompassing influence of whiteness ideology deprive postcolonial subjects of vital

connections with other members of the community and experiences they are denied access to. By taking a look at different cases of everyday conflict (taking place at home, the church or the school), I will analyze how whiteness power structures permeate the life of colonized individuals at multiple levels. The resolution of those conflicts usually brings pain, isolation, and loneliness. My analysis will focus on the ways Cliff subverts the ideology of whiteness by showing how its traumatizing effects outweigh its privileges for the light-skinned female characters analyzed for both members of dominant and non-dominant groups. I wil thoroughly analyze the bridges created (or the impossibility thereof) between light-skinned characters and the members of the Afro-Jamaican community, and the web of reactions and consequences they bring about on both sides.

In the second part of this chapter, I will analyze the vindication of the colonized body as a tool for recovery from the consequences of the traumas of colonial/modern gender system. This resistance to racialized and gendered performances will be analyzed as especially significant for those upon whom whiteness identification was forced. Refusing to stay complicit with the logic of purity of this system, these characters struggle to affirm their multiple identities and multiracial bodies. In these novels, individuals who have been silenced, disenfranchised, alienated, or even physically raped by representatives of colonial discourse, recover their bodies by rejecting the roles assigned by this hegemonic formation and reclaim them to occupy different, more visible positions away from the lack of agency previously assigned to them because of their race and gender.

Chapter four, "Decolonizing Relations and Communities. Resistant Coalitions in *No Telephone To Heaven* and *Free Enterprise*," is grounded on the concept of logic of

coalitions proposed by Maria Lugones' decolonial feminism. With the help of concepts like "loving perception, "second-order anger," "traveling," "streetwalker theorizing," hangouts," and "impure communities," this chapter aims to elucidate Cliff's representation of resistance communities as practices that resist the boundaries of the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system in *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise*. The first part of this chapter discusses the importance of recovery of connections and communities as a healing strategy to overcome the traumatizing effects of the colonial/modern gender system, both at the individual and the community level.

I also claim that these effects are transmitted through generations and affect the construction of the identity of (post)colonial subjects in a traumatizing manner: I will analyze how those silences deeply affect the relationship between, especially, mothers and daughters. As they raise them, the former occupy marginal roles that are inextricably related by the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system. With her choice of characters and topics Michelle Cliff explores the consequences of subjugation in the way the mothers' position in the family and in society affects the socialization of her children. The mother's influence on the socialization and identity formation of her children is mediated by a series of social, cultural and economic oppressions that provoke distortions in the formation of their identity and relational bonds. The personal traumas of mothers as powerless women have long-lasting effects transmitted in their children's lives. As theorized by Laurie Vickroy, the domestic situation, an "oppressive mothering context", will be analyzed as emblematic of the public/private rift, and as indicative of a lack of agency that is not exclusive to mothers in the novels. Deprived of this vital connection, these feelings of rejection accompany them for a long time, leading them to the denial of

the Afro-Jamaican side of themselves, and the pursuit of their prescribed destiny as light-skinned privileged Caribbean female subjects. These novels analyze how this construct acts as a powerful agent of dislocation: belonging to a multiracial and multicultural family, the protagonists' light skin is a feature that members of dominant groups see a factor that grants privilege, but at the same time prevents them from sustaining a healthy relationship with the rest of the members of their community and their culture.

The second section of the chapter analyzes the politicizing process these characters go through to reclaim their multiple identities, a movement of resistance against the forced white identification they have gone through since their childhood. Forming coalitions and resisting multiple oppressions are presented as healing strategies that overcome the loneliness and alienation provoked by traumatic hegemonic formations. A pivotal element in the development of this second part is the concept of "worlds of sense" as defined by María Lugones. Resistant women in Michelle Cliff's novels defy hegemonic constructions of their identity and find ways to make themselves visible, important, and central. They do so by creating alternative impure communities with their own codes, inhabitants, and modes of participation. In the development of this chapter, I will analyze how Michelle Cliff proposes coalition among members of very different collectivities as a means of overcoming the consequences of multiple oppressions. Especially, although not only in *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise* oppressed women create multiethnic, multicultural, multiracial communities as a response to the traumatizing hegemonic formations of colonialism. "Loving perception" and "traveling" will become key concepts in this movement, as these characters react against these impositions by attempting to establish relationships that go

against the constrictions of the logic of purity. The key to this resistant movement is the epistemic shift of switching from the arrogant perception of the social distance of privilege, with its insensitivity to the lives of others, to loving perception. The latter proposes non-imperialist understandings among people, attempts to overcome the lack of identification with others in order to establish different relationships and create positive changes. This shift in perspective opens up new social transformative possibilities for both individuals and communities. A critical approach to one's own perspectives is a fundamental step in this coalitional movement so that both members of both dominant and non-dominant groups can analyze their own individual and societal practices.

In the case of the novels analyzed in this chapter, Michelle Cliff reflects on the evolution of characters going through this epistemic shift, and how they interrogate the practices of white identification forced upon them to challenge its logic of purity and insensitivity. As will be seen, one of the most important effect of this paradigm shift is that a new sense of belonging can be created as well as new identifications that do not follow the logic of purity and fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system. These will enable a healing of the individual and collective traumas, an engagement in a new future.

In my conclusion, I will summarize and explain the main points and ideas I develop in the main chapters of this dissertation. Michelle Cliff's fiction is very rich in its exploration of topics and presentation of the construction of postcolonial identities. Moreover, I will expand my final arguments to claim that this decolonial trauma study of her fiction is a very appropriate framework to analyze the resistance to the acts of erasure of colonial domination and the reclamation of links with Afro-Jamaican subjectivity and

collectivity as a way to overcome the denials of the hegemony of whiteness and its logic of purity. Recovery of the collective memory, and a documentation of the chaos caused by the colonial/modern gender system, as proposed by the author provide a way out of the entrapments produced by events out of the control of the individual.

CHAPTER TWO

UNBURYING THE SILENCED LIVES AND VOICES OF FEMALE RESISTERS: DECOLONIZATION OF HISTORY IN *ABENG* AND *NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN*

> In time the slave surrendered to amnesia. That amnesia is the true history of the New World (Walcott 39).

> The suggestion that we should try to forget the less palatable parts of our past is frequently made to Caribbean people. Usually it is made by people who feel uncomfortable in the presence of our past. Of course, it is an unreasonable suggestion not only because no one should be asked to do that, but because even if we wanted, we cannot. The psyche holds on to too much of it. Our present lives are fabrics into which our history is so deeply woven that words that sound so ordinary to some people are highly emotive to us: sea, plantation, blood, land, extermination, tears, food, resistance and, of course, dance and laughter. They summon up in us reactions we have known or memories of reactions we have heard about (Pollard 150).

Italo Calvino's claim that "we are what we remember" (Casal and Fraga) could very easily become a summary of the central idea of this chapter, as memory and access to knowledge of individual and collective history will be analyzed as a decisive step in the healing of the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system. The incorporation of hegemonic, Eurocentric categories, constructed a polarized world where the colonized and their cultural forms, histories, or ways of being ceased to exist, expelled to a marginalized position outside of modernity. As will be seen, the profound inequities of this system caused a collective trauma for the colonized. Kai Erikson describes the effects of these experiences, their ramifications, and consequences for the colonized as traumatogenic, destroying everyday connections among members of colonized societies, and undermining the sense of collectivity (185). The ensuing isolation, alienation, lack of agency, and dispossession constitute some of the most persistent effects of the colonial/modern gender system from the 16th century until the present day. Both the quotations chosen as the epigraphs of this chapter point to these issues as well as to some

of the key arguments made in this chapter. Derek Walcott's and Velma Pollard's words allude to the forceful and traumatogenic obliteration and denigration of Afro-Jamaican history in versions of Western historiography as well as its damaging effects on the lives of members of non-dominant groups. However, at the same time, they also reflect on the possibility of an alternative, more inclusive approach to history. Both point to a very clear difference between the novels at study in this chapter. As will be seen, *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) represent different "landscapes of memory," or possibilities as far as memory and the access of knowledge of history are concerned. The "amnesia" Walcott alludes to may very well be a coping mechanism against the horrors of forced enslavement. Enslaved persons' relationship with memory and the knowledge of their own history is delegitimated as the impositions of the colonial system made it impossible. *Abeng* introduces an in-depth exploration of this amnesia in context, a traumatic circumstance that prevents a relationship with history and identity. Pollard's words, on the other hand, point to the possibility of a more active relationship with memory, a different access to, and relationship with knowledge of history. The refusal to forget Afro-Jamaican history suggests the new direction explored in *No Telephone to Heaven* as reflected by the evolution of its main character. In this novel, she may be defined as an activist of memory, a fighter against the amnesias of the colonial/modern gender system.

Michelle Cliff's project in *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* aims to rectify the wrongs caused by the injustices of this system by inscribing the histories and the lives of Afro-Jamaican women's coalition and resistance. There is a second issue related to this traumatic erasure: the constant presence of the past as well as the continuous interplay

between the past and the present in a process of resistance against this destruction. Throughout this chapter, Cliff's fiction will be analyzed as an approach to history that attempts to understand the past with the aim to make it possible to understand the present.

In this process, the reconstruction and recovery of buried knowledges becomes a significant healing movement that Sarah Ahmed summarizes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. She connects trauma, silence and power in a manner that result especially relevant for the purposes of this chapter: "The differentiation between forms of pain and suffering in stories that are told and those that are not, is a crucial mechanism for the distribution of power" (32). Postcolonial feminist criticism of Michelle Cliff's works alludes to her effort in this sense. The Jamaican writer's works stress the consistent project to centralize the experiences of resistant, colonized women whose lives have been ignored or silenced by colonial patriarchal societies and their historiographic projects. By unearthing the clandestine countermemories of the colonized, Cliff's projects stand out as reconstructions of the erased history of Caribbean women, doubly negated by colonial history. Critics such as Maria Helena Lima or Caroline Rody have defined these novels as "revolutionary projects" (Lima 36) or "revisionary histories of Caliban's daughters" (Rody 119) that reclaim not only female histories of disempowerment, voicelessness, disavowal, and lack of agency, but also histories of resistance and reclamation of memory and identities.

In the essay "Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character," Michelle Cliff gives a powerful, compelling description of the main character of the two novels at study in this chapter, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. Clare's evolution, in Cliff's own words, is a

process unequivocally related to the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system and the need for reconnection at multiple levels:

> She is a light-skinned female who has been removed from her homeland in a variety of ways and whose life is a movement back, ragged, interrupted, uncertain, to that homeland. She is fragmented, damaged, incomplete. The novels *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* describe her fragmentation as well as her movement toward homeland and completeness. ("Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character" 265)

With this description, Cliff points to some of the traumatic effects of the colonial / modern gender system as described in the introduction. The powerful logic of purity of whiteness erases the multiplicity of Clare Savage's identity and causes a fragmentation and disconnections that will take a long process of unlearning to heal. The purpose of this chapter is to show how Clare Savage's search for completeness and belonging is directly tied to homeland as the process of reclamation of her identity is connected with the recovery of the history of Jamaica and her multiple identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman.

Abeng and *No Telephone to Heaven* address the collective trauma of the loss of the history of female resistant colonial subjects of Jamaica. Michelle Cliff creates an alternative history of colonialism that foregrounds the traumas of cultural loss, dispossession, separation, alienation, and shame. In this project, memory acts as a crucial

factor in the healing process. Both novels follow the evolution of Clare Savage[10]: from her birth and education as privileged, middle class, light-skinned Jamaican girl to her choice to abandon a life in the metropolitan center of London and to join an anti-neocolonialist guerrilla movement in 1970s Jamaica. Here she re-encounters, reconstructs, and embraces the multiplicity of her identity, more specifically the Afro-Jamaican side of her self. This part of her identity, related to her mother, is seen as a source of shame, and for that reason silenced and hidden from Clare so she can have the

[10] Some of the topics represented in the Clare Savage novels echo Aime Cesaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939), a work in the form of prose and verse that reflects on the cultural and economic dispossession affecting the colonized population. The Martinican author explores issues related to the traumas of the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system through the use of a poetic voice after returning from Europe to the Caribbean island. At first, the vision of the population offered is characterized by paralysis and powerlessness. The poetic voice describes scenes of hunger, disconnection, lack of memory, and access to history: "And in this town a clamoring crowd, a stranger to its own cry as the town, inert, is a stranger to its movement and meaning, a crowd without concern, disowning its own true cry you'd like to hear because that cry you know lives deep in some lair of darkness and pride in this disowning town, in this crowd deaf to its own cry of hunger and misery, revolt and hatred, in this crowd so strangely garrulous and dumb" (38). Silence, inertia, poverty, and disconnections are some of the effects of the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system mark the lives of members of non-dominant groups. As the poem progresses, however, the possibility of resistance and liberatory practices start to be seen as a prospect and linked to the Negritude movement. In the following fragment, the poetic voice language alludes to the recovery of voice and the reclamation of connections:

> Upright now, my country and I, hair in the wind, my hand small in its enormous fist and our strength not inside us but above in a voice that bores through the night and its listeners like the sting of an apocalyptic wasp. And the voice declares that for centuries Europe has stuffed us with lies and crammed us with plague,
> for it's not true that:
> the work of man is finished
> we have nothing to do in the world
> we are parasites of the world
> our job is to keep in step with the world.
> The work of man is only just beginning
> It remains for him to conquer
> At the four corners of his fervor
> Every rigid prohibition.
> No race holds a monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength
> there is room for all at the meeting-place of conquest
> we know now
> that the sun revolves around our earth illuminating the plot
> which we alone have selected
> that every star falls at our command from the sky to the earth
> without limit or cease. (84-85)

normative, dominant life that corresponds to her status as the light-skinned descendant of a family of white landowners. As will be seen, this will be Clare's main source of trauma: the loss of her individual and collective identity after being forcibly separated from her mother, Kitty Freeman Savage. Clare initially survives this trauma only by retreating into her Anglocentric, dominant part of her multiple self, a possibility offered, in the Jamaica of the 1960s, by the association of the lightness of her skin with the multiple possibilities the privileges of whiteness offer. Through the years, however, Clare's memories of her mother and Afro-Jamaican culture will come back to her mind, constant reminders of the painful silencing of Clare Savage's multiple self. "Longing for tribe" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 91), or a desire for belonging and connection becomes one key aspect that links not only both novels, but also author and main character. Michelle Cliff portrays, through the use of her main character, a process of reconstruction of an Afro-Jamaican identity and a broken relationship with the community, lost because of the impositions of the hegemony of the colonial/modern gender system. To counteract silence and forgetting, Cliff's fiction consistently highlights the need to restore the ties to the collective, to extended family members, or members of non-dominant groups, key elements that ease the possibility of healing, of recovering from individual and collective traumas. Recovering and reconstructing non-existent, lost connections with the buried history of Jamaica, the resistance to slavery and its most important figures becomes one key step in the reconnection of individuals with their Afro-Jamaican identity. What follows is an

analysis of how the connections with Maroon history[11] and the figure of Nanny of the Maroons[12] provide the counterhistorical space where the reconstruction of both Jamaican history and Clare Savage's multiple identity can be performed. *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* provide other times and spaces from which to re-member, write/tell and read the individual and collective histories/stories of (post)colonial subjects. Vilouta-Vázquez has asserted that "both novels signify the recovery of the histories of women fighters in the anti-colonial struggle for freedom" (5). The aim is to rewrite not only the history of the colonized nations, but also patriarchal accounts of history. Michelle Cliff's novels blur the boundaries between fiction and history in order to revise the traumatic history of Jamaica, to reclaim a past that needs to be rehistoricized and reimagined. This analysis, rewriting and challenge of the past is also a characteristic of what Barbara Harlow has denominated "resistance literature:" one of the most important features of resistance narratives being "[their] historical challenge, their demand for an access to history which necessitates a radical rewriting of the historiographical version of the past which gives

[11]Vilouta-Vázquez has analyzed the phenomenon of the creation of new communities by escaped fugitives, known as *maroonage*, as a "common reaction to slavery in the Americas. From its beginnings in the sixteenth century enslaved Africans ran away from the plantations to establish self-governed, independent communities" (16) Vilouta-Vázquez also adds that maroonage "represents the dreams of self-determination of black people, the desire to develop their own culture without any outer interference, living with their own norms and beliefs. This separatist impulse that may be defined as the basis of maroonage impelled enslaved people to abandon the plantations in search for a new land or some kind of pacific co-existence" (16)

[12] Vilouta-Vázquez has written "historical maroon leaders as Zumbi from Palmares, or Nanny from Mooretown in Jamaica, have become a source of inspiration for many Afro-Latin-American and Afro-Jamaican resistance movements. In the case of the Anglophone Caribbean, it is Nanny who becomes a symbol of resistance and fight for freedom" (25) "Queen Nanny of the Windward Maroons," "Queen Nanny," "Nanny," "Granny Nanny," or "Grandy Nanny" is Jamaica's only national heroine, an emblematic figure of resistance whose role has been transmitted mainly through oral history. In *Ghosts of Slavery*, Jenny Sharpe discusses this circumstance as indicative of the marginalization of female resistant figures in pre-independence historiography: "Her significance as a rebel woman is bound up with decolonization and the emergence of Jamaica as an independent nation. Her symbolic value lies in her ability to represent both the buried tradition of an African culture and the long history of anticolonial struggles so central to the identity of emergent nations in the Caribbean" (4). Nanny's figure, and with her the maroonage phenomenon, have become a symbol of active resistance against slavery and against the negation of the humanity of enslaved peoples, of their culture, their language and their African cultural traditions.

prominence of place to a western calendar of events" (86). Rehistoricization, reimagination, and a challenge or radical rewriting of the past are seen by critics as key steps in the recovery of the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system.

2.1. Erasure of History as Collective Trauma

When discussing the coloniality of power as a constitutive element of modernity and its key role in the construction of the world from the seventeenth century until our days (64), Aparicio and Blaser connect this process with the construction of a major dichotomy whereby the colonial/modern gender system defined any other systems of thought, governance, histories, or ways of living existing before it as traditional, premodern, or backward and non-evolving: "With the parameters of the discussion set in such a way that the alternatives are either the modernity or unreal traditions, few can conceive of something real existing outside of modernity" (62). In the process of "inventing the colonized" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism" 747), the official historiography of the colonizing countries erased all traces of the colonized and constructed them as devoid of cultures, traditions, political systems, or systems of thought, and in need of the civilizing help of the superior colonizing countries, and their cultures, languages, or religions. One of the most important repercussions of this pre-modern construction of the colonized allowed for an almost complete obliteration of the histories of non-dominant groups, as they were considered unimportant, irrelevant, marginal. Lugones also argues that these erasures included a purposeful suppression of the history of resisters and their continued reactions against the colonial/modern gender system. She juxtaposes both visions in a manner that elucidates the construction of these dichotomies and the ideas associated with each of them:

> The long process of coloniality begins subjectively and intersubjectively in a tense encounter that both forms and will not simply yield to capitalist, modern, colonial normativity. …The global, capitalist, colonial modern system of power that Anibal Quijano characterizes as beginning in the sixteenth century in the Americas and enduring until today met a world not to be formed, a world of empty minds and evolving animals. … Rather, it encountered complex cultural, political, economic, and religious beings: selves in complex relations to the cosmos, to other selves, to generation, to the earth, to living beings, to the inorganic, in production; selves whose erotic, aesthetic, and linguistic expressivity, whose knowledges, senses of space, longings, practices, institutions, and forms of government were not to be simply replaced but met, understood, and entered into in tense, violent, risky crossings and dialogues and negotiations that never happened. ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism" 747)

As Lugones explains, the imposition of the hegemonic formations of the colonial/modern gender system aimed to create a fixed historiographical discourse of uniformity that glorified Western values of progress and modernity. The universal significance and value of this project meant the burial of entire systems of significance that were violently replaced with the purportedly superior civilization of the colonial/modern gender system. In order to explain this complex process Mary Louise Pratt distinguishes different steps in the process of imposition of the supposedly superior, more prestigious and universal system of knowledge. These practices brought about not only the destruction and obliteration of whole systems of knowledge and significance, but also the appropriation or the absorption of other systems. Pratt enumerates four key moments: interruption, or

the cessation in the development of colonial societies; digestion, or the absorption of knowledge from anywhere in the colonized countries; substitution, or the naturalization of the process whereby Eurocentric universals replaced systems of significance; and reversal, or the creation of inferiority, causing isolation and devastation. Digestion, however, has a further consequence: the elimination of colonial subjects from history. This process involved violent processes that absorbed knowledges from elsewhere (Pratt 448), leaving the original sources of knowledge as backward, "their historical role lost to view or seen as unimportant" (449). In this process of digestion a "discursive disenfranchisement" (450) is produced, as the history of nondominant cultures and its members is denied equivalence to the canonical history of the dominant groups. The historical and cultural contexts of entire civilizations were left behind, as they were considered valueless and useless: "From the metropolitan end the expulsion passed unnoticed as a forgetting, but on the receiving end it was experienced, in Tsenay Serequeberhan's words, 'as death and destruction, the effective creation of vacuity…The subjugated experienced Europe as the putting into question of their very existence'" (449). In order to make it possible for these processes to happen. Kathleen Renk discusses the importance of the development of a perspective that allows for the construction of binaries such as modern/pre-modern, relevant/irrelevant. In *Caribbean Shadows and Victorian Ghosts*, Renk describes the concept of the "blind gaze" of the European colonizers, especially emphasizing the dehumanizing process of objectification and categorization of colonial subjects: "…the dominant gaze 'obsessively' looked 'for ways in which a gendered and a racial fear could be seen' further showing that indigenous peoples were seen through the colonial eye that possessed, classified, ranked,

and commanded" (19). These ideas of "possessing" and "commanding" echo the epistemic violence of Pratt's digestion concept. As a result, peoples and lands were categorized and redesigned and became only "mute shadowy objects in the background that created the setting," (19), unimportant, irrelevant, devoid of any meaning or value. In this "possessing" and "commanding" project, history plays a significant role as an agent that supports the dominant values of the colonial/gender modern system, and as such it has been described by Ranajit Guha: after its institutionalization in the nineteenth century as a "fully secularized body of knowledge with its own curricula and classrooms as well as a profession devoted entirely to its propagation by teaching and writing, history was pressed into the service of realizing the state's 'hegemonic processes' in its 'interaction' with the state's citizens" (1-2). The canonical versions of colonial historiography became universal, and as such, was spread and taught to the colonized, who had no access to their own histories, figures, and culture.

More specifically, as far as the construction of boundaries and binaries related to the Caribbean region, scholars such as Antonio Benítez Rojo, Peter Hulme or Nana Wilson-Tagoe coincide in their vision of West Indian canonical history as an ideological construct that responds to the desire of imperial discourse to create a Eurocentric account of history, a textual production aimed at control and management, as well as a justification of the imperial project. This unilateral version is described by Antonio Benítez Rojo: "We must conclude that the historiography of the Caribbean, in general, reads like a long, inconsonant story favouring the legitimation of the white planter… (254). As discussed by Peter Hulme, America and the Caribbean were brought into existence by the contact with the European colonizer, and historiographical accounts

reflected the superiority of the imperial civilization, leaving no space for different versions: “Such a monologic encounter can only masquerade as a dialogue: it leaves no room for alternative voices” (9). In this same vein, Nana Wilson-Tagoe discusses the subtext of imperial historiography as dominated by a single voice:

> West Indian historiography followed patterns dictated by the circumstances and exigencies of conquest, and by the political, economic and social implications of slavery and colonialism. The early West Indian historians were also in the main European colonists and planters, often writing from the point of view of conquerors celebrating glories and defending the validity of their social institutions. (16)

Literature becomes a key environment in the process of bringing back to light the events and the resisters unrecorded and left out by Western canonical historiography. Velma Pollard alludes to the powerful role literature can play in the process of healing the wounds of history. In her analysis of the transformation of history by creative memory in Jamaican poetry, she concludes that combining “potentially anger-making history [with] gentle poetic terms” (151) can become cathartic and healing of those traumas, as “poets could well be undertaking a general healing of those nations. They might be using poetry to take their communities towards a much-desired wholeness” (151). Critics like William Luis, Dominick LaCapra, Noraida Agosto, Caroline Rody, and Linda Hutcheon point to literature as a resistance tool that seeks the de-totalization of “total history” (LaCapra 25). Similarly, Hutcheon identifies ideas of control, coherence, mastery, order, continuity, and even violence as defining the historiographical project:

> The function of the term totalizing, as I understand it, is to point to the *process* (hence the awkward "ing" form) by which writers of history, fiction, or even theory render their materials coherent, continuous, unified – but always with an eye to the control and mastery of those materials, even at the risk of doing violence to them. It is this link to power, as well as process, that the adjective "totalizing" is meant to suggest, and it is as such that the term has been used to characterize everything from liberal humanist ideals to the aims of historiography. (62)

Literature helps to challenge this vision, as it represents a more open, plural, dialogical, heterogeneous approach to history that widens the perspective and eschews the reducing blind gaze of the colonizer: "we now get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men" (Hutcheon 66). Caroline Rody has defined this movement as the result of a "historiographic desire, that is, the desire of writers newly emerging into cultural authority to reimagine their difficult inheritance, the stories of their own genesis" (4). These projects bring to light events, figures, traditions, or communities left out of the canonical venues of Western history, outside modernity. This "historiographic desire" sees fiction as a vehicle to convey the accounts of those forgotten by traditional chronicles, a resistant project that readjusts these previous versions that authors such as Cliff feel have not adequately represented the experiences of colonial subjects:

> They take the enterprise of reimagination especially seriously, knowing that it can be a political act with real consequences: they reinscribe received historical

> narratives in order to debunk and purge them, to relocate the site of the historical and redefine history's meanings; to challenge prevailing discourses of power and knowledge, infuse oral tradition into the written, and reassert devalued folk memory; and to reinvent ethnic political, and literary bloodlines. (5)

In her study of the historical fiction of African-American and Afro-Jamaican twentieth-century historical fiction, Caroline Rody addresses the role of literature as a vehicle to challenge canonical history. The revision of received narratives of their own or their own peoples' histories "open[s] up the past to reimaginative revision, not to annihilate it, but in order to reassert the reality of their historical trauma against the officially sanctioned and taught stories that would erase it" (5). The aim, Rody continues, is not to destroy, but to build differently: twentieth century literature's deconstructive work creates a "hybrid global literature [that] retells the story of the history of the world" (4). William Luis points to the importance of this movement for specific groups. In his study of literature of and about blacks in the Caribbean, he states that these literary works allow for the presentation of another side of history, as it works against the fact that "Blacks as a people have experienced history according to different circumstances, not as the initiators and recorders of events, but as the victims of actions imposed upon them by others" (3). More specifically, Noraida Agosto describes Cliff's fiction as projects that historicize memory as a means to "empower the oppressed," (2) "a challenge to monolithic history… that consists of inscribing in 'official' history the memory of those women who fought against slavery and oppression and risked their lives in the process" (3). Cliff views fiction as a powerful tool to rescue this past from outside of modernity. She understands literature allows for the representation of the unrepresented, of the

obliterated, of events and persons that have gone unacknowledged through the centuries. In "History as Fiction, Fiction as History," an article written while traveling around the USA in the process of doing research for her third novel, *Free Enterprise*, she reflects on the role of writers like herself and Toni Morrison. Cliff sees their fiction as an environment that allows for a reimagination and a non-canonical inclusion of the stories and experiences of members of non-dominant groups:

> It is through fiction that some of us rescue the American past. As artists, Morrison has said, it is our job to imagine the unimaginable. The interior of the slave ship. The rush to suicide of the cargo, for example. But also: the resisters, female and male. The history of armed and organized African-American resistance has been made unimaginable by the official histories of this country. One or two incidents are allowed in these sanctioned pages, but these more than often than not end with the hanging of the hero. ("History as Fiction" n.p.)

For both Morrison and Cliff, fiction plays a distinctive role that modern Western historiography did not make possible: the constant interaction between past and present. Their literary projects underline the influence and power the forceful burial of the past of non-dominant groups exerts on the everyday lives of members of formerly colonized countries. Cliff describes this coexistence as she experiences doing research for her novel on Mary Ellen Pleasant: "I am also in search of the past she inhabited. And it is all around me. The past coexists with the present in this amnesiac country, in this forgetful century. It is as Toni Morrison says in *Beloved*. 'Everything is now. It is all now'" ("History as Fiction" n.p.). Morrison's assertion, also the title of one of Cliff's short story collections, very effectively summarizes this idea that past and present are

interconnected, synchronous, happening to exist at the same time rather than chronologically. As Pollard discussed earlier, the crippling effects of the suppression of Jamaican history make it very difficult to disentangle individual lives from this pain, always present as it has been unresolved. In order for literature to fulfil its cathartic role, there needs to be a dialogue between past and present so that they can "meld and mingle without apology" putting forward a "constant kaleidoscoping of the ages" (Pollard 153). Being able to establish a healthy relationship between past and present makes overcoming the traumatic silences of history possible. Historiographic projects such as Michelle Cliff's seek a restoration of indigenous agency and resistance, a reestablishment of the obliterated history of nondominant groups through an active relationship with memory and knowledge of history.

The twentieth century feminist critical historiographical project that some other Caribbean authors[13] have tackled can be defined as a politicized movement of resistance that is linked to the process of reconstruction of the collective identity of the nation and the reconstruction of the experience of women in Caribbean history. Elleke Boehmer has pointed to the powerful contributions of different literary genres as far as the restoration of the history of the colonized is concerned, and their role as a response to the damage of the colonial/modern gender system:

> In such situations, narrative comes into its own as a means to rekindle memory. For a people shipwrecked by history, a story of the past, even if wholly, or part in fiction, again offers a kind of restitution. Especially because of its chronological

[13] Margaret Cezair-Thompson, in *The True History of Paradise*, and Zee Edgell, in *Beka Lamb*, for example, are two authors who tackle these same issues.

> structure, a novel or a narrative poem has the potential to forge imaginary connections between the reduced present and the legendary past. (189)

These authors belong to a generation of Caribbean female writers who, from the 1970s, have challenged the historical voicelessness of Caribbean women, or, as Savory and Fido define it, "the historical absence of the woman writer's text: the absence of a specifically female position on major issues such as slavery, colonialism, decolonization, women's rights, and more direct social and cultural issues" (1). The incorporation/revision of history by Caribbean women writers becomes a resistance narrative with the purpose of undermining hegemonic visions of the colonial world, offering new or alternative points of view that reveal previously hidden social issues, and also reevaluating categories such as civilization and savagery that resulted fundamental in the construction of the Caribbean as a colonial space of domination. Authors such as Jamaican Marlene Nourbese Philip argue for the recovery of the buried histories and myths of which imperial domination deprived Caribbean people as a key source of empowerment. The experiences of slavery and colonialism, from her point of view, acted as a decontextualizing, traumatogenic agent that deprived enslaved people of their connections to language, myths, heroes, heroines, and history. For that reason, the recovery movement becomes a necessity for Caribbean women writers. The aim is to regain control of the narrative and give space to images and persons displaced by the imposition of the canonical narration of Caribbean history:

> For the many like me, Black and female, it is imperative that our writing begin to recreate our histories and our myths, as well as integrate the most painful of experiences—loss of history and our world. The reacquisition of power to create

> in one's own image is vital to this process which can only serve to emphasize that which we have always known, even in the darkest hour of the soul, when everything conspired to prove otherwise, that we belong most certainly to the race of humans (278).

The role of feminist critical historiography, then, consists of listening to the alternative voices of history and delineating the traces of the subaltern: oppressed subjects resist by recuperating the voice and the consciousness of the oppressed and their suppressed histories. Caribbean women writers' texts, Vilouta-Vázquez argues, try to counter the lack of history by "presenting the other side of the story, 'foregrounding the background,' since the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system led to the erasure of people's presences and their history" (37). In the same vein, Renk discusses the subversion of official accounts of history. She uses metaphors of burial, excavation, and unearthing as metaphorical methods of recovering history that Cliff herself uses in her novels as well:

> While received narratives impose views blind to the shadows, they also overlay an official history that camouflages other narratives. To subvert these official narratives, contemporary women writers enter what Wilson Harris suggests are the fossil spaces of time to dig up, turn over, and unearth lost narratives buried within the Caribbean land and landscape. They resurrect lost narratives, narratives of resistance, buried voices, and ancestral rhythms in order to implant and grow a more hybridized text in which the past and the present are contiguously related. (20)

For Caribbean women writers, this effort to reconstruct/ rebuild/dig the buried history of female resistant colonial subjects not only challenges the silences of imperial

historiography, but also the neglect of the history of women in Caribbean male-centered and male–authored literature. In *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*, Belinda Edmonson enumerates a number of Caribbean male writers' revolutionary works who are characterized by the absence of the black woman's experience. Among them, she cites V.S Naipaul's *Guerrillas*, Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*, C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* or Selwyn Cudjoe's *Resistance and Caribbean Literature*. Similarly, Kathleen Balutansky describes the effort to present an alternative to this practice that Edmonson critiques:

> In addition to writing against the Master Narrative of Western domination, — as did their male counterparts earlier, as Lionnet points out—Caribbean women also must inscribe their female protagonists into the male-dominated, Caribbean narrative that continues to circumscribe women's roles – or to exclude women altogether. In other words, Caribbean women writers are not merely writing against the dominance of such powerful signifiers of resistance in Caribbean literature as Henry Cristophe, Toussaint L'Overture, or even Caliban, but also plotting the end of these male mythicizing Master-narratives. (105)

Caribbean women writers such as Michelle Cliff establish a critical dialogue with history that positions female colonial subjects' experience in historiography through female-authored fictional accounts of the lives of women, as their role not only in the economy, but the preservation of the culture, and presence in resistance movements has been considered irrelevant and not worthy of attention. Nana Wilson-Tagoe argues that women took part in the economics and labor of the Caribbean and its social and cultural formations during slavery in more ways than have usually been acknowledged:

"Generations of women have come to possess a better grasp of the deeper meanings of these processes, since as grandmothers and mothers they have transmitted what has always been a muted and submerged culture in women-centered forms, often excluded from the domain of formal historiography" (224-225). As those efforts have been largely ignored, Vilouta-Vázquez argues that "the recovery of the buried history of women has become a remarkable trend in Caribbean literature in recent years, recuperating figures from different colonized places and historical times" (31) This effort, Vilouta-Vázquez continues (31), emphasizes how the construction of the identity of female colonized subjects has been carried out and how their role in history has been silenced.

