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## Speaking the Unspeakable through Counter-Memory and Historical Knowledge of Struggle to Lend Meaning to Silenced Histories and Identities

### Abstract

This article reveals how Eurocentric knowledge constructs cohesive narratives that legitimize irreversible losses at all levels and lend meaning to unacceptable acts in diverse areas worldwide. These narratives are inherently political and ideological, defining communities through forged epistemologies. It is through history that these narratives have been maintained. Michelle Cliff, in her novels *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, stands as a historical revisionist against the accumulated domination of Western hegemony through nuanced narratives of resistance, engraved with audacious transcendence and maturity. She makes her protagonist, Clare, a nexus of her resistant narratives to reveal unjust discourses that lead to the erasure of individual memory and a sense of history lessness. Therefore, through focusing on counter-memory as a site for reconstructing histories and identities, a return to the past is an essential element for acknowledging the silenced versions of representation. This paper focuses on Cliff's strategies to reclaim her history through the resistance of Black women and the techniques of destabilizing Grand narratives of suppression and exclusion. This paper concludes that the process of rewriting history is influenced by memory, political self-discovery, and the remarkable resistance of women, as evidenced by the revival of previously excluded voices, stories, and oral traditions.

**Keywords:** counter-memory, resistance, history, Black women, narratives

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## Susdurulmuş tarixlərə və şəxsiyyətlərə məna vermək üçün mübarizənin əks yaddaş və tarixi bilikləri ilə danışılmaz olanı danışmaq

### Xülasə

Bu məqalə, avrosentrik biliklərin bütün səviyyələrdə geri qaytarıla bilməyən itkiləri qanuniləşdirən və dünyanın müxtəlif sahələrində qəbul edilməz hərəkətlərə məna verən birləşmiş hekayələri

necə qurduğunu göstərir. Bu rəvayətlər mahiyyət etibarilə siyasi və ideoloji xarakter daşıyır və saxta epistemologiyalar vasitəsilə icmaları müəyyənləşdirir. Bu rəvayətlər tarix boyu qorunub saxlanılmışdır. Mişel Kliff *Abeng* və *Cənnətə telefon yoxdur* romanlarında cəsəratli transsendensiya və yetkinliklə həkk olunmuş nüanslı müqavimət hekayələri vasitəsilə Qərb hegemonluğunun yığılmış hökmranlığına qarşı tarixi revizionist kimi dayanır. O, fərdi yaddaşın silinməsinə və tarixsizlik hissəsinə səbəb olan ədalətsiz diskursları üzə çıxarmaq üçün baş qəhrəmanı Kleri davamlı povestlərinin əlaqəsinə çevirir. Buna görə də tarixlərin və şəxsiyyətlərin yenidən qurulması üçün bir sayt kimi əks yaddaşa diqqət yetirməklə keçmişə qayıdış, təmsilin susdurulmuş versiyalarını qəbul etmək üçün vacib elementdir. Bu məqalə, Qara qadınların müqaviməti və sıxışdırılma, həmçinin təcrid haqqında Böyük hekayələri sabitsizləşdirmək üsulları vasitəsilə tarixini bərpa etmək üçün Clifflin strategiyalarına yönəlmişdir. Bu məqalə, tarixin yenidən yazılması prosesinə yaddaş, siyasi özünü kəşf və qadınların diqqətəlayiq müqavimətindən təsirləndiyi qənaətinə gəlir. Bunu əvvəllər xaric edilmiş səslərin, hekayələrin və şifahi ənənələrin canlanması sübut edir.

**Açar sözlər:** əks yaddaş, müqavimət, tarix, Qara qadınlar, rəvayətlər

## Introduction

The process of exclusion from cultural recognition, social acknowledgment, and political power has driven aggrieved citizens to develop sophisticated skills and capacities to adapt to the imperatives that secure full entry and inclusion. These intellectual qualifications facilitate attempts by many to come to terms with political awakening and emancipation, and to declare a refusal of the dominant forms of cultural, historical, and ideological production. Through creative cultural and literary negotiations that foreground fertile spaces for the marginal and the alienated to claim a state of consciousness, numerous writers explore the Western fabricated narratives of exclusion with great clarity. Michelle Cliff, in *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), attempts to unearth the main layers that constitute the walls of official histories and establish an intricate counter-hegemonic narrative for readers of Jamaican history through remembering and involuntary forgetting of the lost history of oppressed Black people.

Born in 1946 in Jamaica. Cliff shows much interest in history throughout her education in Jamaica, the United States, and England. She enriches her writings with subtle talents, including those of poet, novelist, writer, editor, and a promising voice in Caribbean and feminist literature. Cliff's novels, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, are richly interwoven narratives where the central character, Clare Savage, skillfully explores the severe legacies inherited from the two harsh systems of slavery and colonialism through a burgeoning political consciousness.

