Pauline Hopkins' Utopias: Fostering African American Futures through Third Space Ecologies

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Abstract:

What is important to consider when defining and creating a utopic vision? Pauline Hopkins' characters and worldbuilding in her 1902-1903 serial novel *Of One Blood, or the Hidden Self* reflects the dynamic negotiations that happen in third space ecologies while also challenging traditional notions of utopia. The third space is a location of identity formation, meaning-making, and differing power dynamics that are inherent in hierarchical spaces and lived theory of experience. Therefore, third spaces are revolutionary spaces where negotiations are made. Her final novel challenges the popular expectations of African American people in the early 20th century. Hopkins' utopian worldbuilding and activist endeavors lead readers to a clearer vision of how to move forward in a world that is dealing with racial tensions and environmental degradation. Her rejection of the cult of true womanhood and tropes like the tragic mulatta, as well as her interest in the sciences aid in her construction of bodily third space ecologies which are used to disrupt white Western ideology. By looking at literary depictions of third spaces, we can better understand how relationships with the land and the "other" are constructed and how fixed identities can hinder the human development of utopian futures.

Keywords: third-space, Hopkins, ecology, utopia, 20th century, proto-science fiction, bodies, African American, Africa

Ecology is a term that has many layers and can be used to codify different systems under one set of rules or mechanisms. Ecology alludes to the land around us, the biota that inhabits those spaces, and the intricacies that make up the human and non-humans that inhabit certain spaces. Looking at places and bodies as spaces is an important way of examining how complex assemblages are made and how movement is or is not enacted in meaningful ways. Some places and bodies lie outside the usual as they challenge or isolate the ecologies accepted under certain social norms. In that vein, we have spaces that are either fostered or pushed to the margins, existing in liminalities either with success or with a different set of obstacles to overcome to exist in the usual social order. As such, the theoretical and disciplinary uses of the term "third space" can be useful in defining and explicating places and

bodies that live in this liminality. The third space is a location of identity formation, meaning-making, and differing power dynamics that are inherent in hierarchical spaces and lived theory of experience. The term comes from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* where he used the term to discuss the creation of meaning when two other elements of meaning-making clash and come into conversation. Additionally, Sherita Roundtree and Michael Shirzadian define third space as a specific cultural and material position of the individual subject or place which is a collection of complex social assemblages that are informed by and informing each other by intra-acting with human and non-human agents and the dominant discourse. Therefore, third spaces are revolutionary spaces where negotiations are made. Pauline Hopkins' characters and worldbuilding in *Of One Blood, or the Hidden Self,* and her work as an activist reflect the dynamic negotiations that happen in third space ecologies while also challenging traditional notions of utopia. Third spaces can be places where inhabitants choose to live in a third space away from mainstream society like that of the isolationist Telassar in Hopkins' final story, published as a serial while working at the *Colored American Magazine* in 1902-1903, or they can be the situations or identities that are forced upon the human and non-human. Hopkins' utopian worldbuilding and activist endeavors lead readers to a clearer vision of how to move forward in a world that is still dealing with racial tensions and environmental degradation. By looking at literary depictions of third spaces, we can better understand how relationships with the land and the "other" are constructed and how fixed identities can hinder the human development of utopian futures.

