POWER AND ECSTASY: RACE, RELIGION, AND PSYCHOLOGY IN AMERICA, 1890-1930

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of English,

Indiana University

August 2014

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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August 12, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I pen these acknowledgements with great joy that I have the opportunity to thank the very many people who have supported me along the way. At Indiana University, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by scholars who are both distinguished thinkers and also wonderful human beings, particularly on my dissertation committee. Paul Gutjahr first inspired me to study religion and literature, and his attentive and pragmatic feedback on my writing helps me remember that writers should communicate clearly to their readers. Candy Gunther Brown provided an incisive historical perspective, and proves to be an invaluable guide in how to live a productive and balanced academic life. Christoph Irmscher was giving with his time, in the classroom and in the dissertation process. Further, he serves as an example of how academic work can move beyond the university. Finally, I am grateful for the mentorship of Jennifer Fleissner, who has been both my most thoughtful critic and strongest advocate in the academy. She was demanding when the project warranted it, and steadfast in her support when I needed it, and her theoretical and writerly insights improved nearly every page in this document. My debt to Jen, though, exceeds this dissertation. A consummate role model for a young female scholar in the field, Jen is a paragon of intellectual and personal strength, creativity, and generosity.

The Department of English at Indiana University proved a supportive and generative place to be writing a dissertation. I am grateful to the Booth Tarkington Fellowship Committee for allowing me much needed time and space to write. I am also thankful to the many administrative assistants who allow the department to function, and in to particular Bev Hankins for always having the answers to my many questions about the graduate school process.

As an undergraduate, the faculty of Bethel College encouraged me to think of myself as a scholar, even at a young age. Faculty such as Ami Regier and Paul Lewis nurtured my intellectual pursuits, and pushed me to approach textual analysis with care, rigor, and fun. Ami in particular was as supportive a mentor as a young scholar could hope for, helping me attain research grants, guiding me through the thesis writing process, and telling me over and over again that academic writing could change the world.

I am grateful to the many other scholars who read and responded to drafts of my work. My dissertation writing group has looked over innumerable drafts of chapters, and provided much need clarity, precision, and laughter; my thanks to Miranda Yaggi, Carter Neal, and John Han. John in particular deserves thanks for helping me polish the final version of my dissertation. Responses generated by the Americanist Research Colloquium at IU have also been tremendously helpful. In that context (and others), I have had the pleasure of working with graduate colleagues and friends also invested in understanding writing in the United States, including Jess Waggoner, Jed Dobson, and Kristen Renzi. Lauren Simek provided careful readings of my chapters, as well as enjoyable conversations on religion and literature. Finally, I am indebted to Elizabeth Hoover, a friend and thinker of the highest caliber. Elizabeth inspires me, supports me, and believes in me when I cannot believe in myself. Everyone deserves a friend like her.

My final series of thanks goes to my family, a wild and ever-changing entity peopled by the best of humanity. My mother, Gayle Trollinger, is perhaps the strongest person I know. Her strength bolstered me when I had none, and her willingness to be silly reminded me of the humor in the academic life. Her careful reading of several chapters helped me hone my argument and polish my prose, and she and Mike Malone have been constant supports. My

father, Bill Trollinger, is tender and generous. He always knew when I needed his attentive ear and kind words. His thorough reading of several chapters made them innumerably better, and he and Susan Trollinger have been present and thoughtful at all times. My inlaws—Safina and Anwar Khanani; Intisar Khanani, Anas Malik, and their girls Fatima and Khadija—have been caring, giving, and always, always funny, and I am indebted to them for their love and support. My brother-in-law, Dan Hatch, has become a wonderful friend, and his many projects prove that great work always starts with creativity and excitement. My niece, Millie, brings me joy and laughter on a daily basis.

My greatest debt is to my two best friends, my two greatest loves. Abby Trollinger, my sister and friend since before birth, reminds me where I come from, and encourages me to be more. Her brilliance and toughness inspired me to hold fast to this project, and her friendship sustains me. I would be nothing in this world if not for her. Ahmed Khanani, my partner, is present on every page of this dissertation. His creative and exciting mind has brought out the best in this project, and his fierce love brings out the best in me. I am more blessed than I deserve to be to have these two in my life, and for that I am eternally grateful. All that follows is dedicated to them.

Rebekah Trollinger

POWER AND ECSTASY: RACE, RELIGION,

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In this dissertation I contend that in an era defined by Progressive discourse, Jim Crow laws, and disenchantment with the promises of modern life, religious ecstasy offered a dissolution of self that seemed both threatening and also potentially liberating for the individuals involved. Specifically, I argue that at the turn of the twentieth century ecstatic experience became a privileged site for thinking through the nexus of race, modernity, and personhood in American culture. I turn to three seemingly disparate kinds of writing: literature, psychological writing, and religious narrative. As sociologists and psychologists drew on Darwinian and Lamarckian theories to debate racial development, modernist artists and writers imagined the conjunction of the modern and primitive, and holiness and Pentecostal believers embraced seemingly antimodern forms of worship. That all of these changes happened during a period of legally enforced violence and inequality towards African Americans is unsurprising; writers turning to the language of ecstasy combined questions about the autonomy of the individual body with concerns about racial inequality. This is a historical project, and it is grounded in sources that range from the unknown writings of the psychologist George Coe, to accounts of the Pentecostal Azusa Street revival, to the multidisciplinary writings of W. E. B. Du Bois and the fiction of Pauline Hopkins and Nella Larsen. Further, this project demonstrates that boundaries between conversations are permeable—that conversations happening in the field of psychology may affect and be affected by those happening in religious circles. Thus, in conjunction with this historical grounding, I mobilize literary and theoretical methodologies to map the tropic functions of

ecstatic experience across literary, psychological, and religious texts. My research reveals that American writers at the turn of the century drew on emotional religion to grapple with the promises and disappointments of racial progress in modern America.

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Introduction

With its wildly successful reception, Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* demonstrated the pervasiveness of a sentimental articulation of the relationship between blackness and religion in the United States. Through its eponymous hero Tom, the novel depicted African American religiosity as honest, simple, and childlike. In a significant scene, one that made possible Tom's relationship to the child Eva, Mr. Haley the slave-trader describes Tom to a potential buyer, Augustine St. Clare, Eva's father. Haley characterizes Tom as "real pious—the most humble, prayin' pious crittur [sic] ye ever did see" (127). When pressed, Haley explains that Tom's kind of pious is "rail softly, quiet, stiddy, honest pious that the hull world could'nt tempt 'em to do nothing that they think is wrong" (128). Tom's religious practices are portrayed in similar terms. For instance, late in the novel, after Tom preaches to fellow slaves on the Legree plantation, the narrator describes Tom's "wondrous words and pious prayers" striking "upon the hearts" of those around him, prompting religious conversion by two of his peers (361). The figure of Uncle Tom, praying earnestly amid the horrors of slavery, tells a familiar story about the way religion and race conjoin in the nineteenth-century American imagination: African American religious participants were seen as childlike and serene.

Some seven decades later Nella Larsen's Harlem Renaissance novel *Quicksand* offered a strikingly different portrayal of the relationship between blackness and religion in America. In *Quicksand*, a single scene of religious participation determines the course of protagonist Helga Crane's fate. This scene begins with a wet, cold, and emotionally lost Helga stumbling into a storefront church housing a lively worship service that features African American "men and women were swaying and clapping their hands, shouting and

stamping their feet" in a "wild, ecstatic fury" (112). As the service progresses, Helga grows increasingly horrified by the "frenzied women" who "dragged themselves upon their knees or crawled over the floor like reptiles" (113; 114), all in hopes of saving their souls. Finally, Helga, hungry and weak, gives in to the "curious influence" that possesses her and converts (113). Unlike Tom's companions, who experience Tom's "wondrous words and pious prayers" as positively life changing, Helga seems to be mentally and emotionally overtaken to the point of losing self-control. Further, whereas Tom is characterized as serene and simple, the participants in Helga's worship service are irrational and animal-like, simultaneously in a state of mental lapse and atavism.

What happens, then, when the image of Tom embracing a sentimental faith gives way to the vision of conversion in *Quicksand*? This project argues that writers at the turn of the twentieth witnessed and propelled a shift in the relationship between race and religious experience. Whereas African Americans in the middle of the nineteenth century at times figured as religiously simple, authors at the turn of the century linked black religiosity to scientific and aesthetic primitivism. Writers turned from contemplative to ecstatic scenes of religious practice: instead of describing African American believers engrossed in childlike prayer like Uncle Tom, writers described believers writhing and thrashing in conversion. "Power and Ecstasy" is not genealogical in nature—it does not trace the shift from the middle of the century to the early twentieth century. It does, however, present a riveting moment of transformation. This dissertation attends to how social scientists, novelists, and religious writers described out-of-body religious experiences. I argue that conversations on religious experience were fully intertwined with conversations on race. In other words, I

suggest that when writers asked, "what happens to the body in ecstasy?," they also always asked, "how do African Americans fit into the national body?"

"Power and Ecstasy" analyzes both theories and personal narratives of religious experience. At the turn of the century, social scientists such as psychologists William James and George A. Coe interpreted ecstatic religious experience as primarily psychological and secondarily religious. Further, theories of ecstasy were always also theories of personhood and, therefore also worked as commentaries of race, whether implicitly or explicitly. In autobiographical and fictional narratives of religious experience, writers such as early Pentecostals and Harlem Renaissance novelists proposed imaginative ideas of personhood that departed significantly from those articulated by social scientists.[1] For instance, where crowd psychologists consistently maintained individual boundaries of the body, Pentecostals described modern bodies as permeable and transformable. Theories of ecstasy and personal narratives of ecstasy often turn out to be one and the same, as in Edmund Starbucks's writing, wherein he both posits a psychological interpretation of conversion and also laments his own conversion experience. Thus, social-scientific, autobiographical, and imaginative writers all questioned the meanings of race, modernity, and the body on a personal and national level. Images of religious loss of control helped the writers in this study to imagine a modern body characterized by loss of agency, transformation, and permeability.

Ecstasies of the Body in the Age of Jim Crow

Claiming that ecstatic experience helped African Americans during Jim Crow is, and should be, contentious because an ecstatic experience is one of rescinding control. During the

[1] In a review of several publications on religious experience, David Hall insists that "experience remains a problematic concept" because of how easy it can be to "slip into judgments" and overlook experiences that "may strike us as banal or unworthy of religion" or, as Leigh Eric Schmidt mentions, experience scholarly "embarrassment" over "unusual bodily phenomena" (Hall 242; Schmidt xiv).

years following the breakdown of reconstruction, the federal government deprived African Americans of rights and economic circumstances relegated many southern African Americans to servitude in the form of sharecropping while white Americans banded together to form groups that unleashed violence on innocent people because of their race. In other words, black Americans were stripped of control over their rights, money, and bodies. It would appear logical to argue that African Americans wanted to gain control, *not* to give up control. Nevertheless, my research suggests that moments of loss of control helped writers to debate conceptions about bodies, personhood, and development—conceptions that undergirded inequality. Writers I address use explanations of out-of-control experiences as ways to articulate rigorous and imaginative ideas about the racialized body in the United States. Ecstasy, I find, allowed writers to think through the relationship between the mind, body, and something beyond, such as God, history, evolution, or story.

Ecstasy is a particularly useful term for thinking through connections between the mind, body, and beyond because it encompasses a collection of embodied experiences that can range from trances to speaking in tongues to holy laughter, making it broad enough to include a collection of diverse writings. That said, the common factor in all of these writings—and which the word ecstasy accurately describes—is a sense of losing the self, perhaps to nothing, and perhaps to a specific entity (i.e. God). This loss, though, is not necessarily negative—it provocatively resists purely pejorative interpretations. Whereas a word like hysteria might indicate pathology, ecstasy can suggest joy and satisfaction; at the same time, some writers at the turn of the century used the word ecstasy when describing religious manipulation, imbuing it with negative qualities.

The term ecstasy is also useful because resists a clinical approach to religious experience. My scholarly goal is not to diagnose or explain what happens during ecstatic experiences, but rather to understand why people wanted to write about these experiences, and why these writers used the language they used. Writers who called on out-of-body experiences to help them explain modern America themselves often diagnosed ecstatic experiences in psychological and religious terms; this project asks how explaining the body in ecstasy might have helped writers to work through and articulate alternative theories of the self, race, and the body. Indeed, we as scholars need to understand the language of ecstasy in order to conceptualize how writers envision the body in relation to emotions, the world, the divine, and history.

The recent enthusiasm for affect studies is, in many ways, an answer to the call for more interest in how the body responds to affect and the world beyond the body. Before delving into affect theory, it is essential to note, as Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg remind us, "there is no single, generalizable theory of affect" (Gregg and Seigworth 3). Nevertheless, scholars writing about affect have, over the last several decades, reinvigorated studies of the body and emotion. The work of affect theorists influences this project in several ways. Perhaps most importantly, writers theorizing affect helpfully address the ways affective states contribute to a transforming body. In giving an introductory overview of affect theory, Gregg and Seigworth, note that theories of affect insist, "affect is integral to a body's perpetual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is)" (3). Further, affect theorists attempt to chart the ways specific bodies interact with and shape the world. Affect theorists, then, are not generalists, but are constantly "…endeavoring to configure *a* body and its affects/affectedness, its ongoing affectual

composition of *a* world, the *this-ness* of a world and a body" (Gregg and Seigworth 3). A project such as my own, which delineates the ways specific historical actors engaged in and explained religious emotion in order to change the world, may find a happy home in the world of affect theory.

Affect studies has also been the home of much research that examines the connection between "excessive" bodily and emotional reactions and race in the United States. Theorists such as José Muñoz, Sianne Ngai, and Sarah Ahmed trace the connections between national affective categories and racial inequality. Muñoz explains it thusly: "Citizenship is negotiated within a contested national sphere in which performances of affect counter each other in a contest that can be described as "official" national affect versus emergent immigrant" ("Feeling Brown" 69). He addresses the way that "national affect, a mode of being in the world primarily associated with white middle-class subjectivity, reads most ethnic affect as inappropriate" ("Feeling Brown" 69). Further, emotional expression not only gets tied to particular bodies (i.e. this is "ethnic affect"), but also "attain the power to racialize" bodies (Ngai 573).

Affect theory such as the work by Muñoz , Ngai, and Ahmed, not only helps explain the ways affective categories serve to further marginalize people; theorizing emotion can also help to contest national affect and to imagine new and empowering rubrics of emotion. For instance, in his attempts to "…theorize affective particularity and belonging," Muñoz proposes that emotion may help those who are marginalized feel a sense of belonging ("Feeling Brown, Feeling Down" 676-77). My research suggests that experiencing emotional religious experiences—or, more accurately, explaining those experiences—allows writers to revise notions of race in America. For example, early Pentecostal believers use the body in

emotional, ecstatic states to imagine a body characterized not by individual boundaries, but by its ability to transform, such that a stable racial identity becomes untenable.

Nevertheless, much affect theory remains resistant to religious emotion for two reasons in particular. First, part of this resistance is due to affect theory's development within and commitment to the secular. Ann Pellegrini, charting a genealogy of affect theory through queer theory, muses, "I have been struck by the way queer studies [and thus much affect theory]…proceeds through a secular imaginary within which, religion, if it is to appear at all, must be made to appear as arch-conservative enemy of progress" ("Feeling Secular" 207). Pellegrini notes both the relative absence and flattening of religion in affect theory; she contends that conservative religion especially haunts affect theory, symbolizing the "dangerous" and "anti-modern" (207). As was true in liberal turn-of-the-twentieth-century psychology, today's affect theory relegates conservative religion to the position of an anti-modern holdover.

Alongside Pelligrini's explanation, it seems to me that affect theory might be unable to speak successfully about religious emotion for another, perhaps more fundamental reason: a commitment to the material. In attempting to understand the relationship between the body and emotions, theorists of affect tend to focus on the material body, and emotions housed within that material body.[2] Writers such as novelist Nella Larsen, though, describe a religious experience as often one in which the participant senses their emotions as tied not merely to their bodies, but as a vehicle to reach beyond their bodies and beyond earth (109-14). Even Larsen, who is highly critical and skeptical of religious experiences, insists in *Quicksand* that

[2] The role of the body in the experience of emotion is, of course, a matter of great debate in affect theory. It is not simply that all affect theorists have the same understanding of how the body processes and acts upon affective states. For a good primer on the major debates in affect theory, see Gregg and Seigworth's *Affect Theory Reader*.

the *feeling* of religious ecstasy is one that reaches beyond the body to the divine. Because of the specificity of religious feeling, it may be difficult for affect theory to be a framework capable of limning the relationship of the body and emotions to something divine.

Like affect theorists, literary scholars and scholars of American culture at the turn of the century have struggled to adequately theorize religious experience. Many literary scholars can be quite deft at translating transcendence into materialism, suggesting a general disease with theorizing the interior life. A great example of this resistance is scholars' resistance to addressing the pivotal conversion scene in Larsen's *Quicksand*. While this moment in the novel is ripe for conversation about the acceptance and later rejection of a particular form of personal salvation, the scene is generally recuperated as one of many moments of "protest" against social injustices.[3] Indeed, the recent turn in literary studies towards New Historicism, and the continual blurring of the line between American literary studies and American Studies highlight scholars' increased commitment to identifying the material workings of inequality and concurrent reticence to writing about the nebulous inner world of the individual. As Claudia Tate points out, such a resistance to interior life seems especially strong when writing about black American racial politics.

It is the act of translation that a significant group of feminist psychoanalytic critics as well as a group of African American feminist critics identify. For psychoanalytic critics such as Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, Helene Moglen, Claudia Tate, and Anne Cheng, psychoanalysis offers a supplement to cultural material approaches to race.[4] A particularly powerful example is Hortense Spiller's attempts to use psychoanalytic tools to combat the

[3] I quote Claudia Tate's helpful critique of literary scholarship on *Quicksand*. See especially chapter 4 of *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels*.
[4] See Abel, Christian, and Moglen's *Female Subjects in Black and White,* and Anne Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*. See Hortense Spiller's "'All the things you could be by now if Sigmund Freud's wife was your mother.'"

