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A Site of Nation:
Black Utopian Novels in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

A Dissertation Presented

by

XIANZHI MENG

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W.E.B. DU BOIS DEPARTMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

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CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

A SITE OF NATION: BLACK UTOPIAN NOVELS IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH
CENTURIES

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Contrary to the traditional view that there is lack of utopian dimension in African American literature, this dissertation argues that African American literature not only develops an exuberant utopian tradition, but also forms its own utopian uniqueness. Based on this conclusion, the dissertation specially focuses on the period between the 1880s and the first two decades of the 20th century that witnessed the first peak of African American utopian writing. Meanwhile, this era has been claimed as the “Golden Age” of Black Nationalism. Through the examination of the historical background of the co-existence of these two conflicting strains, I contend that it not only provides fertile ground for the blooming of the utopian genre in African American literary writing, but also helps justify its popularity among African American writers. Through the analysis of three African American utopian writers: Sutton E. Griggs, Pauline Hopkins and W.E.B. Du Bois, I conclude that these writers use utopian texts to express their nation consciousness — and by so doing, challenged the myth of (a) white supremacy; (b) that African Americans are incapable of imagining an ideal world; and (c) carved a way forward for the black community.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of “utopia” does not begin with Thomas More, but it is largely acknowledged that the British scholar and statesman invented the word and set the Western tradition of literary utopia. Since the publication of his fundamental work *Utopia* (subtitled *Best State of a Commonwealth and the New Island of Utopia*) in 1516, there have emerged generally three waves of utopian literary writing. The first wave came into existence with the context of the emerging of the capitalist-owning class and their exploitation of new lands. Key utopian writers like Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Tommaso Campanella, and others all responded to the ambition of the emerging bourgeois class and their promotion of the spirit of humanity; and turned to utopian writing to express the desire for a better new world. In their imaginary worlds, all the known evils prevailing in Europe were eliminated; instead ideal alternatives with perfect social orders took their place. The utopian writings by these writers all share a similar theme: a fixed, perfect society in a far-away empty land that suggests a stark contrast to the writers’ present undesirable status quo. These utopian writers on the one hand expressed their criticism of the status quo of their own societies — the decadent feudal system and its social and political defects; on the other hand, demonstrated their ambition for social changes in face of economic, political and ideological upheaval.¹

This desire for an empty land as an ideal New World among American and European writers last until the end of the nineteenth century with the appearance of the second wave of utopian writing which is recognized as “the turn-of-the-century utopian renaissance.”² This wave of writing is largely dominated by the now-canonical utopian writings like: Edward Bellamy’s

¹. Utopian scholars, like Dohra Ahmad believe that there are generally three main waves of utopian writings in Western literary history since Thomas More. In this dissertation, I follow this trend.

². Ahmad, Dohra. 2009. *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-colonial Utopianism in America*. New York: Oxford University

Looking Backward (1888), William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), H.G. Wells' *The Time Machines* (1895) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), William Dean Howells' linked Altrurian novels *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) and *Through the Eye of a Needle* (1907) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) and others. The combined effort of these writers helped create the "Golden Age of Literary Utopias."³ From 1865 to 1917, there appeared in print "at least 120 utopian literary works, almost one third during the 1890s alone, all wedded to the idea of human progress toward some future stage of history."⁴ Together with this peak of literary utopian writing, there emerged a tide of "utopian communities." Following the experimental communitarian societies that set by "utopian socialists" Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint-Simon and Robert Owen, there appeared more than a hundred experimental communities based on utopian principles scattered in the country, and from 1880 to 1900 alone, 28 communities were founded throughout the United States and Canada, which greatly contributed to this utopian wave.

Even though this wave of utopian writing carries the double-function of utopian writing set in the first wave: to criticize the writer's own society, and at the same time to propose for a better society as solution, there appears a paradigm shift. With the close of American frontier in 1890 announced by Frederick Jackson Turner in his "Frontier Thesis", Joseph Conrad's announcement that Africa "ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery-a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over" in his *Heart of Darkness*, and the development of imperialism and modern technology, "the myth of empty space" that dominated the first wave of utopian writing stopped

Press. p. 24.

³. Morris, James M., and Andrea L. Kross. 2004. *Historical Dictionary of Utopianism*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2004. P. xxxiii.

⁴. Ibid.

to satisfy the urge for a better world.⁵ Thus, from 1850s on, utopia started to adopt “a stance more concerned with teaching and exposing for the reader the still unrealized potential of the human project of consciously being in the world.”⁶ Accordingly, the narrative changed from the accounts of the experience of a strange visitor in the remote land to the exploration of the future. Utopian writers of this wave no longer looked to an alternative space located in their present time as a generic rational,⁷ but turned to “a more open and heuristic discourse of alternative values” in an evolved society that accepts the possibility of future change.⁸

From the first wave to the second wave is oftentimes interpreted as from eu/utopia to euechronia by critics. After the turn-of-the-century heyday, there appeared a hiatus of utopian writing for a few decades following the First World War, economic depression, and the potential nuclear destruction, as confirmed by utopia critic Krishan Kumar: “after World War One, Utopias were everywhere in retreat.”⁹ Coming to this stage, utopia became largely a negative word. Utopian writers such as Aldous Huxley even went to the extent to equate utopia with insecurity.¹⁰ This situation of utopian writing only started to change with the publication of Joanna Russ’ *The Female Man* in 1974 which announced a new phase in utopian writing. Following her suit, later utopian/dystopian writers, like Ursula LeGuin, Marge Piercy and Samuel Delany helped to bring out a revival of utopian writing in their combined effort. In their writings, the discourse of imaging a better society is replaced by an attack on present social systems, and the horizon of utopia is shifted from closed to open. Instead of presenting a stable, static and ordered utopian society, they turn to an engaged, incomplete and open utopia that

⁵. Conrad, Joseph. 1996. *Heart of Darkness*. Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Library. p. 5.

⁶. Moylan, Tom. 2014. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. p. 6.

⁷. Ahmad, Dohra. 2009. *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-colonial Utopianism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁸. Williams, Raymond, and Andrew Milner. 2010. *Tenses of Imagination: Raymond Williams on Science Fiction, Utopia and Dystopia*. New York: Peter Lang. p.102.

⁹. Ahmad, Dohra. 2009. *Landscapes of Hope*, p. 14.

¹⁰. Huxley, Aldous, and Michael York. 2011. *Brave New World*. Bath [England]: AudioGo.

carries the radical act of utopian imagination.¹¹ Unlike the traditional utopian texts take utopian locus as the “ultimate,” texts from this wave consider it merely as a phase in the unfolding of utopian project. The classical unified utopia is broken; instead a fragmented one takes its place.¹² The one-dimensional time is replaced by the intertwining of the present and future or past and present. In content, the single hero is “being divided into multiples, or into male and female versions of the same character,” and the one-way trip is replaced by the free transferring between the utopian/dystopia spaces and the present world.¹³

This wave of utopian writing is generally called “critical utopia.” It not only poses challenge to the first two waves of utopia writing in form, content and narration, but also puts utopia genre itself and its historical situation into criticism. Even though the works of this wave retain the main elements of the classical utopian writing, they present these elements in radically different ways.¹⁴ The concept of utopia as a blueprint of a perfect society is deconstructed. The homogeneous “untouched region” of timeless social harmony is replaced by a heterotopia which is incomplete and open to change and puts its emphasis on the active participation of the reader.¹⁵ The anxiety of the Cold War and the hope of decolonization are transmuted to an attack on the present social system. The functional potentiality of utopia for social criticism is tap to the maximum. These writers not only deconstruct the utopia genre itself, but also use utopia genre as a cultural form to contest and undermine the dominate ideology.¹⁶ As suggested by Moylan,

¹¹. Moylan, Tom. 2014. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, Methuen, New York and London. pp. 41-6.

¹². Ibid.

¹³. Ibid.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Ibid.

¹⁶. Ibid.

utopia is “at its most subversive” in the hands of these writers; it is turned into weapons of struggle.¹⁷

The first two waves are predominately written by white men or women (to a lesser extent), and in their utopian texts, they usually present racially homogenous societies. Even though during the second wave racial inequality was most severe, the topic of racism was either evaded or presented in an openly racist way. Only in the mid-twentieth century did the topic of race enter the mainstream utopian literature. White utopian texts (with a few exceptions) generally present white dominated ideal societies devoid of racial tensions and conflicts. As the most influential utopian text of the late-nineteenth century Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* which is believed to single-handedly bring about the second explosion of utopian writing after Thomas More’s *Utopia*, only presents one black character— “a faithful colored man by the name of Sawyer” who serves as a servant. Nevertheless, when it comes to the section about the utopian space in 2000 year Boston— a centralized, technology-enabled universe of plenty, the only black character is neatly excised.

Bellamy’s representation of race and his avoid of racial issue in his utopian community is quite typical in other works that were published in this time period. Even in a utopian enclave that situated in Uganda presented by Ignatius Donnelly in his *Caesar’s Column* (1891), the author depicts an entirely white society. In other works, like Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora: A Prophecy* (1880-81) and feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), the non-white races are thoroughly eliminated. In fact, blacks were not only minimalized (or erased) and stereotyped in mainstream utopian writings, but also dismissed to have the ability to imagine an ideal world. They were considered as “constrained” in imagination and lack a “full-fledged”

¹⁷. Ibid.

utopian vision. Thus, for a long time it was believed that there was never a fully developed African American utopian tradition, as pointed out by William Nichols and Charles P. Henry:

Utopia thought in America has consistently ignored the legacy of American Negro slavery despite the fact that some of our best-known utopian works have emerged from times and places that would seem to make a profound awareness of black-white issues unavoidable. At the same time, *Afro-American literature has never had any significant utopian dimension*. As a consequence, efforts to imagine a more perfect society in America have been almost uniformly innocent of race as a social and political force.¹⁸

Contrary to this biased view on African American utopian tradition, African American literature not only displays a rich utopian tradition, but this tradition goes through their whole culture. Since the very beginning, African Americans not only showed their utopian vision in their oral culture, but also have carried on this vein throughout their literary history, demonstrating their challenge of the white dominance of utopian genre. Even though African American utopian writings had appeared sporadically since they first landed in the New World, the first major wave of African American utopian writing came at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. The period between 1880s and the first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the first peak of African American utopian writing. Major African American writers like Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Chesnutt, Frances E. W. Harper, and the then less well-known ones like Sutton Griggs, Pauline Hopkins and Edward A. Johnson all turned to utopia writing with the hope of finding ways to fight against racist ideas and practices.

The seemingly sudden appearance of the peak of utopian writing in African American community at the turn of the century is not accidental. Since its very beginning, utopian genre

¹⁸. Nichols, William, and Charles P. Henry. "Imagining a Future in America: A Racial Perspective." *Alternative Futures: Journal of Utopian Studies* 1.1 (Spring 1978): 39-50. p. 39. Emphasis is my own.

has been widely acknowledged as functional and effective and endowed with social functions. It is generally written in a time of rapid social changes as a reflection of the unfulfilled wishes of the oppressed class in their specific historical contexts and the author's proposal for social changes. The above mentioned three waves of utopian writings all appeared at times of crucial social changes. For African Americans, the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century is a time that they were most under attack, which the historian Rayford Logan termed "the Nadir." It is a period of crisis and transformations in racial relationship; two extreme racial forces dominate the scene: white supremacy and Black Nationalism. The co-existence of these two conflicting strains provides fertile ground for the blooming of the utopian in African American literary writing, and major African American writers all turn to utopian writings to respond to white supremacy and express their national consciousness and visions. The various forms of utopias they expressed not only show their protest of white supremacy, but also help carve a way for the future of the black community.

However, despite the great amount of scholarly interest in African American literature during this time period, very little attention has been given to the utopian contributions these writers made. As observed by utopia scholar M. Giulia Fabi, even though related terms such as "prophetic" "fantastic" "visionary", and "widely unbelievable" are widely used to describe their works, specialists of African American literature eschew the term of utopia in their reference to novels that appeared during this time, holding that the utopian impulse African Americans demonstrated in their spirituals didn't carry into their literary writing, which results in literary critics' largely held belief that "Afro-American literature has never had any significant utopian dimension."¹⁹

¹⁹. Fabi, Maria a. "'Race Travel': Towards a Taxonomy of Turn-of-the-Century African American Utopian Fiction." 1996.

The outpouring of African American utopian writing at the turn of the century not only challenges the white dominance of utopian genre, but also helps to set the African American utopian tradition. This dissertation focuses on the utopian writings of African American writers at the turn of the century, and specifically focuses on three African American utopian writers who emerged from this period: Sutton Griggs from the South and Pauline Hopkins and W. E. B. Du Bois from the North. All these writers emerged in a transitional period in African American history. Facing the “nadir,” they all turned to utopian genre to seek solutions to the political and racial plight of black Americans and expressed their visions of Black Nationalism in their utopian works. They not only successfully brought the topic of race into utopia genre which posed a direct response to the canonical utopian tradition dominated by whites, overthrowing the myth that African Americans were incapable of imagining an ideal world and America was a paradise or homogeneous nation, but also helped build the uniqueness of African American utopian tradition.

This dissertation is made up of four chapters in addition to an introduction and an epilogue. The first chapter objects to the widely held belief that African American literature lacks a utopian dimension. Through a historical tracing of the African American utopian tradition, from early African/ African American writers and their works, such as David Walker, Olaudah Equiano to contemporary ones like Samuel Delany and Toni Morrison, I argue that African American literature since its very beginning has developed its literary utopian dimension and the utopian impulse is also demonstrated in other cultural forms like music, visual art and religion. Through a historical survey of African American culture, I also conclude that African American

people, as a nation within a nation, are more likely to develop utopian impulse than any other nation. Based on this conclusion, I further raise the view that African Americans not only have an exuberant utopian tradition, but also develop their utopian uniqueness.

Having navigated the map of African American literary utopian tradition, the following chapters will shift to these issues: the characteristics of African American utopian tradition at the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century and how these characteristics are articulated by three major utopian writers who help to bring out the peak of African American utopian writing at the turn-of-the-century. Through the analysis of their utopian texts, I bring out the aims of their utopian writing, the uniqueness of each utopian text and the Black Nationalism they express from their perspectives. Through this, I withdraw that these utopian novels not only show African American writers' criticism of social status quo but also perform as their tool of nation building.

The main body of the dissertation is focusing on the utopian visions of three African Americans writers that emerged at the turn-of-the-century. This group of utopian writers diverged from the dominate strains of naturalism and realism and chose to write in the tradition of utopia. All of the three writers cannot be taken as first-class writers: their skills are not perfect and the content of their works are too elaborate or didactic. Griggs was ignored even in his own life time and has never been taken as a major African American writer. Similarly, Pauline Hopkins was misunderstood and underestimated both in her life and long after her death.²⁰ Du Bois, even though enjoyed a lifelong fame as a writer, yet his "personal favorite" novel, *Dark Princess*, has been criticized widely, and his first novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* is even dismissed as a utopian text by critics. Even so, all the defects of their works and the

²⁰. Now she is recognized as one of the major African American writers.

underestimation they received are not able to cover the purposes and the social effects of their utopian writings and their great contribution to the liberation of black community. Facing international and domestic status quo, they used their utopian writings to express their concern and propose their solutions for racial issues, aiming to point out a way for the political and racial plight faced by black Americans.

Chapter two focuses on Sutton Griggs and his utopian vision of a nation within a nation. As a successful preacher, Griggs turned to literary writing mainly for propaganda. Thus, without a good knowledge of his life and his time, it is not easy to fully understand his novel and the utopian vision he expresses in his utopian texts. So, in this chapter, before an analysis of his utopian novel, there will be introduction of his life and his time, and how the time period helps shape his utopian vision. Chapter three is shifted to Pauline Hopkins and her utopian vision of Africanism. In her utopian novel, Hopkins celebrates African essence by imagining a highly advanced black civilization in Ethiopia. The fourth chapter focuses on the international vision that Du Bois shows in *Dark Princess* by valorizing racial hybridity as the promise of global liberation. The dissertation concludes that the emergence of utopian writing at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is these writers' response to the canonical utopian tradition dominated by whites, which is part of their response and challenge to white supremacy. Through the nation they build in their utopian texts, they show their visions of a better and entirely new future of the African American community.

CHAPTER 1

“LANDSCAPES OF HOPE”: BLACK UTOPIAN TRADITION AND BLACK NATIONALISM

The impossible gives birth to the possible.

— Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.

— Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*

The African American Utopian Imagination

French scholar Roland Shaer at the beginning of his book on utopia points out that strictly speaking utopia was born in the 16th century with the publication of Thomas More’s *Utopia*.¹ As a matter of fact, utopia is much older than his definition and its roots can be traced to ancient times. Long before More’s *Utopia*, Plato’s *Republic*, Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* and popular songs “The Land of Cokaygne” had already manifested the utopian strain. As early as 4th century, there had already appeared a widely acknowledged utopian text *The Peach Blossom Spring* by Tao Yuanming that presents an ethereal utopia. However, as a multifaceted world-wide phenomenon, it is never easy to achieve consensus on the concept of utopia. Different scholars approach it with different questions, and “different literary and ideological communities lead to different

¹. Shaer, Roland, “Utopia, Space, Time, History,” trans. Nadia Benabid, in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, eds. Roland Shaer, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (New York: The New York Public Library, 2000), p.3.

typologies and definitions.”² Gregory Claeys in his book *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea*, for example, divides utopia into three domains: utopian thoughts; the narrower genre of utopian literature; and practical attempts to found improved communities.³ In this vein, many texts that are usually dismissed as utopian can be included in this genre. Utopian scholar Ruth Levitas in her *The Concept of Utopia* points out that even though there could not be agreement as to the definition of utopia, it is generally defined by form, content or function or some combination of these. She further elaborates that scholars like Karl Mannheim and Ernest Bloch define utopia from its functional perspective, while others like Northrop Frye identifies it by its form. As to the content, she believes that there is no universal utopia and it varies with individuals – one person’s utopia might turn out to be another’s nightmare, which makes the definition of utopia in terms of content seem impossible. Critics like Marin and Suvin focus on the efficiency of utopian thought and the critical effect utopian literature creates on the reader. But no matter how different they are, all the texts categorized under utopia genre are concerned with the imagination of alternative worlds representing a better way of being for human beings. Utopia, in the words of Moylan, in essence is to reproduce the lost world in the myth of the golden age.⁴

All the three strains of utopia described by Claeys appeared in African American culture before the turn of the century. However, even though Martin Delany expressed his utopian vision of a black community made up of people from American South and Cuba, David Walker spoke of his utopian vision of an independent black nation, and Frederic Douglass, a black nationalist before emancipation, demonstrated his utopian vision of a black nation sporadically in his

² Ruppert, Peter. 1986. *Reader in a Strange Land: The Activity of Reading Literary Utopias*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. p.35.

³ Claeys, Gregory. 2011. *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea*, London, 2011, p.11.

⁴ Moylan, Tom. 2014. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. Methuen, New York and London.

writing, yet there had never developed a visible line or continuous utopian tradition in African American literary creation. This scene only started to change at the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century with the appearance of a large group of African American writers who turned to utopian writing to express their nationalism vision and their ideal societies. They not only write utopia from the black perspective, but also help bring the African American utopian tradition to its maturity. Of these, the leading utopian writer Sutton E Griggs presents a black nation separated from mainstream society in his novel *Imperium in Imperio* (1899). Edward Augustus Johnson, from the same time period, in his *Light Ahead for the Negro* (1904) presents a utopia in 2006 where whites care for blacks. Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood, or, the Hidden Self* (1903) shows an ideal society with a glorious civilization in Africa which predicates the downfall of whites before an advanced non-white civilization.

This sudden appearance of outpouring of African American utopian writing is not accidental. When Thomas More composed *Utopia*, Europe was “in a century which boldly swept aside ancient conditions and inherited prejudices” and “created new classes and released new ideas and struggles.”⁵ It was a transitional period of “the death-grapple of feudalism with nascent capitalism,” especially Britain was facing radical social changes. Two social transformations were happening in England: the Renaissance and the Reformation, and the two forces were fighting against each other: the emerging bourgeois with its new system of production and nation, and the declining feudal system. This era has been largely claimed by scholars as “one of the most cruel and bloodthirsty in the history of mankind.”⁶ Thus, More's *Utopia* is composed in such a turbulent time with an aim to raise the possibility for social changes. As pointed out by A.L. Morton, More presents in his *Utopia* a world of “despair and hope, of conflict and contrast,

⁵. Kautsky, Karl. 1959. *Thomas More and his Utopia*. New York: Russell & Russell. p.4.

⁶. *Ibid.* p.101.

of increasing wealth and increasing poverty, of idealism and corruption, of the decline at once of the local and international societies in the face of the national state which was to provide the frame within which bourgeois society could develop.”⁷

Morton’s comment not only points out the historical background of this book, but also indicates that More aims to propose solutions to the conflicting situations through his utopia. Through this book, More on the one hand criticizes the European ways and pleads for enlightened rationality; on the other hand, provides images of alternatives to the status quo, thus “to persuade people to make fundamental reforms.”⁸ He wishes the radical ideas he included in this book would be used as “a basis for experiments in social reform.”⁹ His *Utopia* is “no more scholastic exercise; it was designed to exert an influence on the nation’s destiny.”¹⁰ More was successful. *Utopia* brought him into the front rank of the people, and a few months after the appearance of this book, the king abandoned his war policy. In fact, the book’s influence was so profound that Henry was obliged to make concessions and lighten the burdens of his people.¹¹

Utopia, as a literary text, reflects not only More’s desire for an ideal society to take the place of his own, but also the emergence of Britain as a powerful empire. Through the blueprint of an ideal society that he presents in *Utopia*, More not only helps to point a way out of the dire situation faced by Britain, but also helps to form the consciousness of nation in modern history. When More composed *Utopia*, England was experiencing unprecedented development in commerce. British sea power was unprecedentedly expanded, and English mariners ventured farther into the uncharted sea. London emerged as an international city. Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* points out: “without the productive effects of the utopian imagination, we lose not

⁷. Morton, A. L. 1969. *The English Utopia*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p.49.

⁸. More, *Utopia*, p.xx.

⁹. *Ibid.*, p.xxix.

¹⁰. *Ibid.*, p.98.

¹¹. Kautsky, Karl. 1959. *Thomas More and his Utopia*. New York: Russell & Russell.

only our ability to shape the world in which we live, but even our ability to comprehend it.”¹²

More wrote this novel to help people better understand his times, and at the same time with a purpose of justifying British imperialism. In the second book of *Utopia*, More clearly shows his standing on the issue of colonialism by arguing that if the population of utopia outgrows the ability of the land to sustain it, and the other land “where inhabitants have much waste [uncultivated] and unoccupied land,” the utopians are justified to oust the natives.¹³ As a matter of fact, More himself participated in a colonial enterprise undertaken by his brother-in-law.

When *Utopia* first came out, More’s contemporaries saw it as a book that gave directions to the rulers on how to govern their States. During More’s time, men of letters often wrote to show the princes how to govern, like Macchiavelli’s *The Prince* (1513) and Erasmus’ *Manual for Christian Princes* (1516). With the development of commerce, the power of the king was strengthening. More was profoundly disappointed with Henry VIII, and his *Utopia* was written in the frame of his disillusion. In the second book, he gave his views on how a happy State could be if it were rationally organized and governed. More even stated his special object of influencing the government and the constitution of England in the book, as confirmed in Erasmus’ well-known letter to Hutten: “He published his *Utopia* for the purpose of showing, what are the things that occasion mischief in commonwealths; having the English Constitution especially in view.”¹⁴ Many details of the government and people’s life in the utopian community are actually modeled that of Britain and the island of utopia is in fact England, which reflects More’s intention to show what England would like if she was thus organized. Moreover, More is not a traditional man of letters, and he sees his role as a politician and humanist as

¹². Mannheim, Karl, Edward Shils, Louis Wirth, and Karl Mannheim. 1965. *Ideology and Utopia: an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. p.263.

¹³. More, *Utopia*, p. 77.

¹⁴. More, Thomas. 1990. *Utopia*. Raleigh, N.C.: Alex Catalogue. p.140.

having priority over his identity as a writer. He cares more about social reality, and wants to achieve social reform through writing. He wrote this book not just for entertaining the reader, but more to enlighten and inspire for changes in a transitional moment, which is asserted by the statement More made at the end of *Utopia*: “However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments.”¹⁵

Utopia is made of two parts: in book one, through the narration of the evils that beset the early 16th century England, More offers a frightening picture of English society and its contradictions; in book two, More responds with possible solutions by showing an ideal society which shows his proposal for the improvement of his society. The ideal society More presents can be read as More’s direct reaction to his contemporary economic and social conditions. The second book was written first and the first book was added later, but when it was published, More put the part on his tumultuous contemporary world first. Such arrangement did not come into being randomly. Through the comparison of a truly ferocious contemporary society full of violence and oppression, corruption and inequality with an ideal commonwealth, More indicates the necessity of change. Through the presentation of the disparities and discrepancy of the old and new world or the social reality and utopia, More on the one hand criticizes his government; on the other hand, stimulates the reader’s desire to explore the alternative possibilities and to take actions to change the existing society.

Another functional feature of utopia that derives from *Utopia* is its connection with satire. Since the very beginning, the two genres have been tightly connected. In the words of Darko Suvin: “Satire and utopia are not really separable, the one a critique of the real world in the name of something better, the other a hopeful construct of a better world that might be. The hope feeds

¹⁵. Ibid. p.192.

the criticism, the criticism the hope.”¹⁶ *Utopia* has in common with Roman satire both the general structural outline and many other canonical elements. The whole novel emanates the feel of satire; it is full of satire of religion, science, politics and contemporary institutions and events of More’s society. Such similarity between the two genres is not groundless. More’s favorite writer is Lucian who is one of the most famous satirists and he translated some of Lucian’s works. In addition, More himself is a satirist and well informed with the Roman satire beyond Lucian.¹⁷ Such reality leads to the fact that *Utopia* carries both the shape and spirit of satire. Satire usually contains two purposes: to expose, dissect the foolish or vicious behavior of man; and performs as an admonition to virtue and rational behavior. These two sides of satire are clearly manifested in *Utopia*. More’s utilization of satire in this book is also reflected in two comments of his contemporaries. When *Utopia* was first published, Erasmus stated: “If you have not read More’s utopia, do look out for it, whenever you wish to be amused, or rather I should say, if you ever want to see the sources from which almost all the ills of the body politics arise.”¹⁸ Jerome Busleyden in a letter published with *Utopia* also shared the same view with his statement: “by delineating ... an ideal commonwealth, a pattern and finished model of conduct, than which there has never been seen in the world one more wholesome in its institution, or more perfect, or to be thought more desirable.”¹⁹ He further added that to More “jesting was the main object of his life.”²⁰

Utopia is about the ideal, and satire generally focuses on the actual which is generally

¹⁶. Elliott, Robert Karl. 1970. *The Shape of Utopia*. p.24

¹⁷. Kautsky, Karl. 1959. *Thomas More and his Utopia*. New York: Russell & Russell.