Defining Utopia

Hopkins' story *Of One Blood; or, the Hidden Self* follows Dr. Reul Briggs, a white-passing African American man who can restore the life, or consciousness of people who are seemingly dead. He performs this life-saving procedure on a beautiful singer Dianthe Lusk, who he proceeds to fall in love with and marry. He is a rising star in medicine, so he hides his African American identity to continue his rise in society and the medical field. Dianthe does not remember anything of her past life, including the fact that she is also a white-passing African American. After Reul is sent to Africa on an expedition, she dies at the hands of their mutual friend Aubrey Livingstone who invited Reul on the expedition in order to take Dianthe away from Reul. Meanwhile, Reul is recognized as an Ethiopian king and long-awaited savior of Telassar, the hidden utopia at the center of the tale. In Telassar, he learns of the advancements in science that the people have been able to achieve despite their policy of isolationism. Reul using his scientific background as well as the knowledge of the people of Telassar learns about Aubrey's betrayal, Dianthe's death, and to return home. Upon his return, he finds Dianthe barely clinging to life but with enough energy to tell Reul the dark truth she learned from her grandmother Aunt Hannah that connects these main characters and to Telassar: she, Reul, and Aubrey are all siblings with Aubrey being their half-brother, a product of the rape that Aubrey's father enacted on their mother who was his slave and descendant of Telassar royalty. Upon learning the truth of his race, Aubrey kills himself and after Dianthe's death, Reul returns to

Telassar with Aunt Hannah. They live out their days in peace but with dread regarding the potential arrival of the white invaders now that Telassar isn't completely unknown to the outside world.

Hopkins uses specific 19th-century genre conventions to create her utopia vision of Telassar, so we must understand those conventions to discuss how utopia functions as a third space ecology. Utopia needs to be seen as first and foremost an interdisciplinary genre that takes from other genre conventions to create a new vision of the future. As a popular genre within 19th-century authors, popular utopian narratives were penned by white men who thought of futures beyond race distinctions and inherently white. The homogeneous population was then also instilled with the same values and cultural backgrounds. Courtney L. Novosat, in her article "'Gazing Hopelessly into the Future' utopia and the racial politics of genre in *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self*" goes into how race was treated in 19th century utopian narratives. Utopia became a popular genre because it allowed some relief from the racial tensions that overtook American discourse. Novosat asserts that "Given the racialized political tumult of fin de siècle America, it is unsurprising that a literary form offering a means to rewrite our national narrative would gain popularity among white writers and readers. Many white Americans likely found solace in utopian messages of future (racial) stability. Concerned by the growing din of nativist rhetoric, many perceived the nation's present as 'plagued' by the so-called Negro problem and immigrant problem" (2022, 176). As such, utopia was not a genre of equality due to the acceptance of difference, but rather because of the lack of differences in society. However, the ability to imagine a future where human and non-human differences take a different turn is malleable and a creative process not limited to the needs of white patriarchal belief systems. Therefore, we can see Hopkins' take on the genre of utopia and all its possibilities to subvert the white Western narratives that it usually espoused during her time. Because it was "Distinct from other genres, utopia's intertextual, hybrid, and multidisciplinary conventions allowed Hopkins an inroad for disrupting the mechanisms supporting race and gender prejudice, particularly the racialized discourses of science and history, which, like utopia, were dominated by white male voices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Novosat 2022, 174). Utopia's intertextuality allowed Hopkins to create her version through Telassar where she could draw from science and histories of Africa and Haiti to disrupt the previous beliefs that African people and those decedent from them could not create an advanced nation that could become a peaceful power in the world.

One of the popular texts of the 19th century that Hopkins seemed to have taken and subverted while writing *Of One Blood* was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward.* The narrative which is set in Boston, "tells the story of protagonist Julian West's century-long mesmeric sleep and awakening in a seemingly egalitarian society in the year 2000. In this idyllic new world, West finds that men and women both labor in the 'Industrial Army,' pay is equal across professions, and housing and goods are managed by the state" (Novosat 2022, 179). However, much about this future was less than idyllic as the social order of this future mirrored the white middle-class patriarchy of the 19th century. Novosat confirms that "In its private homes, utopia's gender hierarchy ensured that women also retained domestic duties and worked shorter hours to compensate for their fragility. Further, the

