

**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
MOHAMED BOUDIAF UNIVERSITY OF M'SILA**

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

OPTION: LITERATURE & CIVILIZATION

**Post-Apocalyptic Optimism: Utopia as a Mindset in
Octavia. E Butler's *Parable of the Sower***

**Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Master Degree**

Candidates:

Ms. Amal ARAAR

Ms. Sabrina DJEBBAR

Supervisor:

Mrs: Nassima AMIROUCHE

Academic Year: 2019/2020

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By:

Amal ARAAR

Sabrina DJEBBAR

Board of Examiners:

Mr. Youcef BENNAA	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Mrs. Nassima AMIROUCHE	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Ms. Amel BENIA	University of M'sila	Examiner

Academic Year: 2019/2020

Declaration

We hereby declare that the thesis entitled: Post-Apocalyptic Optimism: Utopia as a Mindset in Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, is a representation of our original research work. We confirm that any information has been taken from any source is indicated in the work.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family and especially to my teachers, for whatever help and knowledge provided along my academic path.

Amal ARAAR

To those who are always there for me ... To my beloved parents ... To my dear mother

Berkahoum ... Thank you for standing by my side.

To myself ... Thank you for never giving up.

Sabrina DJEBBAR

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Abstract

Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* is a major work that tackles predictions about the near future that are not promising. However, the optimistic vision is highly apparent through the character of Lauren and her belief system "Earthseed" that calls for new possibilities; for instance, a new life across the space and the settlement of "Acorn" as a new community with a new world order. This project intends to examine utopianism within the novel, as hope is one significant feature of the genre of utopia. Additionally, there is a concern to develop a bridge between the black theology and the religious tendency in this literary work; as both see the world through a hopeful eye and seek to alter realities of hopelessness. The protagonist "Lauren Oya Olamina" is a significant character whose neurological disorder "Hyperempathy" shapes her way in dealing with the outer world. Her character, as a case study, is crucial for tracing an understanding of the futuristic utopian vision, a vision that is determined by optimism. Therefore, it is tended to be studied by applying the psychoanalytic theory.

Key words: Post-apocalyptic, optimism, utopia, dystopia, hope, *Parable of the Sower*.

الملخص

تعتبر رواية مثل الزارع لأوكتافيا بترل عمل لا يستهان به كونها تتناول تنبؤات حول المستقبل القريب التي تجعله غير مبشر بالخير. مع ذلك النظرة التفاؤلية بارزة بشكل كبير من خلال شخصية لورين و النظام العقائدي الخاص بها "إيرثسيد" الذي يدعو لإمكانيات جديدة على سبيل المثال حياة جديدة عبر الفضاء و تأسيس "أكورن" كمجتمع جديد بنظام عالمي جديد. تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى فحص النزعة اليوتوبية حيث أن الأمل واحد من أهم سمياتها, بالإضافة إلى ذلك هناك اهتمام بتطوير جسر بين اللاهوت الأسود و التوجه الديني في هذا العمل الأدبي فكلاهما يرى العالم بعين الأمل و يسعيان إلى تغيير واقع اليأس. تعتبر بطلة القصة "لورين أويا أولامينا" شخصية مهمة, حيث انها تعاني من اضطراب عصبي يدعى "فرط الحساسية" الذي يحدد طريقة تعاملها مع العالم الخارجي. تعد شخصيتها كدراسة حالة مهمة للغاية من أجل فهم النظرة المستقبلية اليوتوبية, هي نظرة حددها التفاؤل لهذا من المقرر دراستها من خلال نظرية التحليل النفسي.

كلمات مفتاحية: ما بعد نهاية العالم, يوتوبيا, ديستوبيا, أمل, تفاؤل, مثل الزارع.

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General Introduction

“In order to rise

From its own ashes, a phoenix, first must Burn”

(Octavia E. Butler).

Throughout history, literature has been confined extremely between the piece of writing as an art, and historical realities that most of writers use as an impetus for change in the society. Countless of writers believe that within literature lies the force that controls the mind of the reader, and transforms it to a new level of consciousness. In this regard, post-modernist literature provides an open portal into some facts of ideological origins of post-apocalyptic esthetics such as: The heavy costs of both world wars, nuclear weapons, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Iraqi war, the Holocaust, Global Warming, the horrific event of 9/11, and expecting ecological disasters. All these features are contributing to the emergence of this temper.

Post-apocalypse has ever been a major concern to many writers, most of its events take place in a futuristic landscape that anticipates the events of the new millennium. That is to say, it highlights environmental decay that coincides with humanity devolution: the struggle to survive, and human reaction towards the frightening occurrences. Moreover, coping with the aftermaths of the world after the fall of its old order, has been a questionable subject.

Octavia E. Butler is a renowned African American writer, who is considered to be the most popular Afro-futuristic writer for her social observations in her works of science fiction that range from the distant past to the far future. In this respect, her iconic work *Parable of the Sower* (1993), is considered a work that deals with a prophetic vision that captures the appreciation of many zealous readers, and academic debates; It gives a chance to the audience to experience the sufferings of the characters, and build imaginary expectations. Through this perspective, the novel tackles many profound subject matters and themes in the American society such as: ecological disasters, religion, politics, the transgression of moral codes, corruption, death, survival, violence,

the doomsday ... etc. In this regard, Butler's philosophy succeeds in depicting the harsh realities of a possible future.

The literary work of Octavia Butler *Parable of the Sower* tells the story of a world, approximately, similar to the one we live in today. It is about the years of 2020; apocalypse of the United States of America because of: climate change, and economic crisis. The protagonist is an 18-years-old teenage black woman named "Lauren Oya Olamina", who suffers from a special condition of "Hyperempathy" which makes her sense the feelings of others, whether joy or pain. She grows up with her family, and neighbors in a gated community called "the have" since they are portrayed to be privileged to live in a safe community. Behind the walls, sheltered from the surrounding anarchy and masses of vagabonds, live the so-called "the have-nots" who are the unprivileged, who live in danger and will do anything to live to see another day because of: hunger and poverty that leads to cannibalism, violence, and human savagery.

At the heart of the novel, she develops her belief system which she calls "Earthseed". When people outside the walls manage to destroy the gated walls, her family has been murdered, and her home is destroyed; the chaos, extremely, exacerbated hand in hand with the continuous failure to survive. Eventually, she gathered followers along her journey to the north with other survivors. Lauren believes that human kind's destiny is to travel beyond Earth and live on other planets; the first Earthseed community "Acorn" in northern California is preparation for this destiny.

In her dissertation, "*Confronting Environmental and Social Crisis*", Melissa Ann Vargas claims that a careful insight into Butler's work suggests how literature can make contributions to our perception of ecological and social injustice troubles (2).

As David Morris it in his article "*Octavia Butler's (R)evolutionary Movement for the Twenty-First Century*", defines "Earthseed" as a tool that aims at altering humanity as a whole species, a goal so massive that needs a, completely, new version of the social and political system. Furthermore, in her article, Danai Nesta Kupemba raises the focal point on how Butler's prophetic

vision of apocalypse demonstrates: the appearance of the deadly Corona Virus, the horrible fires of Australia, racism, and the murder of George Floyd.

Dystopian literature continues to generate much attention in the west as in the rest of the world. It is a sub-genre that tells stories about a frightening future. Moreover, it always ends with catastrophes. This case study investigates how Octavia E. Butler, the first black feminist voice in the science-fictional sphere, succeeds to create a dystopian world that is slightly combined with utopianism; which contributes to the mitigation of the dystopic intensity. Notably, the overlap raises a kind of paradox in studying the novel. But, through a deep understanding of the critical dystopia as a genre; where the dark mood of apocalypse is intertwined with an optimistic vision about the future, which makes her work more unique in giving a ray of hope.

Science fiction has ever been dominated by white men writers. That is to say, white hero characters rescuing people of color from different minorities. In this regard, the motivation behind tackling the novel *Parable of the Sower* as a case study gives this genre a new dimension: Firstly, the writer as an African American woman, Butler knew she could tell a better story. Secondly, the protagonist “Lauren Oya Olamina” as a black girl whose persistence and yearning challenge her aim to make a change.

The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of Critical Dystopia as a literary genre and to inspect the post-apocalyptic optimism in the novel. It is intended that the research findings will provide an insight into the positive attitude and possibilities in confronting the harsh realities of the predicted twenty-first century; a futuristic vision born out of current circumstances.

In order to attain the above-mentioned aims, a set of objectives should be achieved, and the central goal of the study is to apply the psychoanalytic theory on the novel to examine the new age spirituality of the protagonist and her missionary conception of creating a new belief system in the community. In addition to that, it is of great significance to illustrate the connection between “Earthseed” and Black theology in the novel in order to highlight the use of religion as a mean of self-empowerment in the resistance of oppression and the development of socio-political,

and psychological strategies in frightening racial injustices as well as violence in the United States of America.

A bunch of historical and social events that have occupied significant phases in the American history, from the 1980s till the 1990s, have inspired this literary work. The “Crack Cocaine”, a drug had been spread in the United States, especially, among the African American communities. It led to mass incarcerations within the Black Americans as gangs and addicts, in their attempt to afford the drug, commit crimes in order to gain money. Butler used this drug issue through the “Pyro”, the drug that make people set fires and eventually, cause violence and insecurity. Additionally, one of the most critical eras of the American history, namely, Ronald Reagan’s era, during which lower taxes and less governmental regulations were promised by the house through the speaker Newt Gingrich under what is called “Contract with America”. The supply sub-side economics promoted by the US president, Ronald Reagan, aimed at providing taxes will create jobs and distribute wealth to lower and middle classes. These social and economic misfortunes are presented in the novel through the social and economic decay.

This thesis aims at tackling the post-apocalyptic optimism through scrutinizing utopianism and utopian thinking. Additionally, it has the objective of focusing on optimism as a mental process through setting a theoretical framework at the level of the first chapter that will include the needed information in order to conduct the analysis in the second chapter that will be devoted to the analytic section.

I. Chapter One: The Theoretical Frame of *Parable of the Sower*

Introduction

Octavia E. Butler's novel sheds a light on the current social, environmental, and political issues; beginning with the ecological disasters, and ending with the suspected political actions in the United States of America.

Moreover, Butler's work is like a sign of a coming danger that threatens the whole humanity. In the light of these anticipated visions, the first chapter is devoted for providing some contextual evidences that contribute to the construction of *Parable of the Sower*. Firstly, it aims at focusing on utopia as a genre of positive imagining and social critique. Secondly, it is set to provide an introduction to the black theology, as a theology that has ever been a source of hope to the African Americans through its lasting attempts to end their suffering. Finally, this chapter tends to tackle optimism and hope as a human nature in order to set an analytic platform for Lauren Oya Olamina, the protagonist.

1. About Utopia

Speaking of utopia as a term, it was firstly coined by Thomas Moore in his work of the same name in 1516. In which, it refers to an imaginary world, specifically, an island that is created by exterminating the isthmus between Utopus' kingdom and the mainland. This is a significant topographical characteristic in Utopia as a literary genre (Gordin et al 4).

