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SPECULATIVE PASTS, REVISIONIST FUTURES: PAULINE E. HOPKINS, W.E.B. DU BOIS, AND THE PROPAGANDA OF HISTORY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Alexander James Davis

June 2022

This Dissertation of Alexander James Davis is approved:

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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2022

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Abstract

Speculative Pasts, Revisionist Futures: Pauline E. Hopkins, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Propaganda of History

Alexander James Davis

This dissertation explores the textual, contextual, and conceptual convergences of two pioneers of the Black radical tradition: Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins and William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. Their generic experimentation in biography, autobiography, and speculative fiction reveals their near-simultaneous development of an analysis of race as a social category rooted in ideology, not biology. Although they never directly collaborated in their work as historians, fiction-writers, or public intellectuals, I make my own speculative leap, situating Hopkins and Du Bois as partners in a shared revisionist project aimed at countering racial ideology and white supremacist propaganda. During Hopkins's tenure as literary editor for the *Colored American Magazine* from 1900-1904, she drew on her early experiences as an actress and playwright to appeal to a popular readership. Under her own name and various pseudonyms, Hopkins contributed biographies, polemical essays, and magazine novels aimed at radicalizing her multi-racial audience and promoting a materialist analysis of racial ideologies. Despite her profound impact within the Black radical milieux, especially through her writings on John Brown, she remained a relatively marginal figure for much of the twentieth century. This same period coincided with a radicalization of Du Bois, a shift away from his academic project as a social scientist and toward a public intellectual role. In tandem with

Hopkins, Du Bois developed his own materialist approach to questions of race and political economy, first proposed in his 1905 essay, “Sociology Hesitant,” and worked through in his biography of John Brown (1909). Both writers later mine the vein of materialist historiography via their own speculative and revisionist fiction. This is a study best characterized as the biography of two race leaders, a race man and race woman, working toward parallel race concepts.

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patience sustained me through this process, and without whom I would be lost; and to our children, Luella and Henry Davis, who are my past, present, future.

I dedicate this work to Cathy, Margaret, Luella, and Henry.

Introduction

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to [a person] singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.
Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940)

Biographies of a 'Race Concept'

Despite the fact that Pauline E. Hopkins never directly crossed paths with W.E.B. Du Bois, a detailed study of their turn-of-the-century works reveals multiple convergences in their work as historians, fiction-writers, and public intellectuals at the dawn of the twentieth century. In particular, their generic experimentation in biography, autobiography, and speculative fiction traces the simultaneous development of an understanding of race "not [as] an idea but an ideology" (Fields 110). Drawing on history and sociology leads Hopkins first, and, later, Du Bois, to a materialist analysis of racial ideology as one that "came into existence at a discernible historical moment for rationally understandable historical reasons and is subject to change for similar reasons" (Fields 110). Each redefines, in different generic registers, abstract racial categories as fluid and socially contingent, rather than fixed and immutable laws of nature. Du Bois's term is "race concept," in the famous subtitle to his 1940 *Dusk of Dawn: Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept.* To

adapt this phrase, the conceptual convergences between Hopkins and Du Bois allow me to trace the biography of "a race concept" through the biograph*ies* of two figures, one a race man, the other a race woman, as it develops over the course of their careers.

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), Walter Benjamin notes that "materialist historiography is based on a constructive principle" that "involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well… where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions" and "crystallizes into a monad," a singular structure such as the "specific life" of an individual in a particular era, or "a specific work" in "a lifework" (262-3). Forty years earlier, Hopkins, who asserted that "all history… is but biography," took a similar approach to her materialist historiography (Dworkin 49). Likewise, Du Bois, in his 1909 life of John Brown, saw that biography offered the "opportunity to lay new emphasis upon" the life of a subject, and "to treat these facts from a different point of view," namely that of the "Negro American" (*John Brown* 7). To that end, Hopkins and Du Bois each situates the subjects of their speculative and revisionist histories–both fiction and non-fiction–within the larger "constellation [their] own era has formed with a definite earlier one," articulating a history of the present in the past, and the past in the present (Benjamin 263). Even, or perhaps especially, the histories that Du Bois, in his *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), calls "splendid failure[s]," once told, "will constantly call into question every victory, past and present, of the rulers," undermining their ideological hegemony (Benjamin 255).

The redemptive power of re-constellating these revisionist histories is not limited, however, to what Hopkins called "the dark races of the globe," and Du Bois "the colored world"(Dworkin 307; *Dusk of Dawn* 11). Presenting the histories of enslaved Africans in the so-called "New World" and their cousins on the continent itself leads by necessity to a deeper engagement with the inextricably entangled histories of yet other "worlds," including Europe, Asia, and the Americas. This global context generates a more nuanced analysis of the material conditions that produced these seemingly separate spheres, the domestic and the foreign, the races at home and abroad, and ultimately underwrites the insight that they are, in fact, inseparable. Hopkins is known for courting a white as well as black readership for the *Colored American Magazine* during her editorial stint, and hoped her work would "[cement] the bonds of brotherhood among all classes and complexions" (*CAM* v.1 no. 4). Du Bois posits the revolutionary potential of this kind of analysis to awaken a new world spirit in his *Dusk of Dawn*. In the concluding line of Du Bois's chapter on "The White World," he highlights the contradictions of racialized capitalism that create the black/white binary as just one manifestation of a broader class hierarchy. Hopkins offers a similar view of racial economics in the U.S., writing that "when labor and capital become contending forces, the Black will float into full enjoyment of his citizenship" (Dworkin 351). Ever the Hegelian, Du Bois goes on to note that the "colored world therefore must be seen as existing not simply for itself but as a group whose insistent cry may yet become the warning which awakens the world to its truer self and its wider destiny" (87). Put another way, "the colored world," recognizing

that it creates and is created by other “worlds,” including the “white world,” exists “in *and* for itself” as a manifestation of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, and offers the liberatory possibility of de-reifying gender, race, and class categories (Gardener 2).

Hopkins and Du Bois approach their respective projects, first as a means of preventing the past from “becoming a tool of the ruling classes,” and then, going even further, they “seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” in the present, and make the conceptual “tiger’s leap into the past.” The aim is redemptive, to redeem “a kind of Blackness which had nobility and had a past” (Benjamin 261; Johnson and Lubin 15). Once the resonance between moments of danger is established, displacing whiteness as a timeless, universal category, these flashpoints are re-constellated and presented to a multi-racial, multi-gendered popular audience. This method of reconstructing the present via the past, and the past via the present, resists their co-optation and erasure, reviving their revolutionary potential.

By evoking the elided black radical figures of world history during moments of intense crisis, Hopkins and Du Bois articulate the broader constellation formed between these moments of the past, present, and possible futures. Like Benjamin, their historical materialism “blast[s]...out of the continuum of history” to “time filled with the presence of the now.” This practice of working through multiple temporalities leads them, perhaps unexpectedly, to generic experimentation, specifically in speculative history and speculative historical fiction. These speculative works present their black *and* white audiences with a counternarrative to the dominant histories of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, emphasizing the

contingency of whiteness as a universal category under capitalism, ultimately by unmasking it as a social fiction.

Hopkins's and Du Bois's multiple engagements with Toussaint L'Ouverture and John Brown, recurrent figures in both of their *oeuvres,* provide exemplary case studies. Their analyses of both leaders, presented as popular/public history, highlight the global, transhistorical resonances between the socioeconomic antagonisms of the 1790s, and the multiple crises of American capitalism between the 1830s and 1890s. The former created the conditions that lead to the American, French, and Hatitian Revolutions, while the latter generated epidemics of race, gender, and class-based violence in the United States throughout the 19th century, peaking at the beginning of the 20th century. In her 1900 biographical sketch of Toussaint, Hopkins, eschewing the great-man-of-history approach, begins instead with a history of Hispañola, the advent of Europeans, the decimation of native populations, and the beginnings of the African slave trade. Noting his later influence on Brown, Hopkins calls Toussaint "Napoleon's black shadow," and places him within a broader constellation that includes past *and* future resistance to Euro-American imperialism, exploitation, and the laissez-faire liberalism of the European Enlightenment (Dworkin 12).

Du Bois charted a similar worlded constellation in 1903, when he proposed Nat Turner as the subject of a biography he was to write for *The American Crisis* series, noting that "around Turner would center the slave trade, foreign and internal, Negro insurrections from Toussaint down to John Brown" (*John Brown* 7). When the series editor found Turner too controversial for its purposes, Du Bois chose Brown,

placing him in the same extended constellation as Turner, and noting that Brown, who "was born as the shudder of Hayti was running through all the Americas," studied Toussaint's and Turner's tactics (*John Brown* 75). Du Bois presents Brown's life in the context of the various nineteenth-century economic and political crises that shaped it, contrasting his multiple failures in business with his successes as a revolutionary abolitionist in Kansas, and offering Brown as a model for resistance to the global spread of racialized capitalism in the 20th century. Together, the Toussaint-John Brown nexus of Pauline Hopkins and W.E.B. Du Bois brings up the politics of the "splendid failure" that Du Bois describes in *Black Reconstruction in America*, and points to what would be their critical case study, pushed beyond a black-white binary, of failed revolutions of both black emancipation and capitalism.

Constellating Hopkins and Du Bois

Although they were certainly aware of each other,[1] there is no record of Hopkins and Du Bois ever having met. Nevertheless, in this dissertation I make my own speculative leap, in order to imagine the shared conceptual ground on which Hopkins and Du Bois *would* have met: the multiple, understudied convergences of their thinking on topics as varied as race, gender and political economy. While Du Bois has

[1] Du Bois's prominence as a public intellectual in the 1890s meant that Hopkins was certainly aware of him before she became the literary editor of *CAM*, though her first reference to him in writing doesn't appear until a 1902 biography of Charles Winter Wood, published under her known pseudonym "J. Shirley Shadrach." When Du Bois first became aware of Hopkins is less clear, but the Du Bois papers at the University of Massachusetts, Amhurst suggest that her 1905 letter to J. Max Barber detailing the dissolution of *CAM* was forwarded to Du Bois. Later that year Du Bois criticized *CAM* and *The Voice of the Negro* for "lacking editorial professionalism and reliable sources," implying that he had read both publications (Brown 268).

been a persistent presence in academic discourse around these topics, his radical critiques of capitalism and "the hegemony of the white races" have been largely whitewashed from contemporary popular histories (*John Brown* 379). On the other hand, Hopkins, who excelled as a writer of popular fiction and non-fiction in the first decade of the twentieth century, was relegated to cultural obscurity even before her death in 1930. Despite the steady recovery of her work by scholars over the past forty years, the far-reaching influence of her analyses of race, gender, and class relations as fundamentally rooted in ideology remains understated.

The Hopkins-Du Bois disparity in popular prominence is also due in part to the race, gender, and class politics of the early twentieth century. The public recognition accorded Du Bois as a graduate of Harvard and outspoken race *man* meant that Hopkins's humble academic credentials provided the race *woman* a much less conspicuous platform. While Hopkins could not avoid engaging with Du Bois, the elephant in the room, he was in contrast able to overlook her many achievements as a playwright, historian, biographer, and author of multiple historical novels–much as he did with Anna Julia Cooper.[2] Relying and building on this work, my approach is to situate them on a shared, if not level, playing field.

I see Hopkins as an unacknowledged and vital influence on Du Bois,[3] who was nearly nine years her junior. As the literary editor of *The Colored American*

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[2] See Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*, 1984

[3] Lois Brown notes in particular that "Du Bois benefited from Hopkins's early journalistic trials and her innovations in publishing, but he might have thought that to acknowledge Hopkins publicly might diminish his own professional stature and the hard-won reputation that he had scrupulously created and protected" (*Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution* 504).

Magazine from 1900 until 1905, Hopkins shaped the African American intellectual milieu in radical ways. This radicalism drew the ire of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Machine, and led to her eventual removal from that position at the same time that her younger contemporary, Du Bois, was engaged in a more public and bitter debate with Washington and the interests he represented. In one of the great tragedies of that episode, two figures who wrote so eloquently about inter- and intra-racial solidarity did not join forces, leaving us to speculate as to what might have happened if they had… My accent is on the speculative as an alternative, possible history.

What a detailed study of Hopkins's and Du Bois's major works between 1899 and 1920 makes clear is how they coalesce on the need for a concerted campaign against racial ideology founded on disciplined economic, historical, and social research. Rather than accepting race as a biological fact, Hopkins and Du Bois pursue the historically grounded, materialist analysis of the multiple antagonisms–intra- and interethnic, intra- and inter-class, etc.–suggested by Barbara Fields almost a century later.[4] Their findings convey an alternative framework for navigating the contradictions of capitalism that their readers encountered in their daily lives, and provide the basis for a counternarrative to the prevailing white supremacist discourse. This counter-narrative is disseminated to popular and elite audiences via the various forms of the biographical sketch, polemical essay, speculative history, and

[4] See Fields, Barbara J. "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America." *New Left Review*, vol. 1, no. 181, June 1990, pp. 95–118.

speculative historical fiction. Both Hopkins and Du Bois aimed to radically disrupt the repetitive, ritualized production of race as an ideology[5] by reaching a broad, multiracial audience with their speculative writings.

The revisionist histories, ethnographies, and biographies, for which each one is so well known, provide Hopkins and Du Bois a firm formal foundation for their forays into the speculative. The respective revisions each makes to dominant historical narratives utilizes the "interaction of estrangement and cognition" to unsettle their audience's understanding of historical and social realities, and to propose possible alternatives (Suvin 375). Recognizing the particular potential of speculative fiction to popularize their materialist analysis, allowing them to offer more than a mere rebuttal of white supremacist discourse, they turn to the genre as "an imaginative framework" that offers a radical "alternative to [their reader's experience of their] empirical environment" (Suvin 375). While their non-fiction challenges the popular prejudices of the day by unsettling prevailing historical narratives of race in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, their speculative fiction seizes on the opening created by this disruption to posit alternative pasts, presents, and futures. The effect for today's readers is to encourage a deeper engagement with the contradictions of our own time by immersing the reader in a new one.

[5] *Ibid.*, 110.

A Singular Biography of Two Black Radicals

As natives of Massachusetts, Pauline Hopkins and W.E.B. Du Bois both came of age in the relatively relaxed racial climate of New England in the late nineteenth century. Although neither harbored any delusions about the attitudes of their white northern neighbors, their lifeworks nevertheless reflect the longer history of the Black radical tradition, especially the collaboration between communities of African American abolitionists and their white allies and accomplices. Each traced a complex family history back to the earliest days of colonization and slavery in the Americas, to ancestors who hailed from Europe and Africa. Hopkins, whose earliest ancestor arrived in North America in 1755,[6] was particularly adamant in affirming her status as "a black daughter of the Revolution" and laying claim to the rights and privileges that were promised by the American project but consistently denied to black Americans (Dworkin 355). Du Bois's familial history also connected him to colonial America, but "the social heritage not only of a New England clan but Dutch taciturnity" caused him to turn inward, especially "in the face of real and imagined discriminations," and early in life he famously struggled to reconcile his "double consciousness" of his African and American, ethnic and national ancestry (*Dusk of Dawn* 9).

Hopkins, a prolific biographer, penned profiles of dozens of African American men and women between 1900 and 1916, but left very little in the way of an *auto*biographical record. While there are dozens of biographies of Du Bois, anchored by his own extensive autobiographical record, the comparatively few lives of Hopkins

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[6] Brown, pp. 21-22.

rely primarily on her voluminous fiction, non-fiction, and correspondence, supplemented by public records, to make sense of her life, rather than her brief autobiographical profile in a 1901 issue of the *Colored American Magazine*. By contrast, Du Bois was an almost compulsive autobiographer, rivaled only, perhaps, by Frederick Douglass. Yet in symmetrical contrast to Hopkins, he only produced one full length biography, *John Brown* (1909), along with a handful of brief biographical sketches, often included in his autobiographical works. Nevertheless, their divergent methods of life-writing become another occasion for their convergence. The practice of life-writing–whether their own or another's–leads both to discover the roots of racial ideology as a collective in the individual's experience of daily life. Situating these reclaimed lives within their historical context allows them to shine the "ray of light of history" on racial ideology, revealing its roots in the tangled contradictions of racialized capitalism ("Toussaint L'Overture" 12).

Hopkins and Du Bois arrived at their shared analysis and methodology via different paths and at different times, partially reflecting their difference in age as well as educational opportunity. In one sense, they locate themselves on opposite sides of a singular event, the Civil War, and on opposite sides of an urban and rural divide. Hopkins was born in 1859, the same year that John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry failed to secure the emancipation of enslaved Africans; Du Bois was born in 1868, the year that the 14th Amendment to the U.S. constitution was ratified, guaranteeing–at least on paper–their citizenship and equal rights under the law. Du Bois came of age in the claustrophobic social circles of a relatively isolated Great

Barrington, just as Reconstruction gave way to Jim Crow, while Hopkins spent her adolescence in the comparatively cosmopolitan climate of Boston at the height of Reconstruction. In fact, for both, the end of Reconstruction coincided with a formative experience, and each recalls events from that period that were profound in their impact.

Around 1879, in a "wee wooden schoolhouse" in Great Barrington, a "vast veil" fell between the ten-year-old Willie Du Bois and the white world around him, just as the curtain rose on a twenty-year-old Hopkins's militant subversion of popular minstrel shows, *Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad* in Boston (*Souls* 8). For Hopkins, whose immediate and extended family had encouraged and inspired her artistic inclinations from an early age, her experiences as an actress and playwright provided invaluable insight into the role of cultural production in shaping and reshaping dominant ideologies. It also taught her that the struggle for racial uplift is always a collective one, waged in the company of family, friends, and comrades. Du Bois participated in the social life of Great Barrington, co-editing his school newspaper and performing in some of his high school's plays, but derived a more individual inflection from his early experiences as one of the very few African Americans in his age group. Both his inward turn and the physically and academically competitive approach he adopted towards his white peers in Great Barrington

persisted into adulthood, manifesting in his deeply contemplative[7] autobiographical and political writing.

The first real convergence between Hopkins and Du Bois, both intellectually and, possibly, socially, occurs in the 1890s, when new crises of racial capitalism created multiple moments of danger, including over 226 cases of lynching in 1892,[8] the Panic of 1893, and the 1896 Plessy decision. In 1890, at the dawn of the decade that was to become a maelstrom of "sociological whirlwinds," both Hopkins and Du Bois resided in Cambridge, Massachusetts ("Some Literary Workers" 140). That year, while Du Bois was at Harvard finishing his second bachelor's degree, Hopkins began writing the first chapters of what would become *Hagar's Daughter: A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice.* Her historical novel set in both the antebellum and post-Reconstruction eras "challenged notions of a reunited nation in which justice and democracy prevailed" (Brown 319). These events would have a monumental impact on the course of their intellectual development.

In March of 1891, Du Bois, now a Harvard graduate student who'd just ended his brief courtship of Hopkins's distant cousin, Geraldine Pindell, addressed Boston's Colored National League (CNL) with a speech entitled "Does Education Pay?" (Brown 163). In his address, Du Bois "proposed a reading list in black history spanning the millennia 900B.C. to A.D. 1900" that would provide African Americans

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[7] One example is his decision to "lay new emphasis" on the life of John Brown, presenting "from a different point of view," namely "the little-known but vastly important inner development of the Negro American" (7). Here, the Negro American as a collective is represented by the "inner development" of an individual, and vice versa.
[8] Brown, 164.

with a firm historical footing from which they might embark on a longer educational journey (Lewis 108). It is not known whether Hopkins, an active member of the CNL, was present for this address or if, perhaps, she read it shortly after, when it was published in Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's *Boston Courant*; that same month, however, she registered a copyright for *Hagar's Daughter,* officially embarking on her own literary career as an author of recovered black histories and speculative historical fiction. While it wouldn't be published until Hopkins became the literary editor of the *Colored American Magazine* almost a decade later, *Hagar's Daughter* is part of that periodical's pedagogical program of presenting a popular audience with speculative historical counternarratives to the dominant ideologies of white supremacy and male supremacy.

In addition to marking a turning point in Hopkins's and Du Bois's respective political projects that set them on parallel paths, their proximity offers an alternative to the dominant historical narrative of a polarized, male-dominated black political leadership from the post-Reconstruction era through the Civil Rights Era. The tendency of historians to reduce these complex histories to a binary opposition of Du Bois and Washington, or Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. ignores the collective nature of these movements, the multi-gendered, inter-class, and interracial coalitions that these more recognizable figures worked alongside. Hopkins's membership and active participation in organizations such as the Women's Club movement and the Colored National League, along with Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's involvement in publishing Du Bois's speech, suggest a much broader spectrum of

participation in African American political organizing that included men *and* women from a diverse cross-section of civil society. Additionally, aside from offering a morsel of social gossip, Du Bois's courtship of Hopkins's cousin, Geraldine Pindell, which was ultimately thwarted by her preference for William Monroe Trotter,[9] indicates the presence of a "Talented Tenth" in Boston over a decade before Du Bois made the term famous in 1903. That Hopkins, who earned high marks in high school but received no post-secondary training, was an active participant in these social circles undermines the notion that membership in the "Talented Tenth" was limited to those male members of the black bourgeoisie who had gone further in their education.

In 1892 their social paths once again diverged, as Du Bois set off for Germany to study sociology at the University of Berlin, and Hopkins was hired as a stenographer in the offices of two well-known Boston Republicans (Lewis 125; Brown 163). Despite being worlds apart, they were already on parallel paths, politically and intellectually, well on their way to developing the shared "race concept" that defined their work in the 20th century. In 1895, after returning from Germany the previous year, Du Bois completed his doctoral dissertation on "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870" and the next year took a position at the University of Pennsylvania teaching sociology (Lewis 155; 178). As Du Bois embarked on what would become a monumental sociological study in Philadelphia, Hopkins also began sociological work as a

[9] In 1904, Trotter served as intermediary for Hopkins and Du Bois as the former sought to enlist the latter in her struggle against Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Machine and their takeover of *The Colored American Magazine* (Brown 426-7)

stenographer for the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, where she worked until 1899 (Brown 166). That year, as Du Bois's major sociological study of *The Philadelphia Negro* was published and he took a teaching position at Atlanta University, Hopkins left the civil service to embark on her literary career.

At this point of near-permanent biographical divergence between Hopkins and Du Bois, my dissertation shifts focus, to explore them as separate entities, treating their texts and contexts in separate chapters. This introduction is the one place and way I've found to write them into each other's lives in what could be called "Toward a Twin Biography of a Race Pair." They part in the dusk of the nineteenth century to embark, in the dawn of the twentieth century, on an exploration of the global color line. Hereafter, each appears briefly, sporadically, historically in the other's chapters, as cues, symmetries, unacknowledged interlocutors, or parted partners, passing like ships in the night, nevertheless reaching the same speculative destination.

Chapter One: "Re-Visions of the Present in the Past"

The first chapter, "Revisions of the Present in the Past," thus begins where this introduction concludes, detailing the events of 1899 that launched Hopkins's literary career, framed by Du Bois's call for black intellectuals to "to give up some of their personal wealth, their own advancement and ambition, to aid in the ultimate emancipation of the nine millions of their fellows in this land and the countless millions the world over" (Chandler 163). Heeding this call, Hopkins and her comrades in Boston founded the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company, whose

Colored American Magazine (*CAM*) would become the vehicle for her literary activism. This chapter explores how Hopkins's experimentation with multiple techniques in her non-fiction, including the use of pseudonyms, pastiche, borrowing, and assemblage, informs her speculative and revisionist historical fiction. The materialist approach to historiography she adopts as literary editor of, and contributor to, *CAM* directly inspires her own experimentation. Taking my cues from Hopkins, I assemble the various phases of her revisionist non-fiction into a constellation, where she remaps the socio-historical terrain on which racialized capitalism became the dominant mode of production, and racial ideology became hegemonic.

Analyzing the complex intertextual network constituted by Hopkins's credited and pseudonymous contributions to *CAM*, especially her sometimes jarring intratextual transitions between multiple genres, is no easy task. To do so requires similarly abrupt shifts between multiple texts in the constellation Hopkins forms between her past and present. I've settled on this method, which is best demonstrated by an atemporal comparative analysis of several key texts: a 1902 installment of her biographical series, *Famous Women of the Negro Race,* "Some Literary Workers," two installments of her *Furnace Blasts* series, published under the pseudonym J. Shirley Shadrach, and the first installment of her *Famous Men of the Negro Race* series, "Toussaint L'Overture" (1900).

The biographical sketches of the *Famous Women* series offered Hopkins the opportunity to pursue speculative and revisionist historiography via a conventional route, while adding credibility to her authority as the literary editor of *CAM*. In the

aptly-named *Furnace Blasts* series, however, the incendiary social commentary and militant indictment of racialized capitalism required self-revision in the form of her pseudonym. Re-presenting herself as "J. Shirley Shadrach" allowed Hopkins to pursue her speculative project by addressing socially fraught topics, including criminality and sexual mores, while maintaining her reputation as a "literary worker." Despite the distance Hopkins created between herself and her pseudonymous alter-ego, when read together the two pieces exemplify the revisionist approach to non-fiction that, in turn, informs her fiction.

In the *Famous Women* series, Hopkins recovers the elided histories of black women in the United States, revising the lives of individuals in order to speculate on their collective role in shaping the world "beyond the women's sphere" ("Some Literary Workers" 142). The two pieces comprising her short-lived *Furnace Blasts* series similarly emphasize the collective in the individual. The first installment, "The Growth of the Social Evil Among All Classes and Races in America," is a radical indictment of racial capitalism and the "national sin" of "social evil"–her primary examples are violent crime, substance abuse, and prostitution–it creates (207). Revising the racist conclusions of white commentators including Thomas Dixon, Hopkins insists that "social evil" arises from the systemic inequality that racialized capitalism relies on, rather than the moral failings of individual people or ethnic groups, and impacts black *and* white communities. In the second installment, "Black or White–Which Should Be the Young Afro-American's Choice in Marriage?" Hopkins challenges the racist, pseudo-scientific claims of George Combe with her

own speculative racial science: the "*Afric*-American… essentially American in every characteristic, in whom the blood of the Southern white has been contributed as the cement which binds these African tribes as one in the new genus homo" (213). These explicit examples of historical and self-revsion in *Famous Women* and *Furnace Blasts* clarify the more subtle instances of revision in her *Famous Men of the Negro Race* series.

Following my analysis of these later texts, I move back in time to the first installment of the *Famous Men* series, "Toussaint L'Overture" (1900). There, Hopkins also reverses chronologies, decentering Toussaint and resituating his life as part of a broader transcultural process taking place in the Americas. Her Toussaint is notable for its seamless assemblage of heterogenous source material, including earlier biographies and long excerpts from Harriet Martineau's novel, *The Hour and the Man* (1841). But perhaps the most important facet of this text is the profound insight it offers into her revisionist process via the signature Hopkins blend of fiction and non-fiction.

This is exemplified in a brief aside on the life and untimely death of Toussaint's contemporary, Vincent Ogé. The mixed-race son of a wealthy plantation owner, Ogé led a failed revolt against the white planters of Saint Domingue, who, despite his pledge to maintain the system of race-slavery, refused to recognize the mulattoes as their social equals. Rather than detailing the complex entanglement of race and class that lead to Vincent Ogé's failed revolt and execution, Hopkins uses a combination of the factual and counterfactual to revise the historical narrative.

Renaming him "James" and recasting him as a tragic mulatto figure, Hopkins links Ogé's execution to John Brown's, using their shared martyrdom in order to explore the limits and possibilities of revolutionary projects throughout history. Hopkins uses a similar technique in her fiction, revising John Brown's infamous 1856 "Pottawatomie Massacre" to become the climax of her speculative and revisionist historical novel, *Winona*, to which I turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Speculative Histories of the Present

My second chapter, "Speculative Histories of the Present," traces the speculative and revisionist trajectory of Hopkins's fiction from her early plays, through her magazine novel, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902), to her prophetic ethnographic series, "The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century" (1905, in *The Voice of the Negro* after her ouster from *CAM*). The generic mix again is classic Hopkins. As bell hooks would later note, when addressing issues of "race, gender or class, popular culture is where the pedagogy is," and Hopkins's experience as an actress, singer, and playwright gave her a unique insight into mass culture as a tool for reshaping ideology (2). The textual history of *Winona,* from its first iteration, an unfinished play written ca. 1879, to its reiteration as a serially published novel in 1902, attests to Hopkins's ability to anticipate her audience's affective response and adapt her creative output to the needs of a given historical moment of danger. As such, the novel is a nodal point in her *oeuvre*, marking a temporal shift in the orientation of her revisionist project from the past/present to the present/future. To

situate *Winona* within the larger constellation of Hopkins's fiction and non-fiction, I contrast her popular 1879 play, *Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad*, with the abandoned early draft of a *Winona* play, written around the same time.

Examining Hopkins's early endeavors as a playwright helps to account for the significance of the race melodrama that undergirds her later fiction. *Peculiar Sam* was performed nationally for multiracial audiences, winning wide acclaim at a time when the promises of Reconstruction were suspended and foreclosed, then overshadowed by the subsequent rise of what Du Bois called the "second slavery" of Jim Crow (*Souls* 13). The play is a subversive reappropriation of the popular minstrel show that seizes on and revises the genre's racist routines to highlight the performative nature of race itself. Her all-black cast of characters demonstrates both the varying degrees to which whiteness-as-universal-category has been internalized by white *and* black Americans, and how this ideological phenomenon can be overcome. The performance interrupts the "ritual repetition of the appropriate social behavior" and proposes new models of African American identity in the post-Reconstruction era (Fields 110). Her titular hero, Sam, reappropriates himself and his family from their absent white master, and in doing so realizes his autonomy. Sam is an early example of what Hopkins would later call the amalgamated "*Afric*-American," blending slapstick comedy and melodrama to disarm the audience, defuse the racial tensions permeating the moment, and make the case for black belonging in the revised social landscape of post-Civil War America.

By contrast, Hopkins's draft of the *Winona* play lacks *Peculiar Sam'*s subversion of minstrelsy. The script's attempts at comic relief are undermined by the white characters, whose presence allows the antagonisms of race-slavery and the threat of racial violence to remain ever-present. The events of the *Winona* play are located ambiguously, taking place some*where* in the southern United States, and some*when* before the Civil War. This spatiotemporal indeterminacy undermines any sense of African American autonomy the play might attempt to model for its audience. The protagonist, Zach, is literally haunted by whiteness, represented by the ghost of his white adoptive father, Colonel Carlingford, who urges Zach on in his mission to rescue his adoptive sister, Winnie. Whereas Sam's self-reappropriation allows him the autonomy to create his own world, Zach's is always already mediated by the white world that surrounds him. The rage this creates is ever-present, and his threats to violently dismember his white antagonists would have alienated audiences, black and white; the play as a whole would have proven counterproductive to Hopkins's project of proposing a new national identity for black Americans. This failed plot leads Hopkins to set aside her early draft until 1902, when the epidemic of racial and sexual violence against African Americans required a revision of this "splendid failure," and a new model for resistance to racialized capitalism.

In the revised version, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*, Hopkins's addition of the subtitle situates the novel geographically, and her invocation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in the first pages, and the later appearance of the revolutionary abolitionist John Brown, temporally locate the

novel's primary plot in slavery's waning days. The racial tensions that were so fraught in the 1879 draft take on a new dimension, and Brown's resistance to slavery and racial ideology in the past becomes a model for interracial solidarity and mutual recognition in the present moment of danger. An English sublot also links the novel to the longer history of feudalism, suggesting the class antagonisms that lead to some of the earliest ideologies of race, gender, and class, and from there to a new system of racialized capitalism. Hopkins faces the tensions that white characters created in her early draft head-on, using her Anglo-American characters to emphasize that "whiteness" arose as a byproduct of feudal class antagonisms and is itself a category encompassing a wide spectrum of new class antagonisms. Where an individual falls on this spectrum determines the formation of their racial ideology and, more importantly, the ease with which they might revise or escape it.

Challenging these categories, *Winona* suggests instead the radical possibilities presented by a multi-gendered, interracial resistance to racial ideology and capitalism. In historicizing the plot, *Winona* becomes a work of both revisionist and speculative historical fiction, as Hopkins re-constellates multiple pasts with the present and its possible futures. In this sense, *Winona* reenacts the unfinished pasts of feudalism and abolitionism in order to move beyond the racial binary of Hopkins's present, imagining a utopian, multi-raced, classed and gendered future. The novel's open-ended, speculative conclusion, articulated by Aunt Vinnie, simply that "Somethin's gwine happen…", anticipates Cedric Robinson's assertion that the Black Radical

Tradition "is about a kind of resistance that does not promise triumph or victory at the end, only liberation" (*Winona* 149; Johnson and Lubin 15).

Three years later, after her ouster from *CAM*, Hopkins uses this same framework as her point of departure for her series "The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century" (1905). There, she writes that "the most serious questions of the hour are the Negro Problem and its fellow--Labor versus Capital," and that the answers to these questions by "a future generation will change the current of events and deductions of science" (Dworkin 329). This provides the final occasion for constellating Hopkins and W.E.B. Du Bois, who at that very moment was embarking on his own cluster of related projects. The materialist-speculative approach he adopted towards this work is outlined first in his 1905 manifesto, "Sociology Hesitant," then enacted in his biography, *John Brown* (1909), and persists through his essays, novels, and speculative fiction, which are the focus of my final chapter.

