

## The “Ruination” of Englishness: Jamaican Nature and National Identity in Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng*\*

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### I

Michelle Cliff, the author of *Abeng*, is a contemporary Jamaican-American writer who situates herself in the literary tradition of Creole femininity located in between the postcolonial Caribbean and the Anglo-American worlds. Born in Jamaica and educated in England, Cliff herself is an emblem of liminality that characterizes her novels. Since the publication of her semi-autobiographical novels – *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), many critics have examined the

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\* *Abeng* is a Caribbean word that refers to “[a] type of bugle made from a cow horn, used by the maroons [African descendants in the Americas] as a musical instrument and to send signals.” See [www.lexico.com/definition/abeng](http://www.lexico.com/definition/abeng).

identity questions that Cliff explores through the representation of the novels' light-skinned heroine Clare Savage, who wavers between binary oppositions such as Jamaican/British and black/white.<sup>1)</sup> Antonia MacDonald-Smythe, Maria McGarrity, and Kim Robinson-Walcott have discussed Cliff's works in the context of self-exiled Caribbean immigrants' literary tradition, tracing Cliff's literary ancestry to George Lemming and Jamaica Kincaid. Jennifer Thorington Springer and Alfred Lopez explore Cliff's quest for an alternative historical version of Jamaican past in relation to English colonialism through the unstable identity Clare experiences in her development. In my analysis of how Cliff's *Abeng* reshapes national history and consciousness, I discuss the novel's adaptation of another literary frame—country house literature. MacDonald-Smythe and Miki Flockemann point to the novel's critique of colonialism, especially its interweaving of the historical narrative of slave rebellion with the private narrative of a racially-mixed female protagonist's search for identity.<sup>2)</sup> This intermingling of public and private narratives begets, as Kaisa Ilmonen, Belinda Edmondson, and Suzanne Bost note, a hybrid identity that criticizes the colonial heritage through its denial of fixed racial, cultural hierarchies.<sup>3)</sup> Robinson-Walcott, Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter, and Françoise Lionnet have highlighted this alternative identity's positive role in deconstructing the official history imposed by the colonial regime.<sup>4)</sup> In this critical trend that connects the protagonist's quest for identity with a Jamaican rewriting of history, the fluid identity Clare accepts endorses the fragmented reconstitution of Jamaican history. History rendered as such uncovers the hidden past of slave rebellion, colonial exploitation, and

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1) See Aegerter, Dagbovie, Flockemann, Ilmonen, and Lionnet. For an interview with Michelle Cliff on this issue, see Adisa.

2) See MacDonald 423 and Flockemann 131.

3) See Ilmonen 110-11, Edmondson 182, and Bost 679.

4) See Robinson-Walcott 75, Aegerter 8, and Lionnet 329.

the maroons' resistance against colonialism, which lead to the discovery of oppressed mother figures who led independence movements and resistances.

My article argues that Cliff's *Abeng* suggests this alternative historical vision of Jamaica not only through the heroine's quest for identity but also through another literary model that addresses colonial heritage—country house literature, which epitomizes the national character represented by the aristocratic life in the calm country landscape.<sup>5)</sup> Raymond Williams in his book *The Country and the City* argues that the English literary tradition of the country house has fabricated a myth of feudalism that idealizes the harmonious reciprocity between the upper class and the lower class by masking the upper class' exploitation of the lower class' labor. This feudalistic myth has been promoted to the epitome of Englishness through literary depictions of calm country landscapes as the anchor of Englishness during industrialization and imperialism. Cliff's novel participates in this literary tradition by presenting great houses as transitional points in the protagonist's understanding of Jamaican past and present in relation to England; Clare Savage visits her great-grand father's plantation house and recollects her English cultural heritage; near the end of the novel she visits another great house in St. Ann's Bay and meets a wild English woman, who reminds her of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*.

In addition to representing Englishness in English literature and history, the great house in Jamaica imposed Englishness on Jamaica. King's House—the imperial headquarter that administered the colonial regime in Jamaica from 1762 to 1872—served as a site of all kinds of English cultural practices such as large daily breakfasts, dinners, tea parties, etc (Nugent 10-13). By transplanting this colonial architecture

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5) On how the country estate and house contributed to the aristocratic English national character, see Su 552-54.

into the Caribbean, the English colonizers expected to build sanctuaries that will provide “an ideal of the ‘homeland’” and “nostalgia for it” (McGarrity 48). Yet, the expectations were soon destroyed by the Caribbean nature’s intrusion and its re-composition of Englishness.