It is out of question to speak about utopia without referring to the notion of time and space within this genre. Bellamy and Moore are major writers to present this notion as a conventional movement in space (Moore's *Utopia*) or time (Bellamy's *Looking Backward*) that both of them lead to utopia (Johns 396). Distance in space or time enables what Jameson notes the "Totality which presides over the forms of Utopian realization" (5). Although, utopia is commonly understood to be a place of the future, it can even be in the distant past for instance in Hesiod's

Golden Age, and the Garden of Eden (Gordin et al 4).

Utopia, in the general sense, is perceived as a geographically contrived and planned place. However, it is not inevitably the case. To provide a clear understanding of what utopia actually is, there is a bunch of definitions provided by historians and scholars. Godin, Tilley and Prakash, in the introduction of *Utopia/ Dystopia conditions of Historical Possibility*, refer to utopia as “[A] kind of parlor game for intellectuals who set themselves the task of designing a future society, a perfect society—following the pun on the name in Greek (no place, good place: imaginary yet positive).” They indicate that the intellectual or the elite of the society have the right to make imaginings about the future. The last part of this definition brings attention to focus on the double meaning of the Greek name of utopia that can be either; “Outopia” which means the no place, or “Eutopia” that means the good place.

Karl Mannheim deviates from the common definition that it is about an ideal planned place. Rather, he redefined it as a stance for social critique (200-201). Here, he goes further with the typical definition to shed a light on utopia as a center of social critique. This can be considered as a bolster to Jim Miller’s description of utopian fiction that is, according to him, beyond imagined perfection. Instead, it is about social, cultural, and economic critique (339).

In defining the utopian impulse, Michelle Erica Green (qtd. in Miller), claims that a utopia does not have to be a “perfect” society, taking into consideration the pun in the Greek name, no-place. She continues to say that the paradox of the double meaning of the Greek name “[straddles] issues of locality, textuality, and ideology in an attempt to bridge the gap between fictional discourse and everyday life”. (339) Green’s thought goes for the favor of utopia as a genre of critique rather than imaginings about a perfect society.

1.1. Utopian Thinking

Utopia as a concept is considered as a breeding ground for utopian thinking which is about visions, desires, and goals that are created from the present context and yet they are never

randomly created (Gordin et al 4). In the sense, whatever prospect about the future is, it shall have roots in the present. The sociological context is the utter impetus for utopia, as well as, ideology to be conjured. As the utopian project seeks to change a certain social condition; it, in turn, stands behind the motivation of the human to overcome such a situation through survival which is to a great extent an uncertainty (5). “[T]he goal of utopia was to use the present to conjure a future liberated of the context of that very present.” (Gordin et al 11)

Furthermore, the utopian thinking is of a great benefit to bring our own imagination into inquiry; to what degree, our imagination is limited. As there is some kind of possibilities that are created in the mind and seem to be hard to be realized. Thusly, the present becomes history, an already past time, hence the search for brand new possibilities begins. Speaking of history because it is about old themes, memories of lost wars are considered to be wrapped in the fossilization of modernity (Gordin et al 9).

The concept of the utopian thinking lies in the opposite discovery of a political struggle which renders it a positive imagining (5). The idea is that to think about the opposite of a certain struggle means looking for a solution that is determined as a hope which is, eventually, a positive reaction. Karl Mannheim notes,

The concept of *utopian* thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain oppressed groups are intellectually so strongly interested in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it. Their thinking is incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society. They are not at all concerned with what really exists; rather in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists. Their thought is never a diagnosis of the situation; it can be used only as a direction for action. In the utopian mentality, the collective unconscious, guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality. It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyze its desire to change things. (36)

Fredric Jameson criticized certain utopian visions looking into them as “the extent to which [they] (...) have gone out of fashion, namely a belief in bourgeois progress and a faith in

large scale solutions.”(Gordin et al 6) Jameson alludes to the idea that utopian thinking, somehow, took another path of imagination that is about mere high expectations of high standard possibilities.

Ultimately, utopian thinking has ever been related to hope. Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, in the sense of Charles Taylor, state,

The hope of a general reorganization of the world proved to be deeply and intimately connected to a highly specific conjuncture. That conjuncture was framed by a series of conditions of possibility—colonialism, capitalism, socialism, and even technocratic optimism—that in turn prompted the imagination of a future that was not imposed by the sheer thrust forward of time, but was a possibility produced through the architecture of rationality, variously defined. Understanding the artifice of human consciousness helps us to appreciate the ways in which the Self has also been imbricated in utopian politics. (9-10)

In his book *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson sheds a light on the way Ernst Bolch considers the utopian impulse to be dominating everything which is future-oriented. Similarly, Tom Moylan notes: “Ernst Bolch stands at the center of a radical discussion of utopia for the lifelong project of this philosopher was the determination of the possibility of humanity, changing its world and becoming the making its own history.” In the sense of Charles Taylor and Ernst Bolch, there is an understanding of hope being a driving force for changing reality of misfortune through the human consciousness and awareness of a collapsing world.

1.2. Feminist utopia

Feminist utopia is represented to be a significant genre in criticizing the social conditions of any given society; with an intention to enact a change. Throughout history, the feminist narrative, to a large extent, has been interested in the betterment of the world. Particularly, the American women’s writing, to which Jim Miller refers as “fertile site for utopian imagining.” (336)

Carol Kolmerten (qtd.in Miller) demonstrates that a considerable amount of utopian

novels were written by American women from 1890 till 1919; a percentage of nearly Forty percent of the total number of utopian works. These novels were all focusing on turning the world into better conditions (336).

The feminist utopias, as Jean Pfaelzer (qtd. in Miller) notes, are intersected kind of narrative due to the different areas it encompasses; such as postmodernism, science fiction, utopia, and dystopia. This feature of the genre renders it a genre of multiple genres (336). Accordingly, Marlene Barr labeled it “Feminist Fabulation” as an umbrella term (12).

Donna Haraway highlights the significance of the social feminist writing in reconstructing a narrative that is concerned with the system of myth and meanings structuring our imagining. She evokes a kind of call for “ironic political myth” in which utopia, desire, and hope are included in an aspiration for a world free of racism, class domination, and gender (1).

1.3. Utopia versus Dystopia

Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash, in the introduction to their “*Utopia/ Dystopia Conditions of Historical Possibility*” argue that both utopia and dystopia burst forth from science fiction. They both are considered to be a jumping off places of impulsions and desires for an ameliorated future. Their ideas, desires, constraints, and effects interact at the same time; during the process of setting possibilities for a better future. Likewise, both literary genres seek to reorganize the world on a fundamental and systematic level. Utopia and dystopia in the course of events and narrative draw a relationship between past, present and future.

Regardless of how these two genres share several similarities. Gordin et al, importantly, manifest that there are differences between both genres. In this regard, they observe that despite, both genres share several features and goals as literary streams of the new millennium, at certain points, they are deemed to be extremely different. Dystopia is determined to be a doppelganger of the utopia of the twentieth century. It is illustrated as something opposite to utopia. Accordingly, the two are both perfectly contrasted. In the same sense, they contend that dystopia is considered to be a kind of utopia that has been distorted, as utopia is about planning and perfection.

Accordingly, a distorted utopia is a dystopia that lacks perfection. In this case, utopia is not achieved as it is imagined. Therefore, it is a dystopia not a utopia anymore. This idea of referring to utopia as a converse of dystopia may imply that they are the opposite of each other. However, utopia is the opposite of dystopia but dystopia is not the opposite of utopia. Due to the modification that dystopia has been subjected to; it becomes not a utopia.

Returning to the idea of the planning in utopia, the planning of dystopia does not work in the right way. As if, it is something damaged or broken down. Hence, dystopia is not unplanned rather planned but does not work well. This common feature of planning makes utopia already consists of a dystopia.

In terms of time, dystopia is about experiences that have already been lived in the past; whilst utopia is about a perfect future that criticizes the present.

Concerning the portrayal of the ambiance in the narrative, dystopias are presented as extremely horrible atmospheres where everything is deadly terrific. On the other hand, utopia is presented as a perfect place. A special nexus is drawn between utopia and dystopia, within a triangle; in which there is the perfectly planned, perfect planned unjust and perfectly unplanned.

Gordin et al writes,

A true opposite of utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society. In a sense, despite their relatively recent literary and cinematic invention, dystopias resemble the actual societies historians encounter in their research: planned, but not planned all that well or justly. (1-2)

1.4. Critical Dystopia

As there is an ambiguity, between utopia and dystopia at certain points, a brand new genre emerges in order to organize literary texts under what genre they should actually fall under. This brand new genre is “Critical Dystopia” to which Chang refers as “all dystopian works after the 1980s.”(1)

Critical dystopia is linked to two major features: firstly, the open-endedness, this feature is introduced by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan as a genre blurring that is a crucial feature of the subgenre (Chang 4). Secondly, the Eutopian enclave, that is referred to as hope. The critical dystopia as a subgenre takes into consideration the importance of maintaining a certain type of hope. Sargent (qtd. in Chang) defines critical dystopia as “a nonexistent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but that normally included at least one Eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopias can be overcome and replaced with a Eutopia.”(2) Besides the idea of the Eutopian enclave, Sargent points out to a significant proposition; the society is portrayed in the worst image possible. The imagining about a better future makes current and present social conditions extremely horrible.

According to Baccolini and Moylan (qtd. in Chang), critical dystopia is “a bleak, depressing genre with little space for hope within the story,” .But, once this kind of hope is embedded within the text, the reader and protagonist are permitted to be hopeful. As hope is that one thing to be a utopian impulse. However, it would be found “diminished” (2). Therefore, utopianism is diminished. Chang says that it would be better to label this kind of dystopias “post-apocalyptic dystopia”; to refer to dystopias around the millennium (14). Including the post-apocalyptic term as it refers to events after the apocalypse, where there are new possibilities as Adam Johns says it is the appropriate site for a utopian system to be settled (396).

Critical dystopia is not as similar to canonical dystopia (Chang 2). In terms of the level of dark mood and terrific ambiance, as it includes hope, this tension of depressing mood is so diminished and levitated.

1.5. Apocalypse: A Setting for Utopia

Conventionally, apocalypse is defined as the end of the world. But going back to the origin of the word “apocalypse” is the equivalent of the Greek word “apokalypsis” that firstly appeared in the book “Apocalypse of John” of the same title as well, and means uncovering or

revelation. It was derived from the word *Klyptein*, which, in turn, means to cover, hide, or conceal. Nonetheless, the Post-apocalypse is used to refer to events that proceed the end of the world (Johns 397, 396).

The word apocalypse was literally translated to revelation in the book of revelation. From the origins of the word and their meanings and understanding, that apocalypse does not have essentially to be used to refer to ending, or a vanishing world. Rather, it is about uncovering hidden mysteries. A better illustration of this idea of the apocalypse is that type of apocalypse, the Gnostic apocalypse, which is not about the end of the world. Instead, it is about the revelation of hidden mysteries, and the apocalypse of John is the sole representative work (Johns 397).