"muteness" that "shames and baffles the subject" that is minoritized because of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation (400). By relegating African American experience to material experience, these critics note, scholarship denies an African American interiority, and thereby elides how that interiority responds to the full spectrum of human experience, including racism. And, as the collection *Female Subjects in Black and White* demonstrates, discussions of interiority tend towards both reflective theory and also discussions of the spiritual.[5]

However, my project suggests, to draw on Jenny Franchot's foundational "Essay on Literary Scholarship and Religion," that the ontological experience of religion may require a different approach than that of psychoanalysis. This project is specifically interested in religious experiences, meaning spiritual experience shaped by bodies or traditions, such as churches and denominations.[6] At times, though, the organizing bodies that undergird a religious experience are not familiar church groups; some writers create imagined communities, and some depend on religiously-inflected scientific communities. Whether or not the writers in my study identify an established group as providing structure to belief, their forms of religiosity involve relationships between the interior spiritual experience and the community. For all, then, religious experiences happen through bodily emotions, divine presence, and group interaction. Understanding the interiority of religion means connecting the body and emotions to the divine, and to the community.

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[5] Again, the exception here seems to be with black writers (especially African American women's spiritual writing) before 1880. This is partly due to the generally larger interest in religious writing before the twentieth century, but I think it may also be because slavery and the abolitionist movement provide easy ways to translate an interior life into a politics.

[6] For a helpful explanation of the difference between "spiritual" and "religious," and a history of spirituality as distinct from religion, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*.

Religion and Science

This study examines the relationship between science and religion around the turn of the twentieth century. Defining the terms "science" and "religion" reveals some of the complexities involved in determining the relationship between science and religion. In "Power and Ecstasy," I use the term "science" for practices and schools of thought that self-identify as scientific. The question of what counted as "science" was one that many practitioners engaged in—Frederic Myers, British theorist of the mind, certainly considered his work scientific (and William James concurred), but members of the new psychology certainly disagreed. The term "religion" is more complicated. I use the term "religion" to address practices and groups that self-identify as religious, but the religious practices in this study are predominantly Christian, making my work opent to critique from thinkers such as Talal Assad who identify the ways "religious" has, in the West, come to mean "Christian."[7] Despite the pitfalls of the term "religion," I continue to use it precisely to identify the moments when Christian believers and/or theorists of Christian belief and practice stretch and move beyond orthodox beliefs and practices. For instance, in her novel *Of One Blood*, Pauline Hopkins combines mystical psychology and Protestantism. Thus, the term "religion" helps me to identify the porousness of boundaries between Christian groups, and, indeed, the porousness of the boundaries between science and religion. This is never more apparent than in studying theories of the mind.

The period I focus on was one of intense change in theories and beliefs of the mind. These changes transpired in popular writing, religious circles, and the sciences and reflected revised understandings of how these venues properly related to one another. Whereas over much of the nineteenth century, theorists of the mind often studied consciousness and

[7] See especially Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion,* especially the Introduction and first chapter.

religion together, at the end of the nineteenth century, many psychologists shifted from the popular realm into the academic arena. According to Ann Taves, this change involved a move from "clergymen professors" teaching "mental and moral philosophy" to "nonclergy" teaching psychology "as part of the social science curriculum in the new secular university" (261). Indicative of this move, in 1887, G. Stanley Hall (the 1878 recipient of the first psychology Ph.D. in the United States) founded the *American Journal of Psychology*.[8] At the same time, though, practices such as mesmerism continued to be popular, and groups of scholars, such as William James, combined new, experimental psychology and mystical practices. Much contemporary scholarship has portrayed psychology at the turn of the century as hosting two distinct approaches: one, a modern, clinical approach developing out of medicine and philosophy, and the other an "antimodern" (to use Jackson Lears' phrase) response in line with popular mesmeric psychology. I argue that this division is inaccurate: clinical psychology and antimodern practices reacted to and informed one another. Theories of religious ecstasy demonstrate the porous nature of the line between the modern and antimodern in religion and science; psychologists religious practitioners drew on similar language to describe out-of-body religious experiences.

Psychologists at the turn of the century connected the sciences of the mind to a number of related fields that we might consider antimodern. Susan Gillman describes how some psychologists, including, William James, turned to the "occult sciences," which included such varied pursuits as hypnotism, mediumistic trance, and Egyptology.[9] Similarly, some of psychology's most renowned figures, including William James, G. Stanley Hall, and the lesser-known but highly influential George Coe, developed a subset of the field

[8] This Ph.D. was granted by William James.
[9] See especially Susan Gillman's, *Blood Talk*, 32-72.

specifically focused on the psychology of religion. At times psychologists of religion displayed sympathy towards mesmeric practices, at and times they instead tried to create a scientific form of American Protestantism.

Religious believers, like psychologists, negotiated modern and antimodern influences in early twentieth century America. A common narration of developments in American Christianity over the course of the nineteenth century depicts Christianity as moving from an explosion of sects at the beginning of the century to the solidification of denominations in the middle of the century and then towards secularized, rational religion at the end of the century, as exemplified by the liberal Protestant turn to rational belief.[10] This story of the nineteenth century begins with the Second Great Awakening and a proliferation of revivals, which featured ecstatic religious practices such as trances, shaking, and shouting. These practices often divided denominations or revival attendees, and encouraged speculation about faked experiences or psychological/social manipulation.[11] Such revivals were also glorified, for instance, prompting Nathan Hatch to call American Christianity democratic because, he suggested, a large number of individuals and splinter groups broke from mainstream Protestantism to form new religious sects.[12] Despite this "democratic" moment, by the middle of the century many sects had themselves become established denominations. Toward the end of the century, some believers felt that intellectual developments such as Darwinism challenged the foundational theological tenets of many religions, and thus increased

[10] See George Coe for an example of liberal Christianity, perhaps articulated best in *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, 1902. Also, the secularization thesis has caused much debate. While I am not explicitly focused on entering this debate, my argument will suggest complications. For current work on this debate see Tracy Fessendon's *Culture and Redemption*.
[11] Paul Conkin's *Cane Ridge* helpfully chronicles the tensions between those who did and did not participate in ecstatic experiences during the revivals.
[12] Also, this democratic move can also be seen in a publishing boom (which connects to my interest in a Pentecostal periodical). See especially Paul Gutjahr's "Diversification in American Religious Publishing Systems" and Candy Gunther Brown's *The Word in the World*.

questioning of supernatural beliefs. Some liberal Protestants such as George Coe responded by pushing a version of the scientific method with which to judge religious thinking. But the constant popularity over the course of the century of Transcendentalist, Spiritualist, Shaker, Holiness, and Pentecostal movements indicate American religion was a complex phenomenon—rational, "scientific" Christianity and ecstatic Christianity informed and responded to one another.

My concern with the narrative of twinned secularizing and modernizing tendencies during the nineteenth century is that it situates "alternative" religious groups such as Pentecostals outside the bounds of mainstream religious trends, and outside the forces of modernization. The immense popularity of ecstatic religious practices, however, suggests otherwise. Arguably the most significant ecstatic practices to affect American Christianity at the turn of the century were those related to, aligned with, or developing from the Holiness movement, practiced by those Grant Wacker terms "radical evangelicals" (1). Radical evangelicals at the end of the century sought to be "more visibly filled with the New Testament church's supernatural power" (Wacker 1). These groups hoped to return Christianity to its original, apostolic form, which also meant embodying the miracles of the Holy Spirit chronicled in the New Testament. According to Robert Bruce Mullin, the divide between groups that celebrated and reviled miracles replaced the Protestant/Catholic divide in American Christianity. In other words, the rise of ecstatic religious practices at the end of the century was arguably powerful enough to unseat the most important division in Christianity in the United States—the Protestant/Catholic division. This suggests that what we might today call charismatic religious practices should take a central role in histories of turn-of-the-century American religion; as importantly, though, the importance of ecstatic

religious practices at the start of the twentieth century should help us rethink modern vs. antimodern impulses.

Understanding the role of out-of-body religious practices in our understandings of American culture requires careful analysis of those very religious practices. Much contemporary scholarly work on ecstatic or unwilled behavior focuses on locating and naming the psychological or cultural cause of the behavior, the work of what Leigh Eric Schmidt calls "armchair sociologists and psychologists" (xvii). I strive to avoid reducing ecstatic experiences to reactions to cultural or historical factors. That kind of analysis often results in simplifying and even pathologizing the religious behavior. Similarly, I avoid treating characters' actions to phenomena as demanding a historical "diagnosis." Instead, I am interested in how articulations of ecstatic experiences reveal ongoingly relevant concerns about the nature of autonomy that, while speaking to socio-historical factors, resist being relegated to reactionary behaviors and theologies. Thus, I am invested in exploring precisely how historical actors act within, through, or contrary to cultural influences.

My project in part registers anxiety with what Robert Orsi identifies as the becoming-invisible of "good" religious practice. Orsi and Tracy Fessenden explain this as an underlying bias in which "good" religion is invisible and non-emotional, and "bad" religion is recognized because of its emotionality. For instance, this dissertation marks a rarely documented response to Christian revivalism: liberal Christians' attempts to absorb religious belief and practice into the burgeoning field of psychology. Scholars such as G. Stanley Hall and George Coe replaced supernatural religious discourse with social scientific religious discourse and attempted to supplant emotional religious practice with scientific religious thought. At the same time that religions of the spirit (such as Pentecostalism and the various

holiness movements) distanced themselves from denominationalism and intellectualism, liberal Christians (often progressives) trumpeted a new scientific Christianity. I contend that Christian social scientists hoped for the social sciences to completely enfold Christianity. To be clear, I am not arguing that the contemporary social sciences are somehow analogous to religious practice, but rather that we can tease out a historical relationship between the early social sciences and a particular form of liberal, progressive, and scientifically inflected Christianity.

At the same time, the writers I study suggest that those practicing emotional religion had much to say to the sciences. I find support for Mullin's characterization of a developing divide between those who believed in and reviled miracles, yet my dissertation also suggests significant overlap between opposing groups. For instance, while liberal American Protestants equated ecstasy with primitivism, apostolic churches used liberals' psychological descriptions to argue that ecstasy is, in fact, a facet of modernity. A comparison between the discourses that form religion and science reveals the seeming-importance for some people at the turn of the century to establish/maintain the division; at the same time, this study reveals how easily the division dissolves.

The Modern, Literature, and Writing as Response

"Power and Ecstasy" studies writers joining a *fin de siècle* conversation about what it meant to be modern. The writers I study experimented with the boundaries of the body, and the ideas like agency, rationality, control, and history, ideas fundamental to the idea of the modern at the turn of the century. Ecstatic religious experiences seem to be fundamentally antimodern, but "Power and Ecstasy" suggests that at times they represented the fully modern, and at times they represented a way out of modernity. Further, the writers I study

illuminate how questions about the modern in the turn of the century United States were always also questions about the politics of race in America. Thus, literary and social scientific writers used ecstatic experiences to offered imaginative correctives of, alternatives to, or lamentations of the relationship between the modern and America's politics of race.

At the foundation of what was considered modern at the turn of the twentieth century was a combination of progress and order. In his groundbreaking work on the modern and the antimodern, Jackson Lears explains that in the early twentieth century the modern was undergirded by a "faith in the beneficence of material progress" (Lears 7) characterized by commitments to "industrial technology" and "rationalization" (8-9). Further, this material progress was linked to a sense of moral progress, both in the sense that improved technology indicated a moral people (today's version is the gospel of wealth), and also that rationality itself became a moral good (Lears 12). The increased use of clock time helped structure the workday and enforce internalized morality of rationality (Lears 11). As Jennifer Fleissner explains, with the clock, "work is no longer governed by signals from one's complete environment but by an arbitrarily imposed, abstracted, and standardized time" ("Biological Clock" 521). Such abstracted time both created rationally divided days and also increased the sense that people must sublimate instinct and desire into rational action.

Rationality and timeliness became internalized virtues, and self-control was seen as the mechanism by which those virtues were maintained. The increased use of clock time, insistence of rationality and order, and linking of material and moral progress heightened the importance placed on self-control. It was a "new, internalized mode of moral authority," which John R. Reed explains as an emphasis on "controlled heroism, or the reflective will" (Lears 13; Reed 9). At the end of the nineteenth century, there was a shift from understanding

the will as "external command" to understanding it as "self-control" (J. Reed 9). Such self-control could exhibit itself as "self-renunciation in the service of a great cause," but it also surfaced as a person's "power of will in creating his own character." In other words, the will made possible complete control over the self, and the possibility of the "self-made man" (J. Reed 9).[13]

As Lears notes, antimodern groups flourished at the turn of the century, suggesting concern with commitments to rationalization, self-control, and regulated time. Psychologists also evinced concern that too much civilizing could weaken people. Along these lines, Gail Bederman argues that G. Stanley Hall, a champion of experimental psychology, exhibited much concern over the effects of over-civilizing, going so far as to advocate that people capture and retain primitive energy in order to protect themselves from the modern, civilized world. At the turn of the century, psychologists increasingly argued that pathologies stemmed from the process of modernization, or the effects of civilization itself. As a result, psychologists often both celebrated and also warned against the attributes of advanced civilization, worrying about undercivilization and overcivilzation alike. For instance, the nineteenth-century domestic space was celebrated as a place of order and repose, yet, as Jane Thrailkill notes, some doctors feared that the "nineteenth-century home wreaked havoc on residents' minds and bodies" (119). [14]

As Rita Felski notes, interpretations of modernity both today and at the turn of the century became gendered according to sense of progress. In accounts that use as exemplars men, "modernity is identified with dynamic activity, development, and the desire for unlimited growth; the autonomy of the newly liberated bourgeois subject is exemplified in

[13] Reed's example of the former is Florence Nightengale, and of the latter is William Cobbett.
[14] See Thrailkill's *Affecting Fictions,* especially page 119. In this passage, Thrailkill refers to Charlotte Perkins Gilman and S. Weir Mitchell.

the accelerating momentum of industrial production, rationalization, and domination over nature." In accounts that use as exemplars women, on the other hand, the "modern individual" is conceived of as "more passive and more indeterminate," and a "striving masculinity" is "replaced by a fetishized, libidinized, and commodified femininity produced through the textually generated logics of modern forms of desire" (4). In other words, the antimodern gets coded as feminine—irrational, driven by desire, and ultimately threatening to the masculine virtues of rationality, progress, and self-control.

"Power and Ecstasy" examines several responses to the idea of the modern at the turn of the century. In the sciences, responses tended to be ambivalent. For instance, this dissertation studies developments in psychology and the social sciences, and argues that through these developments, social scientists seem to enact commitments to progress, order, and moral authority. Psychology, while continuing to be intertwined with mystical and religious groups, also had a new set of practitioners invested in moving their work into the academic sphere. These psychologists, alongside ethnologists and anthropologists, leaned on Spencerian ideas of development and progress to argue that modernization was synonymous with progress. Nevertheless, social scientists such as William James, Du Bois and Coe expressed ambivalence with modernity itself. For instance, James and Du Bois both employed and valued the systematization of the social sciences—relying experimental, evidence-driven research—and yet both imbued their work with appreciation for mystical experiences.

In this study, I contribute to a scholarly conversation that charts the creative ways *fin de siècle* writers disassembled the line between the modern and the antimodern. If, as Lears encourages, we understand turn-of-the-century antimodern movements as an essential part of

the modern, then we must ask how these antimodern movements effect our narratives of modernity in the beginning of the twentieth century. Further, as Fleissner reminds us, we have to ask how our own embrace of modern ideals such as strength of will and the self-made-man limit our ability to see different articulations of modernity in places that seem regressive. The writers I examine herein remind us that modernity at the turn of the century was a contested site, and these writers suggest that religious expression, to some, displayed advancement that could have been more productive than rationality and self-control.

Moreover, "Power and Ecstasy" reveals that writers embraced alternative narratives of modernity in order to work through the politics of race in the United States. For instance, African American writers in the social sciences contended with and at times embraced social scientific approaches to development as a vehicle to refashion race and modernity. Wilson Moses notes that African American thinkers embraced narratives of modernity ranging from "one that laments the eclipse of a noble past" to "one that celebrates a progressive evolution toward a new and brighter day" (1). Brad Evans, writing about Du Bois's understanding of culture, explains debates between an anthropological "categories of difference" (in particular race), and a "modernist internationalism…that was broadly committed to the historical plasticity of race," advocated by Du Bois, among others. Du Bois's ambivalent relationship with the social sciences—at times embracing and advocating social scientific methods and theories, at other times creating sweeping, literary stories of racial development that resist social scientific particularity—demonstrates social scientific writers' alternatives to narratives of modernity.

Literary writers, too, configured modernity as more complex than rationality and self-control; "Power and Ecstasy" insists that ecstatic religious experiences made possible

imaginative approaches to race and progress in America. As with psychology, one common scholarly narrative of literature at the turn of the century suggests that fiction moved towards a scientized, macho and modern aesthetic, moves that follow the shift from realism to naturalism during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.[15] However I contend that this turn to the scientific is simultaneously a turn to the romantic, and even the ecstatic. Alongside investments in social conditions and scientific psychology, many naturalists in the U.S. participated in what has sometimes been characterized as a transatlantic revival of romance. Although naturalism is a genre often described as concerned with the clinical, naturalist writers, such as Frank Norris, saw their genre as a new form of romance. Romantic fiction, according to Norris, "takes cognizance of variations from the type of normal life" (215) most comfortable in gothic settings, such as the "castles of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance chateaux" (218), settings seen in popular *fin-de-siècle* Gothic novels across the Atlantic, such as *Dracula* and *Jekyll and Hyde*. The mix of gothic elements and social concerns is particularly notable in works by African-American authors such as Pauline Hopkins, who wrote realist fiction and, to borrow from Susan Gillman, romance "melodramas." This literature demonstrates an interest in problems of autonomy and the boundaries of the individual, a conjunction that often plays out in images of ecstatic experiences. Often, though, issues of ecstasy appear in small, but formative, moments in literary texts, particularly in the early modern writing of the Harlem Renaissance. Nella Larsen, for instance registers ambivalence over multiple types of ecstasy—religious, artistic, and erotic—with particular regard for the psychological complexities of being a black woman in the 1920s. I am interested in the way literary writers

[15] Fleissner gives perhaps the best account of this scholarly narrative and its limits.

use out-of-body experiences as a way to combine realism and fantasy, in order to comment on race in America.