¹⁸. Patrides, C. A., Claude J. Summers, and Ted-Larry Pebworth. 1989. *Figures in a Renaissance Context*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p.21.

¹⁹. More, Thomas, J. H. Lupton, Ralph Robinson, Thomas More, and Thomas More. 1895. *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More: in Latin from the Edition of March 1518, and in English from the 1st ed. of Ralph Robynson's translation in 1551*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p.315.

²⁰. Ibid.

presented in exaggerating manner. More's utilization of satire genre in his book enables him to make fun of his society, but at the same time avoids him of unnecessary troubles. Through such a mixed genre, More successfully achieves his goal of "killing two birds with one stone"—exposition and social criticism, and projection of an ideal alternative based on social facts. On the one hand, he exposes the evils of his contemporary society, advocating subversive ideas; on the other hand, he portrays an ideal society which casts a critical light on his present society. Through *Utopia*, More sets the formation and functions of the two sides of this genre: the negative side exposes the evils of society in a humorous way; and the positive side provides a normative model to be followed.

Karl Mannheim, one of the most important theorists on utopia, most well-known for his interpretation of ideology and utopia argues:

The concept of *utopian* thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain oppressed groups are intellectually so strongly interested in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it. Their thinking is incapable of diagnosing an existing condition of society. They are not at all concerned with what really exists.... Their thought is never a diagnosis of the situation; it can only be used as a direction for action. In the utopian mentality, the collective unconscious, guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality. It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyze its desire to change things.²¹

Mannheim not only points out the functional characteristic of utopia, but also clears the transformative function of utopia specifically — to mobilize people to affect a transformation.

²¹. Mannheim, Karl, Edward Shils, Louis Wirth, and Karl Mannheim. 1965. *Ideology and utopia: an introduction to the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. p.36.

His definition of the transformative and anticipatory functions of utopia and its importance as a means for intellectuals to bring out social changes shed light on the popularity of this genre among African American writers. Since its very beginning, literature for African Americans has been more than a mere aesthetic expression; it has been their critical tool for social protests and changes. “Art for art’s sake” does not apply to black writers’ situation. Additionally, utopian literature, as a form of romance, stimulates a desire for a better life in the reader. Thus, it motivates them to take actions to build a new world. As explained by Frye, utopia as a form of romance “involves nostalgia for an idealized past, in part to search for alternatives to the social ideals of the here and now.”²² This explains why during a time when realism and naturalism were dominating the scene African American writers turned to romanticism/utopia to express their vision. As a form of writing, utopia provides them a means to criticize the oppressive status quo within the dominant ideology, and helps to push the protest tradition in African American literature to its limits before emancipation.

Utopian genre appears to be future-oriented or focus on the past golden ages, but on the contrary, it is most concerned with the current moment, and its representation of the moment in an estranged manner is especially practical to African Americans writers. The estrangement feature of utopia genre gives them space to criticize the present and express their plans for a better world, but at the same time spare the surveillance from mainstream society. As a pragmatic and two-fold strategic genre, utopia not only provides African American writers with a forum for social critics, but also enables them to avoid the punishment and persecution from mainstream society that such criticism may cause. Thus, it enables them to carve a way out for themselves in the dominance of the canonical American utopian novels’ racially homogenous

²². Goyal, Yogita, *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*, p.13.

nation that thoroughly excises black Americans. More than these, in content, utopia is usually in the form of dialogue that grounded in a “disjunction [...] between the familiar present and the imagined future, between history and possibility.”²³ It is both deconstructive and constructive. It defamiliarizes the present, criticizes the present and anticipates the future. Thus, it gives the writer a relatively free space to criticize the present, imagine alternative societies and create ideal polities. Such defamiliarization of the present makes the flaws and contradictions of the author’s own society more comprehensible and transparent to the audience, through which to arouse in them the dissatisfaction with the status quo. Thus, invite for social changes.

Since the very beginning, African American writers have been using utopia genre as a diagnostic tool to satirize and criticize the social reality that they cannot change. However, the value of utopia lies not simply in criticizing the existing social system, but more in delivering a proposal for possible solutions. As stated by Fabi, utopia “implies a detailed socio-political critique” and “transform a contemporary dystopian historical reality of racial segregation into an ‘anticipatory’ vision of liberation and empowerment that was intended as a means to bring about desired social change.”²⁴ The critique emerges by force of the contrast between the society in which the author and his or her readers live, and the alternative, supposedly perfect world described in the text. This contrast causes the readers into action for social reform. As pointed out by Leszek Kolakowski that it is “a tool of action upon reality and of planning social activity.”²⁵ Through this, utopia serves as a critical tool proposing alternative to social reality, and anticipates and even predicates the future. More’s *Utopia*, since its publication has been

²³. Pfaelzer, Jean. 1984. *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896: The Politics of Form*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press. p.5.

²⁴. Fabi, *Passing and the Rise of African American Novel*, p.143.

²⁵. Kolakowski, Leszek, “The Concept of the Left,” in *Toward a Marxist Humanism*, trans. Jane Zielonko Peel New York: Groves Press, 1979, p.70.

considered by critics as a serious proposal for social action and reform. Meanwhile, the alternative ideal society produced by utopia has an emancipating function. As a fantasy, it seeks to transcend the bonds and boundaries the existing ideology imposed on people, thus diverts attention away from practical social concerns. In the words of Jameson, utopia is “like a foreign body within the social: in them, the differentiation process has momentarily been arrested, so that they remain as it were momentarily beyond the reach of the social and testify to its political powerlessness, at the same time that they offer the space in which new wish images of the social can be elaborated and experimented on.”²⁶

Utopia is also believed by critics to have the therapeutic effect. On the level of imagination, it helps cope with cultural and social contradictions. Ernst Block perhaps gives the most comprehensive interpretation of utopia by arguing that utopia helps tap human being’s deepest longs for the not yet manifest, thus suggests for a better future. By providing “an image purified of social conflicts, tensions, and discrepancies,” utopias ease the fears and apprehensions the readers have about the undesirable reality, and supply them with “heuristic models of order, harmony, and fulfillment,” thus help them “cope more adequately in an imperfect, fragmented, and hostile world.”²⁷

All these functions of utopia help to explain the popularity of the genre among African American writers, especially in transitional times or when the black community was at attack most. African American utopian writers of the turn of the century not only kept the traditions set up by More in *Utopia*, but also helped set distinctive African American utopian traditions. In his utopian text, More emphasizes the comparison between utopia and the inferior system of his own society. This comparison has been taken as the legitimate frame of utopia genre and is well-kept

²⁶. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, pp.15–6.

²⁷. Ruppert, Peter. *Reader in Strange Land*, p.156.

by mainstream writers. When the early European settlers leaving behind the old world, they often considered America as their Eden, an ideal alternative to the oppressive world they left behind. In fact, even before the Europeans came to America, it had already been pictured as “a site for a new golden age,”²⁸ and “the site of a new beginning for Western society.”²⁹ Thus, in the mainstream utopian writing, the new world is depicted as the land of freedom which posed as a stark contrast to the old world they left behind. The Europeans explorers and early settlers believed that they were the chosen people to rebuild their lost civilization, to build a “city upon the hill” for other nations to follow. They idealized America as an earthly paradise or a civil/religious utopia and themselves as Adam in the wild. Even in the slavery South, white Southerners conceived America as a plantation idyll. These utopian visions of America can be seen throughout early American literary texts in which America is seen as an achieved utopia, and the reality of violence and racism is largely ignored. As stated by Jean Baudrillard in his book on America published in 1986, America has achieved utopia because “what is thought in Europe becomes reality in America.”³⁰

For African Americans, this discourse of America as achieved utopia does not exist. The moment they landed on America, it became their dystopia, and their utopian vision is built upon such a dystopian reality. Thus, since the very beginning, African American utopian writing has formed its own tradition — one that is totally different from mainstream society. As an oppressed and segregated group of people, their utopia is either a space separated from the dominate power or outside the land of America. As pointed out by Fabi, African American texts propose a dislocation of point-of-view: their utopias are situated rather in their own time and

²⁸. Marx, Leo. 1964. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 36.

²⁹. *Ibid.*, p. 3

³⁰. Baudrillard, Jean. 1988. *America*. London: Verso. p.81.

place.³¹ African American utopian tradition usually departs from the comparison mode that was set by More. Since its very beginning, it has been ideologically shaped as a way of their expression for freedom that is denied to them in their land of birth. The author's own system, generally America which is full of racism, inequality and oppression is deserted as a possibility for an ideal place. To them, utopian genre came into being as their expression of freedom and fighting against racism, which results in their relatively more emphasis on the function of utopia. As affirmed by Jameson, genres not only emerge in specific historical situations, but also "carry that ideology in themselves as a ghostly after-effect."³²

Another feature of utopia that is usually connects with More's *Utopia* is that utopia thrives in tumultuous moments. Even though it cannot be rashly said that More's *Utopia* was written in the time of crisis, it indeed emerged in the context of rapid social changes and provided possible alternatives to the given situation. In his study of literary utopias, Northrop Frye argues that utopias must appeal to "something which existing society has lost, forfeited, rejected, or violated, and which the utopia itself is to restore."³³ Also confirmed by Jameson, utopia tends to be most vigorous during "transitional periods." It is no exaggeration to conclude that all utopias, or nearly all, are composed in the times of radical social changes. Indeed, utopia is probably the most historically contexted genre. The turn-of-the-century is one of the most turbulent times in history: a time of change of values with the emerging of imperialism and the fast development of capitalism. A variety of social movements were happening, and the dominating social system was challenged from all aspects. Victorian values could not meet the demands of the era, yet the new values had not been formed. For African Americans, the situation was even worse; it is

³¹. Fabi, *Passing and African American Novel*, p.46.

³². Goyal, *Yogita, Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*, p.9.

³³. Frye, *The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society*, p.123.

imagined as the nadir or the darkest age in their history. Directly after the failure of Reconstruction, there emerged Jim Crow. Their situation, instead of becoming better, became worse. This tumultuous period provides the most fertilizing soil for African American utopian writing, thus, it witnessed a great outpouring of utopian texts.

Even though most critics believe that African American literary utopia began at the end of nineteenth century, utopian tradition came into African American culture much earlier than that. Since the very beginning of their literary tradition, African American writers have used their utopias to challenge the prevailing order. Ernest Bloch explicitly claims that utopian thinking is in some sense of human nature. In his *Spirit of Utopia* (1918), which is seen as the classic expression of this genre, Bloch traces the utopian “spirit” in various works of music, poetry, folklore, fairy stories, and other forms of literature. If so, the utopian propensity tends to be stronger in African Americans than any other group of human beings. For African Americans, utopia is a way of living.

The central theme of utopia is desire — the desire for a different, better world. Since the forcible deportations of Africans from Africa, their desire for a better world began. As “an oppressed ‘nation’ without a home,” their searching for a better world turns to be one of the most common themes in their history.³⁴ Their utopian desire came into being much earlier than their literary utopian tradition, which is reflected in their plantation songs and oral stories. This Promised Land or the New Jerusalem they expressed in their oral folksy culture carries the utopian strain. As commented by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folks*: “through all the sorrow of the sorrow songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The mirror cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence.”³⁵ The spiritual is a perfect

³⁴. Kelley, Robin D. G. 2002. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press. p.15.

³⁵. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1990. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg. p.xiv.

example of the presentation of the utopian impulse in African American life. As confirmed by critic Preston N. Williams, the spirituals performed as a tradition of utopian thinking “deposited in song.”³⁶

Robin Kelley in his *Freedom Dreams* states that “the history of black people is a history of movement.”³⁷ Consonant with this view, Ira Berlin in his book *The Making of African America* points out that the history of people of African descent in America is made up of four great migrations, and accompanied these four big movements were their searching for better places. These four movements elevated the importance of movement and place in African American life. In *The Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature*, Mary Ellen Snodgrass defines utopia as a search for a “good place,” “a longing that haunts the unconscious,” and a “desire for respite, a stopping place.”³⁸ For African Americans, their movements were out of free will, thus each movement carries their desire for a better place where they can realize their dreams of freedom.³⁹ For them, place was not merely a geographic one, but also a social imperative.⁴⁰ Each movement is not simply their searching for a better place, but also their challenge “of the place” ascribed to them by mainstream society.⁴¹ Their utopian space is not a fixed one, frozen in time and imagination, but instead a transformative one. Thus, each movement comes with a shift of their utopian vision, a departure from the old utopian vision and an initiation of a new one. Thus, African American history, to some extent, can be interpreted as African American people’s utopian history of searching for “good places.”

³⁶. Williams, Preston N, “Black Perspectives on Utopia.” Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1975, p. 47.

³⁷. Kelley, Robin D. G. 2002. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press.

³⁸. Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. 1995. *Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature*. ABC-CLIO Ltd.

³⁹. Kelley, Robin. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*.

⁴⁰. Berlin, Ira. 2010. *The Making of African America: the Four Great Migrations*. New York: Viking.

⁴¹. Ibid.

From Nancy Prince's cross-national searching for an ideal home for her family in her narrative to Douglass' searching for freedom in the North in his *Narrative* to the idyllic plantation South documented in Charles Chesnut's *Conjure Woman and Other Tales*, from Zora Neale Hurston's all-black town in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to Toni Morrison's dystopia in *Paradise*, writers all carry the utopian impulse in their creativity. Much the same can be said of African American music, from spirituals' expression of a kind of Jerusalem to black women's desire for freedom and equality in blues to hip-hop's desires of earthly paradise. Other artistic accomplishments, like Gordon Parks' photographs, Jacob Lawrence's Migrations series painting all express black people's desire for a better status of being. In addition to this, concrete utopian projects from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee to Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa Movement" to Martin Luther King Jr.'s Civil Rights movements and the Black Panther party in the 1970s, all these extraordinary works and projects carry African Americans' utopian vision of searching for a better place. It is not exaggerated to say that no aspect of black people's life hasn't been touched by this utopian searching.

African American history determines the uniqueness of the utopian agenda. African American utopias depart entirely from the territorial model that set up by More to Howells. The archetype of the utopian genre usually requires a "central character (who) embarks on a voyage, lands alone in a strange country, makes contacts with the inhabitants, learns about the customs and institutions of their land, makes certain comparisons with Europe, returns home."⁴² The classical utopian novel is usually made up of two worlds: one is the familiar present full of turmoil; the other is perfect world fulfills the author's desire that is unrealized in reality. The author usually puts his emphasis on the perfect utopian community. The two worlds usually rely

⁴². Elliott, Robert C. *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970. p.118.

on a dialogue to bridge the gap that serves as the motivation for changes. The trip made by the visitor to the utopian world is generally one-way trip.

Compared with mainstream utopian texts that focus on the accomplished perfection of utopia itself, African American utopian works pay more attention to the process of individual and collective ideological change that would lead to utopia.⁴³ Instead of effacing human subject and focusing on the description of a perfect society, African American utopias are more likely to focus on the protagonist in action.⁴⁴ The most distinctive feature of African American utopias is a “radical this-worldness.” Unlike classical utopian texts by white writers usually place the story in a remote place or time period, black utopian writers usually challenge social reality instead of representing the escapist fantasies into a distant past or future. The characters of the utopian novels usually don’t inhabit a future never-never land but rebel against the authors’ present or the recent past.⁴⁵ They transfer between utopian space and undesirable reality constantly, but they are secretly hidden from white society. The utopian communities imagined by African American writers are usually fallen into two general groups: one is a separate society inside America; the other is an ideal society outside America. Their literary utopia puts more emphasis on the functional side of utopian genre, expressing the author’s dissatisfaction with the status quo and his calling for a change of racial reality.⁴⁶ African American utopian writers push the utilitarian function of utopia genre to its outmost, and their texts are more purpose-oriented than mainstream utopian ones. Given the racism faced by African Americans, their utopias not only severely criticize the social reality, but also put utopian genre’s proposing for a better future into criticism.

⁴³. Fabi, M. Giulia, and Rita B. Dandridge. 2002. “Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel (Book).” *African American Review*. 36 (3)

⁴⁴. Ibid.

⁴⁵. Ibid.

⁴⁶. Ibid.

In the long history, African American utopias not simply vary in forms but also in contents. Different historical contexts bring out different utopian agenda. Thus, their utopian space changes accordingly to meet their historical needs, and different historical periods, writers use utopian texts to achieve different aims. In their early utopia pursuit, the searching for a good place was often a return to an imagined motherland, a lost place that carried their past. “Back to Africa” dominated their utopian search; Africa as an ideal space performs the main strain, and serves as a black man’s utopia where he can enjoy the fruits of citizenship and the realization of his manhood. This utopian pursuit is reflected in both the repatriation to Liberia and Sierra Leone encouraged by Paul Cuffe and Martin Delany and others, and the early African American writers’ presentation of Africa as their utopian land. Olaudah Equiano in his *Interesting Narrative* (1792) narrates that his motherland Africa was “almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets [where] every great event ... is celebrated in public dances ... accompanied with songs and music.”⁴⁷ Even though Africa was facing all kinds of problems and exploitations and oppression, it still carried a deep longing for these writers, for it was a world that kept them whole.

During the slavery era, the North served as an ideal space for many on the plantations. Douglass in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* equals escaping to the North as to freedom. For those who could not move, autonomous maroon communities that “existing outside the purlieu of the territorial units of the slave plantations” became their utopian space.⁴⁸ Later, as the expansion of colonialism of Africa and other practical issues, like the expenses of the traveling to Africa, Africa gradually stopped as being an ideal space. Instead, flight to Canada, escape to Haiti became more practical alternatives. Delany in his *Blake*,

⁴⁷. Equiano, Olaudah, and Robert J. Allison. 1995. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press. p.7.

⁴⁸. Diouf. A. Sylviane. 2014. *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons*. New York University Press.

proposes the project of building a new black community based on the black emigration to sites of Caribbean, Central America and South America.

After the Civil War, black people saw their hope of gaining freedom and equality in America, thus the fad of emigration to the outside of America faded. Migration to the West and the building of all black communities took place, resulting in hundreds of all-black towns and communities. As an important aspect of utopian desire, until this time, literary utopian writings appeared sporadically, African American utopia vision is mainly reflected in their concrete utopian projects.

Before the Civil War, black people were denied citizenship and manhood, thus the utopian writers' imagined lands were those where they could be free as human beings. After the Civil War, they were given citizenship, but with the collapse of Reconstruction and the emergence of Jim Crow, their situation instead of becoming better was actually worse. They were denied the rights to vote and the access to education, and faced lynching and segregation in their daily life. As Isabel Wilkerson suggests in her masterwork on great migration, nobody was free of lynching in the South in Jim Crow era. The land of the South turned out to be a land of fear, and thousands of people left their homes for the North.⁴⁹ For a few decades, the North again performed as their utopian space. This time period witnessed quantities of African American utopian writings denying the South as an ideal space to live. It is also during this time that African American novels began to appear in quantities. Sutton Griggs, Frances Harper, Pauline Hopkins and others all turned to utopian genre on the one hand to deny the South as a possible utopia and to promote separatism; and on the other hand, to express their vision of a better society in which they can fulfill their dreams of equality and freedom.

⁴⁹. Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House.

The North was not the promised land of freedom and equality as African Americans dreamed of. Facing the disappointment of isolation and unemployment, the communal South became a kind of Jerusalem to a lot of black people who migrated to the North. Clifton Taulbert in his memoir of his migration from Mississippi recalls: “The sound of Mama’s and Ma Ponk’s voices could not find their way through the maze of buildings that separated us. Never again could I pick dewberries or hear the familiar laughter from the field truck.”⁵⁰ Meanwhile, there appeared the resurgence of the back to Africa movements promoted by Bishop Henry McNeil Turner and Marcus Garvey. Garvey’s New Africa that embraced Western ideas and technologies and transformed them to meet black people’s needs created a great sensation among the black community, which marks the peak of black utopian vision at the beginning of the twentieth century. The longing for an ideal past in an imperfect present dominated the utopian scene of the early twentieth century. After the peak of Garvey movement, with the gradual development of civil rights movement and cultural movement, the geography of utopia gradually shifts from Africa and other places to America. In recent time, emigration to outside America also seems to lose its attraction to black people. Instead, they are more likely to place their utopian vision in America or even outer space, like Sun Ra’s projection of interplanetary emigrationist movement.

Black Nationalism

According to Ernest Bloch, utopian impulse is part of human nature and historically variable; it flourishes on certain historical occasions with specific situations. As argued by Moritz Kaufmann, “the appeal of utopia is directly proportional to the level of social

⁵⁰. Berlin, Ira. 2010. *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations*. New York: Viking. p.22.

discontent.”⁵¹ Utopia as a narrative form is believed to develop in times of crisis and thrive in times of turmoil. The turn of the century not only witnessed the first major outpouring of African American utopian writing, but also the peak of Black Nationalism, another important strain of African American culture. Similar to utopia, there exists a relation between the prosperity of Black Nationalism and low ebb of African American history. Black Nationalism prospers when black people most despaired of finding a place within society and culture, for the “nationalistic tendencies provided an escape from the oppression suffered.”⁵² As confirmed by Wilson Jeremiah Moses that nationalist sentiment, even though present throughout black history, tends to be most pronounced when black people’s situation has declined, or when they have experienced intense disillusionment after “a period of heightened but unfulfilled expectations.”⁵³

Black Nationalism, like black utopian vision, is another concept that of unclear origins, but it has always been there in African American history. Most critics agree that Black Nationalism consciousness began with the community consciousness that developed on the slave ship among enslaved people who were captured and forced to board on slave ships heading the New World. They “took silent vows either to find a way back home—a constant preoccupation for early Africans — or cultivate ties to sustain new communities.”⁵⁴ Philip Curtin further points out that when they arrived at the New World, the “strange bond between ‘shipmates’ who had made the Middle Passage together” continued in these “new communities,”⁵⁵ and was kept in their building of organizations and institutions in the New World. The common experience of slavery

⁵¹. Levitas, Ruth. 2010. *The Concept of Utopia*. Oxford: Peter Lang. p.16.

⁵². Meier, August, and Elliott M. Rudwick. 1976. *Along the Color Line, Explorations in the Black Experience: [essays]*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. p.191.

⁵³. Levy, Peter B. 1998. *The Civil Rights Movement*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press. p.14.

⁵⁴. Diedrich, Maria, Henry Louis Gates, and Carl Pedersen. 1999. *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.40.

⁵⁵. Gomez, Michael Angelo. 1998. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. p.165.

and the racism they received in a strange world which was built on the concept of “white superiority and black inferiority” make their desire for a nation especially strong.

After the Africans landed on the land of America, despite their differences in languages and religions, they began to form communities which enable them to better survive slavery. This community consciousness was carried since then and emerged as the most popular ideological movement in African American community in the end of 19th century and early 20th century which is defined as the “golden age of black nationalism” by Wilson Moses.⁵⁶

However, Black Nationalism is not a once-for-all definition. It went through various forms throughout its history with the changes of historical contexts. Since the beginning, there have been two most prominent strains of Black Nationalism that run throughout the history of Black Nationalism: Afrocentrism and Ethiopianism. Both emphasize the important roles that Africa plays in the world civilization and in helping create civilization in African American community. Similar to their utopian pursuit, the earliest black nationalists held Africa to be their place for ideal nation, a place that they could be independent. On the one hand, they believed that Africa was the home that they would return to eventually. On the other hand, many of them, especially black Christians believed that they should go back to Africa to Christianize the continent. This trend was especially prominent in the 18th and 19th century when Christianity was taken as symbol of civilization. Many African Americans took it as their duty and mission to go back to Africa to redeem the people there from the native heathen ways and lead them to civilization. From the poems of Phillis Wheatley, the writing of the Europeanized African Olaudah Equiano and David Walker’s political pamphlet to the “back to Africa” movement in the twentieth

⁵⁶. Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. 1978. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books.

century by Alfred C. Sam and Marcus Garvey, Africa occupies a predominantly important role in Black Nationalism.

In classical definition of nation and nationalism, territory is oftentimes considered to be the primary necessity.⁵⁷ However, for African Americans, their nation is not simply a geographical pursuit, but more as an ideological, cultural and political one. Different from most other nationalism ideologies, the adherents of Black Nationalism are united “neither by a common geography nor by a common language, but by racial unity.”⁵⁸ As another important aspect of Black Nationalism — Pan-Africanism believes in the spiritual unity of all black people. Du Bois in his *Dark Princess* promotes an international organization which serves as a site of Black Nationalism that united all people of color over the world. Hopkins in her *Of One Blood* expresses her Black Nationalist vision by imagining a utopian space in Ethiopia. Her vision of Ethiopianism is not simply a literal reference to Ethiopia, but a movement for the universal elevation of African peoples all over the world.

Even though a large number of blacks immigrated to Africa, mainly Liberia, the majority stayed in America, a land of their birth. They believed that black people’s home was in America and they should fight for their full rights as American citizens. Of those who stayed in America, some believed in assimilation; others stuck to separation and believed that the only way to solve the racial issue was to create a complete geographical and sociopolitical separation. They promoted racial uplift through the building of separate institutions and organizations. However, the contradiction of black separatists is that they believe in building a nation against white supremacy, but their nation is oftentimes just imitation of white nation. As interpreted by Dean E. Robinson, Black Nationalism was born in the context of black and white race relations in

⁵⁷. Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?”, text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11th, 1882, in Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* Paris, Presses-Pocket, 1992. (translated by Ethan Rundell)

⁵⁸. *Ibid.* p.17.

