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**Intersections of Gender and Ethnicity in *Brown Girl
in the Ring* by Nalo Hopkinson**

Haitian Diaspora and Hybridity, and the Controlling Images of Black Women

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Master's Thesis

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The topic of my thesis is the analysis of intersections of gender and ethnicity in Nalo Hopkinson's debut novel, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998). I do this by focusing on the two main characters, Gros-Jeanne, and Ti-Jeanne. Gros-Jeanne's section concentrates on Haitian diaspora and hybridity while Ti-Jeanne's section centers the controlling images of Black women. The aim is to answer the following questions: (1) How does gender intersect with ethnicity by emphasising the oppression of Black women? (2) How does Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne fight the oppression?

The framework for my analysis comes from Black Feminism and intersectionality. Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Barbara Christian, and Patricia Hill Collins form the base of the theory, but other critics are also used throughout the thesis. The purpose is to shed light onto the unique experiences of Black women.

The analysis revealed that being Black and female are always intra-connected. Having Haitian heritage makes Gros-Jeanne the Other of the society, and her Haitian practices of herbal medicine are simultaneously shunned and exploited. Ti-Jeanne, on the other hand, is forced to live with the images of the matriarch and the sapphire created for Black women to justify their oppression. They both fight the injustice by demonstrating their Black womanhood is what also makes them strong.

Key words: *Brown Girl in the Ring*, black feminism, controlling images, diaspora, ethnicity, feminism, gender, hybridity, intersectionality, Nalo Hopkinson, matriarch, Otherness, patriarchy, racism, sapphire, sexism

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1 Introduction

Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998) is a post-apocalyptic novel set in Toronto somewhere in the not-too-distant future. It is often described either as science-fiction or magical realism, as the novel regards both themes of futuristic organ transplantation and Caribbean folklore. However, in the heart of the story are three women, who resist the patriarchal society of the derelict city, finding themselves, their powers and identities while fighting the oppression of being Black Haitian women. Hopkinson has written a story that is not only futuristic fantasy, but a story with feminist critique; it is full of examples of how gender intersects with ethnicity, and how it has a negative impact on Black women in social hierarchy. Hopkinson herself is a Jamaican Canadian author working as a professor of Creative Writing at the University of California. In her own words: "I write science fiction, fantasy, speculative fiction; call it whatever you want, my novels and stories are full of the unreal, the futuristic, the unlikely, the impossible" (Nalo Hopkinson: author, creator, n.d.). This is true of *Brown Girl in the Ring* (henceforth *Brown Girl*). In the novel all political and social constructions have collapsed and the rich and powerful have fled Toronto, leaving behind the less fortunate to fend for themselves. The story follows three Haitian Canadian women: Gros-Jeanne, Mi-Jeanne, and Ti-Jeanne. Gros-Jeanne is the eldest of the family, whose daughter is Mi-Jeanne, the middle one, whose daughter then is Ti-Jeanne, the main protagonist of the novel. Gros-Jeanne is the Voudun priestess and healer of the community, and although her child and grandchild are taught the ways of their ancestry, both women reject their Haitian background.

The novel's action is set in motion when Ti-Jeanne's ex-lover and father of her child, Tony, asks for her help with Toronto's infamous gang leader, Rudy, and his violent posse. Tony has promised to find a human heart transplant for Rudy but cannot bring himself to kill someone, putting himself in danger with Rudy. Ti-Jeanne persuades Gros-Jeanne to help, who calls on Voudun Spirits to hide Tony into the spirit world so he can run away from Toronto without being seen. But things do not go as planned, and Tony is captured and pushed to kill Gros-Jeanne for the heart. Rudy, on the other hand, uses a duppy, a bowl with a human soul locked in it, to try and kill Ti-Jeanne as well. It is revealed that Rudy is Gros-Jeanne's ex-husband, and he holds a grudge against the family. He uses black magic to get his way in the city, even trapping his own daughter, Mi-Jeanne, inside the duppy. Only Ti-Jeanne can stop him with her powerful Voudun (also known as voodoo, vodun, vodou or vodoun) abilities. And while

she does that, Ti-Jeanne does not only help the whole Torontonion community by abolishing a power-hungry criminal, she also learns to accept her own magic and Haitian heritage.

Brown Girl is inspired by Derek Walcott's Caribbean Magic Realist play, *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958; in Walcott 1970, 81–166), where three brothers, Gros-Jean, Mi-Jean and Ti-Jean, try to overpower the Devil. Hopkinson's take on it is a feminist one, changing the male-centric play into a female-focused story, which is typical of feminist thought, as it often re-defines male-dominant terms and expands literary theories and genres to better suit its needs. Therefore, I argue that the genre of this novel is Magical Feminism. To demonstrate this further, I turn to Kimberly Ann Wells (Wells 2007, 129–130) who sees *Brown Girl* as a Magical Feminist novel for it models positive female empowerment with the help of the novel's magical religious beliefs of Voudun. In fact, Magical Feminism was developed from Magical Realism to use "magic elements to specifically explore gender inequity and power for women, modeling a type of empowered female within a realistic world, one step away from our own" (Wells 2007, 20). However, as a literary criticism the novel uses many Black Feminist methods. Besides its pronounced magical themes, the novel also concentrates on issues of sexism and racism, visible in the way the story's women are treated in their patriarchal society.

Black Feminist criticism has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s United States where the Civil Rights Movement gave birth to the Black Power and Black Arts movements. These operations, however, were lead and largely dominated by Black men, excluding Black women from the movements (Keizer 2007, 154). Meanwhile, second wave feminism was emerging, and the first women's studies programs were established in the United States together with scholarly journals that, for the first time, focused on feminist theories (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016, 2). However, many Black women argued that this feminist theory was written for, and about, white women. Therefore, since Black women had no place in the male-dominated Black Power movements, or the white-dominated feminist movement, they began theorising from their own experiences instead. Furthermore, one of the terms Black Feminist critics coined was 'intersectionality'. Kimberly Crenshaw uses the term for the first time in 1989 as an analytic framework to evaluate the position of Black women within the civil rights law and civil rights movement (Cooper 2016, 385). Her intent is to acknowledge that race, gender, and class all play a part in Black women's subordination (Cooper 2016, 386). Even by this early definition, intersectionality is apparent in Hopkinson's novel. In *Brown Girl*, Gros-Jeanne, Mi-Jeanne, and Ti-Jeanne all live in a society where their Haitian ancestry has made

them the Others of the town. They are different from the rest of the residents for their strong ties to their heritage as female healers and Voudun practitioners. I argue that people often see their skin colour first, quietly accepting stereotypes of Black women as truth instead of fighting these images that were created to oppress them.

Furthermore, gender and ethnicity intersect in many ways throughout the novel. By ‘gender’ I refer to Judith Butler’s (2004, 48) definition of it as a norm that has social power. ‘Ethnicity’, on the other hand, indicates a person’s nationality, heritage, ancestry, and culture (Merriam-Webster.com 2022, n.p.). When these two ideas interact with each other, the oppression of Black women through their social and political status, and identity takes many shapes. I concentrate on two different aspects of intersectionality found in *Brown Girl*: Haitian diaspora and hybridity through Gros-Jeanne’s experiences, and the controlling images of Black women mostly through Ti-Jeanne. Gros-Jeanne is an example of a female Caribbean immigrant who endures displacement and multilocation while trying to include both Haitian and Canadian experiences in her hybrid identity. Ti-Jeanne, on the other hand, lives with the stereotyped images of the emasculating matriarch and the aggressive sapphire, which were created for Black women during slavery to justify their abuse and domination (Collins 2000, 69). By analysing these topics, I search for answers for two questions: (1) How does gender intersect with ethnicity by emphasising the oppression of Black women? (2) How does Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne fight the oppression? To go further into these subjects, I first introduce Black Feminist Criticism and intersectionality mainly through the works of Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Barbara Christian, and Patricia Hill Collins. I analyse the intersections of gender and ethnicity through Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne separately, first focusing on Haitian diaspora and hybridity, then on the controlling images of Black women. A natural continuum would be to analyse gender through Magical Feminism as well. Gender can intersect with many different aspects of one’s identity, witchcraft being one of them. Intersections of gender and magic is something future research on this topic can analyse in further detail as the restrictions of this thesis keeps me from focusing on that side of the novel.

2 Black Feminist Criticism

Arlene R. Keizer gives a concise explanation why Black Feminism came to be:

Contemporary black feminist criticism came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s, fostered by the Civil Rights Movement and developed in conjunction with the Second Wave of American feminism, which was dominated by white women, and the Black Power and Black Arts movements, which were dominated by black men. (Keizer 2007, 154)

During the liberation of Black men and white women, Black women found no safe space to express their concerns about the racist-sexist oppression they have experienced since slavery. This realisation gave birth to the predominantly Black feminist movement, which was written by Black women about Black women. But to fully understand the academic side of Black Feminism, it is also important to know where the broader sense of feminism as literary criticism originates. Nevertheless, as the focus of my thesis is Black Feminism and intersectionality, a comprehensive study of the history of feminism is not needed here. Instead, I give a short overview of some of the female critics that most developed feminism before the Civil Rights movements in The United States and Europe. This is to understand that racism can never be the only form of oppression Black women face, since women of all colours have fought sexism for centuries.

To begin, feminism did not develop in a few decades, even as a literary criticism. Instead, some trace the beginnings of feminist thought to the ancient world, while others consider the eighteenth-century writers of Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft to be the first feminist theorists (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016, 1). Wollstonecraft, for example, shocked the world by stating that femininity is a “regenerated natural discourse of rational, human feeling and ethical imagination” (Manly 2007, 47). To her, gender was a social construct and women could very well live without it while still being intellectual sexual beings (ibid.). In the end she rejected conventional femininity to the point of arguing that there was no value in being a woman (Manly 2007, 50). Furthermore, in her 1792 publication, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, she demanded women to have equal rights to those of men (Manly 2007, 51). She strongly disagreed with the descriptions of women in famous works such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Jean-Jaques Rousseau’s *Émile* and helped pave the way for women to argue that they are more than “subordinate beings” and not only the objects of men (Manly 2007, 51–53).

Another widely accepted feminist figure is Virginia Woolf, who is celebrated as the founder of modern feminist literary criticism (Goldman 2007, 66). As Laura Marcus (2010, 1) argues, the relationship between Virginia Woolf and feminism is a symbiotic one. Her influence extends to definitions of modernism and postmodernism as her work is essential to twentieth-century literature and culture, and her work remains as a source for feminist debates over topics such as women's language, gendered literary perspectives, feminist radicalism and relationships between socialism and feminism (Marcus 2010, 2). Although she was an active writer during the suffrage era, which concerned getting women the right to vote, she did not consider herself a feminist activist (ibid.). Still, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which Jane Goldman (2007, 68) refers to as a "feminist manifesto," is considered as the first modern work of feminist literary criticism and one of Woolf's most celebrated pieces of writing. Her work modified the nature of literary criticism and helped form a new feminist agenda (Goldman 2007, 59).

Additionally, as much as Woolf is known for her fictional writing, Simon de Beauvoir extended feminist thought to philosophy with *The Second Sex* (1946), one of the most influential books of the twentieth century to have a powerful impact on feminism (Fallaise 2007, 85). Nancy Bauer (2001, 23) argues that the biggest achievement of *The Second Sex* is completely rethinking what philosophy is: it "dramatizes the extent to which being a woman poses a philosophical problem – which is to say, a problem for and of philosophy" (Bauer 2001, 1). With her new ideas, de Beauvoir was the first to provide a theoretical tool for analysing the social construction of gender for philosophers, historians, theologians, and scientists, but also literary critics (Fallaise 2007, 85). One of her main ideas was the "myths of woman," which were invented by men to reinforce the oppression of women through economic and social actions (Fallaise 2007, 88). However, de Beauvoir, like many other feminists of her time, still draws a limited picture of what a woman is: a white, Western, bourgeois female (Bauer 2001, 22). It took another few decades to see a change in this view with the feminist movement. From the mid-1960s to early 1990s, feminist literary criticism slowly developed into a more diverse field of study and theory, a time some refer to as 'second wave feminism' (Plain and Sellers 2007, 102). During this time, a wider field of discourse was introduced, including issues concerning not only gender but class, sexuality, and race as well (ibid.). Feminist theories ranging from liberal to radical, from psychoanalytic to postmodern, all share the same notion that the injustices women face is a part of a system of larger political gender oppression (Disch and Hawkesworth 2016, 3). Feminism became

more self-aware of its earlier issues of narrow representations of women, and now is often connected with postcolonialism, queer theory and psychoanalysis, to name a few (Plain and Sellers 2007, 103). People of colour, especially Black women in the United States, found a way to raise their concerns during this period. Next, I look further into history to find the root cause for the need for Black feminism as a separate movement. For a brief history of Black female slavery, I use bell hooks and her book *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981) as a reference.

2.1 Images of Black Women in Slavery

I begin with details of what it was like to be a Black female slave in colonial America, since the oppression of Black women stem from slave ships, plantations, and domestic work (hooks 1992 [1981], 15–49). However, what is important to concentrate here is not the complete history of slavery but the newly constructed image of the Black woman. As bell hooks argues:

In a retrospective examination of the black female slave experience, sexism looms as large as racism as an oppressive force in the lives of black women. Institutionalized sexism – that is patriarchy – formed the base of the American social structure along with racial imperialism. (hooks 1992 [1981], 15)

Black Africans were sent into a society that ran on sexism and racism, and Black women had no chance fighting the images white Americans drew for them. They were stripped of all human dignity by being removed of their names, common languages and African heritage while being ridiculed, tortured, and traumatized by white slavers (hooks 1992 [1981], 19).

