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Creolizing Nation Language, Folklore and Science Fiction: Nalo Hopkinson's Rhetorical Strategy in *Midnight Robber*

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Abstract

Nalo Hopkinson, in her novel *Midnight Robber* (2000), blends the elements of folklore and science fiction, and uses Creole to create a unique genre that departs from the traditional methods of nation building employed by canonical Caribbean writers. The different languages that had been functioning in the Caribbean over several years have hybridized into Creoles. Hopkinson's usage of Creole sheds new light into the contemporary Caribbean culture. This paper is an exploration of Hopkinson's rhetorical strategies in the above mentioned novel, and how they aid in the formation of Caribbean national identity and discourse.

[**Keywords:** Nalo Hopkinson, Caribbean, Creole, language, nation, folklore, science fiction]

Nalo Hopkinson's innovative usage of Creole language in her novel, *Midnight Robber,* contributes to the formation of nationalistic Caribbean literature, and marks a departure from the traditional methods. Unlike the Caribbean canonical writers such as George Lamming, C. L. R. James, Kamau Brathwaite, Claude McKay, and so on, Hopkinson takes up the genre of science fiction as her creative endeavor. Nationalism, for the canonical writers, had been an anti-colonial movement. Hopkinson, however, provides a different model. The setting of *Midnight Robber* is in Planet Toussaint, a space beyond the Caribbean, and beyond the Earth. Hopkinson rejects the white dominated scientific terms, and embraces certain terms from the Caribbean folklore and combines them with the elements of science fiction, forming an exceptional genre of her own, that she calls "speculative fiction" (Rutledge 589). Through this new discourse, Hopkinson gives a vision of a budding Caribbean culture that resists the European/American standards, and embraces a nascent culture evolved out of a condition that may be called twice exiled.

Neither Africa/India/China, nor Europe/America is truly home for the Caribbean people. Living on the Caribbean soil and breathing the Caribbean air, force these people to come to terms with their daily existence where they feel rootless and alienated, failing to form any connection with the colonizing countries. In this doubly exiled state, the languages of these people also become a hybrid of their languages from the past and the master tongue (the language of the oppressor/colonizer). Through transformation of the language by stealing the "torturer's tongue" as described in David Findlay's poem *Stolen* (quoted in *Midnight Robber*), Hopkinson establishes a unique vision that may have fantastic and utopian elements mixed with magic realism, but can also be interpreted as hope for an emerging culture. This culture is not afraid to assimilate and digest old forms and give birth to new ones without blind imitation. Hopkinson's conception of nation is different from that of the nationalistic writers of the Caribbean. Hence her discourse is also different from the anti-US or anti-European discourses of those writers. She uses multiple Creole languages and thus does not restrict herself to one singular nation. She challenges the Euro-centric predisposition of technological language by an innovative medley of science and folklore. An exploration of Hopkinson's rhetorical and purposeful use of language in *Midnight Robber* will show her contribution to the formation of Caribbean national identity and discourse.

Why is Hopkinson experimenting with the complex sets of codes that are Caribbean Creoles? The nature of Caribbean cultures is hybrid. She says, "hybridity was a strategy for survival and resistance amongst the enslaved and indentured people" (Hopkinson, "Code Sliding"). These people came from "different cultures and different languages," and then "had an alien culture and speech imposed on them. They had to find ways to use elements of all the cultures in order to continue to exist" ("Code Sliding"). Hopkinson has tried to reflect that in *Midnight Robber*. She invents a new type of sweet fruit called Halwa, which originally means Arabian sweet meat. This is a result of the hybridity of the Muslim culture present in the Caribbeans (Okorafor 2). The protagonist of the novel, Tan-Tan, belongs to planet Toussaint, who is then exiled to New Half-Way Tree. People, in these places, talk in a language that is quite different from Standard English. Hopkinson says:

> I'm fascinated with the notion of breaking an imposed language apart and remixing it. To speak in the hacked language is not just speak in an accent or a Creole; to say the words aloud is an act of referencing history and claiming space. The people of the Nation worlds in my novel have done that have left Earth to a place where they can make their own society. Their speech, written and spoken, reflects the reasons they've made that journey" ("Code Sliding").

Thus her novel begins with David Findlay's poem "Stolen" which celebrates the stealing of the torturer or colonizer's tongue and improvisation of it to form a new language, the language of Creole through hybridization.