Chapter Three: "Speculative Histories of the Future"

My final chapter re-traces the development of Du Bois's ever-evolving "race concept." His multiple autobiographies make clear the radical shift between his early acceptance of racial essentialism, rooted in racial ideology, when he arrived at Harvard in 1890, and his irrefutable conclusion in 1940 that "the economic foundation of the modern world [is] based on the recognition and preservation of so-called racial distinctions" (*Dusk of Dawn* 101). I account for this shift in his analysis of racial ideology via a corresponding shift from the metaphysical, Hegelian

dialectical approach that informs his early works, most notably *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), to the more explicitly Marxist, materialist dialectic of his mature works, including his *magnum opus, Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). Central to my analysis are Du Bois's 1905 essay, "Sociology Hesitant" and his 1909 biography of John Brown; the former describes the limitations of a positivist approach to sociology rooted in metaphysics, suggesting instead a materialist approach, and the latter is his first major attempt at a materialist historiography.

Du Bois began work on *John Brown* in 1903, the same year that he famously asked "Am I an American, or am I a Negro?" (*Souls* 184). While he ought to have been celebrating the successes of this widely acclaimed work, he was instead toubled by failures of his earlier sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) and subsequent Atlanta Conferences to have any meaningful impact on the daily lives of African Americans. These failures presented him with a profound puzzle. Despite mountains of data, no progress had been made in combating racial inequality and the attendant "social evils" that Hopkins-as-Shadrach had documented in her *Furnace Blasts*. Eventually, Du Bois "came to suspect that there were severe limitations to his concept of theory's ability to immediately address the issue of the Negro's social survival" (Judy 19). He realized that in order to achieve real success, theories needed to be extrapolated from the material conditions that actually existed, rather than derived from idealist notions. In "Sociology Hesitant" (1905) Du Bois outlines a plan for revising this methodology, turning it on its head in order to "clear away the

metaphysical cobwebs that bind us and open the way for a new unified conception of human deeds" ("Sociology Hesitant" 43).

Researching the life of John Brown presented Du Bois with an "opportunity to lay new emphasis" on the significance of his subject, and to view him from a new perspective, that of the "Negro American" (*John Brown* 7). Just as Hopkins was able to revise the failed draft of her *Winona* play by including John Brown as means of "laying new emphasis" the social antagonisms in her narrative, Du Bois also revises the earlier bifurcation of black subjectivity proposed in the "double consciousness" of *Souls*, uniting them as one subject position "in-and-for itself," rather than mutually exclusive social categories. The 1903 question, "am I an American or a Negro?" morphs into the 1905 answer, "Negro American." Proceeding from this perspective, Du Bois asks two more crucial questions: first, is "the cost of liberty" greater than "the price of repression"? And second, what were the material conditions that contributed to John Brown's radical break with antebellum social norms around race and slavery? His conclusions reflect a mastery of materialist historiography as he shifts from his earlier Hegelianism to a more explicitly Marxist dialectical method. He arrives at a counterpoint, summed up in Marx's view that no one life could be understood except by an account of how "the material world [is] reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought" (Marx 102).

The resulting biography situates Brown within the broader context of antebellum political economy and the complex politics of Black leadership, where the intersections of race, gender, and class ideologies are possible points of attack in the

struggle for liberation. Du Bois's research revealed that Brown was able to move beyond the dialectical blockage of "whiteness" as a dehumanizing universal social category. Instead, he was a "co-worker" with Black men and women, recognizing them as "fully, if not more than his equal" (*John Brown* 26). Brown's resistance to the dialectical blockage represented by racial ideology allowed Du Bois to make a similar move, linking his own autobiographical writing to his biography of Brown; rather than "taking for granted" that he and his white colleagues were "training [them]selves for different careers in largely different worlds," Du Bois foresaw the radically different futures made possible by mutual recognition and interracial solidarity (*Dusk of Dawn* 101).

In the concluding chapter of *John Brown*, Du Bois returns to the questions he began with, speculating on their implications for the future. He asserts that liberation "would cost something in pride and prejudice, for eventually many a white man would be blacking black men's boots," but that "its greatest cost would be the new problems of racial intercourse and intermarriage…" (383). Setting the stage for his own forays into the realm of speculative fiction, Du Bois notes that "this might be a good thing and it might not be. We do not know. Our belief in the matter may be strong and frantic, but it has no adequate scientific foundation" (383-4). The tongue-in-cheek implication is that in the absence of an "adequate scientific foundation," the only path forward is to test the hypothesis of equality across the entire social spectrum of race, gender, and class by changing the material conditions that create them in the first place. Du Bois conducts just such an experiment in his subsequent

works of speculative short fiction, “The Comet” (1920), and “A.D. 2150,” written ca. 1950, but not published during his lifetime.

In “The Comet,” which appears at the conclusion of his 1920 autobiography *Darkwater: Voices From Within The Veil*, imagines the annihilation of the entire population of New York City by a cosmic cataclysm. The story speculates on the trials and tribulations of two sole survivors, an African American clerk named Jim, and a wealthy young white woman named Julia. The pair struggle to overcome their prejudices, rooted in ideologies of race, gender, and class, as they navigate an empty social landscape. In the absence of the ritual repetitions of appropriate social behavior, Julia and Jim are almost able to envision a world beyond the color, gender, and class lines that had kept them apart. But this vision is interrupted by the return of Julia’s father and her fiancé, accompanied by a white mob, who immediately reestablish those social barriers and the ideologies that ritualistically sustain them. The results of this fictional experiment speak to ideology’s powerful hold on larger social formations, and the difficulty of breaking that hold, even in the face of cosmic catastrophe and the almost total apocalyptic annihilation of the social realm.

Thirty years later, in “A.D. 2150,” Du Bois revises this plot, this time proposing a kind of self-annihilation and gradual remapping of the social realm. There, the semi-autobiographical narrator awakes in New England 200 years after his death in 1950. The world he discovers is radically different from the one he left behind. Revising the encounter between Jim and Julia in “The Comet,” the narrator of “A.D. 2150” observes an African American man entering a diner, sitting down next to

a white woman without a second thought, and notes that the uproar he expected at what he perceived as a social transgression of the color line did not materialize. In addition to finding no color, gender, or class lines in the social terrain, he observes that the total transformation of the physical terrain–reshaped by mass transit and green infrastructure–has changed the material conditions of daily life. Poverty and war have been abolished, and even the cultural products that had been separated into categories such as “white music” and “Negro music” were now united under the banner of “American music.” The implications of this fictional experiment support Du Bois’s program of mass education and redistribution of material wealth as a means of dismantling ideologies of gender, race, and class, to build a more equitable and just future.

The dissertation closes with an open-ended epilogue that takes its cue from Hopkins and Du Bois. There, I consider paths-not-taken, both in this dissertation and beyond, speculating about the openings my work here has created for future projects. With the recent leak of a draft majority opinion overturning the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, and the marked increase in racialized violence in the U.S. and abroad, the constellation formed by the Du Bois-Hopkins moment has become more relevant than ever.

Chapter One

"The deeds of men of a past generation are the beacon lights along the shore for the youth of today. We do not rehearse deeds of riot or bloodshed from a desire to fire anew the public mind, but because our traditions and history must be kept alive if we hope ever to become a people worthy to be named with others. We must pause sometimes in the busy whirl of daily life and think of the past, and from an intelligent comprehension of these facts read the present signs of the times."
Pauline E. Hopkins, "Famous Men of the Negro Race: Lewis Hayden," 1901

Re-Visions of the Present in the Past

In order "to interrogate a way out"[10] of the racial regime in which African Americans found themselves at the turn of the century, Pauline Hopkins and her colleagues embarked on a radical, non-fiction revisionist project, writing histories, biographies, and prose essays for the *Colored American Magazine* (*CAM*) to illuminate the social relations and contradictions out of which the ideology of race[11] arose. As the literary editor of *CAM* from 1900 to 1905, often writing under pseudonyms, she experimented with a variety of techniques, including revision, pastiche, borrowing, and assemblage. This project leads her, perhaps unexpectedly, to speculative experimentation in her fiction. For Hopkins, it is obvious that the social landscapes which give rise to racial ideologies are always shifting, and these shifts in the conceptual topographies reflected in individual subjects corresponded to real shifts in the changing geographies of the United States from its founding through to the beginning of the 20th century. She recognized race as a contingent social

[10] *Futures of Black Radicalism,* ed. Gaye Theresa Harding and Alex Lubin. pp. 14-15.
[11] See Barbara J. Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States" (*New Left Review,* May 1990, pp. 95-118) and "Ideology and Race in American History" (*Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 143-177.

category, abstract, fluid, and ultimately a social fiction, that nevertheless manifests itself through very real, often violent, social processes. As part of a larger "legion of people that were moving toward recovery of a kind of Blackness which had nobility and had a past"[12] Hopkins's revisionist project also aims to shift the prevailing prejudices of her time in an attempt to get the *CAM* audience of approximately 18,000[13] readers, at least one third of whom were white,[14] to imagine a future free from the social and ideological confines of circumscription within the color line, gender line, and class line. Her preferred method was to return to moments in the past when the social and economic contradictions that create them are heightened, and these untimely possibilities seem within reach.

Hopkins approaches this project with a detailed, multigeneric study of the sociopolitical practices and institutions that not only shaped (and continue to shape) racial regimes, but also hierarchies of gender and class in the United States and abroad. Anticipating the work of Barbara Fields[15] in the late 20th century, Hopkins's analysis demonstrates that, when contextualized through a triangulation of their highly contingent social, geographical, and historical coordinates, the origins of racial ideologies in the United States become clearer, and more susceptible to the kinds of critique necessary to mobilize a popular campaign for their abolition. One recurrent

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[12] *Futures of Black Radicalism,* pp. 14-15.
[13] *CAM's* sworn statement of circulation claims a monthly average of 17,840 copies in 1901. Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory,* 1902.
[14] Hanna Wallinger, *Pauline Hopkins: A Literary Biography,* p. 50.
[15] See Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America." *New Left Review*, vol. 1, no. 181, June 1990, pp. 95–118.

figure in her corpus is the white revolutionary abolitionist John Brown, whose unflinching commitment to destroying the institution of slavery and its attendant ideologies of race, gender, and class, epitomized for Hopkins their fluidity and fragility.

John Brown first appears as a liminal figure in the revisionist biographical sketches that comprise her *Famous Men of the Negro Race* series and subsequent *Famous Women of the Negro Race* series, published in *CAM* between 1900 and 1902. In six installments of *Famous Men* and three installments of *Famous Women*, Hopkins holds him up as an exemplar of the abolitionist spirit and confidant of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Lewis Hayden, some of the movement's most notable black leaders. Her revision of the dominant narrative of Brown's life– that he was a fanatic acting in relative isolation without broad popular support– situates him as part of the much longer history of black and white resistance to slavery and ideologies of race, class, and gender. While the violence of the John Brown moment fails to completely rupture the social and historical processes that give rise to ideologies of race, class, and gender, it is nevertheless what Du Bois would later call a "splendid failure," exemplifying the spirit of revolutionary abolition that creates a sort of conceptual shockwave, unsettling the dominant ideologies, and reverberating across the American political landscape for decades (*Black Reconstruction* 481). Tracing those John Brown afterlives is key to my study.

In her 1902 novel *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest,* Hopkins builds on her earlier dramas, as well as her revisions of black history and

Brown's life, adopting a speculative mode. Seizing upon the brief opening made possible by the successes of Brown's militant actions in Kansas, where he led a guerrilla campaign against the pro-Slavery militias known as "Border Ruffians," *Winona* offers a space to imagine what a more complete rupture might look like. Through her depictions of Brown and the women and men of his multi-racial force, Hopkins's novel presents a speculative-historical and speculative-fiction counternarrative to the myths of white supremacy and male supremacy that undergird racial ideology, suggesting that revised social relations, free from the physical fetters of race-slavery and the ideological fetters of race, gender, and class, might offer a clear path towards liberation.

Winona is an understudied text in Hopkins's *oeuvre* precisely because this speculative turn adds another layer of complexity to the novel's already perplexing pastiche. Borrowing from the seemingly antithetical forms of the protest novel, the western, and the romance, as well as what some critics consider to be plagiarized[16] material from other novels, biographies, histories and news articles, Hopkins's narrative demonstrates the fluidity and hybridity of generic conventions, as well as socially derived "genres of being human."[17] This heterogeneric composition enables Hopkins to build upon Brown's example and create her own opening in service of her revisionist project. Working both within and against the formal constraints of these genres and reappropriating the work of mostly white authors does double duty for

[16] JoAnn Pavletich, '…we are going to take that right': Power and Plagiarism in Pauline Hopkins's Winona"

[17] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 2000.

Hopkins: the familiarity coaxes her readers into lowering their guard and unsettles their preconceptions of what ought to happen in her narrative. In fact, by moving, sometimes jarringly, between genres, and refusing to settle permanently within the boundaries of their formal conventions, Hopkins offers her readers a model for countering the conceptual stasis of accepted forms, waging a guerilla campaign of her own against the literary "Border Ruffians" who would seek to confine the work to one genre. This approach, which has its earliest beginnings in her post-Reconstruction stage plays of the 1870s and turn-of-the-century non-fiction, serves an urgent pedagogical purpose, too, encouraging her readers, especially her white audience, to survey their social landscape, and to interrogate the relationship between prevailing conceptual forms and the social relations out of which ideologies of race arise.

Countering "The Propaganda of Silence"[18]

The sense of urgency motivating Hopkins's revisionist histories and historical fiction, from her portraits of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Harriet Tubman to *Contending Forces* and her speculative/revisionist narrative of John Brown's Pottawatomie Creek Massacre in *Winona*, can be traced to several key events in April and May of 1899: the lynching of Sam Hose on April 23rd (also a key turning point for Du Bois), the April 24th meeting of the Colored National League, and the speeches given by former

18 In her self-published pamphlet, A Primer of Facts Pertaining to the Early Greatness of the African Race and the Possibility of Restoration by its Descendants, Hopkins reflects on the events recounted in this section, noting that "It is now several years since the first signs of cold indifference on the part of former white friends, towards the social and political condition of the black man, manifested itself openly and aggressively. Nothing is heard from pulpit, press and platform but the growing charity and sympathy on the part of southern whites towards the blacks of their section…. The Propaganda of Silence is in full force. Newspapers and magazines have been subsidized or destroyed if the editors fearlessly advocated the cause of humanity" (Dworkin 345).

Confederate William Northern and AME Bishop Benjamin Arnett at the Congressional Club's May Festival and Lady's Night on May 23rd. These events played out against the backdrop of nascent U.S. imperialism and the broader contradictions of the period around race, gender, and class. Most critically, these events opened the potential for a new interracial coalition to reactivate abolitionist networks that had been fractured and weakened in the aftermath of the Civil War. Both then and now, pre- and post-emancipation, mainstream movements for women's rights grew out of racial struggles for equal rights–and leading feminists, black and white, took part in both.

On April 24th, 1899, the Colored National League met in the Massachusetts Club Room at Young's Hotel. The CNL was one manifestation of the post-bellum black national identity that Hopkins sought to foster in her turn-of-the-century works and earlier plays. Founded in 1876, the CNL's primary objective was to maintain pressure on the federal government and bring to bear state power to support Reconstruction during its waning days (Brown 166). The CNL's membership was "drawn from across black social lines, and enjoyed broad community support" (Brown 167). The purpose of this particular meeting was to debate Booker T. Washington's policies of accommodation and industrial education as a means of racial uplift. However, any hopes for confronting the intraracial class antagonisms this debate entailed were overshadowed by the dire threat posed by the epidemic of racist violence in the Southern United States that was then reaching a peak, and quickly came to dominate the conversation.

News of the brutal lynching of Sam Hose in Georgia the day before had so incensed many of the attendees that, "the few attempts by Edward H. Clement to defend Washington were completely eclipsed when 'two black war veterans' called for 'violent resistance and retaliation for lynchings'" (Brown 179-180). Hose, born Samuel Thomas Wilkes, was accused in the Southern press of murdering his employer, Alfred Cranford, with an axe, beating his son, and raping his wife. Subsequent investigations by the police and Ida B. Wells found that the latter two accusations were false, and Cranford's wife told police that Hose had fled immediately after killing her husband, never entering the home, let alone assaulting her or her child (Litwack 589). Nevertheless, these falsehoods were printed in the Southern press, and accepted as facts by the lynch mob that was incited to brutally murder Sam Hose. As racist violence instigated by outright lies increased in the South, so too did the willingness of black Bostonians to "wage another civil war to defend the persecuted members of their race," and the CNL's members were some of the most vocal proponents of armed self-defense (Brown 180). The Boston press' coverage of this episode and the subsequent debates about lynching quickly overshadowed coverage of Washington, and dominated public discourse for weeks. For the time being, the intraracial class conflict over political power and racial uplift within the African American community was paused for "another civil war," the more immediate threat of white supremacist violence.

While calls for armed self-defense and even retaliation against Southern whites increased among Boston's black population, Florida Ruffin Ridley and

members of the Women's Era Club convened a multiracial women's meeting on May 20th to address the epidemic of lynching *and* sexual violence in the South (Brown 180-1). This meeting was attended by such luminaries as Maria Louise Baldwin, Julia Ward Howe, and Florida Ruffin Ridley's mother, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin. The women's meeting matched the spirit of the CNL's April meeting with their own militant calls for action against racist, sexist violence in the South. For Hopkins, the lynching of Sam Hose and subsequent debates in her New England social circles would become the catalyst for her activism; these meetings ignited conversations around gender, race, and class issues that reverberated through her writing for the next two decades.

The first woman to address those assembled on May 20th was Mrs. Butler Wilson, who explicitly linked the imperialist violence of the Spanish-American War to domestic instances of racialized violence (Brown 181). In her role as literary editor, Hopkins would go on to encourage contributors to explore this connection, and explored it in her own contributions to *CAM*, which would in turn earn her the ire of Washington's Tuskegee Machine. The next speaker, a white woman named Ednah Dow Cheney "wasted no time indicting the men of her race" who openly or tacitly supported the spirit of white supremacist violence (Brown 182). Cheney exhorted her audience to "combat this spirit" growing in the South, even if it meant "to face, though God forbid it, another baptism of fire and blood" (Brown 182). This expression of militant solidarity with oppressed black people over four decades after the Civil War recalled the fiery speeches of the days of abolition. Cheney's sentiment

was echoed by Julia Ward Howe, whose "Battle Hymn of the Republic" became the Union's most recognizable song, and borrowed its tune from the song "John Brown's Body." In the meeting's most explicit demand for state power to be brought to bear on white supremacist structures, Howe called for the federal government to re-deploy troops to the former confederacy, recalling the days of Radical Reconstruction (Brown 182).

Finally, Mrs. Edwin Mead urged her fellow white women to "mobilize Southern white women to grapple with the stark, often ignored realities of rape affecting Black women," reminding her audience that "in approaching the question of the negro, it was their own fathers who were responsible for the mullattoes" (Brown 182). The message of this gathering was clear; the doctrines of white supremacy and male supremacy were the cause of racial and sexual violence against African Americans, and must be openly confronted and stamped out by a multiracial coalition of men and women from all classes. The political atmosphere of Boston had been electrified, and if Pauline Hopkins was poised to make her own contributions to the campaign against white supremacy, the events of May 23rd drew forth lightning from her pen.

Just as this revolutionary, anti-lynching fervor was gripping the African American community of Boston and their white allies, the specter of Southern revisionism and apologia for white supremacist and male supremacist ideologies arrived in the person of William J. Northern, the former governor of Georgia. Northern, an ex-Confederate who also worked as "an administrator of the Slater fund

for negro education with Booker T. Washington," was "invited to address the topic of African Americans and the South" along with AME Bishop Benjamin W. Arnett at the "Congregational Club's annual 'May Festival and Ladies' Night'" (Brown 183-4). Northern spoke first, offering the multiracial audience of over 1000 assembled at Tremont Temple on May 23rd "The White Man's View"; it soon became abundantly clear that no measures would be taken to improve race relations in the South if they posed a threat to white supremacy (Brown 184).

Northern's intransigence may not have been surprising to many of the Black Bostonians assembled, but what did come as a shock was the enthusiastic applause of their white neighbors. White Bostonians were wooed by the "divisive gendered perspective" of Northern's revisionist narrative, which attempted to frame the murder of Sam Hose as a defense of white womanhood, rather than the results of interracial class antagonisms between a black sharecropper and his white employer (Brown 184). While just several days before, many of their white allies had attested to the very real gendered violence perpetrated against Black women by white men, many more white Bostonians were surprisingly susceptible to the same lies that had incited a Southern mob to lynch Sam Hose the previous month.

Northern framed his appeal for intraracial solidarity from the white audience as a false binary. Seizing on white anxieties about interracial marriage to rationalize racialized labor hierarchies, he argued that black and white Americans "cannot live together, unless intermarriage takes place or the one is dependent and in some sense subject to the other" (Brown 185). He continued, claiming that because "the record of

all history" had proven intermarriage was not even a consideration, the perpetuation of white supremacy and male supremacy was the only solution (Brown 185-187). The impact of his appeal was startling, and revealed that the raced and gendered ideological structures underlying white supremacy and racial capitalism in the South were also present in the North, and equally effective.

The very real danger of Southern views on race and gender, already tacitly endorsed by many New Englanders, becoming the dominant ideology in the former stronghold of abolition cannot be understated; losing the support of Northern whites meant the further encroachment of Jim Crow and Lynch Law. To Hopkins and her comrades, Northern's affiliation with Washington and the Slater Fund for Negro Education also represented a grave threat to the relatively marginal gains made by African Americans in the North. The interests represented in this unlikely alliance suggest there were forces aligning capable of forcefully limiting the scope of African American autonomy in the North. Northern's rhetoric indicated the very real possibility that the thin veneer of civility white northerners maintained in race relations might be easily washed away by the rising tide of white nationalism in the South.

On December 27th of that year, W.E.B. Du Bois delivered an address in Washington, D.C. at the Third Annual Meeting of the American Negro Academy entitled, "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" (Chandler 165 n. 1). The piece offers a sweeping analysis of "the problem of the color line not simply as a national and personal question, but rather in its larger world aspect in time and

space" (Chandler 146). Du Bois concluded this address with an internationalist call for Black intellectuals to produce works characterized by "excellence" and "thoroughness, though it be in sweat and poverty, in obscurity or even ridicule," and "to give up some of their personal wealth, their own advancement and ambition, to aid in the ultimate emancipation of the nine millions of their fellows in this land and the countless millions the world over" (Chandler 163). "Without this," Du Bois claimed, "we cannot co-operate, we cannot secure the greatest good of all, we cannot triumph over our foes" (Chandler 163).

Just five months later, "in May 1900, Hopkins allied herself with [Walter] Wallace, [Harper] Fortune, [Walter] Johnson, and [Jesse] Watkins," and formed the Colored Cooperative Publishers. Hopkins and the founders of the *Colored American Magazine* embarked on a substantively cooperative effort to counter white supremacist ideology and reconstruct Black histories in the US and globally (Brown 263). The cost would be high; by the end of her work at *CAM* Hopkins would face ridicule at the hands of the Tuskegee Machine, and her work would be relegated to a gradual obscurity for almost half a century. However, her impact as an internationalist scholar working in multiple genres informs the Black Radical Tradition even today.

Hopkins and the Black Intellectual Milieu

When Hopkins and her comrades founded the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company in 1900, the pedagogical aims of the project and the co-operative structure through which they circulated the *Colored American Magazine* were certainly aligned

with Du Bois's sentiments, though Hopkins could not know then how much she would be asked to "give up" in the endeavor. Literary critic Hazel Carby has described the broad "intertextual coherence, achieved under Hopkins's literary editorship" of *CAM,*[19] and her revisionist historiography in that publication lays the groundwork for her speculative–and revisionist–historical fiction (Carby 160). Indeed, in much of her work, especially the biographical sketches of her *Famous Men* and subsequent *Famous Women* series, Hopkins takes an almost Benjaminian[20] approach to her project. Eschewing the historicist view that tells the "sequence of events like the beads of a rosary," Hopkins instead "seizes hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger," illuminating "the constellation which [her] own moment has formed with a definite earlier one" (Benjamin 263). This textual constellation extends through the 19th and 20th century work of other black and white authors, including Du Bois, whom she engages both implicitly and explicitly in her revisionist project, a measure of the wide but unacknowledged influence that Hopkins had on her contemporaries.

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[19] Claudia Tate has commented specifically on *Winona* and the ways that Hopkins "uses the historical landscape of slavery to represent the contemporary social order" as "transparently a call for organized acts of resistance against contemporary persecutions" (154-155). For one of the most thorough studies of Hopkins's intertextual biographical series in *CAM* see C.K. Doreski's, "Inherited Rhetoric and Authentic History: Pauline Hopkins at the *Colored American Magazine*." Doreski notes that Hopkins "wrote in the certainty that her biographical texts would inform her fiction and social notes, even as they were informed by the larger textual whole" (*The Unruly Voice* 72).

[20] I say "almost" because, as Ronald Beiner points out in "Walter Benjamin's Philosophy of History" (1984), for Benjamin "The task entrusted to historical materialism is not to make the future, but to save the past. Historical materialism is a way of comporting oneself, not toward the totality of the historical process, but toward certain instants of the historical past: to make the fragments whole again" (424). Hopkins seems to be as concerned with making the future as she is with saving the past, especially in her final novel, *Of One Blood*, and her ethnographic series, *The Dark Races of the 20th Century*, written after her ouster as literary editor of *CAM* and published in *The Voice of the Negro.*

Following the thread of Hopkins's non-linear, revisionist historiography requires sometimes dizzying shifts between multiple points in this broad textual constellation, including her early dramas, the articles published under her name, under her several known pseudonyms, and her anonymous submissions to *CAM* between 1900 and 1904. One of the most striking examples of this conjuncture emerges between an installment of the *Famous Women of the Negro Race* series, "Some Literary Workers" (1902), which appeared in *CAM* just two months before the first chapters of *Winona*, and "The Growth of the Social Evil among All Classes and Races in America," from her short-lived *Furnace Blasts* series, published in 1903 under the self-revisionary pseudonym J. Shirley Shadrach. Thinking through conjuncture points to the way Hopkins's texts constellate. While the *Famous Men* series is often more reserved in its social and political criticisms,[21] the *Famous Women* and *Furnace Blasts* series do not shy away from making the targets of her criticism or the aims of her project much more explicit.

In "Some Literary Workers" she begins by framing the Benjaminian moment of danger as a "stupendous problem" facing contemporary scholars involving an analysis of "the great struggle of humanity which at present convulses the entire world, and of which race and color are but incidental factors," that nevertheless point to a "striving for supremacy," which appears as a "great battle that is now on between the Anglo-Saxon and the dark-skinned races of the earth" ("Some Literary Workers" 140). This passage evokes Du Bois's 1899 essay, "On the Present Outlook for the

[21] Her sketch of "Booker T. Washington" is one such example.

Dark Races of Mankind," as Hopkins and Du Bois both emphasize the historical contingencies "incidental"[22] to the formation of racial ideologies, and the social contradictions out of which they arise, while formulating strategies by which African Americans and the global diaspora might "strive"[23] against these forces.

Hopkins contrasts the domestic manifestations of the color line with the foreign policy of the US at the beginning of the twentieth century. She sees in the encroachment of "hateful feelings against the Negro" that "are brought into the North by the influence of the South" in order "to foist upon the northern Negro the galling chains of the most bitter southern caste prejudice which is widening the circle of its operations day by day" something like the imperialist policies of the US abroad ("Some Literary Workers" 140). She continues, (again, echoing Du Bois's 1899 essay[24]) articulating a subtly subversive view of this broader imperial project which sees, in "the subjugation of Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines" by the United States, the inevitable

[22] "...the question of the relation of the advanced races of men who *happen to be white* to the great majority of the undeveloped nations of mankind *who happen to be yellow, black, or brown*." ("On the Present Outlook…" 157, emphasis mine).

[23] "...the American Negroes will in the 20th century strive, not by war and rapine but by the mightier weapons of peace and culture to gain a place and a name in the civilized world." ("On the Present Outlook…" 160)

[24] "But most significant of all at this period is the fact that the colored population of our land is, through the new imperial policy, about to be doubled by our ownership of Porto Rico, and Havana, our protectorate of Cuba, and conquest of the Philippines. This is for us and for the nation the greatest event since the Civil War and demands attention and action on our part. What is to be our attitude toward these new lands and toward the masses of dark men and women who inhabit them? Manifestly it must be an attitude of deepest sympathy and strongest alliance. We must stand ready to guard and guide them with our vote and our earnings. Negro and Filipino, Indian and Porto Rican, Cuban and Hawaiian, all must stand united under the stars and stripes for an America that knows no color line in the freedom of its opportunities." *Ibid.*

> death knell of prejudice, for the natural outcome of the close association that must follow the reception of these peoples within our Union, will be the downfall of cruel discrimination solely because of color. In this way malice defeats itself." (Dworkin 140)

At first, this may appear to be a naive analysis of nascent US imperialism and the color line so violently enforced at home, or an attempt to find the silver lining in the destructive practice of primitive accumulation and imperial violence. However, Hopkins speaks to multiple audiences through the multivalent critiques in these biographical sketches. Readers both black and white recognize themselves in her local-global critique that imperial exploits abroad will force a world-wide reckoning with the color line akin to what the US has endured domestically. Indeed, her deceptively simple conclusion that "malice defeats itself" belies the contradictions of racialized capitalism, and the fact that in the pursuit of empire, the introduction of diverse peoples into the expanded boundaries of the US only serves to increase the "close association," or "social intercourse" as she will phrase it in *Winona*, of groups on different sides of the color line. The effect is to heighten the contradictions of the racial ideologies that constitute that line.

In the short-lived *Furnace Blasts* series, published in *CAM* just one year after this installment of "Some Literary Workers," she repeats this line, revising it to be more explicit in its critique of domestic race relations and their entanglement with ideologies of gender and class. The *Furnace Blasts* series deals specifically with questions of criminality, sex work, intermarriage, and miscegenation, highlighting

how the “malice” of white Americans creates the circumstances for its own “defeat.” In the first article, “The Growth of the Social Evil among All Classes and Races in America,” Hopkins (revising herself, and writing as J. Shirley Shadrach) exhorts her audience to “do what we can… for the substantial building-up of the race while time remains. Today is ours; tomorrow is uncertain” (“The Growth of the Social Evil…” 201). The moment of danger presents itself again, making any speculation about the future “uncertain,” and Hopkins turns her attention to the role of the past in shaping the present. Her title makes it clear that “the social evil” is a national problem “of which race and color are but incidental factors,” the form of appearance taken by the deeper contradictions of the capitalist order. Rebutting accusations of African Americans’ inherent criminality leveled by Thomas Dixon in his reactionary[25] and revisionist novel of white supremacy, *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902), Hopkins points out that it is the prejudices of white men that have created the conditions of poverty among black *and* white communities, “impeded the progress of the new emancipation,” and “injured the white man and the black man alike” (206).

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[25] “This then is the state of mind of the age that is called to settle the Negro problem in America and in the world. The abolitionists with their pure and lofty ideals of human brotherhood and their fine hate of dark damnation of national wrong and injustice, have left this generation a priceless heritage, and from their heights of enthusiasm was bound to come a reaction, and the natural recoil was hastened by sympathy with the stricken and conquered South, by horror at the memory of civil strife, by growing distrust of universal suffrage, and by deep-seated doubt as to the capabilities and desert of the Negro. Here then we have the ideal and the criticism—the still persistent thrust for a broader and deeper humanity, the still powerful doubt as to what the Negro can and will do. The first sign of reconciliation between these two attitudes is the growth of a disposition to study the Negro problem honestly, and to inaugurate measures of social reform in the light of the scientific study. At the same time this disposition is still weak and largely powerless in the face of the grosser and more unscrupulous forces of reaction and the vital question is: which of these two forces is bound to triumph?” *ibid, 154*

Because their fates are entangled, Hopkins argues that the solution to the problem of "the social evil" among black and white Americans is social equality. She proceeds "to study the Negro problem honestly," as Du Bois put it, and without malice ("On the Present Outlook…" 154). Here, she rearticulates her earlier formulation that

> Malice defeats itself. It is not sensible to place the blame for social impurity in a population of 80,000,000 upon one race or class alone. Criminals themselves prove this. Since Thomas Dixon's book saw the light… we have had a Jane Toppan up here in Massachusetts, whom Thomas might have taken for a model so perfectly does her case represent, in some of its details, the depraved picture he drew of crime among his own people. (Dworkin 206)

In denying Dixon and other racist ideologues their preference for having it both ways, Hopkins cites the case of the white mass murderer Jane Toppan to demonstrate the condemnation, made in bad faith, of a whole group of people based on the conduct of just a few. Hopkins-as-Shadrach offers a compelling counter-narrative to the white supremacist line in the concluding installment of the *Furnace Blasts* series, "Black or White–Which Should be the Young Afro-American's Choice in Marriage?" In a highly speculative moment, she posits that the processes of transculturation[26] at work in the US via the amalgamation of black and white blood is "the greatest evolution in humanity ever presented in the pages of history." This evolution will culminate in the

[26] For more on the role of transculturation in Hopkins's work see Susan Gillman "Pauline Hopkins and the Occult: African-American Revisions of Nineteenth-Century Sciences"; on transculturation as a concept, see Fernando Ortiz "On the Social Phenomenon of 'Transculturation' and Its Importance in Cuba."

appearance of the "*Afric*-American… essentially American in every characteristic, in whom the blood of the Southern white" is "the cement which binds these African tribes as one in the new genus homo" ("Black or White…" 213). Hopkins proposes not only a revision of the past and the present, but a revision to the very social "systems of meaning [in which] we institute ourselves" that Sylvia Wynter[27] calls "genres of being human" (Scott 186).