2.2 Michelle Cliff's Vision for Her literature

Cliff's personal interest and continuous effort to reflect the forgotten histories of resistance not only in Jamaica, but in other countries around the world has earned her the title of "the Historical Re-visionary" (Enszer). From her very first publication, "Notes on Speechlessness," to her poetic prose, published in volumes such as *If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire,* or *The Land of Look Behind,* she consistently addresses the overarching influence of the whiteness of the colonial/modern gender system and the shame and trauma attached to anything that fell outside the range of the privileged categories: "Put simply, Jamaica is a place halfway between Africa and England, although historically one culture has been esteemed and the other denigrated (both of these are understatements)" (2008: vii). This traumatic denigration and shame spur Cliff's concern with the erosion of a history that deserves acknowledgement and recognition and a central place in her writings. Her works of fiction can be defined as resistance acts aimed to counter the damaging power of the colonial/modern gender

system. In an interview with Opal Palmer Adisa, Cliff recounts her permanent interest with the recovery of history outside of modernity. Knowledge and resistance are related in a view that connects ignorance and powerlessness: "I started out as a historian; I did my graduate work in history. I've always been struck by the misrepresentation of history and have tried to correct revisions of history, especially the history of resistance. It seems to me that if one does not know that one's people have resisted, then it makes resistance difficult" (280). All which has been lost, forgotten and misinterpreted needs to be recovered and celebrated as an integral part of the identity of the Afro-Jamaican. The Middle Passage, the history of slavery, or the misrepresentation of the maroon movements are all traumatic historical events Cliff strives to recognize and historicize in her writing. In Cliff's opinion, the reclamation of these integral parts of Afro-Jamaican culture and history require of an active search on the part of the writer, an unlearning of the rigid hegemonies of the colonial/modern gender system:

> As a writer, as a human being, I have had to search for what was lost to me from the darker side, and for what has been hidden, to be dredged from memory and dream. … To write as a complete Caribbean writer demands of us retracing the African part 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 within a class system notable for its rigidity and for its dependence on color stratification. (*If I Could Write This in Fire* 8)

Michelle Cliff's novels become counterhegemonic statements that link the progressive politicization of their characters' consciousness with the recovery of their history and their multiple identities. In *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare Savage

understands that the unlearning of imperial history and the reconstruction of the silenced history of Jamaica go hand in hand with her process of reclamation of her multiple identity. Knowledge of the past leads to a better understanding of the self, not only personal, but also political: not only individual, but also collective. Vilouta-Vázquez describes Michelle Cliff's novels as an assertion of "the necessity to recover the stories that have been ignored by conventional narrative discourse, bringing to light a context that has been ignored by canonical literature for a long time" (41). As said earlier, it is only an understanding of the traumatic past that can bring an understanding of present painful circumstances and disconnections. Michelle Cliff describes this process as a personal search for belonging and completeness in an interview in the early 1990s. Among other issues, she discusses her literature as a resistance project that "enacts the struggle for cultural decolonization," (Schwartz 594) both at the personal and collective level:

> Q: The connection between Clare's coming into herself and knowing her history permeates the novels. She can't come into herself until she knows her history and clearly that dynamic has been part of your personal quest as well. (…) A: Well sure. Just remembering this incident is knowing part of my history, which is making me more complete. It's both personal and political history. (606)

Both with these words, and in the preface to *If I Could Write This in Fire* (2008), Cliff emphasizes the importance of subverting the previously mentioned "blind gaze" of the colonizer with an "informed gaze" (2008: xi) that is able to look beyond the hegemonies of the colonial/modern gender system and towards the parts of history that were relegated to the outside of modernity. Challenging these impositions by looking at subjugated

knowledges helps reconstruct the way members of nondominant groups look at their own past, and as consequence, to their own present and future.

2.3. Postcolonial Trauma and Memory: Reconstruction of History as a Healing Mechanism

As said earlier, the obliteration and loss of history of the members of non-dominant groups can be understood as a collective trauma affecting the members of colonized societies and their social fabric. Especially in the context of the construction of a new approach to history, memory becomes a key concept in the analysis of the relationship of the colonized with their own history. A different relation with memory, as well as a different, more dynamic relation with history are seen as a source of healing of the traumas caused by the imposition of the colonial/modern gender system.

Postcolonial trauma theory defines trauma as an experience (or constellation of experiences) located in very specific cultural contexts that have, as their most important consequence, a historical reidentification, both individual and collective, of those affected. It is only because individuals and collectivities undergo loss, separation, dispossession, violence or pain that forgotten histories surface, that projects to narrativize the past occur. Rather than considering traumas as isolated incidents divorced from definite circumstances of society, this understanding of trauma allows for an examination of the social dimensions of these experiences: these, together with the aftermath of traumas for individuals and communities, come into play when acknowledging the role of social contexts in the production of alternative histories. Derek Summerfield's definition of trauma critiques the individualized view of previous approaches because they ignore the social aspects related to the damaging effects of traumatic events, an argument

especially useful in the context of the reclamation of buried histories and denigrated identities: “Exposure to a massive trauma, and its aftermath, is not generally a private experience. It is in a social setting that the traumatised who need help reveal themselves and that the processes that determine how victims become survivors (as the majority do) are played out over time” (2).

Directly tied to this idea of trauma related to specific social, historical circumstances is the definition of postcolonial trauma theory of memory and remembering. As mentioned earlier, the collective trauma of the imposition of the hegemonies of the colonial/modern gender system destroyed the bonds attaching people together. The destruction of the sense of community is largely related to being denied the possibility of remembering: social structures, shared experiences, beliefs, or history generate a common ground that creates a sense of coherence and belonging. In a discussion of narrative, memory, and cultural modes of remembering and forgetting, Jens Brockmeier discusses memory as one of the elements that bind communities together, non-existing for members of non-dominant groups:

> And why do we remember socially, together with others? … Each culture develops a sense of coherence that is grounded in an underlying connective structure… What binds individuals together into a cultural community is the centripetal force of a connective structure that organizes a considerate body of thought and knowledge beliefs, and concepts of self, that is, a worldview rooted in a set of social rules and values as well as in the shared memory of a commonly inhabited and similarly experienced past. The overarching function is to guarantee a cultural sense of belonging…. (18)

The sociocultural approach to trauma theory stresses the importance of memory / remembering as social acts, just as much as forgetting is. Both are considered as active and revisionary processes: contexts and audiences evolve as time goes by, and as a result, what is considered remarkable and what is worthy to be recorded and remembered depend on specific interests or historical facts. Laurence Kirmayer defines trauma narratives as influenced not only by individual personalities, but also by "cultural models of remembering and forgetting" (175). Social and historical contexts construct different "landscapes of memory," "metaphoric terrains that shape the distance and effort required to remember affectively charged and socially defined events" (175). Summerfield shares a similar view, as his argument also highlights the importance of historical contexts in the empowerment of memory and recovery: "Victims react to extreme trauma in accordance with what it means to them. Generating these meanings is an activity that is socially, culturally, and often politically framed" (3). Different social contexts dictate, at every given moment in time, what is meaningful or valuable to be retold. Kirmayer distinguishes two temporal dimensions related to the process of remembering traumatic events: the actual moment when these happen, and the specific social circumstances that allow for their recuperation. What is more, he connects these moments to healing processes occurring at the individual and the community level:

> There is a crucial distinction between the social space in which the trauma occurred and the contemporary space in which it is (or is not) recalled. … If a community agrees traumatic events occurred, and weaves the fact into its identity, then collective memory survives and individual memory can find a place (albeit transformed) within the landscape. If a family or community agrees that a trauma

> did not happen, then it vanishes from collective memory and the possibility for individual memory is severely strained. (189-190)

As contexts change, past traumatic experiences may become the object of reevaluation. Traumas are the reason why the silences of history need to be read and reinterpreted. Michelle Cliff's project to recover the stories of female resistant colonial subjects, with its powerful interplay between the past and the present, connect these two temporal dimensions in a very effective manner. Cliff transforms Clare's individual trauma—the loss and separation from her mother, and as a consequence, the Afro-Jamaican side of Clare's culture and history that Kitty Freeman Savage represents—into public history, its loss and the resistance projects that serve as a recovery process for both individual and collective identities. She does that by linking her individual project to a collective project by constructing a fragmented structure that reflects the aforementioned interplay between past and present, understood as a healing mechanism.

Both novels can be defined as trauma and resistance projects where memory plays an essential role. Vilouta-Vázquez has described the role of memory in Clare Savage's evolution as key, since

> research and retrieval of her past and the connections that may be established between the past and the present constantly revise the former, allowing it to become a basic presence in understanding not only her country's evolution, but also her own. Both works show this effort very clearly since past experiences help the protagonist re-member the different influences her life is composed of. That way, it can be said that personal and historical memory act as a liberation factor. (30)

Abeng and *No Telephone to Heaven* recuperate the resistant female past (with Nanny of the Maroons as a central figure), through the resistant present, the neocolonial Jamaica of the 1970s, with the aim of reclaiming the figures of female fighters relegated to oblivion by the prevailing discourses of power and knowledge created by the colonial/gender modern system. Cliff understands this process as a journey into speech that stems from the recognition of the cultural loss, shame and trauma caused by the rigid structures of the power of the colonial/modern gender system. Her works of fiction stem from the informed gaze that comes to being only after a process of recognition of the traumatic effects of the domination of Anglocentric culture in both individuals and communities. It is the contention of this chapter that *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* represent two different stages, or contexts, as far as the relationship between Clare Savage and the buried history of Jamaica are concerned. The different moments in the life of the central character of both novels also signify different approaches to history, or cultural moments of remembering or forgetting: in the first novel, Clare Savage is completely unaware of the historical events related to slavery, and it is only through the moments where the intrusive third person narrator takes over the narrative that readers learn about the history of different resistant women, with a specific interest in Nanny, whose heroic figure is celebrated. It is in these counterhistorical spaces where the third person narrator takes over that access to memory and knowledge of history can occur. The landscape of memory makes it impossible for the colonized to gain access to this knowledge, and for that reason, Nanny never becomes a direct presence in Clare's tentative explorations of Afro-Jamaican history in *Abeng*. However, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, readers see Clare actively resisting her dependence on Anglocentric culture, and

researching, reconstructing, and making an effort to transmit the Afro-Jamaican history of resistance. As will be seen, Cliff articulates this difference in the novels with the use of the contrasting metaphors of burial and excavation. Examples of these two will be analyzed as they reflect the two different landscapes of memory each novel represents.

Especially relevant for this cultural mode of forgetting is the concept of "multidirectional memory," a device the third person intrusive narrator utilizes to overcome the cultural mode of forgetting in the Jamaica of the 1950s, very thoroughly described in *Abeng*. Michelle Cliff's reclamation of Afro-Jamaican history as well as the lesser known resistance projects by female colonial subjects aims to situate collective trauma at the level of other historical events that have been the object of widespread research and investigation. Michael Rothberg proposes the term "multidirectional memory" to counter this isolation of histories and identities; multidirectional memory signifies an effort to connect traumatic collective histories, identities, and contexts, even from different historical eras. Multidirectional memory blurs the boundaries between collective memory and group identity to emphasize inclusion and connection versus the isolation of experiences that competitive memory suggests: "In contrast, pursuing memory's multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established *positions* but actually come into being through the dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction" (5). Multidirectional memory functions as one of the threads that join *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* together. The rising interest of the main protagonist in the traumatic histories of different,

interconnected oppressions will prove determining in the construction of new worlds "[built] out of the materials of older ones" (*Multidirectional Memory* 7).

2.4. Cultural Modes of Forgetting: *Abeng*

Readers see Clare Savage grow and become an adult in both novels: *Abeng* opens in 1958, when the protagonist is barely twelve years old, and *No Telephone to Heaven* closes when she dies at the age of thirty-six as a member of an anti-colonial guerrilla. *Abeng* shows readers the complexity of Clare's upbringing. The daughter of Boy Savage and Kitty Freeman Savage, descendant of enslavers and enslaved people respectively, Clare Savage inhabits, in Cliff´s words, at least two worlds[14], where she experiences moments of privilege or dispossession of her rights depending especially on the location of the different episodes the third person narrative voice chooses to show. Her color, her gender, and her class place the protagonist in different spaces of discrimination or privilege at various times of her existence, whether at school in Kingston or in her grandmother's farm in the mountains. For these reasons, Vilouta-Vázquez believes that Clare becomes the embodiment of Jamaican history, incorporating in her own life the binary opposition ruler / ruled, oppressor / oppressed (40).

However, chronology in the novel is much more complicated than a linear description of the facts of the life of its protagonist. All throughout *Abeng* Cliff does not only deal with Clare's personal experiences; from Vilouta-Vázquez's point of view, there is a specific objective in Cliff's selection of narrative forms. The continued changes not only in perspective, but also in the selection of spatial and time frameworks helps

[14] In the piece "Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character," Michelle Cliff describes one of the most symbolic features of her main character: "Her name, obviously, is significant, and is intended to represent her as a crossroads character, with her feet (and head) in (at least) two worlds" ("Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character" 265).

highlight forgotten moments in the history of the island, including its own moment of birth (40): : “The island rose and sank. Twice. During periods in which history was recorded by indentations on rock and shell. This is a book about the time which followed on that time. As the island became a place where people lived. Indians. Africans. Europeans” (*Abeng* 3). The narrative form used by Cliff in *Abeng* can be understood as the means for uncovering and rediscovering buried history. The necessity of the reconstruction and recovery of the histories left out by the all-encompassing influence and presence of the history of the colonizing countries constitutes one of the central aspects of the narrative in *Abeng*.

This novel, that seems to be the story of a single character, reflects, through constant changes in narrative perspective, the different phases of Jamaican history. As opposed to the linear and totalizing discourse of history, the structure used by Cliff aims to reassign authority and the position of colonial subjects in relation to history. The collective trauma and destruction of the social fabric of relationships that brought about loss of culture and history is explained by the intrusive third person narrator as a direct result of the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system and its racialized construction of the world: “In the beginning, there had been two sisters—Nanny and Sekesu. Nanny fled slavery. Sekesu remained a slave. Some said this was the difference between the two sisters. It was believed that all island children were descended from one or the other. All island people were first cousins” (*Abeng* 18) The structure chosen to reflect on the traumatic effects of this system points to cultural model of forgetting as the narrative voice intersperses fragments of the unknown history of Jamaica in between the sections that recount Clare Savage’s education as a member of

the dominant groups of Kingston. As the allegory of Nanny and Sekesu shows, Clare's evolution will be marked by this same logic of fragmentation. Her multiple identities as the daughter of members of both dominant and non-dominant groups will be silenced by the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system. The narrative form used by Cliff in *Abeng* can be understood as the means for uncovering and rediscovering a history not yet available to members of nondominant groups, still outside of modernity, and in need of reclamation.

The relationship between colonizers and the history of their colonial subjects is described by the third person narrative voice in a highly symbolic way that points to this cultural mode of forgetting and the erasure of the bodies and the histories of the colonized. The metaphor of the burial of history becomes apparent when the third person narrative relates the story of a coffin with human remains found in the churchyard of an Anglican church, precisely the choice of white-identified Boy Savage, Clare's father. Proceeding from a slave boat, any human remains in the coffin are destroyed, hidden from view, and destined to oblivion. It is especially significant that the coffin will be buried twice by members of dominant groups:

> The Parish Church was High Anglican –it was the church of attendance of the white governor and members of the royal family stopped there when the queen's yacht, the H.M.S. Britannia, docked in Kingston Harbor…In 1958, while digging near the churchyard during some renovations to the building, workers uncovered a coffin of heavy metal—a coffin of huge proportions. Not the shape of a coffin at all—shaped like a monstrous packing case, made of lead and welded shut. A brass plate which had been affixed to the coffin and etched with an inscription informed

> the vicar that the coffin contained the remains of a hundred plague victims, part of a shipload of enslaved persons from the Gold Coast, who had contracted the plague from the rats on the vessel which brought them to Jamaica. Others, many others, would have died onboard and their bodies dropped in the sea along the Middle Passage… The coffin should be opened on no account, the plaque said, as the plague might still be viable, The vicar commissioned an American navy warship in port to take the coffin twenty miles out and sink it into the sea. (*Abeng* 7-8)

This specific scene becomes especially significant not only as far as the colony's relationship with the history of slavery is concerned, but also as far as Clare's. The cultural model of forgetting in the Jamaica of 1958, four years before actual independence, is one of destruction and obliteration of history, rather than one of remembering. Resending the coffin to the sea, to the Middle Passage, replicates practices of previous centuries when enslaved persons, considered cargo, were thrown into the ocean when deemed too weak and impossible to sell. At the same time, any connection with the history of slavery is made impossible for those belonging to non-dominant groups.

This cultural mode of forgetting marks the lives of colonized subjects, particularly those of Afro-Jamaican descent. *Abeng* shows how the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system affects even the most intimate social structures by presenting a vision of the Savage family as split up and marked by racial and gender tensions that go back to the hegemonies of the system. Vilouta-Vázquez (42) analyzes one of the moments in Clare's family's life as especially significant: the churches of

choice of each of Clare's parents represents the tone for the rest of the novel, as the whole family becomes part of congregations where the majority of members belong to dominant groups (in Boy's case) and to non-dominant groups (in Kitty's case). In Vilouta-Vázquez's view, "the description of the two different congregations alludes to the different conceptions of existence in Jamaican society: the relationship established with God by the colonizers and the colonized reflects different views towards the world provoked by racial and color inequalities provoked by the imperializing process" (43). On the one hand, Mr. Savage's choice for worship, John Knox Memorial Church, is characterized by its practices in support of metropolitan policies; other symbolic aspects, such as the hymns sung there reveal the authority of the English empire, and its violent attitude of superiority and domination of the world, masked as a civilizing mission:

> On special days [the minister of the church] led the congregation in "God Save the Queen"—during the Suez crisis of 1956 they had stood and sung it every Sunday for a month. On other, more ordinary Sundays, they sang the standards—"Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War"; "Faith of Our Fathers, Living Still, in Spite of Dungeon, Fire and Sword"; "Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of All Nature"; "Fling Out the Banner, Let It Float, Skyward and Seaward, High and Wide"—in which the banner of righteousness carried the Christian soldiers mingled with the Union Jack. (*Abeng* 7)

As usual in the relationship between the parents of the protagonist, the attitudes are opposite, pointing to the construction of a polarized world, pre-modern/modern violence and imposition of the history and values of Western education and systems of thought. In this case, the church chosen by Boy reflects a daring, overconfident approach to the

world and the peoples in it. On the other hand, the Tabernacle of the Almighty is populated with the descendants of the enslaved. For that reason, they constitute the lowest social classes, becoming members of non-dominant groups and hence with a different perspective towards life and a need for healing, as suggested by the balm image at the end of the quotation:

> The hymns at John Knox seemed to suggest a historical and almost equal relationship with the idea of God—that this God would support the travel of the Word to faraway climes and distant "heathen" by almost any means necessary—"marching as to war." The hymns sung by the people in the Tabernacle suggested something else. The necessity of deliverance. A belief in their eventual redemption. In the balm of Gilead. (*Abeng* 12)

The members of the church chosen by Clare's mother belong to a very different world and social class: their lives are marked by inequality, shame, and feelings of worthlessness brought about by the horrors of the system of slavery. After describing their daily lives as members of the service in different households, the third person narrative voice emphasizes this cultural mode of forgetting to insert fragments of African-Jamaican history that have been lost or misinterpreted as a result of the overarching influence of the Eurocentric history of the colonial/modern gender system and the relegation of African and Afro-Jamaican history to the outside of modernity. All throughout this fragment there is a very striking insistence on the impossibility of access by the Afro-Jamaican to their own history. The constant repetition of "They did not know" draws attention to a long list of historical figures, events, cultural elements or practices that have been denied to them:

> The people in the Tabernacle did not know that their ancestors had been paid to inform on one another: given their freedom for becoming the *blackshots* of the white man. …The people in the Tabernacle did not know that Kishee, one of Nanny's commanders, had been killed by Scipio, a Black slave—but of course they did not know who Kishee had been. They did not know about the kingdom of the Ashanti or the kingdom of Dahomey, where most of their ancestors had come from. … They did not know that their name for papaya—*pawpaw*—was the name of one of the languages of the Dahomey. Or that the cotta, the circle of cloth women wound tightly to make a cushion to balance baskets on their heads was an African device, an African word. That Brer Anancy, the spider who inspired tricks and tales, was a West African invention. Or that Cuffee was the name of a Maroon commander—the word had come down to them as *cuffy*, and meant upstart, social climber. …Some of them were called Nanny, because they cared for the children of other women, but they did not know who Nanny had been. (*Abeng* 20-21)

This passage shows the need for a project of historical excavation that members of nondominant groups are not ready to take on yet. In this particular landscape of memory, the shame, or "wuthlessness" (*Abeng* 17) that the members of the Tabernacle feel is shared by Clare's mother, who does not share her knowledge of Jamaican history with Clare, as their relationship is deeply impacted by her shame of her own identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman.

Kitty Freeman Savage is an example of silence and thwarted resistance herself. As a child, and thanks to the teachings of Mr. Powell during her elementary school

education, she has access to Afro-Jamaican history and culture. In his classes, Mr. Powell subverts the sweeping influence of the hegemony of the colonial/modern gender system as transmitted by school manuals:

> The manuals were oblivious to any specific facts about the nature of Mr. Powell's class. No doubt the same manuals were shipped to villages in Nigeria, schools in Hong Kog, even settlements in the Northwest Territory—anywhere that the "sun never set," with the only difference occurring in the pages which described the history of the colony in question as it pertained to England. (85)

In opposition to this project, Mr. Powell creates a counterhistorical space where he strives to challenge and react against these impositions. One of his most important objectives is trying to convey ideas of agency and dignity, replacing the colonial curriculum with works that reflect the reality of colonized subjects more accurately. Moreover, he includes everyday Jamaican reality in the lives of his students, making his teaching closer to them, making their culture as important as relevant as the version presented in the manuals of colonial education.

> So he gave them McKay's poetry and Hughes' poetry, because he wanted them to know that there had been songs by Black men which were equal to any songs by Englishmen. He had them recite "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and transform the rivers named by Langston Hughes into the rivers of Jamaica—these were the rivers that would make their souls grow deep. These were the rivers they knew and should know. They had no business with Mississippi or Congo or Nile or Euphrates. Better to be content with Black. Plantain Garden. Salt. Yallaha, Cobre.

> Minho. Martha Brae. Great Spanish. White. The history of Jamaica was held in these waters. And so were the lives of these children. (90)

This counterhistorical space he creates cannot be completed, however, as he is not able to give his students complete information: "But he concealed the sources of many of the songs and the lives he told them about the poets became the lives themselves" (90). In this landscape of memory, keeping some of this information hidden is a protection mechanism, as his effort to go beyond the boundaries of the colonial power curriculum is not completely possible yet.

One of Kitty's more cherished memories of Mr. Powell's classes goes back to when she learned to recite the poem "Maroon Girl[15]:" "Kitty had been the Maroon Girl at school in her thirteenth year a and that was the poem she had taken to heart" (129), a poem in which many of the lines speak about pride in being a Jamaican female maroon "poised to attack" (129). Mr. Powell's influence on young Kitty becomes an inspiration for a resistance against the hegemony of the colonial education imposed across the board in the entire Empire, as she plans to continue his labor as an activist in favor of the transmission of the silenced history of members of non-dominant groups:

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[15]"Maroon Girl," by Walter Adolphe Roberts
I've seen her on a lonely forest track
Her level brows made salient by the sheen
Of flesh the hue of cinnamon. The clean
Blood of the hunted, vanished Arawak
Flows in her veins with blood of white and black.
Maternal, noble-breasted is her mien;
She is a peasant, yet she is a queen.
She is Jamaica poised against attack.

Her woods are hung with orchids; the still flame
Of red hibiscus lights her path, and starred
With orange and coffee blossoms in her yard.
Fabulous, pitted mountains close the frame.
She stands on ground for which her fathers died;
Figure of savage beauty, figure of pride. (*Abeng* 90-91)

> Kitty's quiet in her marriage and motherhood such a part of her personality, had not always been with her. Before she met Boy, she had been known as a girl eager to get ahead, to get herself an education, and she scoffed at marriage. She was determined to become a schoolteacher and to build her own school at St. Elizabeth, where she would teach children not from the manuals sent by the colonial office, but from manuals she herself would write." (*Abeng* 129)

Marriage and gendered and racialized expectations derived from being Boy Savage's wife silence / finish her dreams. However, even if she was going to share this personal history of resistance at home with her daughter, it would have never been with Clare. From her birth, the latter is destined to be her father's daughter: as a light-skinned, green-eyed female colonial subject, she will be forced to inherit the hegemony of the Eurocentric culture and history her father represents. As a result, Kitty decides to hide the multiplicity of her identity from her light-skinned daughter, and only share it with the darker-skinned one. Her decision comes from her view of Afro-Jamaican culture, worldviews, beliefs and histories as unworthy of transmission, and a source of trouble for her daughters in the white-identified society Clare seems to fit in so naturally:

> Let her passage into that otherworld be as painless as possible. Maybe Kitty thought that Clare would only want this thing, to pass into whiteness, looking as she did, speaking well because of her lessons at St. Catherine's, reading English books and English descriptions of history. Perhaps she thought it would be best for her. (*Abeng* 129)

Kitty's view of her own daughter as a white-identified member of the dominant groups of Kingston confines her daughter to a restricted gendered, racialized role. What is more,

this distance created by Kitty's expectations will have another related consequence: the impossibility to access Afro-Jamaican history, cultures, and traditions, In Vilouta-Vázquez's words, "the silence existing between mother and daughter blocks not only the transmission of her Afro-Jamaican heritage but also Clare's acknowledgement of her connections with Jamaica and other silenced women" (46).

The cultural mode of forgetting at the moment (the pre-independence Jamaica of the 1950s) allows only for the discussion of Eurocentric history, both at home and at school; what is more, it only permits the existence of an unquestioning colonial subject who willingly accepts the versions of history provided to her. At home, it is from Boy, her father, that she learns about the Bayeux tapestry and William the Conqueror, Plato, the *Timaeus,* Stonehenge or the Pyramids. With Boy, Clare also visits Paradise Plantation, the former family property now turned into a tourist attraction. There, she learns about the grandeur of the Savage family, now all gone: "'You know, your great-great-grandfather imported all his furnishings from abroad. Settees and tables, Bric-a-brac. Crystal. China. From England and Ireland mostly. Staffordshire. Wedgewood. Waterford. Royal Doulton" (25). Similarly, at St. Catherine's School for Girls, Clare only learns about only the hegemonic version of history, since teachers minimize not only the relevance of the study of Jamaican history, but also of Afro-Jamaican resistance movements such as the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865, or the existence of maroon communities: "This history was slight compared to history of Empire. The politics of freedmen paled beside the politics of the Commonwealth" (*Abeng* 30). These events are pushed to the outside of modernity as irrelevant and unworthy of study, becoming footnotes to the major events of Western history.

In this cultural mode of forgetting, Clare's timid questioning of history can only start in a secretive manner, right after the visit to Paradise Plantation, a former property of her family where she can visit not only the great house, but also the remains of the slave quarters The third person narrative narrator describes her learning of histories of marginalization or oppression as little steps that always come from sources that, in this cultural mode, must be kept hidden and secret. As she understands that it is not her place to question the validity of colonial ideology by challenging her father or the school teachers' misrepresentations of history, she keeps her ideas and her research to herself. Significantly enough, she secretly directs her view towards alternative traumatic histories of oppression, to sources other than the official (school books, teachers and her father at this point):

> Driving toward Ocho Rios, where her father had an appointment with the manager of the Arawak Hotel, Clare thought about the great house. The time which had passed through it. The salt taste of the walls. She sometimes imagined that the walls of certain places were the records of those places—the events which happened there. More accurate than the stories of people who had lived within the walls. …Maybe there were signs marked on the walls each time they heard a shout—like the slashes on the Rosetta Stone, which she learned about in school. (*Abeng* 32)

Like the Rosetta Stone, these marking on the walls of the great house can offer a key to a different version of history that needs, again, to be excavated and deciphered, although the landscape of memory at this point does not make it possible. Right after this allusion, the intrusive third person narrator inscribes the story of one of Clare's ancestors who

owned the plantation, J.E C. Savage. The context is the end of the slavery system, his cruel reaction to it, and the unknown female figures of resistance whose stories are also recovered through a voice to which Clare has no access. Inez and Mma. Alli are two enslaved women living in the plantation who secretly resist, and help others fight the inhuman treatment of the plantation owner. A descendant of Indians and Maroons, Inez is caught while trying to get a gun for her father, and handed to Savage, who "…raped her for six weeks until he left on one of his trips to London" (34). In Paradise Plantation Inez meets Mma. Alli, a respected figure that resists the cruelties of the system through daily, small acts of resistance: "She said she was a one-breasted warrior woman and represented a tradition which was older than the one which had enslaved them" (34). In this counterhistorical space, readers learn about the many ways in which she alleviates the pain of the rest of enslaved persons in the plantation. Among other things, she transmits her knowledge of African cultures to children in the plantation, counsels them on how to escape, advises women on how to become owners of their own bodies, and performs abortions for women unwilling to breed children with their owner, including Inez. Both women play a primary role in the protection of the plantation enslaved workers after J. E. C.'s sadistic and vicious reaction after the full emancipation of 1838:

> These people were slaves and would not know how to behave in freedom. They would have been miserable. … These people were Africans. Their parameters of behavior were out of the range of civilized men. Their lives obviously of less value. They had been brought here for one purpose, and one purpose only—and this was about to be removed. … And he held that among these people life was cheap, and death did not matter. His conclusion was far from original among his

> own kind: At that moment there people were his property, and they were therefore his to burn. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 39-40)

Even though some of the enslaved persons in the plantation are indeed killed by J. E. C. Savage, Inez helps the ones able to escape to the mountains and start a free life in Cockpit Country, with the rest of the Maroons. The final reflection of the narrative voice gives a harrowing explanation of the remains Clare sees in the plantation, and that she is not able to interpret yet:

> Lest anyone think the judge's action—which became the patters of foundation stones and thin dirt gullies Clare saw that afternoon behind the great house, rectangles remembering an event she would never know of—lest anyone think the judge's behavior extreme or insane or frenzied, the act of a mad man, it should be pointed out that this was not an isolated act on the eve of African freedom in Jamaica. (40)

Unable to access these parts of Afro-Jamaican history, the process of unlearning the official accounts leads Clare to study the history of the Holocaust, as an initial example of multidirectional memory that anticipates her resistance and reconstruction of her individual and collective traumatic histories as an Afro-Jamaican subject. Her research into the death of Anne Frank becomes a turning point towards her questioning of the silences of history she starts to encounter when asking about issues her father or teachers are not ready to answer: "When Clare asked her teachers to explain this fact of the history of the modern world, this overwhelming fact of the murder of six million Jewish people, the death of this Jewish girl, the teachers hemmed and hawed" (*Abeng* 70). Again, this

interest must be kept secret and Clare will need to start a secret process of research that would not be allowed at home or school.

Another example of Clare's growing knowledge of the marginalized, misinterpreted history of Jamaica comes from yet another source that needs to be kept secret, since it comes from a woman who is marginalized by the rest of the community. Mrs. Stevens is labeled the "mad" sister of Mrs. Phillip, the latter being a staunch representative of the ruling class of Jamaica, a racist old woman who is in charge of educating Clare in the mores and customs she is supposed to learn because she also belongs to the ruling class. Conversely, Vilouta-Vázquez describes Mrs. Stevens as being "in charge of teaching Clare the silenced history and the consequences of racial prejudices, sexual colonization, and the cruel history of slavery" (48). A relationship with an Afro-Jamaican man and a child with him sends her to a marginal position per the standards of white-identified Kingston society. Her independence and rejection of the patterns of behavior expected of her earn her the label "mad:" "My sister was too ambitious for herself. Surrounded herself with books. She had some inflated notions with leaving Jamaica. And she did not want to marry—carried on so about that, she nearly killed our father. She finally took to her room, and Father had no choice but to send her to a convent in Morant Bay" (159). Vilouta-Vázquez explains that Mrs. Stevens becomes a key player in Clare's process of recovering the forgotten side of Jamaican history she has found so difficult to gain access by virtue of her white identified upbringing (48). Meeting Mrs. Stevens, then, becomes a necessary step towards self-discovery and the acknowledgement of her roots:

> Although Clare's designated benefactor is Mrs. Phillips, a colonial Englishwoman with an antipathy for black people, her true benefactor, Mrs. Phillips's mad sister, the woman who teaches Clare about the history and ramifications of sexual colonization on the island, represents both the black and white races, the outcast and the English gentlewoman. Clare is supposed to become a genteel Englishwoman under the guidance of Mrs. Phillips, but she receives her real education from the mad woman and thus transformed from girl to womanist. (Renk 107)

Vilouta-Vázquez argues that Mrs. Steven's marginal position in Kingston's society allows for possibilities of resistance that are impossible for other women. By using her insanity as a shield that protects her, she is able to resist the voicelessness that other women suffer (48). As a result, Vilouta-Vázquez adds, hers becomes a position that permits the struggle against the inequalities of society, as exemplified by her teaching Clare about the horrors of slavery. With Mrs. Stevens Clare learns, for example, about the cruel history of the *Zong*, the infamous slave ship from where enslaved persons were thrown overboard as insurance money collected from their loss would be more profitable than their sale:

> They brought people here in chains and then expected to prosper. They killed off all the Indians and the snakes and believed they were doing good…Do you know about the ship called the *Zong*?" She paused only briefly, not waiting for an answer. "The *Zong* was a slave ship and the captain spilled the living bodies of Africans over the side, saying that they were infected. They were not infected.