Hopkinson states that different languages that were in operation in the Caribbean have been hybridized into Creoles, and yet the vernaculars are still seen as debased in many places. Thus it becomes important for her to try to reflect the place of the language in the Caribbean (Rutledge 600). However, she also mentions the problems of it. Since Creoles are oral forms and there are no standard spellings, it is difficult to capture them on page. She says, "I wouldn't expect even a Caribbean reader to find the reading smooth going at first" (Rutledge 600). In an interview with Dianne D. Glave, she claims to have recognized the subversion of the dominant language. It is code-switching. She sometimes does it, depending on the need of the story (149). Hopkinson seems to use the terms "code-sliding" and "code-switching" interchangeably. In the context of *Midnight Robber*, Hopkinson writes:

> Linguists have a term for the way I've used language in the narrative. It is called "code-sliding." Caribbean speech has different modes of address. Speakers may choose to use different modes within a sentence, flipping from a relatively Standard English, French or Spanish to a more creolized form to a deep Creole. It infuses meaning into the language that goes beyond its content ("Code Sliding").

According to her, all the Caribbean characters inhabit in hybridized worlds, where "class divisions are clearly marked in language" in the Caribbean, and "an attuned ear can hear the points of demarcation. Caribbean people who emigrate (or who operate within more than one class level) learn to code switch, to jump back and forth between various language usages as needed" (Rutledge 599). Hopkinson does the same in *Midnight Robber*. She transforms the Standard English into Creole comprised of Trinidadian, Jamaican, and Guyanese dialects and her characters speak only in Creole.

The novel has two parallel narratives, both of which make use of Creole language by code-switching, although in one of them, the omniscient narrator intervenes in Standard English at instances where the narration is not done from the protagonist, Tan-Tan's point of view. In her interview with Glave, Hopkinson explains her strategies that she employed in *Midnight Robber*. She says:

> As I wrestled with the language usage in the novel, … I ended up with three modes of address: a more or less standard English for the narrative; one type of vernacular that was the mode of "pay attention"; and another that signaled opposition. So in the more standard English narrative I might say, "she went to the store," … but in dialogue someone might announce, "Is to the store I going," (getting your attention while they announce what they're going to do and emphasize where they're going); and if there was a problem with them going to the store and they were being defiant about it, they might say, "Me gwine a-store, seen?" (Glave 150)

This type of technique can be located throughout the novel. The reader may at first feel the hurdle instead of a smooth reading, but once the reader gets used to the style, it becomes more comprehensible. For example, the narration begins with "Oho. Like it starting, oui? Don't be frightened, sweetness; is for the best. I go be with you the whole time" (*Midnight Robber* 1) or when Ione says, "Tan-Tan, you daddy vex with me; he vex bad" (25). This inversion of syntax and usage of words different from standard usage definitely makes the readers read the sentences twice.

Verbal resistance that the readers face while reading *Midnight Robber* is a deliberate hindrance created by Hopkinson. In her interview with Rutledge, Hopkinson acknowledges that language has been a particularly thorny matter for her because of her use of code-switching among dialects and sociolects, and the increased complexity resulting from throwing in two or more languages (600). According to Hopkinson, language decides the Caribbean identity to a large extent, which has been used as "a tool of resistance and politicization (Rastafarian "dread talk" being a clear example)" (Rutledge 600). Thus certain usages of terms and phrases in the novel become clear from Hopkinson's own explanations:

> There was also a notion in my mind about Rastafarian "dread talk," about the ways in which it uses language to reveal the rotten roots of some of our ideas: words such as "shitstem" for "system," for example, or "downpress" for "oppress." That kind of subversion and re-invention of the language causes the listener to pay attention, to examine the thing which the word identifies and to think about what that thing really signifies. It's a strategy very familiar to a science fiction writer! The runners in the novel (an oppositional underclass that the reader first encounters as rickshaw operators) are the community where I located some of that habit of verbal resistance (Glave 150).