The first controlled image pushed on Black female slaves was their masculinisation. Many historians have written about the de-masculinisation of Black slave men, and just as many have disregarded the masculine role Black women were forced to adopt (hooks 1992 [1981], 22). These women worked on plantations as much as Black men, and since only “debased and degraded” women were forced to labour in the fields, Black women soon realised this meant that in a white colonial American society they were seen as “surrogate men”, not even worthy of the title ‘woman’ (hooks 1992 [1981], 22–23). At the same time, they were living under constant fear of sexual exploitation. According to hooks, institutionalised sexism legitimised the sexual assault of Black women by both white and Black men, and most female slaves were first assaulted between the ages of thirteen and sixteen after starting work in the white domestic household (hooks 1992 [1981], 24–25). Verbal or physical torment of enslaved

teenage girls was usual in colonial America, and many lived under fear of being raped by their masters. Meanwhile, Black women were made prostitutes by the same men by being paid for non-consensual sexual services under the fear of being brutalised and punished if they declined the offer (hooks 1992 [1981], 25–26). This forced hypersexuality is the second image invented for her, as rape was another way to demoralise and dehumanise Black women, an example of the “depths of male hatred of woman and woman’s body” (hooks 1992 [1981], 29). Black women became highly sexualised in a society where Christian teachings and misogynist attitudes saw them as evil sexual temptresses and men were the victims of her seductive ways (ibid.). While white women were idolised as pure virgins without any sexual desire, a problematic view on its own right, African women became sexual savages and jezebels (hooks 1992 [1981], 32–33).

The third image Black women involuntarily adapted to is the image of a mother and a caregiver. Black women were forced to breed and to reproduce to give slave owners more workers (hooks 1992 [1981], 39). Women were to marry or mate with a man to get pregnant, some were even promised possession such as a pig or a new pair of shoes every time a child was born to her (hooks 1992 [1981], 41). Many slave owners accepted marriages between the Blacks for the desire to enslave their children. However, these marriages only underlined the societal position Black women had, even in their own homes. Black women did all the domestic work, which was deemed female, and therefore less important than masculine physical labour (hooks 1992 [1981], 44). Colonial gender roles were deeply set within Black families which granted Black men status over their wives, and these roles were only enhanced by the religious teachings on the plantations (ibid.). Enslaved Black people came to accept the white patriarchal gender roles of the household: women were domestic workers and children’s bearers who obeyed their husbands (hooks 1992 [1981], 47). Even after being liberated from slavery, Black women were not liberated from social and political oppression, or the controlling images left by slavery. Although the racist and sexist oppression of Black women was acknowledged by white feminists, many believed Black women could manage the abuse because they are strong and have an “innate ability” to bear heavy burdens (hooks 1992 [1981], 6). They were not merely victims of sexist and racist gender roles as slaves; they became devoted mothers and liberated sex objects of the modern world, and the strength they showed in the fields now made them stronger against oppression of all kinds. Black Feminism opposes these roles and recognises their roots come from colonial America and the slave trade.

As I mentioned earlier, Black Feminism developed through the rise of civil and feminist movements both in the United States and Europe. However, this does not mean there was no activity to end the oppression of Black women before that. One of the first historical moments for Black women's political action can be dated to the 1800s. In 1831 in the United States, Maria Stewart's name was written in history when her ideas of Black motherhood and the unity of women helped form communities for Black women for better self-determinism and independence. She was aware that "race, gender, and class oppression were the fundamental causes of Black women's poverty" (Collins 2000, 1–2) which later became the premises for intersectionality. During this same period, Sojourner Truth fought to end slavery while calling for action for women's suffrage, criticizing Black male patriarchy over Black women (Gines 2011, 276). What is more, in 1893, during her speech in the World's Congress of Representative Women, Anna Julia Cooper pleaded for Black women's sexual autonomy while Fannie Jackson Coppin saw the rights of Black women aiding the rights of all women (Carby 1988, 3–4). In the early twentieth-century, Sadie Tanner Mosell Alexander shed light into the racial oppression over Black women's wages that were much lower than that of the Black man or the white woman (Gines 2011, 276). However, despite these efforts, most of the voices of Black women still stayed within Black literary societies, churches, and charitable associations, and remained absent in national organizations largely operated by white women at the time (Carby 1988, 4). Still, these Black women activists, among many other, helped pave the way for future generations. Because of them, others can demand that the discussion of Black women's oppression should not stay within the Black community, but that it needs to be a widely argued topic not only in politics but literature and the academia as well. Therefore, with the help of the works of pioneers such as Barbara Smith and Barbara Christian, I go through some of the theory of Black Feminism and its key points as a literary criticism framework. To do that, I concentrate on the 1960s and 1970s and to those brave enough to publicly talk about Black women from a feminist perspective.

2.2 Black Women's Renaissance and Building a Literary Tradition

In 1977 Barbara Smith writes in her article, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism", published in the Black lesbian feminist *Conditions: Two* magazine, the following:

I do not know where to begin. Long before I tried to write this I realized that I was attempting something unprecedented, something dangerous merely by writing about

black women writers from a feminist perspective [...]. These things have not been done. (Smith 2012 [1977], 3)

Smith writes this in a time when most feminist journals were mostly all-white publications which “dealt almost exclusively with white women as if they were the only women in the United States” (Christian 2007 [1989], 9). Why did it take critics, especially other feminists, so long to talk about Black women writers? As Smith states, the long history of racism, and its many ramifications, has dwindled the growth and appreciation of Black women’s creative work, but also caused others to become blind to the unique oppression Black women face (Smith 2012 [1977], 3). To change that, Smith argues, the “white feminist movement” needs to be re-defined and re-characterized to include not only Black women’s existence and experience but art as well (Smith 2012 [1977], 4). Smith’s article quickly became a theoretical backbone for many interested in Black Feminism in the following decades. Carby (1988, 8) regards it a “manifesto for black feminist critics” as it affirms many of the principles of Black women’s writing, which Smith saw as a shared experience of identity. According to Smith, that experience, together with “Black female language,” could act as a basis for a Black literary tradition:

The use of black women’s language and cultural experience in books by black women about black women results in a miraculously rich coalescing of form and content and also takes their writing far beyond the confines of white/male literary structures. The black feminist critic would find innumerable commonalities in works by black women. (Smith 2012 [1977], 9)

For Smith, the language of authors such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker is a part of their identity and the only way to truly express the thoughts of their characters as well as themselves as Black women. The common experiences of these writers could also disclose a valid literary tradition among Black female writers (Carby 1988, 8). This tradition is a historical practice that correlates to the writing traditions of both Black men and white women but differs in its “act of creating literature as a direct result of the specific political, social and economic experience they have been obliged to share” (Smith 2012 [1977], 8). Nevertheless, although Smith’s essay was ground-breaking in the literary community in the late 1970s, her arguments have since been re-evaluated. For Carby (1988, 9), Smith’s essay has “major problems,” especially in over-simplifying the parallels between fiction and reality, and Black feminist criticism being solely dependent on those born Black and female. In her opinion, Black feminist criticism cannot stay “essentialist and ahistorical” since it would diminish the experiences of all black women, creating an artificial common

Black female imagination (ibid). Instead, Carby (1988, 17–18) calls for solidarity between white and Black women in the name of sisterhood, voicing the need for all feminist work, while still urging literary critics to focus on institutionalised racism and sexism. For this reason, a white woman like myself can now write about Black Feminism, even if it can never be from a personal point of view within a shared experience or identity. As a white feminist ally, I can help the Black community confront the negative images forced on Black women throughout history by shedding light onto the racism and sexism they face.

In addition to Smith, another influential Black Feminist critic is Barbara Christian who follows Smith's footsteps in establishing a Black Feminist literary theory and tradition. Her essay, "The Race for Theory" (1988) and later, a collection of texts in *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers* (1997), made her a centre figure in Black Feminist thought. What her essays and articles reveal is a pursuit in theorising Black Feminism through literature. Keizer (2007, 1) specifies this pursuit as "using the knowledge represented by writers and their characters as a basis for thinking about African American literature as a whole." In her view, Christian wanted powerful Black fiction, poetry, and drama to have an equally powerful and active framework for criticism (Keizer 2007, 2). To begin this work, Christian first concentrates on the year 1974 when a then unknown author, Zora Neale Hurston, appears on the cover of a widely read publication on Afro-American culture, political action, and literature, called *Black World* (Christian 2007 [1989], 5). In the publication, Hurston's works from the early 1900s are placed next to those of Richard Wright who is often acclaimed as the most successful Black author of the mid to late 1900s (Christian 2007 [1989], 6). This visible comparison indicated the need to publicly name Black female authors, but most importantly, the need to celebrate the existence of Black women writers in the first place (ibid.). Hurston's work started the "black women's renaissance of the 1970s" which revealed the neglect of centuries of texts written by Black women (Fabi 2007, 69–70). It is now easy to list names of Black female authors – Maya Angelou, Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker – because tedious work has been done to get to this point. Before the 1970s, however, a person of colour as the protagonist of a novel was unheard of (ibid.).

In fact, before Smith and Christian began their search for published books, articles, essays, and pamphlets by Black women, Black female authors were unknown even in the Black community (Christian 2007 [1989], 7). Christian (ibid.) recites: "Although in the sixties the works of neglected Afro-American male writers of the Harlem Renaissance were beginning to resurface [...] I was told the women writers of that period were terrible – not worth my

trouble.” This excerpt reveals the level of sexism of the 1960s society in the United States: although novels written by Black men were accepted into the prevailing literary tradition, Black women writers were not worth the same, not even the time it took to look for them. However, life in the United States was changing, and the fact that *Black World* published a number full of writings about Black women proved the Black Arts Movement was slowly uniting with the women’s movement, which is where Black feminist literary criticism has its roots (Christian 2007 [1989], 8).

Furthermore, while interest in women’s literature slowly rose in the academic world in the 1970s, not much Black writing was found in the predominantly white feminist journals. It became clear that those who had access to critical texts in the 1970s were namely white men and women, and Black men, who all seemingly did not know how to analyse publications by Black women even when available to them (Christian 2007 [1989], 9). As Christian (ibid.) argues, the intersections of racism and sexism Black women wrote about jeopardised the self-image of male and white female readers, which is why they refused to talk about Black female writers and their works. In the 1970s, Black women were considered only as Black writers, not as women writers (Christian 2007 [1989], 8). Smith (2012 [1977], 5) argues that the reason for this is the fact that the Black Feminist movement was developing slower than that of the white feminist movement. Christian, on the other hand, sees this as a much wider issue prevalent in the racist 1970s society, and finding a literary foremother in Hurston set forth a demand to build a Black female literary tradition.

This, however, was not an easy task for it was especially difficult to find the historical material that would build a foundation for a contemporary Black female literary tradition (Christian 2007 [1989], 10). Smith (2012 [1977], 13) articulates the difficulties of even knowing some, if not most of nineteenth-century texts “because there is no place to read them.” Christian (2007 [1989], 9), on the other hand, finds them “virtually impossible to locate.” There simply was no written account of Black women’s history:

Other than Gerda Lerner’s *Black Women in White America* (1973), I could not find a single full-length analysis of Afro-American women’s history. And despite the proliferation of Afro-American and women’s history books in the 1970s, I found in most of them only a few paragraphs devoted to black women. (Christian 2007 [1989], 10)

Not only that, when Christian (2007 [1989], 10) begins her research on Black women’s history to fill the gap described above, her academic colleagues warn her of studying such an

irrelevant body of literature, which might ruin her academic career. This again demonstrates the importance of Black Feminism as literary criticism as the topic has been so openly resented for centuries. Christian (ibid.) proves this further by stating that she feels lucky to be doing scholarly work in the Afro-American Studies instead of the English Department, “where not even the intercession of the Virgin would have allowed me to do research on black women writers.” Still, her work was deemed unimportant even before it started for Black women had so long been at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

However, the 1980s brought some change to this racist-sexist worldview when the Schomburg Library published dozens of texts written by Black women that previously had been difficult to find. Ann Ducille (2006, 46) describes the editor Henry Gates’, depiction of them as “marvelous renderings of the Afro-American woman’s consciousness” and how he notes that “black women published more fiction between 1890 and 1910 than black men had published in the preceding half-century.” Yet, these texts were either unknown or extremely hard to locate. Why is that? Ducille (ibid.) sees this as a consequence of the “bad rap” women’s fiction had received historically, and how these lost books had been misunderstood at the hands of white and Black men. Furthermore, these early texts did not seem to fit into the Black female literary tradition Smith started with “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism.” The idea of a shared identity through “Black female language” and common female activities were absent in the early Black woman writing. For that reason, the texts published in 1988 by the Schomburg Library were considered grammatically incorrect and unfit for the slowly building literary tradition (Ducille 2006, 47).

Indeed, building a tradition on history is complicated when it comes to Black Feminism. An example of these difficulties is Hurston herself, who is seen as an author of the quintessential Black feminist texts. While her second novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), gave her the title of a foremother, her fourth novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948) was denounced from Black literary tradition as it focuses on white characters instead of the lives of Black women (Ducille 2006, 47). This is why Deborah McDowell criticises Smith not only for her thoughts on a shared “Black female language,” but the definition of what Black feminist criticism is. McDowell (1980, 608) argues that the term should not refer only to Black female critics working on Black female authors but to anyone writing about Black women writers despite their race, political perspective, or gender. She also questions whether white feminists are to use a different set of critical tools in analysing Black women’s texts, as they have different cultural values but are all women (ibid.). To backtrack these thoughts, she refers to

Alice Walker, who responded to the following quote written by a white female psychologist: “I have no theory to offer to Third World female psychology in America [...]. As a white woman, I’m reluctant and unable to construct theories about experiences I haven’t had” (McDowell 1980, 606). To this Walker (ibid.) says: “[She] never lived in the 19th century Yorkshire, so why theorize about the Brontës?”. If people of all skin colour can theorise and analyse the texts of those critically acclaimed white women whose experiences they have never shared, why would it be any different with Black women’s texts?