> The captain collected money for their souls. That is the sort of thing that went on here day after day." (*Abeng* 164-165)

Having access to this unknown history becomes especially pertinent in Clare's learning process, especially if connected with the story of the coffin buried twice (first in a graveyard, then at sea) discussed earlier. Placing this moment of learning history towards the end of the novel adds a special layer of significance to this turning point. Vilouta-Vázquez emphasizes its importance as

> this learning process, only made possible by the connections made with marginal members of society, will culminate in *No Telephone to Heaven* as well when Clare Savage decides to go back to her grandmother's land to regain her identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman. The process will be belated, but will end up culminating in the reaffirmation of her Afro-Jamaican identity in the second novel. (48)

2.5. Cultural Modes of Remembering: *No Telephone to Heaven*

In this second novel, readers see Clare Savage as an adult woman who, even though is still fragmented, is now in a position to unlearn her Anglocentric education and upbringing. At this point, Clare is ready to start a process of reclamation of her Afro-Jamaican identity, denied to her as part of her background as a member of a white-identified family of Kingston. What is more, in this novel, it is Clare who takes charge of her own active learning of Afro-Jamaican history. It is the contention of this section that *No Telephone to Heaven*, mainly set in the Jamaica of the 1980s, represents the cultural mode of remembering for Clare. As the historical context has changed (Jamaica gained

independence on August 6th, 1962), a more active relationship with memory, and a different approach to the knowledge of silenced history appear as a possibility.

After spending several years in London, and being in contact with resistance movements (especially in the fight for civil rights of the 1980s in London), she is ready to return and reclaim her own identity as a multiethnic, multiracial Afro-Jamaican woman:

> The *thirty-six-year-old woman Clare Savage* is standing in the back of a truck climbing through the Cockpit Country. *Her story is a long story. How she came to be here*. For she had once witnessed for Babylon. Had been ignorant of the wildness of the Maroons. *There are many bits and pieces to her, for she is composed of fragments. In this journey, she hopes, is her restoration*. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 85)

Vilouta-Vázquez asserts that the words "The *thirty-six-year-old woman Clare Savage* is standing in the back of a truck climbing through the Cockpit Country" allows readers to access "the space / time frameworks where Cliff's main character's evolution is inscribed," (49), ready to reclaim a forbidden way of life, replicating the way of life of the Maroons of that Jamaican region. Two sentences in the previous quotation summarize this process: "For she had once witnessed for Babylon[16]. Had been ignorant of the wildness of the Maroons." She has gone from having once been a member of the white-identified privileged social classes of Jamaica to traveling to Cockpit Country with other members of an antineocolonial guerrilla group, having gained knowledge of the Afro-Jamaican history previously forbidden to her. Vilouta-Vázquez (49) defines the setting as

[16] For Afro-Jamaicans, mainly for those following Rastafarianism, the word "Babylon" is used to represent white patriarchy or any other form of oppression.

especially significant, too, since Cockpit Country[17] is a region of Jamaica directly linked to Nanny and the maroon communities, and it is described by the third person narrative voice as "the land of look behind[18]" (21). What is more, St. Catherine is the village in this region that will become a critical context for Clare's project of recovery of both individual and collective history of resistance. Gaining access to this memory and knowledge of history will allow Clare the possibility to overcome the traumatic consequences of the years when her privileged social position was used as a reason for a denial of access to the history of the members of non-dominant groups. Among the many reasons why moving to Cockpit Country becomes a very meaningful decision for Clare and the guerrilla members, a most significant one is the relationship between the maroon population and the past as a source of pride and self-esteem. Deborah Gabriel's description of their way of life and systems of significance insists on their resistance to slavery as not only resistance but also as a "defense of their culture and identity, their spiritual and political values, and preservation of African civilization." In a connection with the importance of active memory and knowledge of history as sources of a general healing against traumatic denials that become the main idea of this chapter, Gabriel points out that the Maroons' resistance against slavery looked to memories of Africa and its cultures as a source of self-esteem as well as confidence: "…so much so that this diluted the stigma of inferiority imposed by the plantocracy." As Maroons sought for

[17] Cockpit Country is a mountainous region in the mid-western region of Jamaica. Since the 17th century, it has been home to the Maroons, descendants of enslaved persons of African descent who escaped to the mountains to avoid the horrors of slavery. Several attempts were made by the English to subdue the Maroons, but none of them were successful. In 1738, and after all these unsuccessful attempts, the British conceded that Cockpit Country and its Maroons were unbeatable and recognized the region as a state within a state (Shoumatoff).

[18] Cockpit Country has also been named "the land of look behind," as it became so dangerous and unpredictable for British soldiers that two of them had to ride a horse, with one of them facing the rear in order to be always vigilant of the effective attacks of the Maroons (Shoumatoff).

remedies against the traumatizing effects of slavery, *No Telephone to Heaven* explores the healing power of the creation of counterhistorical spaces that help reconstruct fragmented identities and histories.

Vilouta-Vázquez describes this novel as representation of Clare's reclamation of her Afro-Jamaican identity, a vindication made exceedingly difficult by her position of privilege in the white-identified upper classes of Jamaica. In fact, Vilouta-Vázquez adds, it is her mother who constantly emphasizes that this privilege must be embraced as a promise of a easier life (41). Jeannie, Clare's sister reports these thoughts: "One time she said she feel you would prosper here. She say is because you favour backra, and fe you Daddy" (105). Owing to the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system, Clare's multiple identity is reduced to a single possibility that can be described as a traumatic loss of cultural practices and knowledge associated with her mother's side of her family, that Vilouta-Vázquez lists as Anansi stories, duppy stories or folk songs. The fact that she is light-skinned, and for that reason, destined to a life of privilege, probably away from Jamaica, establishes a clear path for her: she will never know anything that is related to the Afro-Jamaican side of her family.

Even though the main events in *No Telephone to Heaven* depict Clare's life in Cockpit Country as a modern maroon, a series of flashbacks give readers an idea of the time gap existing between the end of *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. At the beginning of the second novel, the whole family leaves Jamaica in order to live in the United States. After a short period in Brooklyn, Kitty Savage cannot put up with the racism she experiments and returns to Jamaica with Jennie, her darker-skinned daughter. . Clare, on the other hand, was assigned to her father from the moment of her birth.

Vilouta-Vázquez views this separation as the cause of a series of denials made in order to forget the pain caused by her mother's decision to divide the family into two halves and leaving Clare with her father (50). The trauma of being separated not only from her mother, but also from the Afro-Jamaican side of her identity, increases when Kitty dies in Jamaica some years later. Clare then decides to go away to England to study the art of the Renaissance. Vilouta-Vázquez (50) sees this move as a response to the pain she suffers after the death of her mother: "Choosing London with the logic of a creole" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 109). This trauma of personal and cultural loss influences Clare's development dramatically. Yet, as it has not been fully processed, leads to a state of dissociation where she tries to separate herself from the source of pain and takes refuge in the way out everyone in Jamaica keeps mentioning is her best option, pursuing a life away from the colony. Clare's inner fragmentation and pain are very powerfully described by the third person narrative voice by means of analogy that pairs Clare with the main protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847): "The fiction had tricked her. Drawn her in so that she became Jane. Yes. The parallels were there. Was she not heroic Jane? Betrayed. Left to wander. Solitary. Motherless" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 116). The last words in the quotation describe her dissociated state very powerfully, as she only sees the option of renouncing her Afro-Jamaican identity. The powerful fiction of race and gender Lugones described in her discussion of the construction of the colonial/modern gender system is shown in action in this scene, as it acts as a prevailing factor of pressure in the decisions made by different colonial subjects. The main feature of this moment of her life is that she clings to her knowledge of Anglocentric culture. Feeling betrayed by her mother's decision to leave her behind, isolated from those parts

of her identity that she is forced to ignore and disregard, she lacks a support system and chooses to replace it with her studies: "Being rootless and disconnected from her past is a consequence of the denial of Afro-Jamaican history that has affected her education, leaving her with only one half of the story to know" (Vilouta-Vázquez 50).

In London, she starts her studies as a manner to forget, to wall off the memories of Jamaica, to dissociate herself from the trauma of being forcibly separated from her mother first, and her death, some years later:

> That suited her for a time. Study. Dreams and images. Refuge. Rivalry of nature. Balance. Harmony. None enters here unless he is a geometer. Mnemonics. Order from chaos. Theater of the world. Structure. Art. Illusion. Original texts. She needed this—yes. Her head filled. Shower of gold. Split brow of Zeus. Calumny of Apelles. Splendor of tombs. Sacred and profane love. Christ's agony, besides. Piero's resurrection. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 117).

At this moment of Clare's life, European art represents order against the chaotic image that her family offers of Jamaica. They represent it as a place with no present and no future, a country without any merit from where those able to, should escape: "You have a chance to leave that island behind you—distancing himself in his phrasing from the place in which he wrote" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 110). The desire to get away from anything that reminds her of her mother and her Afro-Jamaican identity is her adaptive response to the overwhelming pain of losing both. To avoid thinking about painful events, she deploys a system of self-distraction to allow painful memories to retreat to a corner of her mind. This dissociation state interrupts the access to memory, although Clare's present behavior is still affected by this still intense presence.

The "for a time" that she initially plans is interrupted and finishes as her life is shaken by the events of racial turmoil occurring in London during her stay. Again, as was the case in her interest in the history of Anne Frank and the Holocaust, multidirectional memory sends Clare in the direction of making connections with different collective traumas that help her get the process of reclamation of her own identity and history as an Afro-Jamaican woman.

The initial steps Clare takes to reconstruct her individual and collective identity and her relationship with the history of Jamaica are very powerfully symbolized by two specific moments in her life still in London. Vilouta-Vázquez highlights that there are two objects in particular:

> one brooch she sees in Portobello Road with the inscription "Résistez" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 112), an idea that anticipates a change in Clare's behavior, and a cotta, a round cushion of cloth used by African women to balance burdens on their heads. The cotta connects her to her matrilineal heritage. (51)

As said before, Kitty belongs to the part of the family that links Clare to her Afro-Jamaican identity. Moreover, the presence of the cotta object adds another layer of meaning to the process of recovery and knowledge and the role of a more active memory, as it was mentioned in *Abeng* as one of the objects/elements/peoples/members of non-dominant groups had never had the possibility to have access to: "They did not know that their name for papaya—*pawpaw*—was the name of one of the languages of the Dahomey. Or that the cotta, the circle of cloth women wound tightly to make a cushion to balance baskets on their heads was an African device, an African word" (20-21). Vilouta-Vázquez argues that in this case the multiplicity of her identity does not need to remain

hidden behind the lightness of her skin anymore (51). A new allusion to another fictional character helps readers understand Clare's evolution to embracing the multiplicity of her identity. In this case this change is emphasized by the analogy with Bertha Rochester /Antoinette Cosway, the main character in Jane Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966):

> Wild-maned Bertha. 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. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 116)

All the words in this powerful quotation establish the developing prominence of the multiplicity of her identity, and physical features that had remained hidden and that start to surface and to be reclaimed. Besides, the rest of nouns and adjectives all hint to a rejection of the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system upheld by her father.

It can be added that other devices emphasize the importance of these moments of highly symbolic significance in connection with Clare's return to her grandmother's property. In Vilouta-Vázquez's opinion (52), Clare's process of reconnection and access to knowledge of the unrepresented history of resistance of Afro-Jamaican women is anticipated by the short chapter "Magnanimous Warrior," where a compelling reclamation of the figure Nanny of the Maroons, and with her, other female resistance figures is made: "Rambling Mother. Mother who trumps and wheels counter clockwise around the power-stone, the center of the world. Into whose cauldron the Red Coats vanished" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 164). In connection with this aim, it can also be added that a powerful paragraph ,in the same chapter proposes a reclamation of the

figures of women fighters who have been forgotten, denigrated, and on the verge of vanishing. Figures of female resisters already recovered in *Abeng*, like Inez and Mma. Alli as well come to mind:

> What has become of this warrior? Now that we need her more than ever. She has been burned in an alms-house fire in Kingston. She has starved to death. She wanders the roads of the country with swollen feet. She has cancer. Her children have left her. Her powers are known no longer. They are called by other names. She is not respected. She lies on an iron bedstead in a shack in Trench Town. She begs outside a rum shop in Spanish Town. She lies in a bed in a public hospital with sores in her buttocks. No one swabs her wounds. Flies gather. No one turns her in the bed. The pain makes her light-headed. They tell her she is senile. They have taken away her bag of magic. Her teeth. Her goat's horn. We have forgotten her. Now that we need her more than ever. The nurses ignore her. The doctors make game of her. The priest tries to take her soul. Can you remember how to love her? (164)

As said earlier, the significance of this reclamation is even more remarkable being placed right before the portrayal of Clare's final decision to abandon Europe and her escapism strategy for good, embracing the project of reclamation of identity, voice and history. The first step in the recovery of Afro-Jamaican history and her multiple identity takes place right after Clare's return to Jamaica. She decides to change her interest in the history of European Renaissance art to teaching Afro-Jamaican history, an effort she understands is necessary in the process of reconnecting with the multiplicity of her identity. She becomes a historian herself. Her resistance project includes uncovering the silenced life

of resistance in the island, as well as her personal history. She turns her eyes to ancient, multiethnic Jamaican culture and history, disciplines she had been forced to ignore:

> I have educated myself since my return. Spoken with the old people [...] leafed through the archives downtown […] spent time at the university library […]one thing leads to another. I have studied the conch knife excavated at the Arawak site in White Marl […] the shards of hand-thrown pots […] the petroglyphs hidden in the bush […] listened to the stories about Nanny and taken them to heart. I have seen the flock of white birds fly out at sunset from Nannytown […]. (193)

Again, images of excavation as opposed to burial abound in Clare's description of this process. The active relationship with memory and knowledge that was almost absolutely absent in *Abeng* is clear here. It is also worth noting that in this new landscape of memory, Clare has access to memory and knowledge through both the oral and written histories of Jamaica, combining them together in her project to unlearn the teachings of colonial history. Access to sources becomes much easier as archives, libraries, excavation sites, or even Nannytown become possibilities that were unthinkable for her in *Abeng.*

Becoming an Afro-Jamaican history teacher produces very positive effects in Clare, as she defines her experience of learning and spreading this knowledge as fulfilling, satisfying, "the best thing I have ever done." (194). As opposed to the withdrawal and isolation that studying history in Europe meant, this new effort is defined by her experiences of insensitivity and arrogant perception, effects she now tries to revert: "I only know that the loss, the forgetting…of resistance …of tenderness…is a terrible thing. Look, I want to restore something to these children." (196). These words could apply to Clare herself, who, as a child, lost the connections to resistance and to

tenderness, as she was separated from her Afro-Jamaican identity and from the linkages with her mother's story of resistance.

After this initial step at the recovery of her multiple identity, Clare Savage's literal and metaphorical journey takes her to her grandmother's farm in Cockpit Country. There she will be able to recover and reconnect with her mother's figure, a part of her multiple identity that has largely remain hidden from her. As it has been often mentioned, Cockpit Country, Nanny, and the Maroons are the elements around which Clare's reconstruction process revolves: "Sleeping on the ground, squatting at the roadside, evoking the name of Nanny, in whose memory they were engaged in this, they might move closer." (*No Telephone to Heaven* 5). Clare's evolution towards the reclamation of the multiplicity of her identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman and her lineage is populated with the figures of unknown resistant women: "Swinging their blades against the tough bush, some of them thought about their grandparents, thought: yes, this is for them, too. And for their mother: our mothers who fathered us when the men were called away or drifted off" (10). Moreover, the cotta mentioned twice already returns as an element that helps intensify the connections with her mother and grandmother:

> Basket on head, resting on a cotta, bought a year ago in Knightsbridge, in a gallery specializing in African art, carried as a talisman. Now being put to use, its true properties recognized. It had not been comfortable on a woman's head. She spoke to the shopkeeper in the name of her grandmother. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 12)

The connection with her grandmother's figure is precisely the circumstance that makes this initial step possible. Miss Mattie's farm, now hers, provides the counterhistorical

space that will become the context for a process of recovery and reconnection with Afro-Jamaican history, which in Clare's case, is also a personal project that resembles the frustrated dreams of Kitty as a history teacher. Vilouta-Vázquez understands that recovery of this land is directly tied to a process of healing from the traumas of the separation from her mother and the subsequent cultural loss attached to it: "Recovering Afro-Jamaican culture and history becomes the basis on which to understand the construction of Clare's identity as an independent Afro-Jamaican woman" (52). Vilouta-Vázquez makes further connections between Clare and Nanny of the Maroons that include elements such as "resistance, landscape, memory and time" (55). The first one Vilouta-Vázquez lists alludes to a connection between the arrival of enslaved persons of African descent in the colonies, and Clare's, made in a similar way: "She had arrived in Kingston with a high fever, in pain, entering the city on the sea as her ancestors had done" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 168). The second connection Vilouta-Vázquez points to becomes especially important, as it relates to specific female resistance. After a relationship with a wounded soldier in Europe, Clare loses her womb as a result of an infection. Her inability to bear children links her not only to Nanny but also to "a tradition of resistance, since one of the elements that made enslaved women more valuable was their capacity to add more property elements to their master's household or plantation" (Vilouta-Vázquez 55).

The final linkage between Clare and Nanny of the Maroons Vilouta-Vázquez sees is not only the location but also the features of Miss Mattie's farm. Cockpit Country became the site chosen by Jamaican Maroons because its geographical features made it almost impossible to find. One of the most important connections that can be made

between Miss Mattie's land and Clare's process of recovery of a silenced history of resistance is the choice of title for the chapter "Ruinate." Vilouta-Vázquez believes that with this choice, Cliff emphasizes the return of Miss Mattie's land to a moment when the colonial/gender modern system had not forcibly taken it[19]. This way, the third person narrative voice makes an even stronger connection between the land both Clare and Nanny inhabit. Moreover, Vilouta-Vázquez also adds that this ruination serves also as protection for this group of modern maroons, shielding them from the world they are trying to resist (56):"the soldiers left enough forest alive so that they were not visible from the road which passed at the foot of the hill. They lived in a clearing behind the screen" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 11). Vilouta-Vázquez notes the presence of constant connections between the past and the present (56). As the guerrilla members keep on working on the land, they find elements from the past, reinforcing these connections: "They found, in the process of clearing the land, things that had been planted before—before even the grandmother—which had managed to survive the density of the wild forest. Cassava. Afu. Fufu. Plantain." (11). Moreover, the third person narrative voice connects the land the guerrilla members work with the times before colonization, especially emphasizing the pain and traumas caused by the imposition of its hegemonies: "Nothing but the chaos of green—reaching across space, time too it seemed. When only Arawaks and iguanas and crocodiles and snakes dwelt there. Before landfall. Before hardship" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 172). The last four words in the quotation significantly connect the colonization process and trauma. With the use of "landfall" and

[19] "Ruinate," according to the definition given in a reference note in the novel, makes reference to lands which "were once cleared for agricultural purposes and have now lapsed into…bush" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 11)

"hardship" the third-person narrative voice distinctly emphasizes the devastating power of the construction of the world of the colonial/modern gender system. Besides, it can also be argued that the repetition of the word "before" associated with the present quality of the landscape points to the possibility of a new beginning, to the construction of a counterhistorical space that allows for previously forbidden practices, values, and beliefs.

Moreover, this counterhistorical space becomes the context for Clare's process of healing from the traumas provoked by the broken relationship with Kitty, her mother. As said before, the Savage family's relationships were affected by the racialized and prejudices of the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system. According to Vilouta-Vázquez (57), one of the most traumatic losses for Clare was the closer relationship with Kitty in this part of the Jamaican landscape, where Clare's mother's personality thrived: "I explored the country. First with my mother. She felt about this place…it was here where she was alive, came alive. 'I was fortunate I knew her here'. Her passion of place. Her sense of the people. Here is her; leave it at that" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 174). The real value of these experiences for Clare, in Vilouta-Vázquez's view, is that they take place away from the more white-identified Kingston she inhabits and the hegemony of the colonial/modern gender system (57). For this reason, these memories will become key in the process of renegotiation of the multiplicity of her Afro-Jamaican identity. Vilouta-Vázquez points to the significance of a scene that takes place in Cockpit Country as well, In a highly symbolic moment, Clare feels a connection that marks a new beginning for her while swimming in a pond near her grandmother's land: "The importance of this water came back to her. Sweet on an island surrounded by salt. She shut her eyes and let the cool of it was over her naked body, reaching into her as she

opened her legs. Rebaptism" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 172). The metaphor alluding to new beginnings precedes a series of memories Clare returns to, all of them related to her experiences in the country. Interestingly enough, she sees herself as an arrogant child in one of them: "Clare felt her face redden, even at this distance. Lifting her head, she could see the shade of the arrogant child" (173). These culminate again in a connection made with her mother and access to Afro-Jamaican history: "Her mother had told her of the enslaved persons. Her people" (174). To this list of Clare's reconnections with lost history Vilouta-Vázquez adds, perhaps, the most significant moment of excavation and recovery, which takes place when Clare literally digs her mother's possessions from the basement of her grandmother's house (58). Clare literally discovers her mother's own past as a young woman in Cockpit Country::

> Under this house she found solace from the rest of the company. She found her mother's things from childhood—schoolbooks, thread-spool dollies, vehicles with wheels of shoe-polish tins. Her mother's schoolbooks—history, literature, geography—opened their wormed pages to a former world. Things, beings, existed in their rightful place—destiny, order were honored. (199)

Among her mother's possessions, she recovers Kitty's schoolbooks. As was said earlier, one of Kitty's thwarted projects of resistance was to open her own school with books written by herself, like Mr. Powell used to do. These would include history and figures left out of modernity, those never taught to colonial children. This proves to be an especially significant connection, as Clare's project to recover her individual and collective history connect both mother and daughter's resistance projects.

Vilouta-Vázquez believes that Clare's decision to become a modern maroon allows for an individual and collective recovery and a discussion of resistances against the colonial/modern gender system, those which were obliterated and silenced by colonial historiography. The reclamation of lost voices must be understood, in Vilouta-Vázquez's words, as "a revolutionary gesture related to the change from objects to subjects, from the shade to the light of public acknowledgement" (59).

CHAPTER THREE

RESISTING THE TRAUMATIC PERFORMANCES OF WHITENESS:

DECOLONIZING FOREIGN BODIES IN *ABENG* AND *INTO THE INTERIOR*

> In 1958 Jamaica had two rulers: a white queen and a white governor. Independence-in-practically-name-only was only four years away. The portrait of the white queen hung in banks, department stores, grocery stores, schools, government buildings, and homes—from countryside shanties to the split levels on the hills above Kingston Harbor. *A rather plain little white woman decked in medals and other regalia—wearing, of course, a crown. Our-lady-of-the-colonies. The whitest woman in the world.* Elizabeth II, great-granddaughter of Victoria, for whom the downtown crafts market—where women came from the country-side to sell their baskets and Rastafarians sold their brooms and old Black men sold their wood carvings to the passengers of cruise ships and Pan-American clippers—was named. (*Abeng* 3, emphasis added)

> The girl spoke without looking at her sister. "One time she say she feel you would prosper here. She say *is because you favor backra*[20] *and fe you daddy*. Don't feel bad, man
> (*No Telephone to Heaven* 105, emphasis added).

> Everything is red and gold and lapis. *So comforting, all this color, evidence of grandeur*. So much easier on the eyes than a black-and-white photograph of Patrice Lumumba rotting in a fetal position in the trunk of a black sedan (*Into the Interior* 29, emphasis added).

The quotations chosen as epigraphs to this chapter are all related to its main purpose: to analyze how the female multiracial characters of Michelle Cliff's novels evolve from the traumatizing effects of the performance of whiteness towards resistance and reclamation of their own erased bodies. Whiteness as a cultural hegemon of superiority and privilege is represented by Elizabeth II, the Queen of England, who, during her visit to Jamaica in 1958 is described by the third-person narrative voice using terms of sainthood and virginity immediately preceded by her position of superiority,

[20] "Backra" is a term used to refer to white masters during slavery times. After slavery, it has been used to refer to British white, or white-identified people, more specifically those representing the ruling class.

which is significantly enough immediately followed by a description of her very white skin. This description echoes other terms used to refer to Elizabeth I (1533-1603), "the Virgin Queen," one of the initiators of the expansion process that would culminate with the foundation of the British Empire. At the same time, these adjectives serve the purpose of placing Elizabeth II as the head of the most evolved, superior country in the world, as opposed to the non-dominant Jamaica, presented as dependent and underdeveloped with the images of older women, men, and Rastafarians selling brooms, baskets and carving as opposed to the diamonds and other elements of the queen's regalia, a performance of whiteness and power that will be discussed later in this chapter. The fact that Elizabeth II is described as "the whitest woman in the world" evokes ideas of racial superiority assigned to those racialized white, contrasting with the inferior, colonized, non-dominant, non-whites. White skin is also associated with purity, virtue, and moral superiority, the Virgin Mary ("our lady of the colonies") being one of its most salient representatives in Western culture. All the connotations of this quotation help contextualize the situation in which the characters in the novels to be discussed are brought up. The two following epigraph quotations show the consequences of the processes of gender construction and racialization occurring in this very specific context (the Jamaica of the end of the 1950s). At the same time, they correspond to two of the key concepts in this chapter: the social distance of privilege and the traumatizing, alienating consequences derived from it. In these novels, Cliff represents trauma by presenting different multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural female characters that, owing to their forced white identification see how their family / community relationships are broken because of the social distance of privilege. As a consequence of the processes of racialization derived from the

colonial/modern gender system light-skinned Jamaicans were brought up to ignore other realities in their communities, focusing mainly only on all aspects related to England (body image, culture, language, or behavior), as they were construed as neutral and positive identities, and as a result, opposed to colonized identities, considered racial and negative. As the second epigraph shows, even the closest, most intimate family relationships suffer the devastating effects of this social division, when different members of the same family are inscribed into different social positions depending on the color of their skin. Laurie Vickroy describes the consequences of traumatic events such as this one: "traumatic experience can produce a sometimes indelible effect on the human psyche that can derange the nature of an individual's memory, self-recognition, and relational life" (11).

Cliff's novels explore the devastating effects of whiteness and the social distance of privilege through the experiences of a wide range of characters. At the center of these stories, she places the struggles of light-skinned female members of the dominant group who refuse to stay complicit with social injustices and inequities that would be easier to ignore in the environments where they are brought up. This effort proves to be a difficult one, as prejudices and racial and social barriers make it impossible to protect and maintain personal relationships and multiple identities. Through their connections and experiences in different environments, readers have access to varied degrees and consequences of trauma, from loneliness and isolation to full-on oppression, experienced by different characters depending on their location in this system.

Despite the privileges granted by their light skin, the fact that these central characters are forced into white identification causes them to experience the unsettling

consequences of traumatic social distance of privilege and the impossibility to create meaningful relationships among members of families / communities. The novels show how different interactions give these characters a gradual awareness of the social and racial inequities of the colonial/modern gender system, but because of its restrictions for light-skinned female children, this unlearning process is brought to a halt. As children, the restrictions of the system will result in the main characters' withdrawing from the painful reality of broken relationships and entering into a traumatic stasis that serves as a mode of protection in order to escape these harsh experiences. These turning points, when these characters start piecing together a cognitive awareness of the impacts of the colonial modern gender system, will be analyzed as learning moments to which they will return years later, in their adulthood, and as part of their efforts of identity recovery through the unlearning of this system's fragmenting logic.

In the case of Clare Savage and the unnamed protagonist of *Into the Interior*, this withdrawal means retreating to the supposed safety and comfort of the cultural / social center of privilege reserved only for those racialized white (or in their case, forced into white identification) and deserving of access to all opportunities: London. Staying away from the realities of Jamaica means to be able to build a world where to refuge themselves, a cocoon of protection and peace, as the duality in the third epigraph symbolizes so well. The splendor of the works of art displayed in a London museum offers for these characters a realm of protection against the harsh reality of Patrice Lumumba's violent death in 1961 in the context of the fight for independence of Congo. This chapter analyzes how these characters attempt to move away from the denial of, or

the withdrawal from, this history of brutal oppression to a reclamation of their bodies and the multiplicity of their identities as Afro-Jamaican women.

3.1 Whiteness and the Colonial Modern Gender System

The aim of this third chapter is to analyze one of the most significant issues in the traumatic experience of female postcolonial subjects when faced with the power of whiteness ideology: the traumatic construction of bodies as racial signifiers of privilege/disempowerment, primarily focusing on *Abeng*, *No Telephone to Heaven*, and *Into the Interior*. I define these novels as corporeal trauma narratives because the body of (post)colonial female subjects is forced into white identification, inscribed in specific cultural positions within society because gender and color formations demarcate fixed, restricting positions of privilege or inferiority that, if not completely inescapable, are constraining and difficult to transgress. Postcolonial subjects such as the main characters in these three novels are socialized believing that whiteness is both aesthetically desirable and pragmatically necessary: social and class mobility and success are contingent upon the adoption of the lifestyle and performances of those racialized white. In the case of these three novels, it is very significant that Michelle Cliff always chooses her central characters as light-skinned multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial. With the construction of these literary devices, she denounces the traumas of hegemonic whiteness, not only on light-skinned, but also on darker-skinned subjects, those utterly negated and marginalized by hegemonic whiteness. Throughout this chapter, I will analyze how race and color differences not only in the family environment, but also among the members of the community (especially at school, church, and among friends and extended family) provoke everyday conflict because of the privileges/demands

reserved for lighter-skinned colonized subjects, who see their advantages as an alienating situation that separate them from their siblings and community members in a dramatic manner. Race does not exist in a vacuum, and for postcolonial subjects, caught in the middle of different racial constructions and ethnicities, this is an especially complex construction. An analysis of the construction of the identities and the disjointed relationships subjects sustain is a powerful example of the different levels of trauma and the consequences of the hierarchical structures of whiteness for privileged and unprivileged members of society; the relationship between the members of the community is constructed along the lines of, and deeply affected by, Western hegemony. The different performances (both race and gender-related) that the hegemony of whiteness expects of subjects invade their relationships which are never really free from these constraints and end up being alienating. Cultural and racial shame and the over-encompassing influence of whiteness ideology deprive postcolonial subjects of vital connections with other members of the community and experiences they are denied access to. As has been said, the imposition of the hegemonies of the colonial/modern gender system can be defined as a collective trauma. Its main effects, as defined by Erikson are a devastation and a destruction of the social fabric and the connections among its members: "The bonds attaching people together" (194) are destroyed, although individuals continue to exist though distant and hard to relate to" (194). By taking a look at different cases of everyday conflict (at home, the church or the school), I will analyze how whiteness power structures permeate the life of colonized individuals at multiple levels. The resolution of those conflicts usually brings pain, isolation, and loneliness. My analysis will focus on the ways Cliff subverts the ideology of whiteness by showing how

its traumatizing effects outweigh its privileges for the light-skinned female characters analyzed. I will thoroughly analyze the bridges created (or the impossibility thereof) between members of dominant and non-dominant groups, and the web of reactions and consequences they bring about on both sides. Through an analysis of the processes of gender formation and racialization and their traumatizing performances I conclude that Michelle Cliff's novels belong to the genre of the corporeal trauma narratives: bodies become through the different processes of culturation, "foreign." The arbitrary association between the color of the skin, and the supposed truth that the body announces converts identity into an imposition. In the case of these novels, the body of the main characters announces whiteness. However, they feel this forced identification is robbing them of their identity as Afro-Jamaican women.

In order to subvert the association between whiteness, moral superiority, and privileged identities as essential features of those racialized white, Michelle Cliff presents the possibility of performing whiteness differently, emphasizing that the enactments and relations of whiteness are learned performances, both socially and culturally. Performing their Afro-Jamaican selves differently in relation to the family and the community will involve an effort to overcome the social distance of privilege and to recover the materiality of their bodies. In the second part of this chapter, I will analyze the vindication of the colonized body as a tool for recovery from the consequences of the traumas of colonialism. In these novels, individuals who have been silenced, disenfranchised, alienated, or even physically raped by representatives of colonial discourse, attempt to recover their bodies by rejecting the roles assigned by this hegemonic formation and try to reclaim them to occupy different, more visible positions

away from the lack of agency previously assigned to them because of their race and gender. Instead of the process of erasure that the imposition of racialized / gendered performances involves, Cliff introduces characters who become agents in the making of themselves by starting the project to reappropriate their own bodies and by attempting to perform their identities differently, away from the prescribed, oppressing imperatives of whiteness and from the social distance of privilege. By subverting these codes, they struggle to create new links and communities that go beyond the strictures of the colonial-modern gender system.