The resistance is not only confined in Hopkinson's characters, but also found in herself. Her identity as an Afro-Caribbean Female Science Fiction writer gives her a significant place in the anthology called *Dark Matter: A Century of speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*. In its introduction, the editor Sheree R. Thomas writes, "like dark matter, the contributions of black writers to the sci-fi genre have not been directly observed or fully explored… there was more to this genre than met the eye" (*Dark Matter* xi). Hopkinson, as an important contributor to this anthology, makes the invisible visible by subverting an exotic imperial romance into a fantastical speculative mode that provides a different kind of realism. Walter Mosley, in his essay "Back to the Future" (2000) argues that the "power of science fiction is that it can tear down the walls and windows, the artifice and laws by changing the logic, empowering the disenfranchised, or simply by asking, What if?" (*Dark Matter* 407). Hopkinson uses that power to the utmost by combining science fiction with folklore and giving the novel a Caribbean grounding.

What is Hopkinson doing different with the language of science fiction? In her interview with Glave, she says, "I think I only cause raised eyebrows because I'm doing it [using Creole] to write science fiction and fantasy" (149). She states that she came out "of a tradition of Caribbean writing where some of the writers have been deliberately claiming and valorizing Creole," (149) and thus it's nothing new for her to write in "Caribbean English(es)" (149). She

declares that partly she was trying to "imagine how Caribbean culture might metonymize technological progress if it was in our hands: in other words, what stories we'd tell ourselves about our technology—what our paradigms for it might be" (149). In another interview, she acknowledges that she also got this idea partly from a professor of University of Toronto named Uppinder Mehan, who was from Ontario but had Indian origins:

> He was talking about writers from continental India writing SF. The problem being that to an audience from here, because we may not know their cultures, we can't tell when the writers have done science fictional extrapolation from those cultures. Another thing he pointed out was that if Indian culture had developed without the colonizing influence of the West, the words that they use for technology would be different words, because they would have developed their own technologies and metaphors for speaking about technology. In the West we use words that are based in Greek and Roman myth to describe our technologies and sciences. We call a space ship "Apollo" or a psychological phenomenon "Oedipus." So I got to thinking: What metaphors for technology would a future Caribbean culture use? (Schellenberg 2)

Hopkinson, indeed invented quite fascinating metaphors for technology in her *Midnight Robber*. The African folklore elements come alive in her novel as the technological elements of science fiction. The communication system in the novel is described as "four-eye" which is a future equivalent of a telephone including sight and sound. "Four-eye" is a "Caribbean word for a seer, the being who can see into all dimensions and communicate with the beings there. The operating system, which governs a building, is called an "eshu," who is a West African deity who can go everywhere, see everything" (Glave 149-50). In another interview conducted by Time Warner Trade Publishing, Hopkinson explains that in *Midnight Robber*, the "artificial intelligence that safeguards all the people in a planetary system becomes Granny Nanny, named after the revolutionary and magic worker who won independent rule in Jamaica for the Maroons who had run away from slavery." "Granny Nanny" and the house eshu are two figures who become the supporting strength that Tan-Tan could not get rid off, even through her exile in the half-way tree. The technologies in *Midnight Robber* assume different names and thus are striking in contrast to those found normally in science fiction. Thus Hopkinson blends technology with mythology, and claims that science fiction and fantasy bleed into each other (Schellenberg 2). Hopkinson's new mode of language seems to deal with the old problem of Caribbean national identity, but shows a way to master the torturer's tongue.

Hopkinson emphasizes the creativity of hybrid language in the masquerade of the Midnight Robber in the Trinidadian carnival. The story that the Midnight Robber tells is essentially about "disenfranchisement," which talks about how the son of an African king kidnapped into slavery escapes it and becomes the Midnight Robber. The story needs to be told in poetic melodious speech, and the triumph occurs when the Robber succeeds in holding the attention of the audience. Hopkinson uses this as a metaphor for Tan-Tan for whom "violence is not going to work, and she doesn't have a home any more" (Schellenberg 3). Thus words become Tan-Tan's only weapon, something that emerges as a new form by reworking the language of the oppressor. According to Hopkinson, "Tan-Tan's victory is won through words—that is a very powerful metaphor for a writer" (Schellenberg 3). Tan-Tan becomes the Robber Queen and through her creativity, poetry, and performance, she regains her strength and hope for the future, even after terrible suffering.