I will elaborate on the novel’s quest for an alternative historical vision deviating from English colonialism by discussing the spatial intervention of the English country house literary tradition instead of focusing on the coming-of-age narrative. My focus on the great house’s subversion of English metropolitan values expands on the recent interest in the reverse gaze of the colonized that reshapes Englishness. As Robert Young in his book *The Idea of English Ethnicity* suggests, Englishness during the nineteenth century was dissected from its place of origin and became a set of Anglo-Saxon cultural norms uniting all the British people serving the colonial regime around the world. Ian Baucom in *Out of Place* argues that the spatial contestations of English cultural monuments such as country houses in the colonies reshaped the English culture imported from the motherland. Simon Gikandi in his book *Maps of Englishness* argues that “British colonies functioned as indispensable ingredients in the institution of English identities in certain specific moments and circumstances” (8), indicating the active role of colonies in configuring the English national character and modern Europe. I situate my discussion of *Abeng* in this critical debate on the (ex)colonies’ role in reshaping Englishness. In doing so, I will examine the role of nature in manipulating cultural artifacts imposed by the colonizer, and its potentialities and problems in creating Jamaica’s national identity.

In my analysis of Englishness and Jamaican national identity in the context of country house literary tradition, the novel’s engagement with Jamaican nature requires critical attention. In her essay entitled “Caliban’s Daughter: The Tempest and the Teapot,” Michelle Cliff argues that Jamaican land’s wild nature, which refuses to be controlled

by the English colonizers, embodies the natives' resistance against colonialism. She defines "ruination" as a process by which the native land takes over the space ruled by the colonizers and reshapes it into a democratic one that approves deviations from English norms. In *Abeng*, we find various descriptions of nature, which oppose the colonial perspective as embodied in the great house and provide an empowering vision for Jamaica's national identity. I will examine how Cliff's notion of "ruination" and the narrative development in the novel might inform our understanding of Jamaican nature's role in deconstructing the colonial perspective imposed by the great house and constructing Jamaican national identity.

In the early part of this article, I discuss how the great house located in Clare's great-great-grandfather's plantation embodies white supremacy in English culture and imposes Englishness on the Jamaican national character. The image of Jamaican nature, however, opposes that colonial perspective and instigates a powerful vision for the national discourse through wildness mixed with a revised image of the great house at the end.<sup>6)</sup> Ultimately, Jamaican nature's appropriation of the English great house serves as a critique of the colonial regime of Englishness, and this connective coexistence between nature and culture, or "natureculture," devaluates the colonial binary between wild Jamaica and civilized England.<sup>7)</sup>

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6) Stitt examines Jamaican land's role in forming the national character, but she is more interested in the fossilization of the mother figure as the symbol of nation and the curtailment of female agency during the process.

7) See Haraway 1-5. In *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Haraway uses this word "natureculture" in plural to reconsider the binary between nature and culture, which has hitherto divided humans and dogs in separate realms, in co-evolutionary terms. See also Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*. Latour argues nature and culture have always coexisted in the form of a composite that makes modernity's anthropocentric binary impossible.

## II

Set in Jamaica at the dawn of independence (1958), Michelle Cliff's novel *Abeng* (1984) tells a story of a mixed-race light-skinned girl Clare Savage, the daughter of Boy Savage, a descendant of white plantation owners, and Kitty Freeman, whose red skin color suggests an African-Creole ancestry. The novel interweaves the story of her adventures with broader narratives that portray racial and class hierarchies in Jamaica. As the story unfolds, the novel is divided into three parts. In Part One, Clare's reflections on her visit to the great house at Runaway Bay—her father's ancestor's plantation—demonstrate a colonial imagination grounded in the great house and its impact on Jamaicans' understanding of themselves. The people she "imagine[s]" in order to account for the past in her ancestors' great house are not native Jamaicans, but "People who came from 'England,'" the imperial center which she considers to be the place of her cultural origin (Cliff, *Abeng* 36).