3.2. Corporeal Trauma Narratives: Performances of Whiteness and The Social Distance of Privilege

Michelle Cliff constructs the main characters in *Abeng*, *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Into the Interior* as light-skinned and belonging to the privileged classes of Kingston, where they are forced into white identification and, as a result, enjoy advantages the members of the lower class cannot experience. One of the key consequences of this process of racialization is that their bodies become the surface upon which the hegemonies of whiteness are inscribed. More importantly, these characters are forced into white-identification and a denial of themselves despite the multiplicity of their identities. In this case, it can be stated that skin color undermines this multiplicity. This imposition of gendered / racial performances erases individuals' identities and replaces them with different forms of hegemonic representation. The interpellation of these characters as members of the privileged classes of Jamaican society inserts them into a prefabricated power system where they are situated, interpreted, modelled, and forced into becoming white-identified as members of very specific groups with very specific expectations as far

as gender /racial performances are concerned. They become bodies whose surfaces are inscribed with meanings: their skin is a sign that acquires properties beyond its natural existence. The color of their skin becomes a culturally constructed element that predetermines a set of values and expectations regarding behavior, relations, performances or ritual practices, that, as they become older, they interrogate as traumatizing factors. These prescriptive performances destroy the possibility of myriads of cultural, social, personal, and family relations and determine the lack of freedom of these characters. Whiteness, as a cultural hegemon, imposes a certain set of performances that erase the identities of those light-skinned characters. The color of their skin is the sign that is interpreted by other members of society as a symbol of superiority and a guarantee of privileges they will enjoy as they become disciplined subjects who follow the prescriptive performativity of whiteness. Following what is expected of them, they bury themselves in what they understand society will accept, denying other parts of their identity they have been taught to despise. The traumas associated with the performance of whiteness turn individuals' light-skinned bodies into foreign, unfamiliar, empty vessels devoid of multiplicity, only conforming to the prescriptive performances expected of them. Through these bodies, Cliff explores the material conditions and processes of culturation that produce different crises both at the individual and collective level. During their childhood, these characters are unable to resist the white identification forced on them: it will not be until their adulthood that they understand that the materiality of their bodies does not necessarily reflect specific hegemonic attitudes and performances.

Racialization of the body can be defined as the process of becoming a sign for others to interpret. The interpretation of an individual as "white" exposes her to a series

of expectations that are totally unrelated to anatomy or physiology. Judith Butler asserts that (gender) categories are produced by dominant discourses instead of being inherent or essential to individuals, that is "effects of specific formulations of power" (*Bodies that Matter* ix). Butler's theory of bodies and their experiences being discursively constructed can be applied to the process of racialization the moment that authors such as Anibal Quijano have analyzed the construction of the superiority or inferiority of some races as an artificial construct completely unrelated to physiology or anatomy. Butler makes a very valuable distinction between the materiality of bodies and their regulated, expected performances:

> At stake is such a reformulation of the materiality of bodies will be the following: (1) the recasting of the matter of the bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of their material effect; (2) the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains… (*Bodies that Matter* xii)

Authors such as María Lugones or Nadine Ehlers have called for the application of Butler's ideas on the construction of gender to the processes of racialization, since as Lugones explains, "race is no more mythical and fictional than gender—both are powerful fictions" (202). Ehlers argues that racialization, as gender formation, also targets the body: disciplinary practices and performances of racialization shape and transform not only bodies but also identities. Meaning is attached, in this case, to visible

marks of the body such as skin, eye color, and hair texture. Nadine Ehlers establishes an equation between identity and body, which are fused and come to signify the same:

> Race is seen to be a "truth" that the body of the subject announces: the body is viewed as a legible text upon which the schema of race is inscribed and through which it is transparently conveyed. The subject becomes synonymous with the body, which functions as the disciplinary mechanism through which the social and the legal position of the subject is defined and regulated, and it is this body that marks the parameters of subjectivity. (51)

The materiality of these light-skinned bodies comes to bear cultural meanings of superiority and prestige and endless possibilities to fulfill promising futures, especially by traveling to the motherland. Some visible parts of these bodies (hair, eyes, skin) situate Michelle Cliff's main characters in a very specific cultural sphere, with very concrete performances and expectations related to their position in the elite classes of Jamaica.

The discourse of the whiteness of the Jamaica of the 1950s is characterized by the link between class and color, as the legacies of the colonial/modern gender system still prevail in pre-and post-independence decades. Mervyn Alleyne establishes a hierarchy that situates white-brown-black as the different color gradations that correspond to high-middle-low classes:

> It can be said that Jamaica follows the dominant Caribbean pattern of basic tripartite racial division with socioeconomic correlates. These are simply represented as "white" (receding), "brown," and "black." They continue the primordial divisions which were established in post-Columbian Caribbean societies, and which correspond to master, his (freed) offspring of mixed blood,

> and his slave, respectively. These divisions later developed into the socioeconomic categories of upper class, middle class, and working/peasant class. It could be argued that this basic tripartite social division, with its socioeconomic correlates, still exists in Jamaica. (193)

As a consequence of these social divisions that associate whiteness with privilege and the dominant classes, members of the same families whose skin color falls into different sections of the color continuum are destined to inhabit different layers of the social classes, to sustain different relationships, to attend different schools or have different opportunities.

Prevailing discourses of power generate sets of meanings that attach to skin color, and through disciplines, rules, and punitive strategies constitute subjects as racialized white. The interpellation of these characters as racialized white creates their very whiteness, and as a result, they are exposed to a series of outlooks and possibilities associated with their bodies. The fact that these bodies are a set of very specific possibilities means two different things, according to Judith Butler: first, that the body's appearance in the world does not depend, in any manner, on any interior essence; secondly, that the concrete expression of these bodies at specific moments are renderings of historical possibilities constricted by the historical situation in which they actually live. With their performances, individuals and bodies reproduce historical situations, which they replicate and reflect. Applying Butler's theory to racialization means to assert that one is not only "white" or "non-white," one becomes "white," or "non-white."

In the Jamaica of the second half of the twentieth century, female light-skinned bodies are compelled to a historical idea of whiteness and become cultural signs for other

members of society to interpret, materialized in correspondence to possibilities that specific historical conjunctures mark: for colonized women, the reality of the colonial-modern gender system meant a racialized/gendered reality that established a hierarchy where humanity/animality were the different categories they were assigned into.

The reality of being racialized white is not an empirical / scientific fact, but rather a performative effect of the language and the constituting facts that define individuals. Bodies and their physical features become discursive categories: the marks of whiteness, or the bodily visual signs (hair and hair texture, eyes, light skin) allow these bodies to achieve not only significance but also interpretability for other family, community, and society members. It is through the performance of the particular discourse of whiteness that the materiality of the body is achieved, more specifically through the repetition of "stylized acts" such as bodily gestures, mundane rituals and movements. Butler understands performances as acts of survival so that individuals can avoid the punishment and the marginalization destined for those who are considered "abject," or members of the constitutive outside, the domain where those whose performances do not conform to the discourses of power belong:

> The abject designates here precisely those 'unlivable' and 'unhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. … In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside of the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation. (*Bodies that Matter* xiii)

In order to retrain those whose performances have traversed societal prescriptions of racialized/gendered performances, Judith Butler discusses the punishment that is exerted upon those who perform their whiteness in a wrong manner:

> Performing one's gender wrong initiates a series of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. That this reassurance is so easily displaced by anxiety, that culture so readily punishes or marginalizes those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism should be sign enough that on some level there is social knowledge that the truth or falsity of gender is socially compelled and in no sense ontologically necessitated. ("Performative Acts" 908)

In order not to be rejected by other members of the privileged class to which they belong, individuals must go through a process of re-education so that those performances that belong to the constitutive outside are forgotten and those of normative whiteness are resumed. As a result, the rigid boundaries built by the modern/colonial gender system can be kept and are not undermined in any dangerous way.

The colonial/modern gender system constructed (or better invented the idea of) entire world populations as the abject, the undesirable, the marginal, and relegated to the constitutive outside. It is for that reason that Veronica Watson has described whiteness as an "essentialist non-relational identity" (130) that denies the possibility of connections with those who are racialized as non-white. Watson adds that this non-relational feature also involves a blindness and indifference to the pain of others, showing an uncivilized nature which challenges the traditional idea of the moral superiority of those racialized white. As has been previously said, the colonial/modern gender system and the

concomitant gendered/racialized whiteness performances created a social division in colonized societies, separating the inhabitants of the different zones of social life, the inhabitants of privileged strata and the constitutive outside. Cliff's fiction interrogates these privileges through the creation of light-skinned, multiracial, multicultural characters, in order to analyze their everyday life and relationships very thoroughly.

The hegemonic racialized/gendered construction of whiteness constitutes privileged identities that are protected by what Sacks and Lindholm call "social distance," the structure that protects dominant groups from the experience of oppression:

> The structural reality of social distance enables the dominant group, who inhabit the apex of the stratification system, to ignore or simply not see the experience of non-dominants. Moreover, the unique structural location of the multiply privileged gives them the power to render their own experience normative. (139)

These advantages create a traumatizing social distance between members of different communities. As a result of this distance, personal, family, and /or community relations are broken, distorted, and disrupted even at the most intimate level. Those racialized as white enter positions of privilege associated to performances that preclude them from understanding / having access to the realities of the powerless, disenfranchised members of society. Following Sacks and Lindholm's argument, cultural imperialism becomes one of the most disruptive consequences of social distance the moment that it enables members of dominant groups to see their own position as central and normative, and as a consequence, to ignore the oppression and experiences of the unprivileged:

> Cultural imperialism universalizes the experience of the triply privileged and establishes it as the norm. The structural reality of social distance enables the

> dominant group, who inhabit the apex of the stratification system, to ignore or simply not see the experience of the nondominants. Moreover, the unique structural location of the multiply privileged gives the power to render their experience normative. (139)

Michelle Cliff's fiction aims to establish a very clear distinction between those members of dominant groups who conform to, support, and help maintain the colonial/modern gender system, and those who refuse to comply with their assigned performance and position in this discriminating system. In order to explain this difference, she uses her own personal experiences to describe not only the effects of this distance in terms of lack of empathy and insensibility, but also her refusal to continue playing by these rules. As a light-skinned member of the privileged classes, she describes her own experience of this distance in *If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire*: "To be colonized is to be rendered insensible. To have those parts necessary to sustain life numbed. And this is in some cases—in my case—perceived as privilege. The test of a colonized person is to walk through a shantytown in Kingston and not bat an eye. This I cannot do" (26). However, she goes on to describe how some Jamaicans like herself resist these performances and the distance they create as as a way to overcome the traumatizing effects of this distance and renouncing to the impositions of the identities constructed by this system and forced on them:

> It is not a question of relinquishing privilege. It is a question of grasping more of myself. I have found that in the true sources are concealed my survival. My speech. My voice. [To walk through a shantytown in Kingston and not bat an eye] I cannot do. Because part of me lives there—and as I grasp more of this part I

> realize what needs to be done with the rest of my life. (*If I Could Write This in Fire* 26)

With these words, Cliff anticipates the evolution of her characters: from concealment and self-effacement to survival and agency in order to recover the silenced parts of their identity despised by the colonial/modern gender system.

The effects of the prevailing performances of whiteness such as isolation, loneliness, alienation, and the pain of suffering the broken family and community connections provoked by the social distance of privilege can be understood as individual and collective traumas derived from the colonial/modern gender system. Laura Di Prete's concept of "corporeal trauma narratives" provides a very effective framework to analyze these traumas, as they focus on the process of racialization / gender formation as acts of erasure that create foreign bodies within particular sociohistorical circumstances:

> Culturally constructed notions of the body within the sociopolitical arena decide questions that ultimately are contingent on real, material bodies, questions of power and disempowerment, normality and abnormality, inclusion and exclusion, life and death. The same ideologies can sustain and defend legalized forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse against "real" bodies. (15)

The processes of human culturation, that is, entering representation, provoke traumatic effects in different individuals and at different points in history. In Di Prete's interpretation of these effects, bodies are appropriated by the representatives of hegemony, who transform them into signs that confirm the specific values of that culture. As a result, the physical body is erased, and becomes "foreign." By erasure Di Prete means that bodies disappear among the performances and repetitions that make the

material body vanish. Cliff's novels bear witness to the material conditions that generate individual and collective traumatic crises. In these novels, readers encounter bodies that display the marks of inscribed racialized and gendered identities, thus addressing the cultural origin of the traumas they voice. Corporeal trauma narratives make the body their central figure, describing the journey from erasure to empowerment signified by the rupture with dominant codes, cultural hegemons and performances that subject individuals and their bodies.

Whiteness as a homogenizing ideology results in the traumatizing destruction of connections and relationships for both the supposedly privileged and the members of the constitutive outside. In the case of novels such as *Abeng* (1984), *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), and *Into the Interior* (2010) the main characters belong to privileged families although they have lost most of the riches earned through slavery; they still adhere to ideology of the empire and its performances. All of them explore the consequences of growing up as a light-skinned biracial girl in multicultural societies (Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and the United States) at the end of the twentieth century. As such, they continue the trend of works such as Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), accounts of the traumas of passing, invisibility and living in a society where prestige and privilege are associated to whiteness. Bodies become the central sign of an identity that needs to be confirmed and consolidated through their association with specific values, ideologies, and performances. Laura Di Prete describes this process of entering society as centered in the body and the identity it is made to represent:

> The process of human culturation—which begins with the newborn's separation from the maternal body—causes the disappearance of the body and its subsequent

> replacement not only within the realm of mechanical production, but also within discourses of and forms of representation that paradoxically try to articulate its presence. … The body enters representation always as a sign (the "sema") through which a given culture negotiates and consolidates hegemonic values, norms, and beliefs. In the shift into representation the material, physical body with its distinctive traits ("soma") becomes displaced through the cultural and ideological content that is attached to it. (14)

Using Laura Di Prete's terminology, these novels can be defined as corporeal trauma narratives because the bodies of the protagonists are inscribed in a cultural position within their families because of its color, which demarcates a fixed position of privilege encounter. This color difference provokes everyday life conflict because of the privileges reserved for the lighter-skinned characters, who, in turn, see their advantages as an alienating situation that separate them from members of their family and community in a dramatic manner. By entering representation, these characters' bodies stop belonging to them and start belonging to those who represent power and the colonial institutions. Cultural and racial shame and the overencompassing influence of whiteness ideology deprive them of vital connections with a side of their identity they are denied access to. In my approach to these novels, I claim that the shame and silences of history provoked by the colonial/modern gender system and the social distance of privilege are transmitted through generations and affect the construction of the identity of the protagonists in a traumatizing manner. These erasures are connected with the racial and cultural erasures that whiteness exerts in its construction so as to be seen as a nonexistent ideology. The protagonists of these novels resist these acts of erasure and vindicate their

belonging to Afro-Jamaican cultures that their inscription in hegemonic discourse denies. For that reason, it can be asserted that these novels undermine the "passing" option, whereby their protagonists might consciously renounce and forget the possibility of living the life of privilege the white side of their identity promises.

When problems arise, families separate, and lighter-skinned girls are appropriated by the members of the side of the family that is more similar to them, racially speaking. As a result, the relationship between both groups result traumatic for the members of the family. These novels present the events from the point of view of the sister of the lighter-skinned characters to denounce how whiteness and its privileges can also be understood as sites of trauma. They analyze how this construct acts as an agent of dislocation: belonging to multiracial and multicultural families, the protagonists share a similar feature that is seen as a factor of privilege, but at the same time prevents them from sustaining a healthy relationship with the rest of the members of their family, their community, and their culture. In these novels, Cliff shows the evolution of female characters who start as traumatized subjects, oppressed by the prescriptive performance of whiteness, to their adulthood, when they strive to become agents in the making of themselves. Readers follow this process of reconstruction from the oppressive, traumatic performance of whiteness to the search for new connections to the autonomy of a multicultural identity of which they have been deprived during their upbringing in the realm of families belonging to the (formerly) privileged classes of Jamaica. These characters change the performances of their white selves in relation to their families and communities. Through these narratives, Michelle Cliff demonstrates that the performances and relationships of whiteness are socially and culturally learned:

whiteness is a social relation and not an identity, and for that reason can be challenged and deconstructed with the aim to interrogate its mythological superiority, its bases and development.

3.3 Whiteness and Trauma in Michelle Cliff's Novels

In my reading of *Abeng*, *No Telephone to Heaven*, and *Into the Interior*, I understand whiteness as the construct of privilege that traumatizes the protagonists the moment that it involves traumatic separation from members of their family and their community for reasons they are unable to understand. In the case of the first two novels, Clare Savage is separated from her mother and her sister and the Afro-Jamaican side of her culture that they represent. In the case of *Into the Interior*, its unnamed protagonist is irreparably separated from her family (especially her mother) for being born a female instead of the male heir her father demanded.

These traumas, then, take place not only in an individual level, but also in a collective one, happening as they do embedded in societies that are deeply torn and traumatized by the impositions of the colonial modern gender system. This could, at the same time, be considered an insidious type of trauma, the way it is defined by Laura Brown (101), because although it has life-altering effects, it may go unnoticed and affect someone who does not belong to the central members of society, in this case two light-skinned girls dominated by the whiteness ideology of their society and their fathers. The fact that their skin is very clear situates their body in a problematic position within their families. Their bodies enter a very specific cultural position (female, white) different from that of her father and her sister, and that leads to conflict and alienation on many occasions. These episodes serve to comment on the profound traumatization of colonized

societies and the different levels of destruction brought upon for darker-skinned family members and friends. These are various and repeated throughout the novels, and happen not only to the main characters, but to their darker-skinned family members and friends also.

The lack of connections brought about by whiteness starts for the characters with a very hard blow: losing important links with their mothers. Michelle Cliff describes the main protagonists of these three novels in a very similar manner, as traumatized, lost and fragmented, desperately searching for a web of connections that they have not been able to establish in a world where their options, despite their privileges, are limited. Both descriptions are filled with vocabulary related to loneliness, loss of culture and identity, silences and searches for connections. Vilouta-Vázquez believes that in the case of *No Telephone to Heaven*, the third person narrative voice's representation of Clare Savage's experiences of fragmentation and unbelonging during her teenage years and early adulthood make it possible for readers to understand the reasons for her choice to abandon her studies in London in order to become "a modern maroon" (41). With the members of the guerrilla, Clare can eventually find a sense of community she could not find in other social groups:

> You knew her also as the girl left behind in the Brooklyn apartment. The albino gorilla moving through the underbrush. Hiding from the poachers who would claim her and crush her in a packing crate against the darker ones offended by her pelt. Make ashtrays of her hands, and a trophy of her head. She cowers in the bush fearing capture. Waiting for someone to come. Crouching. Not speaking for years. Not telling much of anything, except a vague dread that she belongs nowhere. She

> fills her time. In schools, playgrounds, other people's beds. In pursuit of knowledge, grubs, and she thinks, life. Her loss remains hidden—over time a fine thick moss covers her skin. She does not speak of it. She does not speak of it. She does not gather branches to braid into a nest. She moves. Emigrated, lone travel, the zoologist would have recorded. Time passes. The longing for tribe surfaces—unmistakable. To create if not to find. She cannot shake it off. She remembers the jungle. The contours of wildness. The skills are deep within her. Buried so long, she fears they may have been atrophied. Distant treks with her dark-pelted mother. With a solid urgency they may emerge but she also may give herself to the struggle. She belongs in these hills. And she knows this choice is irrevocable and she will never be the same. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 91)

In this brilliant passage, the third person narrative very compellingly summarizes Clare Savage's evolution. The powerful imagery describes Clare's experiences as a postcolonial subject whose body and purported corresponding social position are appropriated by members of the dominant group from a very early age. The objectification of her body that at the same time does not belong to her, and its utilization in order to pursue and ensure the privileges of the higher social classes is symbolized by the violence of poachers who kill the albino gorilla and chop her hands and converted into ashtrays, trophies used in the same way she was as a "crowning achievement" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 61) among her family members because of her light skin. "Cowering," "waiting," "not speaking," "not telling," "her loss remains hidden," are all meant to describe the aftermath of the trauma she experiences when she is left behind by her mother. As her light skin predicts a brilliant future away from the colony, Kitty

Freeman Savage believes her daughter belongs with her father. This belief is understood differently by the young girl, who fails to understand her mother's decision and reacts to it by withdrawing ("buried," "atrophied") into the Aglocentric culture she is supposed to revere because of her light skin. The reawakening of her Afro-Jamaican identity, hidden during the London years is powerfully described in the last few sentences of the quotation, abundant with imagery of belonging ("emerge," "struggle," "belongs") and a return to the identity her mother's side of the family represented.

In the case of *Into the Interior*, the third person narrative voice, again, describes the unnamed protagonist as a lonely traveler who relentlessly searches for her identity in the form of a longing for connections, especially with female figures who remind her of her mother, a very early loss she has not been able to understand:

> She herself was an opportunistic nomad, the scientist's term (but which branch?) for an omnivorous traveler, rootless. She collects terms like these, with which she will try to define herself. Poor thing, she chips away trying to find the form in the stone. Haven't the past months proved this? The woman she was following seemed to have direction. The rain was becoming downpour and the fog was thickening. Suddenly the woman in front of her came to a stop. (*Into the Interior* 120)

In both cases, these traumas stem from a constellation of everyday events that will be analyzed later. However, and more particularly, the loss of their mothers is highlighted in these novels as the most determining traumatogenic event in their evolution as individuals and members of their communities. What Laurie Vickroy calls "intersubjective nurturance" is almost unachievable by circumstances such as the

gender/race inequalities brought about by the colonial/modern gender system: "Circumstances such as poverty, racism, and exploitation become traumatic by virtue of this missing recognition, and traumatization of mothers makes intersubjective nurturance virtually impossible" (47). Family relationships become traumatic because the members of entire families are subordinated to social expectations. Hegemonic formations influence these relationships and other friendships the moment that economic or cultural forces "mediate nurturing" (40). Cliff shows how this nurturing becomes impossible by depicting how different gender and race hegemons intervene in several episodes when human relationships are affected by the social distance of privilege. She records the main characters' separations from their mothers as traumatic losses, effect of the shame produced by the whiteness ideology of the colonial/modern gender system. These novels, as corporeal trauma narratives, reflect how the social distance of privilege undermines these characters' multicultural / multiracial identities and connections during their formative years, apparently leaving them with no options but to acquiesce to the hegemonic performances of whiteness. Shame is a key ingredient in this result, since it produces a series of long-lasting effects such as voicelessness, alienation, and a lack of fulfilling relationships. The main characters in the three novels under consideration see their futures inextricably linked to the light color of their skin. As has been previously said, from their own birth their bodies announce whiteness, and as a consequence, their racialized features seem to doom them to be in the position of signs that confirm the specific values of the culture into which they are born. In these novels, the light color of their skin is interpreted by the members of their communities and their own families as a

guarantee of privileged positions that will allow them different opportunities those belonging to the constitutive outside will not enjoy.

The webs of relationships described in *Abeng*, *No Telephone to Heaven*, and *Into the Interior* make the young protagonists of these novels fail to understand the boundaries existing between them and other members of their own community or the reasons why they cannot approach them. Not only at home, but also at school these postcolonial female subjects see the social distance of privilege affect their attempts to establish differences with members of the constitutive outside. Cliff very deftly depicts how these difficulties occur in different contexts, but with similar results: the social distance of privilege makes relationships between different characters virtually impossible, since even if at first links can be established, the differences established by the colonial gender modern system end up destroying these connections. This constellation of traumatic separations and experiences end up with these characters trying to find a cocoon of protection in the Anglocentric side of their identities. Both characters conclude that if they look x, they must behave as x, and find security and comfort in the roles the colonial/modern gender system reserves for them: London will become the destination for both of them, since pursuing an Anglocentric education is the performance expected of them.

3.4. The Clare Savage Novels: *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*

Readers see Clare grow and become an adult in both novels: *Abeng* opens in 1958, when the protagonist is barely twelve years old, and *No Telephone to Heaven* closes when she dies at the age of thirty-six as a member of an anti-colonial guerrilla. *Abeng* shows readers the complexity of Clare's education. The daughter of Boy Savage and Kathy Freeman, descendant of enslavers and enslaved people respectively, Clare

Savage inhabits, in Cliff´s words, at least two worlds, where she experiences moments of privilege or dispossession of her rights depending especially on the location of the different episodes the narrative voice chooses to show. Her sexuality, together with her color, her gender and her class, place the protagonist in different spaces of discrimination or advantage at various times of her existence, whether at school in Kingston or in her grandmother's farm in the mountains. . Initially conceived of as an advantage, the fact of having a white skin promises a life of privilege: "But she was a lucky girl—everyone said so—she was light-skinned. And she was alive. She lived in a world where the worst thing to be—especially if you were a girl—was to be dark. The only thing worse than that was to be dead" (77). As it will be possible to see from the forthcoming analysis, "passing" is a way of life that provides protection, but at the same time demands silence and rejection of important parts of one's identity. The strictures of the colonial/modern gender system dictate that light-skinned individuals will function better in the world if they become women without any attachments to Afro-Jamaican persons or culture. Clare Savage learns this performance from her father: "Through all this—this new life—he counsels his daughter on invisibility and secrets. Self-effacement. Blending in. The uses of camouflage" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 100). The identity that has been constructed for them seems to promise feelings of security that at the same time, prevents them from thinking and deciding for themselves. Their light skin is linked to a privileged position that promises, though does not always deliver, a comfortable future—if they conform to the racialized/gendered expectations for a girl belonging their social class, as long as they do not break the social contract the performances of whiteness constitute.

Kitty chooses Jennie, her youngest daughter, over Clare because the latter's lighter skin becomes a sign of her identity. For her, because she looks "x," she must be "x." Shame seems to be the deciding factor when Kitty leaves her oldest daughter education to her father. Being the granddaughter of enslaved persons of African descent, Boy Savage's wife understands she must silence everything related to her Afro-Jamaican traditions, culture and persons as far as Clare is concerned:

> If Kitty could have shared her love which proceeded from darkness with anyone, it would have been with Jennie, her younger, darker child, in the same position at birth as Kitty herself. Maybe someday her breech-born youngest daughter would be admitted into that place deep in Kitty's soul which she kept guard over. But Clare would never get admission—she had been handed over to Boy the day when she was born—swiftly, with the water, surrounded by a caul. And much too soon. (*Abeng* 128)

The decision that Clare be handed over to her father is taken in a manner that it prevents the older Savage daughter from establishing a fulfilling relationship with her mother as well as her sister. In Kitty's view, what she sees as the advantageous performances of whiteness shuts down the possibility to establish a relationship with her own daughter, and between her two daughters as well. Taking advantage of that is something her mother emphasizes:

> Maybe Kitty thought that Clare would only want this thing, to pass into whiteness, looking as she did, speaking well because of her lessons at St. Catherine's, reading English books and English descriptions of history. Perhaps she thought it would be best for her. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 129)

Kitty's words summarize Clare's situation in Jamaican society. Her position is somewhere else, as she does not belong in Afro-Jamaican society but in England, where the supposed truth announced by her skin situates her. Being kept away from that other half she will live a life of privileges and power, but full of denial and silence, too.

Clare's light skin will become the most important factor in her evolution, as it will cause a painful fragmentation and disconnection with the multiplicity of her identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman. In this case, the third-person narrator in both *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* repeatedly stresses how her body signifies a passport to privileges and choices:

> She was tall for her age, lanky, and as her father had noted, golden. Her wavy chestnut hair fell to her shoulders with no extraordinary means. On this island of Black and Brown, she had inherited her father's brown eyes—which all agreed were her "finest feature." Visibly, she was the family's crowning achievement, combining the best of both sides, and favoring one rather than the other. Much comment was made about her prospects, and how blessed Miss Mattie was to get herself such a granddaughter. (*Abeng* 61)

As a consequence of these racialized features, her parents understand her upbringing and education belong to her father's side, a long line of British colonizers whose money is long gone, but whose position in society is still considered one of prestige. Their belief in the superiority of those racialized white remains, and as a member of the Savage line, Clare is raised to continue their traditions and racialized and gendered performances. Her father appropriates her multiracial and multicultural body, and in what will prove to be a traumatogenic act of erasure, decides to obliterate all the parts of Clare's identity that do

not conform to his idealized idea of whiteness. Clare's evolution, then, becomes a corporeal trauma narrative, since the processes of racialization / gender formation create and appropriate for her a foreign body that represents the prestige of the Savages. All the traces that represent the Freeman side must disappear so that Clare is not racialized as a member of the constitutive outside and enters representation as a member of the ruling class; as such, she must learn all the proper performances of whiteness expected of her. At school, at church, and at home, Cliff depicts different scenes where those prescriptions are forced upon the girl. The imposition of a white-identified identity and performance does not become an easy process in this family environment. Clare's educational process of all things English and whiteness and privilege is undermined by her persistent interest in the systemic social and racial injustices she perceives around herself and that she cannot ignore. The curiosity she shows for the disempowered, the disenfranchised, the traumatized from a very early age and her efforts to understand inequalities are constantly thwarted and silenced by both her parents and teachers. With her reading of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Ivanhoe* among others, she develops an interest in the Holocaust and historical injustices. Both at home and school, however, those to whom she asks questions make sure that she is kept unaware of uncomfortable realities, and directed to knowledge of her more Anglocentric future. Her insistent questioning of the causes of the Holocaust make her father uncomfortable and the questions and conversations are dismissed as improper, and thus silenced: "'Why do you want to bother your head with something that does not concern you, something so sad? You will only antagonize your father'…To find out why Anne Frank had died had become connected to a forbidden act" (75-76).

Clare's sensibility towards all the components of her multicultural/ multiracial members of her family and her community does not disappear as easily as her father would have wanted, and she often gets into trouble. For example, in *Abeng* Clare Savage can establish what seems to be a very solid friendship with Zoe, the granddaughter of Miss Ruthie, an impoverished woman living close to Clare's grandmother's house in the country. Both girls are allowed to forget the conventional behavior imposed by the colonial modern gender system, as long as they do not relate outside of the context of Clare's grandmother's farm:

> The two girls—who had lived all their lives in Jamaica and had been taught about themselves not only by Miss Ruthie and Kitty but by Lewis Powell and Boy Savage—were well aware that there were differences between them, of course. Had it not been for the differences, the friendship would not have begun in the first place. But in their friendship the differences could become more of a background, which only rarely they stumbled across and had to confront. They had childhood, they had make-believe. They had a landscape which was wild and real and filled with places in which their imaginations could move. Their friendship over these years was expanded and limited in this wild countryside—the place where they kept it. It was bounded by bush and river and mountain. Not by school or town—and felt somewhat free of the rules of those places. (95)

Their relationship would be impossible in Kingston, where the laws of whiteness are enforced daily, both at home and at school. Existing boundaries that cannot be traversed in Kingston can almost, "somewhat" be forgotten in the farm. Two very telling examples establish the differences in allowed/ forbidden performances in these two realms. The

possibility to establish a friendship with Zoe cannot be repeated in Kingston, where the social distance of privilege prevents Clare from approaching members of the unprivileged classes and vice versa. These two events occur in the context of St. Catherine's School for Girls, a private school in Kingston where the performances of whiteness reflect the hegemonic education of the British Empire. The school is seen and described as a realm of whiteness, isolated from the racial inequalities of Kingston:

> It was easy to lose sight of color and all that went with it within the imitation-English quadrangle of brick buildings. A school with a tuck shop that sold English sweeties and copies of *School-Friends*, stories of English girls in English boarding-schools. It was so easy to lose sight of color when you were constantly being told that there was no "colour problem" in Jamaica. Or anywhere in the Empire for that matter—Her majesty's government had all under control. (99-100)

In both cases, these experiences help Clare become more and more of the inequities of this system, represented by the reactions of the members of her community who refuse to help and reject those whose race, gender, and class, make them members of the constitutive outside. These moments can be read as moments of instability and rupture that help her start to get some knowledge of the impact of the colonial /modern gender system. In the first case, Clare is left wondering about the social barriers that make an older, dispossessed woman go to other darker girls to ask the time instead of herself. The scene takes place at a bus stop, as two other darker-skinned St. Catherine's students are approached by "a darker-skinned, shabby looking" (77) old lady, only to be responded with scornful looks and disdain. The girls' reaction is perceived by Clare as "inhuman"

(77), and as such she reprimands the girls. She does what the other two students refused to do (give the old lady the time and bus fare), but is also confused by why the old lady would not approach her in the first place: "Clare did not understand enough about her world and her place in it to question why the old lady had approached the other girls and not herself. Nor could she begin to understand why the two dark girls had responded as they had" (77). The social distance of privilege resulting from her education both at home and the school creates disconcerting situations for the young Clare, unaware as she was until these moments of the circumstances in which those belonging to the constitutive outside live.