The sociological fact of this inevitable shift in the demographics brought on by "social intercourse" domestically and the open aggression taking place abroad cannot be completely hidden by the ideological constructs of race in the US. Nevertheless, Hopkins is aware of the threats posed to her project by the revisionism of reactionary propagandists like Dixon. Returning to "Some Literary Workers," it is clear that Hopkins has already been working to turn the myth of criminality on its head, indicating that

> It was a criminal omission on the part of those [U.S.] statesmen, who, having the power vested in them to enact laws to protect an innocent, helpless people in the rights which the outcome of an arduous and bloody war had conferred upon them, yet shirked their responsibilities for a nauseous sentimentality, leaving to this generation a heritage of woe. They knew then as we do now, that "unsettled questions have no pity for the repose of nations," and like Banquo's ghost, they are unbidden guests at every feast and will not down. ("Some Literary Workers" 140)

[27] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," 2000.

Hopkins is explicitly vague in the opening line of this passage. The ambiguous language of "an arduous and bloody war" recalls to her readers' the deep historical resonances between the more recent "criminal" failures of the U.S. government to follow through on the promises of Radical Reconstruction after the Civil War and the earlier "criminal" failure of framers of the Constitution to "enact laws" that "protect an innocent, helpless people in the rights" secured after the Revolutionary War. Revising the widely accepted narratives of the American Revolution and the Civil War constellates the two moments as part of a longer tradition of unfinished, ongoing revolutions. Hopkins alludes to a contradiction that Barbara J. Fields will make explicit almost a century later when she writes that "American racial ideology is as original an invention of the Founders as is the United States itself. Those holding liberty to be inalienable and holding Afro-Americans as slaves were bound to end by holding race to be a self-evident truth" (Fields 101).

Hopkins cites "these unsettled questions," persisting from the founding of the republic and through the Civil War, as the very contradictions that have

> brought us the happenings of the past few months—sociological whirlwinds—the martyrdom of President McKinley, the Washington episode at the dining table of the White House, the Tillman-McLaurin incident in Congress and mob law triumphant in the appointment of Mr. Geo. R. Koester as collector of internal revenue for South Carolina. ("Some Literary Workers" 140)

While it goes without saying that "the race question" figures prominently among the many questions left unsettled in the American sociopolitical landscape, Hopkins

points to broader entanglements of race with class and gender by including the fight between McLaurin and Tillman (an altercation long in the making, but finally sparked by the latter's accusation against the former that he'd accepted bribes from the textile industry in order to secure his support of annexation of the Philippines),[28] and the assassination of President McKinley by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz. Together these "unsettled questions" ultimately emerge as contradictions inherent in a system of global capitalism and the ideologies it produces.

Hopkins insists, however, that amidst these crises at home and abroad, "the colored woman holds a unique position in the economy of the world's advancement in 1902" ("Some Literary Workers" 142). In feigned demurral, she continues: "we know that it is not 'popular' for a woman to speak or write in plain terms against political brutalities" and that "popular prejudice" would claim "that a woman should confine her efforts to woman's work in the home and church," it is nevertheless imperative that

> beyond the common duties peculiar to woman's sphere, the colored woman must have an intimate knowledge of every question that agitates the councils of the world; she must understand the solution of problems that involve the alteration of the boundaries of countries, and which make and unmake governments. ("Some Literary Workers" 142)

Hot on the heels of her incisive indictment of the "criminal" failures of "statesmen" to live up to the "power vested in them," Hopkins demands a place not only for women,

[28] https://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/senate-witnesses-a-fistfight-feb-22-1902-235199

but for black women. Here, her attention to the multiple valences of the "economy" in question demonstrates the inextricable entanglement of the so-called "woman's sphere" of domestic labor, their labor in industry, including the fields of the South and the textile mills of the North, and the hemispheric political economy that drove US imperialism in the Philippines and elsewhere. While this is one of her most militant calls to action and clearest demonstrations of the processes at play in maintaining contemporary ideologies of race, gender, and class, the historical groundwork for dismantling the ideologies of white supremacy and male supremacy that enforce those boundaries was laid as early as her very first biographical sketch in *CAM* two years before "Some Literary Workers."

Transcultural Revisions of Genre and Being

To understand more fully the process by which Hopkins deconstructs the linear historical narratives that uphold white supremacist thinking and racial ideologies, we must investigate her revisions to the generic categories of "history" and "biography," "non-fiction" and "fiction." In these revisions she presents to her audience reconstructed counternarratives of the present in the past, and vice versa. Her generic revisions point to a fundamental connection between these socially constructed literary genres and the broader social "systems of meaning [in which] we institute ourselves" (Scott 186). Before turning our attention to Hopkins's early dramas and later fiction, especially *Winona* as a speculative historical novel, it is worth lingering

a while longer on Hopkins's biographical sketches, and particularly "Toussaint L'Overture,"[29] the inaugural installment of her *Famous Men of the Negro Race* series.

For Hopkins, "All history… is but biography" and, as Ira Dworkin notes in her introduction to *Daughter of the Revolution*, she recognizes her biographical sketches "as [belonging to] a genre that addressed more than the life of its individual subject" (xxiv; 49). Thus, while each installment of *Famous Men* is nominally focused on an individual as representative of the race, these biographical sketches are actually reconstructed narratives of their times and the wider world. As such, they incorporate accounts of other people and events borrowed from fiction and non-fiction, and emphasize the collective in the individual. With Hopkins's remapping in "Toussaint L'Overture" of the terrain of racial ideologies and their historical development in the "New World," we get an even clearer sense of how her nonfiction lays the foundation for her speculative and revisionist experiment in *Winona*. Although Toussaint L'Ouverture was the subject of dozens of biographies and biographical sketches produced on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the nineteenth century, source material from which Hopkins freely borrows, her brief sketch manages to encapsulate the much broader complexity of her subject, the Haitian Revolution, and the genesis of ideologies of race in European colonialism. Her "L'Overture" blends the early-nineteenth-century "romantic racialist" accounts of British abolitionists, who sought to "soften the rock hard image of this indomitable

[29] Ira Dworkin notes that "Hopkins followed a spelling occasionally used at the time" (11) by earlier scholars of the Haitian revolution; given that her borrowings seem frequently to be intentional, I can't help but feel she meant this piece to be an "overture" to her broader revisionist project.

warrior" by "embedd[ing] him firmly in the domestic sphere," with the more radical portrait of the "slave-soldier who employed violence in pursuit of freedom" favored by revolutionary abolitionists in the antebellum United States (Clavin 125-128).

Hopkins begins the series with a "cursory glance at the history of that beautiful isle," Santo Domingo, on which "the Republic of Hayti is situated" and "which is one of a cluster known to students as the Greater Antilles" that "form… stepping stones from the Old World to the New" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 11). Instead of centering the individual subject of her biographical sketch, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Hopkins begins a full 300 years before the Haitian Revolution. Her method of historical and socio-geographic triangulation highlights the contingency and fluidity of the social relations out of which Toussaint Breda, who chose his more recognizable surname from the French for "the opening," arises. These spatiotemporal and social slippages in her account of his life unsettle dominant narratives, create a conceptual "opening" for her readers, and provide a model for thinking through the overlapping spheres of domestic and international political economy.

From the opening remarks along the geographical axis of the island as part of a series of steppingstones to the hemispheric Americas, Hopkins also marks the social and historical coordinates of Toussaint's "Hayti." Indeed, her choice of the spelling "Hayti," instead of "Haiti," is a closer approximation of the "Arawak word *Ayti,* meaning 'mountainous land'" and serves as a linguistic marker of the indigenous social relations that existed on the island prior to the advent of Europeans or

Toussaint (Dworkin 11n2). Highlighting these shifting social coordinates of space necessarily invokes the historical axis and the movement in time from the "Old World to the New." This phrase operates on multiple levels: first, Hopkins remains within the dominant narrative of Western progress, the "discovery" of the so-called "New World," and the movements of European peoples into the Americas. She then shifts her focus, however, proposing a counter-narrative that accounts for European contact with indigenous peoples in the Americas and the ensuing destruction of their "Old World" caused in part by the "rapid decrease of the Indian population... found on the island by Columbus, who were driven into a cruel and barbarous servitude by the Spanish adventurers who flocked from the Old World to the new Eldorado" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 11). Hopkins again operates within the dominant formal conventions of turn-of-the-century historiography to offer an immanent critique of the Eurocentrism of nineteenth century historical discourses, highlighting the entanglement of Native, African, and European peoples and their initiation into "social intercourse" at this moment of colonial conquest (*Winona* 1).

Further, when she invokes the myth of "Eldorado," Hopkins highlights the role of mythologies in contemporary historiography, connecting the mythical golden city to the myth of white supremacy, and situating race as an ideology that arises from the social conditions of imperialism and nascent global capitalism. Hopkins invokes and undermines these myths. It is the decimation of exploited indigenous populations that "demanded another source of supply to obtain laborers for the mines, and to cultivate the sugar-cane," and Hopkins is quick to re-frame this moment as one when

"all eyes then turned toward Africa, and thus came into regular form the commerce for slaves between Africa and America" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 11-12).

Re-charting the shifts in spatial, temporal, and social coordinates, as Hopkins does in this brief passage, revises the "regular form" of the dominant historical narratives of New World conquest and the origins of racial ideology. We begin to get a sense of how this revisionist strategy becomes critical for Hopkins's speculative project in *Winona.* In her words, we see how she offers her readers "an intimate knowledge of every question that agitates the councils of the world" and the foundations for understanding "the solution of problems that involve the alteration of the boundaries of countries, and which make and unmake governments" ("Some Literary Workers" 142). This includes the internal "boundaries" made manifest in social divisions of San Domingo, one of the earliest examples of racial ideology taking root in the Americas, and one of the earliest examples of how it was resisted.

Hopkins's Toussaint begins before the birth of its subject, jumping from the early history of the island, its inhabitants, and the advent of European settler colonialism and race-slavery, to 1790, when the slaves "numbered five hundred thousand to thirty thousand whites" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 12). This staggering imbalance underscores the tensions on the island prior to the outbreak of revolution, and serves to remind Hopkins's readers of the complex social relations on the island: "Slavery is a many-headed monster" she says, "and from the mingling of the whites and blacks the mulattoes had sprung, and at this time numbered thirty thousand" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 12). Hopkins alludes to the role of sexual violence in the

creation of the Americas in the "social intercourse" taking place on the fringes of empire (represented later in *Winona* by the figures of White Eagle, Winona, and Warren Maxwell), where differentiating between "races" in these areas becomes increasingly difficult, except as a function of other categories such as gender and class (*Winona* 1).

There are unmistakable parallels between Hopkins's description of pre-Colombian *Ayti* and the biblical description of Eden.[30] This intersection of fact and fiction offers an intriguing incentive to reconsider the ways Hopkins reflects on the historical fluidity of racial and gender categories in the concluding line of this passage. There, as she does in "Some Literary Workers," she leaves a certain ambiguity, this time in her own characterization of the Haitian situation. If the *gens de coleur* of Haiti, whose allegiances, vacillating between their property and their liberty, play such a pivotal role in later histories of the Haitian Revolution by writers including Anna Julia Cooper and C.L.R. James, "had sprung" from the "many-headed monster" of slavery and "the mingling of the whites and blacks," her readers might wonder whether the allusion is to Hesiod's depiction of Athena, or to Sin in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In the same way that the pseudonym J. Shirley Shadrach allows her to address the controversial topics of interracial relationships in the *Furnace Blasts* series, the literary allusion here offers Hopkins a critical distance from which to

[30] In "Inherited Rhetoric and Authentic History: Pauline Hopkins at the *Colored American Magazine*" C.K Doreski points out that Hopkins "resorts to fictional strategies and the literary, Christian discourse of the garden" (*The Unruly Voice* 76).

address the main race-sex narrative, while deepening the black-white-mixed classifications as she turns to the social and historical nuances of the Haitian situation.

That history is shaped first and foremost by the mythologies developed in response to the material conditions in the colony, of which ideologies of gender, race, and class are just a few “incidental factors” among many (“Some Literary Workers” 140). Again, we find a critique operating on multiple levels, and opening lines of inquiry for her readers which call into question the very categories of race operating in her histories and her fiction. In fact, JoAnn Pavletich has commented[31] on Hopkins’s deployment of the trope of the “tragic mulatta,” which often subverts the frequently formulaic depictions of mixed-race figures in favor of a model that offers a more humanized, nuanced portrayal. Indeed, far from figures of ridicule or tragedy, Hopkins is intent on reappropriating the agency of mixed-race people, her heroines in particular, beginning with *Contending Forces,* continuing through *Hagar’s Daughter* and *Winona* and culminating in the figure of Dianthe Lusk (who shares her name with John Brown’s first wife) in *Of One Blood,* as a critical point of contention in the construction of racial ideologies.

Highlighting the immediate intermingling of the Indigenous, European, and African peoples challenges the supposed mutual exclusivity of these groups, a foundational logic of racial ideology and the myth of white supremacy. Hopkins’s revisions to this history render fallacious the very proposition of difference, exposing

[31] JoAnn Pavletich, “Pauline Hopkins and the Death of the Tragic Mulatta,” Callaloo, Vol. 38, No. 3, Summer 2015, pp. 647-663.

the supposed racial distinctions as arbitrary. The anthropologist Fernando Ortiz characterizes “the painful process of transculturation” (102), a term he coined in the Cuban context as a way to “express the highly varied [cultural] phenomena that have come about” (Ortiz 98). He is particularly attentive to “the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place” in the “economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects” of daily life and lived experience (Ortiz 98). Ortiz notes the sometimes gradual and sometimes sudden transformation of the “intermeshed transculturations” in history, from the *longue durée* of “paleolithic to the neolithic Indians” to the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, when, “in a single day, various of the intervening ages were crossed” and “two worlds that discovered each other… collided head-on” (100). The initial violence, accompanied by the radical temporal shifts, in this “painful process of transculturation” is undeniable, and registered in Hopkins’s fiction and non-fiction as the comingling of these two genres that seek to make sense of the socio-geographical and historical shocks to systems already in flux.

While Ortiz’s examples are specific to his native Cuba, many of the same violent processes take place throughout the Americas. Hopkins applies this transculturation to other forms of fiction and exposes white supremacy as itself a social fiction. For her, the question of the violence necessary to enforce and uphold the racial fiction, and also necessary to enforce the fictions of gender and class, *is also* necessary to resist and overcome them, and becomes a key source of narrative

tension in her novels and non-fiction. In the Haitian context, as CLR James would assert thirty years later,[32] Hopkins points out that

> The rise of the blacks under Toussaint was in reality the culmination of a series of altercations between the Home government and the whites and mulattoes of the colony. To fully appreciate the advent of this man we must consider the surroundings that demanded such a character ("Toussaint L'Overture" 13).

These altercations expose the contradictions inherent in the nascent system of global capitalism that in turn shapes and reshapes the social landscape out of which ideologies of race arise, and Hopkins presents these "strivings for supremacy" as a struggle over revisions to the "genres of being human."

Revising the "Genres of Being Human"

In a brief passage fraught with some of the most intriguing omissions, silences, and revisions in the *Famous Men* series, Hopkins recounts the torture and execution of "James Ogé, the son of a wealthy mulatto woman, educated in Paris, and well known there in all political circles" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 13). The multiple histories published in the wake of the Haitian Revolution make no mention of "James Ogé,"[33]

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[32] "It was the quarrel between bourgeoisie and monarchy that brought the Paris masses on the political stage. It was the quarrel between whites and Mulattoes that woke the sleeping slaves." *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouuverture and the San Domingo Revolution,* pp. 73.

[33] Two notable exceptions are Marcus Rainsford's *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, and John Mercer Langston's "The World's Anti-Slavery Movement; Its Heroes and Triumphs" (1858). Was a British officer, and CLR James notes that his work is "little more than a propaganda pamphlet" (*The Black Jacobins* 388); Mercer's work initially uses the name "James Ogé," but subsequently switches to Vincent Ogé.

but another man, Vincent Ogé,[34] figures prominently in many accounts. He was "the son of a wealthy mulatto woman" whose short-lived insurrection of October 1790 sought to enforce the equality of the free-born mulattoes and white planters while maintaining the system of plantation slavery that had brought his family great wealth. As an embodiment of the contradictions inherent in the bourgeois revolutions occurring in Europe and the Americas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Vincent Ogé represents a unique challenge to Hopkins's counternarrative. To fully account for these contradictions would require much more space than the pages of *CAM* provided, to say nothing of the possible scandal any critical reckoning with Oge's dubious aims might arouse among both reactionary critics and her readers, many of whom were also middle class and mixed-race. Her subsequent revision of the Ogé episode occasions the first appearance of John Brown in her writing, and is one of the earliest examples of her experimentation with speculative and revisionist history in service of her broader project, the abolition of racial ideology.

Hopkins's revision begins by describing the moment, "When the National Convention in Paris, at the commencement of the Reign of Terror, issued its famous declaration,—'Liberty, Equality,'–the mulattoes in the colony of St. Domingo immediately contributed six million francs to its support, and asked in return that they be recognized socially and civilly" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 13). Her emphasis on the

[34] Vincent Ogé is featured in histories and novels of the Haitian Revolution such as Pamphile de Lacroix's 1819 *Mémoirs pour sevir à l'histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue,* Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* (1826), Harriet Martineau's *The Hour and the Man* (1841), J.L. Mercer's 1858 speech "The World's Anti-Savery Movement: Its Heroes and Triumphs," J.R. Beard's *Toussaint L'Ouverture: A Biography and Autobiography* (1863), and C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938).

conjuncture of the Reign of Terror and the Declaration of the Rights of Man signals textually the violence inherent in the assertion of these rights both in Haiti and globally, but also contextually as she notes the resonances in time. She continues, detailing the reaction from the planters of Saint Domingue when the National Assembly in Paris finally decreed that "All free-born Frenchmen are equal before the law" and Ogé

> was selected to carry the decree to the island. When it was laid before the general assembly there the enraged planters tore it to pieces, seized Ogé, broke him upon the wheel, quartered the yet palpitating body, and sent a part to be hung up in each of the four principal cities of the island, reviving a custom that had been dead since the suppression of the Spanish Inquisition. Ogé was a martyr; so was John Brown a few years later at Harper's Ferry. Every great movement in the name of right demands its innocent victim. The death of Ogé sowed the seed which caused the blacks to rise and free themselves in St. Domingo. The spirit of John Brown marched on and on until it swept this country like an avalanche, and freed six millions from oppression. (Dworkin 13)

Here, the full historical resonance of these moments–the French and Hatian Revolutions, the Spanish Inquisition, John Brown's raid and the ensuing Civil War in the United States–forms a Benjaminian constellation pointing to Hopkins's own moment and the dangers therein.

The brutality and spectacle of Ogé's execution are certainly calculated to remind her readers of the more recent spectacles of the ongoing campaign of lynching in the United States intended to discourage similar demands for social and civil recognition. Ogé's punishment for pursuing membership in the nascent political identity as a "free-born Frenchmen" is literal *dis*memberment. However, the almost passive role Hopkins ascribes to Ogé implies that his personal and political connections are the basis of his being "selected to carry the decree" of the National Assembly to the island, and that he was swept along, for better or worse, by the spirit of revolution in France only to be crushed by the forces of reaction in Saint Domingue. This half-spoken implication belies the loud silences and deliberate omissions in this account and speaks to a much more complex entanglement of the past, present, and possible futures.

On its surface, Hopkins's rather brief narrative of Ogé's failed attempt to secure equality peacefully through the body politic and the evisceration of his physical body illustrates the violence inherent in the processes of transculturation at play in the Haitian Revolution. As the "son of a wealthy mulatto woman, educated in Paris," Ogé represents one of those "extremely complex transmutations of culture," exposing the contradictions of colonial societies in the Americas and globally. Here, Hopkins's emphasis on Ogé's matrilineal connection to wealth and society and her omission of the third term frequently associated with the motto of the French Revolution, "Fraternity," demonstrates the deliberate denial of these blood relations by the French planters on San Domingo; their very existence is antithetical to racial

ideologies and undermines the myth of white supremacy. Considering the Christian discourse Hopkins deploys in "Toussaint L'Overture," this seemingly incomplete account can be read as the next logical episode of the postlapsarian narrative, where Ogé's murder at the hands of his brother-colonists and planters recapitulates the story of Cain and Abel. In this instance, the mark of Cain is both the very whiteness that the planters planned to protect and that will come to haunt them under Dessalines, but also the blackness of the freed slaves, who will face imperial interference for generations.

At face value, then, the murder of Ogé becomes the occasion for the first appearance of John Brown in her non-fiction. The fictionalized pairing across space and time is consistent with their actual historical outcomes. Both men ultimately failed in their respective missions, but were nevertheless successful in highlighting the social contradictions that create racial ideologies, their martyrdoms serving as catalysts for the civil conflicts that end slavery in their respective homelands. Contrasted with Brown's more militant attempts to secure the equality of enslaved black people in the United States, as well as his divestment from his own whiteness, Hopkins demonstrates that whether one seeks civil redress of these contradictions through non-violent political demands or through revolutionary violence, the reaction from those in power would entail the same brutality that ultimately defeated both Ogé and Brown.

Ogé's social status as a free-born man of means but mixed heritage excluded him from the dominant class of French planters, and his demand to be recognized as

equal to the whites on San Domingo was an affront to the socioeconomic hierarchies of the island. Thus, the mechanisms of racial ideology that mask these contradictions began to operate against him as soon as his “contribution” was made in Paris, culminating in his death and a years-long bloody revolution. Brown, who also asserted this equality in the face of racial ideologies in the U.S., was himself frequently depicted as not completely “white,” and in fact had deliberately divested himself of “whiteness” as racial and cultural capital through his actions as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and his founding of an interracial enclave at Elba, New York. From the beginning of his assault on Harpers Ferry until well into the 20th century, reactionaries including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Robert Penn Warren[35] attempted to revise the historical record, casting Brown as a madman and fanatic. These accusations still haunt the historical record, and may have demonstrated to Hopkins the power of revisionist narrative.

The comparison would be an unremarkable truism if taken at face value. However, Hopkins omits from her account of Ogé’s martyrdom the fact that he, too, attempted an armed insurrection that failed, and, more importantly, the fact that his motives were far from the radical demands of abolitionists like John Brown, or even Toussaint himself. Further, Hopkins could not have been unaware of these facts. For one, the source material from which she freely borrows, including her fictional

[35] After Brown’s execution Hawthorne stated that “No man was more rightly hanged” (Burns); Robert Penn Warren’s 1929 biography, *John Brown*: *The Making of a Martyr* portrays Brown as a cunning media manipulator who cultivated his image for personal gain. See Jonathan S. Cullick’s “The Making of a Historian: Robert Penn Warren’s Biography of John Brown,” *The Mississippi Quarterly,* Winter 1997-98, pp. 33-54.

source, makes Ogé's dubious aims abundantly clear. The British novelist Harriet Martineau, whose novel *The Hour and the Man* (1841) is quoted at great length in "Toussaint L'Overture," begins with an account of Ogé's "ill-principled and ill-managed revolt" and subsequent execution (Martineau 10). The details of Ogé's failed rebellion, well-known to novelists and historians at the time, cast the anachronistic comparison to Brown and the drastic revision of the episode in a new light, as one of the earliest examples of Hopkins's own speculative and revisionist historical fiction.

In *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), C.L.R. James paints a more critical picture of the circumstances that produced Ogé. Lacking the jubilance of Hopkins's account, James describes how "a fortnight" after King Louis XVI had signed the Declaration of the Rights of Man "the Mulattoes appeared at the bar of a House still echoing the famous declaration, and claimed the Rights of Man" (James 38). The bourgeoisie in the National Assembly were stunned by the demands of Ogé and his friends, for

> How could an Assembly which had just passed the Rights of Man refuse to relieve these men from the injustices under which they suffered? They based their claim not only on abstract grounds but on their wealth, and offered six millions as security for the National Debt. It was an unanswerable case, and the president gave them his cordial, if careful welcome. (James 68)

What Hopkins characterizes as a "contribution" to the idealism of the French Revolution was actually a down payment made to the state in exchange for the

recognition of the civil rights of the mulattoes, a bribe that was only possible because of the wealth they had obtained through their own participation in the slave economy of San Domingo. If the bourgeoisie would not recognize their status as "free-born Frenchmen" on the "abstract grounds" of "*Liberte, Egalite,*" or the more concrete grounds of "*Fraternite*" and their blood relations to the white planters, they could at least make a down payment, or investment, in this social "whiteness" based on their wealth.

One of the most detailed sources available to Hokpins, J.R. Beard's *Toussaint L'Ouverture: A Biography and Autobiography* (1863),[36] presents the more damning facts of the Ogé episode. Beard notes that when Ogé returned to the colony, he did so

> under the name of Poissac, with the title of lieutenant-colonel, and the order of the Lion, which he had purchased of the Prince of Limbourg; and, having visited his mother, who lived in handsome style at Dondon, marched, in alliance with Chavannes, a man of his own caste, at the head of two hundred men to La Grande Rivière, in the Department of the North. (Beard 46)

Believing himself to have purchased the recognition of the National Assembly in Paris, in addition to a military rank and title, and no doubt assured that he would succeed in compelling the whites of Saint Domingue to recognize the equality of the *gens du coleur*, Ogé presented his letter of 17 October 1791 to the planters in Le Cap

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[36] Beard's biography was immensely popular, and published by James Redpath, a well-known abolitionist and envoy to Haiti whom Hopkins knew of through his Boston Lyceum Bureau and likely based some of her own descriptions of Brown on his *The Public Life of Captain John Brown* (1860) (*Famous Women of the Negro Race,* "Phenomenal Vocalists"); Redpath was a comrade of Brown's and served as his go-between in his negotiations with the so-called "Secret Six" financial backers in Boston; he later served as an ambassador to Haiti for the Freedmen's Bureau (Du Bois).

on the eve of his insurrection. But we learn that what he actually "laid before the general assembly there" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 13) stated plainly that he would not "call on the plantations to rise" and "did not include in [his] claims the condition of the negroes who live in servitude" (Beard 46-47). Indeed, C.L.R. James castigates Ogé as the "good Liberal" who was "unsuited to the task before him," and whose attempt to "appeal to the common interests of the whites and mulattoes as slave-owners" was incapable of breaking the ideological fetters of race that bound his would-be white colleagues (James 74).

After the French planters refused his terms, Ogé and Chavannes, "one of the many Mulattoes who had fought in the American War of Independence" commenced their brief campaign, during which "Ogé committed no crimes, but Chavanne massacred a few whites" (James 74). Chavannes, whose name likely appears on the "authentic list" of Haitians who fought in the American Revolution, is another figure with whom Hopkins was likely familiar. Appearing in Beard's biography of Toussaint, as well as John Mercer Langston's[37] "World's Anti-Slavery Movement: Its Heroes and Triumphs," both works emphasize Chavannes's heroic conduct on the day of his execution, which would make him a much likelier candidate for comparison with Brown, especially when contrasted with Ogé's loss of "firmness" on that day, but he is omitted completely from her sketch of Toussaint.

[37] Hopkins profiles Langston in ninth installment of *Famous Men of the Negro Race,* that appeared in *CAM* in July 1901.

Perhaps more than the historical record, however, it is Harriet Martineau's *The Hour and the Man,* a work of historical fiction, that offers Hopkins both a motive and model for her revisions. The novel opens with a description of Ogé's "ill-principled and ill-managed revolt" and subsequent execution, but it is Martineau's depiction of his mother that likely moved Hopkins. Madame Ogé, a wealthy, mixed-race plantation owner, is an unhappy woman whose negative impression of Toussaint is formed as much by her class position as by her grief at the loss of her son. She expresses a deep sense of dread at the impending racial violence that her son's execution heralded. In one exchange, she laments Toussaint's ascent to power, recalling him in bondage, and claiming that "If those had been masters who ought to have been masters," then

> Toussaint would, no doubt, have been placed at the head of the negroes: for we knew him well—I and they whom I have lost. Then, without insubordination,—without any being lifted out of their proper places, to put down others—we should have had a vast improvement in the negroes. Toussaint would have been made their model, and perhaps would have been rewarded with his freedom, some day or other, for an example. This would have satisfied all the ambition he had by nature. He would have died a free man, and perhaps have emancipated his family. As it is, they will all die slaves: and they will feel it all the harder for the farce of greatness they have been playing these ten years. I am very sorry for them: and I always was; for I foresaw from the beginning how it would end. (Martineau 239)

In this passage from *The Hour and the Man,* Martineau allows Madame Ogé's fixation on what "ought" to have been done with an "ambitious" slave like Toussaint to give a clearer sense of the prevailing politics of the time, their contradictions, and the complex intersections of the *gens du coleur's* class interests with their desire for social and civil equality. Through Madame Ogé's speculative and revisionist reverie, the contradictions of Vincent Ogé's views and the cause of his rebellion, which sought only the formal recognition of the propertied class of mulattoes as equal to their white counterparts, and the maintenance of their own property in African slaves, are exposed and Hopkins could not have missed this fact in her own reading.

In light of Ogé's spectacular failure and dubious aims, why does Hopkins include such a glowing tribute to a historical figure whose attempts to purchase whiteness could not be more antithetical to John Brown's own divestment from it? One response is that Hopkins clearly understands the role that the "propaganda of history," described by Du Bois almost four decades later in his seminal *Black Reconstruction in America*, plays in shaping contemporary ideological landscapes. As Du Bois notes in his 1935 *magnum opus*,

> It is propaganda like this that has led men in the past to insist that history is "lies agreed upon"; and to point out the danger in such misinformation... Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable? (486)

In this sense, we see that Hopkins is aware of how Ogé's shortsightedness might be used by reactionary revisionist historians to discredit the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint, and struggles for black liberation more broadly. Her decision to revise the record of Vincent Ogé denies white reactionaries the opportunity of lumping him in with figures who had already been demonized, including Dessalines and the black elected representatives of the Reconstruction era who, among other falsehoods, were charged with a "saturnalia of corrupt expenditures" during that crucial period (*Black Reconstruction* 485). Hopkins, who was no doubt familiar with these revisionist histories that were used to support a process of gradual emancipation in the antebellum period and contemporary arguments for the gradual education and uplift of black people at the turn of the century, must have recognized the parallels between these discourses and Madame Ogé's own speculative and revisionist reverie in Martineau's *The Hour and the Man*.

Madame Ogé's revisionism relies on a highly improbable causal sequence of conditionals, the "if's" and "ought's" that, "*perhaps* would have" culminated in Toussaint's freedom or "the emancipation of his family," in order to reconstruct a more palatable past, and maintain the status quo of her petit bourgeois existence (Martineau 239). Her nostalgia for her former privilege and her desire for a return to her "proper place" in the social hierarchy ignores the fundamental contradictions of the slave system, which precluded any possibility of emancipation without a violent rupture. This kind of reactionary, revisionist speculation was already leading to the rehabilitation of the Old South in American culture via white supremacist authors like

Thomas Dixon, whose novels *The Leopard's Spots* (1902)[38] and *The Clansman* (1905) were instrumental in revitalizing and perpetuating white racial ideology in the cultural sphere, posing a very real threat to African Americans' struggles for equality. Hopkins, recognizing the social contradictions which produced reactionaries like the fictional Madame Ogé and the all-too-real Thomas Dixon, also recognized the Benjaminian "moment of danger" they signaled. Rather than mere conjecture, her speculative re-articulation of the Ogé moment relies on the very real resonances between the struggles for equality in 1900 and past struggles, including the Haitian Revolution and the revolutionary abolitionism of the antebellum period, and she reconstructs the past in the context of the broader historical constellation. Hopkins's speculative approach informs my own.

In painting Ogé's insurrection with broad strokes, remaining silent about his specific aims, and renaming him "James," Hopkins pens a speculative and revisionist history. Using a combination of the factual and the counterfactual, she strategically recasts Ogé as a tragic mulatto figure. Her calculated use of this familiar trope and her invocation of Brown provide her readers with two general examples of principled resistance to white supremacist ideologies. In the same way that the pseudonym "J. Shirley Shadrach" provides a critical distance from sensitive topics in the *Furnace Blasts* series, her semi-fictional account of "James Ogé" helps Hopkins avoid the twin

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[38] Dixon's novel is itself a revision of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and attempts a rehabilitation of that novel's infamous overseer Simon Legree. The novel was reviewed by William Stanley Braithwaite in the June 1902 edition of *CAM* alongside the second installment of *Winona*.

pitfalls of reinforcing racist arguments about black inferiority and accommodationist arguments about staying in one's "proper place."

Instead, she offers an alternative to the rhetoric of white supremacists like Dixon *and* accommodationists such as Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee Machine, (which would play such a prominent role in her own descent into literary and historical obscurity). Additionally, her early revision of this history suggests a similarly timed rejection of the accommodationist line. By remaining silent on the details of Ogé's "ill-principled" insurrection and the reasons for its failure, choosing instead to invoke the martyrdom of John Brown to lend authenticity to Ogé's failed insurrection, Hopkins makes a much broader point. She recasts the failures of both Ogé and Brown through tracing the limits and possibilities of gradual liberal democratic reforms and armed insurrection when the base of popular support for either course is weak, and when the forces of reaction are already prepared to meet even modest requests with brutality.