The texts addressed in "Power and Ecstasy" brings to the fore writers who are often dubbed non-modern—early Pentecostals, novelists interested in out-of-body experiences—even as I argue that they contest the very notion of the modern. Early Pentecostals, for instance, often characterize religious conversions as extraordinarily modern, using images of pipes and machinery to emphasize technological advancement powered not by steam or fire, but by God. Similarly, in her novel *Of One Blood*, Pauline Hopkins describes a hidden city as peopled by the most civilized population on earth, whose scientific leaders practice what might be called the occult in the United States. Writers like Hopkins and Pentecostal believers used out-of-body experiences to envision a modernity free of racial inequality.

This dissertation examines writings by theorists—psychologists explaining unwilled behavior, storytellers—novelists imagining ecstatic acts, and believers—religious participants explaining Spirit-filled occurrences. These are three separate categories, but they bleed into one another. For instance, psychologist of religion George Coe was explicit about his desires to improve Protestant beliefs and practices, and novelist Pauline Hopkins engaged and challenged specific texts by psychologists such as William James. Studying such different descriptions of religious experience required an interdisciplinary approach for several reasons. This project is interdisciplinary first and foremost because of the varied nature of the texts that form my object of study: religious texts to account for specifically religious ecstatic experience, psychological texts to examine psychological articulations of such experiences, and literary texts to flesh out imaginative responses to the ensuing debates over ecstatic experience. Further, an interdisciplinary approach makes available a range of

methodological tools with which to map the terrain. I chart the tropic functions of ecstatic experience in literary and non-literary texts alike, and I am concerned with the theological underpinnings and historical context of any given ecstatic experience.

I organize this study both thematically and chronologically, focusing on particular, always contested nodes of modernity. I explore a foundational question in the first chapter, asking how did writers theorize the body and emotion during ecstatic moments? In the first chapter, "'A New Religious Ideal': George Coe, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Religious Emotion," I create a conversation between the psychologist of religion George Coe and the sociological writing of W. E. B. Du Bois. Reflective of trends in social scientific writing at the turn of the century, Coe and Du Bois both described African American religiosity as highly emotional and therefore evidence of an intensely affective nature essential to Americans of African descent. Nevertheless, both also drew on imagery of emotional religion to contest that very essentialism, indicative of an oft-elided complexity in theories of racial development. Coe, inspired by political progressivism, saw emotional religion holding African Americans back from modernity. As such, he envisioned his developmental model of religion as a means to free peoples trapped by disempowering forms of "shamanism." Du Bois, on the other hand, hoped that black Americans might draw on their distinctive cultural heritage to rewrite world history with Africa playing a central role. Together, writings by Coe and Du Bois illuminate both a broader discussion about religious emotion that took place within the social sciences and also the creative visions of race in America that writers developed using images of religious practice.

Du Bois and Coe wrote within a larger debate regarding individual consciousness occurring in the social sciences in the United States, and in particular in the field of

psychology. The turn-of-the-century move of psychology into the academy fostered debates over what counted as scientific, and what should be relegated to mere mysticism. It was this process of demarcation that William James engaged in most passionately, insisting that mysticism should not be removed from from psychology. Novelist, magazine writer, and editor Pauline Hopkins engaged in the debate over science and mysticism in order to rethink consciousness in a post-Jim Crow United States. My second chapter, "The Open Soul: Pauline Hopkins, the Subconscious, and the Limits of the Will" examines consciousness and will in Hopkins' sci-fi novel *Of One Blood*. Hopkins's novel engages in conversations with different schools of psychology, including the new psychology, a group of experimental psychologists, and William James and his cohort of mystical psychologists. *Of One Blood* employs out-of-body experiences, such as conjure and hypnosis, to suggest that modern visions of unified consciousness and will restrict the possibility of racial equality. The novel suggests an alternative approach to consciousness that marries out-of-body experiences, mystical psychology, and Protestantism.

The first two chapters address what might be called theorists of ecstasy—thinkers engaged in explaining or imagining what might be happening in an ecstatic experience. Despite their own religious commitments, few of those authors describe personal experiences of religious ecstasy. Personal accounts of Pentecostal conversion and Holy Ghost baptism suggest that believers explaining their own ecstatic experiences also engaged in conversations pertinent to the sciences of the mind.

In my third chapter, "Sweet and Clean like a Washing Machine: Transformation and the Crowd in American Pentecostalism," I argue that believers participating in the turn-of-the-century, interracial Azusa Street revival used the language of ecstatic holy ghost baptism

to revise the limits of the body as articulated by social scientists. Whereas American crowd psychologists evinced concern about bodies being permeated, Azusa Street Pentecostals suggested that permeable boundaries might simultaneously be fully biblical and fully modern, and even more, might dissolve racial inequalities by eradicating racial differences. Further, in their periodical, Azusa Street believers portray emotional religious practice and the writing of religious ecstasy as potential sites of political activity. For contributors to *The Apostolic Faith*, spirit-filled worship thwarted the social injunction for racial inequality.

My fourth, and final, chapter, "When 'the thing became real': Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, Conversion, and the Storefront Church," rereads the oft-cited conversion scene toward the denouement of Larsen's Harlem Renaissance novel. Whereas scholars have tended to decode the religious ecstasy as standing in for Helga's repressed sexuality, I contend that interpreting Helga's conversion in more literal terms allows us to appreciate Larsen's ambivalence about religious abandon as a response to racial inequities. I highlight this ambivalence by analyzing historical and social responses to the phenomenon of the urban storefront church. Specifically, in the 1920s, storefront churches simultaneously bore the markings of a worship space and a commercial center. I suggest that this site in Larsen's novel works as a symbol of Helga's own mixed position: leaving her body ecstatically may momentarily relieve her of inequalities tied to her physicality (race and gender), but also leads her to a religious community that entrenches those very inequalities.

"A New Religious Ideal": George Albert Coe,

W. E. B. Du Bois, and Religious Emotion

...we are suffering, not from excess of emotion in religion, but rather from too little emotion, from the narrowness of our emotional range, and especially from neglect of the more robust emotions.

George Albert Coe (*Religion of a Mature Mind* vi)

But back of this [anger] still broods silently the deep religious feeling of the real Negro heart, the stirring, unguided might of powerful human souls who have lost the guiding star of the past and are seeking in the great night a new religious ideal.

W. E. B. Du Bois (*Souls* 137)

At the turn of the twentieth century, psychologist George Albert Coe and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois each advocated "a new religious ideal." While their approaches had significantly different aims, both began with the premise that emotional religion offered a way to better understand and address racial inequality in America. What was at stake for both Coe and Du Bois was the desire to ease oppression, but this desire took a very different shape in each of their texts. Coe's work indicates a concern about how people—especially African Americans at the turn of the century—became trapped in a developmentally primitive state through repeated patterns of religious manipulation. Coe, even while espousing essentialist and evolutionary views of race, hoped to free the vulnerable from passive emotional states that allowed for exploitation; he used evolutionary models to liberate people from those very

narratives of development. For Coe, then, individual, proactive emotion was key to mental freedom.

Du Bois, too, saw a long, developmental view of history as key to African American salvation in Jim Crow America, but he favored a Hegelian rather than evolutionary approach to progress. To Du Bois, a long view of history, and in particular religious history, restored to black Americans a sense of cultural growth that had been stolen on slave ships.[1] Further, Du Bois suggested that the language of emotional religious experiences could potentially offer African Americans a way to articulate a history of the emotions of racial oppression through a mode of historical narrative that recognized both material and psychological effects of inequality. Religious emotion allowed Du Bois to argue neither that material histories told the whole story, nor that the whole story was unable to be told. Rather, by using religion to tell this story, Du Bois gestured toward an experience of race in America that was both historically specific and also transcendent, in the senses of outside the national body, beyond the racialized body, and in excess of the time of history.

In their work on religion in America, Coe and Du Bois mobilized three methodologies prevalent in the turn of the century social sciences: the evolutionary sciences, positivism, and Hegelian historicism. The first, which drew on versions of Darwinism and Lamarckianism to explain the development of individuals, practices, and societies, "permeated the religious language of the progressive age" (Christie and Gauvreau 79). Coe's writings suggest significantly more ease than Du Bois's with evolutionary models of development, though both social scientists regularly gestured towards the idea of groups evolving over time. The second methodology, positivism, was "radically inductive" and

[1] For more information on the Hegelian influences in Du Bois's writing, see Brad Evans' chapter "The Ends of Culture: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Legacy of Boasian Anthropology," in Evans, *Before Cultures*.

"radically…localized" (Evans 165, Zamir 68). Coe joined psychologists of religion, most notably Edwin Starbuck, in doing meticulous research into psychological responses to religious states. Du Bois took an even stronger stance in favor of positivism; with the publication of *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1896, Du Bois declared his commitment to a positivist approach to sociology.[2] The final methodology was the Hegelian approach to *Bildung*, or spiritual/psychological formation. Hegelian historicism resembled the evolutionary approach in its investment in development over centuries and its sense of teleology—peoples progressing towards their best form; nevertheless, this approach differed greatly from the evolutionary developmental model in that the Hegelian approach emphasized "the inner drive" of peoples, rather than just material circumstances and physical development (B. Evans 163). Although Du Bois exhibited stronger investment in the Hegelian notion of *Bildung*, both Coe and Du Bois were indebted to the notion of development as not just material, but also moral and spiritual. In a 1912 letter to a family friend, Coe explains what he calls the "immense importance" of Hegel's influence to be the "insistence that history can be thought thru [*sic*], has meaning and structure" (Coe letter). Coe and Du Bois relied on the above methodologies to explain race in America, but both ultimately found the approaches to be lacking, and turned to emotional religion to diagnose and suggest remedies for racial inequalities in the U.S.

Coe and Du Bois's investments in emotional religion anticipate recent work in affect studies, and in particular work that details how emotion becomes tied to racialized bodies to signal otherness. Although works by scholars such as José Muñoz and Sianne Ngai address contemporary affective configurations, writings by Coe and Du Bois suggest that today's

[2] It should be noted that Du Bois reacted specifically to Franklin Giddings' version of ahistorical social sciences. See Shamoon Zamir's explanation, especially in the chapter "Local Knowledge in the Shadow of Liberty."

discourses of racialized emotion are not so dissimilar from those at the turn of the century. Indeed, today, as then, affective characterizations not only become tied to particular bodies, but also "attain the power to racialize" those bodies (Ngai 573). Such configurations connect to the much broader national body, in which "performances of affect counter each other in a contest that can be described as 'official' national affect versus emergent immigrant" (Muñoz 69). In other words, the line drawn between affective and racial categories serve to delimit members of the nation through "'official' national affect," which is "a mode of being in the world primarily associated with white middle-class subjectivity [that] reads most ethnic affect as inappropriate" in its excesses (Muñoz 69). That both Coe and Du Bois address emotional religious practices as tied to particular racialized bodies suggests that the connections between affect and race have a long tradition in America. Indeed, both contribute to the idea of excessive emotion as in excess of the national body. Whereas Du Bois attempts to reimagine the national body, Coe tries to bring marginalized groups out of the realm of affective excess.

As both Coe and Du Bois demonstrate, at the turn of the twentieth century, the hinge connecting emotion and race was often evolution. Sara Ahmed notes that in the social scientific milieu of the early twentieth century, certain kinds of emotion worked as indicators of lack of development, and signaled not only excess, but also regression. Ahmed argues that Darwin's descriptions of emotions show early forms of an affective developmental model. For instance, in *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin states that "some expressions, such as the bristling of the hair under the influence of extreme terror, or the uncovering of the teeth under that of furious rage, can hardly be understood, except on the belief that man once existed in a much lower and animal-like condition" (19). Ahmed reads

Darwin as suggesting that the physical immediacy of affect reflects instinctual, primitive forms of the human. Yet, just as emotion indicates development, emotions themselves unfold into a neat "hierarchy… some emotions are 'elevated' as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain 'lower' as signs of weakness. The story of evolution is narrated not only as the story of the triumph of reason, but of the ability to control emotions, and experience the 'appropriate' emotions at different times and places" (Ahmed 3).

Like racialized affective categories, emotional religion often gets coded as excessive. Ann Pellegrini describes how the secularization thesis "aligns secular modernity with reason, progress, freedom, universalism over and against religion, which is framed as particularistic, violent, dogmatic, atavistic and emotionally 'off'" (210). Through the secularization thesis, religion is oddly framed as both dogmatic (i.e. rigid) and "outside of, in excess to, organized public feelings" (i.e. volatile) (Pellegrini 210). Coe and Du Bois echo this sentiment by characterizing developmental categories as unbending, but portraying performances of those developmental categories—ecstatic religious practices—as unpredictable and uncontrollable. Further, as the historian John Corrigan notes, in the nineteenth century, "emotion and its performance…was a primary indicator of membership in the Protestant majority, as much so as language, skin color, dress, diet, and other such factors construed as signs of group belonging" (1). Emotion indicates who belongs in secular modernity, or in the Protestant majority aligned with secular modernity. Again, whereas Coe addresses this problem by suggesting ways to move into a new, religious modernity, Du Bois suggests rethinking the category of modernity and the boundaries of the national body.

In the national body, the coding of religious emotion serves two purposes: first, to delimit acceptable (what Robert Orsi calls "good") religion from unacceptable religion, and

second, to reduce religion to emotion (Orsi 19).[3] In differentiating acceptable religion from unacceptable religion, affective states seem to reveal those religious groups that are committed to reason and those that are not. In reducing religion to feeling, then, emotional religious groups are displaced from national dialogues. If, as Pellegrini warns, we see "religion *as* feelings, nothing more than feelings," then those religious groups dubbed emotional are designated as outside the national body, and ineligible for conversations on earthly matters (211-12). Coe and Du Bois suggest we resist the formulation that religion *is* feelings; while Coe insists religion need not be limited to only particular, excessive emotions, Du Bois argues that even excessive emotions may comment on social conditions.

George Albert Coe and Development

In 1952, psychologist and Protestant Christian George Albert Coe declared, "I judge that the most significant turning point in my life, religiously considered, was [an] early turning away from dogmatic method to scientific method" ("My Search" 170). Coe, who made his name with the Clark School of psychology during the first two decades of the twentieth century, offers an interesting causal relationship here: science improves religion.[4] Given the panic that many fin-de-siècle Protestant intellectuals exhibited over Christianity's demise in the face of evolutionary science, it would seem to make more sense if he proclaimed that science replaced religion.[5] Nevertheless, in his copious writing on

[3] See also Orsi, "When 2+2 = 5" and Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Also see Tracy Fessenden on Orsi (2007, 1-12).

[4] Coe began his academic work in the field of theology, but switched to philosophy and then moved to psychology, and in particular the psychology of religion. After studying psychology and religion, Coe moved into the field of religious education: it was his hope that early training could make pupils rational, deliberative Christians.

[5] I want to insist that this does not indicate that science actually did, in any substantive way, replace religion, as per the secularization thesis. Rather it demonstrates an anxiety about secularization during the early decades of the twentieth century.

psychology and religion, Coe espoused a firm belief that science could improve religion, just as religion could improve science.

Coe's argument that people needed science to improve religion hinged on a claim about emotion: that there was an excess of unhelpful emotion in religion that allowed for manipulation of individuals by religious groups, and the solution was a more rational form of Christianity.[6] Coe created a developmental model of religion in the hopes of improving religion by determining its best manifestations. In Coe's 1916 tome on the use of psychology to understand religious experiences, *The Psychology of Religion*, he argues that as religion develops, it turns towards the scientific.[7] Protestantism, he believed, could improve social conditions by reducing the negative influence of emotional—and thus manipulative—religion.[8]

Like most psychologists and social scientists at the turn of the century, Coe relied on a developmental model that racialized the groups he figured as primitive. Coe created a three-step developmental model of religion, in which religious practice originated with primitive emotional practices and culminated in deliberative, rational practices. Coe termed the three categories crowd religion, sacerdotal religion, and deliberative religion; crowd religion was aligned with emotional worship, sacerdotal religion was connected to Catholicism, and deliberative religion was tied to mainline Protestantism. Coe characterized crowd religion as emotionally manipulative, sacerdotal religion as less manipulative but still

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[6] Coe often wrote about religion in general, but he clearly wrote from within a Christian framework.
[7] Coe conceived of this text as a primer to the study of the psychology of religion, and the book was received with general acclaim. For example, fellow psychologist of religion James Bissett Pratt, reviewing Coe's manuscript, calls it "admirable" due to its breadth—"almost every important aspect of the subject is treated". See Pratt, 1917.
[8] See especially the introduction to *The Religion of a Mature Mind*. Here he lays out the social imperatives for adopting a scientific approach to religion. Also see John Jentz 1976. Jentz makes the connection between liberal Protestantism, the progressive movement, and the psychology of religion. Coe's investment in reshaping religion to promote social equality shows his progressive leanings.

too authoritarian, and deliberative religion as democratic. Coe insisted that a scientific approach to religion—one in which believers do not adopt ideas until they have been debated and tested—was the final stage in the development of religion.