America, but “classical black nationalism mirrored what we could loosely call ‘white American nationalism’ of the time.”⁵⁹ For example, Sutton Griggs in his Black Nationalist novel *Imperium* created a separate black nation as a solution to white supremacy, but the concept and the organization of the nation were adopted from the white nation criticized by him. Actually, the black nation he presented in the novel was just an imitation of the white society that the black radical nationalists were fighting against.

This desire for an independent nation expressed by Griggs goes through African American literary writing and practices. In his searching for the meaning of nation, Ernest Renan pointed out that “‘having suffered together’ or the “common suffering” played an important part in the formation of nation consciousness. “National sorrows” are one of the most significant elements in nation formation. The “common suffering” that went through African American experience in the New World, from slavery to Jim Crow, from the status of “subhuman” to second citizenship, made the nation consciousness extremely strong in African American community. During the Nadir, African American people’s situation instead of becoming better actually turned to be worse than any period after the Civil War with their loss of the rights gained during Reconstruction and the unmet promises. The founding of the Ku Klux Klan with its increasing strength and the establishment of Jim Crow as national law forced African Americans to separate or establish all-black communities. Disappointment with the social and racial reality and the failure of social reform drove many African American writers to the utopian genre to imagine alternative ideal worlds as sites of nationalism. Similar to utopian writing’s likely appearance in time of crisis, Black Nationalism is also strongest in transitional times. Thus, the confluence of these two strains in the turn of the century is not surprising, or accidental.

⁵⁹. Robinson, Dean E. 2001. *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. p.7.

CHAPTER 2

“A NATION WITHIN A NATION:” SUTTON GRIGGS AND HIS “CRITICAL UTOPIA”

It often requires more courage to read some books than it does to fight a battle.

— Sutton Griggs

We believe in the Negro, in the majesty of his patient soul, in the brilliancy of the future that awaits him as a distinct branch of the human family.... who knows but that he is being evolved as the special guide of the host of the dark millions across the waters?

— Sutton Griggs, *Wisdom's Call*

Sutton Griggs and his Utopian Vision

Perhaps no African American writer brought the utopian writing to a higher level at the turn of the century than Sutton Griggs. In less than a decade, from 1899 to 1908, he produced five novels, all of which demonstrate his utopian vision of building a better society for blacks. More than being merely a utopian writer, Griggs is also a man of action giving “much of my time, energy and meager means” in building up a better South for his people.¹ Born into a priest family, before turned to writing to challenge white supremacy, Griggs had already been a successful Baptist minister and a spokesperson for the black community. Emerging from the “nadir” of African American history, upon realization that preaching could not fulfill his goal of racial uplift, Griggs turned to writing with the purpose of exposing the social, political and moral

¹. Griggs, Sutton, *The Story of My Struggle*. p.4. <https://sites.google.com/a/kean.edu/suttongriggs/publications>

issues faced by the black community in the Jim Crow era, hoping to rectify “these social and political inequalities.”²

Griggs had his first book published in 1899 and since then until his death wrote five novels, one autobiography, and numerous religious and sociopolitical treatises and tracts as complementary to his protest as a preacher and orator, which makes him one of the most prolific African American writers at the turn-of-the-century. As a preacher turned writer, Griggs believes that literature is fundamental to the progress of African American people; it is an efficient tool to challenge the political and social reality of his time. He endeavors to build up “a national Negro literature,”³ holding that all great nations should have their own literature, as he wrote in *Life's Demand*: “all of the races of mankind that have achieved greatness have developed a literature. Not a single race that has no literature is classified as great in the eyes of the world.”⁴ In fact, he is one of the very first black writers, “perhaps the first black writer consciously to attempt to create a distinctively Afro-American philosophy of literature,”⁵ and he believes that African American writers are capable of producing a literature that would surpass the achievement of mainstream literature. His philosophy of art is nationalistic; his objective was to arouse the nation consciousness in the black masses.

Despite his achievement as a priest and writer, Griggs was also an entrepreneur and social activist. Facing difficulties that inflicted on black men in publishing, he established his own publishing company – the Orion Publishing Company (Nashville) and the National Public

². Coleman, Finnie D. 2007. *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle against White Supremacy*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. p.19.

³. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. p.30.

⁴. Griggs, Sutton E. 1916. *Life's Demands, or, According to Law*. Memphis, Tenn: National Public Welfare League. p. 98.

⁵. Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. “Literary Garveyism: The Novels of Reverend Sutton E. Griggs.” *Phylon* 40.3 (Fall, 1979): 203-16.

Welfare League (Memphis). In 1905, when Tennessee passed laws to enforce segregation of streetcars, Griggs helped lead one of the most ambitious and sustained resistance movements in the South. However, time and criticism have been harsh on him. He has been misunderstood and underestimated by both the literary critics of his time and contemporary scholars. So far, despite his utilization of diverse genres and his great bulk of literary writing, Griggs has not been recognized as a major African American writer. His novels are dismissed as aesthetically flawed and still regarded as non-canonical by modern scholars. So far, only his first novel is still in print. Moreover, although he helped to introduce the first peak of African American utopian writing and all his writings display his utopian vision and impulse, he has never been treated as a major African American utopian writer, and only his first novel has been lightly criticized as a utopian novel.

As a writer, Griggs' contribution lies not simply in the large quantity of his works but in his use of literature to bring about social changes. He is a pragmatic writer— not simply writes to entertain, but more importantly to provoke the readers to actions—“Each of his novels seeks to provide direct solutions to the political plight of black Americans, proffering and experimenting with practical proposals for political action and affiliation in the South.”⁶ He aims to produce a different kind of literature, one that “departed from aesthetic standards that were predicated on the dominant racial theories of his time.”⁷ Following the African American protest tradition, he intends to build a specific African American literature: a kind of literature to correct the violent misrepresentations and inspire the reader to read carefully and intensively, at the same time to point a way out of the dire social reality faced by black community, as he writes: “When the time arrives that the Negroes are capable of being moved to action on a large scale by what they read,

⁶. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. p.11.

⁷. *Ibid*, p.159.

a marked change in the condition of the race will begin instantly and will be marvelous in its proportions.”⁸ Long before Harlem Renaissance intellectuals’ promotion of the “New Negro” image, Griggs had already raised the “New Negro” concept in his first novel *Imperium*, and created a galaxy of characters in his works that predicted the “New Negro” images in Harlem Renaissance era. The radical Black Nationalism he demonstrated in his writing not only predicts Garvey’s militant nationalism in the 1910s, but also the radical black movements in the 1970s.⁹

For Griggs, art is never for art’s sake; art is functional. In both his life experiences and his works, he demonstrates that politics and art are one. He uses all his works to promote his political vision and his solution to various racial issues. Griggs emerged in a time period mainstream society was endeavoring to rewrite history after the Civil War, and utilized every possible means to create a discourse of black inferiority to justify the solidification of Jim Crow and the disfranchisement of black people. In fiction and non-fiction writings, white writers like Thomas Dixon Jr. and Thomas Nelson Page used their writing to promote the images of black people as subhuman and inferior in every area. Racist books like *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination: The New Proslavery Argument* (1868) by John H. Van Evrie gained national popularity. In institutions, the dominating historical Dunning school emerged and justified taking away of the rights of blacks to vote. In addition to these native thoughts, racism thoughts from Europe also swept America. Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) became national popularity and his “natural selection” was widely adopted by main stream society to make believe the correlation between skin color and intelligence, thus to justify the discourse of black inferiority. Another British sociologist Benjamin Kidd’s social evolution theory was also adopted by mainstream society to justify racism and imperialism.

⁸. Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. 1978. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books. P.171.

⁹. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*.

As a leading scholar and successful preacher from the South, Griggs was very familiar with this social reality. As a well-educated black, he was exposed to current thoughts both inside and outside the country, and was well acknowledged in the prevalent thoughts of Charles Darwin, Benjamin Kidd, Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer and other leading scholars. Meanwhile, he has a better understanding of the African American community than most of his peers. He turned to fiction writing as a direct response to the injustice mainstream society imposed on blacks. Through novel writing, he aims to correct the misrepresentation of black people and help to redefine race and clarify the mass' understanding of the racial issues. He views novel writing as "a means of historical revision and social intervention," and aims to rewrite African American history through novel writing.¹⁰ Even though he emerged as part of the black response to mainstream society's distorted writing of history, he has own uniqueness.¹¹ He launched personal attacks and wrote in direct response to Thomas Dixon's Klan trilogy and the Jim Crow's construction of white supremacy. His third novel *The Hindered Hand* was a direct response to Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*.

Literature, to Griggs, is a tool to inspire and equip people with the power to change their circumstances; it is an instrument to gain political representation for African Americans. He believed that in a society where blacks were totally deprived of political rights, literature was the only way that African Americans could achieve political representation and challenge the root of white supremacy. As he spoke through the character of Belton in *Imperium*: "There is a weapon mightier than either of these. I speak of the pen. If denied the use of the ballot let us devote o

¹⁰ . Gillman, Susan Kay. 2003. *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p.76.

¹¹. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*. p. 80.

attention to that mightier weapon, the pen.”¹² He took up the pen at the moment when the African American community was most in need — the Southern states were trying to complete disfranchisement and consolidate Jim Crow.¹³ In his novels, he used every means to dismantle and deconstruct the myth of white superiority, intending to make believe that race is a social construction and racial hierarchy is simply manmade.¹⁴ To counter whites’ extreme fear of black blood and the adoption of the one drop policy, Griggs illustrated the equal fear black people have of white blood through various fictional characters he created. For example, Viola Martin, who is “a universal favorite” in *Imperium*, in order to keep her black blood from being diluted by white blood, chose to commit suicide when her beloved mulatto lover proposed to her. Belton, one of the main protagonists in the same book, deserted his wife and child immediately when he discovered that his newly born son looked like a white child. He only came back to them many years later when he found that the child turned out to be a black child. Perhaps the most melodramatic character that best reflects Griggs’ utopian vision of race is Eina Rapona in *Pointing the Way* (1908) who leaves the North and goes to the South to choose her identity.

Griggs writes:

Eina’s complexion had been the bane of many an artist’s life, portrait painters having despaired of reproducing its beautiful tints, defying, as they did, the power of the brush and pen. She was light enough of complexion to pass among the whites for a white girl, had just enough of the dark in her complexion to permit her to pass as a colored woman if she so elected, while the under glow of red in her complexion, coupled with her beautiful black eyes and the appearance of her hair, suggested that Indian blood was not altogether missing from her veins.¹⁵

¹². Griggs, Sutton E. 1969. *Imperium in Imperio; a Study of the Negro Race Problem, A novel*. New York: Arno Press. p. 246.

¹³. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Griggs, Sutton E. 1974. *Pointing the Way*. New York: AMS Press. p.21.

In his depiction of the color of Eina, Griggs presents a utopian vision of color. Color, the most important element in deciding a person's race becomes a personal choice. Eina could freely choose her race and nationality. Through this character, Griggs not simply deconstructs the myth of color that dominates white supremacy, but also shows that nationality is not simply a political issue, but a personal choice. Blackness is not simply biological but also political. Through Eina's choice, he successfully dismantles the dominating discourse of color hierarchy and the accepted ideology of blackness and inferiority as simply manmade myths. The character Horace Christian a white man who sexually exploits black women is another proof of this statement. Horace's friend, Lanior, in order to save the life of an innocent black boy John who is charged for killing the head of the union, makes Horace drunken and disguise as a black man. Lanior takes him to the prison and switches him with John. The next day, despite Horace's endeavor to prove that he is white, he is taken as John and hanged. Through these characters and the results of their choices, Griggs brings before the public the truth of race as a social construction. In these novels, color becomes a utopian space where people could project their political vision. Meanwhile, through the thorough different results of the characters' choice of color, he indicates the slippage between black and white, i.e. the slippage of utopia and dystopia.

Unlike his contemporaries Charles Chesnutt and Paul Lawrence Dunbar who aspire for the acceptance from the white community — Chesnutt even goes so far as to conceal his racial identity to seek publishers, and Dunbar largely depended on William Dean Howells to promote his works, Griggs acts as his own editor and publisher, builds up his own publishing houses and markets his books by himself. He not only writes for the black masses, but also sells his works door-to-door in the black community. As he narrated in his only but short autobiography *The Story of My Struggle*: "I went from door to door, visited, at dinner hours, places, where plain

workmen toiled. I went to schools where poor Negro boys and girls were struggling for an education.”¹⁶ He believes that the purpose of literature is to serve the black masses, to provide basis for racial unity within black community, and to bridge the gap between the two racial groups, as he wrote in *Wisdom's Call*:

This very absence of social contact tenders it necessary for the races to discover some other way of understanding each other better. Cannot literature become this bond of union? Cannot white men and women picture the inner life of the white South, and through these books give the Negroes a sympathy and knowledge of the whites? Cannot the millions of whites and Negroes be led to exchange visits in this way? This mutual knowledge will make for peace and good will. But this can only be reached through the higher culture of the Negro race.¹⁷

By this, Griggs cultivates the same aim of building a socially constructed community through the “imagined community” beheld by Benedict Anderson proposed in his book:

There may be living in the same age, or country or village with a person an individual with great moral and spiritual strength that is far removed, for one reason or another, from the possibility of direct personal contact, yet through what may be written of or by the individual who cannot be reached personally, the life and mind of this individual may be utilized as an aid through the habit of reading.¹⁸

Griggs believes that literary habits could cause social effect, and were means to connect fellow men that were not otherwise available. For him, literature is the proof of a nation's progress; a way to catch up with the white race. In accordance, his writing serves as a site where African Americans fight against racial depravity and search for their identity and citizenship. Due to his

¹⁶. Griggs, Sutton, *The Story of My Struggle*, p.4.
<https://sites.google.com/a/kean.edu/suttongriggs/publications>

¹⁷. Griggs, Sutton E. 1911. *Wisdom's Call*. Nashville, Tenn: Orion Pub. Co. p.178.

¹⁸. Griggs, Sutton E. 1916. *Life's Demands, or, According to Law*. Memphis, Tenn: National Public Welfare League. pp.26-7.

writings, nation consciousness in the black community of the South reached an unprecedented high level at the turn of the century.

Thus, it is no wonder that utopia as a functional or pragmatic literary genre naturally falls into the liking of Griggs. During his time, naturalism and realism were dominating the literary scene, but he chose to write in the tradition of utopia. As a functional genre, utopia not only addresses the burning questions of the present and helps the reader envision the social problems that are embedded in their social system, but also proposes a blueprint for a remote future that contains reforming project for its own times. Through the criticism of social reality, it aims to awaken people to the problems that are entrenched in the political system. As More manifested in *Utopia* that the primary purpose does not lie in presenting an ideal society, but in his criticizing the social reality of his own society. Through the discrepancy between a perfect utopian world and the chaotic status quo, More aims to attack the existence of private property, social and economic inequality, and the explorative policies of the rulers of his own time, thus to arouse the social consciousness of the people. Such characteristics of utopia, on the one hand enables Griggs to criticize the social reality of his own time, on the other hand gives him space to point out an ideal alternative. Moreover, utopia is perhaps the most reader-oriented genre. It supplies “the reader with heuristic models of order, harmony, and fulfillment that can help them cope more adequately in an imperfect, fragmented, and hostile world,” and leaves a shocking and disturbing effect on the reader and forces them to think about their own lives and the socioeconomic system in which they live.¹⁹ The unsurpassed social effect and the immense influence, both national and international, caused by utopian novels like Bellamy’s *Looking*

¹⁹. Kautsky, Karl. 1959. *Thomas More and his Utopia*. New York: Russell & Russell.p.156.

Backward: 2000-1887 is proof of the pragmatic feature of utopia genre and explains Griggs' devotion to it.

The functions of utopian novel are demonstrated in all Griggs' novels. In *Imperium*, he imagines a secret black organization with a plan to establish a black nation in the state of Texas. In his second novel *Overshadowed*, despite the dystopian reality that is full of violence, segregation, and social injustice, he ends it with the protagonist's self-chosen exile with his son who will later return to redeem the South. Disappointed with America and uncertain about moving to Africa, the protagonist Astral Herndson exclaims: "hereby and forever renounce all citizenship in all lands whatsoever, and constitute myself A CITIZEN OF THE OCEAN, and ordain that this title shall be entailed upon my progeny unto all generations, until such times as the shadows which now envelope the darker races in all lands shall have passed away, away, and away!"²⁰ In *Unfettered* published in 1902, Griggs gives fullest expression to his postulate of his utopian vision of "a nation within a nation." In *Dorlan's Plan* (sequel to *Unfettered*), he imagines an African American identified as an African king who is assigned the mission to "save" black people in America. In *The Hindered Hand*, his fourth novel, which is written as a direct response to Dixon's extreme racism portray of African Americans, Griggs images a Pan-Slavic world takeover. In his last novel *Pointing the Way*, he proposes a utopian vision of the future of the black community. Through the character Uncle Jack's transformation from a plantation slave to a civil rights activist, Griggs points a way out of disfranchisement for African Americans. It is no exaggeration to say that Griggs single-handedly brought African American utopian writing to a peak at the-turn-of-the-century. Following the functional paradigm of utopia novel More set in his *Utopia*, through these novels, Griggs demonstrates a collective response to the crisis of

²⁰. Griggs, Sutton E. 1901. *Overshadowed: A Novel*. Nashville, Tenn: Orion Pub. Co. p. 217.

African American community in face of America's imperial expansion in the Caribbean and the Pacific and the domestic "nadir" with its Jim Crow, disfranchisement, and lynching, and expresses his vision of a better South for blacks.

As a pragmatic writer, for Griggs, the primary aim of fiction writing is to achieve political goal, and to achieve this goal, he uses whatever means that he could to appeal to the readers. He knows that in the end, he wants to his readers to arise and take actions to change their political and social status quo. The flaws of his novels and the failure of the acceptance of his books can not overshadow the fact that Griggs' achievement in literary esthetic and the enlightenment it brings into his community. As he manifested in his autobiography *The Story of My Struggle* that he wrote novels to express his opinions on racial issues in American society and offer his solutions. His novels repudiate the stereotypes of blacks, and help build up the image of the New Negro. As a political leader and practical writer, he turned to literary writing to achieve his goal of uplifting his race. After the failure of his novels, he switched to treatise, political pamphlet and essays, believing they would be the more effective forms of writing. Thus, he wrote many articles carrying the same themes he displays in his novels. In these works, he uses plain language and gives more specific analysis of the social issues. As complementary to his novels' presentation of an imagined ideal society, his political writings like *Light on Racial Issues*, and *Life's Demands or, According to Law*, provide detailed guidance on how to build up a better community to uplift the race. He not only promotes his political visions, such as the "collective efficiency" in his political writing, but also goes to such details as to telling black people how to improve their image in daily life in essays like "Tidiness" "Good Taste," and "The Suppression of Loudness" in order to win racial cooperation with whites.

Griggs' utopian impulse runs through both his fictions and non-fictions which reflect the functional feature of utopia, especially the political function of utopia. If his novels draw the blueprint of an ideal society for blacks, his political writings teach black people in detail how to build an ideal alternative. He not only points out a way, but also gives directions on how to achieve it.²¹ Even though his point of view goes through different changes, Griggs never changes his hope for his race. A thorough knowledge of his thought process would bring out his consistent belief in the importance of collective efficiency and racial co-operation in building his utopia. Griggs believes that there are two tiers of black issue — the first tier involves resolving the disjuncture between the national reality for blacks and the fair treatment and equal opportunity for all American citizens, namely the dysfunctional relationship between blacks and whites. The second tier, is the resolving of the internal failings of the black community, which could only be rectified by the black community. In solving the tiers of “Negro problems” Griggs shows his belief in the “Talented Tenth” and “collective efficiency” of the black community. On the one hand, he asks white people to be patient with blacks as a people newly freed from slavery with nothing inherited and encourages them to include blacks in politics for their own good. As he states: “For its own good, for the supreme development of its strength, may the white South freely open its political arms to take in and assimilate the worthy Negro voter.”²² On the other hand, he asks black people to improve themselves and make themselves more acceptable to whites. Needless to say, Griggs' belief was utopia in his time, but the ou-topos side can never overshadow the eu-topos in his writing.

²¹. Warren, Kenneth W., and Tess Chakkalakal. 2013. *Jim Crow, Literature, and the Legacy of Sutton E. Griggs*.

²². Griggs, Sutton E. 1901. *Overshadowed: A Novel*. Nashville, Tenn: Orion Pub. Co. p. 217.

“A Nation within a Nation”: Griggs’ Critical Utopia

Imperium in Imperio is Griggs’ first novel and has been claimed as the first major political novel written by an African American.”²³ It is Griggs’ only book that has been acknowledged as a utopian novel by critics. It was written in direct response to the increasing domestic and international dominance of white supremacy and imperialism. In this novel, Griggs gives a perfect representation of his literary philosophy of politics and art as one, through which he successfully catches the racial injustice and the fear of black violence and insurrection at the end of the nineteenth century and expresses his desire for an ideal society for blacks.

The title *Imperium in Imperio* literally means “a nation within a nation.” The concept of “a nation within a nation” was not first raised by Griggs. Earlier than him, Martin Delany who is known as “the father of black nationalism,” in his 1859 emigration commission to West Africa to explore possible sites for a new black nation, wrote: “We are a nation within a nation, we must go from our oppressors.”²⁴ He further explained: “The condition, elaborated the idea that black people were in fact a nation like various stateless minorities and groups within the nations of Europe, and that as a national group blacks should seek a territory.”²⁵ Later, in his novel *Blake, or The Huts of America*, Delany exerted this utopian vision of nation by creating a Pan-African collectivity to challenge the dominant slavery powers and to elevate the oppressed black peoples all over the world. This concept of “a nation within a nation” also appeared as a series of social movements in the 19th century. In 1866, Sojourner Truth, an African American abolitionist and women’s rights activist, encouraged freed blacks to migrate to the West and petitioned the

²³. Griggs, *Imperium*, p. xvi.

²⁴. <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/delany-major-martin-robison-1812-1885>

²⁵. Ibid.

government of United States to set aside land for this purpose. In the 1870s, various groups of African Americans who are also known as Exodusters in history fled the South to Kansas to build distinct black communities separated from white society. In the late 1890s, Bishop Lucius H. Holsey proposed to the government to set a separate state for African Americans, based on his belief that “two distinct peoples can never live together in the South in peace, when one is Anglo-Saxon and the other Negro, unless the Negro, as a race or en masse, lives in the submerged realm of serfdom and slavery.”²⁶ According to his proposal, whites would not be eligible for citizenship within the territory unless through interracial marriage, and white people could only reside within its borders when they were on official government business. Another contemporary of Griggs, Edwin McCabe, planned to establish an all-black government in Oklahoma.

The concept of “a nation within a nation” Griggs presents in *Imperium* is not new. However, his presentation of a black utopian community created and governed by black elites, which exists as a counterpart to the U.S. government built upon white supremacy is both initiative and prophetic. In fact, the concept appears in several of Griggs’ novels, but it is only in *Imperium* that he gives it a clear expression. *Imperium* was written in a time when separation was a heated debate. As a political leader of the black community, Griggs was familiar with these concepts. Thus, the utopian enclave that he presents in *Imperium* contains many of the heated themes of the 19th century. On the one hand, it is a utopian other to the historical era of Ku Klux Klan, disfranchisement, segregation and the deprivation of black citizenship; on the other hand, it presents Griggs’ plan to the solution to racial problems, and his vision of the Black Nationalism that peaked in his time.

²⁶. Bacote, Clarence A. "Negro Proscriptions, Protests, and Proposed Solutions in Georgia, 1880-1908." Nieman 27-54. p.49.

The secret organization Griggs portrays in the book had been organized and maintained for many years before the Civil War. It was initiated by a wealthy black scientist “who won an international reputation by his skill and education.”²⁷ He “gathered other free negroes together and organized a society that had a two-fold object. The first object was to endeavor to secure for the free negroes all the rights and privileges of men, according to the teachings of Thomas Jefferson. Its other object was to secure the freedom of the enslaved negroes the world over. All work was done by this organization with the sole stipulation that it should be used for the furtherance of the two above named objects of the society, and for those objects alone.”²⁸ Before the Civil War, its membership was confined only to free blacks. After the Civil War, when they realized “being released from chains was but the lowest form of liberty,” “the society began to cautiously spread its membership among the emancipated.”²⁹ Griggs writes in the novel:

The negroes gained political ascendancy in many Southern states, but were soon hurled from power, by force in some quarters, and by fraud in other. The negroes turned their eyes to the Federal Government for redress and a guarantee of their rights. The Federal Government said: ‘Take care of yourselves, we are powerless to help you.’ The ‘Civil Rights Bill,’ was declared null and void by the Supreme Court. An ‘honest election bill’ was defeated in Congress by James G. Blaine and others. Separate coach laws were declared by the Supreme Court to be constitutional. State Constitutions were revised and so amended as to nullify the amendment of the Federal Constitution, giving the negro the right to vote. More than sixty thousand defenseless negroes were unlawfully slain. Governors would announce publicly that they favored lynching.³⁰

²⁷. Griggs, *Imperium*, p.129.

²⁸. *Ibid*, p.130.

²⁹. *Ibid*, p.130.

³⁰. *Ibid*, p.131.

The end of slavery did not bring an end to the enslavement of blacks. The secret organization thus came into being, to protect blacks in their rights. It existed as “counter-institution” to the federal government that failed to do its duty due to a defect in the Constitution.

Utopian scholar Fredric Jameson argues that “the properly Utopian program or realization will involve a commitment to closure (and thereby to totality),”³¹ and the closure is adopted as indispensable part of utopia and achieved by a variety of spatial and temporal barriers. In More’s *Utopia*, a great trench is dug to separate the utopian community from the mainland. In Bellamy’s utopia in *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, the separation from the real world is achieved by time. The secret organization Griggs presents certainly meets the standard of a utopian space which achieves its closure by the exclusion to its black members. In another word, it achieves its closure through color. In *Imperium*, the membership is to black people only, and any black person who withdraws his membership is expected to be killed. In the classical utopian community, there is no communal activity between utopians and the outside world, except the traveler. In many texts, the trip to utopia is a one-way trip, and the traveler is not supposed to go back. Jameson further argues that the totality of utopia is achieved by a system that enjoys autonomy and self-sufficiency. The organization of *Imperium* has its own independent system. It not only has its own government that represents an alternative site of freedom, but also has its own parliament, tax system, and propaganda machine. It is a space that exists as a corrective to the racist power where African Americans could escape from the political, economic deprivation enforced by them.