These questions, although difficult to answer, can be seen as a positive turn. If a wider group of critics are attracted to this body of literature, it means that it is gaining interest and a level of respect it has never received before. These highly debated questions reveal the growing pains of Black Feminism, which Ducille (2006, 48) describes to be tunnel vision which is at the very centre of any process of creating something new. In the case of Black Feminism, texts written by Black women symbolise much more than just women’s art – they are a representation of real-world women with real-world issues of segregation and oppression. As Christian (2007 [1994], 185) illustrates, African Americans, both female and male, write because they need to explore and articulate how the concept of race and its effects have shaped the American society: “African-American writers have pointed to the effects of the intersections of the categories we now call race, class, and gender.” This relationship between race, class, and gender, “the new Trinity” (Christian 2007 [1990], 174) is what I concentrate on next.

3 Intersectionality

In 1989, Kimberly Crenshaw writes a paper on the oppression of African American women, called, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” in which she uses the term ‘intersectionality’ for the first time. It grants her the title of creator of the term, but this does not mean that ideas of intersectionality were not present before coining it in an academic paper. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016, 53) date the history of intersectionality to the late 1960s to early 1980s when social activism in the United States pushed forwards ideas of social inequality and social justice from the lens of racism, sexism, and colonialism.

However, Kathryn Gines (2011, 275) argues that intersectionality has been the centre of Black feminist writing since the nineteenth-century. In this chapter, I use the writings of the above mentioned three Black feminists to understand what intersectionality means and how it can be used as an analytical tool to examine the ways different aspects of one’s identity are in intra-connection with one another, and how they reveal political and social injustice all around the world.

To trace the beginnings of intersectionality as an ideology, I return to Gines and her argument that intersectionality has been a concept widely used before Crenshaw’s coining of the term. It is easy to support her claim when looking at what Black women such as Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells-Barnett were focusing on in the 1800s. Truth’s now famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?,” which she delivered in 1851 during the Women’s Rights Convention, shows clear intersections of gender and race:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman? (in hooks 1992 [1981], 160)

Truth questions the concept of womanhood when it clearly does not seem to apply to her, even if she has always considered herself a woman. She turns to slavery, an issue dealing with race, and combines it with the issue of being a woman – perhaps no man helps her into carriages because she is a *Black* woman. Many have since recognized Truth’s ability to link

abolition and women's rights to expose the intersections of Black women's gender and race identities, well before anyone had a name for this ideology (Gines 2011, 276). Similarly, Wells-Barnett dedicated her life on researching and writing about lynching in America, which show intersections of politics, race, and gender. Victims of lynching were not only Black men sentenced for raping white women, but they were also Black children, women, and men who either resisted white supremacy or had wrong political views (ibid.).

It is important to note here that although intersectionality was born out of necessity within the Afro-American community and Black Feminism, it does not mean it includes only issues of political and social injustices in the United States. Indeed, many communities outside of North America and Europe have also used intersectionality as an analytical tool without naming it as such (Collins and Bilge 2016, 12). To demonstrate this, Collins and Bilge consider "an unexpected example" from nineteenth-century colonial India and the work of Savitribai Phule, a first-generation modern Indian feminist (ibid.). Collins and Bilge cite Deepika Sarma, who first pointed out Phule's intersectional tendencies: in the mid-1800s she fights for widow remarriage rights, helps welfare programmes such as opening schools for workers and rural people, and cares for people affected by famine and plague, which eventually also kills her. Sarma states that Phule is "a staunch advocate of anti-caste ideology and women's rights" and that her "vision of social equality included fighting against the subjugation of women" while promoting Adivasis – the indigenous peoples of India – and Muslims (Collins and Bilge 2016, 13). Just as Truth confronted intersections of race and gender, Phule concentrates on intersections of caste, gender, religion, and class.

As discussed earlier, the 1960s and 1970s brought change in political movements all around the world. This is when women of colour stepped away from 'second wave feminism', and intersections of race and class were brought up more frequently. In fact, in the late 1960s, people of colour were involved not only with the Black Power movement but the Chicano liberation, Red Power and Asian-American movements as well (Collins and Bilge 2016, 54). Within these groups women were not considered equal to men, and women recognized that they have unique gender issues with racial and class segregation. While I concentrate on the issues brought up by Black Feminism, the Chicanas, Asian-American and Native American women were, and still are, facing similar struggles (ibid.). In *Brown Girl* the women are of Haitian descent living in modern day Canada, and intersectionality's core ideas are very visible in their lives because of their ethnic background. Although intersectionality as a term

has its background strongly in the United States, it does not mean it could not be used for issues brought up in the Global South as well.

Furthermore, to give a more recent example of intersectionality outside the United States, Collins and Bilge draw attention to the Latinadades, the Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean women's convention, held in Brazil in 2014. This event was a combination of an African cultural heritage event, a political occasion, an academic symposium, and a music festival (Collins and Bilge 2016, 23). Although the event was aimed at women of African descent, many men, and people from other ethnic groups from South America and the Caribbean nations joined, which reflects the many ways participants from different parts of the world wish to illuminate the sexism and racism Afro-Latin women face (*ibid.*). The event shed light especially onto Brazil's national identity contributing to the "erasure of Afro-Brazilian women" through historical considerations of gender and sexism and the place of Black women (Collins and Bilge 2016, 24). Intersections of race, gender and sexuality are visible in the daily lives of Afro-Latin women searching for jobs or education because their appearance, be it their skin colour, facial features, or hair texture, still factors in who is granted opportunities in the Brazilian society (Collins and Bilge 2016, 25). The Latinadades festival, then, revealed shared identity politics by Afro-Brazilian women since they, too, had been left out of the previous feminist and Black movements. To change that, these women actively "cultivated a political black feminist identity at the intersections of racism, sexism, class exploitation, national history, and sexuality" (*ibid.*). It is a recurring theme: different women of colour need to combine forces on their own to fight for their rights.

There are several influential names that are connected to intersectionality and its beginnings, some already mentioned in the previous chapters. One that had a big impact on intersectionality is the Combahee River Collective's (henceforth CRC) and their now famous text, "A Black Feminist Statement." The statement was originally written in 1977 and it focuses on the systematic oppression people face through racism, capitalism, and patriarchy, also putting emphasis on homophobia (Collins and Bilge 2016, 55–56). CRC was a group of Black lesbian feminists that concentrated on both the theory and politics of intersectionality. Collins and Bilge (2016, 58) describe their ideas and how the collective shows that theory and politics can be combined: "The experiences that emerge from political struggles can catalyze an enriched conceptual vocabulary for understanding intersecting oppressions, yet unexamined experience is also not enough. The synergy of ideas and actions is important." The Statement is important for its theoretical values, but it is emphasised that theory cannot

be where the analysis of intersectionality ends, because the political struggles are very real and tangible for women of colour. The writers of the Statement also acknowledged that what they started with CRC is only the beginning of intersectionality and Black Feminism. The statement ends with the following proclamation: “As black feminists and lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us” (Combahee River Collective [1977] 2019, 36). This turned out to be very true as intersectionality has gone through a long process of development since the late 1970s.

Today, intersectionality is used as a tool to understand and analyse the many factors that influence a person’s life and the self through different axes of social and political division (Collins and Bilge 2016, 11). These divisions can include one or several of the following examples: class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, citizenship, culture, or religion. Shortly, the term refers to the “multiple, interconnected layers of existence and identity” (Gines 2011, 275). Crenshaw divides intersectionality into three different areas: structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, 1245). Structural intersectionality refers to people having multiple intersections of identities, and how they still can be different from others who share similar identity markers somewhere else (Crenshaw 1991, 1245–51). Political intersectionality, on the other hand, can be used to analyse the way people need to belong to more than one political group, even if they are opposing one another in some way (Crenshaw 1991, 1252). For women of colour, according to Crenshaw, this means always belonging to at least two subordinated groups with conflicting political agendas: being a woman and being Black (ibid.). The third aspect Crenshaw (1991, 1282–83) considers is representational intersectionality. This refers to the way women of colour are explored and viewed in the dominant cultural imagery via media, language, and texts. Crenshaw uses the three aspects of intersectionality in discussing violence against women of colour, but her ideas can be used in a wide arrange of political and social issues.

As I have demonstrated, intersectionality is a “way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience” (Collins and Bilge 2016, 27). To help build a tangible analytical tool, Collins and Bilge divide the core ideas of intersectionality into six groups: social inequality, relationality, power, social context, complexity, and social justice (ibid.). The three of these core ideas shown most prominently in *Brown Girl* are social inequality, power, and social justice. Social inequality is exactly

what it sounds like, inequality among different societies when it comes to issues like race and class. Intersectionality adds on to this idea by recognising that social inequality is based on interactions with many different categories, it is not caused by one classification only (ibid.). Power, on the other hand, is analysed through intersections of these different categories, for example sexism and age, while concentrating also on the domains of power (Collins and Bilge 2016, 28). Social justice is a broader idea that describes the fairness in unequal societies, where simple rules are applied to people through biased practices (Collins and Bilge 2016, 30–31). An example of this is the right to vote without equal access to do so (Collins and Bilge 2016, 28). Collins and Bilge (2016, 31) argue that social justice is “the most contentious” core idea, but it “expands the circle of intersectionality to include people who use intersectionality as an analytic tool for social justice.”

In the next chapter, I combine the ideas of Black Feminism and intersectionality to analyse *Brown Girl* through Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne, and their experiences as Black women.

4 Intersections of Gender and Ethnicity

Before analysing intersections of gender and ethnicity in *Brown Girl* it is important to talk about the difference between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ first. Both are accepted as social constructs used to categorise groups of people that have similarities in appearance or cultural background.

Merriam-Webster makes a distinction between the two as follows:

The term race is understood today as primarily a sociological designation that identifies a group sharing some outward physical characteristics and some commonalities of culture and history, while ethnicity is a word for something you acquire based on where your family is from and the group which you share cultural, traditional, and familial bonds and experiences with. (Merriam-Webster.com 2022, n.p.)

‘Race’ is what one might use when defining someone’s physical traits whereas ‘ethnicity’ includes the idea of race together with one’s nationality, heritage, ancestry, and culture (Merriam-Webster.com 2022, n.p.). Two people could identify with the same race but have different ethnic backgrounds. This is especially true in North America, where historically a lot of stress has been put on one’s physical appearance and skin colour, and people are still characterised either as Black or white for racial purposes. Unlike many other Western countries, the United States requires all legal forms and censuses to state what race and ethnicity one belongs to (Merriam-Webster 2022.com, n.p.). However, ‘race’ as a modern word is an invention that has no valid biological concept and was originally used to deny people of colour of privileges and giving them to people who were white (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.), much of which I discussed while elaborating on the lives of enslaved women.

I argue that using race as a common term to keep separating people in today’s world is problematic and counteractive to what anti-racist movements advocate, but the term still cannot be ignored as it would lead to ignorance of the political and social effects it still has on people. However, it is important to know what ‘race’ as a term means, where it comes from, and what effects it has had ever since its invention. Only after that can one decide whether to give the world more power or to find other ways to talk about what it implies. As Ta-Nehisi Coates states, “race is the child of racism, not the father” (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.). The term was born out of a need to segregate people of colour, not the other way around, and it is how different notions of racism were kept alive for hundreds of years because justification for enslavement was needed. Still, many anti-racist

movements, including Black Feminism, regularly uses the term. *Brown Girl* is a feminist novel that includes many Black Feminist concepts, and it strongly highlights not only the ‘race’ of the protagonists but their cultural and ancestral heritage as well. Therefore, I choose to analyse the ‘ethnicity’ of the characters, while using Black Feminism as a framework for racial issues found in the book.

The ethnicity of the characters becomes even more important when connected to Canada’s multiculturalism. *Brown Girl* is set in the derelict Canadian city of Toronto and although Hopkinson does not make a clear statement about it, the city seems multicultural in its own right with an array of ethnicities interacting with each other daily. This is insinuated with the diversity of names given for side characters often mentioned only once or twice in the novel: “Pavel” is a typically Slavic name, “Malini Lewis” points to Indian heritage, while “Pastor Maisonneuve” implies a French background (*Brown Girl* 12–15). Furthermore, languages spoken even within the Caribbean community suggest people have immigrated to Toronto from all over the world: “Mostly Caribbean English, but some spoke Spanish and others the African-rhythmed French of the French Caribbean islands. One or two were White, and there was Mami’s friend Jenny, who was Romany” (*Brown Girl* 87). These descriptions go hand in hand with Canada’s multicultural identity, and how today Canadian literature showcases representations of different cultures and histories, “which transcend[s] traditional categories of Canadianness” (Howells 2009, 1). This thinking, however, is a relatively new development. Although Canada is a former settler colony founded on the lands of the First Nations, accepting that it is more than a white Commonwealth country took many decades of work. It was not until 1988 when the Multiculturalism Act was set forth to respond to Canada’s changing demographic (Howells 2009, 3).

As the protagonists in *Brown Girl* come from Haiti, I am especially interested in the history of Caribbean immigration, as it can explain the mind-set Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne have about their own cultural heritage while struggling to be Canadians at the same time. Haiti was one of the first countries to abolish African slavery and become an independent country besides its large slave population. The enslaved people of rich sugar plantations in Saint-Dominique, as Haiti was known back then, revolted for civil rights in 1791 which resulted in the country’s independence from France in 1804, and eventually the Haitian Revolution in 1831 (Smith 2014, 21). Although many moved to other Caribbean countries, even the U.S., after that, Canada did not accept Haitian immigrants until the early 1960s, when the country was in desperate need for skilled outside laborers (Jadotte 1977, 493). This is in part why many still

have the false notion that the Black communities in Canada have developed rather recently, when in fact African Canadians have inhabited the lands for 400 years, Nova Scotia having the oldest colonial past in that regard (Bristow et al. 1994, 9). Hopkinson does not give the novel a specific date, it is merely set somewhere in the future. As the novel was first published in 1998, it is not farfetched to argue that if the reality of our time and the reality of the books were to overlap, Gros-Jeanne could be one of those first 1960s immigrants that moved to Canada as a teen or even a young adult. Rudy, her ex-husband, remembers coming to Canada: “From I born, people been taking advantage. Poor all me born days. Come up to Canada, no work” (*Brown Girl* 131). I find this an important link, as it is evident in my analysis that Gros-Jeanne is still very much connected to her homeland. I talk about the Haitian diaspora in more detail later in the next sub-chapter.

However, Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne cannot escape their ethnicity completely as they all suffer from the stereotypical images forced on Black women, even in a world that has collapsed both politically and socially. These images were contracted to control Black women’s subordination and date back to slavery (Collins 2000, 72). Gros-Jeanne carries the image of the mammy, an older Black woman who is a devoted mother and carer. Ti-Jeanne, on the other hand, cannot escape being seen as the emasculating matriarch and aggressive sapphire. What is more, even in a multicultural society in a multicultural country, they are seen as the ethnic Others, different from everyone else, because of their strong Haitian background. In the following two sub-chapters I go in further detail about these topics, as I analyse Hopkinson’s novel through the eyes of intersectionality. How does gender interact with ethnicity in *Brown Girl in the Ring*? What does it mean to Gros-Jeanne to be a Haitian Canadian woman in a hostile city ruled by men? How does Ti-Jeanne fight the images forced on her?

4.1 Gros-Jeanne: Haitian Diaspora and Hybridity

In short, diaspora refers to a shared ethnic experience of displacement or relocation, especially in connection to migration and resettlement. Today it is also linked to the feeling of multilocation, living in one place while remembering another just as vividly (Howells 2001, 2). Historically diaspora has been a term used to describe the displacement of Jewish people and World War I refugees to “both describe and critique the conditions of transnational movement brought about by systems of indenture, immigration, and varied forms of

displacement” (Mannur and Braziel 2016, 164). The Caribbean Second Middle Passage, the domestic U.S. slave trade, is an example of indenture that affected the relocation of many before the abolition of slavery, while World War II created new diasporas that lasted until the Cold War (Mannur and Braziel 2016, 165). The traditional criteria of diaspora often include the pursuit to assimilate to the new community but simultaneously committing to the idea of returning to the original homeland (ibid.). From a feministic point of view, however, diasporas should also be used to analyse how the displaced movement is affected by gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. For this reason, feminist, ethnic, and queer studies have brought light onto the way traditional descriptions of diaspora only follow patrilineal genealogies, how accords of home and self-determination are based on colonialism and imperialism, and how the moving forces of diasporas are based on patriarchal systems (Mannur and Braziel 2016, 165–166). In my analysis, I follow the feminist thinking of diaspora to understand the “impossibility for women, queer subjects, or otherwise disenfranchised subjects to fully identify with the projects of the nation-state” and the way “implicitly gendered logic through which the language of nationhood, belonging, and migration is constructed” (Mannur and Braziel 2016, 170).

To analyse diaspora in *Brown Girl*, I concentrate on Gros-Jeanne, or Mami, as Ti-Jeanne calls her. She is the oldest of the family, providing for herself and her granddaughter exclusively by using Haitian herbal medicine to help people in need. As a forgotten city full of crime and poverty, Toronto no longer has access to healthcare, which is why many turn to the old lady. It is clear Gros-Jeanne, or her immigrant parents, brought her Haitian knowledge of plants to Canada from the Caribbean as she “missed the tropical herbs she could no longer get in Toronto, both for healing and for cooking” (*Brown Girl* 141). Before the Burn, the event that escalated the social and political collapse of the city, Gros-Jeanne was using the tropical plants found in Toronto, as they are a crucial part of her identity as a Haitian woman living in Canada. However, knowingly keeping such strong ties to her heritage has caused Gros-Jeanne to become “that crazy old woman” (*Brown Girl* 36) who plays with foreign medicine and, with or without her acceptance, is portrayed as a Caribbean witch doctor. I see this implying three different things: firstly, with the use of herbal medicine, Gros-Jeanne is displaying her Haitian diasporic and hybrid identity. Secondly, Gros-Jeanne is not only a Haitian healer, but she is also a woman, and she has involved herself with what the patriarchy considers to be nothing but ‘womanly fluff’. Thirdly, this seemingly simple yet effective way to help ill Torontonians has connotations to Buff, the local drug. This connection is negative in

association since both medicinal herbs and Buff are strongly tied to Haiti, and Haitians are seen as ethnic Others in this community. To elaborate, I first look at what it means for Gros-Jeanne be an ethnic Other.

As Otherness is a relatively wide concept and has many interpretations, it is unnecessary to theorise all of it here. Instead, I turn to Jacqueline Benn-John (2016, 153) in stating that being an Other means to be deemed different from everyone else. In the case of Black women, they are compared to whiteness and the colonised connotations of power and privilege it has. Blackness, on the other hand, is characterised as inferior, backward, and evil, and Black people cannot have the attributes or skills associated with being white (Benn-John 2016, 153–154). Being an ethnic Other, then, is to be the outsider of the group for one's ethnic background. For Gros-Jeanne, the negative connotations of Otherness are not only given to her 'race' but her entire Haitian identity. This is clear when examining Gros-Jeanne's role as the community healer. Although the herbal medicine she uses is relatively harmless and docile, such as garlic and salt for a foot itch, aloe or plantain leaf for a cut, and willow bark for headache (*Brown Girl* 35–36), these mundane plants become exotic and intimidating. This is because they are used by someone who the community sees as an Other, a foreigner, someone different from them, no matter how big of a part she plays in its well-being and welfare. Garlic and salt are "backward and evil" when they are associated with a Haitian Black woman, but delicious and positive when associated with whiteness and cooking. This binary thinking is used to categorise people in oppositional terms of difference to objectify the Other so that they can be controlled (Collins 2000, 70). Aloe is not indigenous to Canada, therefore using it as a healing remedy makes Gros-Jeanne a bush doctor – she can either be 'good' and white, or 'evil' and Black.

Furthermore, as I mentioned above, the local drug, Buff, also has a strong Haitian connection: "Is Haiti people first make it, you nah know? From poison toad and some herbs. Bufo toad. Is that name that buff come from" (*Brown Girl* 210). Buff is mentioned often throughout the novel, and it has done nothing but bad things for the people addicted to it. One of them is Tony, Ti-Jeanne's ex-lover, who gets mixed up in Rudy's business for his growing Buff debt. In my opinion, the drug's negative implications act as a metaphor for the image given for the Haitian community: both are dangerous and unknown, and if one is not careful in meddling with them, bad things will happen. It is almost as if only someone from Haiti could have made a drug so harmful it ruins people's lives, even in poverty-stricken Toronto. In addition, when Rudy paralyses Ti-Jeanne during their battle at the end of the novel, he uses "buff with

some other Haiti medicine mix in” (*Brown Girl* 211) to knowingly cause her extensive pain. Buff and Haitian medicine are used together as the ultimate act of evil to underline what being an ethnic Other in Toronto indicates. For Gros-Jeanne it means being stereotyped as a witch doctor who is shunned and feared by those who do not believe in her ways. This is especially interesting as Gros-Jeanne lives in a hybrid community that does not only affect the way she is viewed, but her own identity as well.

Hopkinson’s later novel, *Midnight Robber* (2000), also has Caribbean-born characters. The way she describes their lives can easily be applied to *Brown Girl* as well:

Caribbean cultures are hybrid cultures. Hybridity was a strategy for survival and resistance amongst the enslaved and indentured people. They all came from different cultures with 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. (Hopkinson [2006])

As mentioned above, the community Gros-Jeanne lives in is a widely multicultural one. Not only does she struggle with her own hybrid identity mixing Haitian and Canadian cultures, but she is constantly affected by the surrounding ethnicities. This is visible through different aspects of the novel: the space in the city she inhabits, the way she navigates her spirituality and how she needs to find a way to combine Haitian and Canadian habits in her day-to-day life. To survive the harsh life in Toronto, people from all backgrounds must work together to combine their strengths. Michelle Reid (2005, 306) argues: “This community is reinforced by necessity, resourcefulness, and local participation.” Gros-Jeanne participates through her Haitian plant knowledge and Voudun practices, even when these things affect her life and self-worth negatively. This is because hybridity and diaspora are always two-way roads. On the one hand, Gros-Jeanne endures the clear marginalisation she suffers because of her Haitian heritage, but on the other she has learned to accept and evolve that part of her. This is indicated when she thinks about her plants: “Romni Jenny and Frank Greyeyes were teaching her about northern herbs. In time, she’d have a more complete arsenal” (*Brown Girl* 141). She must learn how to use not only what is familiar but what is available, and by extending her herbal knowledge, she is extending and expanding her identity from a Haitian-born healer to a Haitian Canadian healer. As Hopkinson states, “hybridity was a strategy for survival and resistance” (Hopkinson [2006]). Gros-Jeanne’s hybridity is complicated but not unusual for someone with her past. Her Haitian diaspora keeps her from completely assimilating to Canada, but she has found a way to call Toronto home. Her Haitian remedies and Voudun

practices are what makes the space she inhabits her home, not the thought of returning to the monolithic homeland.

As I mentioned, Gros-Jeanne's role as a healer comes with ramifications. Tony, a Black man himself, resents Gros-Jeanne, and immediately connects her Haitian treatments to Obeah, which to him is dangerous black magic:

Tony had once teased Ti-Jeanne almost to tears about her grandmother: "What's that crazy old woman doing over there in Riverdale Farm, eh, Ti-Jeanne? Obeah? Nobody believes in that duppy business any more!"

"Is not obeah, Tony! Mami is a healer, a seer woman! She does do good, not wickedness!" (*Brown Girl* 36).

Tony acts as the voice of the white man, supporting racial oppression and white patriarchy by categorising Gros-Jeanne as a crazy, old woman who works with foreign beliefs. He insists on not believing in Obeah but is still afraid of it, indicated by many instances where he thinks to himself. In fact, Gros-Jeanne's stereotypical image as a female bush doctor further demonstrates her role as an ethnic female Other. Tony fears what he cannot understand, deeming Gros-Jeanne the ethnic Other even to himself because she is not only a woman but a Haitian woman. Like Tony, other people in their community believe Gros-Jeanne is wicked in her ways, but simultaneously rely on her remedies since commercial medicine is no longer available. This double standard travels far and wide in the community, as even children fear her. When an orphan girl is brought in for her broken leg, she tries to repel: "No, no! She's a witch! She's going to eat me! Don't make me go in there!" (*Brown Girl* 63). To ease the girl's worries, Gros-Jeanne changes her speech "to the more standard English she used when she was speaking to non-Caribbean people" (*ibid.*) and introduces herself as Mistress Hunter.

Although Gros-Jeanne is proud of her ancestry, she is aware how it affects her role in the community. She feels the need to change herself to appear less Haitian when necessary, and knows language with the tone of her voice, and the word choices she makes is a big part of that. She cannot change who she is and where she comes from, or the way she looks, but she can change her demeanour and voice to act more white. Hopkinson calls this switching of modes 'code-sliding':

Linguists have a term for the way I've used language in the narrative. It's 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. (Hopkinson [2006])

I have analysed code-sliding as a way for Gros-Jeanne to assimilate and change herself when needed, but what Hopkinson says above could be read as a more positive way to look at the way Gros-Jeanne uses language in extension to her Haitian diaspora. Not only does she use a hybrid language common for Caribbeans who feel rootless and alienated for their colonised past (Mukherjee 2012, n.p.), she takes this trauma to form a sense of community around herself. “Caribbean communities have always been hybrid communities” (Hopkinson [2006]) and Gros-Jeanne’s instinctive way of using language modes to appeal to different people in different situations provides a network of support and community spirit, which is “reinforced by necessity, resourcefulness, and local participation” (Reid 2005, 306). Moving effortlessly between the creolised English to a more standard one helps Gros-Jeanne to be a part of that participation and resourcefulness. Everyone needs her and she makes sure she is available even for those who might feel uncomfortable around her. According to Igor Maver (2009, 22), Hopkinson’s Caribbean language is her vision of how co-existing cultures can evolve, and it acts as a language of resistance. Just as he argues that Hopkinson herself embraces and acknowledges her Caribbean Canadian hybridity with her writing, I argue that Gros-Jeanne does the same, and her language is a big part of that.

Furthermore, ‘code-sliding’ is only one way of enhancing Gros-Jeanne’s own hybrid identity. As Haitian immigration to Canada has been relatively recent, Gros-Jeanne is still very connected to her heritage, therefore wanting to sound a certain way to keep that connection alive. Paul Brodwin, while analysing Haitian diaspora in Guadeloupe, states that Haitians often “stereotype their own cultural distinctiveness in order to underscore the cultural weakness of Guadeloupe” (Brodwin 2010, 16). It might be too farfetched to argue that Gros-Jeanne sees the non-Haitian cultures in Canada somehow weaker, but she can, however, be argued of stereotyping her own cultural uniqueness. She takes pride in her heritage and is not afraid of passing on not only her knowledge but harmful manners. She is especially hard on Ti-Jeanne, which in turn makes Ti-Jeanne not only reject Gros-Jeanne as a trusted grandmother but shun her whole Haitian identity. The following passage is an example of the language, both in syntax and usage of words and how Gros-Jeanne addresses Ti-Jeanne throughout the novel:

“Is where the ass you been all day? You don’t see the child hungry? Get inside and feed he! You just as bad as your blastered mother!”

“Yes, Mami. I goin’, Mami.” Ti-Jeanne scuttled inside, unbuttoning her blouse as she went so that the child could suck.