In *The Psychology of Religion,* Coe clearly racializes the undeveloped form of "crowd religion." For instance, Coe explains that crowd religion is the same as that found in "an old-fashioned negro revival." Further, Coe encourages readers to connect crowd religion to the "racial beginnings of religion" (119, 122-23, 125). In other words, Coe connects crowd religion to both bodies that, in the early twentieth century, signified primitive bodies, and to primitive time. The category of primitive thus becomes located in the body, as much as in time, and primitive becomes tied to particular racialized bodies. This combination, especially as it shows up in *The Psychology of Religion*, requires tricky temporal maneuvering of the category "early religion," in which "early" religion denotes either a temporally prior group, or a racially marked group, both presented as developmentally lower. In the chapter "The Racial Beginnings of Religion," Coe slips easily between the descriptors "early" and "low," suggesting that traits of the primitive are characteristic of both temporally prior groups and also contemporary, racially marked groups (78). In the second footnote to the chapter, Coe describes the complexities involved in defining "primitive man":

> Strictly "primitive man" is a more or less speculative entity. Even if we take as primitive the Congo pygmies and similar types […], it does not follow that their ways will yield the greatest possible illumination as to the beginnings of religion. Not until the evolution has proceeded an appreciable distance are the data present for defining the problem of origins. The study of beginnings is a study of something that has begun. In the

> present chapter "early group" implies a stage of culture in which religion is, so to say, just articulate—it utters itself in ways sufficiently stable and sufficiently institutional to enable us, looking both backward and forward, to discern the direction of the mental movement (77).

Coe begins the footnote by pointing to a potential stand in for "primitive man"—Congo pygmies— that, to his contemporary readers, stood in for all black Africans. Linked to race, Coe's "primitive man" also demonstrates the temporal confusion inherent in race-based (as opposed to temporally determined) evolution. In order to understand the evolution of races, Coe argues, we must be able to see development from a distance, a requirement that may prove difficult were primitive man in the past; Coe simplifies his own scholarly injunction to observe evolution over time by disconnecting "early" from time. Instead of "early" signifying temporally prior, here it simply "implies a stage of culture" we may see in our world today, one that is "just articulate."

When Coe racializes these groups, though, he does not merely fix notions of race; he also makes an implicit argument that more rational forms of religious practice can save people from the seemingly inescapable categories of racial essentialisms. Coe's call to dismantle manipulation through rationality undergirds much of his life's work, such that it motivates his personal letters as well as his published texts. In a 1912 letter to a friend, Coe writes of "…the moral calling to help men toward a more rational life than this that is about me now." Later in the same letter, Coe describes finding "real life" and "rational satisfaction" by "plunging into this social life, carrying [his] protests and ideals with [him]." (Coe letter).[9] In this letter, Coe describes the best, most real life as one aimed at bringing rationality to an

[9] The recipient of the letter, Bonny, seems to be the college-age son of a good friend who has passed away. Coe maintains communication with Bonny during the year after the death of Bonny's father.

irrational world. This letter suggests reading Coe's portrayal of manipulative religion as not merely description, but also as a call to "plunge" into that irrational manipulation and reform it such that its participants may experience "real," "rational" life. Coe's concern with "this social life" highlights his simultaneous adherence to individual rationalism and resistance to purely individual religious practice.

Coe presents the answer to religious manipulation as deliberative, rational, collective religion. In his construction of deliberative religion, Coe presents a form of religion he sees as removing manipulation through a version of the scientific method that encourages examining evidence coming to rational conclusions. Importantly, though, this deliberative work happens in a group. The structure of this sort of religious collective is that individuals share ideas, listen to other people's ideas, deliberate on the differences, and then decide what they believe is true and just. Coe writes: "through pauses, incitements to reflection, and the pitting of desires against one another, the individual is stimulated to self-discovery—the discovery of what it is that he really prefers" (133). It is only through this interaction with a collective that individual development can occur. By situating this as the final place in religious evolution, Coe suggests that it is possible for anyone to attain this level of spirituality through the encouragement and deliberation of their group. Coe's use of emotional religion, then, allows him both to further cement racial essentialisms common in the early twentieth century, and also, paradoxically, to suggest a way out of those very developmental traps.

Coe and Religious Emotion

Coe argued that excessive emotion indicated primitive religion, but he did not write off emotion altogether. Whereas he saw the passive emotion found in suggestible states as a

danger to religious participants, Coe imagined emotions such as disappointment and aggression as active, and thus feelings that may be harnessed to improve religious groups. For instance, Coe described religious disappointment as having the potential to destroy all religious feelings, and yet having the ability to motivate religious reformation; in fact, he argued that the active emotion of aggression could be mobilized as a counter to passive, manipulative religious feelings. Throughout Coe's writings, his sense of the potential of emotion comes through most strongly in explanations of his own sadness in response to not having the kind of emotional religious conversion he expected. In the introduction to *The Psychology of Religion*, Coe describes his personal religious experiences as shaped by disappointment:

> …the chief incitement to seek mystical experiences came to me wrapped up in dogma, and the disappointment of my adolescence, when the promised and sought-for mystical 'witness of the Spirit' did not come, caused me to turn away from both the dogmatic and the mystical approach to religion. (xiii-xiv)

Coe describes trying to achieve an emotional religious experience, but failing. This passage suggests not only a bias against mystical (or ecstatic) religious experiences, but also a particular affective state coloring his research into ecstasy: disappointment.

Coe was not alone in his combination of personal sense of disappointment and a singular desire to protect those who did not experience emotional conversion. William James's well-documented dismay at his own sense of religious limitations similarly motivated his attempt to catalogue the range of religious experiences. Edwin Starbuck, too, attributed his work in psychology in part to personal religious experiences. Starbuck had a

positive evangelical conversion at a young age, but upon later reflection, "regarded [the experience] with dismay, puzzlement, and, occasionally, nostalgia." The conversion first "seemed like a powerful and genuine event," but later "he wondered if social pressures and contagious religious excitements might have produced it" (Starbuck in White 433).[10] Social scientists like James, Starbuck, and Coe developed scientific practices and, at times, even theologies based on personal religious experiences of disappointment.

Coe's texts demonstrate his concern about newly converted Christians having an experience like Starbuck's, and ultimately abandoning the faith. Coe describes his worry in particular in his 1902 text *The Religion of a Mature Mind.* Where *The Psychology of Religion* was ostensibly as a primer for students of the psychology of religion, *The Religion of a Mature Mind* was more intentionally normative in its portrayal of emotion in religion. In his1903 preface to the 1902 volume *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, Coe articulates his worry about people feeling disaffection with religion. Coe asks, "What is the next step for a studious mind that is in danger, through its immersion in the scientific spirit, of being alienated from Christianity, or for a Christian who is disturbed by the giant tread of the empirical sciences?" (ii). This preface suggests anxiety not only about manipulative emotions that participants may experience, but also about the depressive or isolating emotions non-participants may endure. Indeed, this same passage continues using the language of recuperation: "How shall one recover one's poise who, in the flux of opinions, begins to feel insecure of all spiritual things?...What help is there for those who, because their feelings do not respond to the customary religious incitements, are puzzled as to the possibility of a

[10] These examples of religious disappointment shaping practice or theology call to mind Phoebe Palmer's call for non-emotional sanctification as a result of her own failure to have an emotional conversion, as well as Benjamin Warfield, whose theology of cessationism grew out of his sadness that his wife did not experience a faith-based healing.

personal religious experience?" (ii-iii). Coe thus infers that his works aims to heal not only those hurt from within emotional religion, but also those hurt from the sidelines, like Coe himself.

Coe's investment in the dangers of disappointment fuelled his study of people's religious experiences. In *The Spiritual Life*, Coe's first book combining religion and psychology, Coe tells the story of a "young man" who "on three different occasions had earnestly sought to be converted and had failed to receive what his advisors told him to expect" (18). In response, the young man "reasoned as follows: 'I have honestly met all the conditions laid down, but have not experienced what I have been taught to look for. I am not different from other men. Therefore, since I have not received the blessing, neither have they. The whole thing is a mistake or a sham!'" (18-19). Indeed, the young man's disappointment leads to his conclusion that the encouragement to experience religious conversion is at best misguided, and at worst, manipulative. Coe uses this story to argue that expectations of emotional religious conversions may harm those who do not experience them. He later puts a fine point on it: "We must ask not only how many persons we reach by the revival, but also how many we fail to reach; and we must hold ourselves to a rigid accountability for the souls whom our defective methods get into doubt and difficulty, or even repel from religion altogether" (21). In spite of his consternation with emotion, Coe argues that some emotions have the possibility of liberating people from manipulative group emotion or depressive individual emotion. In other words, Coe's own religious development suggests a rereading of this young man's experience as potentially helping him along the path of religious development. Whereas Coe considered volatile emotion to be dangerous, his work suggests

that he did not think of all emotion as detrimental; rather Coe's writings suggest that the feeling of disappointment may be the start of rational thought.

Responding to his and other psychologists' concerns about the effects of religious disappointment, Coe advocated a religion rational in practice and robust in affect. Coe argued that American Christianity requires aggressive—as opposed to passive—emotional fervor employed to transform the limited ideas of what religious practice must be. In *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, Coe addresses the "misunderstood topic" of "emotion in religion," declaring, "we are suffering, not from excess of emotion in religion, but rather from too little emotion, from the narrowness of our emotional range, and especially from neglect of the more robust emotions" (vi). Coe envisions a differently emotional Protestantism, one that encourages masculine affect—strong, offensive, and controlled. Hoping to encourage change in American Christianity, Coe trumpets this "new type of aggressive Christianity" as countering the "[representations] of Christianity as threatened with spiritual paralysis through the thought-tendencies of our age." Coe warns against "making Christianity appear to be always on the defensive," and instead hopes for a form of Christianity that aggressively moves towards rational deliberation (*Religion of a Mature Mind* 10-11).[11]

Due to Coe's somewhat unsurprising approach to emotion and religion—strong, masculine emotion is laudatory; volatile emotion is destructive—it is easy to gloss over a related, fundamental argument: that emotion—*all* emotions—are tools for scientific work. Indeed, when Coe discusses "cults and substitutes for cults of which our day is so

[11] In *The Spiritual Life*, Coe suggests the problem of wrong feeling may be connected to "the excess of women over men in Church life" (6). Coe sees this project as so deeply tied to manliness, that the first chapter of *The Religion of a Mature Mind* is called "Modern Manhood." "Modern Manhood," *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, 19-43. For more on masculinity and Christianity at the turn of the century, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* and Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America*.

prolific,"—which gestures towards emotional, ecstatic religious groups—Coe advocates trying to "*feel* with those from whom we differ however profoundly," in order to "somehow trace out their processes of mental manufacture—noting how the power is carried from wheel to band, from band to shaft, from shaft and band to this machine and that, each of which contributes something to the finished product." In Coe's view, emotion can tell scientists about the machine of the human body. In fact, Coe insists, "this is a far more delicate and complicated and pains-demanding task than the mere logical anatomizing of a system of beliefs" (*The Spiritual Life* 23-24). Coe is insistent, though, that including emotion in scientific endeavors does not mean simply analyzing emotion, but rather employing emotion towards scientific ends. Coe explains that trying to understand foreign affective experiences should "[bring] us closer to life in its concreteness" as well as "[open] avenues of sympathy," and finally "[show] us how to reach the total cause and not merely one or two of its symptoms" (*The Spiritual Life* 24). In other words, emotion can improve science by allowing its practitioners to sympathetically understand those who are different. Coe delineates emotional and scientific benefits to imagining other states of feeling, and, as such, brings logic and affect together under the rubric of "scientific work."

George A. Coe's work on psychology and religion serves as an excellent example of how *fin-de-siècle* social scientists mobilized emotional religious practices in the service of racialized developmental models. Emotionally excessive religion served as a characteristic of early religion and also as evidence of primitive holdovers in contemporary religious groups. Nevertheless, Coe's desire to eradicate manipulative religion as well as his belief in the power of particular emotions illuminate his sense that rational religion may actively bring people out of those seemingly-static developmental models, and may help scientists to better

understand those engaged in emotionally excessive practices. In other words, Coe's writings simultaneously entrenched and dismantled the very developmental models that upheld racisms in America.

W. E. B. Du Bois and Development

Like his contemporary Coe, W. E. B. Du Bois used emotional religious experience as a way to explore the nexus of development and race in *fin-de-siècle* America. Du Bois's writings on black religiosity, though, figure emotional religious experiences not as affective states to be escaped, but rather as ways to simultaneously communicate African American historicity and particularity. This argument assumes that Du Bois's use of religion is more than stylistic, which cuts against a prominent strain of scholarship on Du Bois that argues, as Edward Blum notes, that Du Bois "merely used religious language for rhetorical effect," an argument that depends on the narrative of Du Bois's life as "a somewhat predictable secularization tale" (76).[12] This essay takes as a premise that Du Bois wrote about African American Christians from a sympathetic, if heterodox position. Indeed, a new strain of Du Bois scholarship suggests that Du Bois and his writings evince a kind of religiosity commensurate with his contemporary pragmatic religious naturalists, including William James and Santayana.[13] According to Jonathan S. Kahn, Du Bois fits in this category because

[12] For more debate Du Bois's religious beliefs and practices, see Blum and Young's collection *The Souls of W. E. B. Du Bois: New Essays and Reflections*. Notable Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis, characteristic of this strain of scholarship, writes of a young Du Bois that "neither the God or Moses nor the redeeming Christ appeared to have spoken deeply to [him]…On the other hand, the prose of the King James Version registered powerfully," and, Lewis later remarks, he used it whenever "he strove to give an idea maximum emotional force" (Lewis 1993, 50 and 166). Du Bois's agnosticism, though, is well chronicled. Lewis meticulously notes his move away from organized religion, and notes that his "need for a personal deity who intervened and judged was objectively minimal by the time he finished college" (Lewis 1993, 66). I should emphasize, then, that my goal is not to prove Du Bois religious, but rather suggest he may have been interested in more than "merely" "rhetorical effect."

[13] Many scholars have described Du Bois as a pragmatist. See, for instance, Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*,

his work is antimetaphysical, while still "hold[ing] tight to religious stories, moods, symbols, rhetoric, and moral values" (13). Kahn further argues, "Pragmatic religious naturalists conceive of religion as funding the deepest sources of ourselves, while insisting that those sources get their depth from linguistic and historical webs of meaning" (13). In other words, according to Kahn, Du Bois works with an earthly form of religious transcendence.

Du Bois deployed emotional religious experiences as evidence for his broader claim that in order to understand specific, particular moments of racial injustice in America, we must recognize those particular moments' transcendent emotional reverberations. For pragmatic religious naturalists such as James, Santayana and Du Bois, religious experience could retain a sense of grandeur, while still maintaining skepticism about a divine source of that grandeur. George Santayana, pragmatist philosopher and Jame's colleague, writes: "Whatever makes life worth living is to be found 'in the world of matter and history.' We can account naturalistically—materially and historically—for parts of spiritual life that matter to us" (Santayana in Levinson 73). Du Bois's writing on African American Christianity suggests that he taps into theotherworldliness of religious emotion to explain both the concrete and lasting experience of being black in America.

Du Bois's use of religious emotion built off of a complex relationship with the social sciences and with history, and as such, understanding his use of religion requires understanding his intellectual approaches to race in America. Like Coe, Du Bois used a developmental model to understand both race and religion, and his commitment to the social sciences undergirded many of his intellectual endeavors, and in particular his use of

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and Paul Taylor, "What's the Use of Calling Du Bois a Pragmatist?" That said, Jonathan S. Kahn is the first to argue the Du Bois's pragmatism also influenced his religiosity. See Kahn, *Divine Discontent: The Religious Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois,* especially pages 3-20 and 21-48. For excellent work on other pragmatic religious naturalists, see Henry Levinson on James and Santayana.

developmental approaches to religion.[14] Indeed, his approach to racial development suggests a commitment to essentialisms not so different from Coe's. Du Bois's developmental model resembles Coe's in its dependence on the concept of the primitive. Since "African Americans served as a primitive backdrop to normative theories about contemporary 'civilized' religion and nothing more for most theorists in Du Bois's day," offering a normative religious assessment following the social sciences also often meant describing African American religiosity as essentially primitive (C. Evans 270). In Du Bois's writings, as in the work of many of his contemporaries, primitivism meant heightened emotionality channeled into fetishism, magic, and ecstasy. In his 1903 book *The Negro Church*, Du Bois begins with a description of primitive religion familiar to social scientists at the turn of the century. The first section of the book, titled "Primitive Negro Religion," explains that this group of religions, endemic to various parts of Africa, lacks cohesion and is characterized by "Nature worship with the accompanying belief in sorcery," with different groups focusing on different parts of nature, such as the moon, the sun, or cows.[15] In contrast to primitive believers, those that adopted "the worship…of such higher spirits" as in monotheism, "banished fetichism [*sic*] and belief in witchcraft" (Du Bois *The Negro Church* 1).

Whereas Coe figured primitive religion as central to communities, Du Bois described these primitive religions as part of an array of forms of religious expression in Africa. Du Bois's brief description of "Primitive Negro Religion" in *The Negro Church* reveals his sense

[14] Many scholars have tackled Du Bois's mobilization of essentialist racial descriptions in order to explain African American history. For important work on Du Bois's approaches to race, see especially Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," and Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form*. Curtis Evans expresses concern that scholars might find Du Bois "engage[d] in a normative religious assessment of the very people that he had sought to help," given Du Bois's seeming essentialism (Evans 2007, 272). Evans gives a helpful summary of critiques of Du Bois's approaches to African American religion.