utopia's conspicuous consumption, caste-based segregation, and Aryan-featured populace assured its white nineteenth-century readers that the creature comforts of middle-class capitalism, social mores, and expected racial segregation remained in the future" (2022, 179). Evidently, Bellamy's future utopia retained the racialized systems that Hopkins herself worked to fight as a writer and activist. As someone who would be aware of this text, she may have felt the urge to take on the genre of utopia in her final novel to fight a future where African Americans and women were still relegated to the same positions of disenfranchisement and invisibility as in her present. Certainly, "As a participatory and interventionist form, utopia not only traditionally borrows from other works but also enables Hopkins to disrupt the genre's own mechanisms for supporting race prejudice" (Novosat 2022, 182). Telassar becomes the utopia that Bellamy and other white-male authors of the time could not imagine with their limited and racist understandings of race and culture. When used in an American context, utopia was destined to become more than just a white vision of a white future. Hopkins practices literary extraction in her creation of utopia, "Yet the practice of literary extraction—as in quotations, epigraphs, and the widespread practice of commonplacing—occupied a critical position in the print culture of Walker's nineteenth century" (Insko 2020, 176). The history of the United States cannot withhold the narratives and the futures of African Americans, especially during Reconstruction when abolitionists were fighting for equal representation within the nation. It was essential for Hopkins to create a vision of Africa that could not only compete with the Western ideals of civilization but take it one step further and be the birthplace of civilization.

Telassar as Land and Home

Hopkins, utilizing the genre conventions of utopia, provides intricate and vivid descriptions of the fictional Telassar, making it imperative to look closer as to what kinds of people or bodies fit into this space. As a third space ecology created under a utopic vision, Telassar was meant to represent both the past and future of African society. Hopkins uses this common science fiction and utopia technique to pull from the histories of enslavement and displacement that she was well aware of to present an alternative to the present state of anti-Black and racist sentiments that were prevalent and growing during Reconstruction. Amber Foster, in her article "The Serial Novel, Nation, and Utopia: An Intratextual Re-Reading of Pauline Hopkins' *Of One Blood; Or, the Hidden Self*" determines that "Telassar becomes the fictional embodiment of what this black nation—modeled on ancient African societies—might one day become...Hopkins situates Africa as a nascent utopia, a prospective site of pan-African racial pride" (Foster 2019, 49). By doing so, she creates a space that allows for the negotiations of race, identity, and religion to occur. She also creates a future where Africans have agency over their society and land, juxtaposing this vision with the ongoing fight for agency in the United States. This space not only presented possibilities, but it also allowed readers to have something to fight for as the utopic possibilities were now presented to her vast readership through her serialized publication in the *Colored American Magazine.* The fictional Telassar then can be considered a third space ecology created by Hopkins to allow for a space where a new area of

negotiation of meaning and representation can exist and develop. This fictional space was not meant to stay fictional or out of the reach of African Americans. Hopkins wanted Telassar to challenge people's views of Africans and descendants from African nations. She does this when Reuel discusses the Ethiopian capital Meroe which was their original destination. He states, "'Your theories may be true, Professor, but if so, your discoveries will establish the primal existence of the Negro as the most ancient source of all that you value in modern life, even antedating Egypt. How can the Anglo-Saxon world bear the establishment of such a theory?' There was a hidden note of sarcasm in his voice which the others did not notice" (Hopkins 2022, 270). The Anglo-Saxons, as Hopkins calls them, would have to come to some sort of realization of the atrocities that they had imposed upon African peoples if they were to recognize the ancient knowledges of Africa. The sarcasm in Reuel's voice is present since he knows he is not fully a white man and already seems to understand the foolishness of this idea of inferiority that many around him share. Through her narrative construction, readers would be able to see her underlying goals of not only making this a dream of Africa but a global Pan-African reality. Telassar could become the home for any who believed in the ideals of social equality espoused by Hopkins and other abolitionist writers who aligned with her beliefs.