The second example takes place inside the school itself, where Doreen Paxton, a dark-skinned scholarship student suffers from an epilepsy attack during mass, only to be faced with the ignorance of her teachers and classmates. Again, Clare's interrogation of this class and race-prejudiced response is silenced, as it is understood the racial inequities of Jamaican society do not pertain to the expected performance of whiteness of a young girl: "But Mother, how come no one came forward to help except Miss Maxwell? No one came forward at all. They acted like it wasn't happening" (98). The explanation her mother provides describes St. Catherine's teachers as performing their ladies' role, one in which, in the end, human relationships are related and reduced to differences in skin color: "Clare, you know how Englishwomen are—they think that they are ladies; they are afraid of the least sign of sickness or anything like that. …Ladies, Clare had been taught, did not speak in a familiar manner to people beneath their station. Those with the congenital effect of poverty—or color" (98-99). This is precisely the reason why Clare's relationship with Zoe is allowed only in the country, as long as it does not undermine the

strict boundaries that exist in Kingston. However, as time goes by, the prescriptive performances of whiteness and the social distance of privilege open a gap, a separation between the two girls, establishing positions of domination, power and disempowerment, privilege and dispossession that separate the two girls. Even if it seems like they apparently can forget about their social positions, it is easier for Clare than for Zoe: she can ignore the reality of her friend's life. However, from very early in their friendship, Zoe is made aware of the differences between them. Simple events such as borrowing Clare's swimsuit become moments for Zoe to learn that there are differences that she must be aware of:

> 'Clare is de granddaughter of Miss Mattie. Dem is rich people. Dem have property. Dem know say who dem is. She can't be wunna true friend, sweetie. Fe she life is in Kingston, She no mus' have friends in Kingston. In fe she school. Wunna is she playmate. No fool wunnaself. …Den why she not let wunna borrow she bathsuit? Sweetie, mus'not get too close to buckra people dem.' (102)

The differences whiteness and privilege establish distance between the two girls gets to its climatic point when they embark in an adventure to kill Massa Cudjoe, a wild pig, performing a ritual usually performed by men. Forgetting the prescriptive performances of whiteness and gender, Clare leads Zoe into a hunting project in which she forgets that their social positions are different, and the potential consequences can be different for each of the girls as well. Zoe's understanding and awareness of social barriers and her explanation of them become another of the moments that contribute to Clare's awareness of the injustices of the system:

> Wunna is town gal, and wunna papa is buckra, Wunna talk buckra. Wunna leave here when wunna people come fe wunna. Smaddy? Wunna no is smaddy already? Gal smaddy. Kingston smaddy. White smaddy. Dis place no matter a wunna a-tall, a-tall. Dis here is fe me territory. Kingston a fe wunna. Me will be here so all me life—me will be marketwoman like fe me mama. Me will have fe beg land fe me and fe me pickney to live pon. Wunna will go a England, den maybe America, to university, and when we meet later we will be different smaddy. But we is different smaddy now. (118)

This clarity of ideas stuns Clare, as her upbringing, both at home and school, makes it more difficult for her to grasp the difference between her circumstances and Zoe's, as well as the possible consequences of their behavior. After this conversation, and as the weather gets too hot anyway, the hunting project gets discarded, and both girls decide to go for a swim in the river. However, trouble ensues when they are seen swimming naked by two of her grandmother's workers. In an attempt to protect herself and Zoe, Clare grasps the gun with which they intended to kill Mass Cudjoe, and accidentally kills Old Joe, her grandmother's bull. This act of violence that crosses both a gender and race boundaries—she is punished not only for killing a bull, but also for carrying out an activity that is reserved for men, never for a light-skinned girl— expels her from her grandmother's farm, where she will not be able to go back until twenty years later. Since her behavior as a young woman traverses boundaries, it has to be trained to go back to the whiteness performances she has forgotten. Judith Butler has described the time and spatial dimensions of the gender role as having social, cultural, and political meaning: "There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public nature is

not inconsequential; indeed, the performance is affected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame. Understood in pedagogical terms, the performance renders social laws explicit" ("Performative Acts" 906). The punishment Judith Butler talks about comes in the form of an exile at Mrs. Phillips' home, a member of society that will teach Clare how to respect the whiteness contract and its performances and act according to the role society expects of her. Interestingly enough, both parents blame the other part (and the truths associated with it) as the cause of their daughter's behavior: whiteness and blackness are used as factors to describe the unusual violence shown by Clare during the Old Joe adventure:

> Maybe Kitty thought it was whiteness—and the violence that usually accompanied that state—which had finally showed through their daughter's soul. But should she save her daughter from this—or give into it?…Maybe Boy thought that Blackness was the cause of his daughter's actions—and the irresponsibility he felt imbued these people—and now had to be expunged once and for all. On this little island so far removed from the mother country, a white girl could so easily become trash. (148-149)

Kitty decides that her daughter's position in the world must correspond to the truth her body announces, and explains to her daughter what her punishment will consist of: living with Mrs. Phillips for a few months will help her how to perform whiteness properly. The old lady's house will be the realm where Clare is reintroduced Clare to the prescriptive performances of whiteness she seems to have forgotten in the country:

> "Child, what you did was a serious thing. Your father is right. Punishment is no punishment enough. You have to learn once and for all just who you are in this

world. Mrs Phillips is a lady, and you are getting to the age when you need to be a lady as well. She is from one of the oldest families in Jamaica. She has education. Good manners. …Jamaica is just a tiny little place. There are no opportunities for someone like you here. I don't want to leave Jamaica because my place is here. But you don't have to be confined by this sad little island. Just take your medicine. Go stay with the old lady and learn what you can from her." (150)

Mrs. Phillips' house is seen as a realm of whiteness replacing the country, now seen as dangerous, and continues the task performed by her parents and the school. There, Clare will relearn the performances of whiteness expected of her, which at the same time, will end up driving her away from Jamaica ("you don't have to be confined to this little island"). In this Anglophile realm ("That was all—and the walls were bare of decoration except for a map of England hanging over one bed, inset with a portrait of the queen," p. 155) Clare learns about the inferiority of Jamaican culture: "Miss Beatrice was forever talking about 'culture', and what a cultural 'backwater' Jamaica was. A place whose art was 'primitive' and whose music was 'raw'" (157). Also, she witnesses the importance of racial barriers and the social distance of behavior that aims to make her insensitive to race differences and injustices: "That was but one incident, and after it Clare learned to keep her mouth shut about anything to do with color or colored people. Anything that might be understood by Miss Beatrice for sympathy or concern" (158). Mrs. Phillips is also adamant to teach Clare about the importance of maintaining the lightness of her skin, her biggest asset, preventing it from darkening: "'And when we get there, be sure to put on your straw hat, with the wide brim; the sun is dreadful on the North Coast. You don't want to freckle'" (160). These performances of whiteness, her expected behavior and

promising future prospects will drive Clare away from her Afro-Jamaican identity, the one that connects her with her mother, and the one she will strive to reconstruct years later, as reflected in *No Telephone to Heaven.*

"Moving with the space of a loss" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 93) is used by the third person narrative voice in *No Telephone to Heaven* to describe Clare Savage's state of mind after her mother returns to Jamaica, taking Jennie with her and leaving Clare and her father behind, in Brooklyn, NY. This novel, meant as a sequel to *Abeng*, gravitates around this traumatogenic event for Clare. Kitty's choice to take off with her darker-skinned daughter, leaving the lighter-skinned one behind brings about feelings of loneliness, confusion and alienation in young Clare, who is unable to negotiate the new situation in her family. Clare's traveling all around Europe to study the art of the Eurocentric traditions is nothing but a desire to forget her sense of unbelongingness and filling it with the culture that was supposedly hers, as asserted by her father in her childhood years. The performances of whiteness drive Clare away from the Afro-Jamaican heritage that is related to her mother and that she will have to reconstruct years later away from the normativity of the performances of whiteness. The help of Harry/Harriet will become a new link that will help her in the construction of a new community away from the prescribed performances of whiteness. Kaisa Ilmonen describes the presence of Harry/Harriet as crucial in the process of rejection of the performances of whiteness and recovery of her Afro-Jamaican identity:

> …these in-between characters are able to cross conventional borders between genders, histories, cultures and races, operating as symbols of transcendence in these narratives, while creating new articulations of colonized Caribbean

> subjectivity…As signifiers of ambivalence, these transsexual characters are able to heal the traumas of history caused by Eurocentric binary thinking while re-signifying the fixed gender structures of colonial modernity (229-230).

Clare identifies with Harry/Harriet because they are similar, divided in two: "No, I don't find you strange. No stranger than I find myself. For we are neither one thing nor the other" (131). Her education and training alienate her from part of her family; for Harry/Harriet, it is his sexual identity that places him/her in a marginalized space, on the negative side of the binary so that whiteness and their performances can occupy its privileged position: "Then Harry/Harriet, boy-girl, Buster's brother-sister, half brother-sister actually, who was always strange, since childhood, they say, but everyone tolerates him, as if measuring their normalness against their strangeness. He is only one, after all, one that nature did not claim" (21). His role in the social group can only be sustained as the source of entertainment in his liminal position as the adoptive/biological son of a high-class family. He was born of the relationship of his mother, a maid, with her boss, and adopted by him and his wife. This way, his position is society is guaranteed by these two facts, in a society that is especially violent against social/sexual relationships other than the heteronormative.

In this society, the liminality of Clare's and Harry/Harriet's identities provides spaces of connection to be established between the two: they both live split, and they both will have to make a decision and choose which side to lean to in the search for their identity. Harry/Harriet is the character that enables Clare to re-establish the lost connections to Afro-Jamaican culture, a process that had been prevented by her Eurocentric education. There are several moments when Harry/Harriet becomes the

source for the momentary fulfilments that make the reconnection with the past possible. The first one of these moments takes place in a touristic restaurant where both subvert colonial boundaries by staging a performance with the aim to make fun of the stereotyped racial views of an American tourist. In a setting that reminds them of the Middle Passage, they stage a dialogue full of racial/sexual connotations that startle the tourist to challenge his racist behaviour:

> 'I am Prince Badnigga, and this is my consort, Princess Cunnilinga, we are here for the International Festival of Practitioners of Obeah, my dear chap.' Poor man, did he not see their eyes jump with the joke? Afrekete and Anansi[21]. But no, the poor fool, now released, took the whole story back to his table to tell his wife he had spoken with African royalty, and, oh, dear, they are as we feared. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 125-126)

Harry/Harriet uses his ambivalent appearance to disrupt the comfortable positions of the modern colonial/gender system destabilizing the normative performances that make everyone else feel safe and secure. With these new performances, they undermine the codes of those whose vision of the world is reduced to the prescriptive norms of whiteness: "'Oh, man, girlfriend, is nuh what dem expect from me? Nuh jus' give dem what dem expect? Battyman trash. No harm. Our people kind of narrow, poor souls. Foolish sometimes. Cyann understand the likes of me'" (127). This moment of disruption of the colonial patterns of domination helps Clare's historical consciousness of her

[21] Afrekete and Anansi are the names of two trickster figures of Yoruban origin. For this reason, their subversive activities are associated with the fight for freedom. Kara Provost enumerates some of the features that these trickster figures have, and that describe very accurately their association with Harry/Harriet and Clare at this point: "Both Gates and Lorde emphasize the relationship between the trickster and language. Lorde specifically points out the trickster's associations with unpredictability, abundant eroticism, and gender ambiguity" (46).

identity and her Afro-Jamaican roots resurface: “Oh, yes, labrish, but also true-true. Her twang was coming back, rapidly, in Harry/Harriet’s presence, voice breaking the taboo of speaking bad. Discouraged among her people” (121). This one becomes one of the first, key moments when Clare frees herself of the influence of the performances of whiteness.

They travel around Jamaica together two times, and both have deep significations for the reconstruction of the identity of Clare as an Afro-Jamaican woman. The first time they travel to the Jamaican coast, significantly trespassing the property of American absentee landlord, and even more significantly spending the day close to cane fields, that make them remember the history of enslavement of the island by the colonizing powers. The visit to the beach is described by the third person narrative voice with lots of sensorial details, introducing readers to an erotic scene between Clare and Harry/Harriet: “This was but the beginning. Soon they would be covered with mango juice, salt water, and the spicy oil of the meat. Resting from riding the breakers, warmed by their feast and the sun, they lay side by side under a sky thrilling in its brightness. Touching gently, kissing, tongues entwined, coming to, laughing” (130). Again, enjoying the pleasures of food, the sea and sex with Harry/Harriet is linked to a consciousness of silenced identities: “‘I am sorry to preach, for me know is preach me preach, and you come with me today to have some fun, but is hard, missis. Were we to sleep on this beach we might hear more than the breeze rattling the stalks, and singing through the blades. We might feel more than its warmth. We might hear more than our people celebrating cropover” (132). In the same way as the scene at the restaurant, this moment has its effects on Clare’s body, that literally starts to get free from the whiteness that has always doomed her to prescriptive performances: “Clare lay back, shutting her eyelids, against the fire of

the sun. She thought she could feel the tint of her skin deepening, melanin rising to the occasion" (131). This moment becomes very significant, as allowing the sun to darken her skin contradicts the lessons in whiteness learned in Mrs. Phillips house. Her skin, her main asset, does not matter anymore as a signifier of privilege and performance, thus not dictating prescribed behaviors.

Shortly before joining the guerrilla, Clare goes back to the country and, together with Harriet, visits her grandmother's house in the mountains. That trip proves to be a decisive step in the process of the reclamation of her body, since Clare can recover the identification with her Afro-Jamaican identity and her mother:

> The house could not be seen at all. The house so hidden it seemed to exist no longer. Once the center of their life in this place. The structure which held her grandmother's stern church. Her grandfather's senility. Her mother's schoolbooks, wormed, yellow, handed down. The building where it was, where she remembered it as being, screened by green. Nothing by the chaos of the green—reaching across space, time too it seemed. When only Arawaks and iguanas and crocodiles and snakes dwelt there. Before landfall, before hardship (172).

Recovery from the traumas of the colonial/modern gender system and reclamation of multiple identities derive from reconnection at different levels: bodies, people, land, her own skin. In this case, Clare's process of reidentification with her Afro-Jamaican identity cannot happen without a return to her grandmother's farm, a place that allowed her, albeit temporarily, to resist the impositions of her forced white identification. At the same time, the changes in the land seem to point to new beginnings, to healing from the

multiple ruptures caused by the colonial/modern gender system. The last four words of the quotation are quotation become especially significant, as they allude to the traumas of this system, and its dramatic consequences for different member for members of postcolonial societies.

Harriet and Clare's trips include eating, chatting, remembering their respective childhoods, and an erotic experience that connects Clare to the island in a highly symbolical way: "The importance of this water came back to her. Sweet on an island surrounded by salt. She shut her eyes and let the cool of it wash over her naked body, reaching up into her as she opened her legs. Rebaptism" (172). In a similar way as the previous scene on the beach, those moments help Clare come closer and closer to her Afro-Jamaican identity. Moreover, this scene brings readers back to Zoe and Clare in the river, before the sudden end of their friendship. This painful moment for Clare is replaced, in her adult life, by a pleasurable, erotic moment in the same river. This moment, then makes it possible for Clare to establish a new, positive connection to this nature and this land she was expelled from. The conversations with Harriet, now a woman, evoke memories from her childhood in the country, in the same setting they are. Those results are key in her decision to join the guerrilla, and fight for the freedom of Jamaica from neocolonial domination:

> After their bath, they lay together on the rocks, and Clare let herself drift further. Each bend in the river came back to her. The special rocks where crayfish slept underneath. The deep places you could dive without harm. The pool named for a man who suffered from fits. The pool named from a girl made pregnant by her uncle. The dam made by a man who kept hogs. The five croton trees—dragon's

> blood—marking off the burial place of slaves, at the side of the river, on a slight rise. Unquiet ground, that—children feared the anger of the spirits, who did not rest, who had not been sung to their new home. (174)

Her mother becomes the center of her memories, and the project to recover a relationship with the identity she represented makes a modern maroon of her. Clare is finally able to reclaim her Afro-Jamaican heritage, and returns to the farm her grandmother owned, to establish a new community with the rest of the members of the revolutionary group.

3.5. Britannia Waives the Rules: *Into the Interior*

In the case of the main character of *Into the Interior*, there are also very specific cases when she tries to establish meaningful relationships with members of the constitutive outside only to find humiliation and rejection as a response. Raised by Winona, her Afro-Jamaican nanny, abandoned first and an orphan later, she desperately craves for the connections denied to her during her childhood. She belongs to a family who raises her following the performances of whiteness of the privileged classes of Jamaica. Even though she is born in the twentieth century, she, however, understands that her family keeps looking back to the nineteenth century: "I was born in the middle of the twentieth century and was raised in the age of Victoria, at least partly, for my family, older than the hills, older than the D'Urbervilles, cleaved to the past they had received, and the landscape, real and imagined, ordered and ruinate, kept it so" (3). The main character understands her personal history as one of amputation, since many of the relationships she tries to establish are destroyed by the legacies of the British Empire, still very much present in the middle of the twentieth century: "Blindness is relatively common in the tropics. As is amputation" (3). This idea of having lost crucial parts of

oneself is present throughout the novel, and will accompany the central character until the final chapters.

Rejected by her father for being a female, this descendant of grand-blancs is sent to her great-grandmother's to be raised by Winona, a very old half-deaf Afro-Jamaican woman. The girl grows up in the company of her nanny and a goat named Magdalena, but never her own mother's. As a result, she becomes, in her own words "someone to be adept at leaving" (15). Her mother becomes an unknown figure who dies after an abortion performed in Haiti, circumstances she learns about unexpectedly: "I experienced her death as a final absence; she who had never been a presence" (16). Much like Clare Savage, she belongs to a dynasty of plantation owners who have lost most of their properties. Her Afro-Jamaican part comes from the relationship of her great-grandmother with one of the servants, a circumstance seen as a shameful part of their past: "I was ten or eleven when this bit of family legend was given me. I asked why the scandal and was told by my father in a hushed voice although we were the only two people in the drawing room, 'He was a servant. Such things were unheard of. Naturally her family disapproved" (86). This part of her identity is a shameful event that will be buried in the mainstream performances of whiteness her light skin facilitate.

Significantly enough, their house reminds readers of the Middle Passage, as it is linked to the bottom of the sea and the origins of their wealth as slave owners: "The yellow brick of the great-house began as ballast on a slaver. It is interrupted here and there by coral embedded in the walls, slashing them pink" (8). Her loneliness and feeling of disconnections is emphasized by the comparison the main character makes, equating the house to the Flying Dutchman, the legendary ghost ship that can never make port,

doomed to sail the seas forever; all of this separation and alienation makes the main character look for connections of which her family has deprived her. Her sense of disconnection makes her look for connections and get into trouble a few times at school for smoking ganja with one of her school's gardeners. Her behavior traverses the boundaries established by the performances of whiteness, and she is sent home for a few days.

She usually gets into trouble when she tries to approach the school workers, especially the gardener. One of the most significant moments of rejection comes when the main character tries to establish a deeper relationship with the school gardener. Her longing for connections leads her to accompany him to church. Significantly enough, she wears the school uniform, full of symbolism of the British Empire: "What I had taken as kindness was something else. I was asked to stand up and my person became the subject of the gardener's sermon. Beginning with my school uniform and all it signified. Cross and crown over one nascent breast. Overarched with motto: *In This Sign We Prosper*" (19). The result of this attempt at connections and kinship with other members of the community cannot be more traumatic and difficult to negotiate for the main character. The social distance of privilege derived from the whiteness of the colonial/modern gender system creates a situation of tension, lack of empathy, pain and hate that makes it easy for the Afro-Jamaican gardener to humiliate the light-skinned girl and make her feel a complete sense of unbelonging, loneliness and alienation standing in the middle of the congregation: "I stood in the church of the Christian Diabolists as they gathered around me, mocking me. Making game. Pointing. 'I am not worth your merriment. I am not

worth your merriment. I am not worth your merriment.' I closed my eyes and repeated these words these words in my head, hoping they would carry me past this moment (20).

Her body stands in the middle of the congregation, the object of humiliation, as it is politically invested with meaning and attacked because of the symbolic meanings attached to it by the whiteness ideology of the colonial/modern gender system. During this traumatic experience, the body of the main protagonist of *Into the Interior* is appropriated by the gardener, who racializes her in a position of opposition, rather than one of the search for a connection intended by the girl. Her lack of understanding of the realities of Jamaican society (a product of the social distance of privilege) leads her to a community where she thinks she will be easily accepted. However, the result is quite different; her body and its very distinctive racialized and gendered traits are displaced by the ideological meanings attached to them.

Withdrawing from the pain of disconnections and unbelonging also means traveling to London[22] and submerging herself in the study of the art of the Empire, forgetting about the painful realities of Jamaican society. In the same way Clare Savage does, escaping to Europe to study the art colonial education imposes becomes an artificial constructed defense against this pain, taking refuge into this essentialized white identity. As has been said, the comfort provided by this racialized/gender position also entails a performance of silence, of avoiding going beyond strict boundaries and avoiding scratching the surface of both art and reality:

[22] The chapter where such withdrawal is described is significantly entitled "Et in Arcadia Ego," equating London to the mythological Greek space, characterized by being unspoiled and harmonious, a place of simple pleasure and quiet. This peace and quiet serve the purpose to withdraw from the pain of the loss and disconnection with her mother. Moreover, the Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem used as an epigraph for the chapter highlights this need: "'God, free me from my mother,' she shrieked out, 'These mothers are too dreadful'" (107).

> I hid away in an institution of advanced learning whose specialty is the visual arts, awash in nudes and ambiguity. "We study the dreams of the past," the director tells me. I have walked in off the street and gained an audience. Everything is red and gold and lapis. So comforting, all this color, evidence of grandeur. So much easier on the eyes than a black-and-white photograph of Patrice Lumunba rotting in a fetal position in the trunk of a black sedan. … We study art here and are not encouraged to look behind the canvas, stick our fingers into the wet fresco. (*Into the Interior* 29-30)

Throughout her stay in England, "into the interior," the central character makes herself fully involved in art research, "thinking amnesia a blessing" (32). Readers follow her when she meets many different people, who, in some way or another, bring memories of her childhood and upbringing that she has been trying to inter. The common thread that joins all these episodes together is the central character's lack of reaction, or traumatic stasis after each one of these happens, silently witnessing the often very insensitive, offensive remarks made by her English friends. Her unresponsive attitude responds to an intention to protect herself from a repetition of painful experiences suffered during her childhood. Clinging to her privilege, she distances herself from any circumstances that are related to her Afro-Jamaican identity, outside of the cocoon of protection the performances of whiteness represent.

One of the most interesting examples of this desire to distance herself from any painful realities is the relationship she establishes with Michael, her roommate in London, a South African photographer. He insists on her becoming involved in his fight against apartheid in the Soweto of the 1970s. However, her usual reaction is dissociation

and disconnection from this harsh reality: she usually switches the conversation to another topic, usually related to art, her way to escape realities she does not want to be a part of:

> The tunic, the caption said, dated from about 1900. Black ink on khaki. Artist unknown. A couple of scenes on horse-back. One of a house—a farmhouse from the looks of it—aflame. A cannon. A ship. A gathering of native huts. And everywhere, soldiers. "Rumor has it Cranko is a Cape Coloured." "Really?" "I know that sort of thing interests you." "You'd never guess from Fonteyn's performance." We laugh. He closes the book. "What a place," he says and gets up to pours us each a glass of wine (*Into the Interior* 41).

Michael's reaction to her lack of response to his descriptions of violence in South Africa equates her with Candide, the Voltaire character, protagonist of the satire Candide: or Optimism that symbolizes sheltered life and endless optimism: "Are you to be forever a Caribbean Candide?" (57).

Examples of detachment, inaction, silence and disconnection abound throughout the novel, when the central character decides to turn her look to somewhere else and not to pay attention to manifestation of violence of disempowerment, not only in colonized countries, but also in front of her. In one of the multiple scenes depicting her visits to different British people she is witness to a scene of domestic violence. Significantly enough, this brings memories of not only colonial violence and domination, but also colonial education and its impositions. Once again, the reaction is one of escapism and safely distancing herself from reality:

> They filled the galley with tinned meat and baked beans and a coffee and chicory mixture called Camp, an unctuous black liquid whose logo was a pith-helmeted colonial being served tent-side by a red-sashed native wearing a turban. The servant was saying something in small print on the label.... "Round the rugged rock, the ragged rascal ran." That came to mind, another remnant of boarding school, as Bart pursued Imogen round and round the deck. To escape feelings that I should be doing something, somehow stopping this, I went below. That had nothing to do with me, I told myself (45).

One final instance of this detachment occurs when visiting two writers as a freelancer: after listening to a poem called "The Lost Postcolonial World[23]" she adamantly refuses to

[23] Within the bounds of Empire
The teeth are the first to go.
When the bounds break,
All hell breaks loose
Chaos reigns.
By the waters of Babylon
The bald queen weeps.
The black queen eats her young and gay.
Things start, wake
Shake, rattle and roll.
Bantus confuse
Sugar and diamonds.
Havoc wakes
Victoria Falls
Over.
The bald queen has loosed
Her stays strays
The map turns black
From red bleeds
Africa posts flood warnings
India presents in breech
Of contact
Lady Mountbatten mounts Nehru
The Caribbean is ever more at sea.
"Now who will mind us?" (*Into the Interior* 62)

answer questions about her own childhood, desiring to avoid discussing her life with Winona, her Afro-Jamaican nanny and the experiences they lived together:

> She had a way of asking questions as if she were taking notes, or maybe my inbred fear of invasion, of letting *them* know too much about us, was taking hold. … There was no way I would speak of Winona with these people… "What do you remember of this experience?" the bodice-ripper asked me. "Not a thing," I said. "I seem to be one of those people who has amnesia about her childhood (69-70).

Her withdrawal and dissociation serve one very specific purpose: her own protection and the avoidance of pain and humiliation from happening over and over. Much in the same way as Clare Savage and Harry/Harriet, the central character of *Into the Interior* is able to recover from this dissociative state with the help of a liminal figure, Catherine Bowman/Lyle an American activist visiting the art institute. Like Clare's friend, Catherine Bowman/Lyle will be key in the process to overcome dissociation and withdrawal and to start performing whiteness differently, opening new spaces of reconnection with her Afro-Jamaican identity. The title of the second to last chapter of the novel, "Runagate" points to the beginning of this process of becoming an agent in the making of herself. That, together with the presence of Mnemosyne, the muse of memory, on the first page of the chapter, alludes to the need to look back at different events and figures in her life she has fudged for a very long time, especially her mother and her lost connection with her. What is more, the presence of the muse sharply contrasts with the constant allusions to amnesia and amputation the central character makes. Catherine Bowman/Lyle's crucial role in this moment of transition is highlighted by her own ideas

on the importance of the fight against stagnation and inertia in societies that are in need of change:

> When interviewed from underground, Catherine Bowman, a.k.a. Catherine Lyle, her back to the camera, her dreads in silhouette, said: 'The state of emergency does not allow for subtlety, nuance in depiction. Those us painting from this interregnum [thank you, Gramsci] do not use metaphor, nor speak in code. We wish to explode reality, not to obscure it, certainly not to beautify it (108).

Her ideas and plans contrast with the desire of the central character of the novel, who wishes to do so, exactly, escape from reality and only look at the beauty of very specific works of art. The most remarkable moment of this evolution is the fact that she treasures Catherine's notes on a lecture entitled "The Apprehension of the Negro in Post-Enlightenment Art" (109), given by Millicent Redwing, another West Indian activist. The lecture illustrates, through a good number of paintings and sculptures, how Western art has racialized the body of those inhabiting the constitutive outside in relation to the white body of the colonizer, especially emphasizing captivity, domination, and disempowerment in the way whites and non-whites have been represented. The extensive descriptions of these works of art sharply contrast with the art the central character planned to study initially:

> Redwing: "Here the black nude, female, stands in for the black nude, male. This image, black body on white body, is not lesbian. That pales beyond what is signified…. The black man would never be allowed anywhere near this idyll, if idyll it represents. The European artist always conceives the black man isolate, uncoupled. For example, wrestling a beast, or guardian of a harem, or, on display,

> a lesson in anatomy being sketched in the artist's studio. Only rarely is this isolation rendered with humanity. (113)

The inhumanity associated with non-whites, or those inhabiting the constitutive outside brings us back to the colonial/modern gender system and its construction of the identity of the colonized as described by Quijano, Lugones and Cliff herself, as has been shown in previous pages in this chapter. From Catherine's notes, it can be inferred that these works of art confirm the power of the performances of whiteness as creators of patterns of behavior and essentialized ideas about non-whites.In order to emphasize the key role of the presence of Catherine Bowman/Lyle in the evolution of the central character of this novel, these notes are meaningfully juxtaposed to the attempt at the recovery of the maternal figure. As has been said, the loss of the mother is a common topic in the novels studied in this chapter. The desire to go back to the painful memories she has been trying to avoid during her stay in London marks the beginning of this process of re-appropriation of her own body. Significantly enough, as in the case of Clare Savage, the scene of recovery of both past and mother culminates in a sort of rebaptism in the waters of the river Thames. In a dreamlike final scene, the central character follows a woman she believes to be her mother through the streets of London and the river. Even though this woman denies this connection, their conversation addresses the topic of equal rights and the Caribbean, an aspect that the main character has been trying to forget thanks to the social distance of privilege accorded to her by whiteness and its performances. The need to fight for one's own freedom is part of the interchange: "The women of Saint Domingue wear spirit levels on chains around their necks, signifying equality. The idea of seizing it for yourself, you see" (121). This final thought is followed by an apparent

suicide of the mother figure that jumps into the river to be followed by the central character in the novel. However, in a highly symbolical moment, she is reborn: “When I came to, I was washed ashore” (122). The novel culminates with this idea of a new beginning, related to freedom and a different performance of whiteness that away from the comfort of privilege, fights for equality and those figures forgotten by the colonial/modern gender system and its hegemons.

CHAPTER FOUR

DECOLONIZING RELATIONS AND COMMUNITIES. RESISTANT COALITIONS IN *NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN* AND *FREE ENTERPRISE*

> She thought often about the badge next week. She returned Saturday to claim it. Of course it had been sold. Foolishly, she thought, she added it to her list of regrets, which she kept against herself. That she had not bucked her father and joined a demonstration decrying the murder of Dr. King. That she was not as dark as her sister, her mother. That she allowed the one to be confused with the other, and to lessen her. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 137)

> "My mother was a nigger--speaking the word at him. … "And so am I," she added, softly
> (*No Telephone to Heaven* 104).

> What on earth would her mother have thought to see her apply Mr. Bones's Liquid Blackener to her carefully inbred skin? Ye Gods. Talk about disgrace. It saved her life. That blackened skin. Saved her skin. That blackened life
> (*Free Enterprise* 9).

> There is no "someone else's fight," Annie, you know that (*Free Enterprise* 199).

Berta Zúñiga Cáceres, Berta Cáceres daughter, asserted her belief in the transformative power of anger in an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El País*. On the first anniversary of the assassination of her mother, the Honduran activist, Zúñiga discusses her hope for action to arise from the rage of experiencing the excruciating pain of her loss. The same idea, that resistance can spring up from the anger engendered by different social injustices, is one of the concepts on which this chapter is grounded.

What follows is a study of the creation of alternative communities and voices as possibilities of resistance to the destruction brought about by the colonial/gender modern system in *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) and *Free Enterprise* (1993) by Michelle Cliff. The Jamaican author articulates her vision of resistance to hegemonic formations by emphasizing the creation of unexpected, unconventional allegiances as a strategy to

reconstitute individual and collective identities and to restore the social fabric destroyed by the traumatic events of colonialism. These novels stress the importance of coalition among members of different communities, individuals who have experienced discrimination, and disenfranchisement at the interconnected levels of race, color, class, and gender. As Maria Lugones states, coalition arises from those whose anger seeks to debunk multiple institutionalized oppressions, the common sense, or "dominating sense" that is understood as "the normal," "the ideal," "common sense," or, in other words, the hegemonic (*Pilgrimages* 207).

The previous chapter of this dissertation analyzed the possibility of performing whiteness differently for postcolonial female subjects to overcome the social distance of privilege and establish meaningful relationships with members of the constitutive outside, a taboo in the education in younger female members of the privileged classes of Jamaica. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze Michelle Cliff's suggestion of a willed process of politicization of her characters: reclamation of their blackness becomes an active response to the dichotomous, fragmenting logic of the colonial/modern gender system and its damaging results.

Michelle Cliff's works' engagement with resistance to the master narratives and the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system has generated numerous critical studies. Multiple articles, books, book chapters, theses, and dissertations have paid attention to Cliff's project to recover not only the hidden history of Jamaica, but also of its resisters, especially enslaved women of African descent from as early as the eighteenth century.

Abeng (1984), *No Telephone to Heaven* (1989), and *Free Enterprise* (1993) are the novels that have garnered the most numerous investigative efforts. One of the threads that joins these approaches together is the study of Cliff's fiction as resistance projects that aim to unbury the history of Jamaica, a reconstruction undertaking with black female resisters at its center. Noraida Agosto's *Michelle Cliff's Novels. Piecing the Tapestry of Memory and History* (1999) highlights the importance of Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise* as projects that "propose historicizing memory as a means to empower the oppressed" (2). These two novels, Agosto continues, work as an "[alert] to the fact that knowledge has been used by people in power to create a distorted history" (15), "a challenge to monolithic history" (3), and to denounce a further erasure: female rebels and leaders have been omitted, an "absence that implicates patriarchy" (2). Similarly, Kathleen Renk has characterized *Abeng* as "a vision that sees a distant past" (68), emphasizing how the novel digs up narratives of resistance that juxtapose collective history and the specific lives of the forgotten, or the insignificant (69). When discussing memory, history, and forgetting in *Free Enterprise*, Erica Johnson describes Cliff's recovery of history as "ghostwriting," an undertaking where the Jamaican writer functions as "novelist, historian, and autobiographer." (117) Since having access to some parts of history becomes impossible, Johnson adds, "witnessing history" (117) is central to Cliff's projects, as the unacknowledged forgotten history continues to haunt the present.