[15] Du Bois specifically mentions Camaroon, the west coast of Africa, the Ewne people, the Kaffirs of South Africa, and Egyptian religions.

that religious practice in Africa, as elsewhere, demonstrated great variety. Whereas there was a great propensity to "Nature worship with the accompanying strong belief in sorcery," such "primitive" spirit worship did not necessarily indicate a lack of civilization. Indeed, Du Bois cites Bryce, who insists that the worship of "the Kaffirs, as to the most savage races," also "held its ground among the Greeks and Italians in the most flourishing period of ancient civilization." Further, Du Bois insists that some groups, like the Bantus, favored "larger religious conceptions," such as the "worship of…higher spirits" that "banished fetichism and belief in witchcraft" (*The Negro Church* 1). In his brief history of African religious practices, Du Bois challenges both the idea that what seems to be primitive religion is actually not civilized, and also the idea that African religions took on only one shape.

More than simply complicating conceptions of early African religion, though, Du Bois insisted that harmful primitive religious practices did not typify religion in Africa, but rather threatened the advanced religions already present in Africa. In fact, Du Bois connected the inability to "banish fetichism" to the lack of consistent authority by churches, suggesting the problem of primitive religion is one of protection: if civilized churches would better legislate appropriate theology and practice, vulnerable people would not fall prey to fetishism and witchcraft. Du Bois suggested that as political turmoil hastens the dismantling of established churches, primitive religions take over, implying that churches require political stability to be able to protect their congregations. To this end, Du Bois states, "sudden and violent changes in government and social organization have tended to overthrow the larger religious conceptions and leave fetichism and witchcraft supreme" (*The Negro Church* 1). For Coe, primitive religion revealed fundamentally primitive people, whereas for Du Bois,

primitive religion revealed not an essential primitivism, but rather political or social instability.

In the oft-cited chapter "The Faith of our Fathers" found in *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois argues that religious practices in Africa led to varied African American religious practices of the early twentieth century. Du Bois states that to understand present tendencies, "we must realize that no such institution as the Negro church could rear itself without definite historical foundations. These foundations we can find if we remember that the social history of the Negro did not start in America" (*Souls* 132). Du Bois insists that an understanding of African American religion requires "a study of Negro religion as a development, through its gradual changes from the heathenism of the Gold Coast to the institutional Negro church of Chicago" (*Souls* 130). Slaves brought to America "nature-worship, with profound belief in invisible surrounding influences, good and bad," and "worship…through incantation and sacrifice" (*Souls* 132). Du Bois argues that African supernaturalism undergirded "the Negro church." What Du Bois called "the Negro church," he envisioned as not originally Christian, but as a result of African belief and white American influence. Du Bois writes that "the first Afro-American institution, the Negro church…was not at first by any means Christian nor definitely organized; rather it was an adaptation and mingling of heathen rites among the members of each plantation, and roughly designated as Voodooism" (*Souls* 132). Then, after time, the medicine man of African traditions morphed into the preacher of the slave church.

Du Bois's arguments about the complexity of religious practice in Africa connects to his sense that Africa was possibly the starting point of civilization, rather than the exemplar of societies before civilization. Du Bois understood the religion of the priest—practiced in

Africa and the United States—as the source of a particularly civilized, and more-modern-than-modern form of sociality. In *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois claims that the church remained "the sole expression of the organized efforts of the slaves" (197). In other words, Du Bois saw the remnants of African religious practices as reminiscent of an African social structure. In "What is Civilization? Africa's Answer," published in 1925, Du Bois asserts that the social structure based on African villages allowed for a kind of individuality not threatened by European and American modernity. These villages in Africa, Du Bois insisted, "socialized the individual completely, and yet because the village was small this socialization did not submerge and kill individuality" (376). According to Du Bois, then, African village structure—in America carried on by black religion—offered a positive alternative to the primitive/modern binary in early twentieth-century American culture.

Du Bois's approach to what he terms primitive religion seems indebted to evolutionary models of development, but more important to his work is the Hegelian understanding of development—*Bildung*. Brad Evans notes that while nineteenth-century American intellectuals often rendered Hegel as either accommodationist or assimilimationist, Du Bois was interested in mobilizing this sweeping historicism to suggest a "historicist trajectory" that marks Africa as an origin of and continued place for cultural development (Evans 165-66). Evans notes that Du Bois turned to Africa not to discuss a place "fractured from the course of modern progress," but rather to suggest a "notion of race that could channel black history through Africa," envisioning "Africa as a marker of growth" (171). Du Bois's use of Hegelian historicism reveals that his descriptions of social development in Africa contributed to him limning a long, developmental history of African Americans that may serve as a counter to America's moves to erase black history of culture and development.

Reading Du Bois's developmental model as Hegelian rather than evolutionary allows for a revised reading of Du Bois's seemingly-essentialist discourse. Specifically, his use of Hegel underscores Du Bois's argument that the unraveling of civilization occurred not in Africa, but in America, where African cultural and social formations were decimated by slavery. For instance, in *The Negro Church*, Du Bois describes slaves brought to America as civilized, having "definite and long-formed habits of social, political, and religious life," and while "these ideas were not the highest, measured by modern standards…they were far from the lowest, measured by the standards of primitive man" (2). Du Bois argues that in Africa, then, especially on the West coast, the slave trade destroyed what he calls "religious evolution," and "here it was that animal worship, fetichism and belief in sorcery and witchcraft strengthened their sway and gained wider currency than ever" (3). Returning to his earlier argument that primitive religion takes over as a result of instability, it is clear that Du Bois in particular meant the social instability caused by American slavery.

Du Bois further argues that African American religious institutions at the turn of the twentieth century continued to be affected by destruction caused by the slave trade. In *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois argues that black religious institutions arose in the context of a people whose religious organizations had been decimated by the slave trade. Du Bois writes, "we often forget that the rise of a church organization among Negroes was a curious phenomenon. The church really represented all that was left of African tribal life, and was the sole expression of the organized efforts of the slaves" (197). Du Bois attempted to afford black Americans a long history of development in the sense of *Bildung* while also insisting that the short history—of Africans enslavement in America—deprived them of an immediate, present narrative of growth and development.

Du Bois's commitment to positivism, though, reveals his ambivalence about a long history of development.[16] Positivism, Du Bois insisted, might improve the social sciences and also make possible the uplift of his fellow people. Du Bois's inductive practices followed in the footsteps of economists Albert Bushnell Hart, Gustave von Schmoller and Adolf Wagner, and demonstrate a commitment to "hard data, be it from official censuses, government documents, specific studies, or his own carefully gathered information" (Monteiro 226).[17] In his preface to *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois exclaims, "it is my earnest desire to pursue this particular form of study far enough to constitute a fair basis of induction as to the present condition of the American Negro" (iv). In referencing inductive reasoning—as opposed to deductive reasoning—Du Bois positions himself as a positivist scholar, working against the ahistorical sociology promoted by Franklin Giddings. Further, Du Bois thought himself a positivist working for the greater good of the United States. In the same preface, Du Bois thanks his subjects for "allow[ing] the full truth to be known for the sake of science and social reform" (iv). Others, too, characterized Du Bois's work as positivist in order to achieve social reform. Samuel McCune Lindsay, writing in the introduction to *The Philadelphia Negro*, declares that, using Du Bois's research, "the University should have a part in a work with a distinctly ethical aim and to be based on

[16] For excellent work on Du Bois and positivism, see Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W. E. B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903*, especially the chapter "Local Knowledge in the Shadow of Liberty: Science, Society, and Legitimacy," 68-112. Additionally, Anthony Monteiro's work reminds us to think of Du Bois's positivism as a "mild form" of positivism, and not as European empiricism.

[17] Axel R. Schafer notes that these economists were actually heavily influenced by Hegel, as well as Herder and others. Schafer writes, "True to their grounding in romanticism and their nineteenth-century faith in progress, the historicists argued that both individual human beings and society strove toward the realization of a higher ethical idea. For the historical school, however, these ethical goals were neither ideas intuited *a priori* nor laws of nature. They were conceived in the context of man interacting in specific economic, social, political, and cultural environments, and they unfolded progressively." See Schafer, "W. E. B. Du Bois, German Social Thought, and the Racial Divide in American Progressivism, 1892-1909," especially pages 933-37.

accurate scientific study and investigation" Lindsay in Du Bois ix). Like Du Bois, Lindsay uses distinctly positivist language—scientific study and investigation, as opposed to theorizing—to declare that inductive scientific work has ethical effects.

For Du Bois, the ethical work of positivism began with increasing knowledge of African American life and religious practice. Indeed, Du Bois was a key scholar in the formation of studies of African American religiosity, so much so that he coined and put into circulation the term "Negro Church," the echoes of which can be heard in today's use of the phrase "the black church." Du Bois established himself as the premier scholar of African American religion primarily through his extensive positivist research on African American churches. Evans writes that "Du Bois was a crucial figure in the creation and genealogy of 'the Negro Church,' which was described by him and later interpreters as a singular institution or group organization," thus Du Bois created the sociological category through exhaustive, original data collection (275-76). Du Bois consolidated this group in part by suggesting that it had more than religious responsibilities, and "had certain responsibilities in uplifting the race, bringing about political empowerment, and organizing and pooling the resources and talents of blacks to face the hardships of economic, racial, and political oppression in the United States" (275-76). The Negro Church, as Du Bois conceived of it, took on first a social function in African American communities, and only second, a religious function.

Du Bois's positivist approach to black religiosity evinced an investment in particular social and historical contexts in a way that may seem at odds with Hegelian historicism. A sentence explaining why. In *The Negro Church,* though, Du Bois combines developmental language with specific, historical context. The epigraph of *The Negro Church* illustrates W. E.

B. Du Bois's merging of general developmental theories with specific historical context. To this end, in the passage below, excerpted from the "Report of the Third Atlanta Conference" in 1898, Du Bois writes:

> The Negro Church is the only social institution of the Negroes which started in the African forest and survived slavery; under the leadership of priest or medicine man, afterward of the Christian pastor, the Church preserved in itself the remnants of African tribal life and became after emancipation the center of Negro social life. So that today the Negro population of the United States is virtually divided into church congregations which are the real units of race life ("Report" in Du Bois ii).

Du Bois begins this description with a general, "long" view of the "Negro Church" in America, describing its beginnings in "the African forest" with a "priest or medicine man." But he quickly roots the church in the specific historical context of the United States. In this example, Du Bois combines a somewhat temporally unrooted developmental understanding with African religion to a rooted and specific history of black religiosity in America. Du Bois's commitment to a simultaneously historicist and positivist approach to African American development reveals his commitment to both deeply diachronic and deeply synchronic articulations of African American history.

Du Bois and Religious Emotion

Du Bois's writing reveals his commitment to a long history that uncouples the idea of the primitive from Africa, as well as his commitment to focused analyses that explains the social structures of black communities in Jim Crow America. Nevertheless, Du Bois's writings on religious emotion, particularly in the chapter "Of the Faith of the Fathers" in *The*

Souls of Black Folk, indicate that historicist and positivist approaches both failed to fully capture the experience of being black in America. Whereas Coe racializes emotional religion in order to show lack of development, Du Bois racializes emotional religion in order to historicize that emotion. At the same time, Du Bois's descriptions of emotional religion imply that African American believers used a religious affect of excess to describe racial oppression as both firmly rooted in historical context and also transcendent, in the senses of outside the national body, beyond the racialized body, and in excess of the time of history.

Du Bois often portrays emotional religion as a way that slaves registered feelings of sorrow or anger that were (and continued to be) in excess of the affective allowances of the national body. In "Of the Faith of the Fathers," Du Bois describes religious music as a mode to express feelings not allowed in the national body, music that was "intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave, until, under the stress of law and whip, it became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope" (129). Similarly, Du Bois describes the spiritual leader on a plantation as one who could express slaves' feelings of sorrow and anger. This figure, "the Priest or Medicine-man," served as "the healer of the sick, the interpreter of the Unknown, the comforter of the sorrowing, the supernatural avenger of wrong, and the one who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people."[18] Traces of African spirituality found in Du Bois's Priest then mark not residuum of primitivism, but rather holdovers of civilization ripped asunder. The

[18] Du Bois expresses similar sentiments in *The Negro Church.* "The Negro priest," Du Bois writes, then "became an important figure on the plantation and found his function as the interpreter of the supernatural," and as importantly, the Negro priest held the role of "the comforter of the sorrowing, and as the one who expressed, rudely but picturesquely, the longing and disappointment and resentment of a stolen people" (1903, *The Negro Church*, 4-5).

sorrow songs and the Priest figure in Du Bois's work as markers of the limits of national affect, and also as resistance to those limits.[19]

Like Coe, Du Bois uses essentializing language to describe emotional black bodies in religious motion, but unlike Coe, Du Bois uses emotional religion to suggest a history that is not fundamentally tied to these bodies. In "The Faith of Our Fathers," Du Bois characterizes African American southern religious experiences as emotional in nature. What stood out to him most, he writes, "was the air of intense excitement that possessed that mass of black folk. A sort of suppressed terror hung in the air and seemed to seize us,—a pythian madness, a demonic possession, that lent terrible reality to song and word" (128-29). Du Bois then describes the frenzy characteristic of revivals as varying "in expression from the silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan to the mad abandon of physical fervor—the stamping, shrieking, and shouting, the rushing to and fro and wild waving of arms, the weeping and laughing, the vision and the trance" (129). Nevertheless, Du Bois insists that some level of emotion is an intrinsic part of the religiosity enacted by black bodies. For instance, Du Bois declares that many African American believers joined the Baptist church because "the visible rite of baptism appealed strongly to their mystic temperament," and "the faith of [Baptist and Methodist] denominations was more suited to the slave church from the prominence they gave to religious feeling and fervor" (133). The reason enslaved and free

[19] For many American Christians, religious and historical time existed simultaneously. Describing homiletic fiction, Gregory Jackson argues, "homiletic narratives immersed audiences in contemporary moral and social concerns, declaring that the challenges of their world corresponded with those of the spiritual realm."[19] Christian writers of homiletic fiction, portrayed "a world of constant religious striving, where synchrony and diachrony woven together constitute the framework for consciousness, time stands still for the static self and ticks away the steps for improvement for the self-in-progress."[19] Religious time weaves together religious time and historical time, such that the time of the Bible may be happening today. See Gregory Jackson, *The Word and its Witness: The Spiritualization of American Realism*, especially 1-36.

African Americans were drawn to these two denominations, Du Bois explains, was primarily because, "the Negro has already been pointed out many times as a religious animal,—a being of that deep emotional nature which turns instinctively toward the supernatural" (134). Du Bois draws unequivocally essentializing conclusions about religious practice as tied to race; nevertheless, he suggests that racially essential characteristics such as these may, in fact, be historically determined.

Du Bois historicizes essentializing descriptions of black Americans and as such weaves together historical condition and essential characteristics. In the same chapter as noted above, Du Bois declares that "the Negro has already been pointed out many times as a religious animal,—a being of that deep emotional nature which turns instinctively toward the supernatural," aided by a "tropical imagination and a keen, delicate appreciation of Nature" (134). Not only does Du Bois limn "the Negro" as emotionally predisposed to emotional religiosity, but he also delineates how that natural inclination affects African American reactions to slavery. "Slavery," Du Bois insists, "was to [the Negro] the dark triumph of Evil over him" (134). In this statement, Du Bois describes historical context as in part determined by something essential, and essential feelings as in part determined by historical context. In this move, Du Bois resists locating essentialisms in only specific bodies, but rather in bodies in time. Further, Du Bois mobilizes religious emotionality to indicate that historical injustices may take on the qualities of timeless Evils.

Du Bois similarly argues that the differing social conditions in the South and the North engendered two different kinds of black religiosity. Later in "Of the Faith of the Fathers," Du Bois argues that, in the South, white Christianity taught an ethic of submission, and thus African American Christians developed a religion of cynicism. The believer in the

South, Du Bois declares, is "conscious of his impotence, and pessimistic," and thus "becomes bitter and vindictive; and his religion, instead of a worship, is a complaint and a curse, a wail rather than a hope, a sneer rather than a faith" (137). Those in the North, on the other hand enact a religion of revolt. The Northern believer is "shrewder and keener and more tortuous too," and "sees in the very strength of the anti-Negro movement its patent weaknesses, and with Jesuitic casuistry is deterred by no ethical considerations in the endeavor to turn his weakness into the black man's strength." Thus Du Bois envisions two different kinds of belief, determined by specific historical conditions. As a result, Du Bois writes, "we have two great and hardly reconcilable streams of thought and ethical strivings; the danger of the one lies in anarchy, that of the other in hypocrisy" (137). The first, characteristic of Christianity in the North, wants to revolt, while the second, characteristic of Christianity in the South, uses flattery to cajole the people in power. Thus, unlike Coe and psychologists of religion at the turn of the century, Du Bois historicizes religious emotion. He not only distinguishes between northern emotional religion—restless and angry—and southern emotion religion—cynical and sorrowful—but also suggests that these distinct phenomena are rooted in northern and southern black Americans as having different experiences of the antebellum and post-bellum periods. Thus, in discussing African American religion, Du Bois moves from a general, developmental view of history to a more specific, concrete meditation on the connection between religion and social factors.

In historicizing religiosity, Du Bois also infuses his telling of religious history with a Biblical importance. In "Of the Faith of the Fathers," Du Bois articulates a history awash in religious feeling; northern anger takes on the judgment of the Old Testament God, and

southern sadness takes on the sorrow of the Israelites. In one of the most-cited passages in *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois writes:

> But back of this still broods silently the deep religious feeling of the real Negro heart, the stirring, unguided might of powerful human souls who have lost the guiding star of the past and are seeking in the great night a new religious ideal. Some day the Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal, out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where all that makes life worth living—Liberty, Justice, and Right—is marked "For White People Only" (139).