³¹. Jameson, Fredric. 2005. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. New York: Verso.

Jameson at the very beginning of his book points out that utopia is political.³² Utopia as an imagined space comes into being as a contrast to the unwanted social reality, and the utopian society is portrayed as a contrast to the dystopian social reality. Through the discrepancy between the utopian world and the author's own world, the writer aims to arouse the consciousness of change. This strategy is utilized by Griggs in *Imperium*. He uses ample space to portray the total deprivation of political rights, the extreme poverty of black people, the fear of interracial marriage and the terror of Ku Klux Klan, through which to highlight the importance of utopia. Two thirds of the book is devoted to the detailed narration of the social reality faced by African-American community in the "nadir," especially the dire situation faced by the character Belton. The narration of the secret organization only covers one third of the text. Larger part of the text is dedicated to portraying the social reality that contributes to bringing out the secret organization.

The novel begins with a vivid presentation of the dire situation faced by Belton, the most complicated character in *Imperium*, through whom Griggs narrates his observation of the deprived social, economic and racial reality faced by black people in Jim Crow era and conveys his reflections on the strategy for social changes. Belton grew up in a house "low and squatty and was built of rock."³³ Deserted by his father, Belton and his other four siblings were dependent on their mother who worked as a washer woman to a white family, a typical job for black women. Besides the problem of extreme poverty, racism and classism were other issues Belton encountered every day. Griggs gives detailed portrayal of racism Belton experienced his first day of school. Later, Belton "was singled out by the teacher as a special object on which he might

³². Ibid.

³³. Ibid, p.5.

expend his spleen.”³⁴ Belton is sensible to all the acts of discrimination but he tolerates them passively, because he knows that in an extremely oppressive situation, direct resistance is not the best way — a lesson that he learnt from the priest that he respects. After twelve years of persecution in the hands of his white teacher, Belton acquired an academic education “that could not be surpassed anywhere in the land.”³⁵ He also mastered fundamental skills in writing and thinking to challenge the notions of African American inferiority and became an exceptional speaker. He gave a speech at his graduation ceremony that is equally good as his opponent Bernard, but the honor went to Bernard simply because of his color.

Belton went to a college, “established in the South by Northern philanthropy for the higher education of the Negro,” under the help of a white man with an ambition of racial changes.³⁶ The first day he entered Stowe University, he was both surprised and happy to find a black man sitting among the faculty, “self-possessed, exactly like the rest.”³⁷ Griggs narrates: “A broad, happy smile spread over his face, and his eyes danced with delight. He had, in his boyish heart, dreamed of the equality of the races and sighed and hoped for it; but here, he beheld it in reality.”³⁸ But Belton only found out later that the black teacher was not allowed to sit at the same table with the white faculty in the dining hall. Not only was he disillusioned, but was discovered by one of the faculties while peeping through a window and was taken as a chicken thief when he scurried away. As commented by Griggs: “Thus again a patriot was mistaken for a chicken thief.”³⁹ Through such simple events, Griggs points out the contradictory situation faced by African Americans and the dystopian social reality laid before them.

³⁴. Ibid, p.23.

³⁵. Ibid, p.25.

³⁶. Ibid, p.38.

³⁷. Ibid, p.41.

³⁸. Ibid, p.41.

³⁹. Ibid, p.44.

But this is only the beginning of the racial reality that faced by Belton. Graduated as a student that no one “could surpass him in intellectual ability,” he could not even find a place to earn his daily bread “all because of the color of his skin.”⁴⁰ Griggs wrote: “He possessed a first-class college education, but that was all. He knew no trade nor was he equipped to enter any of the professions. It is true that there were positions around by the thousands which he could fill, but his color debarred him.”⁴¹ As a black man with high education among the colored people, Belton is forbidden to do manual labor. Through his situation, Griggs points out the general situation black men with education faced:

Belton began to cast around for another occupation, but, in whatever direction he looked, he saw no hope. He possessed a first class college education, but that was all. He knew no trade nor was he equipped to enter any of the professions. It is true that there were positions around by the thousands which he could fill, but his color debarred him. He would have made an excellent drummer, salesman, clerk, cashier, government official (country, city, state, or national) telegraph operator, conductor, or anything of such a nature. But the color of his skin shut the doors so tight that he could not even peep in.

The white people would not employ him in these positions, and the colored people did not have any enterprises in which they could employ him. It is true that such positions as street laborer, hod carrier, cart driver, factory hand, railroad hand, were open to him; but such menial tasks were uncongenial to a man of his education and polish. And, again, society positively forbade him doing such labor. If a man of education among the colored people did such manual labor, he was looked upon as an eternal disgrace to the race. He was looked upon as throwing his education away and lowering its value in the eyes of the children who were to come after him.⁴²

⁴⁰. Ibid, p.135.

⁴¹. Ibid, p.89-90.

⁴². Ibid, p.90.

In the end, with a family to support, Belton is forced to cross-dress as a woman in order to get a job as a maid “in the family of a leading white man” in New York, only ended with an unsuccessful rape by the white men in the family. Overhearing that “a number of them decided to satisfy themselves at all hazards” and “resorted to the bold and daring plan of kidnapping and overpowering” him, Belton escaped, humiliated.⁴³

Belton was assigned to take the position of president of Cadeville College, a college for blacks in Louisiana. On his way to the college, he was thrown off the train because he sat in the “wrong” section and fell into the hands of a white mob. The moment he was about to be lynched, his physical strength and looks attracted Dr. Zackland who conspired to use his body for experimental dissection. Through this event, Griggs points out the omnipresent Southern lynching and the inhuman treatment of black bodies. Belton lied on the dissection table pretending to be dead while Dr. Zackland cut his flesh around the bullet wound in the back of his head. Belton tolerated the extreme pain, waiting for an opportunity that he took one of the dissecting knives, plunged it through the doctor’s throat and killed him immediately. This time, Belton deserted the gentleness in mannerism he demonstrated in his revenge on his teacher and the driver who intended to insult him at the train station earlier, and became very violent with the doctor.

Through Belton, Griggs reveals the dystopian reality faced by black men in America: extreme poverty, total deprivation of citizenship and manhood. As he wrote: “Colored men are excluded from the jury box; colored lawyers are discriminated against at the bar; and negroes, with the highest legal attainments, are not allowed to even dream of mounting the seat of a judge.”⁴⁴ African Americans are excluded in their own motherland; even the newly arrived

⁴³. Griggs, *Imperium*, p.92.

⁴⁴. Griggs, *Imperium*, p.90.

immigrants have more rights than them. Griggs gives a detailed example of such exclusion faced by blacks: when a foreigner, unable to read the signs outside the park and ask a black child to read and interpret it to him, the sign reads: “Negroes and dogs not allowed in here.” Griggs adds directly after that that the child’s father cleared the spot whereon the park now stands.⁴⁵

By contrast, in the utopian Imperium, Belton is hailed as a great leader. His color becomes the key to this secret organization where African American could exert their political power. Like the traveler in utopian literature reveals the merits of utopia, Belton reveals the merits of Imperium as a utopian space. Through his transfer as a deprived black man from the outside world to a black leader in Imperium, Griggs shows the discrepancy between the two worlds. The secret organization emerged as a counter force to the “invisible empire” of the Ku Klux Klan controlled by white supremacy. It is a direct response to the white nationalism promoted by white supremacists. It is ruled by a sense of justice, comradeship and cooperation, with the mission to protect the rights of its members. The national government of the state is to “represent an alternative site of freedom set in opposition to the official Congress of the United States and a corrective to racist state power.”⁴⁶ It puts race over country and plans to ally with foreign country to fight against United States to create an independent black state in Texas.

Griggs intends to present the underground government as a utopian space. The government is “a compact government exercising all the functions of a nation” and “complete in every detail, exercising the sovereign right of life and death over its subjects,”⁴⁷ and has its own judiciary for settling intergroup disputes. It serves truly as a utopia for African Americans at that time with such social reality as put by Du Bois in his sociopolitical essay “Of the Dawn of Freedom”: “Not

⁴⁵. Ibid, p.91.

⁴⁶. Griggs, Sutton. *Imperium in Imperio*. p.127.

⁴⁷. Griggs, *Imperium*.

a single Southern legislature stood ready to admit a Negro, under any conditions, to the polls; not a single Southern legislature believed free Negro labor was possible without a system of restrictions and took all its freedom away; there was scarcely a white man in the South who did not honestly regard Emancipation as a crime, and its practical nullification as a duty.”⁴⁸

However, the secret organization is only a utopia in surface. It is “an oasis of freedom and liberty but itself the site of a disturbing coercion and violence that seriously compromises the possibility of an alternate vision in which a democratic ethics can be achieved and maintained.”⁴⁹ Moreover, the founder of the utopia does not provide concrete method to implement the vision of utopia. It is presented in abstract terms instead of details on how the government is organized. Even though Griggs wrote in language like, “well-nigh perfect in every part and presented a form of government unexcelled by that of any other nation,” still it seems unreal and unbelievable to the audience.⁵⁰ It comes into being as counter-space to Griggs’ own unwanted social reality and exists as a desired space. However, it follows exactly the same pattern of the discarded dystopian reality. As Griggs portrayed: “The exterior of the Capitol at Waco was decorated with American flags, and red, white and blue bunting.”⁵¹ When it comes to details of the decoration of the rooms, he wrote: “The rooms are furnished with rare and antique furniture, the Bible, the writings of Thomas Jefferson, including the Declaration of Independence; the organization’s leaders wear Prince Albert suits and die wrapped in the American flag.”⁵² The government is similar to the government of the United States in almost every aspect. It is an organization lead by two leaders who hold thoroughly different political visions, just as they are from thoroughly

⁴⁸. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; reprint, with an introduction by David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), p.60.

⁴⁹. Maria Karafilis, “Oratory, embodiment, and US citizenship in Sutton E. Griggs’s ‘Imperium in Imperio’” *African American Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring, 2006), pp. 125-143.

⁵⁰. *Ibid*, p.135.

⁵¹. Griggs, *Imperium*. p.203.

⁵². *Ibid*.

different classes — Belton, black, from a poor family in Virginia, turns out to be an accomodationist, while Bernard, a rich family with a white father who is a Congressman, turns out to be a militant black nationalist. They develop very different visions on the solutions of racial issues, and the conflicts between them go throughout the Imperium. The organization comes into being as a result of rejection of assimilation, but its leader Belton publicly gives speech on assimilation. It is all black nation based on radical Black Nationalism, but the president is a mulatto who grew up in white culture and educated in white school, only turns to be radical near the end of novel when his potential wife commits suicide to protect racial purity.

In his narration of *Imperium*, Griggs deviates from utopian genre's main focus on the mechanism of an ideal society, and devotes most space on the individual conflicts between the two leaders. Instead of presenting an ideal utopian enclave, Griggs presents a closed utopia that turns out to be a dystopia. *Imperium* was written in the peak of the second utopian wave of Western utopian writing led by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. In his book, Bellamy creates a utopian space (a highly developed industrial society) far ahead of his own time. Throughout the book he emphasizes the importance of time and progress. Even though written in the peak of the second wave, instead of falling into the future-oriented utopian mode of his time, Griggs presents a utopia that falls more into the general pattern of a traditional utopia set by More whose emphasis is on the binary opposition of old and new societies. But different from More's paradigm of creating a closed space that distant from his social reality, Griggs' utopian space is set in his own time and place, co-existing with the dystopian reality. In traditional utopian narrative, utopia generally involves a better or perfect society elsewhere rather than the writer's own society, and to achieve its claims of perfection, a utopian community must be

formed apart from other societies. Whether it is More's ideal society on a remote island or Bellamy's progressive society far ahead of his own time, both utopian societies enjoy distance that separates it from the writers' own social reality.⁵³ However, *Imperium* presents a utopian space that not only co-exists with the writer's reality, but also with a blur boundary between the utopian society and social reality.

Griggs' *Imperium* does not present an ideal society in which black people live happily and free from racism. It is more exact to say that through this novel Griggs proposes possible alternatives to social reality rather than presents a final solution. Instead of presenting a traditional perfect utopian society, Griggs presents a critical utopia which comes into popularity mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. As argued by Tom Moylan in his criticism on critical utopia, the most important feature of critical utopia is that it "reject[s] utopia as blueprint while preserving it as dream."⁵⁴ Critical utopia "in its formal operation, and especially in its self-reflective comments on those operations in the text, negates static ideals, preserves radical action, and creates a neutral space in which opposition can be articulated and received."⁵⁵ Another feature of critical utopia is that it is incomplete. It focuses on the conflicts between the ordinary world and the utopian society and does not intend to show a utopian world of perfection.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in contrast to traditional utopia's focuses on the description of the better society, critical utopia dwells on the depiction of the protagonists in action. Involving around two protagonists, Griggs mainly focuses on the conflicts between United States that is full of racial problems and its utopian alternative, and conflicts within the utopian community.

⁵³. Ahmad, Dohra. 2009. *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-colonial Utopianism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁴. Ibid, p.10.

⁵⁵. Ibid, p. 51.

⁵⁶. Ibid, p.10-11.

In this book, Griggs emphasizes the conflicts within the utopian community, especially between the two leaders. Throughout his depiction of the black utopia, he does not give details on how utopia is organized and operated, but instead gives larger part of the book presenting the dystopian social reality faced by the characters. It is more exact to say that through this novel Griggs proposes alternatives to social reality rather than presents an ideal society. Jameson states that utopia is absolutely dependent on historical circumstances. It flourishes in specific conditions and on certain rare historical occasions.⁵⁷ For Griggs, the utopian practice of imagining a better world is a way of transcending the dire social reality to concrete utopia and a means of rejecting the aspects of the world that fail to fulfill humanity. Moylan argues that critical utopian novels appeared at a time when classical utopia became an impossibility; thus for writers it is more revolutionary compared to traditional utopia.⁵⁸ It appeared at a time when utopia itself was put in doubt. Scholars began to stress the ironies of utopia genre and its many absurd features. Through the downfall of the black nation, Griggs indicates the impossibility of imagining a utopia for blacks in the United States. For him, critical utopia is more a means of social criticism, to reject the world that when “the Negro finds himself an unprotected foreigner in his own home.”⁵⁹

Instead of presenting “a passively perfect society,” Griggs presents the “engaged, open, critical utopia.”⁶⁰ In *Imperium*, he offers the reader not the plan of utopia but the process of imagining a better world. For him, the imagined perfect society is not the solution but the vision that provokes changes of the status quo. In this critical utopian text, Griggs deconstructs the classical utopian writing, at the same time preserves the basic elements of utopia. The core of

⁵⁷. Moylan, Tom. 2014. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. Methuen: New York and London.

⁵⁸. Ibid.

⁵⁹. Griggs, *Imperium*, p.124.

⁶⁰. Moylan, p.56.

classical utopia is kept in *Imperium*, but presented in a more complex and discontinuous way. The key elements of utopia — the alternative society or a way out of the present dire situation, and the use of a visitor to bridge the gap of the new and the old world, are largely kept. The classical utopian paradigm is a combination of romance and an ideal society and centers around what is and what is not yet, or between good and evil, best meets the needs of transitional moments: from feudalism to capitalism, from monopoly to transnational capitalism, from modern to post-modern society, while critical utopia is more limited to a concrete historical situation that seeks human emancipation and fulfillment.⁶¹ Unlike classical utopia focuses on hope, critical utopia puts its emphasis on the attacks the present social system. It is more self-aware and self-critical on social reality than classical utopia. It is both against the limit of the traditional utopia and the current historical situation.⁶² It details the social issues in both the utopian society and the original society, and the utopia is seen as a revolutionary alternative. The *Imperium* presented by Griggs is not an ideal society, but a society that has its own faults, inconsistencies, and problems, which demonstrates his denial of classical utopia's capability of social criticism and his deconstruction of the genre itself.

The novel begins with Trout's confession: "I am a traitor. I have violated an oath that was as solemn and binding as any ever taken by a man on earth. I have trampled under my feet the sacred trust of a loving people and have betrayed secrets which were dearer to them than life itself."⁶³ Meanwhile, he defends himself as a patriot: "It is true that I have betrayed the immediate plans of the race to which I belong; but I have done this in the interest of the whole human family — of which my race is but a part."⁶⁴ This ambivalence of betrayer and nationalist

⁶¹. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*.

⁶². *Ibid.*

⁶³. Griggs, *Imperium*. p.5.

⁶⁴. *Ibid.*

set the tone of the whole novel. Trout joins the Imperium, because he is a black nationalist; he betrays the nation, because he is influenced by Belton and his policy of assimilation. Trout's role is the traveler and messenger from utopia à la More's Raphael Hythloday or Bellamy's Julian West, both of whom present an ideal society as a way out of the undesirable social reality of their own times, but different from both of them Trout is an ambiguous figure. He hopes for a better future for black people, but at the same time he betrays Imperium. From his narration, the reader cannot clearly tell which society is more desirable. This ambivalence continues in the novel through the opposite standings of Belton and Bernard who represent two irreconcilable ways of bettering the status quo: assimilation and militant nationalism. The novel ends with the binary political visions between its two leaders and the impending downfall of the Imperium. Griggs does not demonstrate his own standing; instead he leaves an indeterminate ending, asking the reader to choose between a patriot or a traitor, Bernard's separatism or Belton's assimilationism.

Through the ambiguous beginning and ending, Griggs shows the impossibility for African Americans to imagine a perfect world in the nadir of African American history. He challenges the notion that a better or perfect society can be established if racial differences are eliminated. The end of the 19th century is the most critical time period for African Americans: "Old Negro" was disappearing from history and "New Negro" was just beginning to emerge, but not yet mature. Different thinkers and intellectuals were trying to pointing ways out of the historical moment. Griggs, as a thinker of this time, vacillates between Washington and Du Bois. He agrees with both of them, but at the same time criticizes both of them. The open ending leaves the audience to choose their own standing, which reflects the function of utopia genre. Instead of presenting a static, perfect utopia as an alternative to the dire social reality, Griggs presents a utopia in process. The indeterminacy at the end shows his intention to prompt the reader to

action. In critical utopian genre, utopia does not exist as a static entity that the reader as a passive receiver of what he/she is told. Instead the reader is called upon to get involved and participate in the process of utopia building.⁶⁵ The open ending of *Imperium* calls for the imaginative co-operation of the audience, through which Griggs indicates that the utopian horizon is opened and the reader is asked to engage in utopian reconstruction.

Griggs' *Imperium* indicates that critical utopia, as a revolutionary genre, is more suitable to his critical vision of social reality. For Griggs, utopia is not an alternative to social reality; it is a literary practice, criticizing social reality. It is not an authoritative guidance to an ideal society, but a vision that provokes change. Griggs' critical utopia is also an indication of the dilemma within black community. After the Civil War and the failure of Reconstruction, more problems arose. Some intellectuals promoted a separate territory for blacks; some supported emigration out of the country, and some proposed to seek justice by assimilation. Such a confusing time contributes to the difficulty of imagining a perfect alternative solution. Even though Griggs makes Belton a martyr and Bernard a potential tyrant, he does not state his standing through either of them. From the reader's expectation, Belton should have turned out to be a radical black nationalist, while Bernard an accomandationist. However, it turns out to be the opposite. Belton ends with praising the Anglo-Saxon culture, while Bernard shows his resolution of separatist. Such arrangement shows Griggs' disagreement with the extreme Black Nationalism raised by Bernard and his criticism of the extreme measures *Imperium* utilizes as an opponent to the extreme terror created by white nationalism and his manifest of the complexity in solving racial issues in this confusing age.

As a critical utopian text, *Imperium* does show Griggs' racial vision and his challenge to

⁶⁵. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*.

social reality by presenting “new Negro” images. Long before Alain Locke popularized the concept during the Harlem Renaissance era, Griggs had clearly manifested the concept of “the New Negro” in *Imperium*: “The cringing, fawning, sniffling, cowardly Negro which slavery left, had disappeared, and a new Negro, self-respecting, fearless, and determined in the assertion of his rights was at hand.”⁶⁶ He further points out that this New Negro tries to cut ties with the “old Negro” of the slavery era and endeavor to uplift the community. He believes that the development of a new “Negro” identity would change the condescending attitudes of the whites and enable peaceful co-existence between the two races. The destruction of those characteristics that slavery has “injected into the Negro’s very blood” is indicative of a turning away from the ‘Old Negro’. As he states:

Our grotesque dress, our broken language, our ignorant curiosity, and, on the part of many our boorish manners, would have been nauseating in the extreme to men and women accustomed to refined association. Of course these failings are passing away: but the polished among you have often been made ashamed at the uncouth antics of some ignorant Negroes, courting the attention of the whites in their presence. Let us see to it, then, that we as a people, not a small minority of us, are prepared to use and not abuse the privileges that must come to us.⁶⁷

In *Imperium*, Griggs presents not only a group of male images of the “new Negro”: Belton and Bernard, who are representatives of the “talented tenth,” but also a group of women equal to their male counterparts. Antoinette who later becomes Belton’s wife is not only presented as a woman “famed throughout the city for her beauty,” but also a woman with unusual intelligence and virtue. As Griggs writes:

⁶⁶. Griggs, *Imperium*. p.46.

⁶⁷. Ibid.

She was of medium height, and for grace and symmetry her form was fit for a sculptor's model. Her pretty face bore the stamp of intellectuality, but the intellectuality of a beautiful woman, who was still every inch a woman despite her intellectuality. Her thin well-formed lips seemed arranged by nature in such a manner as to be incomplete without a kiss, and that lovely face seemed to reinforce the invitation. Her eyes were black, and when you gazed in them the tenderness therein seemed to be about to draw you out of yourself. They concealed and yet revealed a heart capable of passionate love.⁶⁸

Antoinette possesses physical beauty, and is a woman of virtue. When she gave birth to a seemingly white baby and Belton doubted about her virtue and deserted them, she bravely faced the isolation of the community and brought up the baby by herself until she successfully proved her innocence. She is a redeeming force to Belton. Similar to Antoinette, Viola Martin, “a universal favorite,” “highly educated and an elocutionist of no mean ability” is another new woman. She is a singer and accomplished pianist, a woman bubbling over with good humor. Her wit and funny stories are the very life of any circle where she happens to be. She is most remarkably well-informed on all leading questions of the day. In all religious movements among the women she was the leading spirits.”⁶⁹ Additionally, she is a heroic female figure, a patriot and martyr. She believes that the “intermingling of the races in sexual relationship was sapping the vitality of the Negro race and, in fact, was slowly but surely exterminating the race.”⁷⁰ When Bernard proposed to her, before her beloved man and her belief of the future of the race, she chose to commit suicide. She dies for what she believes the best for her race. Her suicide suggests her identification with Black Nationalism, and also serves as a counterpart to mainstream society's belief in the supremacy of white blood.

⁶⁸. Ibid. p.80.

⁶⁹. Griggs, *Imperium*. p.71.

⁷⁰. Ibid. p.118.

Despite Griggs' ambition to challenge mainstream society by presenting an all-black nation, Imperium is a patriarchal nation and its leadership is male-dominated. There is no mention of female in the organization. The total exclusion of women shows the leaders' ignorance of the female power, and Griggs' criticism of the social reality and the isolation of women within black community. The women characters are either willingly sacrifice for the organization or appear as inferior to the male. The mothers of both protagonists, Hannah Piedmont and Fairfax Belgrave, sacrifice for their sons' success. The other two women, Antoinette and Viola, even though they are equals to their male counterparts, they are still victims of male power. Antoinette was deserted by Belton and wasn't given a chance when she gave birth to a seemingly white child. She quietly sacrificed for many years until Belton came back to her discovering that white baby turned out to be black. Bernard, before he joined the Imperium had already been professionally successful as a lawyer and politician. He decided to join the black nation because his beloved woman Viola died to give him courage to move ahead.

In *Imperium*, Griggs intends to reconcile the two extreme strivings of thoughts of his time period. Through the conflicts of Belton and Bernard which fictionalized Washington and Du Bois, Griggs catches the two main strains of thought concerning the solution of racial issues. Instead of taking one of them, he suspends his judgment. Griggs does not state clearly his own standing, but from his latter writing, especially his political treatises it is easy to conclude that he promotes collective efficiency. He believes that only through the cooperation between the two races that blacks could establish a utopia. Griggs believes that black people could uplift themselves through collective effort and cooperation between black and white, and the white and black issue could only be shoveled by collective efficiency of blacks and cooperation between the black and the white. His idea was utopian, and too utopian to be realized in his time.

Thomas Dixon, in his book *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) asks: "Can you build, in a Democracy a nation inside a nation of two hostile races?" Griggs in this book gives his direct answer to this question. Through the failure of the nation within nation, he criticizes the situation of blacks at the turn of the century, and indicates the destructive force of white supremacy to black nation and the impossibility for blacks to achieve independence within the boarder of the United States. The ending of the novel predicates the utopia that Du Bois and Hopkins aspire in their utopian novels—utopia that is built on an international stage.

CHAPTER 3

PAULINE HOPKINS AND HER UTOPIAN VISION OF AFRICANISM

By the transgression of the law He proves His own infallibility: “Of one blood I have made all nations of men to dwell upon the whole face of the earth,” is as true today as when given to the inspired writers to be recorded. No man can draw the dividing line between the two races, for they are both of one blood!

— Pauline Hopkins, *Of One Blood, Or The Hidden Self*

(1903)

Then why not allow that the theory of Ethiopia as the mother of science, art and literature is true? Surely we the descendants of Ham cannot be condemned and ridiculed for claiming that the ancient glory of Ethiopia was the beacon light of all intellectual advancement now enjoyed by mankind. History and the fragments found in buried cities, though meager, give us a strong claim upon the attention of the world.

— “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century,” *Colored American Magazine*

Pauline Hopkins and her Utopian Vision

Pauline Hopkins is now largely acknowledged as one of the most well-known African American female writers from the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century. Scholar Richard Yarborough recognizes her as “the single most productive woman writer at the turn of the century.”¹ Born in 1859 and started publishing at the age of 15, Hopkins enjoyed a prolific life as an editor and writer. Solely at the turn of the century, she published four novels, at least seven short stories and numerous nonfiction magazine articles. However, by 1930 when she died at 71, her important work as an editor and writer had long been forgotten, and for a long time after her

¹. Knight, Alisha R, *Pauline Hopkins and the American Dream: an African American Writer's (Re)Visionary Gospel of Success*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012. p. xv.

death, she was underestimated and misunderstood for presenting near white characters.² Critics such as poet Gwendolyn Brooks criticized her for “not in Revolution nor exhaustive Revision,” not being overly “radical” like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, or others. Brooks even went to such extent to say that “Pauline Hopkins consistently proves herself a continuing slave, despite little bursts of righteous heat.”³ Other critics, like Robert Bone interpreted her as an accomodationist in the same tone.