Barnes (1992), Labiosa (1992), Sharpe (2003), Springer (2007), and Stephens (2013) analyze Cliff's novels as far as the representation of black female resisters is concerned, paying attention to aspects so various as the role of Caribbean women's role

in the structures of colonialism, beliefs silenced because of their association with women in the Caribbean, cultural cannibalism and reactions against Eurocentric history, or analyses of women's radical consciousness and collectivization throughout the centuries. Labiosa centers his argument in recalling, reconfiguring, and emphasizing the different types of trade in the Caribbean, "without excluding the need to demonstrate women's central history and role within these structures of colonialism" (13-14). Sharpe, on the other hand, studies how Cliff's literary project privileges traditionally excluded forms of knowledge such as sorcery, myth, legends, myths, or superstitions as figures for black women's history (37). Barnes also discusses *No Telephone to Heaven* as "a description of the struggles against cultural cannibalism" that aim for decolonization on literary and geographical terrain in Jamaica, with Clare Savage in the role of resister against Eurocentrist history (23), while Springer defines Cliff's contributions to literature as "unique" as she enquires into the West Indian Creole woman's version of radical women's consciousness (44). Finally, Stephens explores how neoliberal constraints condition black women's lives, as they are seen as overburdened agents of development, while at the same time are "constructed as endowed with exceptional enterprising capacities for critique and resistance" (6). Both Macdonald-Smythe (29) and Lima (23) join together the analysis of individual and collective struggle against social injustices with an analysis of *No Telephone to Heaven* as an expansion of the traditional Bildungsroman. In a similar vein, Caccavaio's points to Cliff's interest in the politicization of the homespace in order to challenge the lingering colonial and patriarchal social domination of the postcolonial period." (115) In their analyses of resistance in Cliff's novels, both Chancy (265) and Pollock (205) discuss the linkages

between individual and collective concerns for the protagonists of *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise*; Chancy focuses on women's efforts to "free themselves of prescribed social roles," while Pollock's argument revolves around the difficult balance between a search for identity and the undertaking of meaningful action. Together with the vital role of black female resistance in Cliff's fiction, Odintz (1) stresses the importance of female communities as transformative spaces that become "potential site[s] for a collaborative performance of identity." (4) Also related to questions of identity, Nada describes Cliff's vision of resistance as" an examination of the dynamics of counterdiscourse" (n.p.) centered in those whose identity fails to fall in the strict binary categories of the "Euro-phallogo-centric-discourse," in Nada's words, "those who shatter the binary. Cliff's work, Nada continues, reconfigures these divisions, as this endeavor makes it possible to "explore the multilayered realities of the lived experiences of members of social groups that inhabit the nodes formed by the intersections of race, class, gender, sex, sexual orientation, and political convictions" (n.p.). This chapter wants to add a new layer to the already very rich conversation about Michelle Cliff's project to unearth Afro-Jamaican women's resistance history throughout the centuries. Seeing these novels through the lens of Maria Lugones' resistance theory allows for a new perspective: loving perception, as opposed to arrogant perception, allows for an interrogation of practices, behaviors, cultures that result in traumatizing damage and destruction of communities as well as individuals. Adapting Frye's concept, Lugones establishes a distinction between arrogant perception, or a failure to identify with others, thus allowing them to abuse them (*Pilgrimages* 78). Loving perception, on the other hand, becomes an epistemological shift that involves a new conception of identification, a

"consultation of something other than one's own will and interests, and fears, and imagination" (*Pilgrimages* 85). For both members of dominant and non-dominant groups these practices can result in a more equalitarian, undivided, decolonized society.

In her novels, Cliff offers a vision of decolonization that goes beyond violent philosophies of resistance. Her resisting characters/communities tend to favor a more daily life concept of resistant behavior, one that Haynes and Prakash have defined as "contestatory, more enduring everyday forms of resistance constantly present in the behaviors, traditions and the consciousness of the subordinate" (2). This vision of resistance, Haynes and Prakash continue, differs from the usual assumptions about the more evident, public, open nature of more violent challenges to those in power, but can also bring effective change:

> Resistance, we would argue, should be defined as those behaviours and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest social hegemonic formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination… Seemingly innocuous behaviours can have unintended yet profound consequences for the objectives of the dominant or the shape of a social order. (3)

In the case of these novels, Michelle Cliff presents both kinds of resistance: however, the more violent type is more than often portrayed as useless and costly in the form of human lives. In the case of Clare Savage, these more violent projects end with her own death when trying to disrupt the shooting of a movie that appropriates and westernizes the figure of Nanny of the Maroons. As far as Annie Christmas is concerned, joining the forces of John Brown and Mary Ellen Pleasant ends with her imprisoned and chained to other men initially. After she is discovered by soldiers of the Union Army, she is serially

before eventually being liberated at the end of the Civil War. Her final, and perhaps most successful effort consists of joining a group of storytellers in a leper colony in Carville, Louisiana.

Aside from the resistance projects themselves and their success or failure, it is the human connections that allow characters to overcome the consequences, the damages, the alienation, and the traumas of the social distance of privilege. These human connections, at the same time, are facilitated by the streetwalker theorists' willingness to interrogate their own privilege, to be aware of the possibility of a transformative identity. This new mode of being in the world involves for them a rethinking and effective change of their positions in their societies.

It is the contention of this chapter that what Cliff understands as effective, durable resistance is the active effort by individuals of postcolonial countries and societies, both dominant and non-dominant, to be able to unlearn the teachings of arrogant perception, and, as a result, embrace a loving perception in order to overcome the divisions created by the colonial/gender modern system more effectively.

4.1. Alternative Communities as Healing Spaces: María Lugones' Theory of Resistance

This chapter studies the destruction of family ties and connections with members of communities different from one's own as one of the most traumatizing, durable effects of the colonial/modern gender system. It also centers on how collectivizing becomes a healing mechanism for those who try to resist the devastation and disconnections produced by the traumas of colonialism. Collective traumas, as analyzed by authors such as Vickroy, Herman, Bhabha, Erikson, or Lugones, create rifts and divisions that affect individuals not only at the social but also as the most intimate levels. All these theorists

stress the alienation and powerlessness that result from these traumatic events, especially by emphasizing the destruction of connections brought about colonialism as far as different collectives are concerned. Kai Erikson's concept of collective trauma has been discussed early: it accentuates the idea of communities being damaged and permanently changed. This definition of collective describes trauma in a sense that helps us understand the consequences of historical events not only for individuals, but also at the collective level. In her study of trauma and questions of identity and autonomy, Laurie Vickroy highlights how crucial the creation of connections and communities is for individuals who have gone through traumatic experiences, as opposed to the canonical conception of individuals as independent agents, able to determine their own destiny:

> Traumatic reactions verify how circumstances can radically change our behavior and should make us question often-sacralized notions of human self-control and free will. Trauma texts' depictions of the devastating effects of isolation, the necessity for connection, and the cultural influences on private relations and behavior all serve to challenge cultural and often class-based attitudes that define the individual as essentially agential and self-determining. (23)

Vickroy's work centers on the specific destruction of the relationships between mothers and daughters. She argues that the hegemonic impositions of the colonial/gender modern system make intersubjective nurturance difficult, causing feelings of shame, inappropriateness that end up separating the lives of mothers and daughters, a damage that can only be healed by the recovery of community links:

> Trauma narratives question concepts of radical individualism through identification and subject-fragmenting conflicts in mother/daughter relationships

> and in the important role of extended family or community in the possibility of healing. Trauma portrayed within the context of mother/child symbiosis demonstrates the devastation of isolation and hopelessness, particularly in early, formative, and intimate contexts. Radical individualism, whether embraced or enforced, is often punished or takes the form of isolated suffering in these texts, and communal or family support is depicted as necessary for healing. (26)

Vickroy's ideas echo Judith Herman's analysis of the loss of systems of attachment and meaning as one of the primary effects of trauma, especially at very specific moments in life, when individuals start to reach out, generally in the realm of the family. Herman understands the loss of these connections as especially damaging for the development of individuals, affecting their ability to establish meaningful relationships in the future:

> the sense of safety in the world, or basic trust, is acquired in earliest life, in relationship with the first caretaker. Originating with life itself, this sense of trust sustains a person throughout the life cycle…. Traumatized people feel utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, persuades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion. When trust is lost, traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than to the living. (51)

Herman's view of the destruction of the connections among members of families and communities is shared by Homi Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely," introduced in his article "The World and the Home" (1992). Bhabha analyzes the disruption of basic connections within the realm of the family by political events and the idea that historic

traumatic events such as the imposition of the colonial/gender modern system destroyed individuals' connections at the most intimate levels. Homi Bhabha's interpretation of Freud's "*unheimlich*" brings together different issues pertaining to the personal and collective, traumatic experiences of postcolonial subjects: the "unhomely" moment takes place when the postcolonial domestic space becomes a place of political and historical invasion, rather than a space of safety. Instead, it becomes the space where the home and the world meet, conflict and become confused: "The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused, and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (12-13). The unhomely is characterized by the uncomfortable, the unsettled, the misunderstood. As will be seen, the tensions and disruptions created by the unhomely create divisions, traumas and feeling and alienation, destroying the most intimate bonds and connections.

Finally, Maria Lugones, in her analysis of the traumatic, destructive consequences of the colonial / gender modern system stresses the destructive effects that come from inhabiting a community where individuals live with a deep sense of unbelonging, lonely and disconnected at multiple levels, from the smallest to the largest:

> But turning the colonized against themselves was included in the civilizing mission's repertoire of justifications for abuse. The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people's sense of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very

> fabric of their conception of reality, identity, social, ecological, and cosmological organization. ("Toward a Colonial Feminism" :745)

Once more, making the same argument as the previously listed theorists, Maria Lugones emphasizes the colonial/modern gender system annihilated the possibility of intersubjective relationships, creating divisions and inequalities at so many interlocking levels that the simplest everyday actions were permeated by discrimination, oppression, and alienation. Her understanding of resistance stresses the relevance of collectivization, the importance of the reconstruction of connections lost to the traumas of the colonial modern gender system:

> Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individual isolation. The passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies constitutes one. The production of the everyday within which one exists produces one's self as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time. But it is important that these ways are just not just different. They include affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, "estar" over enterprise, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments. ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754)

My analysis of resistance strategies in Cliff's fiction draws heavily on the Maria Lugones' theorization of resistance. Her volume *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes* (2003) develops a series of concepts (some her own, some she borrows from other theorists) that will help to study Michelle Cliff's portrayal of resistant characters in her fiction. Lugones

builds a theory of the recovery of agency that aims to subvert the logic of domination of the coloniality of gender and fights against fragmentation, displacement, alienation, and a destruction of a sense of community:

> *In resistance to a variety of intermeshed and interlocking*
>
> *oppressions, aggregate that*
>
> *pulls in different ways,*
>
> *sometimes in unison,*
>
> *but more often in many directions,*
>
> *dispersed*
>
> *but "intent," in a loose sense of intentionality, on overcoming*
>
> *social fragmentation,*
>
> *the purity of language,*
>
> *disembodiment,*
>
> *a unilinear history*
>
> *mythical attachments to place or communities of*
>
> *the*
>
> *same*. (6)

The last few lines of this poem list some of the most important factors of oppression for members of nondominant groups, among them some of the most significant for the development of this chapter, and explored by Michelle Cliff in her novels. The emphasis on the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system has caused some of these effects, creating divisions, oppression, voicelessness, and fragmentation, both at the individual and the social level.

María Lugones' understanding of resistance to the coloniality of gender serves as the theoretical basis for the analysis of Michelle Cliff's depiction of this phenomenon in her fiction. The concepts of "traveling," "second-order anger," "streetwalker theorizing," "hangouts," or "impure communities[24]" will help analyze the meaning and implications of these characters' actions in order to actively reclaim their subjectivity. Directly tied to Gloria Anzaldúa's work, Lugones' concepts expand ideas such as "la nepantlera," "the new mestiza," or "mestiza consciousness[25]." The figure of the streetwalker expands what Anzaldúa conceptualized as "mestiza consciousness," that is, having and living different identities in different social contexts and relationships. In her "epistemology of resistance/liberation" (*Pilgrimages*208), Lugones defines streetwalkers as resisters whose main feature is a change of perspective. In her view, members of dominant groups take part in a view of the social that she imagines as "perched up high, looking at, or making up the social from a disengaged position" Pilgrimages207). Moreover, this higher, distanced point of view allows for an easier homogenization of those under control, those understood monolithically and monologically, which Lugones interprets as a "powerful fiction" (*Pilgrimages* 217). The "tactical strategical stance" of the streetwalkers becomes a more "horizontal practice of resistance" (*Pilgrimages* 80), an intentionality that undermines the perspective of the dominant by changing the line of vision, the perspective, to "street level" (209):

> This theorizing of resistance thus intermingles in the spatiality of the street… Done as a pedestrian, *una callejera, en compañía,* in the midst of company, and

[24] All of these concepts are thoroughly described in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* by María Lugones.
[25] "Nepantlera," "the new mestiza," or "mestiza consciousness" are all described and developed in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

> obliterating the theory /practice distinction, this theorizing seeks out, puts out, entrusts, invokes, rehearses, performs, considers, and enacts tactical-strategic practices of resistant-emancipatory sense making. Performing a rejection of theorizing the social from above, streetwalker theorizing understands and moves resistance to intermeshed oppressions. (*Pilgrimages* 210)

Mestizas and streetwalkers are able to switch among their multiple identities, and, as a result, are capable of acting, reacting, and reflecting differently in different situations and social contexts. Lugones adds to this conversation that the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system creates the idea of unity, and fragments and divides societies and individuals. The logic of purity, or the logic of control aims to construct individuals as pure, controlling the multiplicity of individuals and reducing it, training it to unity:

> I draw a distinction between social fragmentation and multiple realities. I engage the ideological erasure of multiplicity through the production of social fragmentation. Fragmentation hides multiplicity. It masks the accomplished movement through permeable groups and identities by polyvocal subjects in various forms of oppressing ⇔resisting relations. Social subjects are rendered passive and reduced through exercises in purity. (*Pilgrimages* 34)

As opposed to the logic of purity and its idea of identity as unitary, Lugones understands identities as shifting, as a constant process, individuals as multiple, non-fragmented, embodied, inhabiting multiple locations. Resistance to the logic of purity is connected to world-traveling and for that reason, to new possibilities to understand oneself as having different characteristics, and different, multiple identities. Resistance is also connected to

the ability to read this multiplicity in others, in the context of their historical specificities. Finally, resistance efforts are also connected to understanding individuals as part of a collectivity, as a means to overcome isolation and the divisions of the colonial/modern gender system:

> The barriers to creative collectivity and collective creation appear insurmountable. But that is only if we think of the act and not of the process of creation. As we author every act of resistance we can understand it as meaningful because it is inserted in a process of resistance that is collective, but we can also aspire to acts of collective resistance, breaking down our isolation against the odds prescribed by "the confines of the normal." ("On Borderlands" 37)

According to Lugones, the reclamation of this sense of community lost to the injustices of the colonial/gender modern system and the "social distance of privilege" or "arrogant perception" stems from feelings of anger. These arise from witnessing / experiencing the injustices of an unequal status quo that divides and destroys, deprives individuals of their rights, their cultures, and forbids connections and knowledge of others. Directly tied to this knowledge is anger: anger at having been raised with a very limited access to members of different communities, their traditions and their cultures, which in some cases are also their own. In Cliff's novels, these resistant groups travel to, and occupy, marginalized, abject, forgotten spaces that they claim as their own in order to repossess them and create a multicultural hangout where members sustain equal relationships. The ideological erasure of multiplicity of the colonial/gender modern system is subverted by active subjects who are willing to travel to different worlds in order to create new relationships and reclaiming connections that they have been denied. The multicultural,

multiethnic, multiracial guerrilla that reclaims Clare Savage's land and the Carville community that reclaims colonial histories exemplify how Cliff's fiction stresses the diverse levels of trauma and reconnection attempted by members of the privileged classes who refuse to stay complicit with an unfair unequal system. The analysis of these resistant acts, however, may be complicated for those who are privileged by class, race, or gender in the colonial /modern gender system, as their motives may be seen as unclear, frivolous, or without merit.

The forthcoming analysis discusses how even families become battlefields where members belonging to different races / ethnicities, cultures clash as far as worldviews are concerned. Discussing its power as a liberatory practice, Audre Lorde pointed at anger as a force for change, for resistance, empowerment and recovery of agency:

> Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought anger into being. Focused with precision, it can become a powerful source of energy, serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives… But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies, with whom we have great differences, and who are our genuine enemies. (280)

Similarly, Maria Lugones understands anger as the means to articulate the possibility of knowing and accessing new realities, to be able to create new meanings for those whose

identity and the identity their world of sense allows are in conflict. For colonized or subordinated individuals, anger becomes a tool of resistance, a forbidden emotion that becomes a tool to subvert their silenced identity: "In becoming angry, subordinates signal that they take themselves seriously; they believe they have the capacity as well as the right to be judges of those around them." (*Pilgrimages* 110) In the delineation of her resistance theory, she makes a distinction between first- and second-order angers, the former being characterized by being backward-looking. There is, in Lugones' view, a connection between the withdrawals, the paralyzing effects of trauma, and first-order anger, as "first-order anger responds to someone's (oneself or another) having been wronged, harmed, enslaved. Lyman says that in that case, the past becomes a trauma that dominates the present and the future, for every event recapitulates the unresolved injury" (*Pilgrimages* 113). Second-order, on the other hand, anger is characterized by looking forward, by being at the service of the vision of the resisters: "separatist, anger that recognizes that the angry self and the metaphysical presuppositions of the official world are mutually exclusive" (2003:116). Second-order anger leads resisters to rebel against worlds of sense that they understand as harmful, and in need to separate from. Second-order anger helps to be aware of one's own multiplicity, and to travel to different worlds in order to know their structures critically with the aim of creating of counterdiscoursive practices and communities. As Jen Mcweeny defines it, second-order anger is "fundamentally epistemological…Temporally, second-order anger is forward-looking as it moves to create new liberatory sensibilities. Spatially, second-order anger lies between the first world of the domination and the third world of the oppressed: it is a borderland territory that resists assimilation to either side" (299). For this reason, second-order anger

helps bring about new, different perspectives that "thus lead us to negotiate new worlds of sense, new senses of self, or both" (305). Angers, McWeeny continues, become "ways of knowing", as they help recognize, or be aware, of the inconsistencies of colonized individuals' realities and the impositions of race, gender and class hegemonies: "As such, first and second-order angers expose the harmfulness and hypocrisy of the oppressive structures that work on us and the wrongs that have been done to us within the limits of a particular world of sense" (307). Aside from becoming a new, fresh perspective that drives colonized individuals to become aware of the social injustices and inequities, second-order anger is also linked to a hope for transformation, for new connections and practices that defy the logic of the oppressors:

> The importance of the impulse to reject dichotomies lies in the resistance to have one's plurality and the interrelations/paths among the multiple worlds of sense we inhabit reduced or erased. It is that plurality that enables us to acknowledge, discern, investigate, interpret, remake the connections among crisscrossing oppositional subaltern worlds of sense, oppositional to the very logic of subjection. (*Pilgrimages* 197)

These angry selves and individuals become untied from specific, dominant worlds of sense, as they travel to other, different, marginalized worlds of sense. Second-order anger is a way for individuals to get in touch with different realities, fully aware of constitutive relationships, of the deep structures that constitute meaning and "common sense." Resisting the dehumanizing construction of the world that the colonial/modern gender system instilled in the colonized involves the restoration / recreation of social relationships / connections destroyed by the hegemonic formations of the colonial/gender

modern system. This movement towards the "abject" or "the constitutive outside" is theorized by Maria Lugones as part of an effort to create a collective counterforce that understands traveling to different worlds of sense as an opportunity to cross the rigid racial and ethnic boundaries imposed by the colonial/gender modern system. These alternative worlds of sense become communities of choice as opposed to the original communities of place inhabited by the main characters in these novels. The members of these new communities are encouraged by a very specific kind of rage, a second-order anger that María Lugones defines as caused by a "lack of fit between a particular body orientation and its framing world of sense," (*Pilgrimages* 295) that is, a sense of unbelonging in a world that imposes its hegemonic values to individuals who come to understand that the impositions of the colonial/gender modern system have deprived them of vital connections to members of their communities or even their own families. These significant, relevant, key connections have been replaced in these novels, with a focus on hegemonic cultural forms. The characters in the novels at hand belong in worlds of sense where they occupy privileged position, and as Lugones, describes them, "sturdy" in positions of common sense. With this anger comes a way of being that defies the dichotomous categories of the colonial/modern gender system and the resulting alienation. Anger is the force behind their decision to become active subjects. These novels reflect on its characters' movement against complicity with a racist, sexist, unequal system and towards more egalitarian practices and perspectives, living their lives against its historic injustices.

As will be seen, Clare's and Annie's decision to abandon their privileged positions in society, and with them, renounce to the social distance created by privilege

and the arrogant perception of members of other groups comes from a profound knowledge of the inequities and injustices of the hegemonic constructs of the colonial modern gender system:

> Then one may see that the no-home, in-exile position may have provided some perceptual advantages: the one without home may have learned to see orthodoxies and ossification in the homeplaces; learned them in the rejection of themselves as innovations. Orthodoxies may well respond to a desire for safety, and to a sense that conserving tradition is a way of safety. The racially/culturally homeless may stir critique and new life that appears to endanger that safety. But she looks for community because she looks for the formation of a large resistant subjectivity and this cannot be constructed without the company of those seasoned in resistant traditions. (*Pilgrimages* 161)

Since their very early childhood, these two characters react to the impositions of the social distance of privilege in a manner that lands them into trouble on various occasions during their formative years. Their attempts to resist these inequalities ae thwarted according to the logic of domination; the memories of these episodes, however, will stay with them throughout their adult lives, helping spur the second-order anger that will allow them to become streetwalker theorists.

Streetwalker theorists are those members of colonized societies that are able to understand that being oppressed by particular hegemonic systems is a process that can be resisted in a conscious, critical manner. This new mode of being in the world involves deep knowledge of the structures that went into constructing unequal, dichotomic

postcolonial societies, where the oppressor's hegemonies occupy the "common sense" pole:

> The walking/theorizing defamiliarizes common sense as the "common" backing it up loses its unseen, or taken for granted, part of the furniture of the universe, quality. … The politics and fictitious quality of the common are clarified as the callejera, who is prepared for the unmaking and remaking of sense and thus for participation in a delicate production, is assumed by and as everyone else around her, to be fluent in sturdy common sense (221).

As will be seen in Michelle Cliff's novels streetwalker theorists refuse to resign themselves to feeling comfortable in worlds of privilege where they are only recognized as compliant with the dominant worldview. They reject the confines of "the normal," of what is considered "common sense:"

> The importance of the impulse to reject dichotomies lies in the resistance to have one's plurality and the interrelations /paths among the multiple worlds of sense we inhabit reduced or erased. It is that plurality that enables us to acknowledge, discern, investigate, interpret, remake the connections among crisscrossing oppositional subaltern worlds of sense, oppositional to the very logic of subjection. (197)

For that same reason, "home" becomes a complex concept with which streetwalkers are usually at odds. As defined by Homi Bhabha, homes usually become sites of oppression, silence, and even violence, as the imposition of the hegemonies of the colonial/gender modern system provokes disruptions / conflicts in the relationships of family members.

Central to Lugones' argument for transformation of societies is the idea of pilgrimage[26], of traveling, that gets its meaning from the context of resistance projects through the attitude of the pilgrim/traveler. Streetwalker theorists travel to places without structure:

> I chose "pilgrimage" as the way of movement because of Victor Turner's understanding of pilgrimages as movements of people that loosen the hold of institutional, structural, descriptions in the creation of liminal spaces (Turner 1974). The possibilities of antistructural understandings of selves, relations, and relations became important to me, not as temporary, passing experience, but as a way to think of resisters to structural, institutionalized oppressions. I think of antistructural selves, relations, and practices as constituting space and time away from linear, univocal, and cohesive constructions of the social. (*Pilgrimages* 8)

Lugones maintains that traveling/pilgrimages must be made epistemically; by this she means resisting/interrogating/questioning/subverting the dichotomizing logic of domination of settlers, explorers, missionaries, or colonial explorers: "I recommend that we affirm this traveling across 'worlds' as partly constitutive of cross-cultural and cross-racial loving" ("Playfulness" 629). By rejecting these practices of aggressively ignoring members of other communities, streetwalker theorists become fluent in the mechanisms of oppression. One of the ramifications of this type of traveling is the repudiation of the European vision, directly responsible for the divisions inflicted in societies and

[26] Lugones borrows this use of the concept of "pilgrimage" from Victor Turner's *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1975). According to Turner, pilgrimages can be understood as rites of passage that encouraged people to leave their everyday lives and enter the social and spiritual worlds of others. During these travels, individuals lost their identities and found others, becoming part of an altogether different community that stresses company, a *communitas* from where they would emerge renewed and transformed.

communities. Her vision of traveling echoes that of theorists such as Cora Kaplan and Elleke Boehmer, who understand traveling by the colonized can subvert its canonical meaning as a means of appropriation, invasion, conquest or imposition:

> I agree with Kaplan's claim that in my usage I "reject the conventional myth of travel as a quest for rapport and unconditional acceptance" (1994: 150). In rejecting the myth, I want not only to differentiate the sense of travel that I have in mind from tourism and colonial exploration, I also want to unmask the politics and conceptions of time/space that are intrinsic to them through unveiling an insurgent practice that the myth necessarily veils. I think that it is precisely the case that tourists and colonial explorers, missionaries, settlers, and conquerors do not travel in the sense I have in mind. That is, there is no epistemic shift to other worlds of sense precisely because they perceive/imagine only the "exotic," the "Other," the "primitive," and the "savage," and there is no world of sense of the of the exotic, of the Other, of the savage, and the one "in need of salvation" separate from the logic of domination. Those conceptions of others are inextricably connected to epistemic imperialism and aggressive ignorance. The search for "the authentic" in an alienation from the familiar is a narcissistic search for a position of power. To travel to the worlds of those who are also oppressed but who are categorically isolated from us through the interlocking of oppressions involves acute fluency in the mechanisms of oppression and insight in resisting those mechanisms. That practice of travel is indeed in great tension with the Western, middle-class idea of the chosen and leisured journey… (*Pilgrimages* 18-19)

In this same vein, Elleke Boehmer understands traveling as a trope of resistance in the works of postcolonial writers. Traveling, for her, becomes an opportunity to situate the realities of the colonized front and center, to give them the visibility that has been denied to them:

> In their myriad narratives of journeying we see how postcolonial writers have managed, through a process of imaginative appropriation, to hijack one of the defining stories of imperial expansion: the traveller's tale, the voyage into mystery, to the heart of darkness. Tales of occupation and settlement plotted from the colonial centre to the colonies have been supplanted by journeys from the hinterland to the city—with the extra inflection of the final of homecoming and return. Another reverse narrative in the same genre is the pilgrimage into a spiritual reality obscure to Europe. Incorporating indigenous cultural material, defiant of western authority, the postcolonial quest seeks mastery not in the first instance over land and other peoples, but of history and self. (192)

In this sense, Boehmer, Kaplan, and Lugones complicate the colonial idea of traveling by adding on the one hand, the resistance concept, and on the other hand the epistemical component, that is, acquiring a different, more equalitarian type of knowledge, with the hope to disrupt conventional boundaries of race, class, and gender in order to be able to access different, multiple, forbidden realities, and become "fluent in more than one persistent logic" (*Pilgrimages* 8). Subsequently, streetwalker theorists become active subjects that are able to create connections and identifications between members of these previously disconnected groups of individuals:

> …the reason why I think that travelling to someone's "world" is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to someone's "world" we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*. Only when we have travelled to each other's worlds are we fully subjects to each other. (Playfulness: 637)

Traveling, then, becomes an effective strategy for streetwalkers to heal from the devastation and traumatic disconnections brought about by the colonial/gender modern system. For both members of dominant and non-dominant groups, recognizing others as "subjects" brings about the possibility of subverting the unequal relationships sustained by arrogant perceivers. Being able to identify the humanity and subjectivity of the inhabitants of different worlds is the initial, key step in the construction of new relationships, new communities, new futures.

Loving perception, as opposed to the arrogant perception of the social distance of privilege, becomes a key element in the development of these resistant movements, as it involves a new perspective: the social distance of privilege, or the arrogant perceivers, see other human beings as a threat, or as someone whose identity is only existing in order to fulfill other people's desires. Lugones suggests to be disloyal to arrogant perceivers, "including the arrogant perceivers in ourselves" to be able to destroy the powerful barriers of different oppressions. Lugones (*Pilgrimages* 60) describes loving perceivers, on the other hand, as characterized by a generosity towards the object of perception, and by being devoid of any personal interests, wishes, or projects that may determine the relationship with other human beings. They are required to be critically aware of their own perspectives and opinions, to question and check their own perceptions of the other:

“To perceive lovingly, then, requires that we become vigilant of the ways in which our own desires, needs, or own great wanting is implicated in the ways in which we distort knowledge of this world” (Ortega 60). This loving perception is directly related to the epistemic quality of second-order anger, as the former impels travelers to know different worlds and individuals critically:

> Through traveling to other people's "worlds" we discover that there are worlds in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resistors, constructors of visions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and repliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable. (“Playfulness” 638)

In these novels that present this specific form of resistance, Cliff depicts individuals traveling to / inhabiting resistant worlds of sense that are characterized by “impurity,” that go against fragmentation, emphasizing multiplicity, plurality, and interrelations; those inhabiting those resisting worlds of sense are identified as streetwalker theorists, individuals who defy the logic of unity, demythologizing sameness and defying univocity (Lugones 2003). “Impurity” is a key concept in Lugones’ development of her resistance theory: this is the quality of those individuals / communities that refuse the logic of dichotomies and purity. Quite the opposite: impurity is the quality of those who

> reject dichotomies and to live and embody that rejection that gives us some hope of standing together as a people who recognize each other in our complexity. The hope is based on the possibilities that the unsettling quality of the stranger in our society reveals to us, the possibilities that purification by ordeal reveals to us. (*Pilgrimages* 143)

Following Lugones' terminology, these communities, or "hangouts" are new spaces, or alternative socialities that occupy either public or private spaces:

> Hangouts are highly fluid, worldly, nonsactioned, communicative, occupations of space, constestatory retreats for the passing on of knowledge, for the tactical-strategist fashioning of multivocal sense, of enigmatic vocabularies and gestures, for the development of keen commentaries on structural pressures and gaps, spaces of complex and open ended recognition. (2003:221)

As will be seen, occupation of spaces becomes a highly significant resistance movement, as new connections developed by resisters highlight diversity, multivocality, and impurity, as opposed to the mythologization of sameness, and the logic of purity of the colonial/gender modern system. What is more, hangouts help start new conversations, new performances, new dialogues that contribute to the existence of new collectivities away from former divisions: "hanging out permits one to learn, to listen, to transmit information, to participate in communicative creations, to gauge possibilities, to have a sense of the directions of intentionality, to gain social depth. Unlike enclosures of the social that are conceived as less permeable, hangouts are highly permeable" (*Pilgrimages* 209).