Hopkinson's reason to write in such a subverted form of Creole is a deliberate rhetorical move on her part. She not only mixes the languages of different cultures, races and dialects, but also mixes the genres of folklore, fantasy and science fiction. Her resistance is not confined to the language of the oppressor only. She even resists the genre of the oppressor. She not only uses code switching in the Caribbean languages, but also does so with the euro-centric terms of

science fiction. In her interview with Rutledge, she says postcolonial writers should make use of code switching because:

> Creoles carry their own nuances and textures of meaning. They are a tool for communication that we have. Writing without them can feel like cooking a meal without the spices. It's still edible, even nutritious, but the cook knows how much more interesting it could be with a little piece of thyme and some garlic …. Every nook of every region of the English-speaking world tailors English to suit itself. That's one of the strengths of the language—its flexibility (601).

However, Hopkinson's use of code-switching in Creole language is not anything new that she accomplishes in *Midnight Robber*. It has been for quite sometime a part of the Caribbean and other postcolonial literary tradition. Samuel Selvon, the London based Caribbean writer, had written an entire novel, *The Lonely Londoners*, in Creole, about forty years before Hopkinson started writing. Hopkinson herself cites Selvon in her essay, "Code Sliding" and mentions about his repeated stalling in his composing process, until he started to write in what he called "Caribbean language." In *The Lonely Londoners*, Selvon fuses the narrating voice and the voice of his protagonist, Moses, into a dialect that can be considered an effective use of Creole language to convey the thoughts of a Creole national.

Hopkinson's narrative in *Midnight Robber* presents the same treatment of Creole language, like Selvon's. When Antonio takes Tan-Tan with him in the New Half-Way Tree, Tan-Tan is told by Antonio that they will be in a new place where Tan-Tan will not have her mother, Ione, or her Nurse, or the house spirit, eshu. When scared Tan-Tan asks her father about where they were going, Antonio fails to answer and that comes to Tan-Tan as a shock since the little girl believed that her father had answers to all questions and problems. The omniscient narrator's voice and Tan-Tan's voice merge into one dialect and the readers immediately recognize that they are given a glimpse of Tan-Tan's point of view in her confusion:

> No more Nursie with her 'nansi stories; no more Ione and her pretty dresses-them. No more eshu. Daddy gone stupidee, like he ain't know the answer to nothinh any more. She and Antonio didn't look no different, but Tan-tan could feel the change the shift tower had made inside her, feel her heart begin to harden against her daddy who couldn't tell her where they were, who couldn't make everything all right again. She felt she didn't know him anymore. He was right. Once you climb the half-way tree, everything change-up (*Midnight Robber* 77).

In this half-way tree, where Antonio and Tan-Tan are in exile, their nature, sensibilities and language will undergo a change too, like Selvon's Moses in London. Antonio has committed a crime (murder) and is thrown in an exile where he will continue to commit crimes (rape, incest, infidelity). He will become a split personality of "good Antonio" and "bad Antonio" and Tan-Tan will become "good Tan-Tan" and "bad Tan-Tan" (*Midnight Robber* 140).

But how does this help in the formation of national identity? Hopkinson states that sometimes she calls her different modes of languages "'Nation Languages,' after Kamau Braithwaite" (Glave 152). Kamau Braithwaite's concept of nation language is that it should be devoid of the debase status associated with Creole dialect and be considered a new emergent language. "Nation language is the language that is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New world/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax" (*Roots* 265-266). A close reading of Hopkinson's novel will show that her characters speak in nation languages and so does one of her narrators. The other omniscient narrator however moves back and forth between nation language and Standard English.

Is national language formed through creolization? Does exile play any role in it? Kenneth Ramchand has praised Samuel Selvon for his "linguistic achievement" because it goes beyond the sense of degraded dialect and achieves the status of nation language. Ramchand says, "The language of *The Lonely Londoners* is not the language of one stratum in the society, not the language of the people meaning 'the folk' or the peasantry, but a careful fabrication, a modified dialect which contains and expresses the sensibility of a whole society" (*The Lonely Londoners* 13). Selvon's central character is in exile and acquires a new sensibility that is expressed through a new language. Like Selvon, Hopkinson also uses language as a tool, and Hopkinson's characters are in exile too. But this exile is different from that of the canonical Caribbean writers like George Lamming, C. L. R. James, Claude McKay, Samuel Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Jean Rhys and Michelle Cliff among many others who have emphasized the importance and influence of exile in their lives and works. As George Lamming had written in *The Pleasures of Exile*:

> "Caliban is … colonized by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile" (15).