Michelle Cliff suggests Clare Savage as an autobiographical figure of herself. She follows her maturity and awakening through two literary journeys, as depicted in *Abeng* and its sequel, *No Telephone to Heaven*. In *Abeng*, though the storytelling reveals the rebel women, Clare is identified as a child of British colonialism. *No Telephone to Heaven* reveals Clare as an adult endowed with the spirit of resistance, encouraged to trace an integral path between three diverse locations —Jamaica, the USA, and Britain—to claim her awakening to the historical, geographical, gender, racial, and economic systems of oppression.

Clare, emerging in a milieu of multiplicity and diversity within Jamaican culture, represents the complex subjectivity of the colonized female. Cliff reveals the contributions of Black women and women of colour to refreshing their histories beyond Western narratives. She connects the social, economic, political, and psychological dimensions of colonial legacies and declares a blooming geographical and literary struggle in the terrain of Jamaica. *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* narratives represent a call for all Jamaicans to transcend their blackness and celebrate their rich, hybrid cultural heritage by conveying 'genuine' readings to the multiple contradicting scripts based on the disinheritance, suppression, and assimilation of the colonized population.

Clare's struggle against tyranny remains the primary objective of this study, with a focus on the female resistance and the restoration of effaced histories. It also focuses on Cliff's strategies to rename her history and bring the **voices** of Black women to light through destabilizing Western narratives.

The paper reveals that history is a solid constructed narrative. Therefore, it can be reconstructed and rebuilt by its people, theorists, critics, writers, and politicians through a revolutionary struggle and a rejection of the flow of stereotypical and fabricated images.

## **Research**

### **1- Theories of Silencing: Counter-memory/Subjugated Knowledge**

Stuart Hall (1997,1) reveals that identifying the main elements that construct representation is key to analyzing absence and silence. Representation occurs when meaning is applied to language. People will be able to exchange and produce meaning only through the use of images, signs, a combination of letters, an abstract concept, and even a voice through which Language may be identified as a single letter or a group of letters.

Language is produced and modified through meaning, and has the potential to reflect a single argument or series of arguments within the process of our thought. Representation occurs when we process language and utilize it to assign meaning to a significant situation (Hall, 1997,p.1). Power plays an essential role in creating meaning. The question of the effectiveness of knowledge or power is more important than the ‘truth’ itself. Knowledge relies on power not only to determine the authority of the truth but also to establish its accuracy. In fact, all knowledge becomes true and has real effects once it is applied in the real world. Power contributes to ensuring the passing down of this knowledge, and even in its formation. Therefore, knowledge is created when that representation occurs and is disseminated in society.

Power, as a parameter of equilibrium and inequity between cultures, acts as a large institution of control that influences behaviours, decisions, and perceived legitimacy. Power defines what is considered valid and correct by the excessive process of representing, controlling information, and documenting. These constructed ideas circulate in various media, including magazines, scholarly journals, television news, and other forms of media. Such misrepresentations construct subtly idealistic regimes of knowledge that are inherently accepted as accurate and correct by the audience. As a negative system of representation, power stands as a traditional authority to validate, accept, refuse, insert, or discredit representations that do not couple it: “developments became more concerned with representation as a source for the production of social knowledge - a more open system, connected in more intimate ways with social practices and questions of power” (Hall, 1997, p. 42).

Hall theorizes that powerful institutions not only exercise control over the illegal distribution of resources, but they also extend this control to systematically examine the ideas, thoughts, and expressions of other groups at a lower level. Institutions of power determine what is correct by focusing on the repetition of these representations. Such repetition not only contributes to constructing true knowledge and regimes but also intervenes to determine who can accept, modify, change, or ignore representations that contradict it. Representation, thus, “works as much through what is not shown, as through what is” (Hall, 1997, p. 59).

However, it should be noticed that within “certain historical moments, some people had more power to speak about some subjects than others” (Hall, 1997, p. 42). Voices that represent power can select the appropriate terms, identify the suitable vocabulary, and maintain the status quo. At the same time, the voices lacking representation are silenced and suppressed. Their representations of a problem are invisible and marginalized. Hall argues that “the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operated within what he [Foucault] called an institutional apparatus and its technologies (techniques)” (1997, p. 47).