However, a cursory survey of Hopkins’ life and work will immediately reveal that she is neither accomdationist nor as “soft” on racial issues as she was believed to be. As a matter of fact, her presentation of almost white characters is a strategic one, just her way of resisting racism and trying to make America a better place for her race. As suggested by Hazel Carby, “Her use of mulatto figures engaged with the discourse of social Darwinism, undermining the tenets of ‘pure blood’ and ‘pure race’ as mythological, and implicitly exposed the absurdity of theories of the total separation of the races.”⁴ As a matter of fact, in her writing Hopkins tries to counteract the stereotypical images imposed on blacks and depicts black characters “who would be acknowledged by the white reader not only as human beings but also as embodiments of white bourgeois values, manners and tastes.”⁵ By featuring socially and economically successful African Americans and propagating middle class values, Hopkins intends to show the white race the potential of the black race.

Facing scientific society’s claim of black inferiority and classification of Africans and African Americans as “lesser than” Anglos in both mentality and physiognomy at the turn of the

². Almost all her main characters are light-skinned.

³. Brooks, Gwendolyn, “Afterword to Contending Forces”, pp. 404-5.

⁴. Carby, Hazel V. 1987. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. p.140.

⁵. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. xxx-xxxii.

century, Hopkins used the *Colored American Magazine* as a teaching tool to promote racial uplift and an agent of social intervention to agitate for political change.⁶ During her work as editor of the magazine, she passionately committed to promoting social and political issues pertinent to the black community and righting the wrongs done to her race, aiming to create a better future and promote “the higher culture of Religion, Literature, Science, Music and Art of the Negro, Universally.”⁷ Her publications touched on all subjects that concerned the black community, including oversea expansion and the Western expansion that renders California as the Promised Land for African Americans.

As a matter of fact, far from being an accommodationist, Hopkins not only uses every means that comes to her hand to combat racism but also proves radical in her topics. She believes that literature is a functional tool for historical information, and writes in every popular genre of her time, from success literature, romance and pamphlet to utopia, to promote her belief and attract as many audiences as possible. Her utilization of the then popular sentimental genre can best explain her pragmatic use of genres. As explained by Kate McCullough, “Hopkins used sentimental forms in part because they were among the culturally available and familiar forms of her time; that is, her audience would have known how to read the sentimental signifiers in her work—an important goal given the didactic aim of *Contending Forces*.”⁸ Thus, it is not difficult to understand that utopia as an effective and popular genre falls into her liking given the immense readership and influence of Bellamy’s utopian text caused at that time. Her utopian impulse is evident in almost all her works; and through the various utopias, she aims to negate the social reality and propose better alternatives.

⁶. Wallinger, Hanna. 2005. *Pauline E. Hopkins a Literary Biography*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

⁷. Wallinger, Hanna. 2005. *Pauline E. Hopkins a Literary Biography*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. p.50.

⁸. Kate McCullough, “Slavery, Sexuality, and Genre,” p. 24.

Similar to Griggs, Hopkins is a pragmatic and highly-motivated writer. Her adoption of different genres is driven by her purpose of reaching as many audiences as possible. She constantly adjusted her choices of genres to meet the era's literary trend. In her first novel, she followed the then popular realism, however in her fourth novel which was only published two years later she changed into the more popular historical fantasy. Such incongruity demonstrates her practical policy in writing, and also explains her adoption of the utopian genre which was seen as the most popular and widely published genre at that time. It is no exaggeration to say that Hopkins is an executor of Du Bois' "art is propaganda," which can be confirmed by the claim she wrote in the opening of her first novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance of Life North and South*:

Fiction is of great value to any people as a preserver of manners and customs — religious, political and social. It is a record of growth and development from generation to generation. No one will do this for us; we must ourselves develop the men and women who will faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro with all the fire and romance which lie dormant in our history, and as yet, unrecognized by writers of the Anglo-Saxon race.⁹

Hopkins utilizes every means to undermine the dominance of mainstream society. Like Griggs, she also founded her own publishing firm, Pauline E. Hopkins Company to publish and promote her own works. She not only claims the social function of novel in black nation building, but also sets an unprecedented example of how to achieve this goal as a female writer. She uses her artistic talent for the uplift of African American community, and her role as an intellectual to promote positive African American images. She promotes gifted African American women, including Phillis Wheatley, Frances E. W. Harper and so on to show how

⁹. Hopkins, Preface to *Contending Forces. A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*, 1901.

African American female writers can use their talent to pragmatically benefit their community. Meanwhile, she is a valiant social activist. She confronted Washington and his policy at a time when Washington was believed to be at the height of political power and influence, which was widely believed by critics as the reason she was removed from her position in the *Colored American Magazine*.

Utopia was most popular at the end of nineteenth century and its popularity lasted until the beginning of the First World War. It was popular to such an extent that major writers all turned to utopian writing. As a genre grounded in a “disjunction [...] between the familiar present and the imagined future, between history and possibility,”¹⁰ it gave African American writers space for social criticism — to articulate social reality and protest “within an inspirational narrative frame”— and provides the space that enables them to transform the contemporary dystopian historical reality of Jim Crow into a vision of freedom and empowerment.¹¹ Hopkins turned to utopian writing on the one hand to criticize social reality; on the other hand to create a better space for black community. Utopian genre provides her a means to refute the social reality— the oppression of women, the deprivation of black masculinity, and the social context of black inferiority, that no other genre could.

Even though all her writings demonstrated her utopian impulse, so far only *Of One Blood* has been acknowledged as a utopian text. However, a closer survey of her works will disclose that all her works manifest her utopian impulse and her presentation of utopian communities. Three of her four novels end up with her utopian visions, and her *Colored American Magazine* can actually be read as a nation building site which shows her attempt to build an imagined community for blacks to turn to for inspiration.

¹⁰.Pfaelzer, Jean. 1984. *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896: The Politics of Form*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press. p.5.

¹¹.Fabi, Maria G. *Passing and the Rise of the African American Novel*, University of Illinois Press, 2001. p.143.

Her first novel, *Contending Forces* which was published in 1900 presents a utopian space of peace in racist Boston. In this novel, she also presents black female clubs which serve as utopian space in an era that women were suffering from racism, sexism and confinement to domestic space. In these utopian spaces, black women not simply move out of domestic space, but also become public figures and “stand up for uplifting of the race and womanhood.”¹² These black women are not only successful and independent but also devote to racial uplift. In Ma Smith’s sewing circle, young African American women use their domestic skills to raise money for the churches, as observed by Deborah White: “The guiding principle behind all the clubs was racial uplift through self-help.”¹³ Utopia’s critical function is also reflected in this novel. Hopkins is “against” Washington. One of the main characters Dr. Arthur Lewis, president of the southern industrial school, is a Washingtonian character who opposes black disenfranchisement and beholds that money and material gains alone will bring them fair treatment in the South. Unlike Washington who encourages black people to stay in the South and give up their voting rights, Hopkins in this novel criticizes the Southern social and political policies, and argues that whites should be held responsible for the oppression incur on blacks both before and after slavery. She believes that blacks should demand their civil rights and fight for their voting rights. Through this novel, Hopkins successfully exposes the social reality and proposes her own political vision and belief in a better future for blacks.

At the very beginning of her third novel, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902-1903), Hopkins presents an idyllic island in Lake Erie lived by a group of

¹². Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.156.

¹³. White, Deborah, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894-1994*, New York: Norton, 1999, pp. 27-28.

people “in the perfect freedom of Nature’s woods and streams.”¹⁴ The island sits near Buffalo and the Canadian border, isolated from the slavery world and full of untamed wildness. As Hopkins wrote: “The green world still in its primal existence in this forgotten spot brought back the golden period unknown to the world living now in anxiety and toil.”¹⁵ The family that live on this utopian world consists of a white father who is of English descent, a mixed-race daughter by his fugitive slave wife he married out of pity, the adopted black son and an old native Indian woman as a housekeeper. In this small family, Hopkins presents a utopian union of human beings who are “muticultural, multiracial, anti-imperialist, unnational, anti-materialistic, environmentally attuned.”¹⁶ In this novel, Hopkins continues the denial of America as a utopian space that she set in her first novel and turns the unfulfilled wish that cannot be realized in America into fulfillment in England. In America, the protagonists’ racial background is impediment and Hopkins knows that she cannot solve this issue within the United States. Once the characters leave the land of America, they not only have freedom but also the opportunity to move up. The main character Winona is changed from an enslaved girl in the United States at the beginning of the novel to a lady in England at the end. At the same time, the other male character, Judah is transformed from a slave in the United States to a knight in Britain. Such dramatic arrangement is certainly a reflection of Hopkins’ utopian impulse. Outside the land of slavery, Winona is worshipped as “the last beautiful representative of an ancient family,” and Judah is knighted and “had honors and wealth heaped upon him, and finally married into one of the best families of the realm.”¹⁷

¹⁴. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.320.

¹⁵. Ibid. p.291.

¹⁶. Elizabeth Ammons, “Afterword: *Winona, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century*,” in *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p.214.

¹⁷. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.435.

Utopia is about exile; and the theme of exile features prominently in Pauline E. Hopkins' fiction.¹⁸ Hopkins first turned to America for an ideal space for her utopia; however, she later realized that America was too tainted to be a utopian space for African Americans. Then she moved forward to abroad, mainly Europe and Africa for utopian space. Three of her four novels end up with the protagonists choosing to exile permanently outside the United States. In *Contending Forces*, the main characters leave America for Europe. Will Smith reunites with his beloved Sappho, leaves for England, and plans to work for improvement of the race outside of America. The protagonists of *Winona* also relocate in Europe permanently. In her last novel, Hopkins moves outside the United States-Europe dichotomy and chooses Africa as a utopian "land of freedom" for blacks from the New World. Reuel Briggs returns to Africa, intending to guide his people into the future from there.

All the main characters in Hopkins' novels desert America as an ideal land and choose a foreign land as their final location where "American caste prejudice cannot touch them."¹⁹ Such exile is Hopkins' protest of the racism, segregation and violence towards blacks in America at the turn of the 20th century and also her pointing out a way. After emancipation, another form of slavery oppression named Jim Crow arose and again made America an inhospitable home for African Americans. Different from Griggs and other antebellum writers like Frederic Douglass and Williams Wells Brown, Hopkins believed that America could not be a utopian space for blacks with its Jim Crow segregation. The exile is the reflection of Hopkins' searching for a better place, and also her eager for social change.

Another distinctive feature of utopia is that it is about movement. All Hopkins' works contain movements and transitions. In *Contending Forces*, there is movement in time and space

¹⁸. Exile and Utopia in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood*, p.141.

¹⁹. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.435.

between the late eighteenth-century Bermuda, the early twentieth century Boston and Europe. In *Hager's Daughter*, besides the physical transition of places, there is also the passing between black and white identities and the movement from the beginning of the Civil War to the Washington in the 1880s. In *Winona*, Hopkins' only novel about the slavery era, there are the transitions from slavery to freedom, from freedom back to slavery, and all the changes come with the changes of identity and self-understanding. There are also movements from Canada to the slaveholding South, to Kentucky, back to Canadian border, and final reference to Canada. *Of One Blood* includes more movements and transitions than any of her other novels, both geographical and social: from the United States to Africa and then back, the passing from black to white, transfer from the glorious African past to the realistic American present, and from the oppressed America to the liberating Africa. Each movement carries the protagonist's dream of self-liberating and hope of racial uplift; it also reflects Hopkins' searching for ideal space for her people and her proposal for the solution of racial issues.

Of One Blood and Hopkins' Africanism

Of One Blood, or the Hidden Self is Hopkins' fourth also last novel. It was written during Hopkins' most productive years, and first appeared as series in the *Colored American Magazine* from November 1902 to November 1903. It is the only novel by Hopkins that presents a mixed-race male character, and also the first African American novel that features "both an African setting and African characters."²⁰ Through this novel, Hopkins expresses her commitment to racial uplift and her racial policy. In this novel, Hopkins makes a turn in her writing, diverting

²⁰. Gruesser, John Cullen. 2012. *The Empire Abroad and the Empire at Home African American Literature and the Era of Overseas Expansion*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. p.7.

from the domestic racial uplift and emigration to Europe to the African heritage and ancient past for inspiration for the future.

Since its first publication, this novel has received wide criticism from its form to its content. The form is a mixture of romance, sentimental novel, science fiction and picaresque, which is a reflection of Hopkins' pragmatic vision of novel writing. As to its content, there is mixture of history and fiction and a switch in tone between the first part and the second part. However, all the criticism of this book overlooks the fact that such inconsistency in content and transference in form are Hopkins' pragmatic strategy in writing and her utilization of multiple genres to reach wide audience. The switch of tone and the stark contrast between the utopian Africa and dystopian America show her intention to arouse the audience's consciousness for change.

In this utopian novel, Hopkins follows the pragmatic function of the utopian genre set by More. Through the presenting of a perfect utopian society in Ethiopia, she shows her protest of the oppression on blacks both nationally and internationally, her satire of passing as a way of racial uplift and mainstream society's deprivation of black past. Through this novel, Hopkins negates the then prevalent discourse of the barrenness of Africa in culture and history. She wrote for an African American audience in a time when they were most denied and deprived in America. By this novel, she successfully provides them "a usable, livable past;" a past that they can draw inspiration in their countering of racism and building of a new image.²¹

Of One Blood was written at the time when mainstream society adopted "scientific" proof of black inferiority, and utilized every means to justify the discourse of black inferiority and white oppression. Scholars such as Malini Johar Schueller and Scott Trafton illuminated the discipline of Egyptology which was often employed throughout the nineteenth century to argue

²¹. Gruesser, John Cullen. 2012. *The Empire Abroad and the Empire at Home African American Literature and the Era of Overseas Expansion*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. p.75.

that Africans were inherently subhuman and therefore justified to be enslaved. Hegel and other nineteenth century European historians' assessment of Africa as barren in history was popular, and main stream society held that "the unhistorical and underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature."²² In Europe, the "Darwinist trap," or the temptation to make material, technological achievement as the standard by which all nations should be measured was another widely adopted strategy to prove the backwardness of Africa. Robert Knox, in his *The Races of Man* (1850) stated: "there must be a physical and, consequently, a psychological inferiority in the darker races generally."²³ Benjamin Kidd, in his *Social Evolution* (1894) justified the Anglo-Saxon race to exterminate the less developed people. At the same time, at the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century, scientific society classified Africans and African Americans as inferior in intelligence, aptitude and physiognomy. Dominating view held that Africa was derived from Egypt, and Ethiopian culture was seen as an offshoot of the Egyptians. Even though German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius, "father of German Egyptology" in his thirteen-volume work *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien (Monuments from Egypt and Ethiopia)* detailed for the first time the presence of black Africans in Egypt, little was known about the nearly identical features and clothing of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians which was his most important discovery at that time.

Nationally, the environment of the post-Reconstruction was hostile. There was the adoption of the "separate but equal" policy in 1896, the deprivation of enfranchisement and lynching across the South. Jim Crow law became a national law, and "one-drop" policy was widely applied in every area of African American life. Racist pseudo-science was used nationally to justify the oppression of blacks. Scholars like Frederick L. Hoffman used the latest so-called

²². Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, and J. Sibree. 1956. *The Philosophy of History*. New York: Dover Publications. p.99.

²³. Knox, Robert. 1850. *The Races of Men a Fragment*. London: H. Renshaw. p.125.

“scientific” evidence to support inferiority of blacks and announced the futility of racial uplift.²⁴

At the same time, as an emerging empire through murderous war, American applied the colonial strategy towards Philippines and other peoples on African Americans at the turn of the century.

In the 1880s, archeological discoveries in Sudan and southern Egypt began to unearth increasing numbers of objects that showed African influences, which gradually undermined the myth of the paucity of Ethiopian or African culture. Racial hierarchies that were long held were challenged by the number of objects and cultural wealth represented by the iconic monuments like the Sphinx and the Temple of Abu Simbel built by blacks. Meanwhile, Ethiopia in 1896 defeated the Italians under Menelik, and became the only African nation that had never been colonized by whites, which caused great sensation in the black community and increased African American interest in Ethiopia.

Of One Blood was written in this complicated historical background. Through this utopian novel, Hopkins intends to refute the black inferiority that Europeans imposed on blacks and protest the situation of blacks in the United States. At the same time, she aims to challenge the then prevalent academic ideology of Ethiopian influences on Egyptian culture and to show the heritage of African culture and the glory of African past. Through the presentation of a society highly advanced in science and rich in history, she counters the prevailing view of Africa as the continent without history and inferior in science. The title of the book, *Of One Blood* is a satire of the “one-drop” policy and mainstream society’s belief in white supremacy. Through this utopian novel, Hopkins denies the contemporary scientific claim of African inferiority and America as a country of freedom and democracy, at the same time aims to establish the utopian past of Ethiopia. Through the presentation of a utopian city with a rich and complex African

²⁴. Hoffman, Frederick L, “In Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro,” New York, The Macmillan Company, 1896.

culture, she proves that “Ethiopia was the original source of civilization and ‘black. ... the original color of man’.”²⁵ As she wrote: “It is a *fact* that Egypt drew from Ethiopia all the arts, sciences and knowledge of which she was mistress. The very soil of Egypt was pilfered by the Nile from the foundations of Meroe.... black was the original color of man in prehistoric times.”²⁶

Different from Griggs who presents a secret utopian community within the border of the United States, Hopkins imagines a utopian community, a secret and highly advanced hidden city Telassar, set in Africa. Through the presentation of this African city, Hopkins demonstrates her belief in the prevailing Afrocentrism, and its advocating that the Egyptian and later the Greek civilization grew out of the Ethiopian negroid civilization around Meroe from Cushite reign. Through this utopian novel, she aims to show the advance of African civilization, to counter the view of Africa as uncivilized and savage and to express her criticism of mainstream society’s perception of Africa. In an essay on black female educators in *The Colored American Magazine* in 1902, she wrote:

Rome got her civilization from Greece; Greece borrowed hers from Egypt, thence she derived her science and beautiful mythology. Civilization descended the Nile and spread over the delta, as it came down from Thebes. Thebes was built and settled by the Ethiopians. As we ascend the Nile we come to Meroe the queen city of Ethiopia and the cradle of learning into which all Africa poured its caravans. So we trace the light of civilization from Ethiopia to Egypt, to Greece, to Rome, and thence diffusing its radiance over the entire world.²⁷

²⁵. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. xlv.

²⁶. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p.88.

²⁷. Carby, Hazel V. 1987. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. p.156.

In this novel, Hopkins not only presents a physical city that sets in Africa, existing side by side with advanced Boston, but also presents a spiritual black community where blackness is valued on global horizon. She turns away from the prevailing thought of assimilation and tries to promote separation. However, Hopkins is not the first one to present a black community on international level. As early as 1859, Martin Delany in his novel *Blake: or the Huts of America* deserted the United States as a viable home place for African Americans and shown his approach of Black Nationalism in the direction of global horizons. He promotes the alliance of black Americans with Central America and Africa as an ideal place for blacks. Other African American writers like Frederick Douglass, in the late nineteenth century, began to explore the positive links between African American and African cultures. Hopkins follows this engagement in this novel and answers the call for utopia on international stage by Delany. But different from Delany who aspires for emigration of African Americans to Africa, Hopkins focuses on the function of such a utopian city in countering mainstream society's misinterpretation of African and African American culture. In another word, she presents Africa as a spiritual existence for African Americans.

Hopkins uses her novel as “a reservoir of ideas to spur new conceptualizations of race consciousness.”²⁸ She wrote this novel to combat these prevailing views of black inferiority and the deprivation of black identity and culture, as she put in the book: “For three thousand years the world has been mainly indebted for its advancement to the Romans, Greeks, Hebrews, Germans and Anglo-Saxons; but it was otherwise in the first years. Babylon and Egypt—Nimrod and Mizrainm — both descendants of Ham — led the way, and acted as the pioneers of mankind in the untrodden fields of knowledge. The Ethiopians, therefore, manifested great superiority

²⁸. Sundquist, Eric J. 1993. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. p. 567.

over all the nations among whom they dwelt, and their name became illustrious throughout Europe, Asia and Africa.”²⁹ As confirmed by Kimberly, Hopkins’ novel enacts a “struggle for definition, for something to ground not just an individual identity but that of a people from within the ‘belly of the beast’—from within nineteenth-century America’s internal imperialism.”³⁰ Thus, she puts great effort in this novel on the advance of the city, the physical and intellectual power of the people, and their uses of supernatural power to contrast the industrialized world and its belief in science. Through the maturity of art, technology and luxury of the city, she successfully overthrows the view of Africa as a land that lacks civilization.

The plot of this novel is centered on Reuel Briggs, a Harvard medical school graduate who chooses to pass for white to attain a medical profession. In his practice, he uses his African way of healing and saves the life of a beautiful African American singer Dianthe Lusk who falls into coma after a train accident. After the treatment, Briggs falls in love with her and conceals her black identity, taking the advantage of her capability of passing and her loss of memory. At the same time, Briggs’ best friend, Aubrey, a seemingly white, rich and well-educated man also falls in love with Dianthe. Aubrey, using the advantage of his social status successfully gets rid of Briggs by revealing his black identity and ends his career in the United States. Forced by his situation, Briggs accepts the opportunity of a financially rewarding expedition to Ethiopia in search of ancient Meroe, without knowing that the trip is arranged by Aubrey to satisfy his own ego.

After Briggs leaves, Aubrey takes advantage of the fact that Dianthe does not remember her African identity and forces her to accept his love. In the meantime, he arranges for his slave Jim to murder Briggs on his expedition, but Jim fails. Briggs comes across the hidden city of

²⁹. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p.98.

³⁰. Cantalupo, Charles. 1995. *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o: Text and Contexts*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. p.260.

Telassar and is recognized as “the long-looked-for king of Ethiopia for whose reception the city was built.”³¹ Briggs affirms his African ancestry and assumes the throne. With the help of the priests’ mesmeric capabilities, he learns Aubrey’s plot and returns to the United States to save Dianthe and take revenge of Aubrey, but he is too late. Dianthe has already died before his arrival. Briggs uses the African mesmeric power and forces Aubrey to commit suicide. Later, he learns from Aunt Hannah that Dianthe and Aubrey are both his siblings. The three of them are not only “of one blood” in reference to their racial identities, but also with respect to their siblinghood. They are all descended from Mira, a slave of Aubrey’s wealthy father. Thus, all three of them turn out to be tragic characters by committing incest without knowing. The novel ends with Briggs and Aunt Hannah’s return to Telssar where he marries Queen Candace and converts the city into Christianity, waiting for its emergence into the modern world.

As a utopian novel, *Of One Blood* follows the classical structure of utopia set by More in his *Utopia*. It comprises of two parts: the first part is about the dystopian America, and the second part is about the utopian city in Ethiopia. Through the contrasts of the two worlds, Hopkins points out the dire situations faced by African Americans and suggests that the only solution to racial oppression is to return to Africa. In content, the novel also follows *Utopia*’s paradigm. In the first part that takes place in America, Hopkins talks about inclusion and passing as possible ways to cope double consciousness and their futility which results in the negation of black identity. By this, Hopkins indicates the impossibility of envisioning a domestic utopian space with the racial and gender hierarchy and the horrors of the antebellum plantation system: rape, incest and murder. She advertently criticizes the legacy of slavery, its impact and destruction on the African American community, and the then prevalent Darwinism and racial science. In this part, through the presentation of the social reality faced by African Americans in

³¹. Hopkins, Pauline E. 2004. *Of One Blood, or, The Hidden Self*. New York: Washington Square Press. p.122.

the United States, Hopkins shows her criticism of racial uplift through passing and black people's failure for citizenship and inclusion, and her veto of racial uplift as a strategy for racial inclusion.

The second part is about a utopian city with a magnificent civilization and black autonomy in Africa that has survived in seclusion for thousands of years into the present. It has never been penetrated by the outside world. Outsiders can only enter it with the permission of Ai, Ergamenes' chief minister. Besides this physical isolation, the city is also isolated from the outside world by its appearing loneliness, as Hopkins narrated: "Here there was no future. No railroads, no churches, no saloons, no schoolhouses to echo the voices of merry children, no promise of the life that produces within the range of his vision. Nothing but the monotony of past centuries dead and forgotten save by a few learned savans."³² The outside world not only cannot be compared with the accomplishments of this ancient city, but also owes its civilization to it. This city is not only materialistically rich where everything is made from marble, silk, gold and jewels, and where gigantic statues, palaces, and public baths are located in a paradisiacal, garden-like setting, but also enjoys an advantageous culture. It has a language "once commonly spoken by your ancestors long before Babylon was built. It is known to us now as the language of prophecy."³³ It is so advanced in civilization that Ai, the prime minister informs Briggs:

Here in Telassar are preserved specimens of the highest attainments the world knew in ancient days. They tell me that in many things your modern world is yet in its infancy ... from Ethiopia came all the arts and cunning inventions that make your modern glory. At our feet the mightiest nations have worshipped, paying homage to our kings, and all nations have sought the honor of alliance with our royal families because of our strength, grandeur, riches and wisdom" When Ai tours Reuel of

³². Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p. 93.

³³. *Ibid*, p.119.

Telassar, he points at the decorations of a great temple and says that the ““sages have seen nothing equal to it in the outer world””: “The decorations of the hall are prepared natural flowers; that is, floral garlands are subjected to the fumes of the crystal material covering them like a film and preserving their natural appearance. This is a process handed down from the earliest days of Ethiopian greatness. I am told that the modern world has not yet solved this simple process,” he said, with a gentle smile of ridicule.³⁴

Ai further tells Briggs, “the wonders of civilization which had its zenith six thousand years before Christ’s birth.”³⁵

Through the presentation of such a utopian city, Hopkins restores Africa to its glorious past and changes the stature of African Americans as “a branch of the wonderful and mysterious Ethiopians who had a prehistoric existence of magnificence, the full record of which is lost in obscurity.”³⁶ Here, Hopkins makes a strategic use of the didactic function of utopia genre. She promotes not only the greatness of the ancient civilization but also contemporary African Americans as part of it. The portrayal of such a great old city is not simply to provide a potential destination for African Americans, but also to furnish “a black-centered vantage point from which to defamiliarize the indignities of segregation and the ideological oppressiveness of white supremacy.”³⁷ She uses the glorious past to counter the pseudo-scientific theories of black inferiority of her time, and at the same time to inspire African diasporas to draw from this glorious past to build a better future. Her utopia is not presented as a non-place (ou-topos) but a physical existence (eu-topos). It is not an imagined mysterious land but a land that known to African Americans.