In supplementing and entangling her own historical and biographical sketches with fiction and remaining silent on the complexities and contradictions embodied in Ogé, she taps the broader implications, more accessible to her audience, of these two figures. While Ogé's demands were far too limited in the scope of the "liberty and equality" they aimed to secure, his insurrection was nevertheless instrumental in heightening the contradictions present in the colony. In Hopkins's revisionist history, Ogé rather than Toussaint L'Ouverture creates "the opening" for a more ambitious rebellion that culminated in the first free, black republic in the Americas. Similarly,

Brown’s more ambitious demands and his failure at Harpers Ferry were a catalyst for the American Civil War which, though it began with the modest aims of ending the secessionist insurrection while preserving chattel slavery where it existed, and thus the nation-state on the North American continent, nevertheless culminated in emancipation and a ten-year experiment in what Du Bois would later call “abolition democracy” (*Black Reconstruciton in America* 35). While both projects have been (and continue to be) sabotaged by the same forces of reaction, both also stand as compelling examples of what could have been, and offer Hopkins the material for the speculative and revisionist fiction that follows the *Famous Men* and *Famous Women* series in *CAM*.

The Hour, Then the Man

Hopkins’s sketch of Toussaint emphasizes the transcultural processes at play, including her own transculturating alternation between past and present, fact and fiction. The textual network informing Hopkins’s pastiched profile demonstrates that histories of Toussaint written by his detractors and his admirers are already revisionist biographical narratives, contextually dependent on the cultural mythologies of race and nation out of which they originate, and to which they must cohere. As such, Toussaint is a figure that demonstrates both the limits and possibilities of the transcultural processes at play in the Americas. Toussaint’s meteoric rise and tragic downfall are as inextricably entangled with the European ideals he embraces as those he rejects. The portrait that emerges is one that indicates Hopkins’s place in what

Cedric Robinson calls the Black Radical Tradition, a tradition that "does not promise triumph or victory at the end, only liberation" (Johnson and Lubin 15).

Toussaint's earliest biographers demonstrate the revisionist tendencies of European historiographers, acknowledging "him to have been brave, sagacious, and endowed with wonderful powers for war and government" but adding that these "attributes… were prostituted from noble ends by savagery in battle and hypocrisy in religion" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 14). But any analysis of Toussaint's conduct or methodologies can only have a basis in the sociocultural environment in which he developed, and the epistemologies that comprised it. To that end Hopkins lists the "books which engrossed his mind during the years of his leisure upon the plantation before he was called to be a leader of men" including "Caesar's *Commentaries, History of Alexander the Great,* D'Orléans' *History of Revolutions in England and Spain,* Marshal Saxe's *Military Reveries,* Herodotus, Lloyd's *Military and Political Memoirs,* English Socrates, Plutarch, Cornelius Nepos, etc." and concludes by adding that "he knew something of herbs, too, and first joined the army as a physician ("Toussaint L'Overture" 15). To his detractors, Toussaint's blend of traditional knowledge and European philosophical traditions represent a perversion of the ideals embodied in their "great men of history." However, Hopkins notes the contextual divergence, stating that these records "do not accord with the known facts of his life, with the tenderness that enwraps his memory among his native Haytians whom he delivered from bondage, nor with the story contained within the Haytian state papers"

(“Toussaint L’Overture” 14). Here, she confronts her readers with the multiple contradictions Toussaint embodies as a transcultural figure.

Because he is a “negro of unmixed blood,” Toussaint’s successes cannot be attributed to the single referent of “blood” within the context of white supremacist discourse; his immersion in European historiography and philosophy meant that he was as firmly rooted in that tradition as he was in the blended Indigenous and African cultures of the island. His detractors’ reluctant acknowledgements of his many achievements are proof enough of his skill as a statesman and leader of the revolution. In the cultural memory of his “native Haytians” and the state they created, Toussaint is “prominent among men of colossal brain, who made and unmade kings and formed governments anew,” the equal of his white contemporaries “Robespierre, Washington, Danton, Adams, Lafayette, Jefferson and Mirabeau,” and the Enlightenment ideals they embody (“Toussaint L’Overture” 12). In drawing to her readers’ attention the broader ideological *milieu* of the Enlightenment as the backdrop against which the various bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries took place, Hopkins decenters the familiar figures of the American and French Revolutions. “Napoleon’s black shadow— Toussaint L’Overture” emerges at the head of those who “make and unmake” kings, governments, and sociopolitical boundaries, and about whom the “colored woman must have an intimate knowledge.” She is again calling on her readers to revise their cognitive maps to account for the broader ideological landscapes of the world that are hidden by the color line, with the ultimate aim of a more immediate idea of how this landscape shapes the social and

political landscapes of the present. Toussaint's uncritical acceptance of the Enlightenment ideals that permeated the revolutions in Europe and the Americas demonstrates how these landscapes determine the limits and possibilities of a liberatory project within the very same cultural frameworks that produce ideologies of gender, race, and class.

Relying again on Martineau's novel for the details of his life, Hopkins states explicitly that "the ruin of Toussaint was due in great measure to his loyalty to France and his filial feeling for Bonaparte" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 15). Put another way, Toussaint's fatal flaw was the very feeling of "*fraternité*" that the white planters had denied to Ogé. Unlike Ogé this feeling is not based on blood relations, but on the belief that Toussaint belonged to the brotherhood of "great men of history." Toussaint's "filial feelings" towards Bonaparte and France blinded him to the persistence of race as an ideology. Instead, Toussaint had a shared belief in the bourgeois will to power, notions of private property, and *laissez faire* economics, which he had picked up in his reading and exposure to colonial society; his only objection was to holding human beings as property.

Toussaint's insistence that the exiled planters return to the island and continue cultivating their crops, with their former bondsmen as wage laborers, lead to the reproach that he had "more love for the whites than for his own people" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 16). It is an earlier instance of capital's shift from enslaved to waged labor that Du Bois would later call the "second slavery" of Jim Crow in the United States (*Souls* 13). Indeed, his actions seem to reflect this almost as much as Ogé's.

After quoting Martineau's fictional account of the execution of his nephew, General Moyse, for violating orders that protected the rights of the white colonists at great length, Hopkins sums up this episode as follows:

> While we admire the grandeur of a great moral heroism as exhibited in the abnegation which led this man, for the sake of what he called justice, to destroy his nephew—the betrothed of his daughter—the only child of a wifeless brother, still we feel that such a course would have been beyond us of the present day and generation; nor do we feel shame in making such a confession when we consider the treachery of the whites, who even then contemplated L'Ouverture's destruction. ("Toussaint L'Overture," 18)

Here, Hopkins acknowledges the "attributes" admired by his enemies–his "great moral heroism" and "abnegation"–but shows that in this context they are, in fact, perverse because they so closely reflect the morals (or lack thereof) of the white planters. Toussaint denies his actual blood relation to "the only child of a wifeless brother" on "abstract grounds," and for a false sense of justice, which is not honored by the whites who "even then contemplated [his] destruction." Too late, he realizes his mistake; his "filial feelings" toward Bonaparte allowed Toussaint to be lured into a trap by Napoleon's agents. The ideological fetters of the bourgeois Enlightenment that did nothing to break the real fetters of race slavery re-ensnare Toussaint, and he dies in a cell in France. This demonstrates that while liberation from slavery is possible, the danger remains if the ideological underpinnings of racism are not dismantled.

And yet, because Toussaint so powerfully embodies the very ideals that his enemies accuse him of perverting, because her narrative of his life is "a recovery of a kind of Blackness which had nobility and had a past," Hopkins is able to point to him and say: "All these things were done by [Black] men of education capable of thinking and acting for themselves; with a long line of ancestry, perhaps, which transmitted to its later offspring the power to command armies and hold the reins of government" ("Toussaint L'Overture" 21). Even, or perhaps especially, in failure, the fact that the slaves of Haiti rose up "under a slave! armed with nothing but their implements of toil and their own brave hearts… drove back the conqueror of the world; and clasping Freedom to her breast, Hayti crowned herself with the cap of liberty," serves as an illustration of that same Black Radical Tradition that promises liberty, but not victory. Looking towards the future, Hopkins assures her readers that they need

> not fear for the future of Hayti or for the future of the whole race... As a race we shall be preserved, although annihilation sometimes seems very near. For the Republic of Hayti, whose freedom was cemented by the martyred blood of this soldier and statesman, we feel… that as the north star is eternal in the heavens, so will Hayti remain forever in the firmament of nations. ("Toussaint L'Overture" 22)

In other words, the failures of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions to deliver on their promises in full imply that the conditions of possibility necessary for their fulfillment are a set of questions yet to be asked. The conjuncture of these failures and the more recent failures of Radical Reconstruction, what Du Bois

famously calls "a splendid failure," necessitates a recovery of the past through speculative and revisionist historical fiction, opening up a space allowing these questions to be asked, if not answered.

In *Winona* this practice manifests itself in the juxtaposition of shifting physical and social terrain, which moves from the porous social spaces of US-Canadian border of the Northeast, through the rigid gender, race, and class hierarchies of the slave state of Missouri, to the plains of Kansas where the ambiguity of this "territory" places it conceptually within the bourgeois legal categories of American empire, but outside of its actual laws, offering a glimpse of what an intersectional coalition of revolutionaries might have built on stolen land reclaimed from US empire. Within the shifting social and physical spaces of the novel, the resonances between the temporal dimension of Hopkins's broader revisionist project and the novel are unmistakable, as she speculates on the revolutionary potential of a multi-racial, multi-gendered coalition of committed abolitionists in the 1850s to create new social configurations, and a future radically different from the historical moment from which Hopkins is writing.

Hopkins's choice to focus on the nearly forgotten successes of Brown's Kansas campaign in the mid-1850's, rather than the well-known and oft-cited failure of his final raid on Harpers Ferry and subsequent martyrdom in 1859, speaks to an attempt at redeeming the past in order to highlight the revolutionary possibilities in the present. While the promise inaugurated by the John Brown moment and carried on through the era of radical Reconstruction was abandoned by the forces of reaction

and the subsequent rise of lynch law and Jim Crow in the 1870s, Hopkins wants her readers to see that the vision of revolutionary abolition is nevertheless still within reach in the present, if only she can re-open a conceptual space at the turn of the century in which they might imagine a social order beyond the post-Emancipation nightmare of a "second slavery" and a nationwide campaign of terror and lynching. The novel promises a kind of liberation, but, like the failed revolutions which inform it, the ultimate triumph remains to be foreseen.

Chapter Two

"Judged by the ordinary eye, Judah's nature was horrible, but it was the natural outcome or growth of the 'system' as practiced upon the black race. He felt neither remorse nor commiseration for the deed just committed… Time and place were forgotten as he stood there like a statue. He was back in the past. His thoughts ran backwards in an unbroken train until the scene before him changed to the island and the day when the careless happiness of his free youth was broken by the advent of the strangers, Colonel Titus and Bill Thomson… As through a mist, queries and propositions and possibilities took shape, there on the cliffside, that had never before presented themselves to him. As he stood in the blazing sunlight, his brain throbbed intolerably and every pulsation was a shooting pain. Why had he been so dull of comprehension? What if a thought just born in his mind should prove true? O, to be free once more!"
Winona, A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest, 1902

Speculative Histories of the Present

Just as Pauline Hopkins's revisionist historical and biographical writing serves as a counterpoint to the white supremacist revisionism that prevailed in late 19th and early 20th century historiography, her dramas and fiction are also counternarratives, offering her readers an alternative to the prevailing white-authored fictions of the time.[39] Her plays, novels, and short fiction consist of multivalent immanent critiques of racial ideology, couched in the hetero-generic language of minstrelsy, romance, and adventure novels, and supplemented with her own self-citational borrowings, as well as those from other works of fiction and non-fiction. These works often engage directly with the shifting terrain of contemporary national and regional discourses

[39] Here, Thomas Dixon is the exemplary case study. Throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s Dixon's lectures, plays, and fiction presented audiences with the so-called "Lost Cause" narrative, seeking to rehabilitate the South through revisionist histories of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. His most notable works are *The Leopard's Spots: a Novel of The White Man's Burden* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1905). The latter was adapted by D.W. Griffith and became the basis of his film *The Birth of a Nation*, which is widely recognized as one of the earliest white supremacist propaganda films.

around race, class, and gender. Her well-known 1879 play, *Peculiar Sam*, responds to post-Reconstruction challenges to African American civil rights and autonomy with an all-black cast, reappropriating minstrelsy, and re-presenting its white-supremacist tropes in a revised form that posits a model of African American heroism and national identity in the absence of white antagonists. Just over two decades later, as attempts by Southern apologists to rationalize the epidemic of white supremacist violence gained traction with Northern whites, Hopkins's novel *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902), offered *The Colored American Magazine's* 18,000 subscribers a militant counternarrative, emphasizing interracial solidarity and resistance to white supremacist ideology.

The passage from *Winona* cited above is at once a summary and metanarrative of Hopkins's *oeuvre* up to that point. In the moments after he believes he has killed his former master, Judah's physical and psychological shock gives way to a cliff-side reverie that models a potential conceptual synthesis of her broader revisionist project as well as anticipates the potential shock this synthesis may produce in her readers. Rapidly recapitulating the revisionist histories of Hopkins's earlier non-fiction, and previewing the apocalyptic auguries of her later ethnographies, Judah's recollection of "the advent of strangers" on "the island… of his free youth" recalls her account of Hispaniola,[40] the advent of Columbus, European colonialism, and the introduction of "commerce for slaves between Africa and America" in her 1900 biographical sketch

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[40] Cherene Sherrard-Johnson analyzes the prominent role of "island tropology and topology" in Hopkins's work in her essay "Insubordinate Islands and Coastal Chaos: Pauline Hopkins's Literary Land/Seascapes" (pp. 232-258) in *Archipelagic American Studies*, eds. Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens.

of “Toussaint L’Overture” (12). The speculative “queries and questions and possibilities” elicited by this act of revenge lead him to the realization that “to be free once more” requires revolutionary direct action, anticipating Hopkins’s 1905 predictions that “when labor and capital become contending forces… blood will flow,” (“A Primer of Facts” 351), and this “great labor contest… will teach the Anglo-Saxon that ‘all men were created equal’ and that ‘*all* men’ are not ‘*white* men’” (“North American Indian–Conclusion” 330). A nodal point in Hopkins’s corpus, *Winona* represents a radical shift in the focus of her revisionist project from the problems of the past and present towards the possibilities of the future.

Hopkins’s deep New England roots inform her rendering of Judah’s moment of *anagnorisis*. Her reference to the “ordinary eye” and its myopic view of Judah’s vengeance evokes by contrast Emerson’s all-seeing “transparent eye-ball,” linking the famous Transcendentalist and the fictitious former slave in allied philosophical endeavors. The vivid image of Judah’s statuesque form on the edge of the cliff, leaning on his rifle in the “blazing sunlight, his brain throbb[ing],” recalls Emerson “standing on the bare ground” in “Nature,” his “head bathed by blithe air and uplifted into infinite space” (*Winona* 418; “Nature” 4). However, the relative tranquility of Emerson’s transcendence clashes with the violence of Judah’s. For the latter, the abstractions of the past and the future are physically connected through his actions in the present, and the physical shock they elicit. For her readers, this shock forces a reckoning with the internal contradictions of the (world) “system” out of which

ideologies of race, gender, and class arise. Put another way, we might consider the way that, “for a fleeting instant,” both Judah and Emerson

> catch a glimpse of unified world, of a universe in which discontinuous realities are nonetheless somehow implicated with each other and intertwined, no matter how remote they may at first have seemed; in which the reign of chance briefly refocuses into a network of cross relationships wherever the eye can reach, contingency temporarily transmuted into necessity… there is momentarily effected a kind of reconciliation between the realm of matter and that of spirit. For in its framework the essentially abstract character of the ideological phenomenon suddenly touches earth, takes on something of the density and significance of an act in the real world of things and material production. (Jameson 8)

Readers knocked out of their conceptual stasis might transcend the limitations of the “ordinary eye” and re/view Judah’s “horrible” act through the “transparent eye-ball” of history, recontextualizing the “natural outcome” of the past in the present, and gesturing toward the future in “the distant line of the horizon” (“Nature” 4).

The complex intertextual network informing this passage requires no small effort to untangle. It’s no wonder then that much of the scholarship around *Winona* focuses on the novel’s perplexing peculiarities: the enigmas of its heroine’s silences, its amalgamation of apparently antithetical generic forms, its complicated relationship with indigeneity, and its ambiguous conclusion. However, just as Judah’s act of vengeance is comprehensible only through the Emersonian “transparent eye-ball” of

history, *Winona*'s generic incongruities are best read in the context of Hopkins's broader revisionist project. Only when historicized do the work's ambiguities and contradictions point to the "ungeneralizable combination of circumstances"[41] out of which it arose as a speculative and revisionist historical novel. In this light, the "queries and propositions and possibilities" elicited by the novel interrogate the socioeconomic "system" of racialized capitalism that has persisted, more or less, through various permutations in the Americas since the advent of European colonialism, and inspire readers to ponder how "to be free once more!" Her early experiences as a playwright, actress, and singer gave Hopkins an intimate understanding of the politics of mass culture and cultural production in the 19th century, how popular culture shapes, and is shaped by ideology, and as such offer an indispensable insight into the novel's composition.

Some Scenes From Early Dramas

Pauline Hopkins had deep familial and social connections to luminaries and leading figures in the Abolitionist and Women's Rights movements in New England that also extended into the world of art and drama. Her great aunt and namesake, Annie Pauline Pindell, was a "composer and celebrated prima donna" whose ascent to international fame was halted in 1853, when she canceled her engagements and rushed home to care for her nephew, Elijah Smith, after the death of her sister (Brown 77). Pindell's influence on Smith was profound, and he passed this legacy on to his

[41] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 1971. p. 180.

younger cousin, Pauline. Smith was instrumental in facilitating Hopkins's first stage appearance as the lead in the Progressive Musical Union's all-black adaptation of *Pauline; or, The Belle of Saratoga* (1877). Performed in front of a multiracial audience at Parker Memorial Hall, this adaptation "allowed [Hopkins] and her African American troupe to signify upon–or reference and revise–the extremely popular blackface minstrel tradition without compromising their respectability or artistic ambitions" (Brown 100). The production's subversive reappropriations became "an extended African American caricature of 'real' white American behaviors," emphasizing "aggressive indictments of class and ethnicity" that undoubtedly influenced the ideas and opinions of its audience, as well as Hopkins's own approach to scriptwriting, and the development of her own "race concept" (Brown 99;102).

In her only complete surviving play, *Peculiar Sam, or, The Underground Railroad* (1879), Hopkins gives an early intimation of her talent for balancing subversive revisions of dominant cultural narratives with the expectations of her audiences. Written when she was just 20 years old and performed nationally at a time of increased racial tension in the wake of President Rutherford B. Hayes's abandonment of Reconstruction, the play explicitly rejects the white supremacist discourse around African Americans' inclusion in the body politic and U.S. culture more broadly, seeking instead to nurture a burgeoning black national identity in the U.S. Her generic revisions demonstrate her awareness that the derogatory stereotypes of African Americans perpetuated in minstrelsy reflected the similarly performative

nature of racial ideology, what Barbara J. Fields describes as "ritual repetition" which is in turn mediated through the expectations and presuppositions of white audiences. In *Peculiar Sam*, Hopkins's all-black cast interrupts the "ritual repetition of the appropriate social behavior," a repetition and "re-enactment that removes the matter from the realm of calculation to that of routine" and offers her audience a critical space from which to interrogate mainstream minstrelsy as more than "a 'handing down' of appropriate 'attitudes,'" about race, gender, and class (Fields 113). Put another way, *Peculiar Sam* is "a distorted mirror," held up for the audience, "reflecting displacements and condensations and discontinuities between which and the social field there exist lags, unevennesses, multiple determinations" (Lott 8).

Hopkins must meet her audience on their terms and within the formal constraints of the minstrel performance, while turning the content inside out and subverting racist tropes. *Peculiar Sam* repurposes the popular racist "routines" of the mainstream minstrel show for an all-Black cast, emphasizing through the absence of white antagonists how these patterns are interrupted, subverting the racist discourses that ritualistically produced and *re*produced ideologies of race. This early experience was instrumental in shaping the fine balance Hopkins was able to strike in navigating the sometimes antithetical expectations of her multiracial readership almost thirty years later.

In 1903, one year after the serial publication of *Winona*, a self-identified white woman wrote to the *Colored American Magazine's* editorial board condemning portrayals of interracial romance in Hopkins's novels and wondering whether she

could “imagine no love beautiful and sublime within the range of the colored race, for each other?” (*CAM* v. 6 399). In her own response, printed in the magazine, to this reader, Hopkins writes that she is “glad to receive this criticism for it shows more clearly than ever that white people don’t understand *what pleases negroes.*” Citing the fact that she has nevertheless “received great praise” from many of her white readers “for the work [she] is doing in exposing the social life of Southerners and the wickedness of their caste prejudice,” she declares that she will “let the good work go on” (*CAM* v. 6 399-400). Her emphasis on “caste prejudice” here indicates an intersectional analysis of race and its class and gender entanglements that situates all three as categories of exploitation and subjugation that she hopes to emphasize for her readers. In her novels, this awareness of her readers’ expectations and anticipation of their reactions[42] allows Hopkins to use the formal elements of the romance, the western, and the historical novel to bring ideological distortions of reactionaries into focus. The success of *Peculiar Sam,* itself a re-enactment of the routines of antebellum life performed in front of multiethnic audiences, but from the varied perspectives of the slaves of Magnolia Plantation,[43] and in the *absence* of any white characters, was surely the origin of her confidence in this matter.

The play begins with Sam, a field hand described in the dramatis personae as having a “very fair complexion,” dancing a “new step” for his fellow slaves as they return from their work. Sam’s complexion is an indicator of his ability to inhabit two

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[42] She had predicted in an earlier exchange that her novel *Contending Forces* would likely “create a sensation among a certain class of whites in the South” (Dworkin 145).

[43] Magnolia Farm is also the name of Colonel Titus’s plantation in *Winona*.

worlds, despite being barred from one, and this "new step" suggests a "new" step into the realm of social equality and cultural creation, a theme which is repeated at the end of the play. After his dance, Sam proceeds to the kitchen, to speak with his mother, Mammy. Her authority over this liminal space stems from the gendered hierarchy of labor, and forced domestic and reproductive labor that produced mixed-race people like Sam. Here, he learns that Virginia, an educated house slave, has been forced to marry Jim, the black overseer of Magnolia Plantation. Jinny resolves to run away "rather than to remain" on the plantation and "become what they wish [her] to be" (*PS* 1.1). Hopkins highlights the ways that slavery deployed the ready-made ideological constructs of class and gender along with race to subjugate those who are inscribed within those categories of exploitation.

However, Jinny's reaction to her forced marriage serves as the catalyst for a collective rejection of and resistance to white supremacy and patriarchal gender relations. Sam, who has been in love with Jinny since childhood, immediately agrees to follow her and flee to Canada, along with his mother and his sister, Juno. Sam tells the others, "Dars been suthin' a growin' an' a growin' inter me, an' it keep sayin', 'run'way, run away, Sam, be a man, be a free man!" and so he has stolen a pass "in kase ob a 'mergensy" (*Peculiar Sam* 1.1). At this revelation, his mother exclaims that she always knew Sam was "pecoolar, but I neber 'spected it would revelop itself in dis way" (*PS* 1.1). Here, Sam's peculiarity is introduced for the first time in the script in conjunction with the assertion of his own autonomy. In daring to imagine and plan for a life after slavery, and sharing his willingness to resist the "peculiar institution"

of slavery through assisting Jinny and their comrades in stealing themselves from their master, Sam subverts the white audiences' own imaginary, paternalistic views, instead re-enacting an alternative model for autonomy and a black national identity. The ensuing three acts re-present the formal elements of a typical minstrel show–slapstick comedy, song and dance–while the subversive content is blended with the hallmarks of melodrama, such as the love triangle and mistaken or double identities. The hybrid genre produces a three-part revisionist outcome, on the humanity of black people, the potential for racial uplift and liberation, and a black national identity in the U.S.[44]

In her biography of Pauline Hopkins, *Black Daughter of the Revolution,* Lois Brown notes that of the nine times that characters use variations of the phrase "Peculiar Sam," Sam himself is the only one who "pronounces the word 'peculiar' correctly," pointing to a "self-conscious use of standard English to underscore the unprecedented role he is playing" as an archetype for the "African American heroic identity" (130). Brown's insight speaks to the multiple meanings embedded in Hopkins's use of the term "peculiar," particularly its etymological connection to the Latin word *peculium*. Under Roman law, the *peculium* was "the property which… a master allowed his slave, to hold and administer, and, within limits, to alienate, as though it were his or her own" (*OED*, 'peculium,' 2). Taken in this sense, it is notable that every subsequent reference to Peculiar Sam's "peculiarity" is elicited by acts of

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[44] For more on *Peculiar Sam* see Hanna Wallinger's *Pauline E. Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (University of Georgia Press, 2005).

reappropriation, self-possession, and rebellion during the play's otherwise typically comical minstrel scenes. Sam eschews the performative inferiority of the minstrel show when he takes a whip from the black overseer, Jim, or assumes a new identity as "a mulatto fellar," or steals his former master's pistol and uses it to capture Jim (also his Master's property), expropriating the $100 Jim was given to solicit information that would help him re-capture Sam and his companions; instead, "time and place" are forgotten, and his performance becomes a model of transtemporal heroic resistance and black national identity enacted within the revised formal framework of minstrelsy and melodrama.

This is perhaps best exemplified in two scenes that collapse the antebellum politics of race, gender, and labor with their new manifestations in the 1870s into a single moment of comedy and drama, a simultaneity giving an intimation of Hopkins's future speculative and historical project. The first scene occurs in the kitchen, after Jinny tells the group she has decided to escape, and Sam proposes that they *all* leave together. Their discussion is interrupted when Jim enters, demanding that his new wife prepare his dinner and mend his clothes, threatening to coerce this labor from her even "eff I has to tie you up an' gib you a dozen lashes" (*PS* 1.1). In addition to re-enacting the violence used to coerce labor from enslaved people, Jim's misogyny reproduces the gendered violence of slavery in the antebellum period, as well as the violence against African American domestic workers and Black women more broadly in the Jim Crow era.[45]

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[45] Angela Davis, *Women, Race, & Class*, 1981.

At this threat, Sam "seizes him by the collar" and "jerks him to," declaring "when you talks 'bout struckin' Jinny, I'se got suthin' to say!" (*PS* 1.1). Sam's physical resistance to the misogynistic violence of coerced domestic labor would have been as much of a shock to her audience as it is to the overseer. Jim, taken aback, declares that Sam will be "fixed long wif de res' ob your 'culiar coons" when they are sold down the river the next day. In the ensuing scuffle, Sam seizes Jim's whip, taunting him with it and declaring that "the ascendent ob sech a structible fambly as I is can lick a dozen sech cantankerous niggers as you is!" (*PS* 1.1). In his mispronunciation of "descendant" Sam calls the audience's attention to the fact that while he is likely a blood relative of his white owners, he has been placed outside of, and below, the familial structure, which has been altered by racial ideology in order to serve the economic system of plantation slavery. Sam is forced to perform the role of a slave, while Jim, who has no obvious connection to the family, is given the role of overseer. As Sam ascends to his rightful place in the broader human family, this loaded allusion to his mixed heritage hints at the longer history of class and gender hierarchies and inverts the relationship between them, demonstrating the ways that race-slavery and capitalism re-create the roles of master and slave that existed under feudalism.

In the absence of white characters, Jim claims Jinny and the "'culiar coons" as his own *peculium,* and reproduces the violence of the slave owner in his attempt to maintain his authority. As a slave himself, Jim is still subject to the whims of his master, but he accepts these circumstances uncritically, and in his reenactment of the

master-slave relationship and its attendant hierarchies of gender and class, he reproduces the very same ideological justifications that keep him enslaved. Sam's decision to speak up against this authority, and then to act against it, underscores the role of intraracial class and gender antagonisms of plantation slavery, and later Jim Crow capitalism. Rather than submit to Jim's authority or accept the threat of violence against black women, Sam and Jinny challenge these structures and the systems of white and male supremacy, assisting each other as they struggle together for freedom.

The complexities of entangled racial, gender, and class hierarchies are further developed in the following act when, after escaping, Sam and his companions arrive at the first station of the Underground Railroad, the cabin of a free black man named Uncle Caesar, who agrees to take the party on to the next station. Sam disguises himself as Caesar and remains inside the cabin in order to throw off any would-be pursuers. Not long after the others leave, Jim arrives, demanding to know if Uncle Caesar has seen the runaways. Here, the stage directions indicate that Sam "Appears at [the] window" with a "disguised voice," feigning his indignance at being so rudely disturbed. Sam, as Caesar, declares that he is "a gemman ob business" who "hires [his] time," prompting a change in Jim's demeanor. Despite his authority as overseer on the plantation, Jim must show a certain deference to a free black person, further illustrating the complex intraracial hierarchies at play. In order to regain some sense of status, Jim reveals that he has been entrusted with $100 to offer as a reward to

anyone who aids in re-capturing the runways, and uses the wage relation to elicit information from Caesar.

In the ensuing back-and-forth, Sam uses Caesar's status as a "gemman ob bisness" to negotiate a $3 fee for betraying the runaways, and sends Jim on his way. Believing he has misdirected Jim, Sam comes out to collect his money, only to be confronted by Jim, who reappears dressed as a ghost in "a white sheet with eye holes" (*PS* "Costumes"). Falling to his knees in terror, Sam glimpses Jim's unmistakably large feet, and exclaims, "Playin' ghost, am you? Well reckon I'll make you de sickes' ghost in 'Merica, for I'm done wif you" (*PS* 2.1). As Jim tries to flee, Sam catches him and demands he hand over the money. After doing so, Jim again tries to flee, but Sam "stops counting, looks up, produces a pistol" and threatens him, declaring "I'll make a sho nuff ghos ob you!" (*PS* 2.1). The comedic effect of this scene seemingly belies the very real racialized terrorism of the Reconstruction period when Hopkins wrote *Peculiar Sam,* only to propose the legitimacy of armed self-defense as one method of resistance.

Hopkins uses the disrupted temporalities of these scenes to highlight the performative aspect of racial ideology at the level of individuals. In Fieldsian terms she points out the fluidity of the "social terrain, whose map they keep alive in their minds by the collective, ritual repetition of the activities they must carry out in order to negotiate the terrain" (113). Jim's and Sam's disguises in this scene offer a critique of the complex socio-political terrain that perpetuates racial ideology in the United States and opens up space for the audience to interrogate the different circumstances,

shifting across time, that produce these roles. In his disguise as Caesar, a free man who "hires his time," Sam embodies two historically distinct, socially contingent roles simultaneously: as Sam, he is still in the antebellum condition of chattel slavery, and as Caesar he points toward the condition of the free black wage laborer who is nevertheless still subjected to what Du Bois would call the "second slavery" and racial terror of the Jim Crow era (*Souls* 13). Sam's ability to adapt his various performances to the fluid social situations he encounters highlights the fact that, "if the [social] terrain changes, so must their activities, and therefore so must the [ideological] map" (Fields 113).

Hopkins's omission of white characters in the play adds a further performative dimension in that Jim must serve as stand-in for white antagonists as well as an example of the contradictions inherent in intraracial class antagonisms. Through his decisions to re-enact the violence of slavery and reassert his lost authority by dressing as a ghost in order to terrorize a free black man, Jim performs the role of both the antebellum overseer and the postbellum Klansman. But Jim's "immense false feet" (*PS* "Costumes") serve as another marker of his difference from the white men for whom he acts as a surrogate; despite what he may do in their absence, he can never truly stand in their shoes, though his attempts to do so alienate him from the broader black community.

This is perhaps one of the most jarring moments in the play in terms of its political valences, because it connects the violence of the black, enslaved overseer in the antebellum period with the violence perpetrated by the KKK and other white

supremacist organizations in the years after the war. The authority of both the black overseer and the white klansman ultimately derives from the tacit support of the Southern aristocracy, who create and recreate these roles in order to maintain the subjugation and exploitation of black people and poor whites, in turn maintaining their own power. Their control of both real and social capital allows them to hold power firmly in their grasp, and facilitates the reproduction and reenactment of ideologies of race, gender, and class. Instead of equally sharing this power, they offer "whiteness" as a supplemental social capital that Du Bois equates to a "psychological wage," in lieu of meaningful access to real capital (*Black Reconstruction* 475). Sam, recognizing Jim's multiple performances, overcomes this terror when he sees that the ghost is only a man, and one with whom he would be on equal terms were it not for their further alienation via intraracial class hierarchies.

Sam brings the captured Jim with him to a cave where he and his comrades leave him and make their escape to Canada. The play concludes "six years after the [Civil War]," when Sam is elected as a representative for the state of Ohio. Virginia finds work as a singer, and Jim, whom she views as her legal husband, returns after a long absence. In this final act, Sam and Juno no longer perform their lines in the vernacular that mark their social status in the first two acts. Jim, however, retains his earlier vernacular, and after arriving unannounced at Mammy and Uncle Caesar's house, reveals that as the Union Army advanced closer to Magnolia Plantation, he fled with enough of his master's valuables to pay for law school in Boston and become "one ob de pillows ob de Massatoosetts bar" (*PS* 3.1). In Boston, Jim married

another, wealthier woman, thus resolving the dramatic love triangle and freeing Jinny to marry Sam.