The great house had seemed so small, Clare thought. Broken down. The house was not at all what she had expected. It was as though she had wanted it to be a time machine rather than a relic. A novel rather than an obituary. She wanted to know the people who had lived there. The people she had been given an idea of. Men with swords and carriages—horses imported from Arabia and wine from the Rhine Valley. That was what she imagined. People who came from "England," that place she knew from her father's stories and her teachers' lessons. Where everyone was civilized and no one had to be told which fork to use. England was their mother country. *Everyone* there was white, her teachers told her. Jamaica was the "prizest" possession of the Crown, she had read in her history book. And she had been told that there was a special bond between this still-wild island and that perfect place across the sea. (36)

In this context, imagination propounded by the great house becomes a tool of colonialism that fosters a sense of backward inferiority in Jamaicans. As she considers England as “their mother country” (36), the notion of “mother” in the description of England puts Jamaica in the status of a child that needs to mimic the customs in England. Also, the transition from the third-person-singular possessive pronoun “her” to the third-person-plural possessive pronoun “their” indicates that this issue concerns not just herself but her fellow countrymen. Moreover, the depiction of Jamaica as a “still-wild island” relegates Jamaica to the backward position in the Enlightenment logic of progressive advancement (36). In this sense, the imagination propagated by the great house reinforces the colonial understanding of Jamaica, subjugating Jamaica to the status of Otherness.

It is worth noting, however, that this image of people is not wholly the creation of Clare’s imagination, but it is the image “she had been *given* an idea of” (my emphasis, 36); it is a reflection of the institutional education she has received under the guidance of the colonial government of England. Charles Dickens’s novel *Great Expectations*, which she thoroughly reads and uses in order to activate her imagination, is the text she was “studying [. . .] in *school*” (my emphasis, 36). Through the state-regulated education that requires identification with the white English boy and aspiration for the aristocratic life depicted in the novel, colonized children in Jamaica are forced to develop a historical understanding that renders their native place and life into displaced norms.

The narrative in Part One mirrors this institutional indoctrination of colonial history. The macro-account of the exploited economy and demography of Jamaica overwhelms the novel’s plot, as the third-person omniscient narrator’s voice introduces “the monetary

system of the island [. . .] based on the pounds/shillings/pence of the ‘mother’ country” and the list of racially segregated churches (5). The neutral narrative voice also records the neo-colonialism manifested in the Jamaican estates “subdivided for American vacation homes” (23).

Yet, we get a glimpse of an emerging conception of history recorded from the colonized perspectives—the story of slave rebellions, the Maroon wars, and Nanny—through narrative fragments, which are scattered around the big official macro-narratives. These narrative fragments often appear at the end of each chapter or in the midst of macro-narratives without enough information, perplex readers and interrupt their reading of official history they have been following. For example, a brief reference to Nanny, a historical figure who led the War of the Maroons, interrupts the narrative account of the community life in the Tabernacle church. A broad account of the sugar plantation industry is curtailed by Clare’s recollections of the “salt taste of the walls” of her great-grand-father’s plantation house (33). In the next section, I will discuss the implications of these contending stories that are injected into the fissures of the macro-narrative by drawing upon the idea of wildness engraved on the land.

### III

While the great house at Runaway Bay conveys a vision of history imposed by the institutional education, the land surrounding the great house hints at another vision of history. The land that houses the “bones of dead slaves” stores the memories of the slaves’ search for freedom and right to property in defiance of the plantation owner, who, enraged by his mistress’s engagement in the plot, burned down

the slaves' houses and the entire plantation (41).

This understanding of history from the perspective of the colonized, arising from the natural remnants of the land and defying the imposition of colonial order, gestures toward the concept of *wildness*. The novel opens with a description of Jamaican land and its "wild fruit" called Mango. Mango is a "wild fruit," because "Jamaicans did not cultivate it for export to America or England—like citrus, cane, bananas" (4). This image of mango as a fruit for domestic consumption highlights the idea of *wildness*, which prioritizes the native's perspective not affected by the imperial power from metropolitan England.