“Stupidness,” Mami muttered behind Ti-Jeanne’s fleeing back. (*Brown Girl* 34)

Gros-Jeanne misuses her role as an authority in the family by abusing Ti-Jeanne emotionally as well as physically. Ti-Jeanne remembers the “slaps and whippings” (*Brown Girl* 219) she has been given throughout her childhood, but these events are merely brushed off by stating that Gros-Jeanne was a “hard woman” (*ibid.*). Her hardness, it seems, comes from a long tradition of abuse that she received from Rudy, her Caribbean-born ex-husband. Interestingly, Gros-Jeanne knew to flee the abusive relationship when the domestic abuse was too much for her, as Rudy reveals to Ti-Jeanne: “Just because me give she little slap two-three time when she make she mouth run away ‘on me” (*Brown Girl* 131). Yet, Gros-Jeanne cannot completely flee this learned behaviour when it comes to her own family. The same theme continues when Ti-Jeanne questions Gros-Jeanne’s hesitance to share anything with her:

From since slavery days, we people get in the habit of hiding we business from we own children even, in case a child open he mouth and tell somebody story and get them in trouble. Secrecy was survival, oui? Is a hard habit to break. (*Brown Girl* 50)

Although it has been hundreds of years since slavery officially was abolished in Haiti, the national trauma stays within Gros-Jeanne even after immigrating to Canada. Throughout the novel, her identity has an underlying theme of exile for the strong ties she has with her ethnic background and learned habits that are difficult to break. She is marginalised for what Brodwin (2010, 17) characterises as “chronic state of divided allegiance”, and she constantly moves between being a part of her community and being Othered by it.

What is more, Benn-John argues that “a Black woman is never just Black or African or woman. Instead, all of her identities come into play, impacting her experience of day to day social interactions, privilege and marginalization” (Benn-John 2016, 153). Being a woman intersects with Gros-Jeanne’s ethnicity and her role as a marginalised immigrant. When she uses her Haitian knowledge to help the community, she is crazy, she eats children, and is shunned by those who do not understand her heritage. From a feministic point of view this is especially problematic as Rudy is also known for using black magic, but for power over the city. Instead of being forced to change himself to fit in like Gros-Jeanne, he is a leader, someone to be respected, and no one challenges his power. While this is an example of gender interfering with magic, it is also an example of Black male privilege within an oppressed

community. It enables the sexist oppression of Black women and the “racist expectations of hegemonic womanhood” (Benn-John 2016, 156). Rudy has the same Caribbean heritage as his ex-wife but does not face the same discrimination. This is his Black male privilege, another lesson in Black women’s political intersectionality.

Additionally, in Hopkinson’s post-apocalyptic patriarchal Toronto ‘women’s knowledge’ is worthless compared to the ‘real knowledge’ of men. Whatever society deems female-centric, becomes of less value. Curing plants and using them as remedies is a domestic task, which is what Black women historically have been restricted to (Collins 2000, 40). Gros-Jeanne’s work as a domestic healer might appear reactionary as “much of Black women’s progress in the labor market has been measured by the move out of domestic service” (ibid.). However, Gros-Jeanne has gained social power for this exact reason. Her domestic services have given her authority in the community, which is illustrated by many things: the number of patients she has, how most citizens know her by name, how many help her find plants and viable drugs to build her medicine arsenal, and the fact that Ti-Jeanne, a young woman, feels safe moving in the crime ridden slums other people fear because she is associated by Gros-Jeanne. Men who harass her on the streets never go too far, since “she was Mami Gros-Jeanne’s granddaughter, and nobody wanted Mami mad at them” (*Brown Girl* 31). Gros-Jeanne is the perfect example of someone who turns what seems a disadvantage into a vessel for power. She uses herblore to revalue what women’s knowledge and domestic work means. This is a reoccurring theme in *Brown Girl*, Hopkinson takes something that has been a way to oppress women to show that same thing is also a way to fight injustice. Although women often lack power in patriarchal societies because they are not men, in *Brown Girl* Gros-Jeanne could not have gained her position without being a woman, without using traditional women’s knowledge as power.

Indeed, beyond using Haitian plants to display her power, I argue that Gros-Jeanne is an example of a woman who uses her role as an ethnic female Other to further fight marginalisation and oppression. Because of the diaspora, she has spent most of her life educating her female descendants about their heritage and about the Haitian medicine which has become a vital part of Torontonians life. By doing so, she engages in feminist activism, fighting generations of coercion by recognising the importance of her knowledge. She has decided to live as the Other despite what it means to her personally, as it helps the next generations to resist the images forced on them. Although she is characterised as the bush doctor, a derogatory expression to diminish the value of her expertise, she spends all her time

and effort to help the community, even the ones that reject her and the source of her services. According to Benn-John (2016, 159), Black women's resistance includes passing on the cultural and indigenous knowledge not only within the Black families but through the acts of everyone who is socially or politically active in the community. This is exactly what Gros-Jeanne does with her remedies: her help is an act of resistance. In the end, her love for her ancestry is how she will be remembered:

It was Jenny who had insisted on the nine-night, a wake for the recently dead that would calm the dead spirit and point out its way to Guinea Land, sent off with the love of the living it must leave behind. "This is how your granny would have wanted it," Jenny told them. "A shasto, a party, to send her soul off with joy. This is her way." (*Brown Girl* 242)

Haiti is her way, even when living in another country. She carried the diaspora with her, moving between her Haitian and Canadian identities to make herself an irreplaceable part of Toronto's multicultural community, finding a way to root herself in Toronto. A part of Haiti remains in Canada as they celebrate her life the way she would have wanted to.

Next, I move my focus on Ti-Jeanne and the controlling images of Black women and how gender interacts with ethnicity in yet another way.

4.2 Ti-Jeanne: Fighting the Controlling Images of Black Women

As I discussed in Chapter 2, different stereotypes have been forced on Black women since slavery. Historically there are three controlling images: the mammy, the sapphire, and the jezebel (West 1995, 458). Mammies are "highly maternal, family oriented, and self-sacrificing," sapphires "threatening and argumentative" and jezebels seductive, irresponsible, and promiscuous (West 1995, 458). These images were constructed in the slave era to protect Black women's subordination to accept racism, sexism, and social injustice as normal or natural (Collins 2000, 72, 69). To widen the historical spectrum, Collins adds three other stereotypes to the list: the matriarch, the Black lady, and the welfare mother, built upon tropes detected by other contemporary Black scholars such as Michele Wallace and Mary Helen Washington (Wisseh 2019, 392). The matriarchs are aggressive, unfeminine women who emasculate their husbands (Collins 2000, 75) while the Black ladies are the modern mammies, middle-class professional women "who represent a modern version of the politics of respectability advanced by the club women" (Collins 2000, 80). The welfare mothers, on

the other hand, are poor, working-class Black women using the welfare benefit system to raise their children (Collins 2000, 78). The stereotypes described above are all compared to the mammy image which acts as the norm of what is expected of Black women – subordination to elite white male power (Collins 2000, 72). Fighting these controlling images is in the centre of Black feminist thought (Collins 2000, 69) as well as Hopkinson's novel.

It is not unusual for a Black woman to possess more than one image (Woodard and Mastin 2005, 272). In *Brown Girl*, Gros-Jeanne has qualities of the mammy and the sapphire: she is completely committed to her job as the carer, but she is also the loud, angry Black woman who is deemed evil. Some could also argue that Gros-Jeanne, the head of household as a single mother, is what is considered the opposite of the ugly, old mammy, the emasculating matriarch. However, in my opinion, Gros-Jeanne is the perfect mammy despite her unwillingness to be the happy slave. The mammy represents the “good” mother (Collins 2000, 75), which is what Gros-Jeanne is: she cares not only for her own child, but her granddaughter, the ill orphan children of Toronto, and anyone who requires her nurture. She is depicted as asexual and “therefore is free to become a surrogate mother to the children she acquired not through her own sexuality,” typical of the mammy image (Collins 2000, 84). Ti-Jeanne, on the other hand, is not like her. She resents motherhood and has “nothing in [her] head but man” (*Brown Girl* 61). Unlike Gros-Jeanne, she is seen as the “bad Black mother,” a young matriarch. She is the opposite of Gros-Jeanne and the opposite of the mammy, the perfect Black woman. In addition to the matriarch, Ti-Jeanne fights the image of the sapphire, much like her grandmother.

The mammy was a creation of the patriarchy. She was shown her place as the caregiver, the woman who stays home, takes care of white children better than her own, and does not question the power of men, even their husbands' (Collins 2000, 72–73). The matriarch, on the other hand, was conceptualised in the 1960s Moynihan Report, where Daniel Patrick Moynihan describes a woman who leaves her children and man for work, and therefore has no real maternal instincts (Woodard and Mastin 2005, 271). His thesis argues that Black women who failed the traditional female role contributed to the problems in the Black community (Collins 2000, 75). Ti-Jeanne is an example of a woman who acts as the opposition of patriarchy, she is what Moynihan and others consider a problem. She leaves her child in others' care, is not afraid to have sexual desires, and fights the sexist subordination of women in subtle ways. Therefore, in this sub-chapter, I concentrate on the intersections of gender and ethnicity by analysing the controlling images of Ti-Jeanne. First, I look at how Ti-Jeanne's

role as a mother is a depiction of the matriarch but how she is also an example of a Black woman who fights this image.

The matriarch is the “bad mother,” a universal stereotype common in Canada:

In Canada's social context, single Black females with children exist outside the boundary of hegemonic femininity (e.g., married, heterosexual, middle-class, deserving, kind and caring); however, single Black females exist within the universal stereotype of a “bad mother” (e.g., non-White, single, poor, unprepared, incompetent, impatient and mothering racialized children). (Benn-John 2016, 161)

Ti-Jeanne is everything Benn-John describes in the passage above: non-white, single, poor, unprepared, incompetent, and impatient with her child. This is not surprising as her role models for motherhood come from women who themselves have failed in society’s eyes as mothers in different ways. Mami Gros-Jeanne is a “hard woman” who uses physical and mental abuse as means of upbringing, and Mi-Jeanne, Ti-Jeanne’s mother, left without a word when she was young. What is more, Gros-Jeanne is more affectionate to the people she helps in her community than her own offspring, and Ti-Jeanne often transfers this learned behaviour to her new-born child:

As he suckled, Baby’s hand found one of Ti-Jeanne’s plaits and gave it a good pull. Irritably Ti-Jeanne pulled the plait away from him and was about to slap the mischievous hand when Mami came back into the room. [...] “Ti-Jeanne, I know you did never want no baby. Sometimes you almost feel to just get rid of he, don’t it?” Shamed, Ti-Jeanne nodded. (*Brown Girl* 49)

Ti-Jeanne often wishes Baby would not exist or would at least act more like an adult as his crying and whimpering annoy her. She grows impatient when he is hungry and does not always intuitively know what the baby needs. She does not possess the mammy qualities of a jovial, loving mother and instead becomes a stereotyped “bad mother.” This unusual representation of a mother is further demonstrated by Ti-Jeanne’s feelings for the unwanted child which move from resentment to affection throughout the novel. This is evident even when she became pregnant: “Resentment battled with the urge to care for the baby growing inside her. The two feelings fought and grew, swelling as her belly swelled. Love and resentment scabbed, punched, kicked inside her” (*Brown Girl* 43). She is afraid of becoming like her own mother, who left her child in Gros-Jeanne’s care, while simultaneously secretly wishing she could do the same.

Furthermore, by having these thoughts, Ti-Jeanne knows she is an incompetent mother in society’s eyes as women live with the expectations of being nurturing, maternal family

figures. For Black women this role can be even more prominent, as Black single mothers often have an imbalance between meeting the needs of others and having a sense of independence (West 1995, 460). As Collins (2000, 76) states: “One source of the matriarch’s failure is her inability to model appropriate gender behavior.” This is the ideology Ti-Jeanne lives with, she does not live up to the expectations of what a Black woman should be like, how she should act and think, especially in motherhood. She struggles to find a way to parent her child since the patriarchal society she lives in only celebrates mothers who are her opposites. Mi-Jeanne reinforces this struggle when she explains to Ti-Jeanne why she left:

“And after you born, you eat up my whole life. It was ‘baby need this, baby need that.’ I couldn’t take it. I sorry to admit it to you, Ti-Jeanne, but I couldn’t take it.” Shame made Ti-Jeanne’s face hot. It bit too close to the bone. She knew what her mother had been feeling. (*Brown Girl* 242)

By describing a different kind of Black motherhood, Hopkinson fights back the expectations Black women face. She shows that mothers are allowed to have an array of feelings when it comes to their children, even the negative ones demonstrated by Mi-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne above. Ti-Jeanne often leaves Baby with other women in the community when she works for Gros-Jeanne around town. Although this might seem at first glance another way to show her failed motherhood as the matriarch, this type of othermothering is typical in Black communities. Othermothers, women who share mothering responsibilities with the bloodmother, are key in confronting racial oppression and helping Black communities by forming women-centred kin units (Collins 2000, 178). To view this as a negative trait is to look at motherhood through a white lens, which only enhances the controlling images of Black women. In fact, stereotypes of Black motherhood benefit from the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and they maintain definitions of what a mother is like. However, contradicting experiences can exist in Black motherhood and they all act as a catalyst for self-definition, self-value, independence, and Black women’s empowerment (Collins 2000, 176). This is visible in Ti-Jeanne’s growth when she accepts herself through her Haitian heritage and Voudun abilities. While doing so, she also finds agency to enjoy motherhood on her own terms.