The ensuing excitement prompts Juno to suggest "an ol' Virginie" dance as "the only safe exit for surplus steam" but then suggests that these old plantation customs are beneath the dignity of Sam's status as a newly elected member of Congress, which demands "high toned dances" (*PS* 3.1). The melodramatic excess of this scene culminates in the final lines of the play, when Sam rejects Juno's suggestion. He addresses the audience directly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will excuse me for laying aside the dignity of an elected M.C. and allow me to appear before you once more as peculiar Sam, of the old underground railroad" (*PS* 3.1). Sam's statement and subsequent dance offer transculturation as an alternative to both assimilation and subjugation of newly freed black people and their descendants in the US. Rather than dancing "a quadrille," or re-enacting some other cultural form marked as explicitly "white," Sam performs the "new step" that he showed to the other fieldhands in the beginning of the play. Sam's new role as a Congressional Representative takes on a double politico-cultural meaning, both underscoring the importance of black political power and claiming a place for African Americans in the realm of cultural production. Hopkins makes Sam a model for a new, diasporic black national identity in the United States, which she later called the "*Afric*-American… essentially American in every characteristic, in whom the blood of the Southern white" is "the cement which binds these African tribes as one in the new genus homo" ("Black or White…" 213).

Conversely, as both a slave and an overseer, Jim embodies the contradictions of the slave society from which he fled and the bourgeois liberal society of the North that sought to instill respect for waged labor, labor contracts, and individual advancement in freed peoples after the Civil War.[46] His enthusiastic embrace of these ideals means that he is happy to continue performing the role of overseer, and situates him as one of the founding members of a Black Bourgeoisie that Du Bois would later call the "Talented Tenth." In their desire to ingratiate themselves with their white counterparts, some among this class pursued a program of integration and accommodation that would become an impediment to both Hopkins's and Du Bois's careers.

In this sense, the play's conclusion imagines Reconstruction and its aftermaths as periods of tenuous freedom which require political power in the hands of newly freed people in order to last. The eventual "splendid failure" of Reconstruction to deliver on the revolutionary promises of its radical phase, instead delivering African Americans back into the hands of their erstwhile masters, looms over Sam and his companions (*Black Reconstruction* 480). Their freedom takes on the characteristics not only of liberation from chattel slavery, but also the more insidious "freedom" of the labourer under capitalism who, disposesessed from the land and capital necessary to succeed in the new "free labor" economy, and left with "no other commodity to sell" is free "to dispose of… labour power" as their only commodity (Marx 272-273).

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[46] White, *The Republic for Which It Stands,* Oxford UP.

Peculiar Sam deals with the complexities and contradictions of the Southern plantocracy, including the hierarchies of labor and gender that white planters created among their slaves, as well as the broader gender and racial divisions of that social formation. Each character reacts to the broader social conditions in which they find themselves, and their behavior speaks to the performative nature of the ideological structures they create to make sense of the world around them. Of all the play's characters, only Sam can fully transcend "time and place" in order to see the complex entanglement of the past and future through his actions in the present, just as Judah will in *Winona*. At a time when this tenuous freedom was threatened by the Federal abandonment of Reconstruction, *Peculiar Sam's* positive critical reception led to nationwide engagements, offering the young Hopkins and her fellow performers the opportunity to enact and re-enact a new model of "appropriate social behavior" and Black national identity before audiences all over the country.

The typewritten manuscript for *Peculiar Sam* in the Hopkins Papers at Fisk University includes another draft script for an untitled, undated play that is an earlier version of the plot of *Winona*. In this earlier play, Zach, a black seventeen-year-old, is sent by the ghost of his adoptive white father to rescue his adoptive sister, Winnie, from slavery. This play is unfinished; there is no title page and no dramatis personae page, and only Zach's lines appear with a character name next to them, making it difficult to tell what other characters he is in conversation with. However, the name "Winona" appears twice in stage directions for Winnie, making it clear that this is an earlier version of the plot that would become the magazine novel. Likely written

around the same time as *Peculiar Sam*, this play similarly showcases Hopkins's talent for subversive adaptation and foreshadows many of the thematic elements of the magazine novel published in 1902. Her revisions to this earlier Winona play, however, indicate an even greater, more temporally pointed talent for adapting her narratives to the shifting sociopolitical landscape of the United States as the dusk of the 19th century became the dawn of the 20th.

While this early play shares many similarities with both *Peculiar Sam* and the serialized version of *Winona*, including dramatic escapes, comic relief, love triangles, double identities, and conclusions culminating in a surprise revelation changing the legal status of the female protagonists, it also diverges from these texts in several key ways. Most notably, while *Peculiar Sam* has no white characters, the unfinished draft for a Winona script features white characters as antagonists, and in the revised plot of the magazine novel, white characters are both antagonists *and* protagonists. Telling clues, these revisions offer insights into her decision to abandon the early plot in favor of further developing *Peculiar Sam,* as well as her decision to return to it over twenty years later, during a rise in imperialist violence abroad and racialized violence domestically.

The absence of white characters in *Peculiar Sam* reflects a deliberate choice based on the exigencies of the play's post-Reconstruction moment, allowing Hopkins to highlight Sam's "peculiar" forms of resistance and self-repossession without explicitly addressing the interracial violence implicit therein. The comic scenes are disarming, cutting the tension of an otherwise fraught attempt at positing an

alternative to the racist tropes of conventional minstrelsy for her mixed-race, war-weary audience. In that play, her all-black cast of characters' struggle within their circumscribed social space puts to rest any doubts about the social equality of formerly enslaved peoples. Conversely, in the *Winona* play, the conflict between Zach and the white antagonists is deadly serious, creating a palpable tension that would have undermined Hopkins's attempted subversion of racist ideology via her revisionist minstrel show. An exploration of this tension speaks to Hopkins's abandonment of this play in the aftermath of Reconstruction, and sheds light on why she chose to revisit it two decades later, during the epidemic of lynchings and sexual violence against African Americans that Du Bois would describe as a "Red Ray," and which prompted Hopkins and her colleagues to found *The Colored American Magazine* (*Dusk of Dawn* 34).

Despite displaying the same aptitudes and aspirations as Sam, Zach is never fully realized as a model for black autonomy. In the opening lines of the play, he addresses the ghost of his adoptive white father, Colonel Carlingford, stating that "what you have done impresses itself forcibly upon me. I realize what I have gained, and what a great, generous heart it must be, that shields the poor negro, and accepts him as his son" (*Winona* Play 1:1). The ghost of Colonel Carlingford responds, "Free men and women." Zach continues, admitting that he is "only a boy; but with a spirit that pants to break all bonds; to do such deeds of glory, as shall convince the world, that all men were created free and equal and that the whitest soul may be found beneath the blackest skin" (*Winona* Play 1:1). The multiple valences of whiteness in

these lines undermine any sense of the "glory" they might otherwise foretell when Zach accepts his blackness as a mark of social inferiority. The unevenness of this draft would seem to indicate that Hopkins is still thinking from within the "theory of race separation" that Du Bois would later admit was "quite in [his] blood" in the last decades of the 19th century, and had not yet fully developed her own "race concept" that proclaimed that all humans were "of one blood" (*Dusk of Dawn* 51).

In this exchange, Colonel Carlingford's paternal protections belie the patronizing paternalism of even the most ardent abolitionists. In fact, Colonel Carlingford's reappearance as Captain Henry Carlingford in *Winona*, a fugitive English aristocrat adopted by the Seneca people and renamed White Eagle, indicates that Hopkins may very well have had in mind the contradictory concept of "the Great White Father," who was invoked patronizingly in order to coerce Native Americans into ceding territory to the United States. Addressing the specter of his father by his military rank underscores the broader historical connections between military and social rank, particularly during the colonial period, and the responsibility of Europeans for instituting race-slavery in the Americas in the first place. Colonel Carlingford's cryptic response, "free men and women," appears anachronistic, as the play is set in the antebellum period, before slavery had been fully abolished by the Reconstruction Amendments. However, this may be Hopkins's point: race is socially contingent, and before race-slavery was instiuted in the Americas, black and native peoples *were* free. Hence, what is forcibly impressed upon Zach as he is haunted and hunted by whiteness for the remainder of the play is his inferior social status, visually

signified by his blackness, the acceptance of which undermines any sense of heroic self-reappropriation his character might share with Sam.

Hopkins's Sam pushes the conventional boundaries of minstrelsy, never fully capitulating to the audience's expectations for the stereotypical black character. However, Zach's performative blackness alternates between an overwrought pandering to the audience's racist expectations in the vernacular and more ominous threats against his antagonists in standard English. In a painfully self-conscious nod to derogatory stereotypes about black criminality, after he has successfully stolen some papers from a room in the big house, Zach soliloquizes that, "Now, I'se gwine to fin' a chickun som whar, den Ise gwine to hab a hi time all to myself" (2.2). Whereas Sam's minstrelsy is a playful dissemblance taking place in concert with his acts of resistance, Zach's dissemblance panders almost too aggressively to the racist expectations of white audiences.

Hopkins seems to have worked on the textual problem that these jarring alternations weren't as subtle as Sam's nuanced dissemblance. During an aside, Zach acknowledges that he has "worked and dissembled to avenge my benefactor and his daughter. Been a slave on this plantation, a lackey, a monkey for my master and his friends. Bah! I would hate myself if it were not for my object" (3.1). Zach's disgust seems to mirror Hopkins's own disgust with the minstrel genre as a whole; both lament acquiescence to white supremacist structures. He asks, "What have I not seen? Horrors that chill the blood, wrongs that I long to avenge, that kindle a fire in my breast which burns to consume this cursed slavery!" (3.1). This threat of violent

retaliation returns in the final act, when, after capturing Thomson, he asks "Do you remember how I came to be a slave? Do you remember the blow you struck me that enabled you to bring me South? Ah! Many a time I have ached to return it. Sit down. And if you attempt to escape, I'll throttle you!" (5.3). Again, Zach's fury at being dragged south intimates an identical rage on Hopkins's part for being forced to drag her art down to the level of her audience. While her future work would historicize this very process of enslaving Africans and bringing them to the Americas, the material was too fraught for her purposes; in the absence of a more disarming, subversive minstrelsy, scenes such as this were more likely to be disquieting to her mixed-race audience.

Where *Peculiar Sam* was well-suited to Hopkins's project of nurturing a burgeoning black national identity in the waning days of Reconstruction, the Winona play fell short. Although he is ultimately able to rescue Winnie from the whit antagonists, Hardman and Thomson, there is nevertheless a sense of unresolved tension at the end of the play, which Zach concludes by addressing the audience and Colonel Carlingford's ghost, stating that, "I have tried to act, as I thought you would have had me; and in this moment I realize all my boyish hopes" (5.3). Here, Zach acknowledges that his motivations are almost purely external and mediated through the perceived expectations and actions of the white antagonists and audience, rather than a reappropriation of himself. His performance speaks to the performativity of race itself, but also the deep anger and violence bubbling just below the surface of this facade. Zach's realization is both a fulfillment and a sudden revelation of reality;

he has fulfilled what he *believed* to be his objective, rescuing Winnie in order to "convince the world… that the whitest soul may be found beneath the blackest skin" only to have it revealed that it was "boyish" to accept "whiteness" in the first place. Zach's abdication of his role as the hero in the final lines of the play did not serve Hopkins's purposes, so she set the play aside for almost a quarter of a century, until a renewed sense of urgency necessitated a more complex portrayal of intra- and inter-racial contradictions.

Examining Hopkins's early endeavors as a playwright helps to account for the significance of the race melodrama that undergirds her later fiction. Playwriting allows Hopkins the physical space to stage her works and fully realize the conceptual moves she makes in her writing. The excesses of emotion that are embodied by the actors and material world of the stage performance correspond to the performative excesses of racial ideology in social spaces. In both spaces, there is an affective response to the excess of feeling, and Hopkins uses this affective mode to short circuit the ideological structures imprisoning her audience. In connecting the conceptual deconstruction of abstract, ideological models to a physiological phenomenon, Hopkins hoped to elicit the kind of shock in her audience that she would later replicate in Judah's experience of spatiotemporal dislocation in *Winona*.

Winona's Palimpsestic Plots and Hidden Histories

As African Americans around the country responded to the 1899 lynching of Sam Hose and the epidemic of racist violence, W.E.B. Du Bois noted the connections

between an earlier, European history of caste and class antagonism. He locates the origins of gender, race, class antagonisms in the feudal social relations of "a brutal past," and a "materialistic present [have] bequeathed to many the medieval idea that the way to strive in the world is by knocks and blows" ("On the Present Outlook…" 160). Against this notion, he hopes that "American Negroes will in the 20th century strive, not by war and rapine but by the mightier weapons of peace and culture to gain a place and a name in the civilized world" ("On the Present Outlook…" 160). Hopkins and her collaborators looked to the founding of the *Colored American Magazine* and the publication of her first novel, *Contending Forces*, as their direct response to Du Bois's call, and to the racist rhetoric of demagogues like Thomas Dixon and William Northern. In this early novel, Hopkins revisits the same methods of reappropriation and revision which she began twenty years earlier in *Peculiar Sam*. The novel's epigraph, borrowed from Ralph Waldo Emerson's address "Emancipation in the British West Indies" (1844), is a castigation of caste prejudice in the U.S. Hopkins uses the words of a white man to remind her readers that "the civility of no race can be perfect while another race is degraded" (*Contending Forces* ix). Indeed, much has been written about the novel's engagement with contemporary race, gender, and class politics, as well as her acknowledged and unacknowledged appropriations in the text.

One of the most infamous, early criticisms of these appropriations appears in Gwendolyn Brooks's afterword to the 1978 edition of *Contending Forces*, where she praises Hopkins's "bursts of righteous heat" but laments that they prove ineffectual

because she is ultimately a “brainwashed slave” who “revere[s] the modes and idolatries of the master” (406). However, what Brooks characterized as a reverence for the “modes and idolatries” of Anglo-authored fiction is in fact Hopkins return in her fiction to the subversive methods of revision honed in her earlier melodramas. Although the novel’s characters do inhabit spaces of bourgeois sentimentality and relative social stability, the novel is nevertheless “situated within... a black social order,” just like *Peculiar Sam* (Carby 146). While Brooks reads Hopkins’s novel as a work too rooted in white literary and cultural forms, Hopkins adopts those forms precisely so that her readers will be more receptive to her subversion of the genre and the political valences of her text.

Just as the Progressive Musical Union cast black actors, including a young Pauline Hopkins, to play the white characters in their 1877 production of *Pauline; or The Bell of Saratoga*, in *Contending Forces*, Hopkins confronts “white society” as “a systemic set of forces” by representing them “indirectly through the accounts and experiences of [her] black characters” (Carby 146). For her black readers, this approach would resonate with their own experiences, and suggest a model for engaging in similar critiques, while her white readers would be compelled to engage with new perspectives via familiar literary forms. The novel’s “bursts of heat” may have been tempered by the more conventional tropes of the romantic tradition in which the novel’s subtitle situates it, but it is her first, cautious step into the literary realm, deploying the “weapons of peace and culture to gain a place” for a black national identity.

In her dedication "to the friends of humanity everywhere," (*Contending Forces* xi), Hopkins alludes to earlier abolitionists who were "friends of freedom" ("Hon. Frederick Douglass" 28). Her preface to *Contending Forces* acknowledges its engagement in the fraught racial politics of her time, noting that "in Chapter XIII," the statements of her white antagonist, "the Hon. Herbert Clapp," are based upon "the statements and accusations made against the Negro by ex-Governor Northern of Georgia" (Bufkin 84), while her acknowledged (and unacknowledged) allusions to the antebellum arguments of abolitionists like Ralph Waldo Emerson,[47] frame these polemics in a palatable, familiar form for her white audiences.

In the same way that *Peculiar Sam* subverted minstrelsy to make the case for the social and political equality of newly freed black people, Hopkins is revising and re-presenting these debates in a romantic novel to argue for a new national identity for African Americans as well as whites. While it may not have been as forceful or successful as later critics like Brooks would have hoped, her subsequent novels and ethnographies respond to the reticence of her white audience with an increasingly militant methodology, demonstrating the inevitability of transcultural processes and positing a new social order. As "a call for organized acts of resistance against contemporary persecution," *Winona* is perhaps the most striking example of her militantly abolitionist, feminist fiction (Carby 155). Hopkins skillfully adapts her earlier play to a serialized novel, radically recombining the formal requirements of

[47] Sydney Bufkin, "*Contending Forces* ' Intellectual History: Emerson, Du Bois, and Washington at the Turn of the Century," Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory, Volume 69, Number 3, Autumn 2013, pp. 77-98.

melodrama, romance, the western, the novel, and non-fiction to demonstrate the historical roots of racist ideology, and the grave dangers it poses to black *and* white Americans.

*Winona'*s opening lines convey a sense of its heterogeneric composition and the processes of transculturation which inform it. The novel's composition can be thought of as another iteration of the trope of "blood"[48] in Hopkins's *oeuvre*, just as the novel's amalgamation speaks to a neoculturated literary form and practice rooted in the same processes of transculturation detailed in her writing, processes which she sees as both inevitable (irrevocable?) and necessary. The novel begins with a speculative gesture, inducing readers to imagine "Crossing the Niagara River in a direct line," where

> the Canadian shore lies not more than eight miles from Buffalo, New York, and in the early 50's small bands of Indians were still familiar figures on both the American and Canadian borders. Many strange tales of romantic happenings in this mixed community of Anglo-Saxons, Indians and Negroes might be told similar to the one I am about to relate, and the world stand aghast and try in vain to find the dividing line supposed to be a natural barrier between the whites and the dark-skinned race. No; social intercourse may be long in coming, but its advent is sure; the mischief is already done." (*Winona* 1)

[48] Susan Gillman "Pauline Hopkins and the Occult: African-American Revisions of Nineteenth-Century Sciences"

For Hopkins, the “strange tales” that “*might* be told” about the “romantic happenings in this mixed community of Anglo-Saxons, Indians and Negroes” need not be, because they are no tales at all, rather real histories, present in the forms of the “familiar figures” that populate this border space and other spaces of marginality and marronage in the novel. Their very existence proves that the “dividing line supposed to be a natural barrier” between races is merely an ideological one that has in fact already been crossed, the “mischief” of “social intercourse” already done, as real and irrevocable as the flow of the Niagara.

While the novel is set entirely in the antebellum United States, the narrative nevertheless draws on Hopkins’s revisionist non-fiction to inform a subplot tracing the longer history of the reified social borders that manifest in racial ideology, exposing their roots in European feudal structures, and their rearticulation during the development of global systems of capital and imperialism. Through its revisionist bent, *Winona* highlights the continuities between these processes, begun in the 15th century, the nascent US imperialism of the early 20th century and the dangers posed to all peoples, black *and* white, by their ritual repetition. Its speculative mode, “lacking the promise of a certain future” (*Futures...* 15), hinting only that “somethin’s gwine happen” (*Winona* 149), nevertheless offers a tantalizing glimpse of the “kind of resistance that does not promise triumph or victory at the end, only liberation” (*Futures…* 15).

The contradictions of this world system are clearest in the re/actions of the novel’s antagonists, who manifest a truly strange, savage desperation in their attempts

to maintain social fictions when the "ritual repetition of appropriate social behavior" is disrupted, challenging their socioeconomic supremacy. Through the figures of Colonel Titus, Captain Bill Thomson, and the "motley crowd of Southern desperadoes" who make up their militia, Hopkins presents her readers with an uncanny analysis of the ideology of race undergirding the white plantocracy (*Winona* 74). The ubiquity of military ranks as honorary titles for the American characters in the novel highlights the static social hierarchies that their bearers enact and re-enact, and are vestiges of the much older feudal conditions which initially gave rise to ideologies of class, gender, and race,[49] but prove to be just as fluid and prone to violent change as any other social fiction.

Hopkins revises the roles that these "desperadoes" usually occupy in the pulp western, eschewing the two dimensional "pure evil" of the genre's typical archvillains to emphasize the ways that ideology is produced at the level of the subject and varies based on their position in the social hierarchy. The men who make up the "motley crowd" that surrounds Colonel Titus and Captain Thomson occupy one of the lowest rungs on the social ladder. However, while the source of their widespread desperation is the precarity and violence of the market system to which they are subjected, they

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[49] "The historical development of world capitalism was influenced in a most fundamental way by the particularistic forces of racism and nationalism. This could only be true if the social, psychological, and cultural origins of racism and nationalism both anticipated capitalism in time and formed a piece with those events that contributed directly to its organization of production and exchange. Feudal society is the key. More particularly, the antagonistic commitments, structures, and ambitions that feudal society encompassed are better conceptualized as those of a developing civilization than as elements of a unified tradition." Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, p. 9.

locate it instead in a struggle to retain the "public and psychological wage" of whiteness that supplements their regular market wages (*Black Reconstruction* 475). This longer history is detailed in Hopkins's earlier non-fiction as well as in the novel's palimpsestic English subplot, revealed to the reader in fragments, and out of chronological order. By intertwining these plots with the more familiar elements of the western and romance, as well as calling back to her historiographic pieces in *CAM*, Hopkins demonstrates the fluidity of the social sphere via the complex interactions between European, African, and Native cultures in the space of the novel.

The first subplot involves the novel's ostensible hero, Warren Maxwell, the youngest son of "John Maxwell, baronet" (*Winona* 11). As the youngest of four sons, Warren Maxwell's position in the family mirrors his father's position in the British Peerage system,[50] which is to say that it is merely a title with no real privilege. Warren's share of the family estate would provide "an annuity scarcely enough to defray his tailor's bill" and so his father

> reluctantly consented that Warren should study law… anything was better than trade. The old aristocrat metaphorically held up his hands at the horror of the bare thought. In family council, therefore, it was decided that law, with money and old family influence, might lead to Parliament in the future (*Winona* 11).

[50] "a titled order, the lowest that is hereditary, ranking next below a baron, having precedence of all orders of knighthood, except that of the Garter. A baronet is a commoner, the principle of the order being 'to give rank, precedence, and title without privilege." *OED*, baronet, 2.

John Maxwell's disdain for "trade" and his reluctance to allow Warren to enter one speaks to the intense class anxieties of those on the lowest rungs of the Peerage, clinging desperately to some semblance of security in the crumbling feudal order. By becoming a lawyer, Warren is still able to make himself useful to the aristocracy by upholding the legal system of inheritance and title while only minimally exposing himself to the precarity that market forces impose on other "trades."

The second piece of the subplot is revealed when Warren is sent to America by the attorneys for the Carlingford estate to look for Captain Henry Carlingford, son of Lord George Carlingford, or any surviving heirs. Captain Henry (later revealed to be White Eagle, Winona's father) is another unhappy victim of the laws of primogeniture and inheritance. Accused and convicted of murdering his older brother, George, over their shared love interest, Miss Venton, whose father "favored George because he was the heir," Captain Henry manages to escape his jailers and flee to North America (*Winona* 12). Warren must seek him or any surviving heirs, lest the Carlingford fortune fall to Lord George's nephew, Colonel Titus. Colonel Titus, also an English transplant to North America, married the bereft Miss Venton, whose father evidently lost no time in calculating the line of succession and arranged the match to secure her an inheritance. The only character who can rid himself of his title is "Captain" Henry, who is cut off from his family and his social status by virtue of his imprisonment and subsequent escape to North America, where he is able to forge a new identity through cooperation and mutual aid on the margins of society.

The plot of the love triangle, George's murder, and Henry's trial and escape to North America to live amongst the remaining Native American tribes are tropes that would be relatively familiar[51] to Hopkins's readers. However, her revisions emphasize the increasing severity of the feudal aristocracy's internal contradictions, particularly the fractures that appear along the gender and "blood" lines that, in this case, force Henry and Miss Venton to sublimate their desires for each other to the logics of inheritance, and in other cases forced those who were disinherited or destitute to seek their fortunes in the nascent "free market" of the so-called "New World." Like the earlier destitute "desperadoes" who initially sought their fortunes in the colonization of the so-called New World– the "Spanish adventurers," ("Toussaint…" 11) Columbus and Cortez, or the Englishman John Smith–Henry Carlingford, Warren Maxwell, and Colonel Titus all find themselves in North America because there is no room for them in the social and economic hierarchies of England.

Only Henry is able to effect a kind of escape or divestment from this system by fleeing to North America and living amongst the Seneca people, who give him his revised identity, "White Eagle," and honor him as a chief after he saves the life of

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[51] JoAnn Pavletich points out that, among other sources, Hopkins borrows this plot primarily from Mary Hartwood Catherwood's *The White Islander* (1873), itself based on "Francis Parkman's chronicle of the life of Alexander Henry, an important British fur trader in the mid-eighteenth century who survived a 1763 massacre of British forces at Fort Michilimackinac because he had been previously "adopted" by the Ojibwa chief Wawa" (118). For more on this and Hopkins's appropriation from other sources, see JoAnn Pavletich, "'...we are going to take that right': Power and Plagiarism in Pauline Hopkins's 'Winona,'" *CLA Journal*, December 2015.

Chief Red Eagle. While this kind of way out is possible for someone with the privileges and education Captain Henry was afforded in the Anglo-European aristocracy, the system had long since worked out ways of foreclosing any escape for those born on the North American continent. While the older feudal order created the conditions out of which the Anglo-European ideologies of blood, class, and gender arose, these gave way to the more familiar ideologies of gender, race, and class in their American iteration. These new constructs arose as a response to the contradictions inherent in a social and economic system reliant upon slave labor, that, among other things, would place so much emphasis on blood and "the condition of the mother" in establishing who was free and who was not (*Winona* 28).

The third and final fragment of the subplot is relayed at the novel's conclusion by Bill Thomson, Judah's former captor, who confesses on his deathbed that he is the true murderer of the young George Carlingford, and his former valet. During his deathbed confession, Thomson reveals that he "swore to bring disgrace upon the entire Carlingford family" (*Winona* 141). According to Thomson, because "Miss Venton loved Captain Henry, Lord George found her an indifferent woman" and turned his attention to Miss Venton's maid, who was also Thomson's sister. George Carlingford seduced her, "deceived her, and when he tired of his toy abandoned her to the usual fate of such women–the street. I found her when it was too late, and I swore revenge so long as one lived with a drop of blood in his veins" (*Winona* 141). Here, Hopkins links the older trope of the fallen woman to the trope of the tragic mulatta, emphasizing the fact that the contradictions within the older Anglo-Aristocratic social

order of blood-nobility and gender evolved to incorporate hierarchies of race in their North American iteration.

Thomson's actions also highlight the contradictions of the older British social structures and the Anglo-American society it created. As we will see, Thomson's selfish, violent reaction is a kind of "ritual repetition" that suits him to the peculiar institutions of American capitalism perhaps better than any of the novel's characters. Thomson continues his revelation, relating that after he overheard Captain Henry and his brother quarreling "bitterly over Miss Venton" he seized his opportunity,

> shot Lord George in the back, and fled, knowing that suspicion would fall on Capt. Henry. It did; and two of my enemies were out of my way, for the Captain was tried and convicted and lived an outcast among savages for years; that was my little scheme for getting even. For the sake of his daughter, Lillian, Colonel Titus killed White Eagle and held Winona as a slave, thus cutting off the last direct Carlingford heir." (*Winona* 141)

Hopkins's English subplot sets the stage for the rest of the narrative in which she demonstrates that, rather than resolving the older gender, class, and "blood" antagonisms of the feudal system, the burgeoning bourgeois democracy of the United States offered fertile ground for these contradictions to repeat themselves, becoming more deeply entangled in the everyday lives and lived experiences of the people there. Instead of opening up space for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," American society was still mired in these older systems founded on notions of nobility by blood and birth. These were transplanted to North America largely intact,

and changed only by what Cedric Robinson calls “the dialectic of colonialism, plantocratic slavery, and resistance from the sixteenth century forward,” and it is this dialectic that is central to Hopkins’s narrative in *Winona* (*Black Marxism* 67).

Thomson’s claim that it was “too late” to save his sister from “the usual fate of such women” who've been sexually exploited is revealing on several levels. First, as a metonym for the sex trade, “the street” implies one kind of social death, here the particular social death suffered by women of the lower classes who are raped, socially stigmatized, and subsequently forced into prostitution, and speaks to a broader instability in a social order that appears static and ordered.[52] The misogyny practiced against women of lower social status and stigmatized survivors of sexual assault also impacted the women of higher social status, such as Miss Venton, who were similarly objectified and used instrumentally to cement class alliances via marriage and producing heirs. Additionally, the parallels between John Maxwell’s “metaphorical horror” at Warren entering a “trade” and Thomson’s horrific abandonment of his sister after she is forced to enter the sex trade are an unspoken acknowledgment of this instability and fluidity, ultimately rooted the horrors of the “free market” and unrestrained capitalism.

Thomson’s recognition that the feudal notions of blood nobility and gender hierarchy provided the ideological justifications for George Carlingford’s

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[52] In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici writes that “For proletarian women, so cavalierly sacrificed by masters and servants alike, the price to be paid was inestimable. Once raped, they could not easily regain their place in society. Their reputation being destroyed, they would have to leave town or turn to prostitution” (54).

dehumanization, abuse, and abandonment of his sister ought to have translated to a condemnation of the social system that produces them. In his plans for revenge, he identifies the "Carlingford family" and the "blood in [their] veins" as markers of their social difference, but Thomson stops his analysis there. In this sense, by positing blood as the origin of social and racial difference the system protects itself, offering one family as a target for Thomson's vengeance, and foreclosing a more thorough critique of class society more broadly. Instead, he re-enacts (in Fields's sense) the "appropriate social behavior" exemplified in George Carlingford's cruel abandonment of his sister, and the murder of George Carlingford is a "ritual repetition" of the feudal violence of primitive accumulation that created the aristocracy, as well as the settler-colonial violence-for-personal-gain that would become the basis of capitalism in the Americas. Trapped in his own ideological net and unwilling to risk his own position in the hierarchy of labor, he leaves his sister to her fate, murders her abuser, and flees to North America, where the logics of the older feudalism and "free" market the and the new liberal democracy have been altered by the intense resistance to it by Native, African, and other marginalized peoples.

"Somethin's gwine happen!": *Winona*'s Speculative Turn

In the *Winona*, Hopkins casts the revolutionary abolitionist John Brown as an alternative to the kind of ideological trap represented by Captain Bill Thomson. Brown exemplifies the radical potential of this "mixed community" to revise the social fictions of racial ideology and create something new. Brown is an intertextual

figure in Hopkins's body of work, appearing with varying degrees of prominence in much of her non-fiction. John Brown was himself an internationalist figure, whose successful guerilla campaign in the Bleeding Kansas conflict of the 1850s placed him on the world stage: his 1859 execution on charges of inciting servile insurrection after his failed raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia caught the attention of international figures such as Karl Marx and Victor Hugo. Brown's radicalism represents a fundamental rupture in the hegemony of white supremacist and male supremacist ideology that creates an opportunity for those circumscribed by the gender, color, and class lines to contravene those borders through a revolutionary "social intercourse." Brown's rejection of the reified social border that attempts to staunch the flow of that Niagara, composed of the human blood lines that flow through time and space, and are central to much of Hopkins's writing, becomes a moment through which she constructs a speculative, revisionist narrative of the radical possibilities that were foreclosed on by the abandonment of Reconstruction and the advent of Jim Crow.

Hopkins sets the events of *Winona* against the backdrop 1850s, a decade when the "progressive abuse of the Union by the slave power" that had been "the general formula of United States history since the beginning of the [19th] century" reached a point where "the *contending forces* were so evenly balanced that… the Union [was] in danger of splitting on that deadly antagonism" (Marx 30, my emphasis). The 1850's were another moment when Northern capitulation to Southern institutions threatened the autonomy of free black people, just as they were threatened by Jim Crow and lynch law in 1899. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska

Act of 1854, and the Supreme Court's 1857 decision in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* meant that no black person was truly safe within the borders of the U.S., even if they enjoyed nominal freedom in the North. It took the interracial cooperation of militant abolitionist organizations to form clandestine networks like the Underground Railroad, and figures such as Harriet Tubman, whom John Brown addressed as "General Tubman" (*John Brown* 251), to resist the encroachment of Southern slave interests in the North.

In *Winona*, Hopkins emphasizes the nearly forgotten successes of Brown's Kansas campaign in the mid-1850's, rather than the well-known and oft-cited failure of his final raid on Harpers Ferry and subsequent martyrdom in 1859, to highlight the revolutionary potential militant abolitionists had to succeed during these crises. Hopkins's Brown offers her white readers a model for resisting the appeals of her fictional reactionaries, like Thomson, and real Southern demagogues like William J. Northern, dismantling race as an ideological construct, and replacing it with revolutionary solidarity. In the novel, Brown's commitment to abolition and racial and gender equality is epitomized by the diverse coalition he organizes, and suggests that a similar coalition might be built at the dawn of the 20th century. Hopkins offers Brown as a model for countering the "hateful feelings against the Negro" being "brought into the North by the influence of the South… to foist upon the northern Negro the galling chains of the most bitter southern caste prejudice which is widening the circle of its operations day by day" ("Some Literary Workers" 140).