Stuart Hall emphasizes that history is not a mere recounting of facts, but rather a construction that submits to power relations and dominant ideologies, in Hall’s terms, ‘de-and re-articulation’”(Lawrence Gossberg, 1996, p. 152). Power represents the apparatus that affects how history is represented, remembered, and understood. It is through media and cultural institutions that power operates to maintain social hierarchies, influence people’s perceptions, representations, and shape identities. History is characterized by its selective process, while numerous details and certain narratives and interpretations are marginalized and excluded, others are privileged. Power dynamics are what define this selective process.

History, which represents an area of sensibility and an intricate form of memory, is subject to distortion and fabrication by universal thoughts due to the lack of real records and the accessibility of crucial historical data. Power reveals itself in its historical specificity. Master narratives exercise power to produce their historical knowledge and forge pasts in an attempt to create a permanent space for the marginalized. Eurocentric ideologies insert alternative scripts of interpretations to silence, exclude, misrepresent, and suppress voices from the social and cultural ladders.

Therefore, counter-memory appears as a real recognition of individuals, histories, and identities. It negates hegemonic narratives shared by collective memory. It runs counter to prevailing visions and ways of evaluating the past; a comprehensive understanding of those who are overlooked, silenced, or excluded can be resurrected, lending sense to a view of history that serves its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological models. Remembering and resistance are, thus, two inherent forms of revising hegemonic historical narratives, which render many records of heroism, struggle, and resistance as invisible.

The positive valuation of these two processes enables memory to function as an intricate tapestry, retrieving, disrupting, running against, displacing, and disturbing predominant circulating methods and ways of comprehending and accepting the past. These memories are used to modify our interpretation of history by utilizing the past, which is a venue organically connected to the truth and our identity. George Lipsitz, in *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Culture*, confirms: "Counter-memory is not a rejection of history, but a reconstitution of it" (1990, p. 227). He defines counter-memory as:

Counter-memory is a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal. Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story. Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. But unlike myths that seek to detach events and actions from the fabric of any larger history, counter-memory forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past...Counter-memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience (1990, p. 213).

The past tries to mask the ambiguities of those who remember and can reveal the hidden side of the story. The act of seeing history as a memorial process is crucial, as it implies re-remembering through revision and rewriting. Lipsitz adds, "Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories of those excluded from the dominant narratives" (1989, p. 162). Therefore, the past stands as a tangible mirror for understanding and clarifying the present. Counter-memory enacts a displacement of the hegemonic ways of remembrance by claiming an attack against the master narrative of Eurocentrism and cultural hegemony, which preserves a shared meaning of unity and identity. In this way, homogeneous political bodies will be able to maintain their ideologies and practices. The shared histories, thus, become a barrier that ostracises and silences any alternative reading or variations of historical experiences.

Therefore, 'the return to the repressed histories of resistance' is a collective remembrance that brings individual stories into cultural memory. The past, which occupies a significant space in the memorial movement, is overshadowed by power and inquiry into the real depths of struggle and resistance to alter the universal truth that conceals the actual content of 'historical knowledge'. Therefore, for an absolute truth, power should be accompanied by degrees of resistance.

Similarly, counter-memory and collective memory intersect and influence the way individuals respond to their inadequacies. Under denial, refusal, fear, pain, silence, and difficult pasts, collective memory is structured and maintained. While collective memory successfully attempts to focus on time and place through which people suppress oppositional memory and refuse to forget, the function of counter-memory may gain considerable force to break out of its oppositional status and act as an official memory.

## **2- Rewriting Forged Histories**

*Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* emerge as politicized acts enacting diverse images of resistance and struggle against prevailing aspects and forms of cultural, ideological, and economic domination. They are the first and second novels written by Michelle Cliff, in which she portrays Clare Savage as a counter-protagonist and ideal figure to oppose the monolithic theoretical script and the paradigm of Western hegemony. Cliff, in this way, has made a significant contribution as a literary voice to inspire other West Indian writers to exhibit a deeper connection to Jamaica and break free from grand narratives. Cliff evokes the Jamaican population to act as interlocutors by bearing witness to history. She triggers her masses to reclaim a resistant narrative that must not be forgotten. It is through declaring “full remembering” and “ongoing interrogations” of the lost past that they will be able to locate the self in place and history. Cliff’s continuous attempts to deconstruct the hi/stories of imperialism, while simultaneously struggling and fighting to make them, are all thought-provoking and significant issues in her works and interventions.

For Cliff, Jamaican history stands as a tangible sign of optimism, rooted in the need to bear a heavy burden to recognize it. This history is characterized by the gap between what is suppressed and addressed by colonial perspectives. One of the colonizing strategies is to attack history as a form of popular memory. Among these mechanisms is the ability to either forge, suppress, misinterpret, or construct its content by favoring the master’s narratives. And through endless fabricated stereotypes, it would lose its power and essence. The fake interpretation is an attempt to assimilate every corner of the island. Under the hostility of this milieu, the Jamaicans feel the echoes of history lessness and the pain of an excavated history emerging from rocks, conch, and seeds.