Du Bois suggests that a complete history of racial oppression in America spills beyond the specifics of positivism or the long march of Hegelian progress into the realm of the Biblical: African Americans may have been mired in Jim Crow America, but their tragedy is akin to losing the guiding star—a reference to the North star that guided believers to Jesus' manger. The Valley of the Shadow of Death, too, is not limited to the Bible; rather, it is as current as separate and unequal facilities. Sorrow, Du Bois suggests, may be historically contingent, but it exceeds the bounds of history; religious emotion reveals the experience of racial oppression as not limited to the moment and place of the oppression, but bleeding beyond historical time.

Conclusion

At the turn of the century, social scientists regularly articulated developmental models that relied on essentializing conceptions of race. Although these models often cemented racial categories, many social scientists exhibited rather complex relationships with the idea

of development. The writing of George A. Coe and W. E. B. Du Bois suggest that social scientists used emotional religion to indicate and entrench the idea of the primitive, but perhaps also to counter or dismantle the very idea of racial essentialisms. While Coe's work does little to question the evolutionary model of development he regularly referenced, his psychological analyses of religious feeling suggest that he saw certain forms of emotion as ways out of the category of the primitive. Du Bois, on the other hand, drew on religious emotion in order to suggest a history of race in the United States in excess of the national body and historical time.

Coe and Du Bois expand current histories of the U.S. social sciences at the turn of the twentieth century, but these two writers also limn productive understandings of religious emotion as more than simply primitive holdovers. For Coe and Du Bois, religious affect makes possible a way of rewriting the history of racial essentialisms in the United States. As such, these thinkers call us as scholars to map the relationships between race and religion in America, but also to excavate the histories and politics articulate through religious emotion. Religious affect may allow us to better theorize the simultaneously immanent and transcendent experiences of racial inequality in the United States.

The Open Soul: Pauline Hopkins,

the Subconscious, and the Limits of the Will

In the opening of Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood*, we meet Reuel Briggs brooding in the apartment that serves as his living quarters and psychological laboratory, a fitting setting for a novel that asks as to the connections between studies of consciousness and the history of race in America. Reuel ponders his vague unhappiness—"he had tormented himself for months" about his place in the world—and then seamlessly shifts to thoughts on scientific concepts associated with "mysticism" and "new discoveries in psychology" (Hopkins 2). On this night, his specific topics of study include "mind-curers and Christian scientists," as well as trances in which a person may "transcend her *possible* normal consciousness" and gain knowledge and experience in these other states. The chapter ends not on mystical discoveries, but on "the Negro problem," when Reuel's friend, Aubrey, asks Reuel his thoughts on race in America. Reuel responds, "I have a horror of discussing the woes of unfortunates, tramps, stray dogs and cats, and Negroes—probably because I am an unfortunate myself" (Hopkins 9). Reuel—whose racial or ethnic "origin" the novel tells us is the cause of much speculation by his peers—hides both his thoughts on race in the United States, and also what it means to calls himself "an unfortunate." In a chapter intent on describing turn-of-the-century psychology, the legacy of slavery, and Reuel's sense of malaise, the word "unfortunate" could refer to a person of troubled social standing, mind, or emotion. *Of One Blood* suggests that these all might be brought together, under the rubric of soul.

This opening scene brings together several of *Of One Blood*'s key investments: mystical psychology, religion, and race. Reuel in fact muses on a particular kind of turn-of-

the-century psychology notable for its interest in the subconscious, as well as its forays into mystical experiences, experiences that, for these psychologists, generally had out-of-body or trance-like qualities. This particular form of mystical psychology shared qualities with metaphysical religious practices such as New Thought and Theosophy in that psychologists understood there to be beneficial and therapeutic effects to having mystical experiences. Today, William James's openness to a variety of spiritual experiences in his *Varieties of Religious Experiences* serves as the exemplar of the kind of psychology invested in the mystical. Several scholars have noted Hopkins's references to specific psychological thinkers as well as related popular late-nineteenth-century concepts such as mesmerism, Egyptology, and other realms of the mystical sciences. In her description of psychology as archaeological excavation, Cynthia Schrager suggests that Hopkins relies on a Freudian notion of the self to explain Reuel's developing understanding of himself. [1] Starting with Reuel's interests in psychology, the novel interrogates modern ideas of consciousness and will, and insists that a nation mired in the history of slavery requires alternative narratives of consciousness.

Of One Blood, a novel Hopkins published serially in *The Colored American* during her tenure as editor, begins as a novel about consciousness and what Hopkins dubs the "mystical sciences" of the turn of the century (page #).[2] The protagonist Reuel puts his

[1] For more on *One Of Blood* and Egyptology, see especially Susan Gillman's *Blood Talk*.
[2] Hopkins served as editor from 1902-1904, at which time she was removed from the editorial staff. Much has been made of her ouster from the periodical, many arguing that it was primarily because of her radical race politics. Bergman, though, argues that it may actually have been her gender politics that caused her dismissal from *The Colored American*. This argument makes sense given her publication record before becoming editor. Before she became editor, Hopkins published a significant number of articles in *The Colored American*. In her capacious biography, Lois Brown notes, "from November 1900 through October 1902, Hopkins produced a total of twenty-three richly textured and absorbing articles in two biography series," the first being about African American men, the second about African American women. Brown and Bergman suggest that through her bibliographic publications, Hopkins quietly advocated for equal publications about African American women and men. See Bergman, "Everything," and Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*.

scientific interests in consciousness to work trying to save the beautiful and psychologically ill Dianthe, a pale African American woman who nearly dies and awakes with no memory, and as such no conscious knowledge of her "blood" heritage. Reuel—also pale and passing as white—falls in love with the mysterious Dianthe, and simultaneously strives to bring back her mental health and seeks to obfuscate her memory so that she will remain with him. When Reuel leaves for an expedition in Africa, though, the novel takes a strange and provocative turn. At home Dianthe is seduced and overpowered by Aubrey, Reuel's white friend, but Aubrey, Dianthe, and Reuel turn out to be related, and the novel takes on a tangled melodramatic kinship tale about the history and continuing effect of slavery in the United States. Aubrey causes a canoe accident in order to kill his own fiancé and render Dianthe dependent upon him. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, Reuel discovers a hidden, ancient, and highly advanced city called Telassar, a civilization that contests the notion that the Euro-American world is the home of civilization, which Bergman explains as creating "a story of proud racial heritage and national entitlement made possible by the restoration of the nation mother[, Africa]" (Bergman "Motherless" 287). Reuel learns that not only is he personally connected to Telassar, but he is actually the heir to the throne. At the same time he learns that Dianthe is not only his wife, but also his sister, descended from the same line of kings. Aubrey, too, turns out to be their brother, all three children born of their mother's rape by her white master. In this sense, Reuel's heritage is wrapped up in America's horrifying twined history of rape and enslavement; nevertheless, in Telessar Reuel finds that his "hidden self"—his heritage—is not his undoing, but his success. As the leader of Telassar, Reuel commands the most ancient and civilized peoples in the world. Those in Telassar are, like

Reuel, invested in mystical sciences; as such, Telassar's advances insist that alternative forms of the sciences of the mind are more modern than modern psychology.

Hopkins's novel comments on two concepts developed and advocated by mystical psychologists at the turn of the century. The first concept is the idea of the subconscious or subliminal consciousness, first developed as part of French psychologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet's research into multiple personalities in women hysterics.[3] British theorist Frederic Myers used Charcot and Janet's research to theorize the possibility of different levels of consciousness present in an individual. The idea of the subconscious undergirds the novel's plot in that Reuel's interactions with Dianthe are entirely determined by the separation of her subconscious from her main consciousness. Further, the idea of the subconscious informs Hopkins's use of melodrama to suggest that narratives and a nation may have a subconscious as well.

The novel also poses several options for having or lacking will, and then finally suggests an alternative to the rubric of will. Hopkins' novel is concerned with will as control—the parameters of the will, the effects of lost will, and whether or not one can step out of the rubric of will. Through the seemingly will-less character Dianthe and obsessed character of Aubrey Livingston, Hopkins maps the dangers of believing in the possibility of will. Having no ability to control one's circumstances or actions, a la Dianthe, is deadly, and yet, the attempt to have full control, as exhibited by Aubrey, simply returns one to a state of no control. Through the character of Reuel, Hopkins suggests that the alternative to will

[3] Janet's 1889 Doctorate of Science thesis, *De l'Automatisme Psychologique,* is particularly important to American psychologists, in particular because of its influence on William James's "The Hidden Self," which I will discuss more below. For Charcot, see his *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System*.

might be soul, an alternative built on Hopkins' rethinking and combining of modern American psychology and American Protestantism.

I use the term "soul" to indicate Hopkins's alternative to new psychology conceptions of consciousness and will because "soul" directly responds to the new psychology's idea of a single, unified consciousness, as well as William James's idea of will. Indeed, "soul" indicates a part of the self that moves beyond the self—perhaps to the divine—and moves deeply into the self, something that is in the body but not necessarily bodily.[4] Because of this movement, the soul also acts as a sort of will that is not located necessarily within the self, but may be directed or influenced by something beyond the self. Finally, "soul" is a useful term in this study because of its explicitly religious connotations. Hopkins's descriptions of Reuel's gifts in the mystical sciences locate those gifts as not merely scientific, but also directed by something larger. As such, Hopkins uses Reuel's gifts to enter into and contest conversations about science and religion.

Just as Hopkins works with and revises "emergent theories" and "minority traditions" in sciences such as psychology and Egyptology, as Gillman argues, so too does she refigure American Protestantism (*Blood* 34). Whereas Schrager sees the novel's move to Ethiopia as an embrace of "deterministic racial identity," I argue that the hidden city of Telassar rather serves as Reuel's inspiration for an unorthodox form of Christianity. (Schrager 190). Hopkins reshapes American Protestantism by combining it with what her novel calls the mystical sciences; narratively, though, she makes it possible to reshape Protestantism by seeming to stay committed to a traditional (if not denominationally specific) form of Christianity. Hopkins asks how a problem in conceiving of the will (or any attachment to the idea of the

[4] Interestingly, the theologian Nancey Murphy argues that we don't have souls, but rather we are souls. See *Bodies and Souls*.

will) might be a problem for the soul, and how a combination of psychology and religion may provide a solution.

To say that American Protestantism is a helpful lens with which to study *Of One Blood* is not to suggest that Hopkins' novel espouses a doctrinally orthodox kind of Protestantism, but rather that the text implicitly envisions a Christianity that inflects Protestantism with mystical psychology. In her revisioning of religion and psychology Hopkins places herself in conversation with psychologists of religion such as George Coe. Whereas Coe hopes to revitalize Protestant Christianity, though, Hopkins hopes to revolutionize Protestantism by combining it with mesmeric sciences to form a futuristic form of religion.[5] *Of One Blood* interrogates psychological understandings of consciousness and the will; ultimately the novel combines psychology and Protestantism in order to ask how turn-of-the-century ideas of consciousness and the will might fail black Americans in the wake of reconstruction. Whereas the new psychologists advocated a single consciousness (that thus had no hidden consciousnesses), Hopkins's narrative in *Of One Blood* is informed by the ideas of double and subliminal consciousness advocated by theorists such as Frederic Myers. The novel's explicit and hidden storylines mimic subliminal consciousness, to suggest that people and nations (such as the United States) have hidden histories of trauma and abuse that need to be integrated into the history of the nation. Further, through the characters of Dianthe and Aubrey, Hopkins tests William James's theories of will, and finds the goal of a strong will unproductive for African Americans—people whose ability to have control over their own lives was systematically eviscerated in the years following

[5] Hopkins precedents might be considered New Thought and Theosophy, two traditions that combined semi-Christian and metaphysical beliefs and practices. The New Thought is an especially good example: it was based on the teachings of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a mid-century mesmerist.

Reconstruction. As an alternative to the idea of will, Hopkins suggests embracing the soul, and the doubling, hidden powers within.

Psychology and Christianity in *Of One Blood*

A good portion of scholarship on *Of One Blood* celebrates the novel's conversations with the mystical sciences of the turn of the century; this area of scholarship is exemplified best by Cynthia Schrager and Susan Gillman. Schrager's essay on Hopkins, James, and the new psychology argues that the novel tests a Jamesian sense of self that theorizes "the indeterminacy of racial subjectivity," but then "embraces a symbolics of blood that seeks to reconstruct an African bloodline that will form the basis of a reconstructed Pan-African political community" (Schrager 184, 199). Gillman similarly identifies *Of One Blood*'s debt to "American scientific rhetorics and debates of the day," and in particular "the science of the occult" and "archaeology, and specifically Egyptology" in part to "reveal in both sciences the overt and implicit racializing that shaped so many late-nineteenth-century Euro-American discourses" (*Blood* 33, 32). Building on Schrager and Gillman, Shawn Salvant draws on the psychology of the hidden self as well as ethnological understandings of "blood" in order to argue that Hopkins's use of "occultism" "fundamentally alters the associations between blood and kinship" (666).[6]

This strain of scholarship uncovers *Of One Blood*'s explicit use of William James's psychology—in particular his essay "The Hidden Self"—as a starting point for Reuel's scientific interests. As Schrager notes, Hopkins "used James's essay…as an intertext, although she deliberately disguised her source" by instead calling it "The Unclassified

[6] Catherine Albanese registers discomfort with the term "occult," instead preferring the term "metaphysical," which is also the term Louis Menand uses for James and his peers. See especially Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, and Menand, *The Metaphysical Club.* For more on kinship and blood in *Of One Blood*, see Thomas J. Otten and Martin Japtok.

Residuum"—a reference to the first line of James's essay (Schrager 184; Hopkins 2). James's "The Hidden Self" draws on and analyzes cases of multiple personalities stemming from hysteria. In particular, James looks at the work of Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet. In this essay, James encourages psychologists to see mystical experiences as worthy of scientific study, and not necessarily pathological; further, James describes the kind of splitting of personality Hopkins uses in her depiction of Dianthe's memory loss. In other words, James's essay provides plot details as well as themes for the novel. Schrager argues further, "Hopkins embraced [James's] notions about the unconscious emerging from work with hysterical women as a means to explore…the political situation and subjectivity of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction period" (184). It is no surprise, then, that scholarship attending to Hopkins's use of contemporary psychology has proven to be some of the most useful work on *Of One Blood*.

Scholarship on the psychology of the turn of the century, though, has suffered from a lack of historical precision, and too avid devotion to William James. These treatments conflate the "new psychology" with either the mystical sciences of the turn of the century, or with Freudianism. Schrager and Gillman both associate the "new psychology" wholly with William James's commitment to and study of mystical experiences.[7] For both Schrager and Gillman, then, the term "new psychology" refers to late-nineteenth-century studies of multiple personalities, mesmerism, and religious movements such as New Thought. Deborah Horvitz, on the other hand, equates the "new psychology" with Freudian ideas on hysteria. Whereas scholars describe the new psychology as interested in double consciousness, mysticism, and even Freudianism, the new psychologists of the late nineteenth century rather

[7] Gillman is more explicit about this in the article that preceded *Blood Talk*, which might lead us to believe that she rethought the usefulness/historical accuracy of the term.

characterized themselves as rigorous experimental scientists, firmly against the idea of double consciousness, and uninterested in what might be characterized as the "mystical." In fact, in "The Hidden Self," James excoriates contemporary psychologists (directed towards the new psychology) for treating with "contemptuous scientific regard…the mass of phenomena generally called *mystical*" (361). James—the psychologist most directly referenced in *Of One Blood*—distinguished himself from the new psychologists precisely because of their intolerance for mysticism.[8]

At stake in understanding the new psychology is not merely historical precision; in other words, the answer is not simply to stop using the term "new psychology" in studies of the novel. Rather, teasing out the difference between the new psychology and thinkers such as James will offer us a greater understanding of the novel's investments in marginal theories of consciousness. To be more precise, *Of One Blood* articulates and embraces an alternative to the new psychology. Stemming from the work of Charcot and Janet and exemplified in Britain by Frederic Myers and in the United States by William James, a collection of thinkers contested theories of consciousness promoted by the new psychology. The psychotherapeutic approaches—a term I am using to encompass the motley collection of psychologists, physicians (concerned with therapy), spiritual thinkers, and theorists who promoted an alternative to the new psychology—came from noted academic researchers, clinical researchers, physicians, and humanities scholars connected with the British Society of Psychical Research.[9] Hopkins's novel can perhaps be best understood through the late-

[8] Edward Reed gives perhaps the most comprehensive account of James's relationship to the new psychology. See Reed, *From Soul to Mind*, especially the last two chapters.

[9] Ann Taves notes, "Although most of the Boston school was involved to some degree with the SPR (the British Society for Psychical Research), James was the only one with strong ties to both the SPR and the new academic psychology. None of the key British figures associated with the SPR—Henry Sidgwick, Edmund Gurney, Frank Podmore, or Frederic Myers—were physicians or academic

nineteenth century debates surrounding new psychology conceptions of the mind, consciousness, and will.

A different strain of scholarship, while not wholly separate from those noted above, also addresses the psycho-spiritual investments of the novel; instead of focusing on Reuel's mystical studies, this line of scholarship calls into question Reuel's explicit commitments to Christianity in Telassar. Many people locate a colonial impulse in Reuel's religious commitments and his insistence that the people of Telassar adopt those beliefs. Some scholars read Hopkins' portrayal of religion as colonial. These readings are not wrong. In fact, in his encounters with his Telassarian assistant and subordinate, Ai, Reuel does seem to adopt an imperialist approach to spreading Christianity: Reuel tells Ai that Telassar needs to change its religious practices to become more Christian. And indeed, Ai did say he would adopt Reuel's religion. Ai asks Reuel what he believes, and Reuel answers, "In Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Ai's response seems very cut and dried: "your belief shall be ours; we have no will but yours. Deign to teach your subjects" (132). This passage, understandably, undergirds scholarly suggestions that the story of religion in *Of One Blood* is a story of colonization.