Hopkins's John Brown is exemplary of the kind of revolutionary solidarity needed to combat the segregationist agenda. When juxtaposed with the novel's other white characters, Brown demonstrates the possibilities that open up when racist and sexist notions of white supremacy and male supremacy are eschewed in favor of mutual aid and cooperation between people of all genders, races, and classes. Hopkins embeds the English subplot of the Carlingford family's inheritance struggle and dissolution to highlight the palimpsestic intra- and inter-class antagonisms that were transplanted from Europe to North America, and demonstrate that "whiteness" is a marker of class status in the US is an outgrowth of the older feudal system. The extent to which her white characters are either liberated from this system, as John Brown, Ebeneezer Maybee, and, eventually, Warren Maxwell are, or remain entrapped in it, as Colonel Titus and Bill Thomson do, depends on how they interpret the contemporary manifestations of this older social hierarchy. To that end, *Winona* reenacts the unfinished pasts of feudalism and abolitionism in order to move beyond the racial binary of Hopkins's present, imagining a utopian, multi-raced, classed and gendered future, starting with Winona herself.

The revised plot of the novel significantly expands Winona's agency, and her actions directly impact the people and events around her. In the play Winnie is almost a non-entity; in the novel, however, Winona eschews conventional gender roles, asserting herself as an equal partner in the endeavors of her comrades, and taking part directly in planning and executing daring escapes and rescues. Portraying Winona's agency offers readers a model black heroine who demonstrates that,

> beyond the common duties peculiar to the woman's sphere, the colored woman must have an intimate knowledge of every question that agitates the councils of the world; she must understand the solution of problems that involve the alteration of the boundaries of countries, and which make and unmake governments." ("Some Literary Workers" 142)

This is best illustrated by the way that she forces John Brown himself to revise his patriarchal and paternalistic perceptions of her. Shortly after her arrival in his camp, Winona is adopted by Brown and his family, and "quartered at the Brown domicile" where "she became Captain Brown's special care and the rugged Puritan unbent to spoil and pet the 'pretty squaw,' as he delighted to call her" (*Winona* 375). Highlighting Brown's unthinking utterance of this offensive, racially coded language emphasizes that, despite his commitment to interracial solidarity and the struggle against slavery, he is also struggling against the "constant re-enactment" and "ritual repetition" of contemporary ideologies of gender and race (Fields 113). However, Hopkins describes Brown, who was notoriously rigid with his own children, as "unbent" by Winona, and his subsequent deferral to her in planning Maxwell's rescue suggests his mental map of the "social terrain" is also unbent by this contact.

Winona's impact on Brown is fully realized when, after news arrives of Warren's capture by Bill Thomson's band of Border Ruffians, Brown and the men in his camp immediately begin to plan a rescue for which "there seemed little hope of success" (*Winona* 380). Hopkins's narrator continues:

> As was the fashion in those days, the women listened but did not intrude their opinions upon the men… But long after the meeting had broken up Winona crept into the woods not to weep, but to think. She leaned against a tree and her hopeless eyes gazed down the darkening aisles; she prayed: "Help me to help save him!" In the morning she sought an interview with Captain Brown. (*Winona* 380).

Hopkins situates this patriarchal gender dynamic in the past, suggesting that in the present it is outdated. In her refusal to abide by the "fashion" of remaining silent in matters "beyond the common duties peculiar to the woman's sphere," Winona re-enacts Sam's "peculiarity," indicating her self-possession and "intimate knowledge of the questions" agitating the councils in John Brown's camp and beyond. Here Hopkins, in her typical cross-generic approach, so akin to but prior to the better known hetero-generic work of Du Bois, lays out the model for her later "Some Literary Workers."

Brown's ready acceptance of Winona's plan to disguise herself as Allen Pinks, a young, male slave, and get herself assigned to nurse Maxwell in his Missouri prison cell, parallels and revises the historical fact of "Captain" Brown's subordination of himself to "General Tubman" whom he considered "the most of a man, naturally, that [he] had ever met with" (*John Brown* 249). Instead of allowing his initial, patronizing perception of Winona to relegate her to "the woman's sphere" in camp life, Brown self-consciously sublimates his prejudices to make space for her to transcend prescriptive racial and gender roles, both literally and figuratively. The

success of Winona's plan to rescue Maxwell leads to the success of Brown's forces over Thomson's, who are defeated by the multiracial, multi-gendered force in Hopkins's reimagining of the Pottawatomie Massacre. Rather than the brutal execution of Border Ruffians during a midnight raid, Brown, Judah, Winona, and their comrades are victorious in a pitched battle, "a terrible struggle between two great forces–Right and Wrong" (*Winona* 125).

After the battle and Thomson's deathbed confession all but liberate her from the shackles of race-slavery in America, Winona, Maxwell, and Judah leave the United States for England, and we are left with the predictions of Aunt Vinnie, a black woman who, addressing a multi-racial crowd outside of Ebeneezer Maybee's hotel, says that

> Somethin's gwine happen…Somethin's gwine drap. White folks been ridin' a turrible hoss in this country, an' dat hoss gwine to fro 'em' you hyar me… Jestice been settin' on de sprangles ob de sun a long time watchin' dese people how dey cuts der shines; um, um! …Watch de sun an' see how he run; gwine to hear a mighty rumblin' 'mongst de dry bones 'cause jestice gwine plum' de line, an' set de chillun free (*Winona* 149).

Aunt Vinnie's predictions connect the liberatory moment of the Civil War with the potential for black and white Americans to unite once again to liberate themselves from the injustices of Jim Crow. Instead of shying away from the violence implicit in representing the race, gender, and class tensions between her characters, Hopkins uses this dynamic of the past and present to explore the contradictions and antagonisms of

racial ideology, and suggests models for overcoming them. This exploration revises contemporary understandings of racial politics in the US and ends, as we have seen, on a speculative note, inviting her readers to consider the "queries and questions and possibilities" opened up by a multiracial, multi-gendered resistance to white supremacy and racial ideology (*Winona* 418).

Three years later, after the Tuskegee Machine, allied with capitalist interests both inside and outside of the black community, had successfully ousted Hopkins as literary editor of *CAM*, her ethnographic series, "The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century" (1905), appeared in *The Voice of the Negro.* Taking *Winona*'s revisionist, speculative themes as the point of departure for a broad sociological and political analysis of the global color line, the series is also deeply influenced by the works of earlier black historians, including Martin Delany, and Hopkins's contemporaries Anna Julia Cooper and W.E.B Du Bois, among others. In this series, Hopkins revisits Du Bois's call for an internationalist approach to analyzing and overcoming the global color line, and further develops her analysis of the gender and class dynamics at play.

While Du Bois's 1899 "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" takes an "eastward" trajectory from the United States to "the continent of Africa," through Asia and across the Pacific towards "South America, where the dark blood of the Indian and the Negro has mingled with that of the Spaniard," before "at last… we come back to our own land," Hopkins's 1905 series continues the westward trajectory of *Winona* (Chandler 147-150). *Winona*'s geographical trajectory

commences with the “mixed community of Anglo-Saxons, Indians, and Negroes” in the northeastern U.S., ending just after Judah’s reverie in the unincorporated territories of the American “South and Southwest,” and “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century” continues along this same route. The series’ five installments begin with a history of the peoples of the Pacific Islands in “Oceania,” and “The Malay Peninsula,” followed by “The Yellow Race[s]” of eastern Asia, and the peoples of “Africa,” finally concluding where *Winona* began with “The North American Indian” (Dworkin 305).

Among the multiple Hopkins-Du Bois intersections, here both works conclude by returning to the Americas and intimating the intertwined destinies of indigenous peoples, diasporic African peoples, and European peoples. But while Du Bois uses the occasion to call for black intellectuals to work peacefully towards racial uplift, Hopkins concludes by summarizing the earlier installments of her ethnographic series and then sharing some of the most urgent and compelling findings of her entire heterogeneric *oeuvre*. After “having viewed the origin, customs and situation of the living dark races, from a scientific viewpoint” in this series, she concludes that “the color of the skin, the texture of the hair, [and] the development of the cranium, are not infallible indications of race origin” (Dworkin 329). Against white supremacist theories of multiple origins for different ethnic groups, Hopkins concludes that “the African race and its descendants… stand in close relationship to the other races on the broad, indisputable plane of common origin and common brotherhood,” and by extension that “the presumption of superiority by the Anglo-Saxon race is insolently

arrogant" (Dworkin 329). Here, Hopkins brings "the power of intertextuality to bear on her efforts to use literature to achieve political intervention and to provide readers with substantial, though concise, access to valuable intellectual debate" (Brown 473).

Hopkins shared Du Bois's hope that by striving peacefully in the realm of culture, and "not by war," a new "race concept" might take hold in the U.S. Her work as literary editor of *CAM* is an exploration of race, gender, and class antagonisms that outlines "propositions and possibilities" for the future, including the possibility that these very categories are highly contingent, rooted ultimately in the antagonisms and contradictions of a capitalist social order. Rather than opine on the failures of the abolitionist project, Reconstruction, or racial uplift, her final series in *The Voice of the Negro* condemns a society that fails to carry on the legacies of these "splendid failures" and reckon with these inherently violent contradictions. First, she proposes

> That the ultimate desire of the Anglo-Saxon is the complete subjugation of all dark races to themselves, there is no doubt; but the persistent rise of the dark men in the social scale and their wonderful increase in numbers is a source of constant menace to the accomplishment of certain designs... this enormous number of men of the future, must yet be reckoned with; and the far-seeing Anglo-American realizes the problem on his hands. (Dworkin 329)

Here, Hopkins uses the term "Anglo-American" to indicate the feudal roots of racial ideologies in the United States, and gestures towards the US's central role in the world-system of racialized capitalism elaborated more fully by later scholars, including Du Bois, Angela Davis, and Cedric Robinson. The "dread fear that is ever

present and tugging at [their] heartstrings," of losing their dominant position in the capitalist world system, is tied up in their conflation of the abstraction of "whiteness" as the sign of superiority with the actual material wealth and power it implies, creating the conditions which necessitate racial ideologies to justify the continued subjugation and exploitation of non-white peoples domestically and abroad (Dworkin 329). "The most serious questions of the hour," she writes, "are the Negro Problem and its fellow–Labor versus Capital," and the answers to these questions by "a future generation will change the current of events and deductions of science" (Dworkin 329). Hopkins notes that, historically, "the tyranny of concentrated wealth on the one hand, and social, industrial and economic, enslavement on the other," caused "the bloodiest social and political upheavals in the annals of man" (Dworkin 330). Armed with the knowledge presented in her "Dark Races" series, as well as her entire body of fiction and nonfiction, how might her readers proceed?

If the problems of social and political equality were eliminated, Hopkins explains, "the problem of bread and butter still remains" (Dworkin 330). But once the ideological fetters of race are undone, these questions of survival and necessity place African Americans "on the same plane with the laborer of whatever color or race and would make his interests ours," suggesting the power of multiracial, multigendered organization and cooperation against the forces of white supremacist capitalism. Hopkins finishes one of her last major series, writing that

> in the great labor contest which will inevitably come to our common country we take a stand with the vast human tide and "sink or swim, live or die,

> survive or perish" with the great majority. In such circumstances the color of the skin, the curl of the hair, the development of the cranium will not count; we want men with red blood in their veins and not the sluggishness of the cold materialist who scorns the "dreamers" who make up the world's best people. Men of the times and for the times who will serve nobly their day and generation. Men who will teach the Anglo-Saxon that "all men were created equal" and that "*all men*" are not *white* men. (Dworkin 330)

The militancy of Hopkins's prediction for the future draws on her larger body of work, recalling the figures of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Harriet Tubman, John Brown, Judah, Winona, and the abolitionist networks they represent. These figures serve as models for "a future generation," yet to come, but one which will transcend the ideologically conditioned notions of "whiteness" and "maleness" as necessary preconditions for participation in mass movements and social change.

The intersection of these trajectories, among the multiple Hopkins-Du Bois intersections, suggests that, while the two were never in direct conversation on these matters, Hopkins was engaged in the same speculative social scientific scholarship that would characterize Du Bois's work over the next half century. This conjuncture is a compelling vindication of Hopkins as a scholar who was as comfortable in the production of mass cultural works–her plays and novels–as she was in producing scholarly, social scientific analyses of race, gender, and class issues. Hopkins's radicalism precedes Du Bois's, reaching this peak just as her career began to wane, her voice to fade, her radical work relegated to obscurity. However, Du Bois took up

her revolutionary call. Though it is unknown whether he read Hopkins's "Dark Races" series, his 1905 essay "Sociology Hesitant" nevertheless argues against the very pseudo-scientific abstractions Hopkins debunks in that series and throughout her body of work. In response to her claim that "sociological conditions have more to do with developing civilization than racial descent," Du Bois reclaims sociology from the "metaphysical cobwebs that bind [it]" to static ideologies of race, gender, and class, proposing a "science that seeks the limits of chance in human conduct" (Dworkin 329; Chandler 344). This project will inform Du Bois's 1909 biography of John Brown, as well as his own works of speculative fiction and revisionist history. His hinge, the unpublished "Sociology Hesitant," provides my own jumping-off point in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

"For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea,' is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought."
Karl Marx, Postface to the Second Edition of *Capital, Vol. I* (1873)

"There is at the basis of Hegelian dialectic an absolute reciprocity that must be highlighted… I am not only here-now, locked in thinghood. I desire somewhere else and something else… I pursue something other than life, insofar as I am fighting for the birth of a human world, in other words, a world of reciprocal recognitions. He who is reluctant to recognize me is against me. In a fierce struggle I am willing to feel the shudder of death, the irreversible extinction, but also the possibility of impossibility."
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

"The view-point adopted in this book is that of the little known but vastly important inner development of the Negro American. John Brown worked not simply for Black Men he worked with them; and he was a companion of their daily life, knew their faults and virtues, and felt, as few white Americans have felt, the bitter tragedy of their lot… this book is at once a record and a tribute to the man who of all Americans has perhaps come nearest to touching the real souls of black folk.
W.E.B. Du Bois, *John Brown*, (1909)

Speculative Histories of the Future

Few scholars engage in the kind of self-reflection that W.E.B. Du Bois practiced throughout his career. His many autobiographical works trace his intellectual development from his childhood in Great Barrington through his final journey to Ghana in 1961. The standard chronology scholars have derived from these sources locates Du Bois' shift towards explicitly socialist politics and a materialist

critique of racial ideologies[53] in the era just after the first World War, a moment when the triumph of the Bolsheviks prompted many on the Left to embrace new, non-capitalist visions of the future. Du Bois himself locates this move in the inter-war period, but it is clear from his earlier sociological, political, and autobiographical works that the political shift had been gestating for some time before that. The question of periodization turns in part on the choice of a textual source itself. What happens if we look back to Du Bois's *John Brown* (1909) as such a turning point? While not nearly as well-known as his autobiographical and scholarly works such as *The Souls of Black Folk,* or the more explicitly Marxist *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois's biography of John Brown marks the end of an aporetic period in his thinking. Breaking free from this conceptual impasse required a shift in Du Bois's dialectical method from the metaphysics of the Hegelian dialectic to the materialism of Marx's.

Reflecting on the evolution of his "race concept" in 1940, Du Bois writes that by 1890, he had uncritically absorbed the dominant racial ideology in the US to such a degree that, "when I came to Harvard the theory of race separation was in my blood. I did not seek contact with my white fellow students… I took it for granted that we were training ourselves for different careers in worlds largely different" (*Dusk of Dawn* 101). And yet, he "was disturbed by certain facts in America" which indicated to him that "despite everything, race lines were not fixed and fast" (101). While he did not realize it at the time, his investigations into "the Negro problem," in particular

[53] Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America" *New Left Review*, May/June 1990.

his study of John Brown, would lead him to the irrefutable conclusion that "the economic foundation of the modern world was based on the recognition and preservation of so-called racial distinctions" (101). Du Bois's encounter with a white subject whose life story represents a series of radical disruptions to the "ritual repetition of appropriate social behavior" ruptures the "continuity of [racial] ideology" in the United States, allows him to re-situate whiteness as a highly contingent and contextual social category, rather a universal one (Fields 113).

When Du Bois began the biography in 1903, the emerging text registered a marked shift in his politics and his analysis of racial ideologies that unfolded in the intervening years. As the Atlanta Conferences entered their seventh year in 1904, Du Bois's attempts to investigate the plexus of "negro problems" in America through detached scientific observation were increasingly frustrated. The data became "a growing tangled mass of facts arising from social investigations, of all degrees of worth and reliability, bewildering in their quantity and baffling in their hidden meaning" ("The Atlanta Conference" 1). This bewilderment arose from the fact that these data sets were abstracted from the material conditions which produced them, creating a critical disconnect between the information they contained and their usefulness in developing an actionable program for racial uplift. During this period, Du Bois "came to suspect that there were severe limitations to his concept of theory's ability to immediately address the issue of the Negro's social survival" (Judy 19).

Du Bois became increasingly skeptical of the positivist approach to sociology that "strayed further in metaphysical lines… confounding Things with Thoughts of

Things" and "sought not the real element of Society," human beings, but rather "the genesis of our social ideas" ("Sociology Hesitant" 40). He would come to understand that the positivist emphasis on "social ideas" rather than the material conditions that produce them, to be at the root of this disconnect. In his 1905 essay, "Sociology Hesitant," Du Bois outlines a plan for revising this methodology in order to "clear away the metaphysical cobwebs that bind us and open the way for a new unified conception of human deeds" ("Sociology Hesitant" 43). This essay defines the limits of a social science founded on the positivism of Comte and the "Spencerian Sociologists" as one which fails to perceive "the limits of chance in human conduct," and Du Bois would later come to understand the system of racialized capitalism as the primary limiting factor ("Sociology Hesitant" 39, 44). Du Bois's program calls for a materialist approach to reconcile abstract, static "laws" of nature with the unpredictability of free will, offering an interpretation of social relations from the perspective of the individual.

Linking *John Brown* and its afterlives with "Sociology Hesitant" and the interdisciplinary and dialectical approach that Du Bois advocates underscores the critic Reiland Rabaka's assertion that he "was developing and doing authentic interdisciplinary critical social theory …before the Frankfurt School critical theorists were born" (Rabaka xiv). However, my aim in highlighting this connection is not simply to reclaim the primacy of his critical theory. Instead, Du Bois's own heterogeneric corpus should be placed, along with the works of his antecedents, contemporaries (including Pauline Hopkins), and later scholars, among those who

seek not to resolve the contradictions of social science and lived experience, but to convey them otherwise. Just as Fredric Jameson asserts that Lukács turned to Marxism "precisely because the problems" of his earlier works "required a Marxist framework to be thought through to their logical conclusion," I argue that Du Bois's multi-genre study of the "Negro problem[s]" along positivist lines throughout the late 19th and early 20th century leads him to the explicitly Marxist, rather than Hegelian, dialectical method, that would define his later and most influential works. The constellation of repeated moments that bring Du Bois to Marxist thought belongs to a similar trajectory in the Black Radical Tradition that passes through Hopkins and Du Bois, Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, and Barbara Fields, and down to our present moment with movements, including Black Lives Matter and MeToo, seeking the abolition of prisons, the police, an end to racial, sexual, and gender violence, and to capitalism itself.

Crucially, Du Bois's materialist analysis also shifts away from the "Talented Tenth" discourse of his earlier works–which remain within the framework of capitalist class relations, relying primarily on the class politics of a Black bourgeoisie to combat the systemic oppression of African Americans–and pivots towards a more revolutionary politics usually associated with his later works. A nodal point for Du Bois, the biography of Brown allows him to escape this aporia and to use his own analysis of Brown's economic and political situation to develop a broader historical materialist analysis of the ideological origins of the color line in domestic and world affairs.

The trajectory of Du Bois's thought from his early sociological investigations to his revisionist masterpiece, *Black Reconstruction in America*, and beyond guides the trajectory of this chapter. While the various socio-economic and cultural ensembles that make up the lived experience of African Americans in the US are his starting points, these socially imposed divisions and classifications are ideological abstractions that limit his investigation before it can truly begin. They exist as the products of a longer history, simultaneously producing and produced by the individuals who live them. Writing the biography of an individual draws on Du Bois's experiments in writing his own life as the "autobiography of a race concept." Central to this shift in his conceptual development is the fact that Brown worked *with* his black comrades, recognizing them as fellow human beings at a time when doing so was literally unthinkable to most, and posed deadly risks. As Du Bois studied his life, he came to understand the relationship between the material conditions that produce race as an ideology, as well as those that allowed John Brown to overcome the dialectical blockage represented by racial ideology. This realignment of his political activism from the all-black Niagara Movement to his work with the interracial coalition of black and white socialists who would go on to found the NAACP was inspired, in part, by his research for *John Brown*.

Both the textual history of *John Brown* and Du Bois's approach to his biographical subject have intriguing implications not only for the way that scholars periodize Du Bois' intellectual development, but also for the way we interpret the "strange career" of the Black Radical tradition as well as the status of biography and

autobiography in the African American tradition. Just as Pauline Hopkins blurs the lines between biography and fiction in order to explore the boundaries of racial thinking, the Brown biography and the biographical connections Du Bois makes between himself and his subject, and the global system of racialized capitalism in which they both are entangled, mark a pivotal moment in tracing the development of what Du Bois later calls the "Race Concept."

The Last Word of Social Science

Du Bois's confession that by the time he arrived at Harvard he was convinced that race was a biological fact highlights the hegemony of racial ideology in the late 19th century. To appreciate the understudied role of *John Brown* in Du Bois's oeuvre, particularly the development of his dialectical method, the biography must be situated in relation to both his earlier and later writing. While traces of a class consciousness entangled with race consciousness appear in his writings as early as his sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Du Bois' relationship to explicitly Marxist thought had multiple beginnings.

Du Bois remarks in his posthumously published *Autobiography* that while he was becoming "a devoted follower of [William] James as [James] was developing his philosophy of pragmatism" at Harvard, the work of "Karl Marx was mentioned but only incidentally" and Marx himself was regarded "as one whose doubtful theories had long since been refuted" (*Autobiography* 133). However limited his exposure to Marx may have been in these early years, an incipient Marxism emerged even while

he remained at Harvard under the influence of Santayana and James. Indeed, in a fifty-two page, handwritten essay for James's Philosophy 4 course entitled "The Renaissance of Ethics: A Critical Comparison of Scholastic and Modern Ethics," Du Bois's biographer David Levering-Lewis contends that Du Bois presents an argument with "intriguingly similar solutions to the perennial mind-matter puzzle worked out in Marx's *Capital*" that "waveringly arrived at the same conclusion: ethical imperatives arose out of the interaction of mind and matter as both became transformed and purposive through willpower" (95). These same "interactions of mind and matter"—literally the matter or material of a society shaped by the system of production based on racialized capitalism—that mold a society's ethical imperatives are painstakingly illustrated through Du Bois's analysis of antebellum political economy in his biography of John Brown.

Du Bois's early foray into historical materialist analysis at Harvard marks one stage in his eventual divergence from James's pragmatism, Comte's positivism, and his ultimate loss of faith in the liberal-democratic institutions and values he cherished during his time at Harvard. In his earlier essays such as "The Conservation of Races" (1897), "On the Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind" (1899), and "The Talented Tenth" (1903), he takes for granted "the theory of race separation," operating within a framework of liberal-democratic reform and capitalist ideology, at times making excuses for domestic and global imperialism while extolling the necessity of a Black Elite to be the exemplars of moral and economic life for African Americans. However, Du Bois' work after the turn of the century began to

incorporate a more nuanced analysis of race, class, and economics. Coeval with his writings concerned more with reform than radical, let alone revolutionary, social change was his 1899 study for the University of Pennsylvania entitled *The Philadelphia Negro*.

While the work itself has been characterized by some scholars as seeking "no more than to remove the barriers to assimilation while maintaining the socioeconomic status quo,"[54] and it is indeed true that Du Bois's prescriptions, especially in the concluding chapter entitled "A Final Word," are for the most part calling for the economic and cultural stewardship of the African American community by a black bourgeoisie, there are nevertheless intimations of a growing awareness that the color line and the class line are entwined and entangled around the larger edifice of capitalist society, and in fact are integral to the structure itself. The scalar dimensions of *The Philadelphia Negro* as a sociological study provided Du Bois with a critical perspective that becomes central to his understanding of how the individual experience of capitalism's contradictions and class antagonisms play out in the broader social sphere.

The contradictions inherent in the system of racialized capitalism manifest themselves most clearly in this last chapter as he expounds separately on "The Duty of the Negroes" in one section and "The Duty of the Whites" in another, paradoxically reproducing the divide that he seeks to overcome. While he urges the

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[54] Tukufu Zuberi, "W.E.B. Du Bois's Sociology: The Philadelphia Negro and Social Science," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 595, Being Here and Being There: Fieldwork Encounters and Ethnographic Discoveries (Sep.,2004), pp. 146-156.

black community on towards an assimilationist ideal, he exhorts white people not "to hinder and retard the efforts of an earnest people to rise" in socioeconomic standing, noting that

> Industrial freedom of opportunity has by long experience been proven to be generally best for all. Moreover the cost of crime and pauperism, the growth of slums, and the pernicious influences of idleness and lewdness, cost the public far more than would the hurt to the feelings of a carpenter to work beside a black man, or a shop girl to stand behind a darker mate… Even a Negro bootblack could black boots better if he knew he was a menial not because he was a Negro but because he was best fitted for that work. (*The Philadelphia Negro* 388-395)

Here, in attempting to solve problems of race by means of opening up class advancement to African Americans, and essentially telling white Americans that their "hurt feelings" shouldn't hinder a sort of meritocratic social hierarchy, we can see Du Bois coming up against the limits of his present sociological view of these problems as discrete. His language operates within a *laissez-faire* economic framework of "free" labor and cost-benefit analysis and reproduces the same divisions of race and class that he seeks to reconcile, rather than recognizing racial hierarchies of labor as another manifestation of capitalism's inherent contradictions.

Significantly, however, he will deploy the same language again in *John Brown*, but to a very different purpose. The shift in his thinking is remarkable; he breaks out of the aporia of racial ideology, and argues that it arises from the

individual experience of daily life under the very specific arrangement of productive forces under capitalism in the United States. In the introduction to the biography he asserts that “John Brown worked not simply for black men—he worked with them; and he was a companion of their daily life, knew their faults and virtues, and felt, as few white Americans have felt, the bitter tragedy of their lot” (*John Brown* 7). This conception of solidarity doesn’t inform *The Philadelphia Negro,* where the color line divides white and black America.

Despite the apparent limits of this final chapter, however, there is a seemingly cynical passage, stemming from his attempt to analyze “the problems arising from the uniting of so many social questions about one centre” (*The Philadelphia Negro* 387-8), that takes on the larger civilizational structure of race and class conflict in liberal-democratic institutions and society at large. Du Bois writes with a sense of ironic outrage, that

> If in the hey-dey of the greatest of the world's civilizations, it is possible for one people ruthlessly to steal another, drag them helpless across the water, enslave them, debauch them, and then slowly murder them by economic and social exclusion until they disappear from the face of the earth—if the consummation of such a crime be possible in the twentieth century, then our civilization is vain and the republic is a mockery and a farce. (*The Philadelphia Negro* 388)

While the subsequent passages disavow that “the consummation of such a crime is possible,” his expression of outrage is nevertheless crucial to demonstrating the

violence of race and class conflicts that define racialized capitalism. A remark of this nature, at the culmination of such an exhaustive sociological study, is reminiscent of Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy* when he writes that "the last word of social science will always be 'combat or death; bloody struggle or extinction'" (147). The global scale of this struggle manifests itself to Du Bois most clearly in a local incident in Atlanta, Georgia, and that also plays out in the pages of *John Brown.*

The scale of the sociological research conducted for *The Philadelphia Negro* foregrounded for Du Bois how the history and material conditions in which individuals find themselves in everyday life are entangled in the socioeconomics and politics of larger populations. To that end, it was an experience of everyday life that, in 1899, the same year in which *The Philadelphia Negro* was published, and which he recounts sixty years later in his *Autobiography*, seems to have most clearly and most forcefully demonstrated this point. Du Bois writes that

> At the very same time when my studies were most successful, there cut across this plan which I had as a scientist, a red ray which could not be ignored. I remember when it first, as it were, startled me to my feet: a poor Negro in central Georgia, Sam Hose, had killed his landlord's wife. I wrote out a careful and reasoned statement concerning the evident facts and started down to the *Atlanta Constitution* office, carrying in my pocket a letter of introduction to Joel Chandler Harris. I did not get there. On the way news met me: Sam Hose had been lynched, and they said that his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store farther down on Mitchell Street, along which I

> was walking. I turned back to the university. I began to turn aside from my work. (*Autobiography* 221-2)

In *Blood Talk,* Susan Gillman underscores the vital importance of Du Bois's "red ray" moment in his intellectual development. Just as the grotesque lynching of Sam Hose became the impetus for Pauline Hopkins and her comrades at *The Colored American Magazine* to embark on a campaign against white supremacy, it leads Du Bois to "ultimately abandon the academy and its scholarly audience, but not his intellectual project, the study of the Negro Problems, itself" (178).

While Du Bois did indeed continue his sociological work, the aim was much broader than the presentation of statistical facts, disconnected from the larger forces that created them, to scholarly audiences with an eye toward modest reform. With the lynching of Sam Hose, the stakes were raised, and the character of the work shifted towards a more revolutionary project, and his "career as a scientist was swallowed up in [his] new role as master of propaganda" (*Dusk of Dawn* 47). This new endeavor led him to claim in 1926 that

> Thus all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent. ("Criteria of Negro Art")

Because, “the most successful propagandist is one who thoroughly understands the ideology of those to be propagandized,” Du Bois began to consider the “plexus” of negro problems in relation to whiteness as another socially contingent category (Fields 111). This investigation allows him to break free from the “blood talk” of racial ideology, and informs some of his most powerful pieces of “propaganda,” including his own works of speculative fiction.

Although Du Bois misremembers the specifics of the Hose case in his *Autobiograhy* (understandable, given the intervening half century), the details of the case speak to the fundamental antagonism between labor and capital that informs his study in *John Brown*. Hose, born Samuel Thomas Wilkes, was a sharecropper who had in fact confessed that he killed his employer,[55] Alfred Cranford, after Cranford refused to give Hose time off to visit his ailing mother. The two argued, and Cranford threatened to shoot Hose, who, in self-defense, threw his ax at Cranford, killing him. Hose was also alleged to have raped Cranford’s wife and assaulted their infant son, but, as was often the case, these details were fabricated by the propagandistic Southern press in order to incite the lynch mob. Despite his mis-remembering the details, it is nevertheless worth speculating about just what was contained in Du Bois’s analysis of the Sam Hose case. Was there any mention of the inherent economic conflict between the landowning farmers and sharecroppers, or the further complication of its entanglement in the color-line? Irrespective of whether Du Bois

[55] Grem, Darren E. “Sam Jones, Sam Hose, and the Theology of Racial Violence.” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 1, 2006, pp. 35–61. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40584885.

spoke to these underlying factors of the case, the sheer violence of Sam Hose's lynching was enough to silence his "careful and reasoned statement," and Du Bois's subsequent project of revolutionary analysis and action can be traced to this moment. As the inherent violence of racial ideology manifested so explicitly and viscerally on the body of Sam Hose, his research for *John Brown* offered an opportunity to develop and disseminate a new "race concept."

Black Star, White Light

The biography of John Brown, whom Du Bois ultimately calls "a white light," was the product of a compromise between Du Bois and Ellis P. Olberholtzer, champion of sanitized blackness and editor of *The American Crisis Biographies*. That series, designed to "give an impartial view of the causes, the course, and the consequences of the Civil War," shows his colors as a sometime friend of the Negro (to adapt the title of one of Du Bois's categories from bibliography of *Black Reconstruction)*. In 1903, four years after his "Red Ray" moment in Atlanta, Olberholtzer requested that Du Bois write "a life of Frederick Douglass," which, for political reasons, was later assigned to Booker T. Washington (*John Brown* 5-6).

Over the course of a long correspondence, Du Bois and Olberholtzer began to negotiate the subject of the biography Du Bois would write. Initially, Oberholtzer suggested that Du Bois might instead be interested in the life of Blanche K. Bruce, the first African American senator. Interestingly, Du Bois countered by indicating that a biography of Nat Turner would be "the best subject for [him]" as "around

Turner would center the slave trade, foreign and internal, Negro insurrections from Toussaint down to John Brown, the beginnings of abolitionism, the movement of the free Negroes of the North and the whole plantation economy which was changing critically in the thirties, and the general subjective Negro point of view of the system of slavery" (*John Brown* 7). His thinking here is reminiscent of Pauline Hopkins's assertion that "all history of the great deeds or wonderful achievements of man is but biography" and suggests a similarly Benjaminian approach to this project ("Edwin Garrison Walker…" 49).

Du Bois's suggestion of two figures central to the understanding of black resistance to slavery and white domination illustrate his intent to present a revolutionary subject to his readership and thus underscores the political aim of his work. Olberholtzer pleaded ignorance of "the life of Turner and the importance of the movement which he led" and wondered whether there was "sufficient material" for a Turner biography (*John Brown* 7). Despite Du Bois's assurance that Nat Turner's rebellion was integral to an understanding of Southern fears of slave revolt and the plantation system in general, Oberholtzer suggested instead a life of John Brown. Brown, who, frequently dismissed as a fanatic by white scholars, must have seemed a safe choice for Oberholtzer, whose refusal of Turner reveals the power of Turner's legacy 75 years later.