Critics have reacted to Lugones' theory of resistance in a variety of ways. However, the point on which critics seem to agree the most is the value of an argument that critiques the pervasive logic of domination. Lugones proposal of an interrogation of arrogant perception makes it possible to create "relational identities" allowing for a liberating resistance that wouldn't otherwise be possible. This new "geopolitics of knowledge" (Bhambra 120) addresses the necessity of transformation of the self and of

the relations that constitute selves. Barbara Lowe defines Lugones' work as "practical" and "of a useful value" (20). Her section on possible pragmatic applications of Lugones' resistance theory provides examples of the power of resistance and transgressions, as well as traveling as a skill for survival. Lowe discusses immigrants and abused individuals who may benefit from the ability to travel to and from worlds of sense and to form coalitions:

> With this comes an enhanced ability to know the world more fully and with greater imaginative possibilities. With this broader and deeper knowledge about the world the individual also gains more options, especially of the individual has honed the creative skill of tapping into the options available in one "world" in order to solve problems in another. This is especially effective if the individual has learned how to learn how to work with others who are also in oppressed situations in order to bend and push against the otherwise unyielding map of oppression. (18-19)

Providing very specific examples of the value of Lugones's resistance theory, Mary Ann Benfield argues that this challenge to theories and practices of oppression, and her understanding of identities as multiple proves very helpful when analyzing the complexities that characterize subordinate groups, especially in the case of Benfield's study, for gays and lesbians. In her view, the merit of Lugones' resistance theory lies within the concept of multiplicity, as opposed to the concept of "purity." For the disenfranchised, and for members of nondominant groups, multiplicity becomes the possibility of autonomy. By recognizing themselves as multiple, individuals understand themselves as embodied and relational. Being able to see themselves as differently

constituted within different environments allows individuals to develop different self-understandings and to respond to these environments in a different way:

> If self-understanding and self-knowledge are attributes of autonomy, then this process of identifying different selves, articulating what is meaningful to each and in each of the environments that constitute them, and using the perceptions and knowledge of each self to understand the different contexts they each inhabit to identify opportunities in alternative contexts, increases autonomy. "A gesture of cultural dissidence, intersectional self-definition involves seeking out heterodox resources within one's culture, perhaps borrowing from other cultures, and synthesizing those materials in novel ways" (Meyers, 166). (104)

Besides, Bendfeld sees value in Lugones' definition and use of "loving perception" as crucial for the development of gay politics, one that, in her words, attempts to perceive others lovingly and with an openness that "embodies an appreciation for the diversity of humanity" (111). In this sense, Celeste agrees on the necessity to approach the world with a non-imperialist eye. In her analysis of *House Hunters International*, a TV show that follows families and couples in search for new homes in Latin America and the Caribbean, Celeste argues that this show reflects mobility as related to economic privilege, only possible for those who travel to nations in this region. Tourists consume some very specific aspects like food or dance, while they ignore the material conditions and the racial and cultural differences of members of the societies to which they travel: "platforms such as [*House Hunters International*] allow for a vicarious consumption of the "other" that requires one to identify with those who are touring and to ignore native

inhabitants and local populations" (539). Celeste proposes a loving perception that would make a new attitude of traveling possible:

> Still, I maintain that it is quite possible for *HHI* and its audience to experience locations and cultures outside of their own through a "loving eye" rather than an "arrogant eye" although the culture industry's reality TV formula presents a formidable challenge. The experience would require intimacy; an intimacy that would enable one to see the ways one participates in the oppression of others under global capitalism. (539)

Allison Weir highlights the importance of the concept of "traveling" to different worlds. For Weir, this is a transformative identity politics, as it allows for deeper coalitions based on identifications. Like Benfield, Weir emphasizes the importance of the cognitive-epistemic component of Lugones' resistance theory:

> For Lugones, the capacity to identify with another is the capacity 'to travel to her world.' As I understand it, this model of identification includes a cognitive-epistemic component: to identify with another is to recognize her experience and her meanings, and, importantly, agency, and it includes also an affective component: to identify with another is to love her…. (77)

When resisting oppressions, Weir continues, it is key to identify with those who are not the same, but are very different: coalition is made possible when individuals are willing to change themselves, to transform to be able to interconnect with others: "This recognition, I argue, requires a process of transformative self-critique and self-identification: once I realize I am in a relation of power with you, I need to re-identify—re-cognize myself to accommodate this recognition" (79).

Along the same lines, Mariana Ortega discusses the different implications for resistance, as related to world-traveling. However, the main difference in the argument Ortega makes is her analysis of the ramifications of traveling to different worlds for members of dominant groups as well as for members of non-dominant groups. Ortega explains that the latter find in world traveling an opportunity to construct and reconstruct themselves in the worlds to which they travel. Moreover, world-traveling allows for the creation of alternative possibilities to understand their oppressions. In her argument, Ortega points to one of Lugones' most valuable contributions to resistance theory: the epistemic component of world traveling affords members of non-dominant groups the possibility to interrogate their own perspectives and to "analyze societal norms and practices as well as personal practices" (132). Ortega emphasizes that world-traveling helps deromanticize the status of marginalized selves. That way, they become able to question the extent of the binary oppressor-oppressed as well as their possible arrogant perception: "Understanding how members of marginalized groups themselves are capable of being arrogant perceivers and oppressors rather than upholding a simplistic dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed is crucial for carrying out a political project and not romanticizing the status of marginal selves" (133). For members of dominant groups, Ortega continues, world-traveling serves different purposes: among them, she lists the potentiality to inquire into their own arrogant perceptions, to find openings that provide opportunities to understand others and themselves differently, or to be able to undermine oppression and injustice. Ortega, however, recognizes that world-traveling for members of dominant groups has been defined as problematic. Some of the main issues that may come up when discussing this possibility, Ortega argues, are the choice of worlds to

which to travel, and the political motivation behind it, the one-sidedness of world-traveling, which might conduce to it being an asymmetrical effort (Weiss 2008), the ontological expansiveness of the members of dominant group, or the view that some members have the right to occupy geographical, moral, linguistic, or other spaces, thus reinforcing their privilege, and the understanding of world-traveling as political tourism, without an actual commitment to produce real social change (Sylvester 1995). Ortega's response to these criticisms does acknowledge these possibilities exist when members of dominant groups travel to different worlds. However, at the same time, she emphasizes the need that world-traveling become a critical practice,

> in which we become vigilant not only of our critical attitudes within worlds but also of the practice of world-traveling itself, what we bring into it, what we derive from it, and what we can reimagine and refashion with it. Let us, then, not lose the force of the incredibly rich concept of world-traveling that offers not just the opportunity for survival, but also openings for self-understandings, understandings of worlds, and the creations of possibilities of resistance against the domination, oppression, and arrogant perception that continues to fold, classify, and file away those whom Lugones so aptly describes as "lively beings, resistors, and constructors of visions. (142)

4.2. Michelle Cliff´s Women Resisters and Blackness

In the volume *If I Could Write This in Fire* (2005), a collection of personal reflections on multiple issues related to the traumas of colonialism, Michelle Cliff describes a decisive, life-changing moment, a critical point that involves recognizing the effects the coloniality of gender has had in her everyday life, not only as an individual,

but also as a member of a broader, destroyed community. Being a member of the dominant groups of Jamaica, she has received lessons in arrogant perception and the ensuing social distance of privilege that create rifts and divisions. However, at the same time, she describes how she is able to analyze and negotiate these strictures in order to pursue a more egalitarian approach to members of the non-dominant groups, a loving perception that allows for the construction of a transformative identity politics and decolonization:

> It is not a question of relinquishing privilege. It is a question of grasping more of myself. I have found that in the true sources are concealed my survival. My speech. My voice. To be colonized is to be rendered insensitive, to have those parts necessary to sustain life numbed. And this is in some cases --in my case-- perceived as privilege. The test of a colonized person is to walk through a shantytown in Kingston and not bat an eye. This I cannot do. Because part of me lives there—and as I grasp more of this part I realize what needs to be done with the rest of my life. (26)

Cliff's reflections on her own experience confirm that the social distance of privilege and its concomitant arrogant perception, as discussed in previous chapters, have the potential to cause colonized individuals to become "insensitive" to the realities of others, unaffected by interlocking race, class, and gender inequities present in their lives, but invisible for them. As has been discussed, the destruction / erosion of human relationships happens at the most intimate levels of family and friendships. Being colonized, for Cliff, is equal to becoming insensitive to those who are different, to those who do not belong to one's own dominant group.

However, at the same time, Cliff describes how trying to overcome this distance and insensitivity is not a process without obstacles. When discussing some of the complications to enact everyday resistance for those belonging to the dominant groups, Cliff uses her own personal experience as an example. She explains how she experienced difficulties when trying to be included in an anthology of Caribbean women writers because she is a light-skinned woman. As a matter of fact, she struggled to be identified as an Afro-Jamaican writer. When discussing the controversy of her inclusion or non-inclusion in this anthology, Cliff expressed her disagreement with the authors' choice of words to describe her position in the world of Caribbean literature in an interview with Meryl F. Schwartz. She pointed to a hostility in the sentences used:

> It's tough. I was reading an anthology of West Indian women writers, a prose anthology called *Her True True Name*. There's a nasty swipe at me in the introduction. They say something to the effect that I am light enough that I might as well be white, which is not true. It's one thing to look x and to feel y, rather than to look x and feel x, and that's part of the difficulty being light-skinned: some people assume you have a white outlook just because you look white. You're met immediately on that level. But it varies a great deal. I felt I was included in that anthology because they couldn't exclude me, but to put me in they had to make a crack about me. The introduction ends with something like "not many of us are called Clare Savage," words to that effect. It was just plain bitchy, if you want my reading of that remark. And it goes back to very old and very painful stuff. (607)

It is precisely the equation "looking x, being x" that Cliff understands needs to be interrogated and negotiated by both members of dominant and non-dominant groups. The

last sentences of this interview excerpt also make a comment on what Cliff believes is the reason for this "nasty swipe:" racial divisions in Jamaican society are the "very old and very painful stuff," words that allude to the still prevailing, poignant master narratives of the colonial/modern gender system.

Characters in Cliff's novels experience this movement towards a loving perception of others, a change from the insensibility of arrogant perception to an active subjectivity that impels them to reconstruct lost / forbidden connections at the community level. This is, for Maria Lugones, one of the most important features of resistance and the recovery of active subjectivity. These strategies do not develop at the individual level, but always embedded in a web of alternative relationships:

> All one has to do is to try to move with people against oppression, to understand oneself as not able to intend in this sense. As I unveil the collectivity backing up the individual, I am pointing not just to the illusory quality of the individual, but to the need of an alternative sociality for resistant intentionality. Subjects participate in intending, but intentions acquire life to the extent that they exist between subjects. (2003:217)

For the main characters in these two novels, the movement from individual to collective identity involves an alignment with their Afro-Jamaican identities, those that they need to unearth, hidden as they are under the layers of rigid, gendered, racialized behaviors that need to be unlearned in order to move from an arrogant to a loving perception, from the social distance of privilege to impure communities, to multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural hangouts.

As said earlier, the resistant response to the colonial / gender modern system is brought about by individuals in coalition as opposed to the alienated, isolated ones resulting from the violent process of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754). In her novels, Michelle Cliff proposes the creation and existence of alternative, multicultural, multiracial communities as a response to the alienating effects of the colonial modern gender system. Cliff represents traveling as both a physical and an epistemic movement that functions as a source of reconnection for members of colonized societies. Stubbornly, Clare and Annie refuse to accept the destiny their light skin and family members trace for them. Rejecting the logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system and becoming members of different hangouts, or coalitions that are characterized by their impurity, can be considered active resistance efforts, as their main desire is to defy the conventions of sameness and univocity. By challenging their oppressive way of life, both Clare and Annie commit to the role of streetwalker theorists, one that involves a change in perspective, as well as a determination to interrogate/fight their own arrogant perceptions and opening spaces that provide opportunities to understand themselves and others. As theorized by Lugones, the role of the streetwalker theorist has a deep significance for both characters, as it involves hanging out, literally, with members of nondominant groups, becoming part, and constructing, new worlds of sense. In these new worlds, these two characters are able to disrupt the dichotomies that have previously oppressed/traumatized them. Through the participation in these hangouts they come to know, and become aware of, a different perspective of other worlds, not from above, but from an alternative, more egalitarian level, in connection with members of nondominant groups, of the constitutive outside.

This new standpoint allows both Clare and Annie to learn, to listen, to communicate and gauge their possibilities, or in Lugones' words, "to cultivate an ear for multiplicity" (*Pilgrimages* 222). As streetwalker theorists, they become aware of not only the profound and alienating restrictions that have drowned their voice and their identity, making them fragmented, silenced individuals, but also of the new worlds of sense that open and become possible. What is also meaningful and remarkable in their process of constructing their active subjectivity is their readiness to contest this fragmentation and recognize their multiple selves, to make new sense, different from the "common sense" instilled in them from a very early age. As will be seen, these contestatory practices and interactions become a resistant challenge to their own arrogant perception, their own colonized selves, their societies and their hegemonic, interlocking oppressions. In order to promote social change, Lugones believes structures of domination need to be challenged, disrupted, but not by individuals: resistance projects reject individuality, as survival can only be negotiated within the context of relationships with others.

The rationale behind the choice of the quotations that introduce this chapter is to help emphasize the central role of a return/movement towards the marginalized as a resistance effort that Michelle Cliff's novels propose as an alternative to the oppressions of the modern/colonial gender system, particularly the isolating effects of the colonial/modern gender system and the ensuing social distance of privilege for both members of dominant and non-dominant groups. These quotations share the possibility of a return to blackness, but not as an essentialist concept of identity, or an idealized return to Africa, but as a revolutionary consciousness, an opposition to what whiteness represents, its performances and modes of behavior, its allegiances, and its social

privileges. Blackness, on the other hand, is defined as a positionality, an alignment with the working classes, the economically and politically disenfranchised (Needham 90). For these resistance practices, Cliff herself claims there is a necessity for "retracing the African part in ourselves," (*The Land of Look Behind* 14) defined by its objective as a revolutionary praxis and identity:

> Thus, the Blackness Cliff claims is an identification she works at and earns the right to via a series of choices she makes, and by affiliating herself with certain positions, peoples, and modes of being in the world. … Aligning herself and Clare with people, ideas, and positions that exemplify struggles against various forms of subjugation through which Cliff and Clare then define their own communities in struggle, "name [their] solidarity" as hooks puts it, through and because of a shared oppression. (Needham 92)

Needham's key concept links this return to blackness with Cliff's depiction of resistance is an emphasis on autonomy when individuals define their own communities of choice. For Clare Savage and Annie Christmas, this revolutionary praxis and identity start as a process, as a trajectory of reevaluation of their priorities, beliefs and values that will end up with a full identification and commitment with identities they were taught to despise. Identity, in these cases, is seen more as a positioning, a becoming, rather than as an essence, a being, as opposed to immovable conceptions and constructions of identity attached to skin color, race, gender or class. Shattering the binaries that tie their identities to the color of their skin, Cliff's main characters are capable to construct their own visions through the reconnection with the multiplicity of their selves. Blackness, in these novels, is opposed to the whiteness that the colonial/gender modern system represents

and upholds. In terms of social classes, it is associated with the working class, the poor, the disenfranchised and politically dispossessed. It is with the members of these worlds that Clare and Annie Christmas aim to construct new communities, their own worlds of sense.

Both Clare Savage and Annie Christmas belong to the privileged classes of Jamaica, and as such, are brought up to live a life of privilege and advantages. However, this privileged position is also a result of their families denying the multiplicity of their origins and their identities. Both characters belong to multiracial, multiethnic families but because of Clare's and Annie's light skin, a performance of whiteness is prescribed as a source of privilege. That supposed advantage involves burying and denying other parts of their selves that they cherish and treasure. Clare Savage describes the pain and the impossibility of achieving this unity. In a conversation with a lover, she relates the traumatic process and the pressures she went through as a child, as well as the difficulties in overcoming the equation light skin = white outlook described a little earlier:

> "I can agree, I can be agreeable in five languages, you know." Her voice became cold. "I was raised by my father to be that way. To be the soft-spoken little sambo, creole, invisible neger, what have you, blending into the majority with ease." She had a sense he didn't trust her in her skin, somewhere he didn't believe she was what she said she was—why should he? "You know, there are people who look one way and think another, feel another. We can be very dangerous to ourselves, to others. Got to quell one side, honey, so I was taught. Amazing…amazing how the other side persists. I can also say "shit" in five languages…perhaps that's my mother's influence. Like my persistence in drifting

> to the wrong side, what my father would consider the wrong side, what most of my family would consider the wrong side. As time passes my mother becomes harder and harder to bring back—but I know…I feel she would approve of my…the way my sentiments seem to lie…" . (152)

In the case of these characters, the personal always becomes the political, as the unhomely postcolonial moment invades their lives and involves distressing denials. After seeing and experiencing its alienating effects themselves, they choose to resist the privileges of whiteness and join resistant communities to become members of multicultural, multiracial communities, "sites of impurity" or "hangouts:" these provide them with links and connections that have been denied to them by virtue of the lightness of their skin and Jamaican race and gender hierarchies and divisions of the coloniality of gender. *No Telephone to Heaven* and *Free Enterprise* explore, on the one hand, the restrictions and oppressions of Jamaican society in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, as well as the resistance strategies developed by different groups and individuals. At different points in the history of Jamaica, Clare Savage and Annie Christmas strive to explore different possibilities for their lives. By becoming streetwalker theorists, they interrogate the implications of white privilege in their lives, the arrogant perception that has caused them to establish a distance with members of the nondominant group. As streetwalkers, they reject the unity of their selves, as proclaimed by the logic of purity of the colonial/gender modern system, and embrace their impurity, their multiplicity. By rejecting this vision, they accept the possibility of inhabiting different worlds, of belonging to different communities of choice. Cliff constructs characters whose strategy for survival means to become members of alternative communities, multicultural

multiracial, multiethnic hangouts that could not be any more different from the privileged lives these two characters reject. By becoming members of these new worlds of sense, they reject the logic of fragmentation of the colonial/modern gender system, celebrate heterogeneity and challenge the reduction of the members of their societies to a unity that can only be defined as fictitious. At the individual level, Annie Christmas and Clare Savage search for a deeper sense of belonging. These hangouts mean, for them, the possibility to overcome the traumatic effects of the compulsory logic of unity and homogeneity of their identity and their social groups. The two characters make the decision to refuse the forced destiny that awaits them in the future. Challenging the idea that individuals are essentially agential and self-determining (Vickroy 23), means to find the much-needed healing connections they have been denied. Clare Savage and Annie Christmas resistance efforts make them become world travelers who look for different connections, away from the impositions of the colonial/modern gender system. Traveling for them involves both the physical and the epistemic process described by Maria Lugones. As she points out, traveling to different realities involves a desire to actually interrogate / dismantle one's own knowledge and prejudices.

4.3. *No Telephone to Heaven*: Resistance Postponed

Michelle Cliff sets the second of her Clare Savage novels in the Jamaica of the two decades right after independence, a period of time marked by economic and social turmoil in the whole region[27]. The struggle for influence in the Caribbean of the 1970s

[27]Prime ministers Norman Manley (1959-1962) and Michael Manley (1972-1980 and 1989-1992) attempted to put into place social development agendas that improved the lives of citizens most affected by the injustices and inequities of the imposition of the logic of capital of the colonial/modern gender system. However, these measures were not enough to prevent national debt from piling up. As a result, the International Monetary Fund, backed by the United States, intervened in the country with loans that came with draconian conditions. The effects of the IMF policy impositions fell mostly on the rural and urban working classes, as prices skyrocketed and wages dropped (Prashad 233). Especially women from the lower classes saw how families

and 1908s was characterized by constant shifts of alliances between neoliberal and Marxist parties or organizations in different countries like Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, or Grenada. One of the most important examples of the escalation of tensions between right and left was the invasion of Grenada in 1981 by United States armed forces. The aim was to depose the New Jewel Movement, a leftist organization that had seized power two years earlier. Its leader, Maurice Bishop, was executed by some of the movement members, as they did not see his policies as sufficiently radical. As they were trying to consolidate their new regime, Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion that destroyed the New Jewel movement regime.

Cliff situates Clare Savage's process of resistance in these convulse years, in a region that became independent merely a decade earlier, in the midst of a global fight for domination between neoliberal and Marxist countries and policies. As will be seen, the guerrilla of which she becomes a member, attempts to undermine the logic of capital of the colonial/modern gender system and start a new community of resisters with different ways of being.

This process of resistance had reawakened in the streets of London, however, when she sees a brooch in a street market with the inscription "Resistez." Chapter three of this dissertation analyzed Clare Savage's stay in London as part of the withdrawal resulting from the separation and loss of her mother and sister, a manner to get away from, and block, the pain by occupying her mind with the history of Renaissance art. As

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became more and more dependent in their underpaid jobs. By 1980, the per capita income had fallen by 40% (Prashad 234). The extremely instability of the economy led Michael Manley to call for an election that turned out to be a very violent process that left eight hundred people dead. Jamaicans saw Manley as responsible for the economic circumstances and elected Edward Seaga, a pro-Atlantic candidate approved by the USA, a "counterpoint to insurgent Nicaragua and Grenada as well as Cuba" (Prashad 237).

discussed earlier, the logic of purity, whiteness, and the social distance of privilege created a rift in the Savage family, and Clare's future prospects as a light-skinned Jamaican sent her to England, a destination she chose "with the logic of a Creole" (109). More accurately, it is missing the opportunity of purchasing the aforementioned brooch that brings back to her the memories of other losses and missed opportunities. Among them, the third person narrative voice includes the lost connection with her multiple identity, her mother, and sister:

> She thought often about the badge next week. She returned Saturday to claim it. Of course it had been sold. Foolishly, she thought, she added it to her list of regrets, which she kept against herself. That she had not bucked her father and joined a demonstration decrying the murder of Dr. King. That she was not as dark as her sister, her mother. That she allowed the one to be confused with the other, and to lessen her. (*No Telephone to Heaven* 137)

The last sentence of this quotation proves significant enough, as this becomes the moment she ties the lightness of her skin with her silence, with obeying the prescriptive behaviors dictated by her father, a staunch supporter of the logic of purity, a decision she later regrets.

As a matter of fact, Clare's attempts to resist the erasure of her multiple identity start earlier in her life: the vindication of her silenced identity had begun right after Kitty's death. Having gone through separation from her mother and her sister, and the subsequent death of the former, Clare Savage initiates a process of reclamation of her identity and the loss of connections brought about by the logic of purity: "'My mother was a nigger'—speaking the word at him. His five long fingers came at her, as she had

expected marking her cheekbone, making her weep in shock. 'And so am I,' she added softly" (104). The anger that Clare feels after her mother's passing prompts a response that asserts her blackness, and the linkages to her mother's resistance endeavors. It is after this moment that Clare is able to raise her voice and assert her impurity, her heterogeneity, the rejection of the dichotomies she has had to live with all her life. The letter she receives after her mother's passing is meant to help her initiate this process and point to this alternative future for her: "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[28]" (103). Following in the steps of the resistance projects of her mother, Clare's rejection of the societal expectations of the performance of whiteness becomes not only symbolic but also a material and social exemplification of the recovery of her active subjectivity. Moving against her own, and other people's oppressions, Clare is able to construct her own vision: belonging to the guerrilla movement allows her to reestablish long-lost, forbidden relationships in her mother's village and house. For Clare, resistance involves the rejection of the particular structures that have rendered her life incomplete, as well as a return and a reclamation of

[28] Throughout *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* readers have access to the continued resistance efforts of Kitty Savage at different stages in her life, as well as to some of the frustrations that come with them. At a very young age, and thanks to the influence of one of her teachers, Mr. Powell, Kitty has access to some of the silenced history of Jamaica. As a result, she dreams of becoming a teacher as well, and build a small school for country children with the aim of resisting colonial teaching: "…she would teach children not from the manuals sent by the colonial office, but from manuals she herself would write" (*Abeng* 129). The war and a precipitous marriage to Boy Savage thwart her dream, as, in her own words, "You know how your father hates the country" (*Abeng* 130). Her interest for the disenfranchised does not go away, and at several points in her marriage she snaps at her husband in defense of members of non-dominant groups he attempts to denigrate: in a scene set in the streets of Kingston, they see woman squatting as she tries to relieve herself, only to be met with Boy's disrespect. Kitty's response is fierce, and she forces him to stop the car and help the woman: "'Why don't you shut you're your filthy hateful mouth, you damn cuffy. She's probably pregnant and alone—something you would not know about.' Then Kitty had him pull the car over so she could give the woman a few shillings—all that she had in her purse" (*Abeng* 131). One of her most frustrating resistance efforts, however, happens during her stay in the US, where she tries to fight against the racism she feels every day. In the United States, the Savages feel a kind of racism to which they are not used in Jamaica. Working as an administrative assistant in a laundry company in Brooklyn, NY, Kitty is assigned the task to provide laundry tips to customers. These come from Mr. White, an advertising technique designed in the shape of a white old lady whose description alludes to domesticity: "An older woman with gentle gray curls, pink skin, two places on either cheek where the pink deepened slightly, soft rounded bosom, small mouth. ... Her understanding nature accentuated by her tilted chin and clear blue eyes" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 74). In the small cards designed to that effect, Kitty starts to send antiracist messages: "WE CAN CLEAN YOUR CLOTHES BUT NOT YOUR HEART. AMERICA IS CRUEL. CONSIDER KINDNESS FOR A CHANGE. WHITE PEOPLE CAN BE BLAACK-HEARTED. THE LIFE YOU LIVE WILL BE VISITED ON YOUR CHILDREN. MARCUS GARVEY WAS RIGHT" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 81). Frustrated after the lack of effect of these messages, Kitty decides to turn Mrs. White into Aunt Jemima: "She took a stack of letterheads and colored the pink face of Mrs. White. She drew a balloon next to each dark face. HELLO. MRS. WHITE IS DEAD. MY NAME IS MRS. BLACK. I KILLED HER" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 83). These words and imagery provoke an immediate backlash among the laundry customers, as the harmless old white lady is transformed into a black woman with a voice. Ironically, there is absolutely no vindication of her resistance as she is not fired for this, but two of her coworkers, Georgia and Virginia, who get the blame for Kitty's resistant work. The lack of success in this project spurs her decision to leave the United States and return to Jamaica: "That night she announced to Boy that she had had enough. In a week she took the younger girl, the one who favored her, back home, and told the elder one to look after herself and her father" (*No Telephone to Heaven* 84).

her Afro-Jamaican heritage. Embracing her self as an Afro-Jamaican woman demands the rejection of a comfortable way of life many members of her family understand she will choose naturally She establishes meaningful, decisive bonds with two key characters that make her resistance effort possible: Harry/Harriet, a transgendered Jamaican woman, and her own mother. What is more, by resisting the logic of purity, she is able to resume her mother's thwarted resistance efforts. Traveling back to Jamaica allows her to recover forbidden connections, not only with other worlds, but also with the silenced legacy of her mother.

This return is triggered by a few events that make her start to think about her forbidden and forgotten multiple identity and the silence she is living in. A visit to Gravesend, the location of the tomb of Pocahontas[29] evokes feelings of loss, as she equates herself with the Native American historic figure, and sees herself dying away from home, with a different name, claimed by a different country: "Found she had been tamed, renamed Rebecca. Found she had died on a ship, leaving the river mouth and the country, but close for England to claim her body" (136). In Clare's current situation, expatriated in England, with almost no connections to Jamaica, she identifies with Pocahontas, the Native American figure that seems to have been appropriated by figures of authority, as the third person narrative voice seems to suggest. Having converted into Christianism and married to an English man, "tamed" is probably the key word that describes Clare's feelings in more depth. Secondly, some of the racially motivated events

[29] Historical accounts relate Pocahontas' death happened as she was visiting England as an exotic figure, an example of a Native American converting to Christianism (the first Christian ever of the Virginian nation") (stgeorgesgravesend.co.uk), and also as an asset for the Virginia Company of London utilized with an economic profit in mind: "The Virginia Company of London, who had funded the settling of Jamestown, decided to make use of the favorite daughter of the great Powathan to their advantage. They thought, as a Christian convert married to an Englishman. Pocahontas could encourage interest in Virginia and the company" (n.p.).

happening in London during Clare's time there have a crucial effect on her. The marches of the National Front, their chants, and banners exhibit racist mottos that aim to attack immigrants from England's former colonies: "Chants. Shouts. Noise slamming against the glass of the well-appointed, high-ceilinged room. KAFFIRS! NIGGERS! WOGS! PAKIS! GET OUT!... KEEP BRITAIN WHITE!" (137). Being a witness to these, and to racist comments made by her classmates anger Clare, whose voice is heard against abuses, cruelty, and her friend's insensitivity:

> "It—the whole thing. Not just her…the march yesterday. "
>
> "What march?" Liz asked
>
> "The National Front…surely you heard about it?"
>
> "Oh, you mean that bloody rabble…Christ! What a racket…I had to move my desk in the library."
>
> "It didn't upset you… on another… level?"
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "I mean to me it felt…dangerous."
>
> "Oh, … I'm sorry. But you needn't take it personally, you know."…
>
> "Liz, you are missing my point."…"Which is that I am … by blood…the sort they were ranting on about."
>
> "But your blood has thinned, or thickened, or whatever it does when…you know what I mean."
>
> "You mean I am presentable. That I'm somehow lower down the tree, higher up the scale, whatever." Clare was having a hard time keeping the bitterness from her voice." (139)

One of the most relevant aspects of this conversation is the palpable difference between the classmates' opinions on the National Front's fight against immigrants. Not being a part of the groups threatened by the far-right group, Liz's arrogant perception makes her able to continue working, unaffected by the turmoil outside of their window. This insensitivity makes Clare feel an anger that adds to the feelings of being part of the attacked community. At this point, it is also very significant to see how Clare starts to look critically at her position in the world, at the privilege conferred by her light skin and how she has used it to ignore differences of which she is aware and willing to fight.

Harry/Harriet's letters from Jamaica also become a key element in the process of Clare's resisting project of reconnection with her Jamaican identity. For a time, these become the only link to the Afro-Jamaican reality she was barred to access. These become the triggers that get her own process of decolonization started. The task that her mother pursued with her letter is continued by the ones sent by Harry/Harriet, Clare's transgender friend. As explained in chapter three of this dissertation, Harry/Harriet is the offspring of a landowner and a maid, a member of both dominant and non-dominant groups. Her connections to both allow her to navigate different worlds. As a member of the Said family, she is invited to the parties of the children of the high classes of Kingston, where she meets Clare. As a member of the non-dominant groups, Harry/Harriet is well aware of the inequities and injustices of Jamaican society. In Clare Savage's world, Harry/Harriet's political position and voice are the most radical ones. Her letters become an influential source of information that become determining in the culmination of the process politicization Clare is undergoing while in London. The sense of urgency reflected in these letters conclude with the plea for her to finally be brave and

acknowledge the multiplicity of her identity as an Afro-Jamaican woman by returning to her country and helping in the fight for the disenfranchised: “I find myself closer to my choice, girlfriend. How about you? Jamaica needs her children—I repeat myself, I know. Manley is doing his best but people are leaving in droves—those who can. The poor, the sufferahs, of course remain. I know you think I nag you too much, but there is terrific distress. And there is no end in sight. Write soon” (140). Clare’s final decision to overcome the effects of the logic of purity makes her go back to Jamaica definitively. As opposed to previous visits, when the third person narrator defines her as “[a] visitor to her homeland. Not answerable to her place of birth” (87), this decision involves a radical change in her life. There are two steps in Clare’s resistant behavior after returning to Jamaica, the first a more personal endeavor, the second towards a more collective effort. As was already discussed in chapter two, Clare’s development of a personal literacy of Afro-Jamaican history constitutes a key step in the reclamation of an individual and collective Afro-Jamaican identity.

The second step is the commitment to a multiracial, multicultural, multiethnic revolutionary group, a decision that will become crucial in her life. After two years as a teacher, Clare comes to see the need to go beyond her effort to teach and spread the silenced history of Jamaica. Again unaware of the economic conditions that surround her in the Kingston of the mid-1970s, it is Harriet who brings reality to her. The rage they feel after Harriet accidentally eats a piece of iguana stolen from Kingston zoo on the street makes Clare finally join the guerrilla:

> At home she found Clare, a copy of the Gleaner in her hands, announcing in broad headlines the theft of several rare lizards from the zoo at Hope. … “Ha!”

> Harriet spat. The flesh of the beast caught somewhere between her throat and stomach, threatening to rise. … "What does it mean when we people have to break into a zoo to steal lizard fe nyam? …We ancestor nyam lizard too. And rat. Mongoose, if dem can catch him. Despair too close sometime. Everyt'ing mus'change, sister." The thing she was holding down rose fast and spilled out of her, onto her fastidious, angry self. … "Girlfriend, come with me now. I have some people I want you to meet. It time." (188)

The poverty conditions described by Harriet to Clare open the possibility for her of a more collective effort than her teaching project. The guerrilla becomes for Clare a hangout, an impure community of resisters that can complete her need for belonging, for the group identification she has been missing for most of her life. Truly multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial, this coalition across differences is composed of very different persons, members of both dominant and non-dominant groups alike:

> These people—men and women—were dressed in similar clothes, which became them as uniforms, signifying some agreement, some purpose—that they were in something together—in these clothes, at least they seemed to blend together. This alikeness was something they needed, which could be important, even vital, to them—for the shades of their skin, places traveled to and from, events experienced, things understood, food taken into their bodies, acts of violence committed, books read, music heard, languages recognized, ones they loved, living family, varied widely, came between them. (4)

For Clare, exercising her own agency means asserting her own blackness. The reclamation of her multiple identity started after the death of her mother becomes, at this

point, definitive. Becoming a resister, however, is not an easy process as, again, her light skin becomes an obstacle for her, as it is equated with a white outlook. She must undergo an exhausting, continued interrogation of her real motives. The rest of the guerrilla members question the hardships she has gone through, as well as the possible implications of her arrogant perception:

> To whom do you owe your allegiance?
>
> I have African, English, Carib in me.
>
> Can we trust you?...
>
> Do you think you are morally superior to someone of my color?
>
> No
>
> Politically?
>
> No.
>
> Intellectually?
>
> No. (189-190)

The guerrilla group ends up accepting her, as owning her grandmother's land becomes a big asset, as it will be used as their headquarters. However, some members still find it difficult to accept Clare's identification as an Afro-Jamaican woman:

> The people around her had a deep bitterness to contend with. Dressed as they were, they might move closer. Sleeping on the ground, squatting at the roadside, evoking the name of Nanny, in whose memory they were engaged in this, they might move closer. Their efforts were tender. They were making something new, approached not without difficulty, with the gravest opposition; the bitterness, the fury some held, could be strip-mined, no need to send the shaft deep at all. Like

> when it was time for a backra to stand guard while some of the others, the darker ones slept—or tried to sleep. Sometimes someone slept with an eye open. (5)

For Clare, the purpose of this resistance project is dual: her aim is to reconnect with her lost mother, with a side of the family she was forced to renounce: "I returned to this island to mend…to bury…my mother…I returned to this island because there was nowhere else…I could live no longer in borrowed countries, on borrowed time. There is a danger here—in sounding…seeming foolish" (193). On the other hand, her desire is to continue her mother's work. One of the climatic moments of Clare being a part of this group is, in fact, being recognized as her mother: "Clare waved at them automatically as she had been taught, and people waved back, wishing good evening to someone they thought was a stranger—all but one man, who said, 'Evening, Miss Kitty, long time pass, ma'am.' 'Yes, indeed, sah,' Clare responded, not surprised" (185). Kitty Freeman becomes a constant presence on this new project: "Clare identified herself with her female line, as was custom…" (185). For that reason, the group settles in Clare's farm, where they find not only shelter, but also a source of income for their project, as the ganja they cultivate is sold to buy, among other things, guns and the truck that gives its title to the novel. For Clare personally, the yield from the farms crops becomes another way to continue her mother's projects: "The rest of the surplus, all that they could not barter, was distributed by Miss Mattie's granddaughter to people around who did not have enough land to support them. It had been a practice of her mother and grandmother. The woman was used to it—what other use could be made of extra food?" (12). Following a more Marxist approach to economy and resources, the guerrilla members refuse to profit from Clare's family's land and its crops, and thus subvert the practices of land and people's

exploitation of the colonial/gender modern system and its ferocious search for economic benefit. Previous discussions of how European brutal capitalism changed world relationships from the sixteenth century become relevant again here. The guerrilla's actions aim to reduce the consequences of its historical injustice by making the farm a resource where a more sustainable, egalitarian redistribution of wealth can be put into practice. As resisters of the impositions of the colonial/gender modern system, they subvert the logic of capital and respond to power by rejecting the introduction of property and dispossession.