Clare's exploration of the Jamaican countryside with her friend Zoe further supports this idea of wildness. The landscape that is "wild and real and filled with places in which their imaginations could move" indicates that here they gain a first-hand experience of their homeland as opposed to the abstract understanding inscribed by the imperial center in England (95). Clare and Zoe are under the influence of institutional education, as the teaching manuals are "forwarded [. . .] by the governor's office, which in turn [has] received them from a department of the colonial office in London" (84). The land Clare and Zoe explore, however, offers them a "wild countryside," which is bounded by Jamaican nature such as "bush and river and mountains," "[n]ot by school or town" and their association with English norms and values (95). Here, the land of profoundly wild nature becomes a site for the emergence of Jamaican identity that prioritizes their own view, untamed by any outside authority.

In this context, the description of Jamaican land in terms of wild nature undermines the colonial trope of landscape that has prevailed in Jamaica since the eighteenth century. The Jamaican landscape in this tradition has been a product created to be consumed by the market in

Britain. Jamaica is depicted as “enchanting” (Nugent 25),<sup>8)</sup> or even as “a pristine Eden,” a place of exotic fruitful nature that offers a chance for refreshment to those jaded by modern civilization (O’Callaghan 52). The tourist promotion exacerbated this colonial ideal of the Jamaican landscape and even transformed the natural geography of plants (Thompson 10).<sup>9)</sup> By describing the heroine’s adventures in mountains and hidden valleys, Cliff triggers a switch in perspectives on Jamaican landscapes and uses landscape tropes in order to explore Jamaican life.

Clare and Zoe’s adventures in the countryside reflect the changes in a way in which imagination works. The imagination that Clare used on her visit to the great house at Runaway Bay—“That was what she imagined” (36)—serves as a mechanism of control and marginalization of Jamaican viewpoints as it made her identify with white ladies and gentlemen. The wild Jamaican nature depicted in Clare’s vision here,

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8) See Nugent 15 and 25. Nugent describes the road to the Penn as “most exceedingly pretty.” On August 10th, 1801, she writes, “Penguin hedges, which are like gigantic pine-apples, with beautiful red, blue, and white convolvuluses running all over them. There was also a variety of curious trees.” On the next day, she also records, “The house appears now quite a paradise, so clean and nice after Lord B’s dirty Penn.” On September 28th , 1801, the rhetoric becomes more precise with the use of the word, “enchanting.” She recalls that she moved to her own room because there it was “the better to enjoy the landscape, as from [her] windows, it is enchanting indeed.”

9) Thompson argues, as the picturesque paintings of Jamaica created the colonial trope of the landscape that conformed to the imperialist ideals, the plants in Jamaican island were replanted and replaced by the tropical species that made the island look like the landscape imagery consumed by the British public. In her book *An Eye for the Tropics*, Thompson gives a detailed explanation of how the rhetoric of the Anglophone Caribbean landscape was composed in the context of the tourist industry at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially focusing on photographs and postcards that idealized the landscape in Jamaica and the Bahamas.

however, legitimizes the use of imagination that would bring to Jamaicans shared historical experiences with other minority figures in history. Reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Clare “filled her imagined camp with people like herself” (76); she thinks about the connection between the Holocaust and the dark people’s suffering in the white-dominated society of Jamaica. In this sense, the imagination Clare discovers in Jamaican land grants her active understanding of the past, allowing her to think about history from minorities’ points of view.

The narrative in Part Two gradually focuses on Clare’s viewpoint as opposed to the third-person omniscient voice, reflecting the novel’s increasing interest in another form of history that privileges the perspective of the colonized in shaping their identity. Stories of her adventures with friends in the countryside, and her experience of colonial education in Jamaica are told mainly from Clare’s perspective. As she watches the *Anne Frank* movie in the “Carib cinema,” which echoes the name of tribes who attacked Columbus on his arrival (67), Clare’s engagement with minority perspectives in understanding the life of Jews under the oppression of Nazi occupation dovetails with her interest in Jamaican ancestors’ sufferings under colonization. In this way, Cliff’s novel interweaves the story of the heroine’s personal development into broader narratives of history in order to challenge the omniscient macro-account of colonial history.