The contrast between Turner's briefly successful insurrection and Brown's failed raid on Harpers Ferry make it clear why Brown was the "safer" choice in Olberholzer's estimation. The failure of the raid on Harpers Ferry allowed Brown to

be dismissed by the white establishment as an ineffectual zealot, and enabled supporters to see his failure in 1859 as the culmination of his earlier successes in Kansas. In the end, Du Bois accepted and proceeded to place Brown in the same global context he had planned for Turner and, in language reminiscent of Hopkins's *Winona*, where she describes the final battle between Brown's multiracial force and the Border Ruffians as a "terrible struggle between the two great forces–Right and Wrong," compares Brown to "a great white light—an unwavering, unflickering brightness, blinding by its all-seeing brilliance, making the whole world simply a light and a darkness—a right and a wrong" (*Winona* 125; *John Brown* 340).

In his play on "Turner" and the idea of events turning around him at their center, we see that Du Bois also places his subject in a broader constellation, situating him around a common center of gravity for the larger events of the era in which he lived. This common center of gravity is the black hole, or dark star, of racialized capitalism. He is also returning via a different route to the analysis of "the problems arising from the uniting of so many social questions about one centre" which he outlined in *The Philadelphia Negro*. In presenting the life of the biographical subject as part of a global nexus, Du Bois tacitly endorses Hopkins's assertion that "all history… is but biography." But perhaps the most important "turn" which manifests in *John Brown* is when Du Bois turns the metaphysics of Hegel's dialectical method "on its head" in favor of a more explicitly materialist, or Marxist, method.

Du Bois's biography of Brown is deeply intertwined with Du Bois's autobiographical writing. In *John Brown,* biographer and subject are doubled, and his

narrative of Brown's life is a continuation of the *auto*biographical work he began in *Souls*. While the "double-consciousness" of *Souls* registers racial ideology as a blockage in the Hegelian dialectic of mutual recognition, it does not explicitly analyze the material conditions out of which this blockage arises. Brown's life, and specifically his recognition of black people as "co-workers," fellow human beings, offers Du Bois an opportunity to understand the material conditions which allowed Brown to overcome racial ideology. Both works investigate the complex internal struggles of their subjects with the world of racialized capitalism that they inhabit. This investigation in turn mediates the "moments of danger" shared between Brown's past and Du Bois's present, informing his later autobiographies and fiction, including his works of speculative fiction, "The Comet" (1920) and "A.D. 2150" (1950).

Du Bois's central assertion in *John Brown* is that "the price of repression is greater than the cost of liberty" and "the cheapest price to pay for liberty is its cost today" (17; 396). While strikingly similar to his earlier use of economic language in *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois moves beyond the simple cost/benefit analysis of the poverty and crime plaguing the African American community in Philadelphia as a separate social sphere towards an analysis of the whole of society. Marx defines "price" as "merely the money-name of the quantity of social labor" contained in commodities (*Capital, Vol. 1* 203). Here, Du Bois is thinking in similar terms about the quantity of social labor required to maintain the racialized hierarchies of American capitalism as "the price of repression." We also see the shift from a

Hegelian dialectical method to a more explicitly Marxist one, when Du Bois asserts that

> the degradation of men costs something both to the degraded and those who degrade. While the Negro slaves sank to listless docility and vacant ignorance, their masters found themselves whirled in the eddies of mighty movements: their system of slavery was twisting them backwards toward the darker ages of force and caste and cruelty, while forward swirled swift currents of uplift and liberty. (*John Brown* 17-18)

Implicit in this analysis of the degrading effects of the social labor that goes into maintaining the color-line as a "caste" system is the "force" and "cruelty" of the violence—both physical and psychological—inherent in it, as well as the fluidity of these categories within the emerging world system.

Rather than reproducing the same racial and economic divisions that made *The Philadelphia Negro* and the Atlanta Conferences an aporetic moment for Du Bois, his study of Brown's life and times allows him to revise his notions of race and class. Instead of apriori, universal categories, he recognizes them as fluid and socially constructed. While the logics of capitalism are inherently contradictory, the antinomies generated through racialization of social hierarchies already founded on conflicting class interests only increase the violence necessary to maintain the system of capitalist exploitation. Echoing Pauline Hopkins's 1905 prediction that "when labor and capital become contending forces… blood will flow," Du Bois recognized that implicit in the "cost of liberty" there was also violence. This is not the incessant

violence of a system of racialized capitalism maintaining, expanding, and perpetuating itself, but instead a brief period of revolutionary violence prior to the possibility of opening new futures ("A Primer of Facts" 351). In his later speculative fiction, this recognition allows Du Bois to think beyond the ideological limits of racial capitalism.

John Brown and Antebellum Political Economy

Du Bois sets out to portray Brown's life and intellectual development as he had intended to portray Nat Turner's—to illustrate that both subjects have as defining moments, incidents connected with "the slave trade, foreign and internal, Negro insurrections… the beginnings of abolitionism, the movement of the free Negroes of the North and the whole plantation economy which was changing critically in the thirties, and the general subjective Negro point of view of the system of slavery" (*John Brown* 7). Both Brown and Turner function as case studies in which Du Bois can analyze the shifts in the national economy that occurred during their lives, but how these two revolutionary figures are affected by these shifts is quite different, leading Du Bois to a vital insight about the "general subjective" point of view and its role in perpetuating ideologies of race, as well as gender and class.

Early in the biography, Du Bois recounts a formative experience in the life of the young John Brown, with striking parallels to many of his own experiences, detailed in his autobiographies, where he recounts his "early days of rollicking boyhood… away up in the hills of New England," not far from where John Brown

grew up (*Souls* 101). Brown's early life among the "wild beasts and wilder brown men" in the woods of Connecticut and Pennsylvania is similarly idyllic, but just as "the shadow" of racial ideology "bursts upon [Du Bois], all in a day," Brown's earliest experience of the color line is abrupt and violent (*John Brown* 21; *Souls* 101). The violence of this event recalls Du Bois's experience of Sam Hose's lynching, and does much to elaborate on the social relations whichthat go unremarked in his recounting of that incident. Du Bois writes that this moment

> stands out as foretaste and prophecy—...[that] foretold to the boy the life deed of the man. It was during the war [of 1812] that a certain landlord welcomed John to his home whither the boy had ridden with cattle, a hundred miles through the wilderness. He praised the big, grave and bashful lad to his guests and made much of him. John, however, discovered… another boy in the landlord's yard. Fellow souls were scarce with this backwoodsman and his diffidence warmed to the kindly welcome of the stranger, especially because he was black, half naked and wretched. In John's very ears the kind voices of the master and his folk turned to harsh abuse with this black boy. At night the slave lay in the bitter cold and once they beat the wretched thing before John's very eyes with an iron shovel, and again and again struck him with any weapon that chanced. In wide-eyed silence John looked on and questioned, Was the boy bad or stupid? No, he was active, intelligent and with the great warm sympathy of his race did him "numerous little acts of kindness," so that John readily, in his straightforward candor, acknowledged him "fully if not

> more than his equal." That the black worked and worked hard and steadily was in John's eyes no hardship—rather a pleasure. Was not the world work? … "Is God their Father?" And what he asked, a million and a half black bondmen were asking through the land. (*John Brown* 25-7)

The poetic nature of this passage is comparable to the lyrical language of Du Bois's later novels and autobiographies, and yet this is a biography of a man who died almost a decade before Du Bois was born. That Du Bois crafts such a striking description of Brown's first encounter with a slave from an "indefinite outline" ties the task of the biographer to that of the propagandist. Du Bois fleshes out the skeleton of this "indefinite outline" with vivid descriptions not only of the brutality of slavery but also the loss of youthful naiveté, and a remapping of the "social terrain" Brown occupied. Crucially, rather than allowing racial ideology to "shut off the circuit" of the Hegelian dialectic, Brown instead recognizes the boy as a fellow human being and feels sympathy and kinship for him (Fanon 192). This sense of kinship turns to shock as he witnesses the dehumanization of his newfound friend, producing an experiences akin Du Bois's notion of "double consciousness," and offers Du Bois a model for creating a narrative of "cognitive estrangement"[56] that he will use in his later speculative fiction.

The resonances between Brown's "early years" of manhood and the "early days" of Du Bois's "red ray" moment in Atlanta are striking. In both formative incidents, we are confronted with the affective impact of witnessing the violence done

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56 Darko Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," 1968.

to another human being in the name of maintaining a racial labor hierarchy. That the transformative nature of this incident in Brown's life is described as "unconscious" contrasts with the incident from Du Bois's life, where he made a conscious, immediate decision to turn away both physically, as he retreated from the store displaying Hose's knuckles, and intellectually, as the futility of sociological research for its own sake—that is, with something more than mere elaboration of the Negro problems and modest reform—in the battle against racialized violence became clear to him. For Brown, the trauma of the event stayed with him for years, and certainly guided his personal actions and beliefs, but it took him longer to break free of the ideological fetters that insisted what he had witnessed was "appropriate social behavior." Du Bois's crucial insight here is that only by witnessing the brutality of slavery was it possible for those who benefitted from it–whether directly or indirectly–to understand its broader social and economic implications and turn against it as an institution.

There is a return, here, to a theme which Hopkins elaborated on in her novels and non-fiction, and which Du Bois first addresses in *The Philadelphia Negro*, and again in *Black Reconstruction*: the potential for solidarity between white and black workers. While work itself is "no hardship" in Brown's eyes—indeed, Du Bois adds, "was not life work?"—it is the nature of the slave's exploitation by a master, and the degradation of both by this relationship, that seems to affect him most bitterly. In much the same way that the negro problems, considered abstractly, become something visceral and immediate to Du Bois in the violent aftermath of Sam Hose's

lynching, the cruelty of slavery, likely considered by Brown only as a similarly abstract–though extreme–form of bourgeois property relations up to this point, is another moment of violent rupture to his interpretation of the "social terrain" of the US, and one which radicalizes him. That this violence comes in the act of exchange reiterates and underscores the internal contradictions of the system of racialized capitalism. If race-slavery limited "the need for free citizens (which is to say white people) to exploit each other directly" by making "class exploitation [synonymous] with racial exploitation," then for white people like Brown, witnessing its brutality firsthand was one way to short-circuit this false equivalence, and foster an interracial, working class solidarity (Fields 108).

Du Bois's purpose in taking on Brown as his subject becomes clearest when he begins to consider antebellum economic injustices at their intersection with social injustices. He writes that

> the economic history of the land from the War of 1812 to the Civil War covers a period of extraordinary development—so much so that no man's life which fell in these years may be written without knowledge of and allowance for the battling gigantic social forces and welding of material, out of which the present United States was designed. (*John Brown* 49)

Here, Du Bois shifts from his earlier Hegelianism to a more explicitly Marxist dialectical method by noting that no one life could be be understood except by an account of how "the material world [is] reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought" (Marx 102). By tracing the transition in economic dominance

from an alliance between merchant-capital and Southern slavery, which had not been mutually exclusive systems, to the rise of industrial and financial capital, he demonstrates how this shift in the relations and modes of production in turn shapes ideologies of gender, race, and class down to the present.

Brown's actions indeed reflected this transition, as he grew "into full industrial manhood," made a small fortune built on speculation, began to "invest his surplus in land along new canal routes," and even became "director in one of the rapidly multiplying banks" cropping up at the time (49). However, his fortune collapsed after "Jackson's blind tinkering with the banking system precipitated a [national economic] crisis" (*John Brown* 50). Here, Du Bois is beginning to outline a crucial connection between the highly speculative, volatile realm of financial capital that was beginning to dominate the world economy during the Jacksonian period, and the socially contingent categories of gender, race, and class. The shifting economic conditions increased the need for "free citizens"–white Americans–to exploit each other, something antithetical to Brown's deeply held religious convictions. The course of Brown's life was drastically altered by the elimination of merchant capital founded on rural subsistence production, the removal of the means of production from the control of the producers, and the compulsion of these producers to submit to market-competition in the new regime of industrial capital, or perish. The social status that came along with his "small fortune" and bank directorship gave way to poverty and eventual bankruptcy.

The crisis of 1837 demolished both Brown's "partly fictitious" fortune in "land along new canal routes" and his very real wealth in the form of his personally owned means of production: his farmland and his family's leather tannery.[57] His misfortune was not unique; in fact "the commercial depression of 1837-42… left most farmers in the northwest with crushing debts accrued to obtain land… they had to engage in successful market-competition in order to survive as property owning agrarians" (Post 233). Brown was forced into a series of ill-fated ventures that would ultimately lead him to abandon his business pursuits altogether and, along with other economic refugees recruited by the Emigrant Aid Society, head west to Kansas, where the question of the expansion of slavery was being fought out. The speculative nature of his "partly fictitious" fortune, his financial ruin after the speculative bubble burst, and the nationwide "commercial depression" which followed point both to capitalism's inherent cycles of crises and growth, as well as the abstract foundations on which the whole system, including its attendant ideologies of gender, race, and class, rests.

Brown's personal misfortunes, brought about by the increasing contradictions of antebellum political economy, were catalysts for his economic radicalism, and ultimately his revolutionary Abolitionism. In the early 1840's, after unsuccessfully breeding racehorses, farming, surveying, and returning to his former occupation as

[57] It is interesting here to note the parallels between the facts that Du Bois makes frequent reference to Brown's tannery in the biography, and that Marx frequently uses tanning as an example in describing various production processes and as a pun: "He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but – a tanning." *Capital, Vol. I,* p. 280

cattle-driver, Brown finally "began sheep farming near Hudson, [Ohio,] keeping his own and a rich merchant's sheep and also buying wool on commission" (*John Brown* 51). Here we see Du Bois "welding" together the lived experience of his subject and the currents of political economy on which he sailed. Du Bois writes that, on the one hand, Brown's work as a shepherd gave him the "air and space" that he "longed for" as well as the time

> to think and read; time was flying and his life as yet had been little but a mean struggle for bread, and that, too, only partially successful. Already he had had a vision of a vast service… and at the age of thirty-nine he entered his new life distinctly and clearly with 'the idea that as a business it bid fair to afford him the means of carrying out his greatest principal or project.' (*John Brown* 52)

On the other, he notes that one of the chief motivations was the "change from household to factory economy" during this period; the "introduction of effective machinery had been slow" in the wool industry and "one of the chief drawbacks was the ever-small quantity of good wool," leading to a sharp increase in demand for wool in the U.S. and England (*John Brown* 51). Thus, the profit to be made and the mobility the wool trade offered Brown as he planned his work for the emancipation of slaves were welded in his will.

Rather than exploit his competition, Brown attempted to organize his fellow wool producers into a cooperative in order to resist the cost-cutting by manufacturer's agents who went from farm to isolated farm, exploiting unwitting rural producers who, due to economic downturn, were easily manipulated into selling at low prices

(*John Brown* 64). Brown's economic radicalism was driven by his own radical Christian beliefs, particularly those surrounding fair dealings with others and equitable treatment of his fellow man. He established his own warehouse and became both a producer and a merchant in wool, but stubbornly refused to sell to the manufacturers at prices they demanded. Unfortunately, instead of fostering a spirit of solidarity among his fellow producers, Brown's attempts at leveling the playing field for wool-farmers in Ohio alienated him from them, and he found them unwilling to cooperate.

Du Bois observes that, due to the divide-and-conquer tactics employed by these "well-organized industrial highwaymen [who] could hold up the wool farmer and make him hand over some of his earnings," John Brown was yet again caught up in the economic currents of his time, and once again financially ruined (*John Brown* 64). Noting the parallels between Brown's frustrated attempts to organize the woolgrowers as a cooperative and the tactics of monopoly capital in his own socioeconomic moment, Du Bois writes:

> The difficulty here would be to bring all the threatened parties into an organization. They could be forced in by killing off or starving out the ignorant or recalcitrant. This is the modern business method. Its result is arraying two industrial armies in a battle whose victims are paupers and prostitutes, and whose victory comes by compromising, whereby a half-dozen millionaires are born to the philanthropic world. (51)

The "paupers and prostitutes" of this passage recall those Black Philadelphians, "debauched" and "murdered by economic and social exclusion," whom he described in his study of *The Philadelphia Negro*, but here he has discovered the source of their misfortune in the racialized labor hierarchy required by capitalism. Just as the wool merchants exploited existing intra-class antagonisms to undermine Brown's efforts at forming a cooperative, monopoly capitalism in the 20th century exploited racial ideology to undermine labor organizing. Brown's resistance to the injustices of the market and his attempt to collectivize production amongst wool farmers, rather than exploit them, gave Du Bois a crucial insight into Brown's economic radicalism as a precursor to his role as a revolutionary Abolitionist guerilla in Bleeding Kansas and his raid on Harpers Ferry.

The vicissitudes of the post merchant-capital market would prove to be yet another invisible force that guided John Brown's life. As he waded through "the slough of despond… in the succeeding years from 1842 to 1846, [the gravity of which] was never fully betrayed, by this stern, self-repressing Puritan… the loss of a fortune and the shattering of a dream, the bankruptcy and imprisonment, and the death of five children" served as catalysts for Brown's radicalization, as "it dawned on him that he had sinned in the selfish pursuit of petty ends: that he must be about his Father's business of giving the death-blow to that 'sum of all villainies—slavery'" (*John Brown* 56). Brown's frequent failures in the market had ramifications beyond his Calvinist self-castigations; bankruptcy and the threat of imprisonment made it

clear that one's position within the capitalist class hierarchy was tenuous at best, and one's whiteness mattered not one whit when it came to debts owed.

Kansas and the Making of a Black Radical

In tracing the final half decade of John Brown's career, Du Bois makes his most compelling connections between the lived experience of racialized capitalism, the larger forces at play, and John Brown's place as a co-worker in the Black Radical Tradition. In the passage below, the expansionist impulse of the "slave barons" sets the stage for the conflict in Kansas, but also foreshadows the imperial ambitions of the post-Reconstruction era in which Du Bois came of age, and how they were being realized by the establishment of US empire at the time he published *John Brown*. Similar to the way that, at the dawn of the twentieth century the US, after it consolidated a domestic empire on the North American continent with railroads and reservations, began to look towards a hemispheric imperialism that saw troops in South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and elsewhere, in the 19th century it was

> the slave barons [who] looked behind them, and saw to their own dismay that there could be no backward step. The slavery of the new Cotton Kingdom in the nineteenth century must either die or conquer a nation —it could not hesitate or pause, it was an industrial system built on ignorance, force and the cotton plant. The slaves must be curbed with an iron hand. A moment of relaxation and lo! they would be rising either in revenge or ambition. And slavery had made revenge and ambition one. Such a system could not compete

> with intelligence, nor with individual freedom, nor with miscellaneous and care-demanding crops. It could not divide territory with these things;—to do so meant economic death and the sudden, perhaps revolutionary upheaval of a whole social system. This the South saw as it looked backward in the years from 1820 to 1840. Then its bolder vision pressed the gloom ahead, and dreamed a dazzling dream of empire. It saw the slave system triumphant in the great Southwest—in Mexico, in Central America and the islands of the sea. (*John Brown* 94-95)

The parallels Du Bois notices between the 1850s and his own moment are uncanny. In a moment of self-revision, Du Bois constellates the expansionist agenda outlined in the Ostend Manifesto (1854) with U.S. foreign policy in the first decade of the twentieth century, echoing his assertion in *Souls* that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" and "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (15). Here, he deepens this analysis by linking U.S. expansion of the color line in the twentieth century to the political economy of the nineteenth century, when the debate over the expansion of plantation-slavery on the continent grew more and more contentious. In response to this earlier expansion, Northern settler groups financed both by abolitionists and northern industrialists under the auspices of the Emigrant Aid Society, began sending settlers to Kansas so that when the question of a territorial constitution was raised, they could vote in favor of free soil and thus limit the spread of plantation-slavery.

Southern interests, many from slave-holding regions of Missouri, financed similar expeditions, while also organizing militia groups, later referred to as Border Ruffians, to bring Northern settlers into line, scare them out of the territory, or murder them. The resulting conflict over the expansion of slavery into the territories "compelled those who loved the right to meet law and force by force and lawlessness, and one man that led that lawless fight on the plains of Kansas and struck its bloodiest blow, was John Brown" (*John Brown* 126). The conflict was a proxy war between Southern Democrats and Northern Whigs (later Republicans), and this crisis of bourgeois, liberal-democratic compromise and the bloody conflict that ensued were a prelude to the Civil War.

While Brown was neither "the central figure of Kansas territorial history" nor "the acknowledged leader of men and measures," he was nevertheless "down in the blood and dust of battle... [one] who delivered the master-stroke—the [maker] of the thoughts of men" (*John Brown* 134). By decentering Brown as a figure in Bleeding Kansas while underscoring the importance of his actions there, Du Bois subverts the notion of the biographical subject as the center of the social history recounted therein, and instead shifts the scale of the work to show that while they may be the center of localized events, they are nevertheless caught up in larger systems which are constantly in motion and have no fixed center. It was in his violent and bloody against the Border Ruffians and other pro-slavery partisans, waged alongside an interracial coalition of free-soilers, black people, and Native Americans, that Brown began to cast off the ideological fetters of race and white supremacist pretensions, and thus to

form his revolutionary subjectivity. After he had fled Kansas and sought to work with other revolutionaries and radicals such as Harriet Tubman,[58] Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and Martin Delany, this subjectivity took on the scope and scale of something larger. His interactions and friendships with black people lead him to a complete disavowal of whiteness and the racial ideologies produced under American capitalism, and a project to radically transform the social terrain of the United States.

Ironically, by broadening the scope of his political project, Du Bois notes that of all the "opportunists and politicians" in Kansas in the middle of the 19th Century, Brown was the only "man who in all this bewildering broil was least the puppet of his circumstances—the man who most clearly saw the crux of the conflict, most definitely knew his own convictions and was readiest at the crisis for decisive action, was a man whose leadership lay not in his office, wealth or influence, but in the white flame of his utter devotion to an ideal" (*John Brown* 134-5). Brown's "white flame" serves as such an effective example precisely because his divestment from whiteness as social/racial capital is backed up by a willingness to work across the color line, and to use violence in defense of his comrades. Du Bois portrays Brown's apotheosis in Kansas in a manner similar to his own "red ray" narrative from his *Autobiography,* but one that could serve as a model for his white audience. Brown's consciousness of the material conditions that have brought him to his present situation allow him to sever the ties that made him the "puppet" of capital's caprice.

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[58] While Brown's relationship with Tubman is mentioned in some detail by Du Bois, other women who were instrumental in terms of material support and even leadership—for instance Mary Ellen Pleasant and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, to name a few—are notably absent from the biography.

The parallels between Du Bois' later radicalism and his narrative choices in the Brown biography are indicative of his own incipient radicalism, particularly the contrast between his own "red ray" and the "white flame" of Brown. His description of Brown as one who was "readiest at the crisis for decisive action" reverberates in his consciousness a year after the publication of the Brown biography, when he becomes the founding editor of the *The Crisis*, a publication with which he will part ways decades later, when his own readiness for more decisive, revolutionary action will lead to a conflict between Du Bois and the NAACP. For Du Bois, the political project of *John Brown* was to simultaneously lay the foundation for his own radicalism while legitimizing it through the parallels between his own life and Brown's, though not through an appeal to Brown as an authority, but through Brown's examples as a co-worker.

As things came to a head in Kansas, one of Brown's final acts was to form an expeditionary force along with James Montgomery[59] in order to enter Missouri and free slaves on properties near the Kansas border. This incident forms the basis for Hopkins's revision of the Pottawatomie Massacre in *Winona*. The reaction on the side of the pro-slavery militias was brutal, and Brown and his comrades were harried by slavecatchers and Border Ruffians for three months before finally reaching Iowa, and there boarding a train for Chicago and eventually Canada (*John Brown* 144-8). Unable to return to Kansas, and practically penniless, Brown began the final leg of his

[59] Montgomery would go on to become a colonel in the US Army and carry out Harriet Tubman's plan for a raid against plantations along the Combahee River, under her command, during the Civil War.

career as a revolutionary by soliciting prominent abolitionists in the Northeast for money and arms.

The subsequent chapter, “The Black Phalanx,” begins by harkening back to his earlier sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Du Bois’s crucial insight here is that, as it became clear that the system of race-slavery would end sooner or later, and the “social terrain” that produced racial ideology began to shift, so too did the rationale for the subjugation and exploitation of black people:

> The great economic change which made slavery the corner-stone of the cotton kingdom was definitely finished and all the subtle moral adjustments which follow were in full action. New immigrants took advantage of the growing prejudice which found a profitable place for the Negro in slavery, and was determined to keep him in it. They began to crowd the free Northern Negro in a fierce economic battle. With a precarious social foothold, little economic organization, and no support in public opinion, the Northern free Negro was forced to yield. In Philadelphia from 1829 to 1849 six mobs of hoodlums and foreigners cowed and murdered the Negroes. (*John Brown* 176)

Here, Du Bois sets the stage for the lead up to Harpers Ferry by reiterating that the entanglement of race and class struggle was not just a question in the South or in the western territories, but one that concerned the whole nation, even the “liberal” North, and beyond. His observation that the “subtle moral adjustments” necessary to shift from a racial ideology that justified slavery to one that justified a hierarchy of waged

labor based on race is one that is more fully developed almost a quarter century later in *Black Reconstruction in America*.

The arduous course Brown takes from patron to patron in his search for money, arms, and—crucially—men of both races to join his force is reconstructed mostly through excerpts from other biographies of Brown and the correspondence, memoirs, and biographies of prominent figures he met at the time, including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Martin Delaney. The central event of the chapters leading up to the account of the Harpers Ferry raid is the recounting of a meeting on May 8th, 1859, in Chatham, Ontario. Canada, as the only truly safe haven for fugitive slaves and free-born African Americans alike, was the final stop on the Underground Railroad. At the Chatham Convention Brown, Delaney, and others looked towards the future by revising the past, and wrote a new US Constitution. The document is striking because on the one hand, it claims not to "encourage the overthrow of any state government, or the general government of the United States," but nevertheless contained articles antithetical to that very same government and its constitution (*John Brown* 194).

Brown and his comrades were aware that the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century had re-created the very systems of feudal hierarchy and exploitation they claimed to overthrow, and attempted to imagine a future that did not repeat the failures of the past. Rejecting the bourgeois notions of private property used to justify slavery in the first place, the Chatham Constitution provided for "all property to be held in common" and stated that "all persons were to labor." In stark contrast to

Vincent Ogé's 1791 letter to the French planters in Le Cap, Haiti, Brown and his comrades unequivocally call for the liberation of the slaves. Their preamble declared that the authors would "no longer serve as slaves, knowing that the 'Laborer is worthy of his hire'" and that

> We therefore, the Representatives of the circumscribed citizens of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled… Declare: …that as free and independent citizens of these states, they have a perfect right, a sufficient and just cause, to defend themselves against the Tyranny of their oppressors. To solicit aid from & ask the protection of all true friends of humanity and reform, of whatever nation, & wherever found; A right to contract all Alliances, & to do all other acts and things which free independent Citizens may of right do. And for the support of the Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence: 'We mutually pledge to each other, Our Lives, and Our sacred Honor.' (*John Brown* 197-198)

That this constitution was written by the joint efforts of white men and black men and women was not lost on Du Bois. The centrality of John Brown to the Niagara Movement has been well-documented; the group even chose to hold a meeting at Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1906, as Du Bois was still working on his biography. The powerful solidarity envisioned in the Chatham Constitution seems certainly to have influenced his later involvement in the foundation of the NAACP at the invitation of white socialists William English Walling and Mary White Ovington, and even his brief membership in the Socialist party later that year.

Perhaps one of the most important influences of this document on Du Bois's later scholarship was the right asserted by the freed slaves and their white allies, "to defend themselves against the Tyranny of their oppressors. *To solicit aid from & ask the protection of all true friends of humanity*[60] *and reform, of whatever nation, & wherever found.*" The international scope of this appeal for aid and protection, in addition to intersectional composition of its authors, underscored the broader implications of the color line as enforced by racialized capitalism not just in the United States, but globally. Brown's willingness to "work not just for, but with black men" demonstrated to Du Bois the power of solidarity and collective action and its radical potential in the 20th century, as the robber-barons in the US continued the militarist expansion into Latin America envisioned by the Southern slave-barons in the 19th (*John Brown* 7). While many scholars point to Du Bois's professed pacifism, the notion of armed self-defense was just as important to him as his hopes for peace. The examples of Toussaint, Turner, Brown, Tubman, and the black soldiers of the Civil War taught him that "No normal human being of trained intelligence is going to fight the man who will not fight back . . . but suppose they are wild beasts or wild men? To yield to the rush of the tiger is death, nothing less" (Du Bois 1957, cited in Cobb, pp. 4-5).

While the failures of the Harpers Ferry raid have been well documented, Du Bois seeks to recuperate the legacy of the endeavor, along with the legacy of Brown in the final chapters. Here, Brown exemplifies not only the overcoming of artificial

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60 This phrase also appears in Pauline Hopkins's dedication of *Contending Forces* "to the friends of humanity everywhere" (ix).

barriers to interracial solidarity, but what other barriers can be overcome once this is accomplished. In the final chapter, Du Bois asks, "Was John Brown simply an episode, or was he an eternal truth? And if a truth, how speaks that truth today?" (*John Brown* 281). In the ensuing 25 pages he elaborates on the nature of John Brown's eternal truth, and the implications for the 20th century and beyond, both in the US and globally. He asserts that on the twin foundations of his religious conviction, which caused him to "love his neighbor as himself," and the inspiration he took from "the social doctrines of the French Revolution with its emphasis on freedom and power in political life," Brown built a "belief in a just and more equal distribution of property" (*John Brown* 281). For Du Bois, these convictions meant "a moral revolution in the attitude of the nation" was just as necessary in his own day as it was in Brown's. This moral revolution must combat "the present reaction" which "says in effect 'keep these black people in their places, and don't attempt to treat a Negro simply as a white man with a black face'" (*John Brown* 282).

In an act of self-revision reminiscent of Pauline Hopkins, Du Bois returns to figure of the Negro bootblack in order to move beyond the "blood talk" and bourgeois economic analysis of *The Philadelphia Negro,*[61] positing instead a future outside of racial capitalism and its attendant ideologies of race, gender, and class. He writes,

> This is the situation to-day. Has John Brown no message—no legacy, then, to the twentieth century? He has and it is this great word: the cost of liberty is

[61] Where he wrote that, "Even a Negro bootblack could black boots better if he knew he was a menial not because he was a Negro but because he was best fitted for that work" (395).

> less than the price of repression. The price of repressing the world's darker races is shown in a moral retrogression and an economic waste unparalleled since the age of the African slave-trade. What would be the cost of liberty? What would be the cost of giving the great stocks of mankind every reasonable help and incentive to self-development— opening the avenues of opportunity freely, spreading knowledge, suppressing war and cheating, and treating men and women as equals the world over whenever and wherever they attain equality? It would cost something. *It would cost something in pride and prejudice, for eventually many a white man would be blacking black men's boots*; but this cost we may ignore–its greatest cost would be the new problems of racial intercourse and intermarriage which would come to the front… this might be a good thing and it might not be. We do not know. Our belief in the matter may be strong and frantic, but it has no adequate scientific foundation. (383-4, emphasis mine)

Here, the crux of the matter, the ideological origins of gender, race, and class hierarchies in the global system of capital, becomes the object of his critique. Just as Pauline Hopkins opens *Winona* with the assertion that the widespread acceptance of "social intercourse may be long in coming, but its advent is sure; the mischief is already done" (1), Du Bois ties the international color line to the domestic one by locating it explicitly in the realm of "racial intercourse," between black and white Americans, which has already, and undeniably, taken place. In the aftermath of emancipation and Reconstruction's "splendid failures," the "moral adjustments"

required to maintain a raced *and* gendered hierarchy of labor became more deeply entangled.

Du Bois continues, turning the internal logics of eugenicist white supremacy on their heads. The "racial philosophy" of white supremacy that has taken root in America, and undergirds the white hegemony, which stands in for capitalism in the biography, "is fraught with the gravest social consequences to the world" (*John Brown* 283). Du Bois asks, "What now does the present hegemony of the white races threaten?"

> It threatens by means of brute force a survival of some of the worst stocks of mankind. It attempts to people the best parts of the earth and put in absolute authority over the rest, not usually (and indeed not mainly) the culture of Europe but its greed and degradation—not only some representatives of the best stocks of the West End of London, upper New York and the Champs Elysees, but also, in as large if not larger numbers, the worst stocks of Whitechapel, the East Side and Montmartre; and it essays to make the slums of white society in all cases and under all circumstances the superior of any colored group, no matter what its ability or culture. To be sure, this outrageous program of wholesale human degeneration is not outspoken yet, save in the backward civilizations of the Southern United States, South Africa and Australia. But its enunciation is listened to with respect and tolerance in England, Germany, and the Northern states by those very persons who accuse philanthropy with seeking to degrade holy white blood by an infiltration of

> colored strains. And the average citizen is voting ships and guns to carry out this program. (284-5).