Being a part of the project of this group gives Clare the opportunity to finally embrace her multiple identity, her mother's lineage of resistance, her own blackness. The actions that continue her mother's labor allow Clare to become a part of the greater community, but the guerrilla group plans seem to be different. They seem to have conflicting and contradictory visions of resistance when it comes to its more material manifestations. These opposing views are clear in the conversation about Clare's motives to join the group, when she is repeatedly asked about the use of violence:

> "Under what circumstances would you kill another human being?"… "Would you kill to eat?" … "Would you kill someone standing between you and food?" … "Would you kill if your child got polio, and you knew this was a result of government policy, and you knew exactly whom to blame?" (180-190).

Clare's answer seems to point in the direction of continuing her mother's work: "My mother told me to help my people. At the moment this is the closest I can come." (196)

To Clare's endeavor to help the poor, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the rest of the group adds the armed struggle against economic and cultural appropriation of

the most important resistant Jamaican figure: Nanny of the Maroons. The last scene in the novel sees Clare Savage and the rest of the members of the guerrilla group in the set of an American movie that miscontructs and devalues the figure of Nanny of the Maroons. The third-person narrator's words emphasize the careless and insensitive treatment of such a major historic figure for Jamaicans:

> Two figures stood out in the costumed group. One, a woman, the actress called in whenever someone was needed to play a Black heroine, any Black heroine, whether Sojourner Truth or Bessie Smith, this woman wore a pair of leather breeches and a silk shirt—designer's notion of the clothes that Nanny wore. Dear Nanny, the Coromantee warrior, leader of the Windward Maroons, whom one book described as an old woman naked except for a necklace made from the teeth of whitemen—sent by the Orishas to deliver her people. Wild Nanny, sporting furies through the Blue Mountains. Old. Dark. Small. But such detail was out of the question, given these people even knew the truth. (206)

Clothes, choice of actress, and even the choice of subject are seen as a humiliating and disgraceful portrayal and utilization of this mythical figure. Adding another layer of arrogant perception to this appropriation, frivolous details are incorporated to the story: "'We are going to shoot the scene where the monster attacks Nanny, and Cudjoe rescues her'" (207). The guerrilla members' rejection of this form of epistemic violence leads them to hide near the set, armed and ready to assault the premises. They do not have a chance to accomplish their plan, and they are discovered and slaughtered in the very last

scene of the novel[30]. As mentioned in the early pages of this chapter, this is where Cliff's vision of resistance seems to take issue with violence and armed struggle. As was said earlier, it is the contention of this chapter that *No Telephone to Heaven* proposes an alternative to the unsuccessful, unproductive results of violent uprisings. The guerrilla attempt to respond to arrogant perception with violence and not loving perception results in sterile, senseless deaths. Moreover, all the destruction at the end of the novel puts an end to their more constructive work to help the marginalized and disenfranchised portrayed in the novel. The logic of coalition proposed by María Lugones as part of her decolonial feminist project emphasizes movement from "dehumanization and paralysis" to the "creative activity of be-ing" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754). As Cliff's novels show, there is a need for a historicization of resistance, for the reclamation of figures of female resisters and communities, of recurrent coalitions happening though history against the imposition of a vision of passive, submissive colonized individuals and societies:

> The logic they follow is not countenanced by the logic of power. The movement of these bodies and relations does not repeat itself. It does not become static and

[30] Cliff's representation of this revolutionary act at the end of *No Telephone to Heaven* has been read in multiple manners by critics. Cliff herself describes it as the ultimate identification between Clare Savage and the Jamaican soil, where she had returned with such passion: "…an ending that completes the circle, or rather triangle, of the character's life. In her death, she has complete identification with her homeland; soon enough she will be indistinguishable from the ground. Her bones will turn to potash, as did her ancestors' bones" ("Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character" 265). Different critics agree with her on this vision. Barnes, for example, sees it as a moment of personal triumph, when her "life-long struggle for a sense of place is consummated in the unification of her personal and communal goals" (30). Hornung interprets the ending as a "triumphant reunification with Jamaica" (90). In Agosto's view, this final scene is the result of a deliberate construction of a parallel with the death of Nanny, creating yet another parallel between her and Clare Savage. At the same time, Agosto sees a glimmer of hope, a new beginning in it. In her opinion, the death of more than twenty people cannot go unnoticed; for that reason, their resistance attempt can function as a catalyst for further resistance (102). On the other hand, Pollock analyzes it as a not-yet-sufficient enactment of a position of resistance" (208). Tinsley makes a similar interpretation, seeing the ending as a refusal to "deliver a story of successful revolution" (199).

> ossified. Everything and everyone continues to respond to power and responds much of the time resistantly—which is not to say in open defiance—in ways that may or may not be beneficial to capital, but are not part of its logic. ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754)

The representation of multiple and different resistant responses undermines the perception of the colonial/modern gender system as a constant achievement of modernity, and foregrounds the creation of new coalitions: "Without the tense multiplicity, we see only either the coloniality of gender, as accomplishment, or a freezing of memory, an ossified understanding of self in relation from a precolonial sense of the social" ("Toward a Decolonial Feminism"754). Clare Savage and the guerrilla members may be dead and turning into potash in the Jamaican soil, but Cliff's fiction shows that the impositions of modernity are constantly challenged by resistant coalitions that show that loving perception is possible, that the teachings and erasures of the colonial/modern gender system can be unlearned.

4.4. *Free Enterprise*: An Impure Community of Storytellers

A multiethnic, multicultural, multiracial group of members of formerly colonized countries meet in Carville, Louisiana, and take turns to tell one another unknown stories related to their origins, their cultures, their religions, and their history. The common thread that joins these stories together is the oppression, the violence, and the secrecy that are unveiled by this community of resisters who see their role as one of unsilencing the voices of the unknown, the silenced, the dead.

Like Clare Savage, Annie Christmas becomes a streetwalker theorist after being raised as a member of the dominant group. Annie's mother constructs an identity for

herself and her family based on the possibility of their light skin, that allows them to bury their multiracial origins:

> Her mother's family tree was constructed of mythopoetic tales, seemingly devised to entertain a child rather than form the basis of a dynasty. The tree branched into swashbucklers, riders of the Spanish Main, swordsmen, petty nobility, an aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington, an Arawak or two – but not the anthropophagic Carib—a female pirate that begged off execution due to motherhood, but never the guineaman, the driver, the cane cutter, the furious Maroon. Annie was born into this imperial rainforest, and christened Regina (pronounced with a long i) which she later discarded. Queendom was not hers. (20)

Their family is "gens inconnu," that is, of unknown people. With their light skin and the racial stratification of Jamaica, Annie and her mother are able to climb the social ladder, not without Annie herself making some sacrifices: "On that bed at that moment the entire history of the island could be captured. Arawak. Slavery. Cane. And herself, lying on that bed, having served the landowner well. Father, uncle, cousin, family friend—what did it matter. Had it happened? With Mamá's blessing" (5-6). The insinuation of rape and sexual violence point to the traumas and denials that the construction of a pure identity entail, a circumstance eased by the racial stratification of Jamaica that allows for the equation of light skin with a white outlook and the possibility of a privileged life. A representative of the logic of purity, Annie's mother constantly insists on the idea that her daughter must maintain and uphold her position as a privileged Jamaican woman and reminds Annie of her privileged position and role in Jamaican society:

> "*Ma fille*" her mother began, "the poor are an investment that will leave you penniless. If you must do this sort of thing, then, for God's sake, become a *religiuse*. Go to France, to a proper convent. Teach the poor to make lace. This business can lead nowhere but heartache, your heartache. Will you lend to the disgrace of us all? Your father and I have worked so hard."
>
> "What kind of disgrace, Mamá?"
>
> "The sort that happens when a daughter turns her back on her people. You belong to us." (9)

Annie's family conducts a performance of whiteness that becomes a trap for her. In a vision of whiteness and privilege, the narrative voice describes Annie's mother's efforts to establish her position as a member of the dominant group: the utilization of nouns and adjectives emphasize the overwhelming whiteness of the moment:

> When Annie's mother petitioned as far as the Custos of St Ann, and won, she threw a great ball. With a huge cake covered all over by the finest slivers of coconut, like the hairs of a white old man, carried into the ballroom on the shoulders of footmen dressed in white silk, a pearl dangling from an ear. The ladies wore gowns decked with albatross feathers, which would have horrified Coleridge, but the islanders had no such taboo. The French doors were flung open, and deadwhite gowns fought the deadwhiteness of a full moon for paleness. (13)

The multiplicity of their identities must remain hidden under layers and layers of whiteness performances, as any signals of it will involve the loss of their affiliation with the dominant groups, and as a result, their social status: "When her hair snaked, her

mother said it was going back to Africa. 'Look like you going home, pickney,' she said. And the swashbucklers and petty nobility fell away. Then: 'Tell no one I said that, *ma fille,*' speaking out of her *gens inconnu* mouth" (23). Asserting the power of their whiteness, Annie's mom becomes a representative of the logic of purity.

On the other hand, Annie's nurse, Industry, becomes the opposite influence, as she supplies Annie with stories of Nanny of the Maroons; those are the only moments that she can have access to the buried side of her identity:

> She slept on a pallet next to my bed, on the floor. She would sit there at night, beside me, after I had said my prayers, and if as antidote to them, would spin the tales of Nanny and her Windward Maroons. All her magic, all her fierceness. I was a child, and I believed in her. In my mind, I fixed Industry and Nanny as somehow one and the same. Maybe she told the stories in the first person; I don't recall. When Industry ran off I knew she had turned back into her Nanny-self. I hoped so. (28)

Industry's flight and torture she suffers after being caught --"Anyway, Industry was finally released from the stocks. But when I left, seven years later, she was still wearing the bit. Still eating rust. In silence" (29) -- impel Annie to start her resistance effort against the injustices and inequalities of slavery. She is, however, unable to direct her anger towards members of her own family:

> There is no someone else' s fight, Annie, you know that.
>
> Now perhaps, Not then. I don't think I did.
>
> What would have made it yours?

> On my island, burning the great houses to the ground, under my mother's nose, my father's hegemony. (199)

Unable to live conforming to the rule of her mother's hegemony and purity logic, but also unable to fight against her own family, she runs to the United States: "The year is 1920. Long time now she'd turned her back on all that, causing all manner of grief, which she could remember now with remarkably little effort. … Who could say why she'd been able to turn her back, when her brothers and sisters took so effortlessly to their places? It didn't matter" (4). By fleeing the island and joining different groups of resistance, hangouts that, at different levels, and with different strategies fight against hegemony, Annie is able to resist her fragmented identity and accept her multiplicity and impurity. Significantly enough, one of her dreams depicts a multicolored snake with a black head, feeling trampled and trying to shed its skin. Much in the same way, Annie decides to escape the trappings of her skin and flee an oppressive, unsatisfying, and alienating existence. She resists by making valuable connections with marginalized communities and individuals as well, some of the most meaningful ones being Mary Ellen Pleasant and the Carville hangout. World-traveling, in her case, involves joining two hangouts: the group of John Brown (1800-1859), right before the failed Harper's Ferry raid, in which Annie does not even get a chance to participate, as the news of its failure get to her on her way to West Virginia, and a group of members of colonized nations in Carville, Lousiana.

The seemingly futile resistance attempt of John Brown provides Annie with a valuable, very influential connection: Mary Ellen Pleasant, the "Mother of Civil Rights from California," a friendship that provides Annie with her new name and identity: she

rejects “Regina” and takes “Annie Christmas” after Mary Ellen Pleasant makes her aware of the existence of a powerful, independent, African-American woman who used to live and work in the Mississippi:

> “Is it yours to give?”
>
> “Inasmuch as your taking it is a way to keep the name alive, unforgotten…. She worked the river, the Misssissippi, and when she kissed its waters in gratitude for her livelihood, she drained the river fourteen miles in each direction. She once towed a keelboat, a great flat-bottomed boat, from New Orleans to Natchez at a full run. No one would have dared slap any chains on her, believe you me.”
>
> …Occasionally she got all dressed up and put on her thirty-foot-long necklace, on which each bead signified eyes, noses, and ears she had gouged out or bitten off in fights.” (26)

Throughout their conversation, Mary Ellen and Annie establish parallelisms between the original Annie’s story and Nanny of the Maroons, thus creating a genealogy of resistance for Annie. This new, quasi-mythical connection makes it possible for Annie to replace the mythopoetic tale of her mother and helps her reconnect with her multiple identity. This new name also brings with it a new existence, as Annie makes the decision to live next to the same river where the first Annie did: “So she took the name when she withdrew, she withdrew to the original Annie’s bailiwick, almost without thinking” (30). This choice will determine the beginning of one very remarkable, influential impure community Annie will become a part of. What makes the Carville hangout significant is the project to unveil the otherwise unknown traumatic consequences and effects of the colonial/modern gender system, as well as to expose the real intentions and violent

behavior of some of the mythologized figures of the members of the colonizing project. This is a significantly meaningful decision for Annie, as she chooses to join this impure community that allows her to share her story and her history, as well as to know about other people's fights, both from dominant and non-dominant groups. From the perspective of a privileged, light-skinned Jamaican woman, this is a significantly meaningful decision, as joining this impure community gives her the opportunity to examine and analyze her own privilege. Not suffering from Hansen's disease, Annie "entered the grounds through a tear in the wire fence, through which two lepers had once run off to get married" (39). This multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial hangout she joins becomes a community of choice for her, as "new kinship was forged" (43). Not only members of colonized nations such as Jamaica, Tahiti, or Hawaii, but also North America, or members of the Jewish Sephardic community convene in a hospital for those affected by Hansen's disease. Racialized as it used to be, this condition is associated with members of the non-dominant groups:

> Leprosy, the reverend mother had explained to Annie when she first petitioned for visiting privileges, flourished among members of the darker races. Indeed, the lepers hailed from all over the non-Western world. They came from the Caribbean, the American West (one man had ridden with Red Cloud; one woman had danced the Ghost Dance), the Sea Islands, as well as Hawai'i, the Philippines, and the northern coast of South America (a Sephardic Maroon from the Surinam jungle, for one), and Africa. (40)

These circumstances bring the opportunity for Annie and the rest of the storytellers to travel to different worlds; they see their role as the keepers of a part of the history of

resistance. Significantly enough, the members of this hangout are said to be in the silence: "'In my hometown, when someone was away, you know, sent to the asylum or a place like this, you said they were 'in the silence.' I'd say that sort of says it all. Maybe that's why we talk so much'" (61). These resisters, supposedly "in the silence," perform the resistant role of uncovering stories that subvert the image of the civilizing project and show its true, violent effects: "we had been syphilized, my friends, cured of our savage state" (49). Together with the stories of senseless violence, racism, sexism, and oppression readers have access to the hypocrisy and the chaos wrought upon nature and people's lives, as the colonizers "helped themselves to the world as they had created it" (47). All the stories conveyed through the members of the hangout subvert the illusion of control of the colonizers. The apparent success of the mission of bringing order upon the chaos of the "uncivilized" is challenged by these stories. However, at the same time, the hangout also gives its members a chance to examine to their own perspectives, their roles and their own history.

Not only the audience but readers as well have access to various stories from different parts of the world. The members of the impure community can have access to the story of violence of Captain Cook in Hawai'i, as told by the grandson of a witness, who, in turn, scrimshawed the story in a thigh bone said to be Cook's own. The central moment of the story highlights the cowardice of Cook's men: "With her divine blessing the people set upon Cook and his men, driving the landing party back to the sea, but encircling Cook on the shore. Saving, and savoring him for themselves. His men, on the high seas on their way to the *Discovery*, barely looked back" (48). This story is a remarkable example of the need for world-traveling and its epistemic benefits, as the

Hawai'ian man reflects on the need to consider and interrogate everyone's perspectives, both on the side of dominant and non-dominant groups. As can be seen from his words, reclamation of history does not exclude cross-questioning of all versions. His conclusions, after delivering his story call for an avoidance of the romanticizing of the marginalized, of the members of non-dominant groups:

> Note, if you will, my grandfather's omissions. The contamination of the people by venereal disease has not been inscribed. He has, in his words, as I remember them, and in the images carved in the bone, purified the experience. He has made a monument. To our people's innocence. Never suggesting that the women and some of the men went along with the English sailors willingly, for payment of biscuits or rum or belladonna. The truth, I suspect, lies somewhere in between. It usually does. (51)

Through Annie Christmas' storytelling, readers and listeners alike hear her recount the story of Alexander Bedward and H.E.S. Woods, also known as Shakespeare II, two Jamaican Pan-Africanists who started an emancipation movement in the Jamaica of the 1840s, believing the 1838 manumission was never real. Interestingly enough, their inspiration comes not only from Touissant L'Overture, the leader of the Haitian Revoution of 1791, but also from one of Shakespeare's characters, Caliban, from *The Tempest*: "'Alexander grew into a strapping man, and into the role of Caliban, of course, which Shakespeare II cast into the mold of Toussaint, for audiences who had never heard of Toussaint, but had been taught about Caliban in school'" (52). Bedward and Shakespeare II start what they call a healing movement, a quasi-church or Afro-Jamaican community that reoccupies a part of Hope River. Choosing this area becomes an

especially significant move on their part, as its name is heavily charged with meaning for the dominant groups: "The healing stream into which Bedward immersed his followers was the Hope River, named for Major Richard Hope, one of the original founders of Jamaica, owner of Hope Sugar State, namesake of Hope Gardens, where even as I speak, peacocks stroll through a maze modeled after the one at Hampton Court" (53). Reclaiming this area and locating the river as central to their freedom project becomes even more meaningful when Annie Christmas reveals its importance for Afro-Jamaican culture and history, as it is connected to Nanny of the Maroons, Jamaica's national hero:

> "The most important tributary of the Hope River is the Mammee, the Akan word for mother'. … "The source of the healing stream and the Mammee was in the Blue Mountains, near the site of Nanny Town." … "The source is to be found in the cascade of water which washes the mountains, near where a flock of white birds, the souls of Nanny and her soldiers, gathers each evening at dusk. Near where the faces of Nanny and her soldiers are imprinted in the trunks of lignum vitae." (53)

With its roots so clearly inserted in the historic movements of resistance of Jamaica, colonial authorities see this movement as a threat not only to colonial order but also to the economy of Jamaica: "[Bedward] was actually a nationalist in priest's vestments, trained and inspired by Shakespeare II. He particularly rattled the colonial authorities intent on order, terrified should the masses become uncontrollable, and the aisles of cane strangled by escape native growth, sending the colony into ruination." (53-54). The colonial response to the creation of this resistant community is to construct is founders as madmen, and to lock Bedward up in a mental asylum, again, "in the silence."

"A Tahitian" (54) tells the story of the potential unbalancing of the natural world attempted by Captain Bligh, one more example of the colonizers' selfish appropriation of natural resources and human lives. After a series of hurricanes decimated the grounds and threatened to starve the enslaved population, colonizers tried to transplant the breadfruit tree from Tahiti to the Caribbean, provoking the famous mutiny of the Bounty, as the narrator reminds his audience: "'You have probably heard that part of the story. The sadistic captain, too quick with the cat, favoring a tree over his own men'" (54). Establishing the connection between the Tahitian story and Jamaica, Annie Christmas explains the effects of this appropriation of the world in Jamaica. Some of these, sold as a benefit for the colonies, had a real economic interest behind:

> They never could let well enough alone. Not when there's a profit to turn, a conquest to be made. The same syllogism to prove: that man is superior, and that white man is supreme. The empiricism of empire. The imbalancing of the world. The mongoose from India is brought to the Caribbean to control the wildlife of the canefields. God save us from wildlife, wild life. The mongoose eats everything in its path, save the Africans cutting cane. (56)

A history of violence is also attached, as the colonizers took Tahitian married women as their own; the husbands, as a result, killed them and set everyone else free, including the children their wives had borne with the colonizers, constructing a multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic community as well:

> "…the slave men rose as the moon rose, and sliced Mr. Christian's throat across, and some other throats, and set themselves free, stealing a boat and rowing back across the open sea to the original island, and the children they left behind. To

> their backs were the women, the remaining white men, and the mongrel children. Where they are today, in one form of another." (57)

From Rachel DeSouza, audience and readers learn about Jodensavanne, a hidden community of Sephardic Jews in South America after being pursued by the Spanish Inquisition. Rachel's story is full of references to silence, violence, death and survival tactics:

> We worshipped in secret to save our lives, and used sand on the floor to muffle the sounds of the services. A wooden or tile floor, and we would have been sitting ducks. But the sand quelled the sound, and we carried this tradition with us into the New World. Some people think we needed a reminder of our exile in the desert. Others think, first came the tropics, then the sand. Not at all. It was a survival tactic, as usual. (60)

Established in Surinam, this hidden community is a very little-known part of the story of Christopher Columbus' trips to America in the fifteenth century. Sailing behind Columbus's ships, Rachel DeSouza continues, this community of marginalized members of a non-dominant group is able to utilize the Spanish colonizing project as a survival strategy: "I wonder if Don Cristóbal knew he was being followed. He probably never looked behind, so intent was he on India, China" (61).

Finally, Bethany, an American woman from Kentucky, "an exception to the rule of the darker-skinned races" (61) relates the story of the peaceful coexistence between the white people in her town and a Maroon settlement living underground, known as Ultima Thulle. Again, describing this community as being "in the silence," Bethany describes this multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural community and its relationship with the

dominant groups: “Africans mixed with Indians, Cherokee and Creek and all kinds, half-breeds, quarter-breeds, whatever. And they traded with my father and other white folks from above the ground” (63). This untroubled relationship is senselessly terminated by the stories published by the editor of the local newspaper: “He ran stories about Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner[31]; some he wrote himself, some he said he copied from those big eastern papers, like *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. They described how these men went on a tear, a rampage, Complete with illustrations of mutilated white babies, and ruined white women” (64). As the articles in the local newspaper evoke images of racial violence, phobia against the Maroons grows in the community, and as a result, the militia invades and destroys the Maroon settlement, ending with one of its leaders beheaded, with his eyes gone.

In this hangout, the colonized take control of their own history, since, in their own words, for the canonical history of the dominant groups, “everything did not happen” (192). For this group of resisters, this impure community provides the opportunity to access the realities of others, to their cultures, their identities, their history, their oppressions. Continuing the tradition of storytelling Annie got to know thanks to Industry, this hangout of members of dominant and non-dominant groups resist the divisions brought upon colonized societies by the logic of purity and are able to establish meaningful connections through the stories of senseless violence they have witnessed or have received from the family as a sort of legacy that cannot, and must not, be lost. The Carville storytelling group proves an opportunity to create a new world of sense for its

[31] Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner were all enslaved persons of African descent who, as freedom fighters, projected rebellions against the oppression and the violence of the slavery system in southern states of the United States in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

participants. In their own eyes, they see themselves as the carriers of a version of history that deserves not to be, in Mary Ellen Pleasant's words, "unforgotten" (26). Identifying their group with classical scenes of philosophers in ancient Greece, they reclaim their central role in the world, one members of the non-dominant groups have been denied throughout the centuries:

> Rachel DeSouza #12246, was sitting with the circle against an arcade of wisteria, blooming, the bunches of purple flowers hanging around them. "We remind me of one of those paintings of Greek philosophers. You know, sitting around pondering the meaning of life. Especially with this arcade behind us, our own *stoae*. …
>
> "Sometimes," Annie said, "too much of the time, I think all we have is these stories, and they are endangered. In years to come, will anyone have heard them—our voices? …"Who will take responsibility for these stories?"
>
> "We all do, Annie, it's the only way." (58-59)

This resistant community puts together the pieces of a history that for most of the Western world "did not happen." The impure community becomes, then, a source of knowledge that builds their resistance from below. In the case of this hangout, resistance lies not only in the ability to read multiple differences, and to read them in the specificity of their historical contexts, but also in the ability to recover of the voice of silenced, unknown communities and their stories.

CONCLUSIONS

In the aftermath of the horrifying acts of violence perpetrated by white supremacists and nationalists in Charlottesville on August 12, 2017, President Barack Obama issued a statement on his Twitter account where he quoted President Nelson Mandela's words on the damaging effects of unequal, unjust constructions of the world based on racial differences: "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. For love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." The idea that love, and by extension, a loving perception of others can become a response to division and the logic of fragmentation of racist and sexist systems is one that has been consistently pointed to in the chapters of this dissertation. As said earlier, loving perception involves a profound examination of our upbringing and education, social and individual practices, or contexts in order to become aware of our relations of power and the ways in which we fail to identify with others.

Different contemporary authors like Marlon James, Junot Díaz, and Toni Morrison have recently addressed this topic, as they all argue for members of dominant groups to explore their own perspectives, prejudices, and assumptions in order to achieve more equal relationships. Reflecting on the different perceptions he experiences as a black man in academia and on the streets of Minnesota, Marlon James insists on the need to abandon the assumption that only members of non-dominant groups are in charge of the struggle for social justice:

> I think there is this kind of idea that communities of color have this major role to play in the end of discrimination. That's like saying women have a role to play in

> erasing rape. They don't. Men need to stop raping. It's a very tricky thing - still waiting on guidance from the victim or potential victim on how to move forward. I think people need to start thinking about what to do instead of asking victims how to do it. (Garcia-Navarro)

Similarly, Junot Díaz makes a call for the fight against racism and inequalities to be seen as a global effort, rather than the task of only those being oppressed:

> Racism and race are still being viewed as *our* problem and not the problem of the white mainstream that so benefits from white supremacy's malign racial hierarchies. We live in a society where default whiteness goes unremarked—no one ever asks it for its passport—but God forbid a person of color should raise her voice against this smug occult system of oppression, points out whiteness, its operations and consequences—well, in two seconds flat that person is the one accused of being *obsessed* with race. (Parham)

Morrison addresses this issue as a daunting task, as privilege is not only difficult to eradicate, but also its behaviors are very hard to unlearn. Moreover, one of the most important challenges in this effort is that those belonging to dominant groups are usually unwilling to examine their own practices:

> The comfort of being "naturally better than," of not having to struggle or demand civil treatment, is hard to give up. The confidence that you will not be watched in a department store, that you are the preferred customer in high-end restaurants—these social inflections, belonging to whiteness, are greedily relished. (2017)

Love, a loving perception, and a logic of coalitions as proposed by María Lugones become a possibility in this dissertation through the suggestion of alternative, previously-

forbidden practices that result from unlearning the oppressive logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system. Mandela's words, as quoted by Barack Obama, can be connected with Michelle Cliff's account of the relationship between her personal experiences and her work[32]: love and hate can be learned and unlearned. From Cliff's words, it is easy to see how privilege creates hate, distance and barriers, and these repercussions she sees as a damage that needs to be undone. On the one hand, Cliff explores these divisions and disconnections experienced by subjects under the colonial/modern gender system and the coloniality of power. On the other hand, Cliff's characters, having experienced privilege, explore the possibilities to unlearn hate and distance as they refuse to stay complicit with the dominant worldview in different contexts.

In my discussion of Cliff's proposal of fiction as an alternative approach to silenced history, I elaborated on how access to memory and the knowledge of buried Afro-Jamaican history can be seen as healing mechanisms against the traumas of colonialism. With the framework provided by authors like Dominick LaCapra, Linda Hutcheon, Noraida Agosto, Kathleen Renk, or William Luis among others, I looked at how literature can offer a field where histories of members of non-dominant groups can be recovered, as the "blind gaze" of colonial historiography did not see it as valuable enough.

In Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* this reductive perspective is replaced by an "informed gaze," as they portray the difficulties and strategies attempted when trying to gain knowledge and access to a history of fight and resistance that, once

[32] "I was a girl similar to Clare and have spent most of my life and most of my work exploring my identity as a light-skinned Jamaican, the privilege and the damage that comes from that identity" (Grimes)

recovered, is seen as a source of pride and self-esteem. Throughout a careful examination of Clare's journey (both literal and metaphorical) towards unlearning colonial history and having access to the history of the oppressed, I highlighted the difficulties of overcoming the silences of modern historiography. With this aim, I studied the narrative structure put into place by Cliff in both novels. By analyzing these devices she uses, I pointed to how different historical circumstances grant different possibilities to the project of reconstructing Afro-Jamaican history, and offering more just, equalitarian accounts.

As I discuss reclamation of bodies in the third chapter, I look at the efforts of two characters, Clare Savage and the central character of *Into the Interior*, to challenge and unlearn the fragmenting boundaries imposed by the whiteness of their skin. With the use of concepts like "social distance of privilege," "performances," "foreign bodies," or "corporeal trauma," I studied how modernity constructed light-skinned bodies as signifiers of beauty, purity, and privilege. Young females from white-identified, upper-class families see how their bodies stop belonging to them and become objectified as they become signifiers of privilege. Besides, I also touched on how the expected performances of dominant groups become oppressive structures that generate distances and alienation at some points impossible to resist and reject, especially at a very young age. In my analysis, I showed how the central characters in these novels learn the teachings of white supremacy and privilege sustaining the colonial/modern gender system while growing up; the alienation and disconnections this process brings are inextricably associated with their privilege. What is more, these become painful experiences that these girls accept as their destiny, without interrogating the oppressing structures of whiteness that create these traumatizing divisions.

In this chapter, I also looked at the way in which Michelle Cliff represents the process of unlearning these racialized/gendered behaviors through the association with liminal characters whose influence helps them reclaim the possibilities of connection that the social distance of privilege denied. The relationships with Harry/Harriet and Catherine Bowman/Lyle open up the possibilities of performing their identities differently; in the case of these characters, I define these as liberating performances that allow for a freer relationship with their bodies, no longer seen as symbols of privilege, enforced into frozen categories as objects and as a means of status protection for their families.

The third and final exploration of unlearning practices I studied is the creation of multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural communities that challenge and resist the traumatizing logic of purity of the colonial/modern gender system. As examples of these traumas, I analyzed Clare Savage and Annie Christmas's unsatisfactory relationships with their mothers as signs of the loss of the closest of attachments brought about by the impositions of the logic of purity. Again, I looked at another process of unlearning: in this case, the rejection of the divisions and denigrating constructions that led to the fragmentation created by this logic. In order to do this, I resorted to María Lugones' theory of resistance and the logic of coalitions. The concepts of "second-order anger," "streetwalker theorists," and "world-traveling," and "loving perception" were especially useful when analyzing not only the process of rejection of the logic of purity in the evolution of Clare Savage in *No Telephone to Heaven* and Annie Christmas in *Free Enterprise*, but also the resulting projects of resistance. For both characters, traveling means an epistemic shift that allows for an interrogation and abandonment of the

practices of white identification that have destroyed even the most intimate of ties, as even families become sites of trauma and disconnection. Impure communities and coalitions, as opposed to fragmented (post)colonial societies allow for engagement in more egalitarian practices, away from the dichotomizing pre-modern/modern construction of the world. As examples of these impure communities, I looked at their significance in the lives of their members, both members of dominant and non-dominant groups. Both the Jamaican guerrilla and the Carville group show how, instead of looking at members of dominant groups as threatening, this new, loving perception requires a transformative effort from all individuals to see themselves with critical eyes, interrogating their own beliefs as selfish, interested and constructing a distorting vision of the world. With this questioning and unlearning, new possibilities of connection and belonging open up.

With this dissertation, I hope to shed light on the possibility of connections to be made among trauma studies, critical whiteness studies, and decolonial feminism in order to study the damaging effects of the colonial/modern gender system and the coloniality of power in the lives of women. My work tries to propose a response to the demands of several theorists that connections be made between critical whiteness and postcolonial studies on the one hand, and trauma and postcolonial studies on the other hand. I believe that María Lugones theoretical framework of the colonial/gender modern system, with its strong analysis of its destructive power at a global level already makes a decisive intervention in this field by historicizing the construction of racialized and gendered categories that dramatically changed the lives of entire communities around the world from the onset of the sixteenth century onwards. What is more, her response to this

system, in the form of a politics of resistance, is detailed and delineated in her articles and in her book *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions.* This contribution has already been highlighted by Cricket Keating as "an important contribution to political theory, in particular to feminist theory, critical race theory, and theories of power and resistance" (82).

With its emphasis on the multiplicity of identities, loving perception, and a logic of coalitions, Lugones' theory of agency under oppression proposes acts of intervention and transformative practices both at the individual and collective level.

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