

## Abstract

The thesis analyzes three novels with utopian features written by African American authors: Sutton E. Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), George S. Schuyler's *Black Empire* (1936-1937) and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997). The novels and their description of alternative all-black spaces are analyzed on the background of Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopias. In the first part of the thesis, I provide the introduction to the genre of utopia and its brief history, and I state a definition of utopia for the purposes of the thesis. Next I discuss the specificity of American context and introduce the concept of heterotopias as opposed to traditional utopias. The crucial features are simultaneity, juxtaposition, mutual relationships and mirroring.

In the latter part of the thesis, I proceed to the analysis of the novels themselves, stressing mainly their treatment of race and racism. In Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio*, I describe the parallels between the white and black world in their use of rhetoric and in the *Imperium*'s inspiration by the American War of Independence. I also examine the role of Du Boisian double-consciousness and its working in the concept of heterotopia. In the analysis of Schuyler's *Black Empire*, I focus on the fascist rhetoric resembling that of Italy in Italo-Ethiopian War, American tradition of superheroes and technological progress. Next I study the role of African heritage for the final emancipation of the Black Empire. In Morrison's *Paradise*, I analyze two heterotopias: one of race, the other of gender. The main focus is to show the impossibility of entering a heterotopia, and to draw parallels between white and black misogyny.

I conclude the thesis with stressing the contribution of the concept of heterotopia to the question of race in the United States.

**Key words:** African American literature, utopia, heterotopia, race