In what is essentially an earlier iteration of his study of the white working classes in his more explicitly Marxist work *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois is connecting the degradation of both the black and white working classes with the global system of capitalism and its attendant ideologies. Interestingly, the colonial context of these final passages is reminiscent, too, of the concluding chapters of *Capital* on so-called primitive accumulation, in which Marx begins to elaborate on the role colonialism played in the expansion of capitalism. Just as Hopkins posited the amalgamated "*Afric*-American" as the social cement of a new America, Du Bois insists that the proliferation of the proletarianized underclasses of white European society will lead to "wholesale human degeneration" if it remains at the heart of the imperialist project. This implies that, in the absence of "adequate scientific foundation," the only logical path forward is testing the hypothesis of equality in all social and political realms.

John Brown was not a commercial success, and is still not widely read, but the biography allowed Du Bois to recognize most clearly the material basis for a history of race and class struggle in the United States, and beyond. Through analyzing the textual history of the biography, and the biography itself, a pre- and post-history of Du Bois's own development comes into view. The pairing of the literary and historical aspects of this text demonstrates the way Du Bois—whose more well-known autobiographical works often overshadow this biographical piece—addressed

political economy through a biography that shows the multiple, unexpected and unlikely intersections of lived experience and the larger social systems at play.

Analyzing these broader social developments through the life of an individual, Du Bois is able reconcile the seemingly static "physical law and biologic habit" of the natural sciences with the "something incalculable" represented by "individual will and chance" and discover the roots of their dialectical relationship in the material conditions out of which they arrive (*Sociology Hesitant* 40). While he continued to publish prolifically in academic journals and popular periodicals, Du Bois began to shift towards fiction in the period after the publication of *John Brown,* beginning with his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911). Through literary forms such as poetry, short fiction, and "the Novel," Du Bois elaborated on "the Trust, and the Expansion of Europe" via narratives of "individual life and motive, the machine-like organizing of human economic effort, and the extension of all organization to the ends of the earth" (*Sociology Hesitant* 38).

Dystopias, Utopias, and the Re-birth of a Nation

While *John Brown* was an integral moment in Du Bois's intellectual development marking a shift towards an immanent critique of racial ideology in the United States, and the material conditions that structure it, the biography's poor circulation suggested he would need to revise his approach by repackaging its conclusions in more accessible cultural forms. The project of disseminating his analysis of the dialectic of racial ideology and political economy leads him to fiction that is

nevertheless informed as much by elements of his sociological, historical, and auto/biographical works as it is by formal requirements of fiction. In "The Comet" (1920) and "A.D. 2150" (1950), Du Bois utilizes the kind of "cognitive estrangement" later associated with speculative/science fiction (SF), forcing his readers to grapple with the recognizable but unfamiliar social and physical terrain of New York City after its population has been largely wiped out by poison gas ("The Comet") and 200 years into a radically altered future ("A.D. 2150"). The effect of both stories is to explore the relationship between the shifting social and physical landscapes and the "subtle moral adjustments" each of his characters must make to their ideological map. Each story posits the possible *re*-birth of the national project, but differs in its approach to illustrating the ideological obstacles.

Du Bois's earliest work of speculative short fiction, "The Comet," appears as the final chapter in *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (1920), a multi-generic text that best exemplifies his to approach to the role of "master of propaganda," assumed after his withdrawal from the Atlanta Conferences (*Dusk of Dawn* 47). Via "a politics of juxtaposition [that] convenes stylistically incompatible textual parts and seemingly divergent political questions," *Darkwater*'s message is the dialectical relation between questions of imperialism, war, gender, capital, and race, and these overarching themes are all *re*-presented in the final, speculative chapter (Gillman and Weinbaum 5). As Amy Kaplan has noted, Du Bois seizes on the post-WWI moment to posit the potential for rebuilding society in the wake of cataclysmic devastation, and the narrative reflects massive loss of life in the aftermath of World War One, as

well as the revolutionary potential of the ongoing civil war in Russia to fundamentally change the relations of production and reshape society. Rather than a dystopian social landscape decimated by industrialized conflict between imperialist nation states, or the internal devastation of an internal race war, however, Du Bois invokes the "absolute unchanging physical laws of nature" in the form of a comet ("Sociology Hesitant" 4).

By externalizing the "inner combustion of the social tensions and global conflicts that inform the anarchy of empire," and placing them into the cosmos itself, Du Bois revisits the earlier contradiction he notes between the apparently static laws of Nature and a social terrain comprised of "self-directing [human] wills" to hypothesize the entanglement of "Sociology and Physics," and demonstrate that, because each realm shapes and is shaped by the other, there is no externality at all (Kaplan 207; Sociology Hesitant 41). Instead of aliens from another place in the cosmos (or even just another country), Du Bois returns to his notion of "double consciousness" to focus on the ways that racial ideology works as a blockage to the Hegelian dialectic, alienating individuals as much from themselves as from each other.

The protagonists, an African American bank messenger named Jim Davis and a young, wealthy white woman named Julia,[62] are the sole survivors of the comet's passing. Together, they struggle in the newly barren social landscape created by the

62 Though she never gives her name directly, and we only learn it in the end when she is reunited with her father, and the social barriers of race reappear.

comet to overcome the obstacles of one that no longer exists, except as the remnants of their now outdated ideological positions, and survive together in a relatively unchanged physical landscape. Du Bois returns to his earlier Hegelianism by framing the relationship in terms of the master-slave relationship, emphasizing, however, the materialist dialectic that shapes it. Jim survives by virtue of his status as a menial laborer, avoiding the comet's poison gas after being momentarily trapped and sealed off in the "fetid slime" of the bank's basement vault, while Julia's survival in a high-rise apartment is facilitated by being similarly sealed off in her dark room while she develops photographs of the comet she'd taken the night before.[63] This "chance" interaction between the natural world, the physical world created by capitalist relations of production, and the social world offers a glimpse at just how entangled the three are, leading the reader to speculate about what changes, short of the total annihilation of a large population, might be possible.

Their alienation from themselves and each other is the central the dynamic driving the narrative. In the beginning, each regards the other through the distorted lens of a racialized, gendered ideology, and only through direct "social intercourse" do they begin to dismantle these conceptual structures and imagine something new (*Winona* 1). In the absence of social and cultural reinforcement, both can let down their guard and see past the supposed danger each poses to the other. But this process plays out slowly, over the course of several days, and is not without its setbacks. For

63 Amy Kaplan notes that "as a photographer," Julia "has access to culture, the tools of representation" (*The Anarchy of Empire* 207). The cultural representations of the black man as a rapist are precisely what she will need to overcome later in the text, and which threaten Jim's life at the conclusion.

Jim, the process begins as soon as he emerges from the bank vault to find he is the sole survivor of this natural disaster. Despite inhabiting a completely barren social landscape, the ideological structures of the now dead "white world" continue to influence his thoughts and actions, as he worries what might happen "if they found him here alone–with all this money and all these dead men" (*Darkwater* 256). However, he does not become completely conscious of this until well after he rescues Julia and "[t]hey stared a moment in silence. She had not noticed before that he was a Negro. He had not thought of her as white" (*Darkwater* 259). After they initially recognize each other as human beings, the dialectical blockage of racial ideology returns.

As they search through the streets of New York, the barren social landscape forces them to interrogate the ideological structures that inform their interactions, and the whole history that produced them. In this sense, Du Bois's narrative models a process of mutual "*dis*alienation" that Frantz Fanon later claimed could only occur "for those Whites and Blacks who have refused to let themselves be locked in the substantialized 'tower of the past'" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 201). For Jim and Julia, surrounded by the silent structures of capitalism, the ideological "tower of the past" still looms over them. Central to this process of disalienation will be an analysis of the supposed dangers each poses to the other. That these dangers are real, though *not* connected to some immutable fact of physical or biological law, and instead rooted in the "substantialized" social relations that predominate under white supremacist capitalism, is demonstrated most poignantly by the scene analyzed below.

In an attempt to make contact with other survivors, they proceed to "the central telephone exchange," and after removing the dead operators from the room, Jim leaves Julia alone at the switchboard (*Darkwater* 263). When her failure to make contact with anyone confirms that they truly are alone in the world, Julia panics, and

> For the first time she seemed to realize that she was alone in the world with a stranger, with something more than a stranger,–with a man alien in blood and culture–unknown, perhaps unknowable. It was awful! She must escape-she must fly; he must not see her again. Who knew what awful thoughts– She gathered her silken skirts deftly about her young, smooth limbs–listened, and glided into a sidehall. A moment she shrank back: the hall lay filled with dead women; then she leaped to the door and tore at it, with bleeding fingers, until it swung wide. She looked out. He was standing at the top of the alley,-silhouetted, tall and black, motionless. Was he looking at her or away? (*Darkwater* 264)

For Jim, the threat of being lynched, dismembered, and turned into a "thing" has loomed since he exited the bank vault. Just as Jim's first instinct is to flee the substantial danger posed by a man of his inferior social status being found near the bodies of his superiors, not to mention a great deal of the material wealth his status denies him, Julia is also threatened with annihilation, and overcome by survival instincts informed by racist ideology and historical forces that produce it. The historical fact of sexual violence and femicide is highlighted by Du Bois's juxtaposition of her femininity with the dead women in the hallway, but the racial

ideology that proposes "alien" black men as the primary perpetrators of this violence cause Julia to conflate the historical fact with the social fiction.

This conflation contradicts her experience of the past day with Jim, whose deference and tact are also informed by the socially constructed danger that upsetting a white woman poses to him. Whether he actually perceived her as a potential victim,

> She did not know–she did not care. She simply leaped and ran–ran until she found herself alone amid the dead and the tall ramparts of towering buildings. She stopped. She was alone. Alone! Alone on the streets–alone in the city–perhaps alone in the world! There crept in upon her the sense of deception–of creeping hands behind her back–of silent, moving things she could not see,–of voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy. She looked behind and sideways, started at strange sounds and heard still stranger, until every nerve within her stood sharp and quivering, stretched to scream at the barest touch. She whirled and flew back, whimpering like a child, until she found that narrow alley again and the dark, silent figure silhouetted at the top. She stopped and rested; then she walked silently toward him, looked at him timidly; but he said nothing as he handed her into the car. Her voice caught as she whispered: "Not–that." And he answered slowly: "No–not that!" (*Darkwater* 265)

Haunted by the ghosts of a society that is undeniably dead–the corpses of its human constituents strewn amongst its vacant edifices–Julia is forced to reconcile the racist ideology of that past with her lived experience of survival with Jim. The process is unsettling, offering a glimpse of the "silent moving things she could not see," and a

"sense of [the] deception" perpetrated by "voices hushed in [the] fearsome conspiracy" of racist ideology. Her timidity upon returning to Jim conveys a sense of shame at having doubted his intentions based solely on the social fictions that alienated them from each other in the first place. That Jim knew exactly what "that" implied, and so assured her he was not going to assault her, demonstrates that he, too, is haunted by the "voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy" which Pauline Hopkins had called "the propaganda of silence" (Dworkin 345). Nevertheless, this shared recognition allows them to see each other for the first time, and to begin the process of disalienation.

Finally freed from the fetters of racial ideology, which falsely posits a scientific basis for racial difference, Julia and Jim can begin to remap the social landscape of their present and envision a new future. Instead of a dead world, they imagine "a world silent and asleep" in which "all nature slept," awaiting their disalienation and the opportunity for the re-awakening or re-birth that it signaled (*Darkwater* 266). Here, Du Bois, "lapsing into saccharine prose" that merges the speculative with the romantic, plays upon his reader's expectations of a lover's embrace (Weinbaum 105). Julia re-imagines herself as a "mighty mother of all men" and Jim imagines being "an All-father of a mighty race to be," while they "slowly, noiselessly move towards each other" and "cr[y] each to the other, almost with one voice, 'The world is dead!" (*Darkwater* 270). However, just as they realize the radical potential of this vast social death to be a rebirth of the nation and humanity, their embrace is interrupted by the return of Julia's father and her fiancé, Fred, who reveal

that the wider world is very much alive, and it was only New York City that had died. As soon as he sees that Jim is black, her father, urged by the same "voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy," but now originating from the crowd that's gathered, demands to know whether "he dared–" live up to the social myth of the black rapist, "reestablish[ing] white paternal authority over the romantic and reproductive life of the woman," as well as the broader relations of production in the global capitalist order (Weinbaum 106).

Revising the failure of John Brown's revolutionary abolitionism to fully realize a future outside of racialized capitalism, the failure of Du Bois's protagonists in "The Comet" to fulfill the requirements of the romance plot and bring about "the utopian promise of interracialism" (Weinbaum 106) underscores the limits of such a project when the forces of reaction remain intact. Brown's campaigns in Kansas and Virginia inaugurated a Civil War that created death and devastation on a grand scale, but did not sufficiently alter the social landscape so that a new one could be formed. In "The Comet," Du Bois posits that only a mass-extinction event on the cosmological scale could open up such a possibility, which is foreclosed as soon as it is revealed that the extent of the devastation was restricted to New York City; but even so, the survivors would need to grapple with the vestiges of racial ideology, and the outcome can only be hypothesized. Du Bois realized that, barring some cosmic cataclysm, the ultimate "limit of chance in human conduct," a completely new social terrain was unlikely, and returned his attention to an investigation of those patterns of human conduct and the material conditions out of which they arise.

Unpublished during his lifetime, “A.D. 2150” returns to the themes of “The Comet,” but with revealing inversions. First, rather than death on a massive scale as the prerequisite for a rebirth of human social relations, “A.D. 2150” posits only the death of its semi-autobiographical narrator in 1950, and his subsequent rebirth 200 years later. It begins,

> Slowly I awoke from the dead. First came the memory of Peace and Nothingness—the sense of having rested infinitely. Afterward came the sharp physical pain of reincarnation, the sense of boundless hurt and ill, stabbing and pricking and grinding. Finally, as this subsided, there poured down the spiritual burden; all the sorrow, apprehension and fear of life mingling with some new strength and zest and determination. (55)

The narrator’s gradual reawakening recalls the slow, painful process by which John Brown, and later Jim Davis and Julia, awaken from the torpor of their own, unconscious ideological positions. Once he situates himself historically in 2150, he tries “to imagine what changes could have gripped the world in two hundred years,” but his first thought is of 1850, *three* hundred years earlier, and 100 years before his death, when “there were 3 ½ million negroes in the United States of whom less than half were free” (55). Du Bois links the conceptual pain of history with the physical pain of living, and the “apprehension and fear” which can only come from memories of historical trauma that are nevertheless “mingling with some new strength and zest and determination,” offering hope of a new day. While Jim and Julia survive “The Comet” and its deadly gas, emerging into a relatively unchanged physical landscape

bearing the burdens of their ideological conditioning, the narrator of "A.D. 2150" is reborn into a physical landscape in which the material conditions and relations of production are vastly different from those of 1950, and have created an almost unrecognizable social landscape.

Rather than the "smoke or noise" of a densely packed urban area shaped by the caprices of capital, the narrator sees a more orderly physical infrastructure, including what would today be called "green architecture" with rooftop gardens, miles of walkways, and a rapid transit "system of swift subways" open to all. As he seeks a restaurant in this abundant utopia, however, he begins to feel "depressed" when he remembers that "the matter of colored people getting meals was one of the great problems" of his former life (55). The necessity of satisfying a basic physiological need like hunger runs up against the old social obstacles of race prejudice and the color line. Just as Jim and Julia carry with them the baggage of a social landscape that no longer exists, the narrator of "A.D. 2150" struggles to reconcile the realities of his present situation with the vestiges of his past. As he watches a restaurant to make sure it is safe to enter, he is shocked to see "a black man enter" and take a seat next to a white women

> I stopped stock still and stared. Here was something that would tell me what 200 years had done in America quicker than anything else. I waited for the explosion. I did not expect the black man to be put out (that would have been 1850). I did not expect that he would be refused service (that would have been 1900). I did not expect that the woman would ask for another seat (that would

> have been 1950). I did expect her to move decisively, quickly, with an affronted look. But she did not. Quite evidently this was 2150! …and save their reading and their eating, nothing happened. I cannot say that I was disappointed and yet the thing was not nearly as dramatic as it ought to have been. (55-56)

The subjects of Du Bois's speculative sociological observations do not have the same cognitive maps of the social terrain as his characters in "The Comet" or the real subjects of his many historical and biographical writings, or indeed, Du Bois himself. His expectation of some explosive drama indicates the same kind of classical conceptual conditioning that made Jim and Julia's awakening so slow in coming, and so brief in duration. But here, where the physical infrastructure facilitates satisfying the requirements of daily life and living, there is room for more freedom. As he endeavors to discover the secrets of this new utopia, our narrator discovers a social terrain radically different from his own.

Happening upon a man he mistakes for a politician, he learns that the dream of the Chatham Convention has been realized almost 300 years after it was written. Here, "there is no difference in treatment, there is no difference in law, there is no difference in privilege" based on someone's skin color, but rather, "all of the toil was shared" in common, and people choose their friends "according to their abilities, characters and likes and dislikes" (56). When the politician turns out to be a policeman, the narrator decides to test the truth of this new freedom of association; as the cop begins to tell the narrator a story from his college days, the narrator turns

away, thinking “A college graduate and only a policeman” as he walked away. For a black man to walk away from a cop mid-sentence would have been construed as a sign of disrespect, and a dangerous one at that (indeed, even today this would be dangerous), but he is free to find some other interlocutor.

Finally, the narrator meets “a gentleman who appeared to be aristocratic enough although he carried a large hoe” who turns out to be an editor. Our narrator is surprised at this, but given that the social and physical landscape seem to support this fact makes it easier for him to accept. The editor explains to him that “the greatest thing we have learned in America in the last century is the toleration of Diversity” in “dress, in thought, in action, and even in the color of skin” (56-57). In order to achieve this, they have abolished “great big incomes that are unspendable and very little ones that starve us,” as well as War, Waste, and Poverty (57).

When the narrator says that he supposes society “has no problems left,” however, the editor scoffs, “we are nothing but problems!” (57). But the plexus of problems plaguing the people of 2150 are far less threatening than those faced by the narrator and his contemporaries. While “the negro question” is no longer a factor in social relations, the editor points out that,

> Here is this terrible question of the realists and the romanticists in literature. Here is the pressing matter of melody and noise in music. Surely you know whither the photographers are pushing impressionistic art. There is the matter of the family group as opposed to the free spirit. There is the question of faith

> and fact, anarchy and socialism, heredity and environment, atom and electron, health and disease, death and immortality. (57)

Du Bois again “turns away” from his interlocutor, satisfied so much that “that night [he] died again, but with a certain quiet content” that made him “willing to to take another nap of 200 years for the sake of seeing Progress” (57). Here, we get a sense of Du Bois’s hopes for a future beyond racial ideologies and the material conditions–specifically those of capitalist exploitation and a racialized labor hierarchy–where the plethora of more pressing problems in art and science can be addressed.

In the 30 years between “The Comet” and “A.D. 2150,” Du Bois embarked on some of his most ambitious projects of political organization, and published some of his most radical and explicitly Marxist works. The tensions between the dystopian chord struck by “The Comet” and the more utopian overtones of “A.D. 2150” reflect an attempt at reconciling the antinomies of the past, present, and future. On the one hand, the failure of the romance plot in the earlier story underscores the impossibility of future generations transcending racial ideologies and building a new society on the rotten foundations of racialized capitalism, while on the other, the multiple generations between the America of 1950’s Jim Crow and the utopia of “A.D. 2150” implies that, at some point, American society achieves just such a transcendence in order to progress.

Written during the post-war boom in material wealth in the United States, “A.D. 2150” posits that this progress can be achieved by addressing both the material conditions–the distribution of wealth under capitalism–and the social conditions that

arise from them through social programs and anti-racist propaganda. Du Bois's projects during this period address the plexus of negro problems via multiple avenues; from art and cultural uplift, economic and political equality through the establishment of organizations like the Negro Cooperative Guild and the Citizens Co-operative Stores. Through these projects and his revisionist histories and editorials, Du Bois sought to set black and white Americans on a path of *re*-discovery and inaugurate the re-birth of a nation. This project remains unfinished, and, in the 21st century, is threatened by the same reactionary forces that sought to stifle it in the 20th.

Epilogue

In its earliest form, this dissertation, tentatively title *Against the Afterlives of John Brown,* was to explore the literary afterlives of that revolutionary abolitionist from the works of his comrades and contemporaries, James Redpath and Franklin Sanborn, through his later admirers, including Hopkins and Du Bois, to the twentieth- and twenty-first-century speculative novels of Terry Bisson, Michelle Cliff, and James McBride. From the beginning, however, it was the textual network around Hopkins's and Du Bois's treatments of Brown that most fascinated me; their conceptual convergences spoke to the radical possibilities of a path-not-taken. Unable to resist the speculative urge, I abandoned my original plan in favor of the preceding comparative case study you've just read. Today, the Hopkins-Du Bois-John Brown constellation persists, serving as a reminder of the unfinished revolutions, spectacular failures, and speculative aspirations that still inform and impel the present.

As the first quarter of the twenty-first century draws to a close. The revisionist[64] narratives about "The American Century" and "the end of history" that have framed the contemporary interpretations of our present do much to obfuscate the social and economic stasis, and even regression, of the past century. Despite the modest reforms of the Civil Rights movement in the mid-twentieth century, the "social evil[s]" that Hopkins-as-Shadrach condemned in her 1902 *Furnace Blasts*

[64] The recent leak of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito's majority opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which appears to strike down the court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion in *Roe v. Wade* on the basis of constitutional originalism is an alarming indication of a return to the same reactionary revisionism that motivated figures including Thomas Dixon, and shares the same revisionist bent as Justice Roger Taney's 1857 decision in *Scott v. Sandford*.

series are just as prevalent today, while the violence necessary to uphold hierarchies of gender, race, and class, and which the Hopkins-Du Bois projects sought to expose and undo, still plagues us.[65] Even the nearly-forgotten victories won during the brief period of Abolition Democracy described by Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction*–among these the public system of education and the enfranchisement of African Americans–are once again threatened by the "dictatorship of property" and may soon disappear (397).

On the occasion of the Library of America's reissue of *Black Reconstruction in America* in 2021, the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library hosted a book discussion that included Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Eric Foner. As a testament to enduring power of Du Bois's *magnum opus* and the challenge it still poses to the "dictatorship of property," the reissue also elicited outrage from contemporary reactionaries who derided the book as "a farrago of lies" and falsely claimed that, "Du Bois was no historian"[66] (Andrews). Once again, however, we find that the textual history quickly debunks such blatantly revisionist propaganda, while also pointing to yet another nodal point in the constellation formed by our present and the past.

In his opening remarks, Gates notes that Du Bois's groundbreaking study was, in part, a response to Claude Bowers's 1929 popular history of Reconstruction, *The*

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[65] At the time of this writing, a white supremacist murdered ten people in a predominantly black neighborhood of Buffalo, NY.

[66] On the basis of its title alone, Du Bois's 1896 dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* indicates his "concentration" at Harvard included history, and refutes this spurious claim.

Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln, that he'd been asked to make by Anna Julia Cooper ("Between the Lines"). In fact, Cooper wrote frequently to Du Bois between 1923 and 1932, but "time and again, he resisted [or] neglected" her requests (Moody-Turner 56). After receiving Du Bois's noncommittal response to her first letter urging a rebuttal to Bowers's racist revisionism in the pages of *The Crisis*, Cooper wrote to Du Bois a second time, imploring him to "let it out and make it snappy" (Cooper). Though the five years between Cooper's letters to Du Bois and the eventual publication of *Black Reconstruction* are anything but "snappy," the work still stands as a masterpiece of speculative and materialist historiography. And yet, in recalling this exchange, one may speculate about what might have happened if the *Colored American Magazine*, under the literary editorship of Pauline Hopkins, existed as an alternative to *The Crisis*.

Hopkins's apparent absence from this 1930 correspondence and from the Schomburg event in 2021 belies her impact on these discussions, then and now. This is, perhaps, to be expected, given the marked contrast between "Du Bois's fictional portraits of African American women" that "emphasize and romanticize their strengths" and his more reserved relationship with his Black feminist contemporaries (James 70). Yet, her *Famous Women of the Negro Race* series offered visibility to emerging black artists and intellectuals, including Cooper,[67] who is ever-present as an unacknowledged influence on Du Bois's editorship at *The Crisis.* In fact, although

[67] Hopkins briefly profiled Cooper in a 1902 installment of the *Famous Women of the Negro Race* series entitled, "Educators" (Dworkin 176).

she is virtually unknown in today's public culture, many popular works from the beginning of the twentieth century through the twenty-first bear the marks of Hopkins's speculative imagination. Today, Hopkins is widely recognized only in the world of SF, both science fiction and speculative fiction, as one of the originators of Afrofuturism, and her work continues to be influential (Century). As recently as 2018, the hidden kingdom of Wakanda featured in the film *Black Panther* was inspired by the invisible kingdom of Telassar in her 1902 novel, *Of One Blood;, or, the Hidden Self* (Pinto). Of all her fiction, that much-studied novel is perhaps the best candidate for adaptation in the present and represents a major "road-not-taken" in this dissertation.

And yet, in this novel which I've decided against including in the dissertation, there is also a return to the Hopkins-Du Bois-John Brown constellation. In her novel *Of One Blood* (1902), Hopkins names her heroine Dianthe Lusk, after John Brown's first wife who died tragically in childbirth. Hopkins's Dianthe is a spectral figure, appearing to her would-be lovers, Reuel and Aubrey, in visions of great tragedies in the past, present, and future. In his 1909 biography, Du Bois resurrects this spectral vision, noting that when Brown was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, "the spirit of Dianthe Lusk [appeared to] guide him" in moments of doubt (*John Brown* 46). In the moments before her death, and fearing a kind of eternal return to the brutal history in which she and her brothers are ensnared, Hopkins's Dianthe asks "O, will our spirits come, like setting suns, on each morrow of eternity?" (804). As if in response to this question she has a final vision of her own, a pageant-like procession

that begins with the distant music of an "unseen mass [that] must have been the disembodied souls of every age since Time began" and concludes with a procession of her royal ancestors, "Candace, Semiramis, Dido, Solomon, David" and "the great masters of the world of song," including Beethoven and Mozart (804-5). This multiracial "pageant [that] passed, or seemed to pass" before Dianthe's eyes in *Of One Blood* foretells Du Bois's own pageant, "The Star of Ethiopia" (1911), written just two years after the publication of *John Brown*, that included a similarly diverse cast, including Biblical figures, African kings, and the white abolitionists John Brown and William Lloyd Garrison. Both pageants convey a sense of redemption, and a move beyond the eternal return.

These hopeful visions of redemption and interracial solidarity both come with dire warnings of their alternative, however. Following Dianthe's death, Reuel Briggs's returns to the hidden kingdom of Telassar to teach "his people all that he has learned in years of contact with modern culture" (807). Although "his days glide peacefully in good works" he "views with apprehension the advance of mighty nations penetrating the dark, mysterious forests of his native land" wondering "where will it stop?" and "what will be its end?" (806). Du Bois, too, later speculated about this uncertain future. In *John Brown,* he proclaims "this, then, is the truth: the cost of liberty is less than the price of repression, even though that cost be blood… The cost of liberty is thus a decreasing cost, while the cost of repression ever tends to increase to the danger point of war and revolution" (395). In another turn of the speculative

screw, Hopkins might reply to this pronouncement of Du Bois by citing her conclusion to *Of One Blood*:

> To our human intelligence these truths depicted in this feeble work may seem terrible,–even horrible. But who shall judge the handiwork of God, the Great Craftsman! Caste prejudice, race pride, boundless wealth, scintillating intellects refined by all the arts of the intellectual world, are but puppets in His hand, for His promises stand, and He will prove His words, "Of one blood have I made all races of men." (807)

As we face the prospect of a return to these same racial, gender, and economic injustices in the twenty-first century, Hopkins's assertion of our shared blood-heritage is a reminder of the shared blood-cost entailed in struggles for liberation in the U.S. and globally.

The international scope of this pronouncement points to another path-not-taken in this dissertation: an exploration of Pan-Africanism and the internationalist perspectives–both implicit and explicit–in the Hopkins-Du Bois constellation. In 1916, just a few years before Du Bois organized the first Pan-African Congress, Hopkins and Walter Wallace, one of her former partners at the Colored American Co-Operative Publishers, founded the *New Era Magazine*, "a thoroughly up-to-date magazine devoted exclusively to the best interests of the colored race, not alone in this country, but throughout the world" ("Announcement and Prospectus…"). The magazine is a return to the unfinished revisionist project she began at *CAM*, including a resurrection of her radical alter-ego, "S. Shadrach," and an appeal to a multiracial

audience. In both of her "Around the World of Color" segments, Hopkins declares that "there are three things which our white friends must help to give us: political freedom, social freedom, economic freedom" ("World of Color" 54). This is yet another instance of Hopkins anticipating Du Bois, whose notions of "the White World" and "the Colored World Within" were explored in the previous chapter. Unable to secure the "economic freedom" entailed by adequate financial backing, however, the *New Era* ceased publication after only two issues. I am left, once again, to ponder the potential impact of this alternative publication that offered a multiracial, global perspective. An uncredited article, "Porto Rico Through a Transition," penned, perhaps, by Hopkins herself, hints at the possibilities. Given more time, might Hopkins and her colleagues at the *New Era* have addressed the possible "transitions" underway during the revolutions in Mexico or Russia?

Hopkins's *Winona* hints at new ways of thinking about borderlands and indigeneity that fell outside of the scope of this study, and indicates another path-not-taken. The novel's opening in Buffalo NY, gives a brief history of Native peoples there who, in 1842 "gave up the last of their great reservations then before the on-sweeping Anglo-Saxon, moving toward the setting sun" (1). Although Native Americans are not mentioned explicitly after this first chapter, her acknowledgment of this process of dispossession at the outset of the novel is another of the novel's many subplots. The narratives shifts from these unceded borderlands of the northeastern US, and the last stop on the Underground Railroad, to the plantations of Missouri, another borderland whose proximity to the ungoverned, unceded territories

of the plains Indians, hints at, but does not directly acknowledge that all of this land is gained through violence and dispossession. Her assertion that in Buffalo, "Here and there a blue eye gleamed or a glint of gold in the long hair falling about the shoulders told of other nationalities who had linked their fortunes with the aborigines" (1) emphasizes the transcultural processes at play in these borderlands, anticipating the work of Gloria Anzaldua in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

If I had proceeded with my intended exploration of the textual afterlives of John Brown, I could easily see myself being diverted towards another comparative case study, this time exploring the constellations formed by Hopkins's *Winona*, Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise* (1993), and Anzaldua's *La Frontera*. Like Hopkins and Du Bois, Cliff's novels draw generically on autobiography and biography, among her subjects John Brown himself, to navigate the complexities of her own lived experience and the history that produces it. In *Free Enterprise,* Cliff takes as her subject Mary Ellen Peasant, financial backer and co-conspirator of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. While Du Bois concludes *John Brown* by speculating as to the "cost" of his struggle, never commented on this key female ally of Brown's, but Cliff's speculative historical novel uncovers this hidden history of John Brown's raid. More broadly, in her semi-autobiographical novels *Abeng* (1984) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), Cliff navigates the constellations, hinted at by Hopkins, of the triangle trade, slave revolts and maroon communities, in order to calculate precisely the "cost" of the problems such as "racial intercourse and intermarriage" in the liminal spaces of empire. Like Du Bois she shows how they are borne by those who

are, as both she and he himself were, of mixed parentage. As Du Bois laments the plight of the social scientist lost in a “sociological wilderness, lisping a peculiar patois,” Cliff utilizes Jamaican patois as a “regional dialectic” (Sartre 18) that gestures towards a totality, encompassing issues of gender, sexuality, race, economics, and beyond.

This is, perhaps, the message that John Brown has for the 21st century: he lives on in the cultural and historical memory, not as a “great man,” but instead as one who, with the help of others, was able to create a brief opening so that they could imagine a future otherwise. Brown did not imagine a future for the U.S. that lacked slavery *and* black people, as many abolitionists did; instead, he imagined a future *with* free black people. But he could not have imagined this if they had not already imagined it themselves and shared this vision with him. This speculative move lies not *within* a study of his life, but *through* it.

Both Hopkins and Du Bois give us a black radical life as a literary form and lived reality. It is through a study of their shared visions of the future, articulated in the forms of autobiography, biography, and fiction, that we are invited to make our own speculations about the still-unknown future of what Du Bois called “abolition democracy,” a period which saw “the new freedmen [and their white allies] gradually become leaders of a Reconstruction of Democracy in the United States, while marching sang the noblest war song of the ages to the tune of “John Brown’s Body’” (*Black Reconstruction* 77). This unfinished project still beckons us today. In a

passage of “Some Literary Workers” that could just as well have been written today as 120 years ago, Hopkins remarks that,

> In the lives of these women are seen signs of progress. Some of us tremble for the future; God knows it is dark enough at present. But brightness is all about us. There are silver linings to the sable clouds. Dissatisfaction and restlessness, even cruel wrong, are but hastening on the day of jubilee. (Dworkin 154)

The Hopkins-Du Bois constellation, embedded as it is within this larger constellation of late-capitalism and racial violence in the 21st century, may be another “silver lining” to the dark clouds of the present. The unfinished abolition democracy of the past has an as-yet unknown future, for, as Hopkins reminds us, in the present tense, “Republics exist only on the tenure of being constantly agitated. We cannot live without the voice crying in the wilderness—troubling the waters that there may be health in the flow” (Dworkin 276). May be, maybe: the open-ended conclusion of this work.

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