³⁴. Ibid.

³⁵. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p.119.

³⁶. Ibid, p. 99

³⁷. Fabi, p.150.

Gordon Frazer, in his article points out that the hidden city “counterfactually constructed in opposition to the trauma of the Middle Passage.”³⁸ He further explains that the novel “contacts the hidden selves of diasporic blacks — their African selves — and replaces a history of colonization, kidnapping, murder, and rape with a history of past greatness, a long period of sexually and territorially protected hiding, and the promise of a renaissance. The utopian society: women (the social status of women, the preserved dead women,) science (the disk, (re)visionary science).”³⁹ The city Telassar is a reflection of the emancipating value of utopia, which is derived from the “Eden” — like qualities of the city or its potentiality as a destination for African Americans to immigrant from the undesirable country where they are deprived and kept in captivity; it serves as a black-centered site where blacks can escape from white supremacy.⁴⁰ It is a proof of the glory of African past— a past that can counter or even surpass European civilization.

In her depiction of the city, Hopkins is more traditional than both Griggs and Du Bois, she presents a closed space that separated from the outside world. She wrote: “the hidden city Telassar” is “behind the protection of our mountains and swamps, secure from the intrusion of a world that has forgotten.”⁴¹ The city is totally covered from the outside world only “certain members of our Council are permitted to visit outside the gates.”⁴² This city is not only geographically isolated from the outside world, but also has never been culturally penetrated. There is no color hierarchy that is widely adopted by the outside world. The colorism that plays a decisive role in social status in America disappears in this utopian city. People who live in the

³⁸. Fraser, Gordon, “Transnational Healing in Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self*,” Duke University Press, 2013.

³⁹. Ibid.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

⁴¹. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p.114.

⁴². Ibid, p.119.

city are “ranged in complexion from a creamy tint to purest ebony; the long hair which fell upon their shoulders, varied in texture from soft, waving curls to the crispness of the most pronounced African type. But the faces into which he gazed were perfect in the cut and outline of every feature; the forms hidden by soft white drapery, Grecian in effect, were athletic and beautifully moulded.”⁴³ In her depiction, Hopkins indicates that even though there is miscegenation in this city, colorism never becomes an issue. The dark hue and the waving hair with its trace of crispness that would degrade a black man below any man of fair hue and straight locks belonging to any race outside the Ethiopian are taken as symbols of pride in this city. By this, she makes a satire of the “one drop policy” adopted by main stream society, as she wrote:

The slogan of the hour is ‘keep the Negro down!’ but who is clear enough in vision to decide who hath black blood and who hath it not? Can anyone tell? No, not one; for in His own mysterious way He has united the white race and the black race in this new continent. By the transgression of the law He proves His own infallibility: “Of one blood have I made all nations of men to dwell upon the whole face of earth,” is as true today as when given to the inspired writers to be recorded. No man can draw the dividing line between the two races, for they are both of one blood!⁴⁴

Hopkins also indicates that even though there is a history of sexual interaction with the Europeans of the inhabitants and the integrity of the city has been tried, it has never been dominated by the outside world. The women in the city have never been raped. Hopkins uses large space to depict the purity of the women in the utopian city, which poses as a stark contrast to the degradation of the female body in the United States. Candace, the queen of the city, also Briggs’ future wife, looks exactly like his wife in the United States, but unlike Dianthe who was contaminated, Candace is a virgin.

⁴³. Ibid, p.113.

⁴⁴. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p. 178.

The title, “of one blood” is taken from the Bible — God “hath made of one blood all nations of men” but in this novel Hopkins generates a new meaning from it. It refers to “the literal passing down of inheritance theorized by the biological sciences, as well as to the biblical inheritance of spirit or culture, it also refers, in the novel’s occult context, to hereditarian theories of a psychic indemnity that endures over time and space.”⁴⁵ In an ethnological article written later, Hopkins stated, “In this study of the dark races actually living today upon the globe, the reader or student is deeply impressed with the infinite variety of mixture in these races. This very mingling of races proves the theory of ‘one blood.’ Indeed, the principle that the human species is one cannot be disputed, and all men that inhabit the earth are but varieties of this one species.”⁴⁶ This “one blood” can be utopia and dystopia at the same time, as suggested by Gillman, “ ‘One blood’ refers textually both to a horror and a promise: to the horror of incestuous, sibling relations among the three protagonists, exposed as literal blood brothers and sisters ... and to the biblical promises of racial unity”⁴⁷ This one blood results in incest in America, but in brotherhood and love in Africa. In the utopian city, people of different hue live harmoniously together. Dark skin does not carry any meaning of degradation. As Ai tells, “you could get there all right with your complexion in my country. We would simply label you ‘Arab, Turk, Malay or Filipino,’ and in that costume you’d slide along all right.”⁴⁸ By contrast, outside Ethiopia, “it is a deep disgrace to have within the veins even one drop of the blood you seem so proud of possessing,”⁴⁹ and this blood results in second-class citizenship in the United States.

⁴⁵. Gillman, Susan, “Pauline Hopkins and the Occult: African-American Revisions of Nineteenth-Century Sciences” *American Literary History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 57-82. p.76.

⁴⁶. From Hopkins’ ethnological series, “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century” (1905), p.191.

⁴⁷. Gillman, p.63.

⁴⁸. *Ibid*, pp.153-54.

⁴⁹. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p.129.

This novel has been widely acknowledged by critics as a utopian novel, and most scholars who agree, are more likely to focus on the hidden city. However, the utopian impulse that Hopkins demonstrates is much more than this. Following the paradigm More sets in *Utopia*, Hopkins spends a larger part of the novel in presenting the undesirable reality of America, which poses as a stark contrast to the utopian city. Through this utopian land, Hopkins makes satire of America as a land of persecution, instead of democracy and freedom that it promoted worldwide. At the same time, she promotes African culture, giving African diasporas hope for the future. For African Americans, this utopia is a link between their past and future. In the novel's non-African part, Hopkins shows how racism turns America into a dystopian land, while in the African part she makes Africa an ideal place for people of all colors. Through the contrast between the two worlds, she criticizes America and the impact of slavery on blacks and the unfulfilled promises of emancipation, with an aim to make the United States as an inhospitable place that demands for social changes. Through the experiences in the United States, she points out the impossibility of building a viable community for blacks in America. Her detailed depiction of the advanced city shows her derision of America and its emerging power and claim of advances in democracy and technology. Slavery was ended, but its impact still dominated the life of African Americans, causing anxiety in African American life. The incest committed unwittingly by the siblings is proof of the aftereffect of the American slaveholding aristocracy. The disrupted slave family keeps on repeating itself after the ending of slavery.

The contrast of the two worlds is also reflected in the different writing styles of the two parts. The first part about Briggs' life in the United States is written in gothic style. In American literary tradition, the gothic genre is often seen as the language of slavery and connected with captivity. For example, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe uses Gothic elements in

her presentation of the horror of slavery. The part about Briggs' life after passing is written in the tone of gothic: his attempt to kill himself, the haunting story they told on Halloween-eve, Aubrey's account of his father's mesmeric power and Mira's disastrous prophesy, and Reuel's rescue of Dianthe from the apparent death. The pervasive presence of incest in the novel also represents the Gothicism of the "peculiar institution." As Briggs' grandmother Hannah explains, "Dese things jes' got to happen in slavery."⁵⁰ However, in the second part about the utopian city, Hopkins switches to romance style, especially in the relationship between Briggs and Candace and the depiction of the advances of the city.

In this novel, Hopkins continues the utopian impulse that she shows in her earlier novels by deserting the idea of America as a possible utopian space for African Americans, but she diverts from her earlier novels' final destination of Europe and chooses Meroe which is the precursor of Ethiopia. This is not accidental. Ethiopianism was part of the Black Nationalism discourse in her time. The Bible reference in Psalms 68:31: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God," was accepted as a prediction of the future of glory for Africans and African diasporas. Ethiopia as a utopia for the black race had acquired both spiritual and political significance in African American communities since 1890s and through the 1920s. Hopkins' utilization of Ethiopianism shows the utopian "early greatness of African race," and her response to the dystopian American reality.

Ethiopia's successful resistance to imperialism made it a popular topic in Hopkins' time. The defeat of Italian invaders in 1896, "became a kind of folk story... passed among individuals within the black community in beauty parlors and barber shops, at church congregations... and in family circles."⁵¹ In *Of One Blood*, Hopkins' choice of Ethiopia shows her protest of the absence

⁵⁰. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*, p. 176.

⁵¹. Jacobs, Sylvia M. *The African Nexus. Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa*,

of African cultural history as a key area for black leaders and white racists at the turn of the century.⁵² At the same time with her publication of *Of One Blood*, she also published a non-fiction serial “Ethiopians of the Twentieth Century.”⁵³ These two publications illustrate her pride in African language and history and her aim to counter the distortion of black history. By the promotion of African heritage, she aims to counter mainstream society’s tendency of “distortion” of black history of enslavement and point out a way out of “the new physical and ideological bondage of segregation.”⁵⁴ This parallel of the ancient and contemporary power of the utopian city is to overthrow the “myth” that Africa has no advanced military power.

In the social context of racial science of Hopkins’ time, black people were deprived of intellect, history and the equal opportunity. In this novel, through the presentation of a utopian city more advanced than any other city in the world, Hopkins intends to show that black people have an aptitude for science and are capable of building high civilization. Through the example of the preservation of the dead, she brings before the audience that Ethiopian science has been in existence since ancient times and far surpasses that of the West. As she writes, “Briggs was awed into silence. He could say nothing, and listened to Ai’s learned remarks with a reverence that approached almost to worship before this proof of his supernatural powers. What would the professors of Harvard have said to this, he asked himself. In the heart of Africa was a knowledge of science that all the wealth and learning of modern times could not emulate.”⁵⁵

1880-1920. Westport: Greenwood, 1981. p.194.

⁵². Thomas J. Otten, “Pauline Hopkins and the Hidden Self of Race,” Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), The Johns Hopkins University Press. p.255.

⁵³. Carby, Hazel V. 1987. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. p.157-58.

⁵⁴. Fabi, M. Giulia, *Passing and the rise of the African American novel*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001. p.142.

⁵⁵. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.145.

In his interpretation of utopia, Tom Moylan wrote: “Utopian writing in its many manifestations is complex and contradictory. It is, at heart, rooted in the unfulfilled needs and wants of specific classes, groups, and individuals in their unique historical contexts.... Utopia opposes the affirmative culture maintained by dominant ideology. Utopia negates the contradictions in a social system by forging visions of what is not yet realized either in theory or practice. In generating such figures of hope, utopia contributes to the open space of oppositions.”⁵⁶ *Of One Blood* not only shows Hopkins’ negation of the “real-world” racial politics and prevailing scientific theory claim of black inferiority, but also her racial pride and her opposition to dominant society’s ignorance of Africa’s past. Additionally, it confirms her optimism in the future of the African American community. As remarked by the protagonist in the novel: “the wonders of a material world cannot approach those of the undiscovered country within ourselves—the hidden self lying quiescent in every human soul.”⁵⁷

Through the contrast of the two worlds: the United States and the hidden city, Hopkins indicates that even “passing” for white which was largely seen as the way of avoiding racism does not work. Both Briggs and Dianthe fall as victims of passing: Briggs’ passing ends in his melancholy, and Dianthe in her loss of her identity. Even though Briggs graduates from the most prestigious school of medicine, he still cannot escape the fate of being a target of racism. Aubrey is successful in ultimate inclusion, and is assumed by all to be a white man. However, his inclusion ends with his participation in persecuting his brother and his marriage to his sister. Through the evil that befall the main characters, Hopkins shows the corruption of American/Western civilization on black men. In the utopian city, the despised black blood turns out to be

⁵⁶. Moylan, Tom, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. New York: Methuen, 1987. pp.1-2.

⁵⁷. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.145.

the marker of racial and royal identity. Briggs, persecuted in America, is claimed as King of the underground city of Telassar, King Ergamenes. His transformation from downtrodden medical student to Ethiopian king best represents Hopkins' utopian impulse.

Another theme that Hopkins presents is the contrast of the two worlds: incest. Shawn Salvant at the very beginning of her article says that *Of One Blood* is about the problem of incest. She further explains, "Incest is so critical to the novel's themes, structure, and political purpose that *Of One Blood* should be considered as a singularly notable if not pioneering treatment of the subject in the African American literary tradition..."⁵⁸ All the three protagonists in the novel commit incest unknowingly and all the black female characters end as victims of incest caused by slavery and male power. Through these repeated incest occurrences, Hopkins points out that the issue of incest is deeply embedded in the racial and gendered power dynamics of slavery. At the same time, she blames the white male's responsibility for incest. By this, she implies that in America, there is no way out of this dire situation of incest, and suggests that the only way out is to return to Africa, the only utopian site without incest for blacks.

Briggs, as an American subject, even though he belongs to "the talented tenth," is an incest committer. In Western culture, incest is a taboo "commonly believed to represent a baseline in the definition of human morality,"⁵⁹ thus Briggs is destined to be a social outcast in America. He has to leave America, abandoning American context of slavery, to cleanse his sin and find his redemption. As long as he stays in the land of America, there is no possibility to redeem himself. His siblings in America can only redeem themselves through death: Dianthe has to sacrifice her life to achieve her moral resolution, thus to pay for her sin of incest with her two brothers.

⁵⁸. Sakvant, Shawn, "Pauline Hopkins and the End of Incest," *African American Review*: Fall 2008; 42, ¾; MLA International Bibliography

⁵⁹. Arens, W. *The Original Sin: Incest and its Meaning*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. ix.

Aubrey is forced to commit suicide for his crime. As Gillman suggests, “Once we learn all about the characters’ mysterious and intertwined pasts under slavery, this knowledge offers no possibility of restoring the American social and moral order.”⁶⁰

In Hopkins’ utopian fantasy, Africa is presented as a site of historical greatness; a site that protected from European imperialism. In her presentation of the utopian community, Hopkins goes further than Griggs. Even though in his utopian novel, Griggs presents independent, intelligent black women who are the male characters’ equals, they are not included in his utopian city, whereas in Hopkins’ utopian city, women are not only included but also as powerful as men. Before she presents the status of women in utopian city, Hopkins devotes ample narrative to the maltreatment of the black female in the United States, which poses as a stark contrast to her counterpart in the utopian world. Her depiction of black women’s situation in America illustrates the fact that black female body is “the site of convergence of violence, racism, and misogyny.”⁶¹ All her female characters in dystopia America have a past that hinders their present, and even needs the sacrifice of their lives to redeem it.

Mira, the mother of the three siblings, come into the reader’s vision by a ghost story Aubrey told on Christmas night. As part of an experiment in mesmerism performed by Livingston’s father, she was used as a party trick to entertain in front of a great dinner party of Southern gentry. She predicted the coming of the Civil War and Emancipation, for which she was sold directly after her prediction. Through Mira, Hopkins shows the exploitation of the female body (the sexual exploitation of Mira by Livingston’s father) and the objectification and the disposability of black women. As Hopkins voices through the mouth of Aubrey, “My father

⁶⁰. Samuels, Shirley. 1992. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 23.

⁶¹. Deborah Horvitz, “Hysteria and trauma in Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*; or, the Hidden Self” *African American Review*, 1999; 33, 2; p.245.

made the necessary passes and from a serious, rather sad Negress, very mild with everyone, Mira changed to a gay, noisy, restless woman, full of irony and sharp jesting. In this case this peculiar metamorphosis always occurred.”⁶² Mira is not a thoroughly powerless woman though. She resists the sexual exploitation by giving birth to two children, one of which turns out to be the heir to the Livingston fortune. However, no matter how she resisted, she can never escape the fate of being sold. In the novel, Mira either appears as a ghostly character or a figure exists in other people’s words. She first comes into the book in the story told by Livingston to confirm the reality of mesmeric phenomena. Once she emerges as a ghost from the floor of Dianthe’s room to mark a passage in the Bible and disappears directly after. Later she appears before Briggs as a ghost again to reveal to him his treacherous servant, Jim Titus. Throughout the novel she never appears as an independent existence but a “hidden” figure. Through this representation, Hopkins shows the fate of a female slave: lives in the shadow of slavery and is disposed whenever the situation warrants.

If Mira is a “shadowy figure,” Dianthe is a walking dead who always appears as a weak woman. She first appears in the novel as a “passing shadow” outside Briggs’ window. Later, she comes to his vision after being hit by a train, unconscious. Besides being weak, she is a passive figure, always dependent on men to give her life and identity, and subjected to male dominance. As Briggs says in the novel, “God and science helping me, I will give her life and love and wifehood and maternity and perfect health.”⁶³ Even when she is conscious, she is described as “childlike” and “pleading,” and she never tries to achieve her own independence. Due to her weakness and dependence, Dianthe unknowingly commits incest with her two brothers.

⁶². Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.51.

⁶³. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.44.

All the black female characters are subjected to male power and suffer from the deprivation of their womanhood. Hannah, even though known as the matriarch of the community and “the most noted ‘voodoo’ doctor or witch in the country,” is repeatedly raped by her master and gives birth to as many as ten children. She is only allowed to keep one child, Mira, and all the others are sold away to “raise de mor’gage off de prop’rty.”⁶⁴ Because of her passivity in resisting, her daughter Mira suffers even a worse fate than her and becomes the sexual object of the master’s only “legitimate” child — Aubrey Livingston, Sr. who is also Mia’s half-brother.

However, when it comes to the women in the utopian city, Hopkins presents them not only as independent, well-protected and respected, but also as “the embodiment of all chastity.” Hopkins presents a matriarchal African nationhood in contrast to American rape culture in slavery. It is no exaggeration to state that the underground city is also a feminist utopia. It is a nation that empowers black women, and black men and women take equally active roles in building an ideal nation. Black womanhood is cherished and the royal bloodline is a maternal one. Women’s blood is seen as a link of the past, present and future. Hopkins gives large space to the glorification of black women in the city. When women are alive, the circulation of their blood is taken as a visual spectacle; after death, the black female bodies are interred in transparent coffins. As explained by Ai, beautiful women are preserved in glass coffins by “subjecting them to the fumes of the crystal material covering them like a film and preserving their natural appearance. This is a process handed down from the earliest days of Ethiopian greatness.”⁶⁵ Women and men are equal in every aspect, and the queens are listed alongside the kings, as Hopkins writes, “All hail, my royal ancestors — Candace, Semiramis, Dido, Solomon,

⁶⁴. Ibid, p.175.

⁶⁵. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. pp.130-31.

David and the great kings of early days, and the great masters of the world of song.”⁶⁶ Through this Hopkins suggests that the long line of slavery and its impact have severely destroyed this tradition, and the only way for black women to be equal to men is to return to Africa.

Queen Candace is similar to Dianthe in many ways. Hopkins writes when Briggs first saw Queen Candace, “in face, the resemblance was so striking that it was painful, and tears, which were no disgrace to his manhood, struggled to his eyes. She was the same height to Dianthe, had the same well-developed shoulders and the same admirable bust....”⁶⁷ However, their fates are thoroughly different. Queen Candace is independent, powerful and seen as the symbol of purity, while Dianthe is subjected to all kinds of deprivation and forced to be a lost woman due to her color. In their relationships with Briggs, Dianthe is never in control, while Candace is always in command: “And dost thou agree, and are thou willing to accept the destiny planned by the Almighty Trinity for thee and me from the beginning of all things, my lord?”⁶⁸ Hopkins further states, “in her smile of grace and sweetness lurked a sense of power.”⁶⁹ Unlike the dependent and weak Dianthe, Candace symbolizes power and energy. In the betrothal ceremony at the end of the novel, it is she who places the ring upon Briggs’ finger and pronounces “Thus do I claim thee for all eternity.”

Utopia is not only about a concrete utopian city; it is also about utopian impulse. The focus of the novel is not simply about the perfect hidden city; it is also about the glorious African past. Hanna Wallinger points out that in this novel Africa is presented not “as a real place on the contemporary map.”⁷⁰ For Hopkins, Africa is an abstract place where African culture is

⁶⁶. Ibid, p.187.

⁶⁷. Ibid, p.137.

⁶⁸. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.138.

⁶⁹. Ibid, p.137.

⁷⁰. Wallinger, Hanna. *Pauline E. Hopkins: a Literary Biography*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, c2005. p. 216.

prominent. It is an imagined space where African superiority exists; an existence that can be used as a correction to the view of African Americans as inferior, thus to overthrow the justification of African Americans as slaves. It is a space that distant from contemporary America, giving the author an objective view of America to criticize its prejudice and injustice. *Of One Blood* centers around the vision of a glorious African past with a blooming future, which shows Hopkins' racial proud and her belief in the future of Africa. The purity of African heroine and the death of light-colored heroine in the United States are Hopkins' vision of Africa as a life-giving and redeeming force and America as a doomed land.

Through such an imagined Africa with advanced culture and history that far surpassed any other civilization in the world, Hopkins expresses her racial pride which was unheard of at that time when Africa was recognized as uncivilized. Ernest Renan, in "What is a nation?" concludes, "A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of earth."⁷¹ In classical definition of nation, territory is usually seen as a prerequisite for nationhood. Through this novel, Hopkins indicates that Black Nationalism does not always assume a physical existence; it is mostly spirituality. In *Of One Blood*, the hidden city is a spiritual location for African diasporas. Africa in this novel is a spiritual existence; it is more like an "imagined community" in which "in the minds of each member lives the image of communion."⁷²

Hopkins' utopian impulse is also reflected in Briggs' self-realization. In despair of being isolated from his communal history and estranged from his past, Briggs passes for white as his strategy to the termination of segregation and shame of his origin. This leads to his profound

⁷¹. Renan, Ernest, "What is a nation?" *Modern Political Doctrines*, London, 1939, pp. 186-215.

⁷². Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso. p. 6.

depression that ends in his temptation for suicide. Du Bois in his definition of “double-consciousness” interprets it as: “a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One even feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”⁷³ The subtitle of the novel “hidden self” is derived from Williams James’ psychological theory, which is also where Du Bois’ double consciousness theory derives from. In America, the double-consciousness faced by Briggs and the split-self drives him asunder, while when he settles down in Africa the double consciousness, the suicidal impulses, and the neurasthenic manifestations of his diseased psychology are all gone. He also finds that once he arrives in Telassar, his power of speech magically multiplies. His depressive aphasia gives way to his fluency in ancient Arabic which he never studied. Moreover, he is able to communicate nonverbally and his mesmeric abilities increase tenfold. The supernatural power he has is the link between him and his African heritage; it is also a link between modern America and African past. Briggs’ transfer between the two selves not only demonstrates the differences between the dystopian America and utopian Africa, but also shows Hopkins’ utopian interpretation of the identities of blacks.

Another important element in the novel that appears repeatedly showing Hopkins’ utopian impulse is the spirituals. At the beginning of the novel, Dianthe’s singing of the spiritual of “Go Down, Moses,” not only inscribes the promise of “future deliverance foretold in the Old Testament,” but also reflects the utopian function of restoring pride in African American

⁷³. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1996. *The Souls of Black folk: Essays and Sketches*. Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Library. p.194.

community.⁷⁴ Spirituals have been widely acknowledged by utopian scholars as containing utopian function. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folks* interprets it “as a tradition of utopian thinking deposited in songs.” It is African American people’s expression for liberation and a better world. Dianthe always appears as passive in the novel, however, when she sings on the stage, she is seen as a person with “the power of genius.” As Hopkins depicts, “She had the glory of heaven in her voice, and in her face the fatal beauty of man’s terrible sins.”⁷⁵ It is the purging power of spirituals that keeps her surviving in face of incest and loss of identity and confirms her exceptionality and equality to Briggs. When she is deprived of her music, she is deprived of her identity. Briggs’ reaction to Dianthe’s singing also shows the emancipatory function of spirituals. As Hopkins narrates when he goes to the spiritual concert at the beginning of the novel, he is carried “out of himself” with a feeling of “pervading excitement — the flutter of expectation.”⁷⁶ He is so fascinated by her songs that he is driven by such passion to marry her. He is lifted out of his suicidal despair by Dianthe’s perform and promoted to reconsider the happiness of his life.

At the very beginning of the novel, Briggs passes for white and has a bright future waiting for him, but when his black identity is revealed by his best friend, his world collapses. Through Briggs, Hopkins presents the slippage of utopia and dystopia for blacks in the United States. Grace Montfort, in *Contending Forces* is another character that shows Hopkins’ presentation of the instability of utopia for blacks. Grace lives a happy life in Bermudan, as Hopkins writes, “Everyone voted her the dearest and most beautiful woman they had ever known, and all would have gone merry as a marriage-bell.”⁷⁷ But she is persecuted to death in American South once

⁷⁴. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p. xx.

⁷⁵. Ibid, p.52.

⁷⁶. Ibid, p.13.

⁷⁷. Hopkins, Pauline E. 1988. *Contending Forces: A romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 45.

she is suspected to have black blood. As explained by Hazel Carby: “the suspicion of black blood was enough cause for the ostracism of the whole family and Grace Montfort’s transition from the pedestal of virtue to the illicit object of the sexual desire of a local land owner, Anson Pollock.”⁷⁸ Hopkins indicates that skin color is the border line of utopia and dystopia. Once Grace is believed to have black blood, all the protection that she received from her husband is gone. She is immediately transformed from a successful mother and wife to a victim of racism. Similarly, in *Hager’s Daughter: A Story of Sothern Caste Prejudice*, Hager’s marriage and happy life became shattered the moment she is discovered to have black blood.

