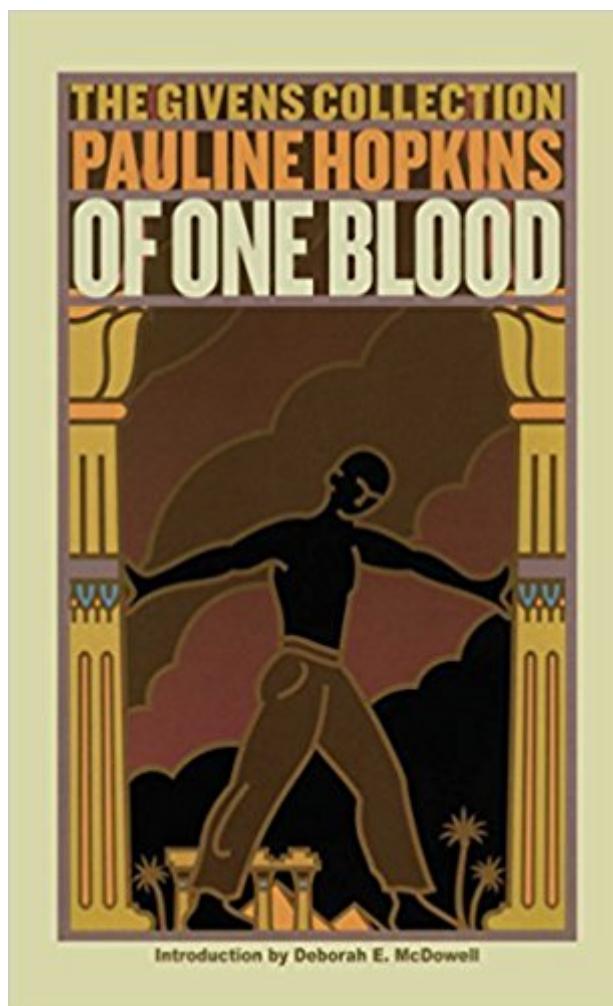


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Of One Blood: Or, The Hidden Self: The Givens Collection



Synopsis

Of One Blood is the last of four novels written by Pauline Hopkins. She is considered by some to be "the most prolific African-American woman writer and the most influential literary editor of the first decade of the twentieth century, though she is one of the lesser known literary figures of the much lauded Harlem Renaissance. Of One Blood first appeared in serial form in Colored American Magazine in the November and December 1902 and the January 1903 issues of the publication, during the four-year period that Hopkins served as its editor. Hopkins tells the story of Reuel Briggs, a medical student who couldn't care less about being black and appreciating African history, but finds himself in Ethiopia on an archeological trip. His motive is to raid the country of lost treasures -- which he does find in the ancient land. However, he discovers much more than he bargained for: the painful truth about blood, race, and the half of his history that was never told. Hopkins wrote the novel intending, in her own words, to "raise the stigma of degradation from [the Black] race." The title, Of One Blood, refers to the biological kinship of all human beings.

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Customer Reviews

Chapter OneThe recitations were over for the day. It was the first week in November and it had rained about every day the entire week; now freezing temperature added to the discomfiture of the dismal season. The lingering equinoctial whirled the last clinging yellow leaves from the trees on the campus and strewed them over the deserted paths, while from the leaden sky fluttering snow-white flakes gave an unexpected touch of winter to the scene. The east wind for which Boston and vicinity