The apocalypse of John gains its success because of its revelation of Jesus Christ at both the literary level and the religious one. “I am the alpha and the omega, the first (*protos*) and the last (*eschatos*), the beginning (*arche*) and the end (*telos*).” “Telos” indicates not simply end in the sense of termination or cessation, but end in the sense of purpose and fulfillment.” In this pivotal revelation, Christ is both the destination (*telos*) and cessation (*eschatos*) of the story of history (Johns 397).

As apocalypse is about an end, in the general sense, it is highly embedded in utopian fiction. Owing to the fact that “Eschatos” and “Protos”, as the Greek words that mean in order end and beginning. Adam Johns uses this projection on Moore and Bellamy’s works in terms of time and space; “a new world, and replaces the more conventional movement in space (Moore’s *Utopia*) or time (Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*) which ordinarily takes us to a utopia.” In this regard, Jameson claims it to be “[The] totality which presides over the forms of Utopian realization” (5).in referring to the movement in time and space. It, therefore, allows for a “world of hope or folly” to come after (396).

Adam Johns notes to the relationship between apocalypse and utopia; claiming that the end of the world gives the crack, or inlet, which empowers utopia: it is that system’s asymptote, the line which can be drawn nearer with interminable closeness, but never really come to by a specific

condition: a condition apparently jumps over the asymptote, instead of passing through it (397).

A definition by Thompson (qtd. in Garrard) suggests that the apocalyptic literature takes the form of a revelation of the end of history. Violent and grotesque images are juxtaposed with glimpses of a world transformed; the underlying theme is usually a titanic struggle between good and evil. Apocalypticism has been described as a genre born out of a crisis, designed to stiffen the resolve of an embattled community by dangling in front of it the vision of a sudden and permanent release from its captivity. It is underground literature, the consolation of the persecuted (86).

In the light of this definition, it is clear that it suggests the following features: the social psychology of apocalypticism that has historically inclined such ‘embattled’ movements to paranoia and violence. The extreme moral dualism that divides the world sharply into friend and enemy; the emphasis upon the ‘unveiling’ of trans-historical truth and the corresponding role of believers as the ones to whom, and for whom, the veil of history is rent. But most importantly, for our purposes, apocalypticism is inevitably bound up with imagination, because it has yet to come into being. To use the narratological term, it is always proleptic; and if sociologically, it is a genre born out of a crisis, it is also necessarily rhetoric that must whip up such crises to proportions appropriate to the end of time. This dialectic in which apocalypticism both responds to and produces crises will be important in our evaluation of it as an eco-critical trope (Garrard 86).

1.6. Utopia through the Lens of Aporia

According to Collins English dictionary, in the philosophic or literary sense, Aporia means a difficulty caused by indeterminacy of meaning for which no resolution seems possible. While in the rhetoric sense, it is a condition of uncertainty or skeptical doubt.

Aporia is, originally, a Greek word “Aporos” which, literally, means “non-passage” to refer to a way that can not be traversed (Warfield 63).

Derrida used the term Aporia to refer to a paradoxical condition. In the sense, that all meanings, words, and signs cannot be coherently attained and presented at one time. Therefore,

deferral is required for signification. As the re-presentable or the presentable sign is succeeded by language because of time. This idea alludes to the delay or lateness that leads Aporia to require activity and movement, and to necessitate a response.

Angela Warfield notes that Derrida in reviewing utopianism, there was a call for rethinking the genre. Utopia is better understood through Aporia as it deals with the undertermined and the not-yet happening. Because of the no place; the one of the two meanings of the Greek word utopia, “outopia” of which the impossible is the unrepresentable future (62). As Derrida writes: “For a possible that would only be possible (non- impossible), a possible surely and certainly possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a futureless possible, a possible already set-aside, so-to- speak, life-assured. . . The possibilization of the impossible possible must remain at one and the same time as undecidable as the future itself.”(29) The inderterminacy of utopia’s destination of perfection is revealed by Aporia.

Jacques Derrida states: “However affirmative deconstruction is, it is affirmative in a way that is not simply positive, not simply conservative, not simply a way of repeating the given institution.”(Caputo 5) He refers to the affirmative as the yes; as an immediate reaction to what may be faced in the future whether good or bad (Warfield 64-65). Affirmation implies Aporia that in its turn implies acceptance of the impossible and the unrepresentable. In this regard, Derrida (qtd. in Warfield) says “To say yes is also to promise, to promise moreover to confirm the yes. There is no yes that is not a promise to confirm itself... And it is there that I am responsible before even choosing my responsibility.” (65)

According to Derrida politics and ethics are consequences of Aporia (63-64). He (qtd in Warfield) claims: “Each time a responsibility (ethical or political) has to be taken, one must pass by way of antinomic injunctions, which have an aporetic form, by way of a sort of experience of the impossible.” (69)

2. Black Theology Shaping a Hopeful Vision

To pave the way for speaking about the Black theology and its contribution as a hope in

the Black American history that is marred with oppression and suffering. A definition and an understanding of religion is crucially needed in order to comprehend how religion or any kind of faith can sow hope in the human spirit.

Erich Fromm notes that the childhood experience and the inability that come after to cope with “inner and outer forces” are what determine the religion. He writes,

Religion arises at an early stage of human development when man cannot yet use his reason to deal with these outer and inner forces and must repress them or manage them with the help of other affective forces. So instead of coping with these forces by means of reason he copes with them by “counter-affects,” by other emotional forces, the functions of which are to suppress and control that which he is powerless to cope with rationally. (11)

Religion can not be created from scratch it’s all about derivation from already existent kind of theologies. Psychologist Silvan Tomkins (qtd. in Tweedy) argues that God “is a derivative construct. Man first conceives the ideal of himself as all-powerful because he has wants which he cannot entirely fulfill. He wishes to live forever, to experience perpetual joy, but he cannot. Nor can he ever defend himself entirely from distress, shame, fear, or hostility.”

Jacques Derrida, in *Interpretations at War*, claimed that religion is about responsibility or it is used in vain. On the light of Derrida’s definition of religion evokes the core objective of the black theology that grants great importance to the responsibility of the human to change certain unfair social conditions, particularly, in the African American community.

In his book, *religion in science fiction*, Steven Hrotic in defining religion said that it is: “Social system within a given domain Legitimated by the claim of supernatural authority.”(11) Hrotic deals with religion as a supernatural power. But with the definition of Luther evokes another understanding of what religion is and this is the tendency of many African American theologians. Martin argued (qtd.in Hrotic) that, first and foremost, religion is a social phenomenon, not a supernatural one. One may perhaps have an experience one believes to be connected with some externalized divinity (12).

Steven Hrotic in the conclusion of his book *Religion and Science Fiction* did not neglect the positive and motivation the religion gives. In this sense, he points out to the importance of the religious institution in conveying positive foundation in order to accept the social restrictions. He asserts that the religious institution motivates the human. Hence, this religious faith brings personal positivity, despite its spiritual and emotional challenges. He says that inventing a religion may be necessary for that religion has a positive societal impact.

James Cone (qtd. in Tweedy), declares that black theology is a new term; the strong notion of its symbolism to show the oppression imposed by the whites and the response of blacks by liberation, the idea is not specifically tied only to America but also black in anywhere is a sign for oppression and freedom.

According to the claim of Wilson Moses (qtd. in Tweedy) Back to history, African Americans according to black theology were considered to be the chosen people by God in order to complete the mission. This costume is clear in the narratives of theologians for instance: Martin Luther King Jr put the responsibility on the church for its disability to stop discrimination, he states that he realizes the strong relationship between the whole countries and that he cannot stay without doing any move in Atlanta without worrying on what is going on in Birmingham.

According to many African-Americans writers, Black theology plays a crucial role in developing psychological and socio-political strategies in resisting violence and racial injustices in the United States. In this regard, Manning Marble (qtd.in Tweedy) explains that Christianity of the black and the American black experience cannot be taken into consideration without its reference to the growth of white racism and exploitation of capitalism. Moreover, Robert Bennetts affirms that the black theology brings the role of tradition that assists to design the sense of black experience by the already existed hope, consciousness is an emphasis; the reaction in hope of God in the order of nature and actions of humans (135).

In fact, the church is not only regarded as the principal of society but also as political reasoning. That is to say, black theology is a theology of change, the expansion of black as a sign

of freedom sheds light on the activism of society by the activity of the black church. At the essence of it, for many African American writers black theology of liberation is considered as an important element in politics, society, and psychology in fighting segregation in the United States of America (Tweedy).

Noting to the Jeremiadic tradition to the African Americans, it was a traditional expression form for their hopes and despair. Wilson Moses (qtd. in Tweedy) contends that African Americans use of the jeremiad present them as a chosen people. In addition, it demonstrates their notable impact on the conception of America as a great nation. Because their suffering shapes America's lack of greatness as a nation that has been built on the oppression of them and the injustice towards their existence.

James Cone (qtd.in Tweedy) argues that that black theology has ever been a way of confronting social injustice and oppression by imposing tenets that aim at ending the socially and politically distorted religion and God as means of achieving power. Through four key tenets: first, the Black experience -- a life of humiliation and suffering; second, Black history; third, revelation -- God has revealed himself and his will throughout human history acts of human liberation; and, fourth, tradition -- participation in the theological traditions of Christianity.

The parables have a great potential in conveying messages or beliefs in order to impose a radicalism that would change the world. Gila Saffan Naveh, in her book *Biblical Parables and Their Modern Recreations*, says that the parable has ever been an ancient form of narrative in different cultures (5). For instance, Madeline Boucher (qtd.in Kimbely) notes that in Greece and Rome rhetoric philosophers and politicians were using them because “they present a challenge. [t]heir message is indeed radical, and is not easily ignored. The hearer of a parable can hardly remain neutral, but must accept or reject its point, must act or fail to act on the lesson.” (94) Naveh notes concerning Jesus' use of parable,

[Jesus] aims to create a new mythology based on a new ideology... the parabolic speech attributed to Jesus clearly aims to replace a set of functioning metaphors that belong to one hermeneutic order by a

set of new metaphors belonging to a “new order.” As the leader of a new religious order, Jesus was clearly not interested in uncovering “a truth hidden since the beginning of the world,” but in replacing the old religious order with his own. (70)

The parable was Jesus’s affective way to spread faith among people; ever since the parable has a higher rank in calling for a new religion due to its inevitable morality.

3. Optimism: A Positive Intuition

In his article, *The Future of Optimism*, Christopher Peterson said that Optimism is attached to positive mood perseverance and effective problem solution and other areas of human life. (1)

A useful definition of optimism was offered by anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1979) (qtd. in Peterson): “a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future--one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable, to his [or her] advantage, or for his [or her] pleasure.” According to him, the term optimism refers to a temper related with anticipation about the future of society it is someone's evaluation for his interest and enjoyment (44).