A Black utopia is not as far-fetched as some may have thought in the 19th century as the framework for utopian thinking and Black nation-building was already set up through the common use of utopia as a literary genre and the example of Haiti as a nation which was able to not only gain freedom by successfully holding the first enslaved revolution in the colonized world. Hopkins did revolutionary work herself through her storytelling as her narratives gave people the hope and pride they needed to imagine a better future. Serpil Opperman, in her materialist ecocritical analysis of stories in her book *Ecologies of a Storied Planet in the Anthropocene*, maintains, "the Earth is a living planet where everything that is *is* a storied subject of an ever-enfolding planetary tale shaping the world while being shaped by that very world. Stories, in other words, create the world by which they are created and configure the very reality by which they are engendered" (Oppermann 2023, 1). Stories were not mere imagination, even when being presented through the speculative genres of proto-science fiction and utopia as Hopkins does. Narratives can create change as they are representative of the environment around us and everything and everyone has the agency to create stories and as such reality. Readers see these negotiations happen in the text as the expedition in Africa moves forward. As the band with which Reuel travels begins to slowly see some of the great ruins of Ethiopia, but before Telassar is revealed to Reuel and the readers, there is speculation and disbelief by Charlie Vance regarding the African's ability to create such advanced structures. He exclaims, "'Great Scott!' cried Charlie, 'you don't mean to tell me that all this was done by niggers?' The Professor smiled. Being English, he could not appreciate Charlie's horror at its full value. 'Undoubtedly your Afro-Americans are a branch of the wonderful and mysterious Ethiopians who had a prehistoric existence of magnificence, the full record of which is lost in obscurity'" (Hopkins 2022, 342). Here, Hopkins creates this conversation between Charlie and the English Professor to present a great African past. This begins to dismantle the conceptions about African inferiority that

were rampant pre- and post-Civil War. Charlie is horrified by this knowledge because he comes from a long line of prejudice and racism. We know that he is Molly Vance's brother and comes from a wealthy white family, which leads readers to question where his family's money has come from since we know that Livingston's money most likely came from slavery since the family was known to own enslaved people. Hopkins also takes this moment to comment on the difference between the British and American views of Black people seemingly painting the Americans as more ignorant and perhaps more violent concerning their treatment of African Americans. In these lines, she is able to start setting the stage for the dismantling of the ideas that Black people are backward or unable to create a highly advanced society while showing that perhaps white Americans are the ones who are uneducated in the true history of humanity because of their part in colonialism and the enslavement of African peoples.

As mentioned earlier, Hopkins also uses her knowledge of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution to begin breaking down these racist ideals. She doesn't only look to Africa as a space of resistance or reimaging. As Mary Grace Albanese asserts in her article "Unraveling the Blood Line: Pauline Hopkins's Haitian Genealogies," "We might therefore consider the first Black republic as a potent 'black shadow' to *Of One Blood's* uncolonized kingdom Telassar, which like Haiti is threatened by the imperialist 'advance of mighty nations'" (2019, 229). This may be one of the reasons that Hopkins may have has for making Telassar a hidden kingdom as Hopkins through her work at the *Colored American Magazine* was very aware of how Haiti was doing economically and politically in the decades leading up to US occupation. Hopkins was "ever attuned to the nation's fragile sovereignty" (Albanese 2019, 229) as a young Black republic that still had to exist within the larger capitalist and racist global ecology. Because of this sociopolitical knowledge, Hopkins may have decided to make Telassar an isolationist and hidden kingdom to comment on the issues of interference that colonizing nations seemingly could not escape because of their greed and superiority complex. During the expedition to Ethiopia that Reuel takes we can see how these men viewed the land around them, looking for something of value to take but not respecting their surroundings or the history of the place. Hopkins writes:

> It was not a simple thing to come all these thousands of miles to look at a pile of old ruins that promised nothing of interest to him after all. This was what he had come for—the desolation of an African desert, and the companionship of human fossils and savage beasts of prey. The loneliness made him shiver. It was a desolation that doubled desolateness, because his healthy American organization missed the march of progress attested by the sound of hammers on unfinished buildings that told of a busy future and cosy modern homeliness. 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 savants (2022, 339).