A number of scholars make this claim. Salvant argues that Reuel's time in Telassar is notable in part for his "…installment of Reuel's Christianity in place of African spiritualist practices" (671). Similarly, Marla Harris describes the Ethiopians of Telassar by simply noting, "they adopt Christianity" (377). Martin Japtok is a bit more explicitly critical, describing the Telassar adoption of Christianity as drawing on African American stereotypes of Africa needing Christianity. Japtok argues that the novel draws on turn-of-the-century

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psychologists; most had degrees in the humanities" (254). For more on the Boston school of psychotherapy see Nathan Hale, *Freud and the Americans*. For more on Myers and British psychical researchers, see Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research*.

notions that Africa "was a continent in need of 'civilization' and Christianity" (405). Writing more generally about Reuel's approach to Telassar, Alisha R. Knight asks, "If Telassar's civilization is superior to the United States,' why does Reuel need to teach them about Western culture?", a question that applies to Reuel's instruction on Christianity (Knight 71). Hanna Wallinger puts an especially fine point on it, arguing, "Reuel is very much the colonizer/missionary who brings religion to the heathen race" (219).

This argument seems so widely embraced that it is rarely an extended argument, but rather just a given mentioned in service of a larger argument. Scholars addressing the psychological roots of the novel and those addressing the Christian references in the novel rarely connect the two. Attending to the novel's connections between mystical psychology and Christianity, though, reveals Hopkins's conception of "soul," which draws on and questions both William James's mystical psychology and also nineteenth-century American Protestantism.

Alternative Psychologies of Consciousness

In making these arguments, *Of One Blood* echoes not the new psychology—the popular up-and-coming field at the turn of the century—but rather what Alan Gauld affectionately calls the "Franglo-American school," a group of thinkers that included French physicians and psychologists Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, Théodore Flourney, British theorist Frederic Myers, and American psychologists William James and Morton Prince (Gauld *History* 401 fn 24). In drawing on this group, *Of One Blood* aligns itself with a psychology seen at the turn of the century as regressive and occult, in particular in comparison to the new psychology. Proponents of the new psychology figured the new experimental approach as modern, progressive, and the future of scientific approaches to the mind. As Edward Reed

notes in *From Soul to Mind*, the new psychologists saw interests in hypnosis, hysteria, and multiple personalities as holdovers from the mid-century, when studies of the mind and the occult were intimately tied together (217-218). *Of One Blood* draws on two ideas in particular that established the Franglo-American school as an outlier in the world of experimental psychology: the idea of the subconscious or subliminal consciousness, which stood in direct opposition to the new psychology idea of the unconscious, and the idea of the will. The psychotherapeutic approach to consciousness resisted the modern, atomistic approach to the self advocated by the popular new psychology.

The new psychology of the late-nineteenth century took its inspiration from Wilhelm Wundt, who taught G. Stanley Hall and whose student, Hugo Münsterberg, worked with William James at Harvard.[10] Scholars generally agree that Wundt was "the new experimental psychology personified" (Wertheimer 71). His influence in American psychology continues to be felt, and indeed he "is generally considered the founder of modern scientific psychology" (White 42). Many scholars today group Wundt and James together, due to their shared interest in experimental approaches to psychology. George Mandler claims that together "James and Wundt had initiated a new psychology that broke with the previous tradition of basing psychological knowledge on self-observation by looking at the psychology of the 'other'—the subject, the representative of human psychology" (Mandler 76). While "Leipzig because the world center for psychology" in the 1880s due to Wundt's

[10] See Michael Wertheimer for more on the connections between Wundt and American psychologists. Wundt published prolifically, but perhaps the most important to late-century American psychologists is his *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Principles of Physiological Psychology). The 1904 version translated by Edward Titchener was the version most widely disseminated in the United States. Some scholars have lamented Titchener's translation as being inaccurate and trying to make Wundt's work accord with his own.

presence and advanced laboratory, American psychologists soon embraced experimental psychology (Wertheimer 70).[11]

For many psychologists affiliated with Wundtian experimental psychology, the goal was to find and isolate the elements of sensation. This atomistic approach to sensation undergirded the idea of unconscious cerebration, the theory that most clearly separated the new psychologists from schools of psychotherapy. For Wundt, "the task of experimental psychology [was] the analysis of conscious compounds and complexes into their constituent elements, the study of how these compounds are synthesized out of their elements, and the establishment of principles and laws of psychological events" (Wertheimer 67). Wundt used these elements and compounds to understand "problems of will, apperception, sensation, and perception" (Mandler 40-1). Wundt's elements, though, did not prompt conscious sensations or actions, but rather unconscious responses, what new psychologists called the "reflex arc," which was "the basic unit of the self, the simplest sensorimotor process, and it was composed of a nervous impulse traveling through sensory nerves to the central nervous system, which then guided these impulses into motor nerves that, finally, led to muscular reactions" (White 42). The reflex arc supported the theory of unconscious cerebration, or the theory that beings could act without conscious thought. New psychologists favored the idea that "seemingly intelligent action could proceed physiologically without ever becoming conscious," as opposed to the idea of the subconscious, which "held that intelligent action was always linked to consciousness" (Taves 254). Thus, for the new psychology, an atomistic approach to sensation undergirded a unified sense of individual consciousness, an equation that some psychologists resisted.

[11] Wertheimer claims, "Before long, students flocked to Wundt to learn about the new psychology. Leipzig became the world center for psychology, with a very active laboratory, and with the first truly systematic experimental psychologist, in the person of Wundt" (70).

Psychologists and physicians associated with the so-called Franglo-American school fundamentally resisted the idea of unconscious action, and their resistance to the unconscious undergirded their concept of the subconscious, as well as their commitment to a consciousness that might be divided. As Ann Taves explains, those who held to the idea of the unconscious (those affiliated with the new psychology) explained unremembered action in terms of unconscious cerebration; those who held to the idea of the subconscious "explained unremembered actions in terms of memories that were either split-off from the primary center of consciousness or so fleeting as to be forgotten" (Taves 254). "The subconscious," Taves continues, "presupposed a dissociative model of consciousness," in which layers or strands of consciousness might be dissociated from each other (Taves 255). James and his contemporaries, then, were invested in understanding how a single person might have several layers of consciousness, such that they may only be aware of one at any given time. Through hypnosis they could become conscious in others, but after hypnosis they would be unable to retain the memories of the hidden layers. In the dissociative model, psychologists theorized "that selves were constituted by 'chains of memory.' While memories were 'associated' within a chain, they were 'dissociated' between chains" (Taves 255).[12] Thus, Taves explains, "through hypnosis, researchers engaged (and created) chains of memory that were dissociated from the chain of memory that constituted the person's usual sense of self" (255). The work of finding "dissociated" memory chains involved uncovering and connecting chains.

[12] This is the key place where Janet separated from the Franglo-American School and others. Whereas James, Myers, and even Flournoy argued that these secondary level of consciousness occurred in healthy people, Janet held to the idea that dissociated memory chains indicated a diseased mind (Taves 255).

Scholars like Myers, James, Flournoy and Prince believed that the subconscious was active in healthy individuals. They departed from Janet on this issue—Janet believed that dissociation (what Janet called *desegregation*) of consciousness into different parts indicated pathology. Myers, an English poet as well as "psychical researcher," provided what James and others considered to be "the chief alternative" to theories (especially Janet's) that suggested that multiple personalities were wholly a sign of illness (Taves 254 and 257). His argument was that the brain "filter(ed) and limit(ed) consciousness" (Cook 1). Myers's goal, then, was to shed light on "that part of ourselves which lies below the threshold of ordinary consciousness" (Myers 298). Myers's "The Subliminal Consciousness" drew on research dealing with hypnosis, automatic writing, and trances in order to understand a kind of consciousness hidden to our daily consciousness. In these theories, then, "consciousness" does not equate with what is "known." As such, we may be "conscious" and yet not "know" all our conscious experiences. He articulates his claim as follows:

> I suggest, then, that the stream of consciousness in which we habitually live is not the only consciousness which exists in connection with our organism. Our habitual or empirical consciousness may consist of a mere selection from a multitude of thoughts and sensations, of which some at least are equally conscious with those that we empirically know. I accord no primacy to my ordinary waking self, except that among my potential selves this one has shown itself the fittest to meet the needs of common life. I hold that it established no further claim, and that it is perfectly possible that other thoughts, feelings, and memories, either isolated or in continuous connection, may now be actively conscious, as we say, 'within me,'—in some kind of co-

ordination with my organism, and forming some part of my total individuality. (Myers 301)

Myers's scientific argument is that there is a "subliminal" self or set of thoughts and memories that individuals do not register, but that is nevertheless present. Whereas the theory of unconscious cerebration articulated a unified self that simply acted without consciousness, the theory of the subconscious outlined a self that always acted consciously, but some of that conscious action was remembered by a different self within the individual. Later in this passage, though, Myers gestures to the hope of reconciling those selves: "I conceive it possible that at some future time, under changed conditions, I may recollect it all; I may assume these various personalities under one single consciousness…" (Myers 301). Myers does not think the subliminal consciousness indicates pathology; nevertheless, he suggests here and elsewhere that it is a goal to *know* one's hidden consciousness. For Myers, as for other thinkers, most individuals required a therapy of sorts—bringing hidden consciousness into accord with the everyday, known consciousness.

Several years later, James published his *Principles of Psychology*, in which he too addressed the idea of the subconscious. Citing Janet, James argues that hysteria proves that there is "*a secondary consciousness* entirely cut off from the primary or normal one, but susceptible of being *tapped* and made to testify to its existence in various odd ways" (James *Principles* 203, italics his). Further, James declares that "it must be admitted, therefore, that *in certain persons,* at least, *the total possible consciousness may be split into parts which coexist but mutually ignore each other,* and share the objects of knowledge between them" (James *Principles* 206, italics his). In these examples James adopts Janet's and Myers's theories of the subconscious, and as such, firmly dismisses the new psychologists idea of the

unconscious. In so doing, James knowingly joins the group of psychologists characterized by the new psychologists as backward and antimodern.

The debate about consciousness, though, also reveals an underlying disagreement about mysticism. As historian Nathan Hale notes, "to psychologists who prided themselves on their scientific Wundtian heritage the subconscious of the Franglo-American school of psychotherapy, and of Josiah Royce and William James, represented a regression to the 'occultism' of the Middle Ages" (Hale *Freud* 249). For those committed to the new psychology, the hiddenness implicit in the idea of the divided consciousness implied a kind of occultism and fetishization of unknowability or of the mystical rather than the purely scientific. Experimental psychology promised that all could be seen, charted, and placed in correct atomized categories; to Myers and James, though, layers of consciousness and openness to the mystical allowed for a better understanding of the whole person.

With respect to *Of One Blood*, the idea of the subconscious helps to explain the psychology that Reuel is interested in, and also his treatment of Dianthe. Reuel assumes there is a layer of consciousness that is unknown to her main layer of consciousness. He and Aubrey do try to hide this subliminal consciousness for some time, but it inevitably comes out when she's in a trance. The Franglo-American school thus serves as the model of individual psychology practiced by Reuel and Dianthe in *Of One Blood*; nevertheless, the idea of the subconscious also informs the novel's generic moves and claims about the history of slavery in America. To see this at work we need to examine the novel's indebtedness to melodrama.

Melodramatic Subconscious

Hopkins's interest in the alternative psychologies of consciousness often coincides with the novel's moments of emotional excess. Indeed, the novel's use of the mode of melodrama reinforces a sense of subliminal consciousness. Susan Gillman writes of melodrama that it is a "'mode of excess' (rather than a definitive dramatic genre) that cuts across periods, cultures, and art forms" (Gillman *Blood* 16). Melodrama as a literary form is most often defined by its excesses of emotion, and as such, is often thought of as regressive, emotional, and non-rational. This may be why, according to Janet Gabler-Hover, "In the Harlem Renaissance, Hopkins was dismissed as a writer of sentimental as opposed to serious fiction" (Gabler-Hover 238). Melodrama as a mode also insists that another, secret self may be displayed by the physical body even if the mind doesn't or won't recognize it. Further, the melodramatic moments in *Of One Blood* suggest that the nation's secret selves may also be revealed by emotional excess. Racialized bodies experiencing emotional excess, then, demonstrate how the past—and specifically in this case the horrifying past of slavery—is always present in a dormant state.

Peter Brooks, whose book *The Melodramatic Imagination* undergirds most conversations on melodrama today, describes melodrama as a literary form that uses excessive emotion to insist that the seemingly-banal everyday is in fact a site of intense drama. Brooks argues that authors such as Honoré de Balzac and Henry James turned to melodrama because "its hyperbolic mode and intensity make it figure more perfectly than would an accurate portrayal of manners what is really at stake for the characters and their relationships" (Brooks 9). Through his idea of the "moral occult"—"the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality"—

Brooks argues that melodrama allows authors to portray the hidden, Manichean battles occurring under the surface of daily activities.

Of One Blood achieves melodramatic status by beginning in the quotidian and growing larger and more sprawling as the novel progresses, inscribing the everyday with epic importance. It opens in the small living quarters of the protagonist, Reuel Briggs, who is studying the "occult sciences," which deal with the mysteries of the soul Briggs' claims are being uncovered in contemporary sciences. Over the opening pages, Reuel contemplates the meaning of his work and his life, and is tormented by concerns over meaninglessness. By the middle of the novel, though, *Of One Blood* has moved to grand, exteriorized settings and concerns. After Reuel marries a woman he has brought back to life—Dianthe—he travels to Ethiopia and discovers the long-hidden city of Telassar, where he finds out that he is the long-awaited king of the highly civilized and scientifically advanced people there. Reuel's work in Telassar not only brings success to himself, but also serves to rewrite the history of evolution and to recuperate an African American legacy.[13] Indeed, as the most advanced nation on earth that was established long before white civilization, Telassar proves both the advancement of those with African heritage, and also that those with African heritage were the first civilized peoples on earth. *Of One Blood* begins as a small, intimate story, but progresses rapidly into a novel about civilization itself.

By the end of the novel, *Of One Blood* returns to the intimate, though this time it is an intimate story situated in family heritage and the history of race in America. Thus, the final thread of the novel bridges the intimate and the immanently historical. Just as Reuel prepares

[13] Several recent books detail turn-of-the-century African American engagement with and mobilization of the sciences and social sciences to rewrite narratives of evolution and civilization. See in particular Brad Evans's wonderful book *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920*, and in particular his chapter on Du Bois, and Wilson Moses's excellent *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History*.

to lead the people of Telassar, he learns that Dianthe is being seduced and held captive by Aubrey. Shortly thereafter he finds out that not only is this the case, but it also true that he, Dianthe, and Aubrey are all siblings—children born of the wrongs of slavery. The novel thus returns to the intimate but in so doing only makes *Of One Blood* even more epic in scope. The novel seems to insist that the intimate always unfolds onto a larger story, especially with regards to the history of slavery and racial oppression in America.

Whereas Brooks in his study of melodrama is predominantly interested in personal, moral conflicts, Hopkins's *Of One Blood* suggests that such conflicts may be more than just personal. Hopkins's use of melodrama has been carefully documented and analyzed by Susan Gillman and Sean McCann. Gillman, studying Hopkins alongside other "race melodramas" of the turn of the twentieth century, argues that these "race melodramas" made visible the "hyperinvisible" realm of "American race relations." "This excess," according to Gillman, "is not…a domain of the unseen and unspeakable that must be made legible and expressive; it is, instead, paradoxically, hyperinvisible, as in the paradigmatic case of the Invisible Empire of the Klan" (Gillman *Blood* 18). Thus, like other melodramas at the turn of the century, Hopkins's *Of One Blood* mobilizes melodrama as a mode to put in relief the history of racial oppression. This works in part through the melodramatic use of the body. Peter Brooks describes the "melodramatic body" as "a body seized by meaning" (Brooks in McCann 791); Sean McCann, writing specifically about Hopkins's novel *Contending Forces*, argues that "no physical expression marks that possession more clearly than the moment when consciousness and will temporarily give way before the forces that dominate a fictional universe" (McCann 791). McCann thus suggests that women in Hopkins's melodramas serve as symbols of history. The task these women face, then, "is first to represent the struggle to

recover a bitter history" (McCann 791-2). In *Of One Blood*, Dianthe's moments of loss of consciousness and will serve to recover America's "bitter history" of slavery and rape. Further, McCann explains, "each of [Hopkins's plots] relates a melodramatic pre-history to the story's main events, and in each of them the central issue is how this past will be linked to the novel's present" (McCann 792). Not only does Dianthe recover the past, but the novel attempts to bridge the gaps between that past and the present. Thus, the mode of melodrama allows the novel to bridge the past and present, and also to insist that that past is always present in the seemingly quotidian everyday.

Pauline Hopkins's melodrama of consciousness limns a post-reconstruction United States grappling with something like a subconscious memory chain of slavery. Excesses of emotion, though, are never only about awareness; they are also always about control. Just as *Of One Blood* posits divided consciousness as a way to understand the history of slavery in the United States, so too the novel tests the possibility of controlling consciousness. In other words, the novel questions the limits and power of the will. *Of One Blood* turns to William James to find alternative theories of unhealthy and healthy will.