Actually, the recent approaches deal with optimism as a mental feature: An aim or anticipation, it is somehow ticklish because it is built on someone’s strong emotions in questioning futuristic anticipations. Without forgetting that, the mental process of optimism is not cold, instead, the taste of emotions paves the way to understand the fact of sensual motivation in optimism. Surely, people must be optimistic about everything. Without neglecting the fact that pessimism and optimism can make humans more egoist and defensive (44-45).

Peterson highlights Sophocles and Nietzsche’s perception of optimism; that it does not serve the human in a good way as it extends his suffering while waiting for something that may not be achieved or happen. According to them, it is better to confront the hard facts of reality. Sigmund Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* argued that optimism helps make civilization possible; particularly when it is institutionalized in the form of religious belief about the afterlife.

This idea of Freud necessitates the existence of a kind of system that deals with the afterlife in order for the human to have optimism about the world.

Freud assists on the idea that optimism is an idea of a global understanding. But, still it is a deceptive concept. In this sense, among the consequences of optimism is the refusal of our real nature. Thus, it is the refusal of reality.

According to Cantor and Norem (qtd.in Peterson), optimism is part of the human nature but only as a derivative of the conflict between instincts and socialization. Optimism depends on what the individual regards as desirable. It is predicated on evaluation-- on given effects and emotions, as it were. Contemporary approaches usually treat optimism as a cognitive characteristic--a goal, an expectation, or a causal attribution--which is sensible so long as we remember that the belief in question concerns future occurrences about which individuals have strong feelings. Optimism is not simply cold cognition, and if we forget the emotional flavor that pervades optimism, we can make little sense of the fact that optimism is both motivated and motivating. Indeed, people may well need to feel optimistic about matters. We should not be surprised that optimism and pessimism can have defensive aspects as well as ego-enhancing ones (45).

To go in deep with optimism as a mental attitude many debates state the idea that optimism is an inherited aspect in human nature and could be cheered or denounced. (Peterson 45). Tiger (qtd.in Peterson) in his book "*Optimism: The Biology of Hope*" assumes the idea of the inheritance of optimism in human nature. In this sense, he situated the idea of optimism in our biological kind. Moreover, he explains that it is an essential feature, and proposed it as a complete feature in human's development. Thus, it is the capacity of mental activities that develops our culture (Peterson 46). Christopher Peterson indicates that there are two types of optimism: the little optimism that includes specific expectations about a positive outcome; and the big optimism that may be biologically inherited but has to be accompanied with the acceptance of the social conditions. It is about a large and more specific expectation, for instance, an expectation about

something may happen to a whole nation, which means expecting something less broad. (49).

In the same way, Tiger considers optimism as a way of human's improvement. Thus, imagining the future is required by optimism, once people commenced watching for the future they ought to think about terrible circumstances which include their very own death. So, some optimistic thoughts need to be brought in order to be advanced in contrast to the incapacity. In this regard, the idea of optimism is a part of human's legacy that cannot be separated, and cannot be considered as a minor element in psychology. In this sense, optimism is very simple in imagination, understanding, and enjoyment. It is featured by the recent psychologists as a development for psychological technique (Peterson 46).

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the context that embraces the Parable of the Sower is of many branches. In other words, the post-apocalypse horrified events highlight the tensions in the novel; such events are of multi anticipations: Ecological disasters, the huge gap in social ethics and politics...etc. In addition, all of these tensions have pushed many zealous writers to create this new genre of utopia, and dystopia in order to expect the worst or the best. Eventually, the iconic work of Octavia Butler has historical bounds that pave the way to emerge the foundations for a near possible future.

II. Chapter Two: The Projection of Utopianism

Introduction

This chapter aims at tracing the utopian stances in the novel through applying and projecting the information found and analyzed in the first one. Firstly there is an objective of providing an analysis of the genre of *Parable of the Sower*; to provide an explanation of the Eutopian enclave which is hope, in the novel without neglecting the importance of tackling the utopian thinking of the protagonist as well as clarifying her utopian impulse. Without neglecting the projection of Aporia to tackle the impossibility of utopia. Additionally, this second chapter is set to draw the relationship between the black theology and the belief system “Earthseed” in terms of hope, social activism and criticism of the traditional Christianity through incorporating the author’s religious background and the propensity of the black theology for social change. Finally, this part of the dissertation attempts to provide a study of the optimistic tendency of Lauren through the psychoanalytic theory.

1. Utopianism in *Parable of the Sower*

Parable of the Sower received countless critiques, of whether being dystopia, utopia or a blurred, mixed text of both genres. One of the major features that makes it thought of as a utopia, is the Eutopian enclave, which is hope, that is a crucial part of the literary genre of utopia.

Hui-chuan Chang argues that the *Parable* novel of Octavia Butler is devoid of any “eutopian enclave” (4). In other words, she referred to it as a text that lacks hope or the hope within it is “dim” and “faded away”. Therefore, it is about something that cannot be fulfilled or reached (6). In spite of that, Gregory J. Hampton, (qtd. in Chang) notes that Butler’s novel consists of a Eutopian enclave that is symbolized by Acorn (7). Despite of Hampton’s claim, Chang still believes that Acorn regardless of its symbolism of hope and Eutopian enclave it remains unqualified to be an ultimate indication to that. The utopian potential, according to her, is

diminished as well as limited; in terms of: firstly, the emergence of Acorn at the very end of the story. Secondly, that Acorn is a wasteland that is not more perfect than the land the survivors used to be in. She says: “[it] is less a utopia than a caricature of one.” But it has a potential for betterment and improvement (7-8). Although the limited potential of Acorn seems to be limited, it is more apparent being compared to other works such as Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It* (8).

The drawbacks of this literary work as utopia call for a comparison between the canonical utopia which means the conventional one to the one in the *Parable of the Sower*. To a great degree, Butler’s novel is not a conventional utopia because it is not similar to More’s “*Utopia*” nor Bellamy’s “*Looking Backwards*” in terms of perfection and planning (Johns 400). As both works present places of future of high standards of perfection. And the *Parable* novel is not about a notable perfection, due to the horrific stances in the novel, for instance, robberies, murders, and natural disasters. It is clear that it does not portray a utopia that is supposed to be about a planned and perfect place.

Most critics see *Parable of the Sower* as a utopia that has been modified in terms of complexity. In this regard, Peter Stillman says that the author does not intend to provide a single answer about utopia. Instead, she clearly attempts to point out to utopian possibilities that made up whether of “Acorn” as a “utopian community” a planned and organized place to be or of “Earthseed” as a call for a destiny in space (16). The utopia that Butler intends to create is not a conventional one but a narrative introduced with utopian possibilities through the foundation of, firstly, “Earthseed” as a system and secondly, of “Acorn” as a community. In the sense, “Earthseed” urges for the creation of Acorn, at the first place. Hence, it appears that it can not be a better place because of its uncertainty as the novel ends without any significant change been made in the concern of perfection and order.

Several firm evidences portray *Parable of the Sower* as a critical dystopian novel; mostly the Eutopian enclave that is embodied in “Acorn”, the hope for a new life. Sargent asserts that the critical dystopia shall have a Eutopian enclave (Chang 2).

Moreover, the futility of the change being made recalls the feature of the open-endedness of critical dystopia as Chang says “open-endedness is a crucial aspect of critical dystopia” (8). As Acorn is the ultimate utopian element in this narrative, its emergence at the very end of the novel does not promise of a major utopian world. However, as Moylan and Baccolini claim that it contributes to levitate the intensity of the dystopian ambiance (Chang 2).

In brief, Butler intends to create an imagining of better world through her critical dystopia by working through the dystopia. In her narrative, she draws a cognitive outline of relations beneath late capitalism through which, she give a ”utopian hope” which is displayed within Earthseed’s community that’s assumed to be based on the social union (Miller 339, 347).

Skepticism and uncertainty are the two major features that define the commencement of Acorn that Lauren and her fellow travelers start to demonstrate that the anticipation of Acorn to be a better place is highly diminished and the future of it is predominantly bleak (Warfield 9). Regarding this idea, Lauren says, “There are no guarantees anywhere” (*Sower* 304). By these words, Lauren asserts the idea that Acorn is not a promising world. Additionally, this uncertainty of Acorn is apparent in Lauren and Bankole’s discussion about the future of Acorn. When Bankole says: “I don’t think we have a hope in hell of succeeding here.” (*Sower* 311) This thought of him, alludes to the uncertainty of Acorn community that is supposed to be a good place. In fact, it is a place that lacks safety. Therefore, it is not a better one.

Reading *Parable of the Sower* through the lens of Jacques Derrida, Angela Warfield argues that this utopia is unreal, in terms of rawness, and of its distance from the real world. Hereof, she raises the idea that the belief system of Lauren, Earthseed, is epitomized in utopia as no place; it is a place yet to come. Hence, this kind of utopia is prone to testing and questioning concerning the redeeming and pleasant perfect future in reflection to conventional utopia (66).

Parable of the Sower can be considered a post-apocalyptic novel if we take into consideration; on the one hand, the meaning of the word apocalypse that is not necessarily an ending but revealing. On the other hand, apocalypse being the rigid ground for utopian

possibilities to take place. As Adam Johns notes, it is the most appropriate ground for a utopian system to flourish (397).

Lauren is in an attempt to uncover the ultimate power and the concealed logic of the world that is of no possible way to be opposed or withheld. The attempt is commenced in her belief in transformation rather than ending. That she is facing an urgent state of change, accordingly, she is a manifestation of change due to her Hyperempathy syndrome. Adam Johns notes: “She experiences life in an original way and responds in an original morality”. She breaks the ordinary type of the science fiction character that is more dramatically and less authentically presented (403). Butler’s work is considered as an apocalyptic novel, because Lauren demonstrates her aim at revealing the truth about the universe and her will is visible in the following words,

I've finally got a title for my book of Earthseed verses-- Earthseed: The Book of the Living. There are the Tibetan and the Egyptian Books of the Dead. Dad has copies of them. I've never heard of anything called a book of the living, but I wouldn't be surprised to discover that there is something. I don't care. I'm trying to speak-- to write-- the truth. I'm trying to be clear. I'm not interested in being fancy, or even original. Clarity and truth will be plenty, if I can only achieve them. If it happens that there are other people outside somewhere preaching my truth, I'll join them. Otherwise, I'll adapt where I must, take what opportunities I can find or make, hang on, gather students, and teach. (117)

What she is attempting to divulge is the extreme control and the basic logic of the universe, the one thing that cannot be denied or switched. She does not accept, in spite of the condition of her world, endings: she believes in change. Usually a revelation she encounters as a result of being caught up in a period of serious change, but most of all since she is an incarnation of change: since of her Hyperempathy disorder, she encounters life in a unique way, and reacts with a unique profound quality. (Johns 403)

Jim Miller finds that Butler is offering a post-apocalyptic hoping informed by the lessons of the past rather than offering a utopian blueprint (336). Based on the critique of the social and political conditions along with religion in this work, Butler tends to avoid the issues that took

place in the past in order to set new utopian possibilities.