Unlike the perfect utopia presented by white writers full of promises, black utopia always has its own defects which lead to its own destruction. Even though Briggs is successful in the end, moving to utopian city with Aunt Hannah, the utopian city is not free from danger of white invasion, as Hopkins writes: “Reuel Briggs returned to the Hidden City with his faithful subjects, and old Aunt Hannah. There he spends his days in teaching his people all that he has learned in years of contrast with modern culture. United to Candace, his days glide peacefully by in good works; but the shadows of great sins darken his life, and the memory of past joys is ever with him. He views, too, with serious apprehension, the advance of mighty nations penetrating the dark, mysterious forests of his native land.”⁷⁹ Here, Hopkins indicates the potential danger waiting for this utopian city and the instability of the black utopian space. It is her warning of the danger faced by the utopian city from the outside world; it is also indication of her view that the impossibility of imagining a perfect world for blacks in face of colonialism and imperialism.

⁷⁸. Carby, Hazel V. 1987. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. p.131.

⁷⁹. Hopkins, *Of One Blood*. p.193.

CHAPTER 4

DU BOIS' UTOPIAN VISION OF INTERNATIONALISM

We have been compelled to admit Asia into the picture of future political and democratic power. We can no longer regard Europe as the sole center of the world. The development of human beings in the future is going to depend largely upon what happens in Asia.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, “The World Problem of the Color Line,” 1945

At last India is rising again to that great and fateful moral leadership of the world which she exhibited so often in the past in the lives of Buddha, Mohammed and Jesus Christ, and now again in the life of Gandhi. . . . This mighty experiment, together with the effort of Russia to organize work and distribute income according to some rule of reason, are the great events of the modern world. The black folk of America should look upon the present birth-pains of the Indian nation with reverence, hope and applause.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *Crisis*, 1930

Du Bois' Utopian Vision and Asia

Antonio Gramsci, in his argument of cultural hegemony points out that “all men are intellectual, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.

¹ He suggests that everyone has an intellect and uses it but not all are intellectuals by social functions. Each social group that comes into existence within a society usually creates within itself one or more strata of intellectuals. These intellectuals give the meaning to the group, help bind it together and help it function. Gramsci further points out that these intellectuals occupy a crucial role in the context of creating the counter hegemony. To achieve this, the intellectual must be able to derive from his own self-consciousness a coherent philosophy appropriate to his

¹. Burke, B. (1999, 2005) ‘Antonio Gramsci, schooling and education’, *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gram.htm>.

own group, and to inspire other members of his group to share his conception. In his theory, Gramsci distinguishes between social intellectuals and organic intellectuals, and withdraws that only the organic intellectuals of each social stratum are capable of producing a philosophy that is consistent with its needs and extends to all its members the philosophy to express the needs and interests of that group. The first task is pure political, and the second one is political. To achieve these goals, the intellectual must be a combination of both political and intellectual.

In this sense, W.E.B. Du Bois can be seen as a real intellectual. He is exemplified as a good combination of both traditional and organic intellectual. Throughout his life, he not only generated his own philosophy: “double consciousness”— capturing the dilemma faced by African Americans; “the talented tenth”— for the uplift of his own race, but also managed to address his philosophy to as many people as possible through his own magazine, organizations, academic institution in Atlanta and his tireless world travels. He created a new and vital ideology, worked as a political leader of his group, and managed to subsume within his activity the role of traditional intellectual to advocate his philosophy. In a nutshell, Du Bois “attempted virtually every possible solution to the problem of twentieth century racism — scholarship, propaganda...international communism.”² More than this, he also functioned as an international intellectual by positioning himself and his work on an international stage, and developed the vision that the problems faced by African Americans would never be solved until “the problem of the relation of the white and colored races is settled throughout the world.”³

Du Bois enjoys a life longer than most people. He was born at a time when the Western imperialism was rising and died at the height of the Cold War. Such length of life provides him

². Lewis, David Levering, *W. E. B. Du Bois, 1919-1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, New York: H. Holt, 2000. p.571.

³. Du Bois, W. E. B., Bill Mullen, and Cathryn Watson. 2005. *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia Crossing the World Color Line*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. p. 7.

space for the continuing development of his thought, which greatly contributes to the complexity of his thought. As a humanist and revolutionist, he fights against colonialism and imperialism and devotes all his life to advocating for liberation and democracy for colored people worldwide. As a writer, his writings touch almost every genre: history, sociology, poetry, novels, and political pamphlets.

Du Bois is a writer who believes in utopian politics. In fact, the utopian impulse not only runs through his literary writings, but also his political vision. During his life time, he wrote many books that illustrate his utopian vision but so far only “Comet” and *Dark Princess* have been considered as his utopian texts by critics. In his short scientific novel, “Comet” which was written in 1920, Du Bois envisions a utopian space that allows the union of a black man and a white woman in Jim Crow era. In his self-claimed favorite book, *Dark Princess* published in 1928, he not only expresses his utopian vision, but also projects it on internationalism by imagining an international community led by an Indian princess, and made up of colored people all over the world to exert their anti-colonialism agenda. As commented by Arnold Rampersad, *Dark Princess* is “a utopian exercise and must be judged as such, for it attempts to reflect in fiction Du Bois’ vision of the ideal political, moral and social world.”⁴

However, a closer look at Du Bois’ works will reveal that his utopian impulse is not only limited to the above acknowledged utopian texts, but runs through almost all his literary works. Even his least claimed text *The Souls of Black Folks* can be read as a utopian text that carries his vision of nation building. In his first novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, a historically important novel, Du Bois presents a separated utopian space that exists as a swamp which is largely claimed by critics as an imagined black nation on domestic soil. The swamp not only

⁴. Rampersad, Arnold. n.d. *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Dubois*. p. 217.

exists as a counterpart to the white dominance, but also reflects Du Bois' domestic solution to the issue of exclusion of blacks on their land of birth, carrying his dream of black uplift and financial independence. Through the union of the protagonist Bles, a representative of the "talented tenth," and the other main character Zora, the personification of the swamp, Du Bois expresses his vision of the unification of the "talented tenth" and the masses and the uplift black people in America through their effort.

Not only Du Bois' literary books, his racial theories also carry his utopian vision. His theory of "double consciousness" indicates Du Bois' belief in the human self is capable of being "cut" or split into two. His "talented tenth" — leadership of blacks in America by a trained few, also reflects his utopian vision. Du Bois first raised this theory of "talented tenth" in 1903, and later in his life he kept on expanding it. In his *Battle for Peace: The Story of My Eighty- Third Birthday*, he discarded the narrow definition he set earlier and expanded it to include those who work uplift the downtrodden world. As he said: "My Talented Tenth must be more than talented, and work not simply as individuals. Its passport to leadership was not alone learning but expert knowledge of modern economics as it affected American Negroes; and in addition to this and fundamental, would be its willingness to sacrifice and plan for such economic revolution in industry and just distribution of wealth as would make the rise of our group possible."⁵ His theory of the "talented tenth," like Plato's theory of the philosopher kings in the republic which is considered to be first utopian community, shows Du Bois' utopian vision of an ideal black nation led by black leaders.

Du Bois is influenced by Marx and Engels. He was more than simply a follower of the Marxism doctrines, he added keen insight into communism. During his stay in Berlin, he studied

⁵. Shaw, Stephanie J. 2013. *W.E.B. Du Bois and The Souls of Black Folk*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. p.68.

the ideology of socialism, and had read Marx thoroughly by the 1930s. During his teaching in Atlanta University in 1933, he taught a course on “Marxism and Negro.” In the following years of his life, his passion for Marxism and socialism didn’t wane. He eventually overcame legal and ideological barriers in 1961 and joined the communist party.⁶ It is generally accepted that Marx’s thought and his theories on communism contain a utopian vision of an ideal society. In Marx’s division of the five stages of human societies in history, both communism and socialism are considered as modes of society that contain utopian elements. Thus, it is no wonder that Du Bois’ lifelong passion for communism is an illustration of his utopian impulse.

Unlike most scholars, Du Bois led a double life: on the one hand, he was a careful scholar who received vigorous training in top institutions, pursuing truth; on the other hand, he promoted the ideology: “all art is propaganda.” He was realistic but at the same time romantic and the two seemingly conflicted strains go through and work perfectly in his life and his writings. His passionate, fiery language, his active social protest and fight for human rights and his mix of politics and fiction, all show his perfect combination of the two extremes, which is a result of his utopian side of his personality and vision. From his “talented tenth” to his joining the communist party, and later his self-chosen exile in Ghana, Du Bois was driven by his utopian belief in a better world; and thus, devoted all his life to making the world a better place for his people and people of color all over the world.

Du Bois was a student of William James who is the father of pragmatics theory when he studied at Harvard. William James was also an internationalist, and a strong opponent of imperialist expansion. He played an important role in helping Du Bois define the concept of

⁶. Frazier, Robeson Taj. 2014. *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p.289.

black cultural leadership, which later developed into the “talented tenth.” James’ pragmatism deeply influences Du Bois, which is not only demonstrated in Du Bois’ expression of utopian vision in his works, but also his practices of utopian vision in building a better world for people of color all over the world. From his Pan-Africanism movement, the building of his own organizations and institutions, and his later joining of the communist party in United States to his taking of the project of rewriting world history from African perspective in his *The World and Africa* to erase the lies and distortions about blacks, Du Bois never stops exerting his theory on racial uplift and making a better world for all people of color.

Asia plays an important role in Du Bois’ utopian vision. From the time he announced the “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” in 1903, to his death in 1963, Du Bois consistently wrote about Asia. He saw Asia and Africa as alliances as they struggled for political liberation and cultural preservation.⁷ Even though he is not the first African American scholar who promoted the breaking of the color-line and spoke about the Afro-Asian connection in African American history, Du Bois is the first to draw an extensive connection between African Americans in America and people of color all over the world.⁸ Long before scholars turned their attention to interdependence between Black and Asia, Du Bois had already prophesied the alliance and wrote broadly on Asian history, economy, culture, religion, art, and myth. He not only developed a lifelong interest in Asia, but also had the first-person experiences with Asia with his traveling and talking in various Asian countries.⁹ He wrote extensively on Indian nationalism, the war between China and Japan, the life of Mahatma Gandhi, colonialism in Malaysia and Burma, and the promise of China’s Communist Revolution. He took part in Afro-Asian Cultural Conference and played an important role in Afro-Asian

⁷. Mullen, Bill. 2004. *Afro-Orientalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Ibid.

literary alliance. In his lifelong decolonization career, he always put Africa and Asia together. As a matter of fact, Du Bois wrote more extensively on the topic of Asia than any African American intellectual before and after him.¹⁰ The number of articles, essays and columns on Japan, China and India in various periodicals, including the *Crisis*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Aryan Path*, etc, exceeds one hundred.¹¹

Du Bois' interest in Asia can be traced back to his participation in the Berlin Conference and the formation of the Indian National Congress which initiated stirrings of Pan-Asianism in 1885. Later, he attended the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900 as secretary and turned his attention to linkages between African and Asian liberation movements. However, it is generally held by critics that Du Bois' interest in Asia began in 1904 when Japan was victorious in the territorial war with Russia. He praised Japan on many occasions and expressed his admiration of Japan and its valiance in breaking white supremacy, as he declared: "The magic of the word 'white' is already broken, and the Color Line in civilization has been crossed in modern times as it was in the great past. The awakening of the yellow races is certain. That the awakening of the brown and black races will follow in time, no unprejudiced student of history can doubt."¹² Accordingly, he extended his color line from America based to "world color line" including Japan, China and India. Du Bois was the crucial figure in building up the Afro-Asian solidarity which became a central ideological tenet in post-revolutionary China.¹³

The era between 1906 and 1914 witnessed the simultaneous rise of Du Bois' Pan-Asia and Pan-Africa theory which formed the basis of his "world color line". In 1914, he wrote in "The

¹⁰. Ibid.

¹¹. Du Bois, W. E. B., Bill Mullen, and Cathryn Watson. 2005. *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia Crossing the World Color Line*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. p.122.

¹². Ibid. p.34.

¹³. Ibid.

World Problem of the Color Line.” “All over the world the diversified races of the world are coming into close and closer contact as never before. We are nearer China today than we were to San Francisco yesterday.” Later, Sun Yat-sen’s Pan-Asian Front in China after the First World War strengthened his belief in Asia. During the Harlem Renaissance, Du Bois wrote essays on India and China about topics that few writers/intellectuals had touched on. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, he emerged as the advanced proponent of African and Asian decolonization and gradually expanded his racial theory from Pan-African centered to mutual dynamic of Pan-Africanism and Pan-Asianism.

Even though Du Bois writes more on African American/African-Asian exchange than any other African American or American intellectual, he does not speak any Asian language, and his travel in Asia is limited to Japan, Russia and China. India occupies an important role in his Pan-Asianism, but he never stepped on the land of India. At the same time, his brief visits to China were not sufficient to give him a comprehensive understanding of the situation in China. So, a large part of his work on Asia heavily borrowed from “both established and marginalized scholars on African and Asian antiquity.”¹⁴ His writing and vision of Asia are “a combination of passionate intellectual desire to wed African American political interest and African American support to Asian destiny, and at times incomplete, romanticized, or willful analysis of events there.”¹⁵ Thus, Du Bois’ Asia is actually a romanticized Asia. To him, Asia is “an object of utopian political and cultural fantasies;” it serves as a utopian attraction to the problem of color-line and offers a way out of the binary white-black dialectic.¹⁶

In his Pan-Asianism, Du Bois puts China as the forerunner of African and African

¹⁴. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*, p. xiv.

¹⁵. *Ibid.* p.xiv.

¹⁶. *Ibid.* p.xvi.

American liberation and calls African Americans to learn from China. In fact, he has more personal experience with China than any other Asian country, and throughout his life, he visited China three times. He first visited China in 1937, at the height of its Civil War when China was occupied by foreign soldiers and native Chinese were treated as second citizens in their own country, facing both inner wars among landlords and foreign invasions of different imperial countries. Sun Yat-sen's ambition to build a country based on democracy failed, which led China back into political chaos. Du Bois captured this situation in his autobiography in his portrayal of Shanghai — “the greatest city of the most populous nation on earth, with the large part of it owned, governed and policed by foreign nations,” “an epitome of the racial strife, the economic struggle, the human paradox of modern life.”¹⁷ He also narrates in his autobiography that he “saw a little English boy of perhaps four years order three Chinese children out of his imperial way on the sidewalk of the Bund; and they meekly obeyed and walked in the gutter. It looked quite like Mississippi.”¹⁸ He witnessed the ravaging effects of both Japanese and Western intervention of China and the disempowerment of Chinese. He knew that China was in political turmoil, but this situation did not prevent him from presenting a utopian picture of China. He wrote:

China is inconceivable. I have been here four days, and I am already dazed. Never before has a land so affected me. For Africa, I had more emotion—a greater wave of understanding and recognition. But China is to the wayfarer of a little week, and I suspect of a little year, incomprehensible. I have of course a theory, an explanation which brings some vague meaning to the mass of things I have seen and heard. But I know, as I have never known before, that in the face of a people and a human history, I have missed the whole meaning; perhaps even I have missed any significant part. But this I know: any attempt to explain the world, is futile. Perhaps

¹⁷. Du Bois, *Autobiography*. p. 27.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*

the riddle of the universe will be settled in China; and if not, in no part of the world that ignores China.¹⁹

Du Bois' utopian perception of China is influenced by his admiration of Sun Yat-sen who was a politician and practitioner of a utopian vision of building a modern China based on democracy and freedom. Sun raised the "Three Principles of the People": principle of nationalism, principle of democracy and principle of people's livelihood, and used it as the guideline for his new China. A larger part of his notion of the new country is based on a utopian text written by Laozi, an extraordinary Daoism thinker who flourished during the sixth century B.C. In his *Tao-te ching*, commonly translated as the "Classic of the Way and Virtue," Laozi presents a utopian vision of an ideal world: a world of peace and harmony, where prosperity and joy prevail. He believes that when such a world becomes reality, all human beings will enjoy equality and freedom.

Du Bois re-visited China in 1959 and stayed eight weeks there. In his narration of this visit, he regards China "as the singular model for African nations seeking independence to follow"²⁰ and called it "the most fascinating eight weeks of travel and sight-seeing I have ever experienced" "never seen a nation so amazed and touched me as China in 1959."²¹ He considered his second visit as a reborn. He confessed in his autobiography: "Seldom can it be said that a man who has long since passed three score and ten years, is born again in spirit, in mind, in body. But, in that spring of 1959, I saw it happen."²² He further added that since his first trip to Europe 67 years ago, he had travelled almost all over the world save South America and

¹⁹. Ibid.

²⁰. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*. p. xiv.

²¹. Du Bois, *Autobiography*. p. 28.

²². Ibid.

India and seen “most of the civilized world and much of its backward regions,” but had “never seen a nation which so amazed and touched me as China in 1959.”²³ As he stated in his book:

we who all our lives have been liable to insult and discrimination on account of our race and color, in China have met universal goodwill and love, such as we never expected. As we leave may we thank them humbly for all they have done for us, and for teaching us what communism means. ... The people of the land I saw: the workers, the factory hands, the farmers and laborers, scrubwomen and servants. I went to parks and restaurants, sat in the homes of the high and the low; and always saw a happy people; people with faith that needs no church or priest, and who laugh gaily when the Monkey King overthrows the angels. In all my wandering, I never felt the touch or breath of insult even dislike- I who for 90 years in America scarcely ever saw a day without some expression of hate for “niggers”. ... *China has no rank nor classes; her universities grant no degrees; her government awards no medals. She has no blue book of “society”*. But she has leaders of learning and genius, scientists of renown, artisans of skill and millions who know and believe this and follow where these men lead. This is the joy of this nation, its high belief and its unfaltering hope.²⁴

Du Bois revisited China in Mao Zedong’s era, and was greatly inspired by Mao’s success in building a new China. He publicly expressed his admiration and support of communist China, placing it at the center of the black man’s revolutionary struggle. He viewed Chinese Marxist revolution as a counter power to Euro-American revolution, and believed that China offered the model and means for the merger of Pan-Asia and Pan-African. However, Du Bois’ perception of China was biased. During his visit, China was just out of foreign invasion and inner wars, still facing severe poverty and backwardness. In his book, Du Bois admits that “China is no utopia,” but still he turns a blind eye to the tragic and uncompleted revolution in the 1950s, and presents a

²³. Ibid.

²⁴ Du Bois, *Autobiography*. p. 29. Emphasis is my own.

utopian vision of China as “a single, unified and classless nation “free, well, and educated”²⁵ — “Envy and class hate is disappearing in China,” “I have seen the world. But never so vast and glorious a miracle as China,”²⁶ “all the Chinese sit high above these fears and laugh with joy,” and they “exorcised the Great Fear that haunts the West; the fear of losing his job; the fear of falling sick; the fear of accident; the fear of inability to educate his children; the fear of daring to take a vacation.”²⁷ He urges Africa to turn away from Western civilization and imitate the collectivist social model of China. Meanwhile, he asks China to “impart the truth to Africa.”²⁸

Du Bois’ presentation and interpretation of China are personal. His vision of China is more like Marco Polo’s personal travelogue than a historian/scholar’s objective report of China. From his first visit to his last, China was experiencing enormous social upheaval. Even though China did achieve unprecedented progress under the leadership of Mao, still upheaval was the dominating theme of reality: the Great Leap Forward, and international threats from foreign countries. China’s broke with Soviet Union which was the major support of the new born socialism power in the world made China on verge of breakdown. However, throughout his narration of his experiences in China, especially the last visit, Du Bois presents a vision of China as the most politically perfect and advanced society.

Du Bois’ misreading of China, on the one hand, is caused by his eagerness to build an alliance with China in his building of the international color-line. Thus, he was isolated and assailed by mainstream American intellectual and political society because of his view. Meanwhile, he was disappointed by black leaders’ gradual racial inclusion and educated blacks’ shrinkage from the tasks and responsibility of social leadership. In his writings, he expresses the

²⁵. Du Bois’ speech given at Beijing University, which was broadcast worldwide on radio.

²⁶. Du Bois, *Autobiography*. P. 53.

²⁷. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*. p.194.

²⁸. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*. p.199.

need to make “new friends and live in a wilder world than ever before — a world with no color line.”²⁹ Thus it is no wonder that Du Bois wrote in his autobiography that his 1959 journey to China was “the most fascinating eight weeks of travel and sight-seeing, he had ever experienced.” On the other hand, China was eager to reach African Americans in her resisting of American imperialism. The U.S. government adopted every possible means to curb the newly born communism power’s influence and its access to the international world. To align itself and its anti-imperialism rhetoric with the other non-white exploited nations, China needed to reach the outside world. African Americans were among the groups that China wanted to unite most due to its anti-imperialism policy against America. Mao desired to build up alliances with the emerging African nations. Du Bois, as the “the father of Africa,” his strong intellectual stature in Africa became a key to Mao’s politics to Africa. Thus, he was treated as a major world figure during his visits in China, which largely determined the social circle he knew. As an intellectual, he was mainly connected with the high society of China. His second trip to China was under the invitation of Guo Moruo, a statesman and prolific writer, and Madam Song Qingling who was then vice president of New China under the World Peace Council. During his two months’ stay, he was treated as an honorary guest. His trips in China were arranged and he was solely shown to the positive side of China.

Thus, it is no wonder that Du Bois’ presentation of China is “an odd manner of imperial eyeballing.”³⁰ He presented a utopianized China and used this exaggerated portrayal of China to achieve his political goals: to bring out the interdependent support of Chinese and African Americans. Besides the above mentioned, the most important but usually ignored reason for Du Bois’ misreading of China is his own romantic personality. Du Bois is a political leader, indeed a

²⁹. Du Bois, *Autobiography*. p. 393.

³⁰. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*. p. xx.

man of scientific reason, but at the same time, a man of romantic vision. As Claudia Tate notes, Du Bois is “for most of his life a romantic who linked his revolutionary doctrine to his belief in providential history and thereby transformed social data into eroticized cultural metaphors.”³¹ Edward Said in his most classical book on orientalism points out that orientalism is both an oppressive discursive trend and a specific embodiment of local subjectivities; it is a strategy of Western world domination. Du Bois as a leading scholar, aware that orientalism is a racist discourse directed against Asians, took the task of rectifying the misleading interpretation of Asia. However, his reading of Asia was deeply influenced by his desire to “correct” Western biased presentation of Asia and driven by his ambition of alliance with Asia, which resulted in his glorification of Asian culture and emphasis on the connection of the two cultures.

Dark Princess and Du Bois’ Internationalism

Dark Princess: A Romance is Du Bois’ second and self-claimed favorite novel. It is also his solely utopian novel claimed by critics.³² It was completed in 1927 and published in 1928. Since its publication, criticism of it has been polarized. Most scholars consider this book to be a failure, and some even go so far as to say that it is “a dirty old man’s fantasy that should have never been published.”³³ Despite the polarized comments of the book, it is a “visionary work” that allows us to “reconstruct many of Du Bois’ private feelings, beliefs, and longings.”³⁴ When this book was published, his political influence as a leader was declining. Thus, he uses the book as “an opportunity to fulfill in fiction if not in fact his greatest ambitions, dreams, and longings,”³⁵ through which he continues the Africa and America utopian strain Hopkins presents

³¹. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1974. *Dark Princess, a Romance*. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization. p. xxvi.

³². Most critics use the word “fantasy” instead of “utopia” in their depiction of this book.

³³. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1974. *Dark Princess, a Romance*. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization. p. xxiv.

³⁴. *Ibid.* p. ix.

³⁵. *Ibid.* p. x.

in her novel and expands her international black community in Africa to an international alliance including people of all colors. By this, he not only prophesies the end of Western imperialism through the emergence of “Messenger and Messiah to all the darker worlds,” but also fulfills his desire for the alliance of color-line on international stage.

As a utopian novel, it is a corroboration of Du Bois’ perception of art for propaganda. As a scholar trained in social science, Du Bois is mainly recognized in the areas of history, politics and sociology, which overshadows his achievements in novel writing. Thus, this novel offers a site that he can divert from his former writing to realize his daydreaming or wish fulfillment of his aesthetics of art as a combination of politics and romance. Through the romantic union of an Indian princess and African American from the South, Du Bois demonstrates his skillful mastery of politics and romance in novel writing and his utopian vision of Afro-Asian alliance.

The book evolves an African American Matthew Towns who works with Kautilya— the “dark princess of the Tibetan kingdom of Bwodpur” to combat international colonialism and aspire to build an international community to liberate people of color. Such a general summary is enough to demonstrate the utopian impulse Du Bois carries in this novel, and a synopsis of the novel can easily bring out the utopian vision Du Bois conveys in this novel. The book centers on twenty-five-year-old black American medical student, Matthew Towns. In 1923, after being excluded from a New York school because of his race, Matthew exiled himself and moved to Berlin where he met Kautilya, the beautiful Indian princess of Bwodpur —“the last of a line that had lived and ruled a thousand years.” The princess brought Matthew into the world of international alliance of colored people all over the world except African Americans, and from there they decided to work together to build an international alliance to overthrow the global white supremacy. The story ends with their marriage and the birth of their messiah son,

“Messenger and Messiah to all the Darker Races” who is seen as the solution to “the problem of the color-line.”

In this novel, Du Bois follows the classical paradigm of utopian text More set in his *Utopia* by presenting a solitary community composed of people of the darker world that exists as a parallel to the dominant white society. The community is led by an Indian princess and its members include people from Latin America, Black American South, Africa, Japan, China and India. Matthew Towns serves as the traveler. Different from More’s fictional world, Du Bois’ protagonist alternatively transfers between the literary realism world and a romantic millenarianism that promises a solid alliance of colored people worldwide. Similar to the critical utopia by Griggs, Du Bois through these frequent comparisons of the two worlds criticizes the social reality, and at the same time indicates the impossibility of imagining a perfect community in this time period.

In this novel, Du Bois “father of Pan-Africanism” who generally keeps Africa at the forefront of his thinking, chooses an Indian princess. However, his presentation of an Indian princess is not surprising. Indian aesthetics was always an important element in Du Bois’ thinking and literary work, which can be traced back to his studies at Harvard. As a matter of fact, Du Bois has a much deeper relationship with India than it appears. Du Bois had fought against American Jim Crow for a long time, and the failure of American socialism to repudiate racism did not give him much hope. The success of India’s collective colored struggle and the emergence of Indian socialism at the turn of the century greatly inspired him and drew him to see Marxism as a counterforce to Western imperialism. In 1907, he wrote in *The Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line* that India was “the land, perhaps, from whence our fore-fathers came, or

whither certainly in some prehistoric time they wandered.”³⁶ Later, Gandhi’s successful national struggle for independence against British imperial rule, especially his non-cooperation movement in early 1920s, made a profound impact on Du Bois and greatly inspired his dedication to anti-imperialism and his interest in India.