is celebrated, drove the sleet against the window panes of the room in which Reuel Briggs sat among his books and the apparatus for experiments. The room served for both living and sleeping. Briggs could have told you that the bareness and desolateness of the apartment were like his life, but he was a reticent man who knew how to suffer in silence. The dreary wet afternoon, the cheerless walk over West Boston bridge through the soaking streets had but served to emphasize the loneliness of his position, and morbid thoughts had haunted him all day: To what use all this persistent hard work for a place in the world -- clothes, food, a roof? Is suicide wrong? he asked himself with tormenting persistency. From out the storm, voices and hands seemed beckoning him all day to cut the Gordian knot and solve the riddle of whence and whither for all time. His place in the world would soon be filled; no vacuum remained empty; the eternal movement of all things onward closed up the gaps, and the wail of the newly-born augmented the great army of mortals pressing the vitals of mother Earth with hurrying tread. So he had tormented himself for months, but the courage was yet wanting for strength to rend the veil. It had grown dark early. Reuel had not stirred from his room since coming from the hospital -- had not eaten nor drank, and was in full possession of the solitude he craved. It was now five o'clock. He sat sideways by the bare table, one leg crossed over the other. His fingers kept the book open at the page where he was reading, but his attention wandered beyond the leaden sky, the dripping panes, and the sounds of the driving storm outside. He was thinking deeply of the words he had just read, and which the darkness had shut from his gaze. The book was called "The Unclassified Residuum," just published and eagerly sought by students of mysticism, and dealing with the great field of new discoveries in psychology. Briggs was a close student of what might be termed "absurdities" of supernatural phenomena or mysticism, best known to the every-day world as "effects of the imagination," a phrase of mere dismissal, and which it is impossible to make precise; the book suited the man's mood. These were the words of haunting significance: "All the while, however, the phenomena are there, lying broadcast over the surface of history. No matter where you open its pages, you find things recorded under the name of divinations, inspirations, demoniacal possessions, apparitions, trances, ecstasies, miraculous healing and productions of disease, and occult powers possessed by peculiar individuals over persons and things in their neighborhood." The mind-curers and Christian scientists, who are beginning to lift up their heads in our communities, unquestionably get remarkable results in certain cases. The ordinary medical man dismisses them from his attention with the cut-and-dried remark that they are 'only the effects of the imagination.' But there is a meaning in this vaguest of phrases. "We know a non-hysterical woman who in her trances knows facts which altogether transcend her possible normal consciousness, facts about the lives of people whom she never saw

or heard of before. I am well aware of all the liabilities to which this statement exposes me, and I make it deliberately, having practically no doubt whatever of its truth."Presently Briggs threw the book down, and, rising from his chair, began pacing up and down the bare room."That is it," at length he said aloud. "I have the power, I know the truth of every word -- of all M. Binet asserts, and could I but complete the necessary experiments, I would astonish the world. O Poverty, Ostracism! have I not drained the bitter cup to the dregs!" he apostrophized, with a harsh, ironical laugh. Mother Nature had blessed Reuel Briggs with superior physical endowments, but as yet he had never had reason to count them blessings. No one could fail to notice the vast breadth of shoulder, the strong throat that upheld a plain face, the long limbs, the sinewy hands. His head was that of an athlete, with close-set ears, and covered with an abundance of black hair, straight and closely cut, thick and smooth; the nose was the aristocratic feature, although nearly spoiled by broad nostrils, of this remarkable young man; his skin was white, but of a tint suggesting olive, an almost sallow color which is a mark of strong, melancholic temperaments. His large mouth concealed powerful long white teeth which gleamed through lips even and narrow, parting generally in a smile at once grave, genial and singularly sweet; indeed Briggs's smile changed the plain face at once into one that interested and fascinated men and women. True there were lines about the mouth which betrayed a passionate, nervous temperament, but they accorded well with the rest of his strong personality. His eyes were a very bright and piercing gray, courageous, keen and shrewd. Briggs was not a man to be despised -- physically or mentally. None of the students associated together in the hive of men under the fostering care of the "benign mother" knew aught of Reuel Briggs's origin. It was rumored at first that he was of Italian birth, then they "guessed" he was a Japanese, but whatever land claimed him as a son, all voted him a genius in his scientific studies, and much was expected of him at graduation. He had no money, for he was unsocial and shabby to the point of seediness, and apparently no relatives, for his correspondence was limited to the letters of editors of well known local papers and magazines. Somehow he lived and paid his way in a third-rate lodging-house near Harvard square, at the expense of the dull intellects or the idle rich, with which a great university always teems, to whom Briggs acted as "coach," and by contributing scientific articles to magazines on the absorbing subject of spiritualistic phenomena. A few of his articles had produced a profound impression. The monotonous pacing continued for a time, finally ending at the mantel, from whence he abstracted a disreputable looking pipe and filled it."Well," he soliloquized, as he reseated himself in his chair, "Fate had done her worst, but she mockingly beckons me on and I accept her challenge. I shall not yet attempt the bourne. If I conquer, it will be by strength of brain and will-power. I shall conquer; I must and will."The storm had increased in violence; the early dusk