Lauren Olamina contributes, crucially, to shaping utopianism in the novel. Her contemplating and bewilderment about her reality affects the way utopia is presented in this literary work. For instance, Clara Agustic contends that the *Parable* is not a utopian work, relying on other idea which is “an interior utopia”; she draws this categorization of utopia from referring to Lauren as a black woman and a sharer. These two characterizations of Lauren are interior ones that float at the exterior level as a utopia, a desire for making a better world with a new order. In this regard, this utopia is not perfect as it is incomplete, dialogic and opened. Therefore, it is prone to issues. Despite all these drawbacks of Butler’s utopia, Agustic still believes it to be a utopia (351). As Lauren, firstly, created her belief system that calls for a utopia; it took her a time to express her new belief to others because she was uncertain if it would be accepted by them .she says: “I am stuck with [Earthseed]. And in time, I'll have to do something about it. In spite of what my father will say or do to me, in spite of the poisonous rottenness outside the wall where I might be exiled, I'll have to do something about it. That reality scares me to death.” (*Sower* 25)

The feminist utopian tendency is visible as Octavia Butler herself is one of the major feminist writers. The feminist utopia has ever been perceived as a utopia. According to Patricia Melzer, feminism and pragmatism is what characterizes Butler’s utopia. She, after all, singles out for the pragmatism in finding solutions through her utopian vision. Additionally, she tackles interests rooted in feminist movement (46). Lacey goes further with Melzer’s idea. She believes that Butler’s utopia aims at redistributing power. That her novel raises caution about the dangerous future that may be an absolute inevitability to confront. However, it is significant in accessing to power through “acceptance and awareness” (392). Butler’s work has a great feminist utopian tendency that calls for new world order through what Haraway explains the betterment of world (1).

Relating the *Parable* novel to the post-modern sphere, it is clearly apparent as Jim Miller says that Butler uses dystopia as a vehicle to tackle post-modern issues and attempts to create new

post-modern myths (336). According to him, Butler is creating a kind of yearning to change the world for the better. Her tendency as a feminist utopian writer becomes visible. And her work is a highly traditional feminist utopia.

Simultaneously, she is trying to challenge this type of narrative by scrutinizing the stipulations by the white feminist writers, who dominate this genre. As an African American writer she has the potential to do so. And above that, she is more aware of class within the science fiction more than other writers within this genre. Hence she is not merely contesting the patriarchal myth. However she goes beyond that by challenging “capitalist, racist and feminist utopian myth.” Miller observes that the novel of Butler is prompted through the pessimism of utopia and considers it a critical dystopia. As it urges the reader to face the post-modern issues through the dystopia once the issues are seen then comes the forth step to start changing the horrendous reality of the post-modern world (337). Working through the dystopia by focusing on the issues it bears, utopian possibilities can take place.

Erica Green (qtd. in Miller), claims that *Parable of the Sower* is a highly dystopian work, because of the firm exposure of the human’s issues within the society; such as greed, prejudices based on appearance and the oppression of women. These issues tend to seem neglected, but they have the potential to contribute to the conjuncture of ideologies that may set the world on a new platform of justice and rightness. Knowingly, utopia tends to put these worries and troubles under the rug; in order to expose its conventional feature of perfect and idyllic place (339). Green’s argument can be summed up in these words as Miller says “the utopian element is inter-winded with the dystopian thought. Utopia is the unseen horizon that makes dystopian vision possible.” (339). The crucible of the modern issues is the impulsion that creates new possibilities and lead to new solutions.

Although *Parable of the Sower* may not seem as a utopian novel, it still has utopian characterization. Adam Johns writes: “[It is] an open/contingent/incomplete/imperfect utopia, without surrendering the utopian drive itself. [It] is a matured utopianism that operates through a

dystopian field characterized by capitalism run amok environmentalist decay, a collapsed government and a Hobbesian war of all on all while remaining paradoxically true to its utopian heart.” (400-401) In the light of Johns claim, Lauren’s persistent and utopian desire remains stable in front of all the obstacles that threaten Earthseed in setting a new world order. “The weak can overcome the strong if the weak persist. Persisting isn't always safe, but it's often necessary” (*Sower* 127). Moreover, the utopian thinking, the desires, and goals set by Lauren are more what defines the utopia in the Parable novel not necessarily a perfect place. All these contrasted ideas are summed up in what Jameson calls, utopianism after the end of utopia (154). Lauren starts looking for new possibilities, after the disintegration of her community. However, her thoughts and ideas of Earthseed emerges at the very beginning of the story; before the horrific events invade her community closely .It starts as kind of yearning when Lauren is longing to make a change and take action for the betterment of a reality of decay and chaos before their culmination arrive at her neighbourhood (Miller 21). Concerning this situation, Lauren has ever thought of something that has to be done: “There has to be more than that we can do, a better destiny that we can shape. Another place. Another way. Something!” (*Sower* 71)

Adam Johns slightly agrees with the bunch of critic towards *Parable of the Sower* that it is a post utopian novel. However, he observes that Butler’s work is significant as the utopian ideal is originated in horrific evolution of the contemporary science via an apocalyptic shape that is adequate to the era of techno-science. As a matter of fact, the world in parable novel is an apocalyptic or a post-apocalyptic and it is different from the conventional apocalyptic novel that is to a great extent concerned with the end of the world (401). The parable novel is more concerned with revealing. And Lauren Olamina does not believe in the end of the world; Rather she believes in continuous possibilities of life.

Angela Warfield claims that the literary utopia is perfectly portrayed in *Parable of the Sower*: “Anticipation, hope and longing necessitated by the unrepresentable of utopia is clearly evident.” (62) She argues that Derrida’s works *Aporia* (1993) and *points* (1992) are the most

adequate ways of study to better understand the impossibility of the genre (62). The utopianism in this novel cannot prevent it from being conceived as a “dystopia hybrid”. (63) Which means; a dystopia that have a utopian like-hood.

In the Aporetic sense of Derrida, Warfield notes that “The notion of the impossible and of what may never be precluded, is the driving force of Utopian endeavour that, rather than courting death, animates life.” (63) This philosophy is the impetus for Lauren to keep moving forward in a world of cruelty. As it is the only source because others do not know about her belief system they are desperately not making any moves to change the reality of disintegration.

As *Parable of the Sower*, a story, that is set in the very adjacent future through in which there is a contribution to the indication of the utopian character constitution. Also, where there is a demand for the rebirth of utopian discourse. In this sense, Warfield says,

Because Utopia's critics overlook the aporetic import of the discourse by not accounting for the unaccountable or unrepresentable, and utopia is traditionally synonymous with presence and idealism, what, then, might an expanded notion of utopia look like? Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* is a novel of the near-future that provides evidence of the need to redefine what constitutes Utopian literature and offers an exciting portent for the resurrection of Utopian discourse. (65)

Butler’s literary work set the ground for a community and vision that are not presentable; which means not-yet real they are mere ideas. The projection of Derrida’s Aporia can draw explanation and understanding of the impossibility of these future possibilities.

Lauren’s *Earthseed* is a philosophy about persistence through which Lauren grasps inspiration and power in confronting the Aporetic condition in order to survive. Her yearning for a better world lies in the philosophy developed in *Earthseed*. Lauren being bound to her philosophy of *Earthseed* that is about change it grasps impermanence and undecidability (Warfield 66). The yearning and persistence of Lauren are biased by the decision that cannot be made about the aimed-at possibilities. Angela Warfield suggests there’s an acceptance of what Aporia provides: affirmation and responsibility. In this regard Lauren’s *Earthseed* is an

affirmation of utopia's no place rather than an ideal planned perfect world "writes, "All that you touch You Change. All that you Change Changes you. The only lasting truth is Change. God is Change."(184). The impossibility and the undecidability of Lauren's vision can be presented by the affirmation and responsibility that are provided by the Aporia.

Lauren uses God metaphorically that it is presented merely as "rhetorical strategy". Earthseed is about current world rather than a super natural authority figure (Warfield 66). This passage from the novel portrays Lauren's thought on this concern: "Earthseed deals with ongoing reality, not with supernatural authority figures. . . [A fellow traveler] asked me what the point of Earthseed is. Why personify change by calling it God? Since change is just an idea, why not call it that? Just say change is important. "Because after a while, it won't be important! " I told him. "People forget ideas. They're more likely to remember God - especially when they're scared or desperate." (Sower 206-208) Lauren sees the possible in what seems to be impossible. Her thought of change as an ongoing reality presents the affirmation of the no-place of utopia.

Lauren does not consent to her father's religion as it is a compensatory to utopian thought because she finds it not flowing with current world issue stream. " the only belief system she can embrace is the affirmation of change " in the sense that affirmation helps recognizing moments of time that are tied to each other and they are eventually all moments of becoming whether moment of excitement, interest or danger, affirmation helps to see condition of possibilities (Warfield 66-67). This firm belief in change shapes Lauren's affirmation that eventually will lead her to possible moments.

The narrative of Lauren's neighborhood in spite of robbery and danger it seems to be safe. Here Butler evokes the idea that "everything is permeable and vulnerable" (Warfield 67). "Three men climbed over the neighborhood wall, cutting through the strands of barbed wire and Lazor wire on top. Lazor wire is terrible stuff (...) People, though, can always find a way over, under, or through" (Sower 21-22).

There is no utopian safe space that consists of change. According to Lauren's point of

view that coping with a changing world is a must and Earthseed is the key to do such. The reason, she criticizes customary utopia (Warfield 67). “I felt alone between the two couples. I let them talk about their hopes and rumors of northern [E]dens” (Sower 199). Eventually, Earthseed is considered to be an incarnation of the no place of utopia and it is a contrast persistence “to compensatory idyllic future-present of conventional utopia” (Warfield 67). The stances in the novel present no possibility of a perfect future.