I argue that Cliff’s vision of portraying the British film in Jamaica conveys a glamorized and dazzling example of how the media exercises power in the process of fabricating scripts and histories. This example coincides with Stuart Hall’s term “articulate” in its dual meaning. First to speak out on the exercised oppression practiced by the dominant groups, and in the way that links that subjugation with the communication media, as they offer the terrain where meaning is built and shaped. And since cultural memory is skillfully accessible through its media forms. For Hall, unmasking power imbalances in society emerges from “deconstructing” media that declare their failure in the face of pervasive “ideology”.

Cliff locates “the British film as a historian,” through which history can repeat itself. This method not only allows people to feel this history but to experience it. The role of memory here is to describe what happened at some point in the past. This memory is deeply entwined with discourses of power and is itself the outcome of numerous networks of power and knowledge that should be deconstructed. This movie purposefully selects Nanny as a base for distortion because she represents “the act of remembrance” and “the national archive”. False images about Nanny mean muting the past that can deliver and produce accurate memory to its present as “The past cannot speak, except through its ‘archive.’” (Hall, 1991, p. 152). Nanny, as a symbol of the archive, is a foundation for how history is inscribed.

Indeed, the echoes of the unwritten version of history complicate lots of ways of comprehending. An archeological past urges the call to collect the scattered seeds of memory and the dispersed reminiscences of colonial tragedies. In *Abeng*, the Jamaican “history was recorded by indentations on rock and shell” (Cliff, 1984, p. 3). While Cliff’s novels portray Nanny of the Maroons as the symbol and emblem of the mother, the British film presents a different version of Nanny’s life story. For Cliff, Nanny is the recorder, the witness, and the testimony of the Jamaican’s psyche. Her resistance is rooted in folklore and oral history as she recounts many of the island’s oral stories. Nanny is the body who resists the masked ambiguities of imperialist ideologies and discourses: “She used her skill to untie her people and to consecrate their battles” (Cliff, 1984, p. 14). In *No Telephone to Heaven*, the following passage represents constructing “fake archive” that the foreign filmmakers aim to transmit:

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 [...] Facing the elegant actress was a strapping man, former heavyweight or running back, dressed as Cudjoe, tiny humpbacked soul. (1987, p. 206)

This movie reveals how a colonialist, Eurocentric perspective has historically dominated archives. The objective behind this romanticized scene gathering between Cudjoe, a historical Maroon leader, and the legendary woman is to efface the indigenous historical narrative and degrade the image of Black women. The movie's photography cannot create real interpretations, and looking for its 'true meaning' is an illusory endeavour. In *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, Morley & Chen put it: "There is no such thing as "photography"; only a diversity of practices and historical situations in which the photographic text is produced, circulated and deployed. And of course, the search for an "essential, true original" meaning is an illusion. No such previously natural moment of true meaning, untouched by the codes and social relations of production and reading, exists (1996, p. 157).

However, Nanny's oral stories help shape individual and collective identity. Her counter-memories provide a space for moral and genuine evidence about how pasts are constructed and how they reshape the Jamaican present. It is through indigenous memory that the images of cowardice, courage, and heroic reminiscence are registered. Under the politics of "make-believe" (Cliff, 1984, p.96), Nanny can refresh this history, which is built on a vacuum, rivalry, and greed. This legendary figure bears the heavy burden of a history of in-betweenness, caught between economic voracity and brutal colonizing acts. Nanny's narratives feed the Jamaican generation and remain unsusceptible to the oppositional project. Cliff's version depicts Nanny as the auxiliary in the struggle and resists the assumption that Jamaica becomes an empty document upon which European personality and character can be engraved forever. Nanny has allowed the Jamaicans to keep their history alive on their tongues, through narration, speech, and song (Cliff, 1984, p. 128).

Like Nanny, Clare is introduced as a metaphorical figure embodying the true sense of struggle: her return to Jamaica, accompanied by her decision to teach children the true Jamaican history, is itself a counter-memory to deconstruct what she has learned during her long journey between the USA and Britain. Teaching Jamaicans their local history transforms these children from marginalized and often unheard voices to a population with high awareness and inclusion in the construction of their history, which is profoundly effaced from official books.

This return conveys numerous ideas about well-organized resistance and how the reparation of the self and land should be. This act is itself an attempt to rewrite her history that contradicts her received lessons, focusing on the British narratives that prioritize: "the names of admirals who secured the island from the Spanish, the treaties which had made the island officially British [...] the introduction of rubber planting after sugar failed, the importation of 'coolie' labor after the slaves were freed"(Cliff, 1984, p. 84).