To be able to do that, however, she needs to grow outside of Gros-Jeanne’s control, which is not possible before she is killed. In fact, Gros-Jeanne’s immediate disapproval of Ti-Jeanne’s pregnancy aggravates and hinders Ti-Jeanne’s identity as a deserving mother from the beginning, and she spends most her time apologising to her grandmother and not getting help

without criticism. Slowly Ti-Jeanne transfers Gros-Jeanne's negativity to the child and calls him 'bolom baby'. This term refers to Walcott's *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*, where Bolom is the Caribbean spirit of an unborn or aborted child. By carrying the shame of her pregnancy in the baby's name, Ti-Jeanne also carries feelings of failure and fear with her. However, the novel's ending paragraph gives hope for Ti-Jeanne's empowerment: "He chortled at her, his fat cheeks bulging. The sight filled her with glee. She grinned back, then gently pulled his tam down to protect his ears from the cold. She smiled at him. 'So, bolom baby,' she said, 'what we going to name you?'" (*Brown Girl* 247). By bonding with the child, she accepts that her way to mother is just as good as Gros-Jeanne's – if not better. She does not need to be the mammy, and neither does she have to accept the narrow representation of the matriarch, either. Just as bell hooks argues that it does not matter that there are women who resemble the mammy (hooks 1992 [1981], 84), it does not matter that Ti-Jeanne is the matriarch. Instead, it is important "that white people created an image of black womanhood which they could tolerate that in no way resembled the great majority of black women" (ibid.). Ti-Jeanne shows that even though she first accepts the image invented for her, she can fight it with self-worth and independence. In the end, the matriarch is a "scapegoat" that helps deviate the source of Black women's oppression from racist-sexist patriarchy to Black single mothers' "inferior culture" (Wisseh 2019, 396). One positive thing that Gros-Jeanne teaches Ti-Jeanne about motherhood is strength despite oppression. Being a single mother is not a disadvantage, it is what makes her strong and gives an opportunity to hold power over those who try to restrain her.

In addition to being a "bad mother," another stereotype of the matriarch is their ability to emasculate their male partners. As the mammy represents the perfect woman of the patriarchy, the matriarch is instead unfeminine for rejecting this image:

As overly aggressive, unfeminine women, Black matriarchs allegedly emasculated their lovers and husbands. These men, understandably, either deserted their partners or refused to marry the mothers of their children. From the dominant group's perspective, the matriarch represented a failed mammy, a negative stigma to be applied to African-American women who dared reject the image of the submissive, hardworking servant. (Collins 2000, 75)

Black women have only one image they can be without causing trouble: the quiet servant. If they choose to be something else, it has an immediate impact on men as well. Black women emasculating Black men has its roots in slavery, which I discussed in Chapter 2. However, as strong female voices were resurfacing in 1960s onwards through Black feminism, many Black

men felt women were again becoming too dominating, which was in the essence of their own male roles as head of households (hooks 1992 [1981], 180). The Moynihan Report suggested that the matriarch was an enemy of Black manhood and that a career woman was envious of male power and “likely to be a castrating bitch” (ibid.). In *Brown Girl* this constant play between male and female power is shown through the relationship Ti-Jeanne has with Tony.

Tony is Ti-Jeanne’s baby’s father, but he does not know this in the beginning of the novel as Ti-Jeanne feared the man could not help with the baby as he was “too flighty to make a good father” (*Brown Girl* 43). Although they were in a relationship when Ti-Jeanne got pregnant, Tony never once considered the baby being his. Instead, he immediately thinks Ti-Jeanne had been unfaithful to him with another man, and it is not until Tony asks her for help with Rudy that he finds out the truth. His reaction to the news is to assert his dominance in the relationship: “‘I would have let you keep the baby, no matter whose it is. I love you, Ti-Jeanne.’ Ti-Jeanne blinked in shock. He would have ‘let’ her keep the baby?” (*Brown Girl* 73) Tony lost his power over Ti-Jeanne when he thought she had an affair, because another man had her. To rectify, he tries to have dominance over Ti-Jeanne’s body and this man’s child. Because he loves her, he feels rightful in telling her what to do; he is the man in the relationship and men naturally have power over women.

While being a typical, dominating man, Tony is also described a mellow, somewhat foolish person. He is not aggressive or dangerous, and compared to the other men in the novel, Tony is the ‘nice guy’ of the community. However, even he finds the subordination of Black women necessary “for the healthy achievement of manhood” (hooks 1992 [1981], 181). This is apparent in the way he gives himself authority over Ti-Jeanne right from the beginning of the relationship. While Ti-Jeanne is living with Tony, they live poorly off of Tony’s job as Rudy’s errand boy. Ti-Jeanne is offered work in a club, but “Tony wouldn’t have let her do it” (*Brown Girl* 43). Only attractive young girls can work in the club, and even though the idea is uncomfortable for Ti-Jeanne as well, it is insinuated that Tony would never accept this as other men would then have access to what he considers his possession. Meanwhile, Tony thinks nothing of Ti-Jeanne helping Gros-Jeanne with domestic work like a good Black woman she is supposed to be. For these reasons the matriarch is not only a problematic image that affects the life of Black women, but it also influences Black men’s own understanding what Black masculinity is like (Collins 2000, 77).

Furthermore, Ti-Jeanne's decision not to involve Tony in her baby's life seems justified, especially when her own grandfather misused power in a similar situation. Ti-Jeanne learns early that men despise the matriarch, because it means they no longer have absolute power in the family. When Mi-Jeanne gets pregnant, she goes from being Rudy's darling daughter to someone who he eventually destroys in the duppy with no remorse. "'When Daddy find out I was making baby,' Mi-Jeanne had told her, 'is like he cut me dead. I used to be he doux-doux darling, he little girl, but not after that'" (*Brown Girl* 242). Rudy cannot handle Mi-Jeanne's independence, and the fact that he cannot control her body makes him insecure about his own masculinity. The control men have over women's bodies, be it sexual or reproductive, has historically been a central sign of women's oppression (Collins 1998, 75). Later, Rudy uses black magic to reclaim his power over Mi-Jeanne. He traps her soul inside the duppy, uses his magic to force her to do his bidding until there is nothing left of her but a mindless, unrecognizable body that wanders around Toronto as "Crazy Betty." Rudy is a violent "insecure bully" (*Brown Girl* 242), an example of a man who sees family hierarchies as natural causality instead of a socially constructed arrangement (Collins 1998, 64). Ti-Jeanne learns that being an independent woman means men will feel emasculated by her. Rudy and Tony both reinforce this by their own actions and use the matriarchy myth to justify women's passive role in the family.

Later, when Tony and Ti-Jeanne talk about his reasons for killing Gros-Jeanne, he again buttresses the matriarch stereotype on her:

"If you saw what I saw, what Rudy could do..."

"I did."

He sighed, almost a sob, and looked at the ground. "Yes, you did. And you faced up to it, despite the odds, despite being frightened." He looked at her again. "I don't think I could have done that. I don't know how a person learns to be so strong." (*Brown Girl* 246)

Because Tony himself could not fight Rudy, it is impossible for him to understand how anyone else could do that, let alone a woman. But when Ti-Jeanne has no real reaction to his emotional pleading, he chooses the only viable explanation for her strength: Black women's innate ability to be more assertive, strong, and independent than other women (hooks 1992 [1981], 181). Ti-Jeanne is not only the daughter of an enslaved bloodline and instinctively has more capabilities to manage oppression, Tony also imposes the image of a "superstrong mother" on her. Naturally she could face up Rudy and his evil black magic, because she is a

Black mother. They are devoted and self-sacrificing women who put others needs behind her own: “The controlling image of the ‘superstrong Black mother’ praises Black women’s resiliency in a society that routinely paints us as bad mothers” (Collins 2000, 174). In response, Ti-Jeanne feels no hatred, “just pity” for him (*Brown Girl* 246). Tony has never understood Ti-Jeanne or the life she leads, because her experience as a Black woman is so far from his own. It is clear she cannot live without constant intersections of gender and ethnicity, even in relationships. Social inequality, power, and social justice are themes that run throughout the novel as Ti-Jeanne accepts her role as a Black woman and mother. One way she does this is through finding her own voice. Sometimes literally.

In the beginning of the novel, Ti-Jeanne is a quiet woman. She rarely speaks up for herself and silently agrees with Gros-Jeanne and Tony about things she has an opposing opinion on. She has learned to be silent to suppress her own personality. She especially rejects her Haitian heritage and sees Gros-Jeanne’s herbal medicine as silly but takes advantage of it to get money: “Ti-Jeanne didn’t place too much stock in Mami’s bush doctor remedies” as she “would have preferred to rely on commercial drugs” (*Brown Girl* 36). At the same time, “Mami said anything she got was her own so she lived well by helping her grandmother” (*Brown Girl* 42). It is as if she wishes to deny her own background and forces a gap between herself, Gros-Jeanne, and being of Haitian descend. She does not understand why “Mami insisted on trying to teach her all that old-time nonsense” (*Brown Girl* 37) but understands the profit she gains from it. Her Haitian diasporic hybridity reacts to Canada in a different way from Gros-Jeanne, but in my opinion this resistance also has another meaning: Ti-Jeanne has grown to internalise the controlling images forced on her, and she does not reject Gros-Jeanne only as a grandmother, but as a role model of a Black woman. I go through this idea by looking at the sapphire image and how Ti-Jeanne reacts to it.

Gros-Jeanne is not only the mammy, but also the sapphire, the “hostile, nagging wife” who is “iron-willed” and is not afraid to speak her mind “with frequent verbal assaults, which she conduct[s] in a loud, animated, verbose fashion” (West 1995, 461). This is the image people have of Gros-Jeanne, although she often stays calm, even in anger. She loses her temper only with her own family, and one reason for Mi-Jeanne’s leaving was Gros-Jeanne’s fiery temper. Ti-Jeanne sees how people react to Gros-Jeanne as the wilful sapphire, and the men in particular think the old woman is either crazy or a “blasted cow” (*Brown Girl* 131). Ti-Jeanne represses her own feelings to not be viewed the same. This is usual for Black women, who fear being regarded as shrews if they express bitterness or anger (hooks 1992 [1981], 86).

However, as the plot progresses and Ti-Jeanne realises she is the only one who can fight Rudy by accepting her role as a Haitian seer woman, a strong Voudun practitioner, she slowly finds her voice. As her Voudun powers grow, so does her self-worth and independence. She starts talking back at Tony, who never quite knows how to react to this change. The first time Ti-Jeanne truly speaks her mind is when Tony insists on talking about Baby while they are running away from Rudy's posse. Tony harps on until Ti-Jeanne angrily says out loud what she has been thinking this whole time. She touches his arm, and it bleeds from the wound Tony uses to "slash Buff":

"You see that? Eh? That is where all your health going, all your strength, all your money. What you could keep child with? Eh? You go feed he buff when hunger pining he?" She let his arm drop. She sucked her teeth in disgust. "Worthless," she pronounced him. (*Brown Girl* 165)

Until that moment Ti-Jeanne has spent most of the novel daydreaming about Tony and their strong physical connection. But reality helps her wake up from fancy: Tony is not capable of providing for the baby, and she needs a way to voice her concerns so that he understands her point of view. However, as the chase continues and Tony is safe, his own image of Ti-Jeanne changes. She is no longer the beautiful young woman he loves, she is now "as dangerous as Rudy" (*Brown Girl* 119). Incidentally, this change happens only after Ti-Jeanne gains power over magic and her own autonomy. bell hooks (1992 [1981], 85) argues that when women show signs of aggression as sapphires, Black men use it a way to explain why they do not get along with Black women – "because they were so evil." The sapphire and the matriarch can be used to describe the same women, people who are unfeminine she-devils, known as present day's "Angry Black women" (Wisseh 2019, 396). When Ti-Jeanne is furious, she is more than just a person with normal emotions, she is someone to be feared for her Black female anger, because it means she is no longer compliant. When the battle with Rudy is imminent and both Gros-Jeanne and Mi-Jeanne are dead, Ti-Jeanne finally accepts her sapphire image:

Tony grabbed her wrist. His eyes were wide. "Woman, like you mad, or what?"
[...]

"Yes, I mad," she answered him, firmly pulling her wrist from his grasp. [...] "I mad like France," Ti-Jeanne said. "Mad like that old woman jumbie thing who used to be my mother. I mad at all of allyou for making me run around trying to save allyou, but allyou just digging yourselves in deeper, each one in he own pit."
(*Brown Girl* 165)

She is no longer the quiet woman she was when she feared anger and expressions of anxiety, concern, and doubt that would have made her look like Gros-Jeanne. Instead, embodying

Gros-Jeanne's wilfulness reveals to Ti-Jeanne that standing one's own ground means more than being a stereotype which incorrectly explains the Black female experience. "Widespread efforts to continue devaluation of black womanhood make it extremely difficult and oftentimes impossible for the black female to develop a positive self-concept" (hooks 1992 [1981], 86). Ti-Jeanne was on her way accepting only the negative, manipulating images of Black womanhood, which is a sign of white authority and power (Collins 2000, 69). When she accepts her madness in both anger and alleged insanity, she fights the controlling image of the matriarch and the sapphire. Ti-Jeanne finally sees the world outside Black women's stereotypes and is no longer afraid to be fully herself.

What is more, to me it seems Hopkinson has made a conscious decision to write a novel that does not only shed light into the struggles of Black women but also a novel that shows feminist literature can act as a catalyst for change. Carby (1998, 95) states that Black women's literature is used as "weapons for social change" and that "literary and cultural criticism needs to consider how these novels actively structure and shape Afro-American culture and political struggles." By making a strong statement about Gros-Jeanne's and Ti-Jeanne's fight with intersections of gender and ethnicity, *Brown Girl* advocates for a more inclusive world for all.

