Jamaican Rebel Slaves

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In attempts to understand the complex identity of Clare Savage, it is essential to understand the historical trauma the Jamaican people have undergone, and how this trauma is reflected in their culture and heritage. Cliff challenges ideas about mixed race through the heroine of her novel. Clare does not understand why she cannot be both “black” and “white” at the same time. Her sense of awareness and rebelliousness parallels that of her Maroon ancestors. Clare is a product of a traumatic colonial history, but unlike most on the island, she refuses to fall passive to the racially restricting world that is meant to force her into choosing between “black” or “white”, something she is unwilling to do.

The Mango as a Representation of the Jamaican People

“All over and each variety was unto itself--with its own occasion and use. In the yards around town and on the hills in the country, spots of yellow, pink, red, orange, black, and green appeared between the almost--blue elongated leaves of the fat and laden tress--and created a confusion underneath” (Cliff 4).

Abeng

“According to their arrogance, the Savages saw themselves as blameless for any downward turn in their fortunes. They managed to relinquish responsibility for their lives…The definition of what a Savage was like was fixed by color, class, and religion, and over the years a carefully contrived mythology was constructed, which they used to protect their identities. When they were poor, and not all of them white, the mythology persisted. They swore by it” (Cliff 29-30).

What’s in a Name?

• Clare’s ancestors were Maroons
• Boy Savage denies Clare her black heritage
• Clare challenges white supremacy

• Symbol of pride and commonality
• “Mixed” like the Jamaican people

• Mythology of the Savage family
• Clare not wanting to be “fixed” by color

“A Legacy of Trauma: Caribbean Slavery, Race, Class, and Contemporary Identity in Abeng” (Murdoch 77).

“"The underlying paradox of white racial superiority is maintained and extended through Boy’s insistence on his and Clare’s intrinsic and inescapable whiteness…one that catalyzes Clare’s revolt, as she interrogates and relocates her sexual, social, and historical identity” (Murdoch 77).”

"It was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and reach one another” (Epigraph).