Clare, the light-skinned young girl, is the heart of the struggle: her story is rife with more complex issues associated with the nation's history, such as colour, class, and identity. Her return also aims to harmonize the split parts in her body. She holds another burden to conciliate the conflicting questions emerging from forged alternative accounts of the buried and forgotten past struck by evil colonizers: "*they have taken the masters' past as [their] own. That is the danger*" (Cliff, 1987, p. 127). Selecting Clare Savage to revise these torn-halves histories reveals a conscious feminist project through which the writer articulates feminist thought in Jamaica and the Caribbean as a whole through a female revolution, and this couples and coincides with Nixon Angelique, who claims: "I see Cliff's works as expressing feminist and womanist perspectives. Known for her sharp deconstruction of colonial history, she revises history by reclaiming stories of the many people who are silenced" (2009, p. 354).

Michelle Cliff, through feminist narrative scripts of resistance, declares complete familiarity and connection with the land and culture by claiming a rich obsession with every notable spot with which she is intimately and thoroughly acquainted, thereby altering her writing into a coded political and revolutionary act. In her book, *The Land of Look Behind and Claiming*, Cliff claims:

To write a complete Caribbean woman, or man for that matter, demands of us retracing the African past of ourselves, reclaiming as our own, and as our subject, a history sunk under the sea, or scattered as potash in the cane fields, or gone to bush, or trapped in a class system notable for its rigidity and absolute dependence on colour stratification. Or a past bleached from our minds. It means finding the art forms of those of our ancestors and speaking in the patois forbidden us. It means realizing our knowledge will always be wanting. It means also, I think, mixing in the forms taught us by the oppressor, undermining his language and co-opting his style, and turning it to our purpose (1985, p. 14).

Both Clare and Nanny are involved in the process of deconstructing the Western narratives through revolution and rewriting Jamaican history, which is a history of “shell and rock.” They enable transparent rebellion for the sake of glory, greatness, and expanding the scope of dialogue between the periphery and the center. It is through the bravery of her female characters that Cliff becomes a genuine recorder of the newly born history of courage, heroism, and inspiration, denying the mode of speechlessness, disremembering, and misrepresentation. Nixon states: “Cliff shows her readers how the revision of history through writing can create revolution, which I see as the process of (re)visioning, (re)writing, and (re)defining histories and *her stories* that can be seen as resisting the long-lasting effects of colonialism and slavery-which continue to haunt the Caribbean” (2009, p. 355). The memories of the legendary woman occupy a considerable space in discovering the real history. Nanny, who is old, wise, and a source of information, represents an indelible archive from which real epistemologies are tailored. Clare, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, explains:

I have educated myself since my return. Spoken with the old people ... leafed through the archives downtown ... spent time at 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 Nanny-town ... duppies, the old people say" (1987, pp. 193-194).

### 3-Narratives of Resistance

After two journeys abroad, Clare's destination for real belonging was her mother, Kitty's, farm in Jamaica. This return coincides with self-consciousness, indigenous visions, complete recuperation of the Maroons' culture, and a move towards wholeness. For Kitty, declaring the true Jamaicanness in front of her daughter, Clare, is: “Better to have this daughter accept her destiny and not give her any false hope of alliance which she would not be able to honor. Let her passage into that other world be as painless as possible” (Cliff, 1987, p. 29). Remembering the past shapes Clare's understanding to comprehend who she is entirely, sparks her consciousness, and pushes her to do better at each step to balance the multiple components of her identity: “She returns to the 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" (Cliff, 1987, pp. 192-193).

The way towards remembering is critical and compels our sympathy and attention to clear the path for cultural reconstruction to manifest itself at each juncture of the heroine's journey. While her growth from a child to an adult reveals her political awakening, this aligns the Caribbean literature, which asserts that children's growth as a sign of maturity. Her return to Jamaica is crucial to ensure locating the self culturally inside her home, Jamaica, to relieve her paradoxical reality and conflicting ties, and break the cultural schizophrenia that pertains to her narratives. Being a student in a colonial country has no meaning in front of a return filled with the desire to maintain control over the indigenous narrative at the bottom level to build a challenging anti- “master code” narrative paradigm and real historical versions. Clare returns allies with negotiating her true sense of being and authenticity, as Cliff puts it: “She is the woman who has reclaimed her grandmother's land. She is white. Black. Female. Lover. Beloved. Daughter. Traveler. Friend. Scholar. Terrorist. Farmer” (Cliff, 1987, p. 91).