At first Reuel and his comrades do not see any value in the land before them. The things that he values in the perceived modernity of the United States, however, are derived from the subjugation and stolen labor of the people who were native or descendants of Africa, the land he now sees as

valueless. Even so, the expedition moves forward because of the capitalist need to find resources and treasures that can be extracted and brought back home to fuel that broken dream of American progress that Hopkins presents as only existing because of the enslavement of African peoples.

It seems that Hopkins distrusted the white man's ability to see a successful and rich Black nation and leave it alone without trying to take over it because of the Western history of colonization and dehumanization. As Jeffrey Insko notes in his chapter on extraction, "Capitalism's insatiable drive towards expansion and growth, its exploitation of material resources, and its need for 'cheap things,' to borrow a phrase from Jason W. Moore and Raj Patel, have created a world so deeply dependent upon resource extraction that it seems almost impossible to disentangle ourselves from it" (2020, 171). By making Telassar a self-sufficient, matriarchal society, Hopkins questions capitalism's ability to treat people and land with true humanity and respect since there had not been a very good track record of this happening in her lifetime. To protect this Black utopia, Hopkins had to create a material and social reality where extraction was impossible because "whatever the source and method, however, extraction always entails a degree of violence: cutting, pulling, plowing, digging, stripping, blasting, drilling, fracturing" (Insko 2020, 173). This violence is not only towards the land but the people that are a part of that space. Once Reuel is brought into Telassar he begins to learn about how the people used their natural resources not by stripping the land through overuse and overconsumption, but rather they are shielded from enslaving and extractive forces by the natural lush environment of their home. Ai tells Reuel how nature has aided in their isolation: "'You are in the hidden city Telassar. In my people you will behold the direct descendants of the inhabitants of Meroe. We are but a remnant, and here we wait behind the protection of our mountains and swamps, secure from the intrusion of a world that has forgotten, for the coming of our king who shall restore to the Ethiopian race its ancient glory. I am Ai, his faithful prime minister'" (Hopkins 2022, 424). Here we can see a glimpse of how the inhabitants of Telassar view their nation. Although they live in only a fraction of their land, they seem to appreciate nature's ability to keep them hidden from outsiders. The mountains and swamps are the protectors and Ai does acknowledge that this is just a bit of what used to be Meroe. Rather than opening up and leaving the safety of the mountains and swamps, the people have been able to foster a third space ecology where they can preserve the environment that we had previously seen as desolate when the expedition was walking through the Ethiopian desert. Telassar is not devoid of knowledge from the outside world due to their isolation. The people have been able to collect knowledge and artifacts from all over Africa and even the world by carefully having some members that go outside the city and bring back some key information from the developing world around them. Ai further informs Reuel about this way of life: "'Standing at the edge of the Desert, fertile in soil, rich in the luxuries of foreign shores; into her lap caravans poured their treasures gathered from the North, South, East and West. All Africa poured into this queenly city ivory, frankincense and gold. Her colossal monuments were old before Egypt was; her wise men monopolized the learning of the ages, and in the persons of the Chaldeans have figured conspicuously the wisdom of ages since Meroe has fallen'" (Hopkins 2022, 429). Ai informs Reuel

about how they have surpassed other ancient civilizations, claiming that this part of Meroe is the cradle of civilization itself and has still been able to continue growing in knowledge even though they are unseen by the outside world. Hopkins through her character Ai asserts that the land, people, and the history of Meroe are much more rich than other civilizations which challenges Western colonial ideals of African and civilization. The people of Telassar take advantage of their invisibility and access to borders which are a site of turmoil and violent politics according to Umut Ozguc an international relations scholar. Oppermann determines that "borders for migrant ecologies represent a third space, 'an in-between space.' Ozguc's reading of the border 'as a space that gives rise to the emergence of multiple possibilities' recasts the border question in terms of its 'ambiguities, paradoxes, shifts, and continuities,' which enable migrant ecologies to construe the border as 'a socially, politically, and culturally constructed lived space'" (2023, 97). Although Telassar is hidden the people see the need for border crossing to keep advancing their society and to be aware of the dangers that surround them Telassar's borders work as a third space in and of itself by allowing for the exchange of information to occur and ultimately for the discovery of their long-lost king to finally happen, but even with his time in Telassar and his discovery of his roots Reuel still seems to bring in his American perspectives to the city which allude to a potential disruption of this balanced ecology.