came swiftly down, and at this point in his reverie the rattling window panes, as well as the whistle and shriek of gusts of moaning wind, caught his attention. "Phew! a beastly night." With a shiver, he drew his chair closer to the cylinder stove, whose glowing body was the only cheerful object in the bare room. As he sat with his back half-turned to catch the grateful warmth, he looked out into the dim twilight across the square and into the broad paths of the campus, watching the skeleton arms of giant trees tossing in the wind, and the dancing snowflakes that fluttered to earth in their fairy gowns to be quickly transformed into running streams that fairly overflowed the gutters. He fell into a dreamy state as he gazed, for which he could not account. As he sent his earnest, penetrating gaze into the night, gradually the darkness and storm faded into tints of cream and rose and soft moist lips. Silhouetted against the background of lowering sky and waving branches, he saw distinctly outlined a fair face framed in golden hair, with soft brown eyes, deep and earnest -- terribly earnest they seemed just then -- rose-tinged baby lips, and an expression of wistful entreaty. O how real, how very real did the passing shadow appear to the gazer! He tried to move, uneasily conscious that this strange experience was but "the effect of the imagination," but he was powerless. The unknown countenance grew dimmer and farther off, floating gradually out of sight, while a sense of sadness and foreboding wrapped him about as with a pall. A wilder gust of wind shook the window sashes. Reuel stared about him in a bewildered way like a man awakening from a heavy sleep. He listened to the wail of the blast and glanced at the fire and rubbed his eyes. The vision was gone; he was alone in the room; all was silence and darkness. The ticking of the cheap clock on the mantel kept time with his heart-beats. The light of his own life seemed suddenly eclipsed with the passing of the lovely vision of Venus. Conscious of an odd murmur in his head, which seemed to control his movements, he rose and went toward the window to open it; there came a loud knock at the door. Briggs did not answer at once. He wanted no company. Perhaps the knocker would go away. But he was persistent. Again came the knock ending in a double rat-tat accompanied by the words: "I know you are there; open, open, you son of Erebus! You inhospitable Turk!" Thus admonished Briggs turned the key and threw wide open the door. "It's you, is it? Confound you, you're always here when you're not wanted," he growled. The visitor entered and closed the door behind him. With a laugh he stood his dripping umbrella back of the stove against the chimney-piece, and immediately a small stream began trickling over the uncarpeted floor; he then relieved himself of his damp outer garments. "Son of Erebus, indeed, you ungrateful man. It's as black as Hades in this room; a light, a light! Why did you keep me waiting out there like a drowned rat?" The voice was soft and musical. Briggs lighted the student lamp. The light revealed a tall man with the beautiful face of a Greek God; but the sculptured features did not inspire confidence. There

was that in the countenance of Aubrey Livingston that engendered doubt. But he had been kind to Briggs, was, in fact, his only friend in the college, or, indeed, in the world for that matter. By an act of generosity he had helped the forlorn youth, then in his freshman year, over obstacles which bade fair to end his college days. Although the pecuniary obligation was long since paid, the affection and worship Reuel had conceived for his deliverer was dog-like in its devotion. "Beastly night," he continued, as he stretched his full length luxuriously in the only easy chair the room afforded. "What are you mooning about all alone in the darkness?" "Same old thing," replied Briggs briefly. "No wonder the men say that you have a twist, Reuel." "Ah, man! but the problem of whence and whither! To solve it is my life; I live for that alone; let'm talk." "You ought to be re-named the 'Science of Trance-States,' Reuel. How a man can grind day and night beats me." Livingston handed him a cigar and for a time they smoked in silence. At length Reuel said: "Shake hands with Poverty once, Aubrey, and you will solve the secret of many a student's success in life." "Doubtless it would do me good," replied Livingston with a laugh, "but just at present, it's the ladies, bless their sweet faces who disturb me, and not delving in books nor weeping over ways and means. Shades of my fathers, forbid that I should ever have to work!" "Lucky dog!" growled Reuel, enviously, as he gazed admiringly at the handsome face turned up to the ceiling and gazing with soft caressing eyes at the ugly whitewashed wall through rings of curling smoke. "Yet you have a greater gift of duality than I," he added dreamily. "Say what you will; ridicule me, torment me, but you know as well as I that the wonders of a material world cannot approach those of the undiscovered country within ourselves -- the hidden self lying quiescent in every human soul." "True, Reuel, and I often wonder what becomes of the mind and morals, distinctive entities grouped in the republic known as man, when death comes. Good and evil in me contend; which will gain the mastery? Which will accompany me into the silent land?" "Good and evil, God and the devil," suggested Reuel. "Yes, sinner or saint, body or soul, which wins in the life struggle? I am not sure that it matters which," he concluded with a shrug of his handsome shoulders. "I should know if I never saw you again until the struggle was over. Your face will tell its own tale in another five years. Now listen to this:" He caught up the book he had been reading and rapidly turning the leaves read over the various passages that had impressed him. "A curious accumulation of data; the writer evidently takes himself seriously," Livingston commented. "And why not?" demanded Reuel. "You and I know enough to credit the author with honest intentions." "Yes; but are we prepared to go so far?" "This man is himself a mystic. He gives his evidence clearly enough." "And do you credit it?" "Every word! Could I but get the necessary subject, I would convince you; I would go farther than M. Binet in unveiling the vast scheme of compensation and retribution carried about in the vast recesses of the human soul." "Find