More than this, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Indian thinkers had a great influence on Du Bois. He developed a personal friendship with Lajpat Rai an Indian nationalist during his exile in America. In 1917, Rai helped found the Indian Home Rule League of the United States and formed the journal *Young India*. During his five-year exile in New York, Rai also paid special attention to American race relations. He paralleled British subjugation of Indian people with black people’s situation in America. Rai and Du Bois met from time to time, and his nationalism and determination to free India from colonial dominance greatly moved Du Bois. Additionally, Rai was a utopian writer, and Du Bois consulted with him while he was writing *Dark Princess*.

Rabindranath Tagore, India’s leading poet and thinker, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, also influenced Du Bois. There is no evidence telling that there was direct contact between the two, but the fact is that Du Bois read Tagore widely. In Du Bois’ time Tagore’s works attracted attention of both German-and English-speaking audience and translations of his works were circulated in Europe and America. Tagore lectured on nationalism throughout Asia, Europe and America from 1916 to 1932. As a leading intellectual of this time period, Du Bois of course was familiar with his views which can be tribute to the thematic similarities between Tagore’s novel *The Home and the World* published in the *Modern Review* in 1918-1919 and Du Bois’ *Dark Princess*. In these novels, both writers utilize the combination

³⁶. *The Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line*. 1907 b, p. 3.

of romantic and political elements and embed them in the historical context of a people's struggle for liberation.

These factors help to build the deep feelings Du Bois cultivated for India. Even though Du Bois had never visited India, he developed a tight relation with this country and put great emphasis on India in his international alliance. In his book *The World and Africa* (1947), Du Bois stated that India was central to Pan-African identity. In his tracing of African ancestry in Asia, he claimed that "Dravidian Negroes laid the bases of Indian culture thousands of years before the Christian era," "the culture of the black Dravidians underlies the whole culture of India," and the great Buddha "was imaged in the Negroid type."³⁷ Throughout 1920s, Du Bois wrote regularly on Indian nationalism. He admired Gandhi and wrote recurrently in *Crisis* in praise of Gandhi and called him "the greatest colored man in the world, and perhaps the greatest man in the world."³⁸

However, despite Du Bois' keen interest in India and his acknowledgment of necessity of the color line alliance between Indians and African Americans, Indian people ignored the situation of black people. India "had the temptation to stand apart from the darker peoples and seek her affinities among whites,"³⁹ as Du Bois lamented in his writing on India: "unless they are as wise and catholic as my friend... Lajpat Rai, they are apt to see little and know less of the 12 millions of Negroes in America." In his article "India", he pointed out that India' ignorance of the problem of American Negroes was wrong and her temptation to "stand apart from the darker peoples and seek her affinities among whites" and her regard of herself as "Aryan" rather than "colored," thinking herself as "much nearer physically and spiritually to Germany and England

³⁷. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 1947.

³⁸. *The Crisis*, New York, 1929.

³⁹. Mullen, *Du Bois on Asia*. p.7.

than to Africa, China or the South Seas” were wrong. Du Bois believed that Indians are black and should seek alliance with blacks instead of white. Thus, he intended to fulfill his wish of Black-Indian alliance and called for India’s standing for the colored races in this novel. Through the romance between Towns and the princess, Du Bois envisioned the alliance between Indians and African Americans, and aspires to convey a commonality between Indians and African Americans in their struggle for freedom and equality.

In *Dark Princess*, the utopian vision of international color-line demonstrated Du Bois’ shift from racial inclusion in the United States to the international stage. After decades of battling racism in America, Du Bois turned to Marxism and a broader internationalism, i.e. the connection of anti-racism in America and anti-imperialism somewhere else in the 1920s. *Dark Princess* culminates his internationalism vision, as he expresses through the messiah child “proletarian in content, international in form.” The international community of the darker peoples of the world creates a strong sense of hope in the dire dystopian world of colonialism and imperialism, through which Du Bois proposes his solution to the racial issue faced by blacks in America and his optimism of the liberation of all people of color.

Most scholars who focus on the utopian theme of this book refer to the international community led by the Indian princess for utopia. However, the book contains more utopian elements in both content and form. The book is made of four parts: “The Exile,” “The Pullman Porter,” “The Chicago Politician,” and “The Maharajah of Bwodpur.” The structure of the novel follows the archetype of heroic adventure in traditional romance: a hero is born in unusual circumstances, leaves the home for an adventure to find solution. After many experiences, the hero proves himself and comes home. In Frye’s theory of utopia, romance is considered as utopia. Matthew Towns’ exclusion from his own land of birth due to his color and his exile in

foreign land, and later his returning to his homeland for the liberation of his people, manifest Du Bois' utopian vision. The whole novel evolves a picaresque of Matthew's adventure and picaresque is often taken as an important element of utopia.

The birth of the child by Mathew and princess is the climax of the novel and is also interpreted as the utopian part of the novel. The birth of a male child as a future saver appears in quite a few of Du Bois' works: "Plot for a Story," "The Burden of Black Women," and others. In Du Bois' vision, the male child is meant to carry the legacy of his ancestors and perform salvation of the dark world. In the poem "The Burden of Black Women," Du Bois emphasizes the bearing of a new generation which is endowed with prophesy of leading the dark world. The repetition of the birth of male child in Du Bois' works shows his lamentation of the pass of his first born who is seen as "the Prophet that was to rise within the Veil."⁴⁰ It also shows his wish fulfillment of a future leader that leads the people of the dark world. He believes that even if the battle against racism cannot be won in his own generation, it will be won "in the day of our children's children. Ours is the blood and dust of battle; theirs is the rewards of victory."⁴¹ The birth of Matthew's son in a world that will be centered on him is also Du Bois' wish fulfillment of his own son who died as a result of the social reality that surrounded him.

In this novel, Du Bois envisions a world free of Western imperialism, racism and disenfranchisement, with a combined leadership by a group of international leaders of color. This international community is a concretization of Anderson's theory of nation as an imagined community. When Du Bois wrote his first book *Souls of Black Folks*, his vision was still limited to a racial nationalism. Later, his first novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece: A Novel*, he

⁴⁰. Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. In Writings. Repr., New York: The Library of America, 1986. p.508.

⁴¹. Du Bois, W.E.B. 1920. *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*. New York: harcourt Brace. p. 202-3.

continued this utopian vision of racial nationalism based on domestic soil. In *Dark Princess*, he deserted the national vision and secures an internationalist vision, through which he indicates that the future of the darker people relies on international alliance. The “golden child” itself is a symbol of interracial alliance, carrying Du Bois’ vision that the future of the darker world lies in internationalism.⁴²

Before this novel, Du Bois had fought against Jim Crow nationally for almost half a century. During this long period, he had tried to reach international alliance in fighting against colonialism and imperialism. He attended international conferences in 1919, and set up his own magazine *Crisis* in 1910 to publish articles to support international decolonization, but he still had not achieved his goal of an international color line before the publication of *Dark Princess*. Thus, through the comprehensive color-line made up of people of color from almost all major countries Du Bois expressed his utopian vision and ambition of an international color-line at the time that it was considered as impossibility. The alliance he presents in the novel is not only utopian, but also indicates Du Bois’ optimism that if he or his generation will not fulfill this wish, the later generation will.

Dark Princess is a novel largely based upon historical facts, as pointed out by Bill Mullin, this novel dramatizes the events that happened in Du Bois’ life between 1917 and 1928. It is a prophetic novel as well. A year after the book’s publication, the Association of Oppressed Peoples (AOP), an anti-imperialist league met in Brussels. There were 175 delegates from thirty-seven countries, including Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Madame Sun Yat-sen, and Muhammad Hatta, which resembles the international community Du Bois presents in the novel. The meeting was described by David Kumche as “the father of Afro-Asian solidarity, the forerunner of the

⁴². Alys Eve Weinbaum. “Reproducing Racial Globality: W.E.B Du Bois and the Sexual Politics of Black Internationalism.” *Social Text* 67 (Summer 2001): 15-41.

conference at Bandung.”⁴³ In 1928, the Sixth Congress that was held in Moscow formalized the Communist International’s “Black Belt” thesis, which had already been predicted through the statement of Kautilya: “Here in Virginia you are at the edge of a black world. The black belt of the Congo, the Nile, and the Ganges reaches up by way of Guiana, Haiti, and Jamaica, like a red arrow, up into the heart of white America. Thus, I see a mighty synthesis: you can work in Africa and Asia right here in America if you work in the Black Belt.”⁴⁴ The weaving of historical fact into his novel reflects Du Bois’ belief in art as propaganda, and the prediction of the forthcoming historical events in this novel can be seen as a reflection of the prophesy function of utopia.

In classical utopian texts, the utopia usually co-exists with the dystopian reality. In this novel, Du Bois also uses sufficient space to describe the undesirable social reality that poses as contrast to the utopia in his imagination. To achieve social realism, Du Bois conducted extensive research on Chicago politics and geography. Before he composed the Chicago part, he wrote constantly to his Chicago contacts concerning local politics, and sent at least eleven letters to experts in various matters that related to Chicago. He wrote two letters to his Chicagoan acquaintances asking information on the election and performance of Edward H. Wright, the “leading colored politician of Chicago” who appears in *Dark Princess* as Sammy Scott.⁴⁵ He believes that “Chicago is the epitome of America . . . Chicago is the American world and the modern world, and the worst of it,”⁴⁶ and to best represent the reality, he even uses naturalistic mode in his portrayal of Chicago. His realistic portrayal of Chicago even makes scholar Amarit Singh comment *Dark Princess* as “undoubtedly more important as a social or political document than as literature.”

⁴³. Ibid.

⁴⁴. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p. 286.

⁴⁵. Aptheker, 1974, introduction to *Dark Princess*.

⁴⁶. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*. p. 284.

On the contrary, the utopian South where Mathew was from is always presented with hope and life, symbolized in the image of his mother who is being called “Kali,” meaning the original source of life. The mother, unnamed and often voiceless, comes into existence through Kautilya who presents her as “a guru of vernacular wisdom.”⁴⁷ Through this “Black-All- Mother” Du Bois expresses his keeping of the black bloodline in his “nation” building and his emphasis on the motherhood of black women. Matthew’s mother is like the “The Sorrow Songs,” “the rhythmic cry of the slave — stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is half despised ...but notwithstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.”⁴⁸ In Indian mythology, “Kali is described as dark-complexioned, being Infinite like the vast space, which appears black, and representing the original state before creation.”⁴⁹ She absorbs all the darkness of the mind and leaves nothing behind; she is taken as “the embodiment of Time and Nature” and an “ancient prophet.” By giving birth to Matthew, the black mother indirectly gives birth to the darker races of the world as a transnational family. Through the presentation of such a black mother image, Du Bois shows his protest of the “one drop” policy, the deprivation of black identity and the exclusion of blacks in the land of their birth.

When Matthew was taken to an international meeting in Berlin, he made acknowledged his people by singing “Go Down Mosses” to “the Council of the Darker Peoples of the World.” In his autobiography *Darkwater*, Du Bois asks the readers, “Are we not coming more and more, day by day, to making the statement ‘I am white’ the one fundamental tenet of our morality?”

⁴⁷. Ahmad, Dohra. 2009. *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-colonial Utopianism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.162.

⁴⁸. Du Bois, W. E. B. 1996. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Library. pp. 536-37.

⁴⁹. Bandyopadhyay, Pranab. 1993. *Mother Goddess Kali*. Calcutta: United Writer p.86.

Through this, he points out that America produces itself as a white nation. Matthew is discharged from medical school not because he is not able to make it, simply because he is a black man in obstetrics, a course that places him in contact with bodies of white women. As the dean of the medical school told him, “What did you expect? Juniors must have obstetrical work. Do you think white women patients are going to have a Nigger doctor delivering their babies?”⁵⁰ White female body is a taboo to a black man, but black female body is an easy access to whites. The white female bodies are strictly protected from the contaminating black hands, while the black female body is the site of white men’s fantasy of black body. A white man could defile the body of a woman of color even she is a princess. In the novel, Du Bois presents several scenes princess Kautilya is subjected to attempted rape by white men. Through such scenes, he indicates the violation of black female body in reality, which poses as contrast to the respect of black womanhood in the utopian community.

Du Bois, throughout his life, devoted sedulous effort on black women’s liberation and is one of the earliest feminist issues supporters. He believes that “The uplift of women is next to the problem of the color line and the peace movement, our greatest modern cause.”⁵¹ In *Crisis*, he regularly articulated black women’s achievements in suffrage and he recognized their achievements. In various works, he discussed the women in his life, from his grandfather’s grandmother to his own mother, and the vital role they played in his life. In his autobiography, he narrates that he and his mother lived a simple life, suffering from economic strains. Later, his mother suffered from a paralytic stroke and became lamb. Even though she suffered from pressures and anxieties, she never burdened him with her suffering. When she died, Du Bois wrote: “at peace at last, for she worried all her life.” In Du Bois’ family, women rather men have

⁵⁰. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p. 4.

⁵¹. Du Bois. (1969a). *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. New York: Schocken. p.181.

direct and indirect influence on his thinking, as he states: “All the way back in these dim distances it is the mothers and mother of mothers who seem to count, while fathers are shadowy memories.”⁵² All the women in Du Bois’ life are presented as powerful and tough, but they were submerged in mainstream history and were never able to transcend the race and class barriers imposed on them in reality.

In *Dark Princess*, women are not only presented as independent, but also at the center of the action. They are the leader of the future world, equal to man in both politics and economics. This novel seemingly focuses on Matthew and his pursuing for liberation for people of color, but it is actually a novel that centers on three women: his mother, Kautilya and Sara. Through these women, Du Bois shows his battling against mainstream society’s downtrodden of black female body. He uses the figure of black mother to contest the logic of nationalism built upon white supremacy. The messiah child’s inherence of the royalty from his mother’s bloodline shows Du Bois’ protest of the tradition of slavery which believes a child’s social status follows the mother’s. Through the extolling of the black female motherhood in utopia, he contests the degradation of black women and black female body in reality. Through the presentation of a group of black women, he fulfills his vision of the empowerment of black women and his reevaluation of black womanhood.

Of all the black women Du Bois presents in this novel: Matthew’s mother is symbol of Africa and the past, Sara is a representative of America and the present, and the princess is emblematic of Asia and the future. All three women play important roles in Matthew’s life. Du Bois in his “The Damnation of Women” argues that the black “All-Mother” must play a pivotal role in the project of social uplift, as he writes, “The primal black All-Mother of men down

⁵². Ibid. p.168.

through the ghostly throng of mighty womanhood, who walked in the mysterious dawn of Asia and Africa.”⁵³ He further points out that she is not only responsible for presenting the children with fundamental tools like fire and iron, but also with knowledge. In this novel, even though Matthew’s mother, as a woman from slavery, fails to equip him with knowledge, she sold her 40 acres to support his school. She performs as a link of the past history of slavery and the future rises from here. As claimed by Kautilya: “Your mother prophesies. We sense a new age.”⁵⁴ She is also the link of the American South to the dark world. As Du Bois says through Kautilya:

I saw that old mother of yours standing in the blue shadow of twilight with flowers, cotton, and corn about her, I knew I was looking upon one of the ancient prophets of India and that she was to lead me out of the depths in which I found myself and up to the atonement for which I yearned. ... out of her ancient lore she did the sacrifice of flame and blood which was the ceremony of my own great fathers and which came down to her from Shango of Western Africa.⁵⁵

Kautilya, as the other important woman in Matthew’s life, is not only Matthew’s equal but in many aspects his superior. She is not only a new woman — a symbol of beauty, virtue and intelligence, but also a “true woman” in the traditional sense of the term. She gives birth to a child who carries the future of the black nation. Through the images of these mothers, Du Bois on the one hand criticizes the denigration and exclusion of black women by mainstream society and its deprivation of black motherhood, and on the one hand, shows the central position of black women in the utopian nation.

In fact, Kautilya is a real existence in Indian history. He is a male political philosopher and serves as a foreign policy advisor to King Chandragupta (ca. 317–293 BCE). He played a crucial

⁵³. Du Bois. *Darkwater*. p.165.

⁵⁴. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p.278.

⁵⁵. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p.221.

role in the unification of India as an empire. It is said that Chandragupta united the Indian nation through warfare under Kautilya's guidance. Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* was widely read from its initial publication through the twelfth century and was translated into English and German in 1915. Both versions were available when Du Bois composed *Dark Princess* in 1927. Max Weber, whom Du Bois had contact with when he was in Germany, was an admirer of Kautilya's science of politics, and compared him favorably to Machiavelli: "Truly radical 'Macchiavellianism' [sic], in the popular sense of that word, is classically expressed in Indian literature in the *Arthashâstra* of Kautilya (written long before the birth of Christ, ostensibly in the time of Chandragupta): compared to it, Macchiavelli's [sic] 'Prince' is harmless." The messianic ending of *Dark Princess* echoes Kautilya's belief in acquiring and maintaining monarchical power for the benefit of the just and orderly society.⁵⁶

In the novel, Du Bois feminizes the historical figure and transforms him into a female character. He not only simply names the princess a male name, but also makes her the leader of the international community of the colored group, a role that connotes masculinity. Such arrangement shows Du Bois' wish fulfillment for an ideal partner who can be an equal to him on intellectual level. In his depiction of the relationship between Mathew and princess, Du Bois always presents them as intellectual equals. More than this, Du Bois presents many sexual scenes which are quite dramatic and widely criticized. "I suppose that all this feeling is based on the physical urge of sex between us," Matthew confesses to Kautilya, "I suppose that other contacts, other experiences, and might have altered the world for us two. But the magnificent fact of our love remains, whatever its basis or accident. It rises from the ecstasy of our bodies to the

⁵⁶. Alston, Vermonja R, "Cosmopolitan Fantasies, Aesthetics, and Bodily Value : W. E.B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* and the Trans/Gendering of Kautilya," *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 3(1), 2011.

communion of the saints, the resurrection of the spirit, and the exquisite crucifixion of God.”⁵⁷

Such bold statement conveys Du Bois’ wish fulfillment of an ideal relationship that based on both spiritual and physical attraction which he was not able to achieve in reality. Du Bois married Nina early in his life, but the marriage was not successful, as he wrote in his autobiography:

I married at 29 and we lived together for 53 years. It was not an absolutely ideal union, but it was happier than most, so far as I could perceive. It suffered from the fundamental drawback of modern American marriage: a difference in aim and function between its partners; my wife and children were incidents of my main life work. I was not neglectful of my family; I furnished a good home. I educated the child and planned vacations and recreation. But my main work was out in the world and not at home. That work out there my wife appreciated but was too busy to share because of cooking, marketing, sweeping and cleaning and endless demand of children. This she did naturally without complaint until our firstborn died—died not out of neglect but because of a city’s careless sewage. His death tore our lives in two. I threw myself more completely into my work, while most reason for living left the soul of my wife. Another child, a girl, came later, but my wife never forgave God for the unhealable wound.⁵⁸

Du Bois enjoyed a long marriage with Nina, but from the above passage, it is not difficult to discern that he did not have the ideal marriage he expected, as he admitted that he “was literally frightened into marriage.” He further confessed, “My wife’s life-long training as a virgin, made it almost impossible for her ever to regard sexual intercourse as not fundamentally indecent. It took careful restraint on my part not to make her unhappy at this most beautiful of human

⁵⁷. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p. 260.

⁵⁸. Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p.178.

experiences. This was no easy task for a normal and lusty young man.”⁵⁹ However, he “was a lusty man with all normal appetites. I loved ‘Wine, Woman and Song.’”⁶⁰

From his autobiography, it is easy to withdraw that Nina does not meet Du Bois’ expectation of an ideal woman. Du Bois narrated that before he went to Fisk for college, he was ignorant of sex due to “the inexcusable ignorance of sex” of the New England education: “In my hometown sex was deliberately excluded from talk and if possible from thought.” As a result, he “turn[s] one of the most beautiful of earth’s experiences into a thing of temptation and horror.” When he was a teacher in the rural district of East Tennessee, he “was literally raped by the unhappy wife who was my landlady.”⁶¹ This experience traumatized him with sex, as he explained, “From that time through my college course at Harvard and my study in Europe, I went through a desperately recurring fight to keep the sex instinct in control.” Later, he had a brief trial with prostitution in Paris, but it affronted his sense of decency. When he was Germany, he lived “more or less regularly with a shop girl in Berlin, but was ashamed.”⁶² Perhaps it is such sense of shame and indecency that drove Du Bois to portray Matthew in a heroic tone when he chivalrously defended Kautilya and rescued her from the sexual advances of a white American man in their first meeting.

The book is full of passages that describing the exotic physical beauty of Kautilya and the romantic love making scenes between Matthew and Kautilya. Kautilya not only meets Du Bois’ expectation of a female intellectual equal, but also satisfies his expectation of female physical beauty. As Du Bois wrote:

Many, many times in after years he tried to catch and rebuild that first widely beautiful phantasy which the girl’s face stirred in him. ... Never after that first glance was he or

⁵⁹. Ibid, p.179.

⁶⁰. Ibid, p.180.

⁶¹. Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p.178.

⁶². Ibid, p. 280.

the world quite the same. First and above all came that sense of color: into this world of pale yellowish and pinkish parchment, that absence or negation of color, came, suddenly, a glow of golden brown skin. It was darker than sunlight and gold; it was lighter and livelier than brown. It was a living, glowing crimson, veiled beneath brown flesh. It called for no light and suffered no shadow, but glowed softly of its own inner radiance.⁶³

Kautilya is visionized as Du Bois' alter ego; through her, he fulfills his wish of ideal female beauty and an ideal marriage that he aspired. The romantic fulfillment between Matthew and Kautilya not only achieves Du Bois' yearning for ideal love, but also a symbolic combination of his utopian vision of the Pan-Africanism and Pan-Asianism. It also carries Du Bois' utopia impulse as his ideal self without concerning his status as a national political and intellectual leader, a relief from the tackles imposed on him by society.

In fact, *Dark Princess* is not only a dream fulfilling site for Du Bois' desire for ideal relationship and female beauty, but a site for his dreaming of his lost child. In his narration of Matthew's son, he parallels the child with his own son. Similar to Kautilya's traveling to Matthew's hometown Virginia to give birth to their child, Nina Gomer also travelled to Du Bois' hometown Great Barrington to give birth to their first child while Du Bois worked as a professor in Atlanta. In his "Passing of the First Born," he wrote that the birth of the son best reflected his sense of romance, and he was destined to lead the world of darker peoples to liberation and democracy. Du Bois looked upon the child as an extension of his own patrilineage: "[I] saw the strength of my own arm stretched onward through the ages through the newer strength of his, saw the dream of my black father stagger a step onward in the wild phantasm of the world."⁶⁴

⁶³. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p. 8.

⁶⁴. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folks*, p. 508.

However, the early death of his first child took away his dream for future. In *Dark Princess*, the child not only saves Kautilya, as she states: “I must have gone to prostitute my body to a stranger or lose Bwodpur and Sindrabad; India; and all the Darker World,”⁶⁵ but also carries Du Bois’ hope for the darker world. The birth of the child promising a forth coming ideal community Du Bois aspires for and fulfills the dream he has of his own son.

⁶⁵. Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, p. 308.

EPILOGUE

The turn of the century was a time of great turbulence; it also witnessed the golden age of Black Nationalism. Although the end of slavery and Reconstruction opened the possibility of inclusion and equal opportunity, African American writers did not fail to detect the new racists' issues with the emergence of Jim Crow law, the Ku Klux Klan and disenfranchisement. Thus, they use their utopian novels as an outlet to voice their inner dissatisfaction with reality, but more important as means of searching for alternatives to the status quo. In their utopian texts, they defy the dominant society's exclusion and devaluation the blackness with aims of bringing out social changes.

Rather than accept the assimilation, all the three writers — Griggs, Hopkins and Du Bois proposed that African American could form their own nation within or without the United States. Three writers express their utopian visions from three perspectives. The utopian communities presented by Griggs and Hopkins are direct answers to the assimilation policy based on the belief that the African American ancestral heritage makes them suitable for American citizenship, whereas Du Bois' international community is a direct response to Harlem Renaissance's promotion of assimilation and racial uplift. Griggs' utopian community exists within the territory of America, as a direct resistance to the dominance American government on blacks, while Hopkins and Du Bois show their doubt of transforming the United States to a livable place for blacks, and veer away from this direct challenge and turn to international alliance for utopia. Hopkins imagines a utopian city in Africa, through which she conveys her black nationalism that based on her international vision. Du Bois carries on the theme of international black nation promoted by Hopkins, but differs that his international community is more spiritual than

physical. He extends the all-black international community Hopkins shows in her novel to an alliance of all colored people.

From Griggs all black nation within the United States to Hopkins' African community to Du Bois' Afro-Asian community, they keep on broadening the color line, and in this process their focus is turning from racial protest to international community. They not only bring the topic of race into utopia genre, overthrowing the myth that America is a paradise or homogeneous nation, but also contribute to the diversity of utopian vision by challenging the one-dimensional utopian presence in America.

None of the three writers discusses in this dissertation present utopia with perfect social arrangements which are often dismissed as typical features of one-dimensional utopia. Marin in his reading of More's *Utopia* withdraws that it is not a blueprint provides answers to the social problems, nor an exercise of pure wit; it has its efficacy in arousing the reader's consciousness in the discrepancy between social fact and the utopian vision, which enables the reader to be aware of the social problems, thus stimulate their desire for changes. In fact, the utopian city More presents is oftentimes considered as "coercive, dogmatic, male-dominated, puritanical, primed for war, and imperialistic."¹ However, no critic fails to admire the effect his *Utopia* caused. All the utopias presented by the three writers cannot be taken as ideal alternatives to social reality, but these texts arouse people's consciousness of the existing historical situation. The blur/ambiguous endings of their novels show their challenge of the possibility of imagining a perfect world in dystopian America, but more importantly they create further dialogue among the readers, which cultivates space for change.

¹. Ruppert, Peter. 1986. *Reader in a Strange Land: The Activity of Reading Literary Utopias*. Athens: University of Georgia Press. p. 90.

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