Bodies as Third Space Ecologies

The characters in Hopkins' narrative must navigate the third space of mixed-race identity as Reuel must fight his white perspective which he has so long internalized due to his choice to pass as white and hide his Black heritage. As Reuel explores Telassar more, he is overcome by the lush and abundant landscape around him, but this landscape seems to bring him negative emotions regarding how the inhabitants of Telassar have used the land and shows his extractive tendencies. Hopkins notes this and reflects in her writing: "The character of the country improved as they neared the interior. Reuel noticed that this was at variance with the European idea respecting Central Africa, which brands these regions as howling wildernesses or an uninhabitable country" (2022, 493). There is a glimpse of acknowledgment regarding the white patriarchal view of Africa and a rejection of those beliefs as Hopkins clearly creates an alternative to those narratives. However, Reuel is not able to fully negotiate through his past knowledge and prejudice that he has build up until this point due to the partial rejection of his identity. This creates turmoil with in himself and he cannot fully see Telassar for what it is without it being a part of a larger global economy. Hopkins writes:

> He found the landscape most beautiful, the imaginary desert 'blossomed like the rose,' and the 'waste sandy valleys' and 'thirsty wilds,' which had been assigned to this location, became, on close inspection, a gorgeous scene, decorated with Nature's most cheering garniture, teeming with choice specimens of vegetable and animal life, and refreshed by innumerable streams, branches of the rivers, not a few of which were of sufficient magnitude for navigation and commerce. But Reuel remembered the loathsome desert that stood in grim determination guarding the entrance to this paradise against all intrusion, and with an American's practical common sense, bewailed this waste of material (2022, 493).

The end of this passage is extremely telling. His appreciation for nature can only go so far because of his American capitalist "practicality" echoing Insko's notion regarding capitalism's inability to keep from enacting violence on places and bodies (2020, 173). If Reuel sees that the inhabitants of Telassar are wasting their natural resources, then what can we expect will happen to the city under his rule? Hopkins goes back and forth here perhaps dealing with her views regarding whether African Americans should maintain their own spaces away from the rest of the world to avoid further abuse and extraction like that which had already occurred through slavery and that which was looming upon Haiti in the 19th century. What Hopkins does not do is reject the need for African Americans to learn about Africa. As Mandy Reid claims in "Utopia Is in the Blood: The Bodily Utopias of Martin R. Delany and Pauline Hopkins," "the convoluted plot lines of *Of One Blood* suggest, *all* African-Americans—educated or not, 'passing' or not—have the 'duty' to make personal, political, and cultural understandings of their glorious Ethiopian past work for them in the face of ongoing racial struggles" (2011, 95). Therefore, Hopkins uses Reuel's third space identity to debate what the goal of abolitionists in the United States should be. When change was imminent and debates about how to integrate African Americans into society overtook American politics and social discourse, understanding Ethiopian or African possibilities was key for Hopkins' advocacy for a more African-centric African American identity regardless of integration or separation from white society.