the subject and I will find the money," laughed Aubrey."Do you mean it, Aubrey? Will you join me in carrying forward a search for more light in the mysteries of existence?""I mean it. And now, Reuel, come down from the clouds, and come with me to a concert.""Tonight?""Yes, 'tonight,' " mimicked the other. "The blacker the night, the greater the need of amusement. You go out too little.""Who gives the concert?""Well, it's a new departure in the musical world; something Northerners know nothing of; but I who am a Southerner, born and bred, or as the vulgar have it, 'dyed in the wool,' know and understand Negro music. It is a jubilee concert given by a party of Southern colored people at Tremont Temple. I have the tickets. Redpath has them in charge."rd"Well, if you say so, I suppose I must." Briggs did not seem greatly impressed."Coming down to the practical, Reuel, what do you think of the Negro problem? Come to think of it, I have never heard you express an opinion about it. I believe it is the only burning question in the whole category of live issues and ologies about which you are silent.""I have a horror of discussing the woes of unfortunates, tramps, stray dogs and cats and Negroes -- probably because I am an unfortunate myself."They smoked in silence.

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I came across this obscure novel by listening to the HP Lovecraft Literary podcast. February being Black History Month the hosts wanted to review a Lovecraftian story by a black author. This book was the closest they could come. Not Lovecraftian in any real sense it does qualify as weird fiction because of the supernatural elements present. This book is very much of a "message" book. The message is racial equality and the common heritage of all humans. The author is not content to let the story get that message across but often uses her role as the omniscient narrator to drive it home in philosophical asides. Though not particularly annoying, it does slow the story down. The main characters in the book are of mixed race in keeping with the theme of the book. The characters' strengths all seem to derive from their African heritage; the Anglo-Saxon portion seems to be only useful for being able to pass for white for the purpose of being admitted to Harvard and mingling in Boston society. This tends to dilute the book's message. Purely as a story the book was fairly entertaining. It is very slow paced by current standards but at the turn of the last century, when this book was written, this was the norm. Writers of this period were expected to spend a lot of verbiage painting word pictures and Hopkins does so with considerable skill. The modern reader is advised to be patient. All in all, the book can be recommended on its literary merits as much as an example of what educated blacks of the period were reading and writing.

I purchased this book for one of my Literature classes and was happy when I received it. It's exactly

what I ordered. Love that they have a kindle version. The book is very easy to navigate and I'm looking forward to reading it this upcoming semester!

In "Of One Blood" the author enlightens the reader about Ethiopian history (especially in 1903 when very few in America knew anything about African history) while educating African Americans of her time about a larger African world and a deep historical past. Critics have attempted to shoot her down with arrows called "Afro-romanticism" and "Afrocentrism". Some have tried to negate her achievement by saying that by simply paying homage to Ethiopia's historical achievements in technology, culture, and literature she was advocating for 19th century Darwinistic values that said technology measured a civilization's progression. This is unfair, because Darwin did not invent that concept: power (be it technological or cultural) is revered throughout the world. By such a rationale, then any person of African descent cannot talk about technological achievements of Africans without being a victim of Darwinist ideals. There is only one truth...technology is impressive, and it will always be this way. Thus for Hopkins to want to acknowledge African achievements and educate her readers she is not saying ALL civilization should be measured by these standards, but that technological achievement is a part of the African past just as it is a part of other cultures. Her reason for focusing on Ethiopia is most related to the dominate African American religion, Christianity, and Ethiopia's pre-Roman Christian heritage.

Loved it.

i liked it enough to read it to the end. Even though it was for a class, I stopped being mad at the professor the moment I got into the book and realized how good it was.

Amazing book. Beautifully captures the time period. Plot twists and amazing characters. I love this book.

Wow! I wasn't expecting to like it so much, being an assignment. But it was truly a wonderful read! I was transfixed to every page.

I enjoyed reading this book. Her fascination with the mulatto them was annoying at times. However, this was a good read for me.

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