In an interview with David Soyka, Hopkinson mentions that exile is "a big theme when you come from a diasporic culture. Where is home? Can you go back there? Or do you have to go forward and make yourself a home elsewhere? Does home reside within you or outside of you" (4). In another interview, she mentions, "The whole idea of being exiled from home is very much a legacy of 500 years of African slavery…. [*Midnight Robber*] is an analogy for that sense of exile when you've been moved from your home at least twice" (Schellenberg 3). Hopkinson's concept of exile is different from that of George Lamming because, her protagonist Tan-Tan not only is alienated from the human race on Toussaint and the New Half-Way Tree, but also is alienated from other folklore animals (Douens). From her home, in planet Toussaint, Tan-Tan is thrown in exile in the New Half-Way Tree. She was already alienated from her parents when her father left home in Toussaint due to her mother's infidelity. In the New Half-Way Tree, she is alienated from the humans, and forms relationships with the Douens: Chichibud, Benta and Abitefa. Douens are non-human indigenous species and are a self-sufficient community. They help the protagonist Tan-Tan during her times of difficulties. But Tan-Tan is again thrown in exile from the Douen community where she is the "other". She seems to finally find happiness with Melonhead, one of her kind (brown/black human) but of different origin (Indian). Most importantly, Tan-Tan is challenged linguistically in the Douen community, where in spite of the initial resistance, she learns to understand the languages of Benta and Abitefa. Hopkinson's experiment with language in her novel becomes a powerful example of what one can achieve by stealing the torturer's tongue, by subverting the oppressor's language. Her vision embraces a transformation through language in a different space than Lamming had illustrated. The pleasure and paradox of exile in Hopkinson are balanced by suffering and rewards, as Tan-Tan's misery ends in her union with Melonhead. The readers get a glimpse of the end of her miseries when she acquires victory through words in the Carnival.

Tan-Tan's doubly exiled state can be read as the metaphor for the state of exile of the Caribbean people since neither Africa/India/China, nor Europe/America is home for them. Tan-Tan's condition is similar to the miserable conditions of the Caribbean communities regarding humiliation, loneliness, racism, and slavery. Tan-Tan has suffered like the Caribbean people. Her slave masters are King Antonio who casts her away from her homeland and Dry Bone who oppress her by unquenchable demands. But Hopkinson provides hope for the race as she tells Glave:

> In *Midnight Robber*, the reasons that Caribbean peoples have banded together, all races of them (remember that the characters are mixed race, as most Caribbean peoples are)

have everything to do with the history of exploitation that has made the Caribbean what it was. Ben tells Tan-Tan that when she wears the ship hat on her head (which was an ancient Carnival tradition), this time it represents a ship in which people made the crossing to the new land as free people this time, and of their own will (Glave 153).

The alien creatures in her novel derive from Caribbean tradition, which are multicultural and multiethnic. "The rolling calf, wrapped in chains with fireball eyes, seems to be what happened when the Irish mythical creature the phouka crossed the waters to Jamaica" (*Time Warner Trade Publishing*). Hopkinson reconstructs Anasi, the trickster figure from West Africa, as Tan-Tan, and uses the Carnival imagery from Trinidad, where "Carnival evolved out of an African response to the New Year's Eve masquerades. It was a way to mock the whites, and to revive memories of old traditions, and to overturn the accepted world order—it's a revolutionary celebration" (*Time Warner Trade Publishing*). Kabo Tano, the intellectual (because he knows all) and the revolutionary voice (because he sends messenger/words for change) cannot help Tan-Tan unless she helps herself. Tan-Tan does help herself and becomes the Robber Queen and creates her own language and speech to achieve some form of freedom, a state that can be read as Hopkinson's hope for a new culture that will emerge out of the old conditions of slavery and exile. Hopkinson promotes this new culture in her art as a synthesis of African/Feminine folklore and White/European/American/Masculine science fiction.