Clare's return exposes a sense of constructing an identity out of the appropriation of "exotic" histories, cultures, and locations. Cliff exhibits the deliberate de-Westernization and politicization of histories to tailor identities out of the European and American viewers and out of “marginality and

elsewhere". She also explores the agency of pure blackness through cultural attachment, claiming full belonging to the matrilineal history and patriotic feelings. For Clare, joining the guerrilla groups and returning to the African myth that has contributed to and shaped the Jamaican cultural institution is an attempt to operate from the principles of a critical sense of Western attempts at domestication and assimilation.

These guerrilla groups have employed the logic of rebellion against the colonial imperial powers' plans to distort realities. The British-American film illustrates a graphical projection of the violation of indigenous histories. It holds a political view that blurs the sight and prohibits the past's testimonies from being heard. Clare and the revolutionary group thus provide a real-life example of an anti-colonial project that illustrates her political activism through the sabotage of the movie in Jamaica. They convey vivid images of historical and cultural reconstruction through which the protagonist has gained a subtle, privileged position and perspective on her nation's sedimented circumstances within the global system of power. However, she is often distanced from both imperial and indigenous traditions, myth, and cultures. Although this film represents the serious weapon of ambivalent politics demonstrated by racial imperialism, it carefully grounds Clare's behaviours, politics, and intentions in transmitting key revolutionary concepts and a full awareness of home, memory, and history.

Indeed, Clare's actions of joining the guerrilla members and rejecting control over her life are unique and marked by extraordinary techniques, such as the stream of consciousness, flashbacks, and revisiting memories. Through Clare's image as a modern warrior, readers gain insight into the impulses, intentions, and decisions that led to such a crucial event, where she stands as a spokeswoman, visionary, and interlocutor of Jamaican history. The uniqueness emerges in the way she distances herself from society as a whole due to her rebellion. She also identifies with the revered character of Nanny of the Maroons and the history of the Maroons. In this manner, she provides a counter historical arena where history and identity are reshaped. *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven* offer a new platform for the methods by which Clare acts on her historical knowledge, particularly those related to colonization, the system of slavery, oral traditions, and folklore that shape Jamaica's status today. She contributes carefully as a key witness to the individual and collective histories and memories of post-colonized subjects through narration, interpretation, and the sense of revolution.

The purpose behind the British movie is to make this history equivalent to cemetery spaces that are considered more than demarcated sites of burial, as these spaces are perceived as a process where the significance of sacred people's life and their achievements is ended, encompassing moral, religious, aesthetic and transcendental dimensions. By instilling a sense of history lessness among Jamaicans, this movie will succeed in creating a "sick room" for Jamaican memory, one that is unable to express the unspeakable, left in a state of speechlessness, and incapable of recounting what happened. I would suggest that focusing on the love affair between Nanny and Cudjoe, is highly purposeful because Nanny is the symbol of the earth who allows us to outline a reflection on memory that preserves "intact" images beyond the wear of time: "magnanimous warrior . . . hunting mother. A woman who can cure, kill, give jobs, a woman who is foy-eyed" (Cliff, 1987, p. 164).

Nanny, the emblem of historical challenge, appears in Michelle Cliff's novels, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, as the spiritual presence of rejection, refusal, and resistance who enables the protagonist to reclaim Jamaican history and identity. By situating Nanny as a "centered figure", Cliff is imposing a solid pillar in her historical narrative and attempting to revalue and resurrect the Black experience that adds appreciable empowerment to the West Indian women's history. Similarly, the inclusion of Black women in the novel's narrative, such as Kitty, Mattie, and Nanny, is purposeful and has an unmediated connection to optimism, positivism, and a rich Black history of consciousness. However, Nanny's image in the Western movie is deliberately misleading.

Clare offers a poetic image of a challenging female, where hope emerges as a stepping stone swinging between life and death, piercing the thorny walls of oppressive systems and acute sleep, and freeing the veils of an eternal silence. Clare embodies the eternal struggle for liberation and transforms it from a quiet hiss into a storm. Clare's struggle highlights subtle testimonies sublimated philosophically and artistically. She explores how rebellion and consciousness are inevitable at each

step of history and are critical to the realization of the humane journey, which transforms the ordinary into an inventive, creative, and fictional experience.

Cliff's vision, as a feminist historian, transcends the act of bringing her history to light, from the process of purification from any desecration to the creation of new paradigms and narratives of resistance that explore hidden stories. She uncovers a distorted version of history, which is full of undesirable memories. First, the two processes of revising and creating permit numerous deliberately blurred prints to emerge successfully as defiant, tangible, and sensorial images, liberating our internal world of stereotypical judgments. Second, she draws on her past to reshape her present and evade an oppressive fate. These processes become her site of textual challenge for declaring and claiming one's whole Jamaican identity from another side.