While this navigation of identity is used through Reuel to discuss the future of African Americans in US society, the negotiation of identity and self becomes nearly impossible for the female bodies in the text because of their gendered positions. The female characters in *Of One Blood* all work through third space ecologies themselves, but through their lack of agency Hopkins perhaps comments on another layer of American life that being the inequality between the sexes. In the article "Pauline Hopkins and the Death of the Tragic Mulatta," JoAnn Pavletich discusses the 19th-century figure of the tragic mulatta and claims that Hopkins had previously followed the trope in her prior writings along with the teachings of true womanhood. She explains, "The figure of the mulatto, or the tragic mulatta, a stock figure in nineteenth-century sentimental literature, sprung out of that century's confluence of abolitionist efforts and gender ideologies, emerging alongside and structured by notions of 'true womanhood' in antebellum America" (Pavletich 2015, 647). The tragic mulatta figure was always tied to true womanhood and it seems that by the time that Hopkins began writing her last novel, she no longer wanted to portray her mulatta figures as falling neatly into true womanhood. The reanimation of Dianthe and how her life is then overtaken by the men around her begin to fall under the trope of the tragic mulatta, however, her unheroic death at the end of the novel indicates that Hopkins no longer believed that Black women should live under the restrictions of true womanhood when that constructed ideology was based on white women's and patriarchal views on purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity. Dianthe is forced into the domestic space and gives into submissiveness and although she seems to hold all the traits of true womanhood, her death at the end shows the fragility of her position and essentially highlights that true womanhood cannot protect Black women from male violence and subjugation. When looking at how Dianthe agreed to

marry Reuel we can see an example of this failure of true womanhood to give agency to Dianthe:

> She was conscious that he loved her with his whole most loving heart. She winced under the knowledge, for while she believed in him, depended upon him and gathered strength from his love, what she gave in return was but a slight, cold affection compared with his adoration... She did not answer at once, but looked at his plain face, at the stalwart elegance of his figure, and again gazed into the dark, true, clever eyes, and with the sigh of a tired child crept into his arms, and into his heart for all time and eternity (Hopkins 2022, 192).

She does not choose to marry Reuel because she loves him, but rather because it seems like it is what it is expected of her to do since he saved her. She sees that he wants her, and although she does not feel the same, it is expected by society that she will marry and become the proper housewife. Due to her circumstances, she chooses the first man who treats her well because it is the norm of the time—that she will become a wife and live a domestic life. Her tired demeanor during the acceptance of the proposal represents her giving into the expectations of society even though she does not fit in with them. Later, Dianthe has to fight off the advances of Aubre Livingston, who also wants her and is willing to murder his fiancé and send Reuel off to Africa to get his prize. Hopkins writes that "In vain the girl sought to throw off the numbing influence of the man's presence. In desperation she tried to defy him, but she knew that she had lost her will-power and was but a puppet in the hands of this false friend" (2022, 198). There is no power in Dianthe's personhood because she has been stripped of it through the loss of her identity. She is not able to successfully negotiate and advocate for herself because of her position as the tragic mulatta and a woman that was pushed into domesticity.

Ultimately, Telassar is a utopic third space ecology that fails to provide a stable vision of the future of Africa or African Americans in the post-Reconstruction era because of its hierarchical structure and isolationist ideology. The arrival of Reuel acts as a way for Hopkins to present the intricacies of building a Black nationhood, showing the possibilities that African Americans had while trying to disrupt outdated visions of blackness. However, Reuel's American perspective clouds his judgment, and we cannot be sure that Telassar will remain the safe space that it had been for centuries because of his capitalist vision. There is some hope provided by Hopkins as she appreciates the way in which the inhabitants of Telassar work within their third space ecology to advance and preserve their society. There is also hope in Hopkins' disruption of the ideals of the cult of true womanhood and the tragic mulatta trope. By bringing Hannah to Telassar, a survivor of colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal violence, and killing her tragic mulatta as a failed vision of true womanhood, Telassar may thrive and become a symbol of African possibility. Hopkins interdisciplinary work as an activist, editor, writer, and creative allowed her to work as a third space professional herself, working through all the mediums available and subverting white genre conventions to have candid conversations of what the future of Black civil society would look like. Hopkins creates a future for African Americans that is not perfect, but possible by fostering third space ecologies and rejecting outdated modes of negotiation.

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