The mixing of races, cultures, and genres, give rise to the mixed sensibilities and thus mixed language, which are resultants of exile. Hopkinson's notion of hope in futuristic utopias expressed through her rhetorical use of language is not entirely hopeful for her. In an interview with Chris Aylott, she expresses her worries that the future of space travel will be dominated by white American and European culture because "the nations that currently control the world's resources favor standardization, homogenization and quantity" unless a "radical paradigm shift" occurs (3). However she hopes for acceptance and celebration of diversities. She mixes older folkloric culture of the Caribbean with the modern colonized experience of the Caribbean and forms a new culture that can be considered motley of African and European cultures. She is amazed to find that "a lot of people don't know that Africans sold into the European slave trade were forced with extreme prejudice to take European names and to stop speaking their own languages, so those readers won't know that the resulting Creoles are part enforced compliance, part defiance, and a whole lot of creativity" (Nelson 102). Thus her characters have stolen the language of the oppressor and created a language of their own as a form of resistance. Hopkinson resists the hegemony of language by deliberately making her characters talk in the oral Creole, the hybridized forms, as normally they would in the Caribbean. She subverts the Standard English language to meet the needs of her characters. What she does is not an easy task. However her playfulness with language and her effective celebration of Creoles make her novel readable and understandable, in spite of offering resistance.

Although Hopkinson celebrates Creole, Aisha Khan is quite skeptical about this type of celebration. She argues that "the recent refashioning of the creolization concept as a metaphor for creativity, agency, and empowerment of subordinate peoples renders it, in many cases, redundant" (2). Khan states that the intellectuals and the academics have used the Caribbean as a model for the center of the earth that presents the "concept of creolozation as antidote to the problem of over-determination" that reflects, in part, "a desire to recuperate the subaltern and the marginal, to bring agency, resistance, and resilience back to the disempowered" (2). What Khan finds problematic is in this exercise, "creolization is not explored in terms of concrete events or processes; rather, it is envisioned as an abstractly cultural phenomenon, a domain in which people—all people—participate in equally meaningful, and according to some, equally empowering ways" (2-3).

Mimi Sheller's discussion of the consumption of Caribbean culture and creolization also supports Aisha Khan's argument. According to Sheller, "Although creolization has become a keyword for processes of dynamic creation, agency, and self-making in the imagery of the global culture, … there is a sense in which the theory of creolization was displaced from its Caribbean context. In that dislocation it was emptied of its resonance as a project of subaltern resistance" (203). But Sheller appreciates the ways in which some Caribbean writers have used their own Nation Language. She says that the Creole oral cultures have resisted the commodification and consumption of the Caribbean culture through their "rawness" (187). Writers like Hopkinson using Nation Language, may initially offer a certain amount of resistance to metropolitan consumption, but it is still consumed by the culture, and has its limitations. As Merle Collins writes, "Caribbean Creoles, languages of everyday communication, have little status either in the local formal situation or in an international situation" (94). Collins promotes more research in the area so that the region might use Creole in more formal communication.

In this recent cultural politics of creolization, Roger Abrahams considers the term "creolization" as a "glamour term" (1). He points out the problem in the communities that are historically marked as Creole:

> The people pursue a new, more rambunctious history in which Creole languages and musical and dance styles form the basis of local pride movements. In addition, as industrial societies mutate into global figurations, creolized representations become attractions ripe for touristic exploitation. They even make their way into the festivals and concerts produced in the name of folk as produced by folklorists (2).

In a political and cultural situation like this, Hopkinson has produced a cultural artifact that needs analysis on the basis of its effective and purposeful use of language instead of pointing out the differences between legitimate Creole and nonlegitimate Creole. What becomes more important here is her effort in telling stories in Creole language, resisting the cultural stigma of noneducatedness associated with Creole.

Simon Gikandi wrote about the canonical Caribbean writers: "Only by subverting colonial modernism could these writers become modernists" (256). Similarly, Hopkinson subverts the white Euro-centric notions of science fiction and black Afro-centric notions of folklore to create her own genre. She also subverts the notions of nationalistic literature created by the major Caribbean canonical writers, by creating a new space outside the physical location of the Caribbean. Hopkinson's themes and narrative strategies share common grounds with the Anglophone Caribbean literature since 1950s: hybridity, creolization, exile, nationalistic discourse. However, she transforms these themes based on her own agendas. Most of her characters are hybrid and her idea of nationalism is expressed through a conglomeration of all races: "their forefathers had toiled and sweated together: Taino Carib and Arawak; African; asian; Indian; even the Euro, … All the bloods flowing into one river, making a new home on a new planet" (*Midnight Robber* 18).

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