5 Conclusion

Brown Girl in the Ring was Nalo Hopkinson's first published novel, and it has since won her six different literary awards (Nalo Hopkinson: author, creator, n.p, n.d.). This is no surprise since it is a diverse novel that discusses many different themes: poverty, power, sexism, motherhood, magic, trauma, and posthumanism, to name a few. I focused on the feminist subject matters shown via Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne, the two most prominent characters of the novel. Using Black Feminism and intersectionality as a framework, I analysed the novel looking at how Haitian diaspora, Otherness, and hybridity affect Gros-Jeanne's life and identity, and how Ti-Jeanne deals with the controlling images of the matriarch and the sapphire, invented for her and other Black women since slavery to maintain sexist-racist oppression. Contemporary Black Feminism gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s United States during the Civil Rights Movement. However, it quickly became clear that the Black Power and Black Arts movements fought for equal rights for Black men, not Black women. At the same time, 'second wave feminism' made it clear that their fight for female freedom was for white women only. This combination meant that Black women had to start writing about their own experiences that Black and white men, or white women, could not understand. Gradually Black Feminism was theorised further, and it, too, became more inclusive, accepting that everyone should and could write about Black women if their focus was on the sexist-racist reality that is unique to Black women. In addition, intersectionality is a term derived from Black Feminist thought, it accepts that people have more than one thing that affects their lives and identities. For Black women there is always at least two things: their gender and their 'race'.

For the restrictions of this thesis, I could only focus on one form of intersectionality: gender and ethnicity. I chose Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne so I could analyse two different topics from two different viewpoints. However, I could only choose one character per subject even though there would have been much more to say. Any future analysis of the novel could concentrate on the differences between Gros-Jeanne and Ti-Jeanne when it comes to the same questions. For example, Ti-Jeanne's relationship with her Haitian heritage and Voudun is very different to that of Gros-Jeanne, and they both build their identities around these aspects on their own ways. Magic is another big theme in the novel, as the West African Voudun plays a large role in the plot. Together with Black Feminism, Magical Feminism could be used as a wider framework for that analysis.

As I argue that *Brown Girl* is indeed a Magical Feminist novel, it has many Magical Realism's core components, one being ambiguity. This is shown not only in describing the magical qualities of the novel, but the overall structure of the text. Hopkinson gives no background on her characters, the only thing that is known is their current struggle that starts and ends with fighting Rudy, the power-hungry gang leader of the poverty-stricken city they live in. Much of my analysis is based on underlying ideas that are not specifically drawn out for the reader. Instead, one must pay attention to the smaller details and the overall world Hopkinson builds with her characters to see them. It is not clearly stated anywhere that Gros-Jeanne struggles being a Haitian-born woman living in Canada, but it is visible in the way she uses her language and Haitian herbal medicine, and how she accepts the role of the ethnic Other to build a more inclusive community. Gros-Jeanne does not, however, let her role as the "crazy old Obeah woman" define her. She fights the oppression by educating other women and helping her community in a city where people have been left to their own devices without healthcare or social services. Gros-Jeanne has grown social influence in Toronto because she *is* the crazy woman who plays with foreign medicine. She is a domestic worker, typical for a Black woman, but has changed her stance in society for being what she is. Being a Black woman no longer means she is at the lowest step on the hierarchical ladder, instead she holds power for her soft skills. Rudy, her opposite, tries to gain power as well, but he does this with fear and black magic. In the end, he is the one who is defeated, not Gros-Jeanne.

Ti-Jeanne, on the other hand, is not like Gros-Jeanne. She is much more uncertain about her identity, and the story's main plotline is watching her growing from an insecure young woman into her own person that needs no one, not even Gros-Jeanne, telling her who she is. During that growth she goes from accepting the images of the matriarch and the sapphire as negative traits to fighting them. She demonstrates that what made her weak before, is what makes her strong now and even more so in the future. Society deems her the bad Black mother because she does not portray any visible nurturing traits like the perfect Black mother should, but Hopkinson shows that there is no one right way to be a mother. Ti-Jeanne exemplifies that by having negative thoughts toward her baby while still never neglecting him. She loves the baby in her own way, and it is not any worse than another way. Moreover, her relationship with Tony dwindles from longing and desire to disdain and pity as she learns Tony only accepts her as the quiet, agreeable woman she was in the beginning of the novel. When Ti-Jeanne displays Black empowerment, Tony resents her and pushes the white-invented images on her without her will.

Writing this thesis has revealed to me the many unjustified ways Black women have been treated in the past, and still are today, not only by white people but Black men as well. As another woman, I can relate to some of the injustices brought on by the patriarchy, but because of my white privilege, I can never truly know what Black women go through in life. Nevertheless, I wanted to shed light onto these issues by writing my thesis on Black Feminism in particular. It is not enough to acknowledge Black women's oppression; change can only happen when everyone actively fights it. My thesis is but a small expression of that resistance, but spreading knowledge must start somewhere.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Finnish Summary

Pro Gradu -tutkielmani aihe on intersektionaalisuus ja kuinka sukupuoli (engl. *gender*) ja etnisyys näkyvät Nalo Hopkinsonin romaanissa *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998). Käsittelen aihetta keskittymällä tarinan kahteen päähenkilöön, Gros-Jeanneen ja Ti-Jeanneen. He asuvat Torontossa, joka on sosiaalisen ja poliittisen järjestelmän tuhoutumisen jälkeen jäänyt vaarallisen jengin valtaan. *Brown Girl in the Ringin* (jatkossa *Brown Girl*) seuraa Gros-Jeannen ja hänen jälkeläistensä taistelua jengin johtajaa, Rudya, vastaan.

Tapahtumat alkavat Ti-Jeannen entisen kumppanin ja lapsen isän, Tony'n, pyynnöstä pelastaa hänet Rudyn kynsistä. Tony on lupautunut etsimään Rudylle tuoreen ihmissydämen poliittisen johtajan sydänsiirtoa varten. Rudy odottaa Tony'n tappavan sopivan luovuttajan, mutta mies ei siihen kykene. Sen sijaan Tony pyytää Gros-Jeannea auttamaan häntä pakenemaan Torontosta, sillä Rudyn väkivaltaisen maineen vuoksi kaikki tietävät hänen joutuvan itse murhan kohteeksi, jos hän ei pysty toimittamaan sopivaa sydäntä. Gros-Jeanne on yhteisössä tunnettu voudun-papitar (tunnetaan myös termeillä voodoo, vodun, vodou tai vodoun). Hän pystyy kommunikoimaan henkien kanssa ja onnistuukin piilottamaan Tony'n henkimaailmaan, jotta Rudy ja tämän jengiläiset eivät löydä häntä pakomatkan aikana. Kaikki ei kuitenkaan mene suunnitelmien mukaan ja Tony jää kiinni pakoyrityksestä. Rudy kiduttaa Tony'n vannomaan tappavansa Gros-Jeannen saadakseen tämän sydämen luovutusta varten.

Käykin ilmi, että Rudy on Gros-Jeannen ex-aviomies ja hän kantaa kaunaa koko naispuolista sukua kohtaan. Rudy käyttää mustaa magiaa apunaan kiinnittäessään oman tyttärensä, Mi-Jeannen, sielun duppy-kulhoon voidakseen pakottaa tämän tappamaan oman lapsensa, Ti-Jeannen. Lopulta Rudy on kuitenkin se, joka tuhoutuu, sillä Ti-Jeanne oppii käyttämään omia voudun-lahjojaan ja henkien avulla syöstää Rudyn pois vallasta. Tony on kuitenkin ehtinyt murhata Gros-Jeannin, ja Mi-Jeanne on niin ikään kuollut Rudyn hävittäessä tämän sielun ja ruumiin. Ti-Jeanne hautaa niin äitinsä kuin isoäitinsäkin haitilaisin menoin ja oppii hyväksymään itsensä niin itsenäisenä naisena kuin haitilaisena voudun-taitajana.

Vaikka juonen tapahtumat liikkuvat voudunin ympärillä, on siinä myös selviä intersektionaalisuuden piirteitä. Kimberly Crenshaw käytti kyseistä termiä ensimmäisen kerran vuonna 1989, jolloin hän kiinnitti huomiota siihen, että Yhdysvalloissa mustien naisten alistukseen liittyy aina ihonvärin lisäksi myös sukupuoli ja yhteiskuntaluokka (Cooper 2016, 385–385). Vaikka termiä käytettiin akateemisessa tekstissä ensimmäistä kertaa vasta 1900-luvun lopulla, on siihen liittyvä ideologia ollut läsnä jo ennen sitä. Patricia Hill Collins (2016, 53) juontaa intersektionaalisuuden aatteen 1960-luvun sosiaaliseen aktivismiin Yhdysvalloissa, kun taas Kathryn Gines (2011, 275) näkee sen tulleen jo 1800-luvulta, jolloin muun muassa Sojourner Truth piti yllä keskustelua mustein naisten asemasta. Intersektionaalisuus viittaaakin siis alun perin afroamerikkalaisiin naisiin ja Black Feminismiin (suom. musta feminismi), mutta aatetta on käsitelty myös alkuperäisväestöön kuuluvien naisten sekä Aasiasta sekä Meksikosta Yhdysvaltoihin muuttaneiden naisten näkökulmasta (Collins 2016, 54). Sitten intersektionaalisuuden periaatteita on liitetty myös Yhdysvaltojen ulkopuolisiin ihmisryhmiin, erityisesti afrolatinaalaisten ja afrokaribialaisten naisten asemasta puhuttaessa (Collins 2016, 23).

Lyhyesti sanottuna, intersektionaalisuutta voidaan käyttää identiteetin ja itsen analysoinnin työvälineenä, kun halutaan tutkia erityisesti niitä sosiaalisia ja poliittisia osa-alueita, jotka vaikuttavat henkilön elämään (Collins 2016, 11). Alueisiin voi kuulua yksi tai useampi seuraavista esimerkistä: luokka, rotu, sukupuoli, etnisyys, seksuaalisuus, ikä, kulttuuri tai uskonto. Intersektionaalisuus viittaa siis monitasoiseen risteäviin identiteetin eroihin, jotka vaikuttavat ihmisen asemaan yhteiskunnassa. (Gines 2011, 275.) Crenshaw jakaa intersektionaalisuuden kolmeen osaan: rakenteelliseen, poliittiseen ja representaationaaliseen intersektionaalisuuteen (Crenshaw 1991, 1245). Rakenteellinen intersektionaalisuus tarkoittaa sitä, että vaikka ihmisillä olisi yhteisiä identiteetti-omaisuuksia, ne voivat silti erota toisistaan eriävissä tilanteissa (Crenshaw 1991, 1245–1251). Poliittista intersektionaalisuutta voidaan puolestaan käyttää analysoinnin apuna, kun keskitytään siihen, miten ihmiset voivat kuulua useampaan kuin yhteen poliittiseen ryhmään, vaikka ne olisivat toistensa vastakohtia. Värillisille naisille tämä tarkoittaa esimerkiksi sitä, että he kuuluvat niin naisryhmään kuin mustienkin ryhmään. (Crenshaw 1991, 252.) Representaationaalinen intersektionaalisuus sisältää ei-valkoisten naisten kuvauksen valta-asemassa olevan kulttuurikuvaston, esimerkiksi median ja käytettävän kielen, kautta (Crenshaw 1991, 1282–1283). Collins jatkaa Crenshawn ajatuksia jakamalla intersektionaalisuuden kuuteen eri ydinajatuksen: sosiaalinen eriarvoisuus, relationaalisuus, valta, sosiaalinen konteksti, kompleksisuus ja sosiaalinen

oikeudenmukaisuus (Collins 2016, 27). Näistä valta, sosiaalinen eriarvoisuus ja oikeudenmukaisuus näkyvät Hopkinsonin romaanissa voimakkaimmin.

Nykyaikainen ajatus intersektionaalisuudesta johtaa 1960- ja 1970-lukujen feministisiin liikehdintöihin. Tuolloin Yhdysvalloissa ja Euroopassakin niin kutsuttu toisen aallon feminismi kehittyi parantamaan naisten yhteiskunnallista asemaa. Näissä naisasialiikkeissä keskityttiin kuitenkin lähinnä valkoisen naisen aseman parantamiseen. Yhdysvalloissa erityisesti mustat naiset jäivät ulos niin mustien miesten johtamista antirasistisista kansalaisoikeusliikkeistä kuin feministisistäkin uudistuksista (Keizer 2007, 154). Tämä johti siihen, että mustat naiset alkoivat kirjoittaa omista kokemuksistaan omasta näkökulmastaan itse. Tätä liikettä kutsutaan Black Feminismiksi, suomennettuna se tarkoittaa mustaa feminismiä. Sen ensimmäisiä teorioitsijoita oli Barbara Smith, joka vuonna 1977 kirjoitti olleensa täysin uuden aiheen äärellä, sillä mustien naisten asemasta ei ollut aiemmin kirjoitettu feministisestä näkökulmasta lainkaan (Smith 2012 [1977], 3). Smithin artikkeli, ”Toward a Black Feminist Criticism”, nähtiin teoreettisena perustana Black Feminismille usean vuosikymmenen ajan (Carby 1988, 8). Artikkelissaan Smith vaati feminististen liikkeiden uudistamista, jotta myös mustien naisten kokemukset ja taide voitaisiin yhdistää naisasialiikkeiden arvioihin (Smith 2012 [1977], 4). Vaikka Smithin artikkelia on sittemmin kritisoitu sen yksipuolisesta näkökulmasta, se antoi muille mahdollisuuden jatkaa keskustelua nimenomaan mustien naisten näkökulmasta.