Laurens readiness and persistence in facing a harsh world in hopes for its betterment is rooted in her learning about survival. From the beginning of the story, the reader is introduced to Lauren's world-philosophy through the immersion in her verses from her book, Earthseed. “The organizing principle of Earthseed is the tenet that "God is change" and this theory governs Lauren's relationship with her environment and her companions.”(Warfield 66) This avid reading and interest about surviving is present by Butler in her narrative as an aspiration that “affirm[s] (...) the unrepresentable”. Moreover, she tends to emphasize the political and ethical activism that is a consequence and a sustained movement imposed by Aporia. Although it seems to be a future of indecidability Lauren endeavours for the no place of utopia; “nowhere” (Warfield 67). Lauren’s intense reading about different topics, as survival, enlarged her vision and rose her consciousness and she admits that, “I read a lot about that kind of thing. I read a lot period.” (Sower 15)

For Lauren, the future change is always able to be a possibility and this is conjured in her recurrent verse in her book “to take roots among the stars”. Warfield says that this verse has a tendency to be referring to a traditional utopia, “ultimate perfectibility” (68). Angela Warfield demonstrates the extent to which this destiny seems to be impossible and more unrealistic because of the basic needs that are difficult to be afforded such as water. Lauren is aware of the decision that can not be made, as long as there are obstacles and barriers in front of moving forwards. She express how people criticize the mission to space in which, the astronaut, Alicia Leal died: “People here in the neighborhood are saying she had no business going to Mars,

anyway. All that money wasted on another crazy space trip when so many people here on earth can't afford water, food, or shelter.” (*Sower* 17) In this sense Lauren clarifies that as long as change is a matter of reality that should be coped with, there will be a future with peril. “The galaxies move through space. The stars ignite, burn, age, cool, Evolving.” (*Sower* 263)

Butler manifests her endorsement of the Aporia instead of magnifying decidability although she seems to be portraying a perfect tradition, safe space, as it is called utopia she is clearly aware that a place like this cannot be existent (Warfield 68). With the flow of the events in the story; that ultimately, end with the establishment of Acorn. The apperception of what Lauren can do, in such a wrecking world, is explicit that she is not a world saviour and her belief system is not a new world order. Such a skeptical thought is raised by one of her travel mates who quest her about fixing the world she answered: “Fixing the world is not what Earthseed is about” (*Sower* 260).

According to Yarbrough (qtd. in Warfield), Butler in the same sense says “[t]here is no single answer that will solve all of our future probably. There’s no magic bullet” (68). From this quotation of the writer herself Warfield considers it as a direct claim from her that “her work is not a utopian because of what she sees a utopian is reputation for firing the “magic bullet” that can fix the world” (68).

According to Warfield Butler’s novel can be considered a utopian novel if taking into consideration the way utopia is defined in the Aporetic sense (68). She says “Rather than providing a traditionally Utopian ideal of an unaffected and uncomplicated future -present, Parable of the Sower offers a way to think about responsibility in the face of the aporia.” (69). In the light of what Derrida says about the must of taking responsibility. Butler’s resolution lies in the affirmation of the indeterminacy of the unrepresentable future, as well in the acceptance of what yet to come; which means to say the yes a la Derrida (Warfield 69).

Lauren’s utopian is presented in her visions, hope, vision, and desire. Her imagination goes beyond Acorn community. She started to wonder about other places; “I think people who

traveled to extra-solar worlds would be on their own-far from politicians and business people, failing economies and tortured ecologies and far from help. Well out of the shadow of their parent world.” (Sower 79) Miller, in the sense of this thinking moment of Lauren, suggests that this is a utopian thinking as long as she is dreaming of a place yet to exist. Another place is the good place (355). And when she says: “out of the shadow of the parent world” Miller explains the shadow to be the system that pushes Lauren and her disciples to endeavor another world in which there is a system of justice. This is summed up in Ernst Bolch “hope” (355). Dreaming is Lauren’s way to overcome the dystopian conditions “The destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars” (Sower 208). Besides, Lauren is more hopeful about the future that she sees good in everything she can think of; “Mars is a rock-- cold, empty, almost airless, dead. Yet it's heaven in a way. We can see it in the night sky, a whole other world, but too nearby, too close within the reach of the people who've made such a hell of life here on Earth.” (Sower 21) by this saying Lauren combined a critique of her society with a hopeful vision about the future this sums up what the utopia is about critique and vision.

According to Patricia, the utopian desire is portrayed through the theme of journey in an apocalyptic future (396). Lauren going north searching for a better and safe place. This stance in the story illustrates the concept of the good place of utopia. After that, aiming at setting her belief’s system community “Acorn” that is supposed to be this good and perfect place. Also, evokes the idea of utopianism that is searching for future possibility .To change the social condition by founding a new community with justice, unity and security.

Her portrayal, in all of her work, of the persistence of yearning in the midst of dystopia is the face of hope in our post-utopian moment.”(Miller 358) The movement forward is driven by yearning (Miller 356). Lauren’s positive attitude towards a shattering world is driven by her deep yearning and persistence the way she wants to make change keeps her moving forward; In this regard Bell Hooks (qtd. in Miller) says “Yearning is the word that best describes a common psychological state shared by many of us, cutting across boundaries of race, class, gender, and

sexual practice.” Miller notes: “The challenge is to live together in a way which is open to all sorts of yearning.”(356)

Back in history, the modernity that aimed at improving the world. It instead drove it into catastrophe and disaster. In this concern, Phillips claims that Butler’s project is concerned with issues of modernity finding a pathway to perfect world, when all pathways tossed up by innovation itself—in specific, the dystopias Fascism and Stalinism have ruined a perfect world into catastrophe (308). In the same sense, Jim Miller argues that *Parable of the Sower* is a Gramscian exercise in overcoming the pessimism of the intellect with an optimism of the will” (357). The modernity of certain community should not be dominated through economic advance or coercion. Instead, it should be dominated by intellectual through their morals and leadership. In the sense of Antonio Gramsci, the modernity of certain community should not be dominated through economic advance or coercion. Instead, it should be dominated by intellectual through their morals and leadership. Lauren symbolizes this kind of intellectual with morals and leadership. As an avid reader, she is more concerned in making a change and improving the circumstance at least at the level of her community, Robledo.

In the course of giving new possibilities; the spirituality in Butler’s work alludes to a new age movement Adam Johns contends that the religious verses in Butler’s novel are the shell that contains the apocalyptic and utopian character (402). Accordingly, Wanzo notes that their character is beholden in the various New Age movements of the current decades. Even they are considered to be a starting point for them (80). Rowell says that the writer had the intention that her book to be published as work directed to a new age audience (66).

2. Earthseed: A Religion of Hope

Butler’s novel mostly deals with the theme of religion and its contribution to rising a sense of hope in the story through the belief system of Lauren, Earthseed. The critiques owed to Earthseed differ in what to refer to it especially in relating it to religion if it is even considered

that.

Douglas Texter says that Earthseed is a personal, individualistic and interest of Lauren's response to an infinite call (472). In contrary, Tweedy declares that it is a religion after being just a personal faith because of the Rituals of planting trees in remembrance of the deads. In fact, it is more of what Tweedy says, because at the very beginning it was a personal faith but then she started spreading it within her companions in order to make it reach as many people as possible.

Lauren being thoughtful, responsible and revolutionary in her mission to spread her new faith and her effort to alter the world, she is greatly deemed to be pursuing prophet foot-prints. Texter illustrates Lauren to other prophets as Muhamed (pbuh), Jesus Christ, and Buddha. In terms of her mission, that aims at spreading her own religion. He sees that Lauren, to respond to this call, has to self-reflect and internally edit her book prior to expose it to other people (472).

Particularly, a similarity is drawn between Lauren and Jesus in terms of them being teachers and leaders who aim at imposing radical messages over false beliefs. Jesus is not concerned in revealing hidden mysteries. Rather, he aims at replacing the world order with another one. He is then bringing hope to the humanity the same way Lauren brings the Earthseed to save the world she lives in. According to Boucher (qtd. in Ruffin), the parable has a power in conveying a radical message and highly taken into consideration. That the ones who listen to parable are more likely to be affected by them they would be either caught to accept or reject action on the lesson of a great significance. What presents them with challenging a feature (94). The same challenge is seen, in Lauren's situation, in her apocalyptic world where she wants to change the appalling situation into a better one. As Ruffin notes, "Lauren's purpose, challenging a[n] (...) irreversible pattern of life, suits the cataclysmic potential of the parable." (94)

Octavia Butler's work is not solely related to the parable in the title. The religious reference is to indicate the purposeful use of it as well as its meaning in the story. Kimberley Ruffin argued that Butler use of King James version, also known as *Parable of the Sower* to stress that Earthseed followers must embody the two themes of the biblical parables, persistence and

resourcefulness, respectively, if they are meant to achieve Earthseed's interstellar aim (92). Even Lauen preaches part of a parable in the church; “[she] preached a sermon about perseverance (...) from Luke, chapter eighteen, verses one through eight: the parable of the importunate widow. It's one [she has] always liked. A widow is so persistent, in her demands for justice that she overcomes the resistance of a judge who fears neither God nor man” (*Sower* 126-127). This use of the parable accentuates its aim at inviting people to new ideology that is promising of a better world.

In addition, she uses *Parable of the Sower* as a vehicle to shape a narrative about Lauren's theology and to convey her message. As John Pfeiffer (qtd. in Ruffin), notes it is used to transmit a “theology of her own” (92). Moreover, *Parable of the Sower* is used by Butler as a “rhetorical core” to highlight her way in interpreting the bible and forming a sacred text (Ruffin 93). Through the history of tradition parable has ever been used to inform the listener and direct him to the right path (Naveh 5). Lauren is doing as allegorist do that leading people to the right path and she is doing this physically and religiously; leading them north and introducing them to the teachings of Earthseed. In a long-term impact of this belief system, people will be virtually led to it as Ruffin notes: “[through] nomadic stages of the religious leadership.”(93). According to Earth-seed “A community's first responsibility is to protect its children - the ones we have now and the ones we will have.” (*Sower* 305) this quote from the novel affirms the long-term objective of Earthseed which is to make a world of better conditions.

In order to set a base for Lauren's brand new ideology, Butler provides a harsh critique of individualism. As Douglas Texter says that she does so because individualism led to “post-modern decay” and she is trying to provide new solutions and possibilities to recover from the accumulated decline from the past. And that her critique is based on the denouncement of “authentic and individual self-articulation.” It is generated from the consciousness that has been perceived wrongly through “post modern, capital and hate-based politics”. Based on this thought, he claims that the individualism intended in Earthseed is for those who better understand the

“authentic need.” The only ones who can reach that kind of “communal vision” that Earthseed offers (472). The critiques of individuality that is rooted in post-modernity, is one of the greatest features of utopian thinking in Butler’s work; criticizing social condition, at the same time searching for solutions which eventually lead to replacing old beliefs by creating Earthseed.

God is highly questioned in Butler’s novel. Lauren is greatly concerned about religion and shaping God. Throughout the story, she is questioning people’s beliefs and faith as she sees endless stances where God seems to be totally absent; she was trying to have a clue about it; “What if God is something else altogether?” (*Sower* 15) She lost hope in the traditional God because of the several images of the human suffering and misery. First, the woman who was assaulted and left homeless and vulnerable to an inevitable death in the street; where there is no security. Secondly, the storm, that hit the Gulf of Mexico, killing nearly a thousand people. In the wake of this natural disaster, she was wondering if the people who were there still have faith. And pondering “If there is [a God], does he (she? It?) care about us?” (*Sower* 15)

Speaking of what to belief in, in Earthseed, there is no kind of belief in the kind of deity such as big daddy God, big cop God, big king God, nor the kind of notion of passivity of hierarchy or any kind that suggests any type of dualism (Miller 338). By this idea Earthseed eliminates any kind of agency that stands between the human and God. According to Earthseed God is “Trickster, Teacher, Chaos, Clay.” (*Sower* 208) In other words, Earthseed goes against the traditional religion in which the human is in a passive state to a super agent; a religion which is hierarchal at its core. Rather, Lauren’s belief system advocates mutuality and reciprocity that no one is super to the human or serves as an agent between human and God. In addition, it advocates the idea that action is not restricted to a supernatural power. Fairly, everyone is free and able to act but not responsible for the results of other ones deeds. All people have responsibility over each other (Miller 356). In this concern, Lauren calls for the activity of people and their involvement in making a change without waiting for a supernatural agent.