#### **4- Cliff's Techniques to Destabilize Western Narratives**

Michelle Cliff's role in her writing transcends the process of rewriting to reveal diverse strategies of destabilizing the Grand narratives and scripts that insert preconceived ideas to hide realities.

##### **4.1-Fragmentation/Textuality**

Cliff focuses on the meaning and drawbacks of the Jamaican historical fragmentation. She considers this fragmentation a critical strategy in which linguistic, storytelling, and narrative fragmentation stand as a mode of challenge, resistance, and encoded message to colonial and postcolonial rule.

Indeed, it is through this fragmentation that Cliff raises essential issues and attempts to question the master codes and narratives built on the logic of power. She claims her voice and speechlessness as a means to reject Anglocentric epistemology and education. In this sense, Cliff explores the fragmentation of her heroine's identity in an attempt to claim wholeness and disturb the narrative technique, language, and the colonizer's epistemology. Clare's journey to discover self-representation is constructed through the sense of her fragments and dislocation and intertwined with her commitment and engagement with numerous narratives, including history, oral traditions, folklore, and political discourse.

Textuality has emerged as a significant technique to launch her counter-discourses and anti-colonial strategies in the face of embedded Grand narratives and codes. Rewriting Shakespeare's *The Tempest* represents the decentering process that Cliff aims to use to render the central imperial texts marginal. Through the depiction of the West Indian as Shakespeare's Caliban responding to Prospero (the colonizer), she declares full rejection of subjugation and complete West Indian awakening. Using Patois in parallel with English is a counterargument to the exclusion of West Indian voices and is another strong argument to challenge masterful mediation and resistance.

##### **4.2- Recovering the Forgotten Memory**

Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* presents a profound exploration of reviving memory, which loses its essence in a buried past. The dug and mined cemeteries for burying indigenous histories are transformed, through Clare and Nanny, into metaphorical and figurative spaces of remembering, where memory provides a crucial arena not only for how the past acknowledges the present, but also for how the present feeds the past, where every recollection is inscribed in an indelible memory. These spaces, full of remorse, fear, hope, and regret, appease pain and intensify the binding rope between what is imperial and indigenous.

For Cliff, this memory serves as a source of authenticity and credibility, as it emerges through the representation of sacred sites and spaces in her novels, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. Memory is not only a source of acknowledging the past but also contributes to shaping characters, their identities, and narratives, both consciously and unconsciously. The attached memories serve as a meaningful agenda, tracing their entire process within the social context through the embodiment of narratives of colonization and resistance. Cliff succeeds in revealing how the process of remembering is critical in the issuance of histories of colonization, slavery, and women's resistance and struggle in the United States and Jamaica, and from the perspective of the Creole diaspora, that is itself helpful in claiming oneself and identity.

The names of the Arawak, flora, fauna, West African, and even Spanish origins provide many signs of island's history and how it was inscribed. These concrete buildings, traces, and materials

are the basic assumptions for seeking lost histories and producing historical narratives which are: “‘inherent in history’ because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out when something else is recorded [...] Thus whatever becomes fact does so with its own inborn absences, specific to its production” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 49).

Indeed, an inner revolution and resistance, accompanied by tolerable degrees of power and approval, in addition to intense upheaval and massive social and political change, are the main components of historiography and are exemplified in the character of Clare Savage. Though disturbed by a deep-seated sense of forced beliefs, oppressive fate, and an eternal, unchanging gaze, she insists on applying her historical knowledge to the terrain. Organizing a revolutionary project requires identifying and harnessing hidden power. Trouillot claims: “history is a story about power, a story about those who won” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 15). Historically speaking, the reconnection of Clare, Harriet, and other Jamaicans in the revolt against Western discourses and practices has exploded from the feeling of being the product of disremembering, dislocation, colonialism, and separation. Thus, because of their African origin in the Americas, historically and geographically, they have sought for exquisite alliance.

Remembering appears as a significant part in identifying history, identity, and who we are. The revelation of such boundaries can emerge in the character of Harriet. This transgender character claims: “We are supposed to be remembering the grandmothers of our people, and - do[ing] something besides pray [ing] for the souls of our old women” (Cliff, 1987, p. 160). Abroad, Clare’s memories of her mother and grandmother follow her everywhere. These memories have typically prompted her to play a vital role and serve as a therapeutic alternative in shaping her identity and the history of Jamaica, “[remember] is essential for protecting identity” (Agosto, 1999, p. 5). Clare’s memory and remembrance push her to restore her past and shape the inevitable steps of the memory of resistance “as inspiration to create strategies for liberation against pervasive oppression” (Agosto, 1999, p. 9).