Barbara Christian jatkoi Smithin työtä etsiessään Black Feminismille teoreettista taustaa. Hänen tutkimuksensa osoitti sen, että mustien naisten kirjallisuutta ei joko ollut olemassa tai sitä oli erittäin vaikea löytää edes mustien omien yhteisöjen sisällä (Christian 2007 [1989], 9). Vasta 1970-luvulla akateeminen kiinnostus ja sitä myöten arvostus näitä tekstejä kohtaan nousi. Zora Neale Hurston nousi mustien naisten kirjallisuusliikkeen johtohahmoksi 1900-luvun alun teksteillään ja ”mustien naisten renessanssiksi” kutsuttu aika antoi luovan tilan uusille kirjailijoille, kuten Maya Angeloulle, Paule Marshallille, Toni Morrisonille ja Alice Walkerille. Myöhemmin, 1980-luvulla, lisäksi löydettiin aiemmin tuntemattomia mustien naisten kirjoittamia tekstejä. Nämä löydökset osoittivat sen, että mustat ja valkoiset miehet, sekä valkoiset naiset, eivät olleet aiemmin kyenneet tai halunneet reagoida mustien naisten kirjallisuuteen (Ducille 2006, 47). Nämä löydökset auttoivat kirjallisuuskriitikkoja pohtimaan mustien naisten kirjallisuuden tilaa. Voiko muu kuin musta nainen kirjoittaa heidän kokemuksistaan? Voiko miehet tai valkoiset naiset analysoida mustien naisten tekstejä? Deborah E. McDowellin mielestä kyllä. Hän ei näe eroa mustien naisten kirjoitusten

analysoinnin kanssa ja siinä, että 1800-luvun Brontën siskosten kirjoja analysoidaan muidenkin kuin 1800-luvun valkoisten naisten toimesta (McDowell 1980, 606). Nämä pohdinnat osoittavat sen, että mustien naisten kirjallisuus on jollain tasolla vihdoin saavuttanut muihin verrattavan akateemisen kiinnostuksen ja arvostuksen. Voin valkoisena naisena auttaa keskittämään muidenkin huomion mustien naisten alistukseen analysoidessani sukupuolen ja etnisyyden välistä intersektionaalisuutta.

Ennen analyysiä kuitenkin erottelen, mitä tarkoittavat termit *rotu* ja *etnisyys*. Rotu viittaa ihmisen fyysisiin piirteisiin, kun taas etnisyys kattaa tämän lisäksi ihmisen kansallisuuden, perimän, syntyperän ja kulttuurin (Merriam-Webster 2022, n.p.). Rotu on moderni sana, joka kehitettiin erottelemaan valkoiset ja mustat ihmiset toisistaan. Sillä ei ole mitään biologisia perusteluja ja se nähdään sosiaalisena luomuksena, joka ylläpitää eriarvoisia yhteiskunnan rakenteita. (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.) Analysoin gradussani nimenomaan hahmojen etnisyyden ja sukupuolen intersektionaalisuutta.

Aloitan kirjan analyysin Gros-Jeannella ja hänen haitilaisella diasporallaan ja hybridisellä kulttuuri-identiteetillään. Diasporalla gradussani viittaan niin yhteiseen etniseen kokemukseen hajaantumisesta uudelle alueelle muuttaessa kuin feministiseen käsitykseen siitä, että perinteiset kuvailut diasporasta usein perustuvat patriarkaaliin ajatuksiin, kolonialismiin ja imperialismiin (Mannur and Braziel 2016, 165–166). Gros-Jeannen suku tulee Haitista ja hänen identiteettinsä rakentuukin voimakkaasti haitilaisuuden ja kanadalaisuuden sekoitukseen. Toronton monikulttuurisessakin yhteisössä hänet nähdään usein joko ”vanhana hulluna naisena” tai poppamiehenä, joka käyttää vierasmaalaisia rohtoja sairauksien hoitamiseen. Nämä mielikuvat viittaavat mielestäni kolmeen eri näkökulmaan: (1) kasviperäisten luonnonlääkkeiden käyttäminen osoittaa Gros-Jeannen haitilaisen diasporan ja hybridisen identiteetin, (2) Gros-Jeanne on haitilainen naisparantaja, mikä aiheena patriarkaattisessa yhteiskunnassa usein koetaan naisellisenä höpsötyksenä ja (3) kasvitiede parannuskeinona nähdään yhteydessä paikalliseen huumeaineeseen, jonka haitilaiset kehittivät Toronton romahduksen jälkeen. Tämä negatiivinen konnotaatio alleviivaa niin haitilaisten kuin Gros-Jeannenkin toiseutta.

Toiseudella tarkoitetaan sitä, että yksilö tai ryhmä nähdään täysin erilaisena muiden ominaisuuksiin verrattuna. Mustien naisten kohdalla se tarkoittaa vertaamista valkoisiin ja siihen liittyviin saavuttamattomiin positiivisiin konnotaatioihin (Benn-John 2016, 153). Etninen toiseus tarkoittaa näin ollen erilaisuutta etnisen taustan vuoksi. Gros-Jeannen

parannuskeinot nähdään negatiivisina, pelottavina ja pahoina asioina juuri sen vuoksi, että ne liitetään hänen etnisyyteensä. Esimerkiksi valkosipuli ja suola, jota Gros-Jeanne käyttää jalkakutinan hoitoon, ovat pelottavia pahaenteisiä, vaikka valkoisten ihmisten käytössä kokkaamisen yhteydessä ne ovat miellyttäviä ruoka-aineita. Kyseisen binaarisen ajattelutavan avulla toiseutta pidetään yllä kontrollin avulla (Collins 2000, 70). Saman ajatuskaavan mukaan Buff-nimisen huumausaineen liittäminen haitilaisuuteen ylläpitää toiseuden ajatusta ja haitilaisuuden näkemistä vaarallisena ja pahana.

Hopkinson itse kokee karibialaisten kulttuurien olevan hybridisiä, joka näkyy *Brown Girl*issä Gros-Jeanin yhteisössä. Hybridiset kulttuurit tarvitsevat kaikkien apua pärjätäkseen uudessa ympäristössä, ja Gros-Jeannen apu on hänen parantajan taitonsa. Hän pyrkii laajentamaan tietouttaan oppimalla myös pohjoisista yrteistä ja kasveista, yhdistäen näin ollen omaa haitilaista taustaansa kanadalaisuuteen. Hybridinen kulttuuri-identiteetti on selviytymiskeino, mutta toisaalta tapa vastustaa valtakulttuuria. Gros-Jeanne yhtä aikaa hyväksyy toiseutensa kuin vastustaakin sitä muuttamalla englannin murretta, jolla hän puhuu, kuulostaakseen tarvittaessa vähemmän haitilaiselta. Näin tehdessään hän pyrkii assimiloitumaan ympäröivään kulttuuriin. Hänen tapansa puhua karibialaisille tyypillisellä englannilla on kuitenkin samalla osa vastarintaa, jonka kautta osoitetaan, etteivät hänen identiteettinsä osat tee hänestä vain sorrettua naista, vaan ihmisen, jolla on voimakas itsemääräämisoikeus. Gros-Jeanne osoittaa toimijuudellaan, että hän itse päättää kohtalostaan. Poppamiehen roolista huolimatta Gros-Jeanne on saavuttanut Torontossa sosiaalista valtaa olemalla oma itsensä: haitilainen musta nainen, joka voudunin lisäksi auttaa yhteisöään parantajantiedoillaan. Hänen valtansa on selvää siitäkkin huolimatta, että naiselliset kotitalouteen liittyvät tiedot ja taidot nähdään patriarkalisessa yhteiskunnassa vähäpätöisenä toimintana (Wells 2007, 23).

Mustien naisten sorron vastustus on moninaista, mutta yksi niistä on muiden naisten kouluttaminen ja oman kulttuuriperinnön jatkaminen (Benn-John 2016, 161). Gros-Jeanne tekee tätä opettaessaan Ti-Jeannelle haitilaisuudesta ja voudunista. Vaikka Ti-Jeanne ei heti hyväksy omaa haitilaista identiteettiään, Gros-Jeannen monilokaation tunne on koko tarinan läpi läsnä. Hän ei silti perinteisen diasporan kuvailun mukaisesti kaipaa takaisin kotimaahansa. Hänen kotinsa on hänen omassa kulttuuri-identiteetissään, jonka hän on kyennyt yhdistämään Torontoon.

Gros-Jeannen ilmentämän toiseuden lisäksi erilaisesta toiseudesta kärsii Ti-Jeanne. Käsittelen hänen kauttaan mustille naisille luotuja rooleja, jotka auttavat mielikuvillaan kontrolloimaan

orjuuden ajasta alkanutta sarronalaisuutta. Näitä mielikuvia on yleisesti kuusi erilaista, joiden englanninkieliset termit ovat seuraavat: *mammy*, *sapphire*, *jezebel*, *matriarch*, *Black lady* ja *welfare mother*. *Mammy* on täydellinen musta äitihahmo, *sapphire* puolestaan erittäin aggressiivinen ja riidanhaluinen nainen ja *jezebel* hyperseksualisoitu nuori nainen (West 1995, 458). *Matriarch* on sanansamukaisesti matriarkaatti, epäfeminiininen, huono äiti kun taas *Black lady* on moderni kuvaus keskiluokkaisesta työssäkävystä naisesta. *Welfare mother* kuvastaa yleensä vähäosaista yksinhuoltajaäitiä, joka kasvattaa lapsensa sosiaaliavustuksilla (Collins 2000, 75–80). Nämä mielikuvat on luotu jo orjuuden aikana, jolloin seksistisen ja rasisin yhteiskunnan ylläpitäminen oli elintärkeää patriarkaattisen valkoisten joukossa (bell hooks 1992 [1981], 15). Kuvat naiseudesta, äitiydestä ja seksuaalisuudesta vaihtelevat sen mukaan, mihin alistettuun rooliin mustat naiset haluttiin jo orjuudessa pakottaa. Nämä samat, yllä mainitut kuvat, elävät edelleen rasisisissa yhteiskunnissa.

Ti-Jeanne elää matriarch- ja sapphire-mielikuvien keskellä. Hän on täydellisen mustan naisen eli mammy vastakohta jopa äiteydessään. Hän siirtää Gros-Jeannelta opitut huonot tavat omaan äitiyteensä ja usein kokee pienen vauvansa taakkana tai ärsyttävänä. Ti-Jeanne kuvailee vauvaansa karibialaisella paholaiseen viittaamalla termillä *bolom baby*, joka korostaa hänen negatiivisten tunteidensa lujutta. Hän ei osaa osoittaa hellyyttään lapselleen, sillä ulkopuolelta tulevat vaatimukset hyvästä äidistä eivät vastaa hänen omakuvaansa. Nämä tunteet ovat yleisiä mustilla yksinhuoltajaäideillä, joiden on usein vaikea löytää tasapaino muiden tarpeiden ja oman itsenäisyyden välillä (West 1995, 460). Yksi matriarch-roolin peruspiirteistä onkin epäonnistunut sukupuoliroolissa eläminen (Collins 2000, 76). Hopkinson kuitenkin osoittaa tarinallaan monipuolisemman äitiyskokemuksen tärkeyden. Huonon mustan äidin stereotypiat ylläpitävät yhteiskunnan epäoikeudenmukaisia rakenteita. Yksi näistä on niin sanottu erityisvoimakkaan äidin rooli (engl. *superstrong mother*), joka jatkaa mustan naisen kuvaa vahvana ihmisenä, joka luonnostaan kestää vaikeudet muita naisia paremmin. Mustat äidit ovat erityisen vahvoja vastustamaan yhteiskunnan sortoa, mutta samalla voivat muiden silmissä olla ainoastaan huonoja äitejä osoittaessaan muitakin kuin mammy-roolin piirteitä (Collins 2000, 174). Ti-Jeannen kautta kuvatut tuntemukset erilaisesta äitiydestä vastustavat näitä stereotyyppioita olemalla katalysaattoreita itsenäisyydelle ja itsearvolle, joita tarvitaan mustien naisten voimaantumiseksi (Collins 2000, 176).

Jotta Ti-Jeanne voi kokea voimaantumista ja itsenäisyyttä, hänen on pystyttävä kasvamaan Gros-Jeannen kontrollin ulkopuolella. Tonyn tapettua Gros-Jeannen, Ti-Jeannen itsenäistyminen tapahtuu pakon edessä niin äitiyden, haitilaisuuden, voudunin kuin

omanarvontunteen osalta. Ti-Jeanne taistelee niin Rudyä kuin kontrolloivia mielikuvia vastaan erityisesti sapphire-stereotypian edessä. Tonym ja Ti-Jeannen suhde on alusta alkaen epätasapainossa Tonym ajaessa Ti-Jeannen yli omaa patriarkaattista rooliaan perheen päänä. Hän muun muassa ihmettelee, miksi Ti-Jeanne jätti hänet raskaana ollessaan, hän kun olisi antanut Ti-Jeannen pitää vauvan, yrittäen näin osoittaa auktoriteettinsa niin naisensa itsemääräämisoikeuteen kuin vartaloonsa. Kun Ti-Jeanne viimein vastustaa Tonya sanomalla ääneen, mitä hän tästä ajattelee, Tony lakkaa näkemästä Ti-Jeannen rakastamana naisena. Sen sijaan hänestä tulee Gros-Jeannen tapaan hullu ja pelottava. Tony on esimerkki mustasta miehestä, joka omilla teoillaan ylläpitää valkoisen miehen patriarkaattia pakottaessaan vahingollisia mielikuvia mustille naisille (Collins 1998, 64). Ei siis ole epäluonnollista, että Ti-Jeanne uskoo tarinan alkupäässä näihin stereotypioihin itsestään ja sukulaisnaisistaan. Hän kuitenkin nousee lopussa vahvaksi, itsenäiseksi naiseksi, joka osoittaa voivansa olla sorrosta huolimatta kunnioitettu ja oikeutettu ihminen.

Mielestäni on selvää, että Hopkinson on kirjoittanut tietoisesti feministisen romaanin, jonka avulla niin lukijoista kuin maailmastakin voidaan tehdä parempi paikka. Gros-Jeannen ja Ti-Jeannen etnisyyden ja sukupuolen intersektioita analysoimalla olen oppinut paljon mustiin naisiin liittyvästä sosiaalisesta ja poliittisesta sorrosta. Toivon, että voin tutkimuksellani valaista näihin aiheisiin liittyviä ongelmia.