## IV

It is at this point that Michelle Cliff’s definition of ruination becomes fruitful for my analysis of her attempt to challenge the imposed order of Englishness and to construct Jamaican national identity. In her essay “Caliban’s Daughter: The Tempest and the Teapot,” Cliff defines

ruination as “the reclamation of land, the disruption of cultivation, civilization, by the uncontrolled, uncontrollable forest” and suggest that “Ruination” is to “ruin” the “nation”; it is the process in which “the order of empire is replaced by the chaotic forest” (40). The opposition between order and chaos, as well as the uncontrollability of the forest, constantly reminds us of the colonial system implied in the mechanism of control and the natural force that demolishes the state apparatus. Connecting it to the idea of “wildness,” Cliff intends to use the term “ruination” in order to reconfigure the Jamaican national character in defiance of the colonizer’s values (40).

The image of the great house and the lady residing there attest to Cliff’s idea of “ruination” in process, as they manifest the Jamaican nature’s disruption of the neatly-arranged culture of Englishness. In addition to the great house at Runaway Bay at the beginning of the novel, we see another kind of great house in St. Ann’s Bay at the end of the novel. The influence of nature on the civilized architecture emerges through wild animals such as “lizards racing through the vines and woodwork” (Cliff, *Abeng*, 160). The prevalent “dimness” (161), which characterizes this great house, questions the status of Englishness as the promoter of Enlightenment ideas.

More importantly, the image of the white governess, who represents Englishness, is challenged by the white woman who combines apparent wildness with cultured character.

She was unlike any one person Clare had seen in her life—a tall white-haired lady in a ragged blue dress and bare feet. A slender woman with one distinguishing feature, the filth that framed her body. Clare could smell her stench from where she stood—a woman whose skin was flecked and caked with dirt and smelled of urine and sweat and thirty-five years. Her fingernails were long dirty claws. Her white hair spread

outward from her head and the spaces on her scalp where her hair had thinned were covered with patches of dirt and scab. The filth was like an aura. Her entire being, it seemed, was unwashed. Clare thought about the leper colony on the island, and imagined that Mrs. Stevens might be a leper. Close off from human contact by her unwashed being—because lepers were thought to be corrupt. Those who carried bells and called themselves “unclean, unclean.”

But Clare was not frightened by Mrs. Stevens. Maybe because she watched her in an act of gentleness. . . Her voice was calm. What people called “cultured” (161)

The description of Miss Winifred, Mrs. Phillips’s mad sister who resides in the great house in St. Ann’s Bay, shows the ruination of English femininity in “the filth that framed her body” (161), which locates her among untamed wild nature rather than in the tidy English culture. Her “stench” reinforces this image and her long fingernails recall animals’ “claws” (161). With yet-remaining traces of culture in her “calm” voice and “gentleness” (161), those features of natural land in Miss Winifred imply the “ruination” in process, which takes over civilization with untamed wildness.

This intrusion of Jamaican land’s nature into the culture of the English great house offers a hinge point from which a discourse on the hidden tragedies of Jamaican ancestors emerges. Through Miss Winifred’s account of why she has become a “filthy old lady” (165), who is excluded from the clean tidy English norms, Clare hears, for the first time in her life, about prohibitions against interracial marriage; Miss Winifred had an affair with a black man, gave birth to a child, and was parted from her lover and her baby. With Miss Winifred’s mention of the slave ship *Zong*, whose captain threw live Africans into the sea in order to be reimbursed by the insurance company (Phillip

189), the trace of sea salt in the great house walls Clare detected earlier in the novel is put into the context of a larger historical account of the transatlantic slave trade and Jamaican ancestors' sufferings under the cruel practice of English colonialism.

The shift in the narrative also formalizes this "ruination" of Englishness. Clare's minority viewpoint, which contends with the macro-colonial account of history in Part Two, now dominates the entire domain and rewrites the story engraved in the great house from the outcast's perspective. This narrative reversal takes the form of the great house literary tradition, which has contributed to the fashioning of Englishness as exemplified in the cultural tropes enjoyed by the upper class in England. Highly echoing the scene in which Clare connects her visit to the plantation house with Pip's visit to Miss Havisham's house in Dickens's *Great Expectations* earlier in the novel (37), Clare's encounter with Miss Winifred appropriates that frame in order to reveal the colonized ancestors' tragedies shaping Jamaican identity. In the end, Cliff's depiction of Miss Winifred and her great house appropriates the image of the great house in the English literary tradition to the extent that it serves as a critique of the colonial regime and a site for the emergence of Jamaican identity rather than as an embodiment of English metropolitan values.