Cliff has successfully uncovered the connection between history, memory, and identity. Clare’s character reveals how the concepts are intricately intertwined. How she remembers her past is essential to shaping her understanding of herself and her surroundings; remembering influences the shaping of her identity and her present. History, as a de/constructed narrative and a story of the past, offers a vision for interpreting these memories.

### **4.3. Place and Return as an Act of Revolution and Resistance**

For Clare, the act of moving between diverse places- Jamaica, the USA, and Britain is associated with the process of telling hi/stories. Cliff is primarily interested in rewriting the lost histories shaped by slavery, colonization, and women’s harsh resistance. Clare’s revolution reveals the interconnection between home, place, geography, and history. For her, being home offers collective and individual accountability over her chaotic and disturbing spheres and claims areas that are persistently subverted by forces of domination, oppression, and fate. Therefore, feelings of exile, memorial images, political involvement and activism, high historical knowledge, and engraved feminist awareness are the main components of healing from the trauma of history and racial fluidity. Breaking the white racist mythology has allowed her to rebuild her history, situating and relocating herself culturally in her home, “Jamaica”, and therefore, renaming who she is.

Jamaica represents more than a point of departure, but a place of ultimate reference and return. This satisfactory return connects Clare with a place in time. Though Britain is considered a “mother-country” (Cliff, 1987, p. 109), America emerges as “a way station” (Cliff, 1987, p. 109). Jamaica exhibits self-conscious scenes of return, commitment on the terrain, and carved redemption where the national spirit meets the transnational.

Harriet initially serves as a confidante friend to Clare, exhibiting a non-binary character and identity. He/she emerges as a catalyst for self-discovery, especially for Clare. Harriet embraces a female identity and makes a tremendous contribution to the Jamaican revolt. So central to understanding how Harriet shapes and mirrors Clare’s own journey of belonging, drawing from her history and geography, ultimately pushing Clare to face her conflicted parts and find her place and state of speechlessness. The connection between Clare and Harry/Harriet, as well as Jamaica as a

place, has allowed Clare to revive the significance of history and revolution, which have become incredibly intertwined.

Clare's death in Jamaica is itself a significant declaration of the history of Maroons. This death is also an attempt to display the struggle entangled with political maturity and consciousness. Cliff figures the female body as a site of resistance and death. The images of blood and womb provide an immediate perspective and a solid connection between land and history. Such a relationship remains extremely hopeful and conveys the idea that blossoming is possible after tragic violence and harsh violation, allowing one to imagine how overcoming and redemption are always bearable and beautiful. This death transmits a personal and communal triumph, culminating after a long struggle and a sense of satisfaction with one's place, family, and lineage.

Clare's death in Jamaica for the sake of emancipation coincides with a flow of bird sounds and blooms, as a result of the end of shocking circumstances and the erosion of Grand narratives in the Jamaican landscape. What draws the intention is that light will shine its magnificence from blackness, as life can step out from death. Through this death, which metaphorically means the birth of the buried narratives and scripts.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Michelle Cliff, through her novels, *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, aims to establish a thorough and imaginative female revolt and resistance, which endeavours to restore the histories and memories that continue to spark significant connections to the past. The reclamation of Jamaican narratives of resistance, which have been effaced by Western historical scripts, can be a powerful image and act of historical revisionism that compels crucial challenges to the dominant narratives of colonialism/neocolonialism. It offers a real space for the recovery, re-reading, and reinterpretation of marginalized histories. This research focuses on counter-memory as a site for reconstructing histories and identities, and emphasizes the return to the past as a crucial way of acknowledging the silenced and nameless versions of representation. It also focuses on Cliff's visions and perspectives of destabilizing ambivalent Western narratives of exclusion that break the Jamaican's memory, self, and homeland, leaving them completely shrouded in the severe process of history lessness. Cliff's reading of her history through forced acts of "make-believe" yields a compelling understanding of the novel and emerges from a feminist consciousness that enables her to put herself in the Caribbean. Cliff, through the death of her protagonist, in the end, confirms that the body, as the only tool of revolution, cannot suffice, but resisting the monolithic Western narratives requires more than that; it demands political awareness, historical knowledge, decisions, a return to the homeland, acknowledging the past and memory, deconstructed narratives, and reviving ancestral traditions. Rewriting histories transcends fighting systems of oppression through resurrecting images of Blackness and Black diasporic subjects. Cliff exhibits new approaches and different political insights through "this new sort of history" (Cliff, 1987, p. 149). In this way, Cliff reveals the significance of understanding the historical past, its complexities, triumphs, failures, and enduring legacies.

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