The God of Earthseed is “Forever uniting, growing, dissolving” (*Sower* 299). Which

suggests that it is not a static being that is in play, but rather the movement of desire. For this reason Lauren wanted to relate God to change. In her conversation with one of her companions, Travis Douglas, about relating change to God and not to an idea; she said that “because after a while, it won’t be important!(...) People forget ideas. They are more likely to remember God – especially when they’re scared or desperate.” (*Sower* 207-208)

The critique of God is extended to the critique of religion and Christianity as a whole. Kimberly T. Ruffin sees that *Parable of the Sower* as a segment of body of work that evolves from African American writers who “critique the bible and challenge a uniformly celebratory acceptance of the text (...) An antecedent in black journal- novels to Butler's Parable series, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* provides a critique of Christian religion.”(88) Based on this idea, she suggests that in Butler’s text there is an emphasis on science rather than faith this emphasis is a major concern in *Earthseed: the book of the living*. The Christian upbringing of Lauren is the impulsion of the emergence of *Earthseed*. It is Butler’s way in referring to the bible in her works (91-92).

Based on the claim of John Pfeiffer (qtd. in Ruffin), this reference to the bible tends “Ultimately (...) to subvert it where it is perverse, embrace it where it is cogent, and finally to substitute for it a personal scripture, indeed, a theology, of her own” (92).

Ruffin, in referring to the scriptural in “substitution”, says that Butler chooses to write over the Christian theological perspective with *Earthseed*’s theology. He takes as example the way God is presented in both theologies saying that in *Earthseed* God is a change while in Christian theology is unchanging. He tackled some tenets in order to draw the difference between both theologies. Concerning the Christian theology, in which life, at its utmost, tends to be lasting forever in heaven, whilst in *Earthseed* is to take roots among the stars (92). Which means; there are other possibilities for a life in space.

Most of the black American writers have the tendency to incorporate the black theology in their works. In Butler’s case, that is seen through Lauren’s activism and action amid the terrible

circumstances in Robeldo. This manifestation brings to the mind the activism of the African Americans in general, and the one of the African American theologians in particular, against the white oppression. Clarence Tweedy declares that Lauren is a young and Black woman dealing with the dangers of the world in a state of ecological and economic collapse. Her experiences as an African American are central in the creation of Earthseed's theology and its attempts to provide security as well as hope in a world looming on the verge of an abyss.

In this regard, Butler sustained this tendency by calling for social activism and responsibility. Through Earthseed, Lauren questions class and social antagonism and the corruption that takes over the government. "Her spirituality is essential in confronting the harsh reality of the twenty first century America." Furthermore, he notes that Lauren, through her anointing and spirituality, provides a new order at the cultural and social level. Earthseed is the source of teachings that allow Lauren and her fellow partners to think about an alternative future that meant to be about conquering the stars (Tweedy). This thought is based on the recurring idea in Earthseed that God is change and each person in the community has the responsibility to make a change. Lauren suggests that "[w]orship is no good without action. Without action, it's only useful if it steadies you, focuses your efforts, eases your mind" (*Sower* 206). This assertion of activism and action are highly adopted in Lauren's belief system as one verse "There is no end to a living world will demand of you." (*Sower* 129) This recalls for the ongoing responsibility and adoption of change as a way for betterment.

Lauren creates Earthseed to respond rationally to the socially and economically collapsed world and it is as shell for he wishes and desire of the trauma of her childhood (Tweedy). In the same sense, Peter Stillman says that Earthseed is a new spirituality; Lauren wrote it to respond to the issues that have been taking over the world she lives in. Earthseed is born out as belief to Lauren because the traditional Christian God, her father's God, is passive and doesn't response to people's prayers he says "God's mercy mocked by private power and ecological decay" (12). Around this idea evokes what happened to Mrs. Sims, who committed a suicide albeit she was a

religious woman. Concerning this, Lauren says: “She believed, like Dad, that if you kill yourself, you go to hell and burn forever. She believed in a literal acceptance of everything in the Bible. Yet, when things got to be too much for her, she decided to trade pain now for eternal pain in the hereafter.”(*Sower* 23) The notion of the afterlife in *Earthseed* is more promising than in Christianity; moreover, the absence of God is the reason why Mrs. Sims decided to put an end to her life.

Earthseed offers a God and religion of a change actively involved in the world through a reliance on and investment in human agency as well as autonomy. As Tomkin refers to it, as product of wish fulfillment. Accordingly, God in *Earthseed* is derived from black theology and the new belief system consists of significant element of this theology. “for the black church God has been constructed and conceived of as an agent of social change an avenger of social injustice and a supreme being that desires the liberation of the oppressed people.” (Tweedy)

This notion of the black church is seen in *Parable of the Sower* through the way Lauren perceives God as an agent of liberation, social change, and action rather than a God that is there for the sake of explaining the anarchy and chaos happening in the world. *Earthseed* is just like a gospel God which advocates the liberty of the self and the community .In this regard, everyone should not be passive and surrender to a supernatural power.

Tweedy says: “*Earthseed* does not advocate a socially passive faith in which adherents, blindly and obediently, wait for heavenly rewards; instead, it is a call to action: a belief that people can change their earthly fate as well as the destiny of the world through direct action.” Accordingly, God is repositioned in *Earthseed* in the circle of the natural order. this what contributes the to birth of hope within the self as God is there with the human through what he is obliged to endure, that he is there to encourage the self agency to overcome a collapsing world at the political and ecological level. The re-articulation and redefining of God in *Earthseed* counteract human suffering and humiliation through a doctrine of self reliance. Lauren notes that power lies in the recognition of God and emphasizes the idea of shaping God “There’s power in

knowing that God can be focused, diverted, shaped by anyone at all. But there is no power in having strength and brains, and yet waiting for God to fix things for you to take revenge for you. (...) God will shape us all every day of our lives. Best to understand that and return the effort: Shape God. ” (Sower 206-207)

Christian faith of her father is futile and not able to make a change. In comparing Lauren’s belief system to the black church, they both are considered responses to amend the social circumstance as for the black church fear and powerlessness and shame that racism create in the individuals of the black community. Lauren’s faith works through the individual’s persistence to contribute to the changing of the reality of an extreme disaster. (Tweedy)

Historically speaking, during the presence of the white American Christianity, there was a miscarriage of justice towards the black Americans because of the theologians taking the politics of power over the fraternal love through creating the racial difference within the American society. Tweedy sheds a light on the author’s contribution in framing *Earthseed* with the black theology tendencies. Because of her strictly Baptist upbringing, she comprehends well black theology tradition of liberation. Butler’s text demonstrates her use of the black theology that she highlights the significant of spirituality in “politics of liberation” God of *Earthseed* is this-worldly not other worldly deity or heaven centered .The feelings of fears powerlessness and shame of Lauren and her people are meant to be wiped away by the God of *Earthseed* that promotes self agency and autonomy “ultimately *Earthseed* confronts legacies of oppression and human suffering.”(Tweedy)

The uncovering of the divine truth by Lauren works on subverting a Christian messianism, a mission that black theology already started. Through *Earthseed* seek a response to the social issue by emphasizing on” learning planning doing teaching and reaching out to people”. Also uses *Earthseed* to create a connection between her and *Earthseed* believers (Tweedy). “I could read, hear, see, all the history I could learn.” (Sower 204) By these words, Lauren intends to show that her learning and knowledge make her aim at enacting a change possible.

The spiritual vision of Lauren put her in a position of “trans-historical theological debate” through a faith against work “that has overshadowed much of Christian history”. Earthseed opposes the rewarding of the afterlife of the human after carrying a burden of life through endurance and faith. God in it is replaced by divine providence (Tweedy). The providence Lauren was searching for is change. She admits,

I was looking for God,” I said. “I wasn’t looking for mythology or mysticism or magic. I didn’t know whether there was a god to find, but I wanted to know. God would have to be a power that could not be defied by anyone or anything. . . . Change is ongoing. Everything changes in some way—size, position, composition, frequency, velocity, thinking, whatever. Every living thing, every bit of matter, all the energy in the universe changes in some way. (195)

Earthseed espouses vision of ambivalent God that is part of the natural order but at the same time shaped by collective freewill.” Lauren relates to this idea by saying “God is neither good nor evil, neither loving nor hating. God is Power. God is Change. We must find the rest of what we need within ourselves, in one another, in our Destiny” (*Sower* 231). Earthseed god ambivalence lies in encouraging believers to accept responsibility to act upon their reality .Rather than being concerned with the afterlife reward. It draws a nexus between the individual and community through the perception of the idea that the outer world fate and the personal destiny are attached to each other. They both are able to work through the extremely horrific circumstances and improve the ecological and social decay (Tweedy). Through Earthseed, Lauren focuses on the importance of the community. She aims at setting a community of union and respect in order to reach the ultimate purpose of the Acorn community of being a community with a new world order.

Butler’s portrayed one of the traditional dichotomies of the black church through exposing Lauren and her father’s view of God. Laurens father vision is, other-wordly that he has a desire and yawns to change the misfortune reality but he is waiting for “messianic leader” who is Donner, the future president who is seen as saviour and avenger. Lauren’s vision is this- wordly because her vision urges the individual to be involved in the change rather than waiting for a super agent

who would reward him if he was obedient and punish him for disobedience (Tweedy). In this concern Lauren says,

We give lip service to acceptance, as though acceptance were enough. Then we go on to create super-people-- super-parents, super-kings and queens, super-cops-- to be our gods and to look after us-- to stand between us and God. Yet God has been here all along, shaping us and being shaped by us in no particular way or in too many ways at once like an amoeba-- or like a cancer. Chaos. (33)

Lauren portrays the importance of accepting the reality so they can change it without relying or waiting for super agent.

Tweedy notes that Lauren's belief lies in the idea that; once self autonomy is recognized, the pattern relationship of parent/father between God and people will be broken.