This characterization of Miss Winifred's great house as nature that challenges imperial Englishness upends the hierarchical binary between wildness and civilization that has characterized Jamaica as the passive, aestheticized wild nature consumed in Victorian culture. A brief review on the history of the term, "wildness," shows that wildness is a colonial strategy that the English has adopted for their imperial projects. In other words, wildness itself is not an inherent feature of the Jamaican nature, but an image imposed by the colonizer. Throughout the imperial conquests in Ireland and Native America preceding the

invasion to the Caribbean, the English associated wildness with the newly colonized territories in order to domesticate the colonies inside the colonial frame of binary opposition between culture and nature and to affirm the colony's backwardness and savagery. For example, the trope of "wild Irish man" characterized Ireland as a "wild" nation that should be tamed and civilized by English culture. As David Harding has noted, Edmund Spenser in *A View on the State of Ireland* (1596) "supported his views on the wildness of the Irish" by characterizing "Irish wildness" as something inherent "in their blood" (Harding 45). Many medieval and early-modern writings promoted the hierarchical opposition between nature and culture, wildness and civilization, adding an illusion that wildness can characterize anything that does not fit into Christen values and cultural norms.<sup>10</sup> Harding traces the origin of the idea of "Irish wildness" to Henry II's invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century and the subsequent literary attempts justifying the conquest. He argues that the very same rhetoric of wildness pervaded in the colonization of America as well, suggesting that wildness is nothing more than a colonial strategy. As Jeop Leerseen rightly points out, "The European articulation of one's civility requires the peripheral presence, on the edge of one's sphere of influence, of a semi-subdued Other" (34).

The very word wildness and its alleged inferiority to civil culture are the products of colonialism and not an inherent characteristic particular to Jamaica. Michelle Cliff positively re-interprets the once-relegated meaning of "wildness" by disrupting the model of

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10) For a list of literary works which created the trope of "a wild Irishman" that justifies the colonial conquest, see Snyder. Snyder mentions Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Thomas Nashe's *The Prayse of the Red Herring* (1599), Moryson's *Itinerary* (1617), and William Lithgow's *Total Discourse* (1632) among many.

linear progress from wild nature to civil culture through the interfusion of Jamaican nature and English country houses. The hierarchical binaries between culture and nature, civilization and wildness, or English metropolis and Caribbean peripheries are undermined by Jamaican nature's power of reshaping the colonizer's identity—i. e. the “ruination” of Englishness—along the continuum of “natureculture.” Cliff's novel creatively reshapes the hierarchical colonial binaries into interactive coexistence promoting Jamaican nature and national identity.

In this article, I have explored, within a framework set up by Cliff's notion of “ruination,” how *Abeng* depicts Jamaican land and its intrusion into the great house to “ruin” the image of the “nation” imposed by the colonial English state apparatus. Destabilizing the notion of Englishness grounded in the clear division between culture and nature, Cliff maps the history of racial mixtures and massacre of African slaves and Indians onto the very core of the great house. In doing so, Cliff constructs Jamaican identity based on the maroons' understanding of their ancestors' tragic history and empowers the Jamaican land's wildness beyond the hierarchical binary between culture and nature, the colonizer and the colonized.

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## 주제어

야생성, 자연, 시골대저택, 자메이카, 영국성

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Abstract

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This article examines how Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng* challenges the colonial notion of Englishness embodied in the great house by interfusing wild Jamaican nature and the domestic, cultured Englishness. For this purpose, I borrow Michelle Cliff’s idea of “ruination,” which she defines as a process of reformulation initiated by wild Jamaican nature in her essay “Caliban’s Daughter: The Tempest and the Teapot.” The great house in Jamaica described in the novel shows colonial Englishness, whereby Jamaicans are forced to understand themselves through the European perspectives implemented by the institutional education. Cliff’s novel, however, shows Englishness in the process of “ruination” by blurring the hierarchical binary between the cultured English great house and the wild Jamaican nature in its blending descriptions and fragmenting narratives. The image of the wild English woman who resides in a great house defies English norms of clean tidy domesticity and reshapes cultured Englishness into untamed wildness. Cliff’s *Abeng* reshapes the hierarchical binary between culture and nature that has justified colonialism into a connective continuum of new possibilities.

#### Key Words

wildness, nature, country house, Jamaica, Englishness

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