Another common feature of black theology and *Earthseed* is the journeys that have been taken at both sides. The journey to Bankole's property that is called "i5", recalls the African American jeremiad. *Earthseed* notion of taking roots among the stars epitomizes the Jeremiadic tradition and the last hope for ending misfortune and suffering. In the same context, Lauren and her followers head north in hope of surviving and finding a safe place. Butler says: "We are *Earthseed*. We are flesh—self aware, questing, problem-solving flesh. We are that aspect of Earthlife best able to shape God knowingly. We are Earthlife maturing, Earthlife preparing to fall away from the parent world. We are Earthlife preparing to take root in new ground, Earthlife fulfilling its purpose, its promise, its Destiny." (*Sower* 141)

Earthseed contributes to the way African Americans understand and manipulate the Christian mythology through the subversion of the xenophobic and ideological vision of the Christian America church. Taking into consideration an importance that *Earthseed* is not concerned in reclaiming the past or promising an afterlife. Butler at the end of the novel referred to the Christian parable in explaining and justifying the way Lauren acts through the course of the story for the sake of the survival of her belief system, *Earthseed*. In spite of it being a brand new faith, it continues to articulate and rearticulate ancient mythology in order to change and improve

the course of the human events (Tweedy). The excerpt from The Bible Authorized King James Version St. Luke 8: 5-8 is mentioned at the end of the novel to refer to the mentality of Lauren in setting the doctrine of Earthseed has been interfered with the old mythology, Christianity,

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. (311)

Acorn community is the fertile soil for Earthseed to be born and from which to spring. That Earthseed emerges as viable faith. In this concern Lauren says, "I have acorns enough for each of us to plant live oak trees to our dead -- enough to plant one for Justin's mother, too. I'm thinking about a very simple ceremony. But everyone should have a chance to speak. Even the two little girls." (*Sower* 310) "after a while this ritual becomes a staple of the community that blinds flowers to Lauren's religion movement reminding them of what they have lost and what they hope to achieve" The oak trees symbolizes the impermanence of Earthseed doctrine of change yet its permanence as a religion in along term proliferation as it will reach more people in the future.

3. Lauren's Optimism: A Utopian Mindset

*"I can't be pessimist because I'm alive.
To be a pessimist means that you've agreed that
Human life is an academic matter.
So, I'm forced to be an optimist.
I'm forced to believe that we can survive
whatever we must survive. "*
James Baldwin

In a world of hopelessness like the one in *Parable of the Sower*, it is hard to hold hope because of all the circumstances of: corrupted government, violence, and environmental decay. Everything surrounds them, work to extinguish any glimmer of hope. However, Lauren Olamina, the protagonist, the only one who seems more concerned about changing this reality because of

her hopeful vision about settling a systematically new land; based on the doctrine of her belief system, Earthseed, Which, also, advocates the idea of conquering the stars that is about a new life on other planet. The words written above can, similarly, be her own words.

Lauren shares a totally different convictions and vision about the future from the rest of the characters of the Parable story. She is the single character, who has hope for future possibilities. Miller notes: “Lauren represents an entirely different response to hopelessness”.

Psychologically, optimism as a mental process is related to problem solving and anticipations about the future (Tiger), Lauren is an optimist kind of person. She is highly concerned in finding solution to the reality of a collapsing world. She says: “Even so, why can't I do what others have done-- ignore the obvious. Live a normal life. It's hard enough just to do that in this world. (25)” She also says “[t]he weak can overcome the strong if the weak persist. Persisting isn't always safe, but it's often necessary.” (127)

Her visions about a future elsewhere than Robledo, the town she lives in; this anticipation about a better future somewhere keeps optimism going on “Space could be our future,” I say. I believe that. As far as I'm concerned, space exploration and colonization are among the few things left over from the last century that can help us more than they hurt us. It's hard to get anyone to see that, though, when there's so much suffering going on just outside our walls. (20) These visions of Lauren keep her motivated also makes her able to motivate others in Norem and Cantor sense.

Adam Johns says: “she is (...) both thoughtful and spiritually inclined (...) perhaps simply because she is unable to ignore the accumulating disintegration of both the natural and human worlds, Lauren prepares both psychologically and materially for the disintegration of her own community. [And her] morality is rooted in the realities of a changing world and her changed biology.”(398, 404)

Psychologists for certain reasons consider optimism as rooted in the human's biology; means what Peterson refers to as big optimism that seem to be great. In Lauren's case this is

apparent in comparison to other characters in the story. Because of her ailment Hyperempathy that is considered to be a something identic about her.

Jim Miller, in addition, brings into attention the Hyperempathy syndrome that she got due to her mother taking drugs during her pregnancy. The way this ailment makes her feel other people's pain and pleasure, it raises her sense of solidarity and compassion with other in a dystopian world, where everyone being selfish to survive (357). One of the most significant stances in the novel, Lauren saw the assaulted woman and wanted to help her, although it was dangerous for her. Through this syndrome of Lauren Butler wanted to break the general notion that people are different. He noted that Lauren's syndrome can be a "compassion fatigue tour present." It even may be "a source of wisdom and cure for the worst of our nightmares." (Miller 357) Through the ailment Butler has the attempt to convey a kind of hope in the story. Even Lauren's syndrome is a biological hope, as psychologists say that it may be biological. Back to the idea of motivating and motivated, once she can feel them she can help them. Therefore she is able to make a change.

The Earthseed has a significant role in enhancing Lauren's optimism as it gives her hope about new possibilities. In the sense of Freud, optimism can be created through a religion that is about the afterlife, this idea evokes when Mrs. Sims committed suicide that she has no more hope in the afterlife . In the other hand, Earthseed is about an after life on other planet; this idea keep hope in people. Lauren commented on her death: "She believed, like Dad, that if you kill yourself, you go to hell and burn forever. She believed in a literal acceptance of everything in the Bible. Yet, when things got to be too much for her, she decided to trade pain now for eternal pain in the hereafter." (*Sower* 23) Lauren alludes to the religious hopelessness of Mrs Sims.

The optimism of Lauren is highlighted by her utopian thinking that is related to visions about the future. Linking these two notions, there is a common feature that is hope as a human nature and Eutopian enclave, which makes her mind utopian and optimistic all at once.

Conclusion

This analysis that has been conducted in this chapter shows that *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler is a dystopian novel that contains a utopian enclave that is hope. This reveals it as a critical dystopia as it meets its features and properties that have been already set in the first chapter. In addition, the critical studies provided by several scholars, the confusion is made clear as pointing to what makes it a utopian work and dystopian work with providing instances from the novel as well applying the information provided in the first chapter. Furthermore, this study shows the areas of commonness between Earthseed and the black theology in creating hope as they both provide new notions of belief and criticizing the traditional Christianity. At the end, there is a psycho-analysis of Lauren, the main character, whose positive attitude and response in a world of devastation and chaos lie in her neurological disorder, Hyperempathy, which contributes to her optimistic vision and shaping her utopian mind.

General Conclusion

This research, entitled “Post-Apocalyptic Optimism: Utopia as a mindset in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*”, has been conducted in order to achieve a set of objectives. The title suggests, portraying and analyzing utopianism and optimism. For this reason, finding out the essential conceptions was set as the primary objective to examine Octavia Butler's work through utopian and optimistic vision, And applying the psychoanalytical theory on the protagonist to put a theory that fits well to understand the dominant mentality of optimism.

The first chapter is set to be the rigid theoretical ground upon which the analysis in chapter two is intended to be built on. Firstly, an introduction to utopia is provided in order to go deep into this literary genre; its similarity to dystopia and eventually reaching the combination of dystopia and utopia to form the so-called critical dystopia.

Besides, the apocalypse is highlighted as a setting for the utopian system and utopianism in general. In addition to that, the insertion of Jacques Derrida' Aporia is significant in the study of the impossibility of utopia which, ultimately, will be deemed to reveal the optimism of the genre.

Inescapably an overview of the apocalypse was mentioned, as the end of the world is highly tied to the utopian visions and system to be present. Additionally, as utopia is about the notion of time that is meant to be the future; the same time for the apocalypse to occur.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the significance of religion as being a major theme in Butler's novel, therefore, a brief introduction to religion is crucial in order to pave the way for tackling the nexus that the black theology has with providing hope as being a theology that calls for social activism and change.

Finally, it is found to be crucial to focus on optimism as a mental attitude through which the utopian vision is conveyed. By defining and presenting it, an understanding that it contributes to changing uncomfortable situations. Moreover, linking it to religion; the way religion can shape

optimism. Most importantly, portraying the two types of it; that there is little and big optimism.

Through our analysis of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, we reached some important results about the post-apocalyptic optimism that is shaped in the form of the utopian mindset of Lauren and her futuristic vision about finding solutions and providing possibilities. The events of the novel are about near future anticipations, these anticipations are based on the new millennium of twenty-first century's ecological disasters and transgression of moral codes.

This study of the novel led to finding a set of conclusions. Firstly, we found out that the term post-apocalypse begins to be an important subject in the whole world and we must worry about it, and that is a significant setting for utopia to be conjured. In the case of Butler's novel it prepares her futuristic vision to be formed as it is an end that has not to be so but rather a revelation and that what the protagonist Lauren Oya Olamina intends to fulfill.

Additionally, modern issues like: ecological disasters, racial segregation, deceases, and the race to gain global power have shifted the interest toward new dimensions and horrible anticipations.

Secondly, through going in deep we discovered that a post-apocalyptic optimism depends on utopianism within the novel that is presented in the utopian enclave which is hope, and it is symbolized by "Acorn". Yet, it can be the beginning of utopianism and hope. And the depressing ambiance of the apocalypse is combined with the hope of utopia. The mixture, between the two different genres, creates the so-called Critical Dystopia that is the most appropriate genre for the *Parable* novel to be written within.

Tackling the theme of religion within *Parable of the Sower* can not be neglected. That is to say, the religious background of the writer plays a significant role in criticizing Christianity and religion as a whole, alongside shaping the futuristic vision of Lauren that is based on the belief system she established "Earthseed".

Equally important, bringing the black theology to the explanation of the hopeful vision is necessary. The relationship that has been found, that both the belief system and the black theology

criticize God and his interference in human saving; also, the critique of the traditional Christianity that has been fruitless in saving the blacks from oppression.

Besides, highlighting the parable in the novel as being used in a rhetorical sense; Although the literary work of Butler does not have the form nor the core of a parable but the reference to it in the novel alludes to optimism and hope for a bright tomorrow. Lauren mentioned some parables from the bible several times in order to expose her hopeful futuristic vision. Eventually, this use of the parable reflects the entire use of religion as being a tool of hopefulness.

In order to achieve the practical part on *Parable of the Sower* in the second chapter, we assist on tackling the optimism of the protagonist “Lauren Olamina” as a case study to understand the relationship between her optimism, utopia, and Earthseed as import concepts that help to reply important focal points.

A conclusion reached that the belief system of Lauren and her neurological disorder contribute to shaping her hopeful vision and ultimately construct her utopian mindset. Through her sensation of other people’s pain and joy, these feelings make her aware of changing the reality of people. Therefore, she has to be optimistic in order to find new possibilities and solutions.

Notably, most of the fictional critics, writers, and theologians have been putting a huge interest in this new genre for the sake of enriching literature; and emerging the zealous new soul of catalyst authors in order to take into consideration the importance of fiction and the signs of danger. Butler is a notable writer, who succeeds, through her novel “*Parable of the Sower*”, to point out the threatening realities of the new millennium by creating a narrative that holds both: despair to raise awareness, and hope to direct the attention to a better possible future.

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