Theories of the Will

Advances in the new psychology were connected with larger cultural shifts in the United States. Edward Reed notes that while changes in psychology "were intellectual changes worked out in universities and experimental laboratories," the rise of the new psychology was also "related to broader trends in American culture," in particular the way "nervous and muscular health, not head shape or size, became the marker of virtue, knowledge, and sometimes, piety" (White 51). Specifically, the rise of the new psychology can be connected to modern ideas related to the will as a force tied simultaneously to manly

restraint and the threat of no restraint. William James, exemplar of the alternative to the new psychology, also exemplifies this idea of will. *Of One Blood* explicitly tests James's theories of will, but ultimately uses an idea of soul to suggest an alternative to both the new psychology and James's manly will.[14]

At the turn of the century, American and European thinkers conceived of a strong will as one that could control the self. John R. Reed explains that this particular idea of will was new in the nineteenth century: "the movement [of conceptions of will] from Romantic to Victorian years is a movement also from aggressive heroism, or what might be called the imperial will, to controlled heroism, or the reflective will" (9). As Reed makes clear, the will as self control was still associated with a kind of manly heroism. Indeed, nineteenth-century theorists of the mind "assumed some power of the self, ordinarily defined one way or another as will, that could oversee [the] process of self-government" (John R. Reed 133). The will, then, could protect one from insanity; at the same time, theorists considered a deteriorated will itself a form of psychological illness. In other words, the will could protect people from external and internal forces, but it could also leave people open to control by those same external and internal forces. In discussing a literary genre often understood as invested in the dual nature of will, naturalism, Jennifer Fleissner explains the double-sided coin of will: a subject is "either the absolute victim of merciless external forces, or…those forces' very mercilessness provides an opportunity for the *truly* manly subject to assert his own equally outsized power" (9).[15] William James took great interest in this problem of will, ultimately

[14] For excellent work on James's early relationship to science and scientific thinkers, see Christoph Irmscher,*The Poetics of Natural History*. For biographical work on James, see Gerald E. Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought*.
[15] For more on manliness and will, see Gail Bederman.

advocating habit as a way to control those "merciless forces."[16] To James, one must develop a strong will in order to thrive. As I will show, *Of One Blood* questions the usefulness of such a rubric of will for black Americans.

In *The Principles of Psychology,* James gives his most developed theory of will. In several sections of his *Principles*, James is interested in what produces the bodily movements that are "the only *direct* outward effects of our will," and "the mechanism of the production of these voluntary movements" (767). One of James's main arguments is that an idea and even experience of an action must be present in the brain at least once for involuntary action to be possible. James argues, "when a particular movement, having once occurred in a random, reflex, or involuntary way, has left an image of itself in the memory, then the movement can be desired again, proposed as an end, and deliberately willed" (768). But we do not need to perform it ourselves: "if performed by another person, we of course *see* it, or we *feel* it" and thus gain enough knowledge of it to make willful movement possible (768).

According to James, our voluntary, willed actions are often remote actions in the sequence of events. In other words, the voluntary action is a desire to see a potentially remote action. I may will myself to pick up the ball, but the only image in my brain is then the consequence of me picking up the ball, but not all the intermediate actions—moving my arm forward, reaching my hand down, opening my fingers, grasping the ball, and raising my arm. James argues, "it is the anticipation of the movement's sensible effects, resident or remote,

[16] Eve Sedgwick's account of will at the turn of the century suggests that the end of the nineteenth century was a turning point in ideas of the will. Writing about the idea of addiction, Sedgwick argues that addiction as a concept came into circulation at the same time that people, in particular in America, began conceiving of will as something like a zero-sum game: either you have complete control, or you have none. For Sedgwick, that history of the idea of will explains today's prevalence of addictions, ranging from shopping addictions to addictions to exercise. See especially *Tendencies*.

and sometimes very remote indeed" that forward voluntary action. Will functions by imagining specific ends to actions, not by imagining the steps of those actions.

James argues that the will causes the beginning of a voluntary act, but that voluntary act often turns involuntary very quickly. For instance, James explains, "a man says to himself, 'I must change my shirt,' and involuntarily he has taken off his coat, and his fingers are at work in their accustomed manner on his waistcoat-buttons, etc." (*Principles* 788). Further, we perform *better* when we are not straining to think consciously about the action: "we walk a beam better the less we think of the position of our feet upon it" (*Principles* 789). We may or may not need an "additional mental antecedent in the shape of a fiat, decision, consent, [or] volitional mandate," but "we are then aware of nothing between the conception and the execution" (*Principles* 790). Indeed, "all sorts of neuro-muscular processes come between, of course, but we know absolutely nothing of them" (*Principles* 790).

According to James, healthiness of will depends on the control of the impulsive nature of consciousness. James argues, "there is a certain normal ratio in the impulsive power of different sorts of motive, which characterizes what may be called ordinary healthiness of will" (*Principles* 799). James argues that an unhealthy will may take several forms: "the action may follow the stimulus or idea too rapidly, leaving no time for the arousal of restraining associates" or "although the associates may come, the ratio which the impulsive and inhibitive forces normally bear to each other may be distorted, and we then have a *will which is perverse*" and either "obstructed" or "explosive" (*Principles* 799). Pauline Hopkins' novel presents both of these forms of will perversity in the characters of Dianthe and Aubrey.

Hopkins echoes James not only to portray the melodramatic subconscious of slavery, but also in order to question the usefulness of the concept of the will. *Of One Blood* suggests

that the concept of the will may further entrap African American women such as Dianthe. Dianthe, whose life seems determined by the actions of the men around her, is unable to find strength or psychological balance through the idea of will; instead, she just identifies herself over and over again as unable to have control of herself. James advocated a strong will as integral to psychological wholeness, but *Of One Blood* insists that will may not be possible or even useful for African Americans in post-reconstruction America.

Dianthe's condition resembles what William James identifies as "abulia," or "the obstructed will." This situation, according to James, is a morbidity of the will in which "the vision may be wholly unaffected, and the intellect clear, and yet the act either fails to follow or follows in some other way" (*Principles* 806). In other words, individuals with abulia are able to fix their attention on an object and intellectually determine that they would like to do something in relation to that object, but are unable to actually act. James attributes part of this problem to a disconnect between "vision of truth and action," in which "this pungent sense of effective reality will not attach to certain ideas" (*Principles* 806). Thus, abulia prevents a person from believing their sense that acting in a certain way will produce certain results, i.e. that reaching out toward the ball will produce the result of grasping the ball.

Although Dianthe begins the novel by holding an audience "spell-bound" during her performance, she really enters into the story of the novel as a victim of near-death sleep; in a way, then, she really begins her role in the novel without agency. She is so without control, that save Reuel's interventions, she would have died from inability to push herself out of her sleep. As Reuel explains to doctors: "The patient does not respond to any of the ordinary methods of awakening. She would probably lie in this sleep for months, and death ensue

from exhaustion, if stronger remedies are not used to restore the vital force to a normal condition" (Hopkins 30). Her state is a sleep from which she cannot awaken herself.

Dianthe sees Reuel as a source of will or control that can help protect her. This is especially true in the first half of the novel when Reuel becomes known as a medical genius. Over Christmas, when Dianthe joins Reuel and Aubrey at a friend's estate, she laments to Reuel her continued fragile state, and pleads, "Give me the benefit of your powerful will." She continues, speaking as much to herself as to Reuel, "Some time the full power will be mine; and mine shall be thine. In seven months the sick will be restored—she will awake to worldly cares once more" (Hopkins 40). Dianthe's cries demonstrate her sense that Reuel, as a powerful doctor of the mysteries of life, may be able to help replace her lost will. These cries, though, also foreshadow her future return to consciousness, and at that moment, her return to concerns of the world of which she is not yet aware. Nevertheless, her laments do not foreshadow a return to strength and self-determination. In fact, she simply rescinds control to another man.

Sometimes the lack of agency she has is characterized as some other character's power over her. Reuel has power over her (to protect her), as does Aubrey Livingston. After Reuel leaves, her inability to drive her own life heightens, and she reaches her weakest point after the drowing. For weeks after Aubrey drowns Molly and saves himself and Dianthe, "Dianthe lived in another world, unconscious of her own identity…The influence which Livingston had acquired rendered her quiescent in his hands…" (Hopkins 166). The narrator explains, "her mind [was] weakened by hypnotic experiments" (Hopkins 171). After this accident and Aubrey's subsequent retreat to the woods, she was so physically and mentally weak that she could be controlled by almost anyone else. Shortly after moving to the woods

with Aubrey (against her will), Dianthe wanders into the forest and meets Mira, an African American woman who later turns out to be Dianthe, Aubrey, and Reuel's mother. When Dianthe meets Mira and Mira calls her into her house, the narrator notes that Dianthe seemed to "have lost her own will in another's" (Hopkins 174). In this scene we know the narrator indicates that she is following Mira's will, but the sentence construction also emphasizes Dianthe's complete loss of will. Dianthe's condition of will, then, is not quite hypnotism or mesmerism, because she is conscious of wanting to act otherwise. Instead, it is an inability to trust that what she envisions as the way she wants to act is actually possible.

Dianthe represents a weak or ineffective will, but *Of One Blood* also details the problem of an excess of will, a condition James theorizes as an "explosive will." In an explosive will, there are very few inhibitions, and "impulses seem to discharge so promptly into movements that inhibitions get no time to arise" (James *Principles* 800). The explosive will can take two forms: in the first form, the person has a "mercurial" or "dare-devil" temperament. The second form looks more like obsession, as "the strength of the impulsive idea is preternaturally exalted, and what would be for most people the passing suggestion of a possibility becomes a gnawing, craving urgency to act" (*Principles* 803). Interestingly, James terms "passion of love" for everyone (even if sane) "monomania," a form of obsession linked to the explosive will. In his view, "it can coexist with contempt and even hatred for the 'object' which inspires it, and whilst it lasts the whole life of the man is altered by its presence" (*Principles* 804).

Aubrey seems to figure as a person with an explosive will due to his obsession with Dianthe. At the same time, Aubrey's will seems almost to take over him, simultaneously making him fully will and fully without will. Aubrey's evolution towards being will

personified is tangled up in his move towards evil, and these twin developments are surprising given where he begins. When we first meet Aubrey, his looks and attitude are sunny—easy, calm, and even-keeled. He comes to Reuel's living quarters on a cold, windy night when Reuel, moody and intemperate, is deep in the study of psychology and mysticism. The novel introduces him as the man who saved Reuel from near-destitution in his early years of schooling, and Reuel is described as paying Aubrey the tribute of his "affection and worship" for his kindnesses. Aubrey enters and immediately "stretched his full length luxuriously in the only easy chair the room afforded" (Hopkins 6). In a room of gloomy, difficult temperament and weather, Aubrey finds the one site of relaxation. Although he engages Reuel in conversation about good and evil, and the hidden self (forshadowing his transformation), Aubrey finally insists that Reuel join him for a concert, because "the blacker the night, the greater the need of amusement," and chides Reuel, saying, "you go out too little" (Hopkins 8). Aubrey, then, initially joins the novel as a figure of ease, amusement, and loyalty.

In his encounters with Dianthe, though, Aubrey sheds his easygoing nature; he simultaneously exerts force and, in so doing, seems to fall victim to some other force. He first becomes enchanted with Dianthe over the Christmas holiday. Watching Dianthe talking to Reuel while in a trance, Aubrey is said to "liste[n] and loo[k] in a "trance" of his own, "his keen artistic sense fully aroused and appreciative…losing himself…" (Hopkins 40). Key in this scene is the implication that Aubrey is mesmerized by Dianthe, and as such, Dianthe unknowingly exerts her power over Aubrey, but then he incorporates this enchantment into himself. From this moment on, Aubrey becomes obsessed with Dianthe, and pits himself against his unknowing friend, Reuel. Aubrey is not just put in a trance, he welcomes that

trance state, and allows a mysterious power to take control over his actions. He welcomes not just the obsession with Dianthe, but also the future wrongdoings the obsession seems to produce. When Dianthe joins Reuel and Livingston's Christmas party, Aubrey thinks of Dianthe, "she had the glory of heaven in her voice, and in her face the fatal beauty of man's terrible sins" (Hopkins 52). He gives up control, and embraces the harm he will cause. Aubrey's obsession with Dianthe thus takes on a character of will—intentionality—even as the obsession seems to control Aubrey.

Aubrey's obsession takes on a controlling force over those around him when he first speaks of it to Dianthe. After Reuel has left for Ethiopia, Molly Vance, a friend, holds a party at which Dianthe and Aubrey are present. When someone calls for music, Dianthe moves in a trance to the piano, and beings to sing a play for the first time since she has lost her memory. Upon waking from her trance, she remembers her past prior to her sleeping death, but cannot recall her time with Reuel. Attempting to put the pieces together, Dianthe turns to Aubrey for guidance, and asks him to tell him about her past. Aubrey tells her that Reuel does not know of her racial heritage and will leave her when he finds out. After Dianthe laments her threatened loss of love, Aubrey offers his own love, proclaiming: "I love you better than all in the world. To possess you I am prepared to save you from the fate that must be yours if ever Reuel learns of your origin." His proclamation is a threat, though, as he will help her only if she submits to his love. Upon her exclamation of "Pity me!" he responds, "I can love, but cannot pity." The novel describes Dianthe's emotional response as one of being controlled. Hopkins writes, "In vain the girl sought to throw off the numbing influence of the man's presence. In desperation she tried to defy him, but she knew she had lost her will-power and was but a puppet in the hands of this false friend" (Hopkins 69). The novel

characterizes this moment as a transformation in which Aubrey gains control over Dianthe. Dianthe is, as I have shown elsewhere, portrayed as without will, and Aubrey as fully in control—despite that control coming from an uncontrollable obsession.

Aubrey characterizes that uncontrollable passion as simultaneously empowering him to have control over others, and also eliminating all power he may have over himself. Days after Aubrey first gains control over Dianthe, he reads one of Reuel's letters to Dianthe, and lashes out over Reuel's love for Dianthe, and his "his *right* to love and care" for her. When Dianthe tries to convince him to have pity and love for Reuel and Molly, Aubrey exclaims, "Do you think I have room to pity Reuel—Molly—while my own pain is more than I can bear? Without you my ambition is destroyed, my hope for the future—my life is ruined" (Hopkins 72). In passages like this, Aubrey characterizes himself as not having control over his life; nevertheless, even as Aubrey's will seems to take over himself, it also allows him to control Dianthe. Dianthe is described as wanting to stay away from Aubrey, and yet, "against her will, better promptings and desires, the unfortunate girl is drawn by invisible influences across the room to the man's side" (Hopkins 72). Aubrey continues to exhibit control over Dianthe while he proclaims a lack of control over even himself.

Hopkins's novel presents two characters that fit James's ideas about perversions of the will. Dianthe and Aubrey are each characterized as having an emotional problem tied to a deteriorating or malfunctioning will. In Dianthe's case, she is unable to translate her desires into actions; in Aubrey's case, his will overtakes him to the point of simultaneously allowing him control over others, and yet denying him control over himself. Reuel, then, stands as an alternative to these two options and to James's modern rubric of will, in which a healthy,

strong will leads to self-control. *Of One Blood* instead questions the rubric of will as a useful metric for African Americans in the era of Jim Crow.

Reuel and the Soul

The character of Reuel functions as an alternative to Dianthe and Aubrey, largely because of his access to a spirituality imbued with the sciences of the mind. The novel is interested in religion, and in the relationship between Christianity and psychology, yet Hopkins imagines a very particular kind of religiosity that is imbued with what Gillman calls the occult sciences, and that understands the soul as the purview of both the sciences of the mind and religion. *Of One Blood* suggests that Reuel may be an alternative to the two perverse states of will, but not as an example of self-control and a strong will. Rather, through Reuel, Hopkins imagines what it might be like to step out of the rubric of will. By embracing the possibility that we may not direct our futures, or understand our pasts, Reuel suggests an alternative to will that we may call soul. The idea of soul as Hopkins conceives it is intimately indebted to Christian notions of the soul, but Hopkins incorporates into the Christian soul psychotherapeutic theories of the mind. As such, understanding Reuel as an alternative to will requires reframing this novel as intimately invested in both retaining the vestiges of and reimagining American Protestantism.

The novel most explicitly deals with an explicitly Christian religious tradition when Reuel embraces Telassar as his home, and determines that the people of Telassar need Christianity. The people of Telassar are adamantly not Christian, in particular in not believing in Jesus as the Son of God; nevertheless, these non-Christians practice a form of religion that seems to have many elements of Protestantism. Ai's descriptions of Telassar belief, in fact, highlights monotheism, trinitarianism, and something that sounds a bit like a

metaphorical belief in God on earth (so, an obscured belief in a Messiah). Monotheism shows up immediately, in references to "God"—as opposed to "gods"—and references to a Supreme Being. On Reuel's first day, in fact, he notices a sphinx (connected with polytheistic ancient Egyptians) that includes the following monotheistic engraving: "That which hath been, is now; and that which is to be, hath already been; and God requireth that which is past" (Hopkins 120).

Ai's references to God continue to suggest a monotheistic basis for Telassarian belief, but his references also give his belief a biblical bent. For instance, during Reuel's ceremony of return to Telassar, Ai declares,

> Son of a fallen dynasty, outcast of a sunken people, upon your breast is a lotus lily, God's mark to prove your race and descent. You, Ergamenes, shall begin the restoration of Ethiopia. Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His, and He changeth the times and seasons; He removeth kings and countries, and setteth them up again; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding! He revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him! (Hopkins 123)

Ai's references to God again highlight monotheism, but this passage also alludes to the famous from Ecclesiastes 3 that declares, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ai's references to God and mimicry of biblical (King James Version) language at very least suggests that Hopkins characterizes the Telassarian belief system as a form of monotheism familiar to her readers.

Ai's invocation of the Trinity, though, suggests less familiarity and more similarity. After the ceremony referenced above, Ai invokes the Trinity while describing a religious

structure in the city: "We have a great temple, the one you entered, dedicated to the Supreme or Trinity" (Hopkins 130). Again, Ai references monotheism (the Supreme), but makes that monotheistic God synonymous with a Trinity. At no point does Ai fully explain this Trinity, an issue we may chalk up to the serial nature of publishing, but it is clear that this reference to a trinity happens prior to Ai committing the people of Telassar to Reuel's beliefs. In other words, the Trinity seems to be integral to the Telassarian religion practiced for centuries before Reuel introduces them to Christ.

Ai also evokes a kind of worship that echoes Christianity. As Ai continues to explain the Telassar system of belief, he states "We have services at noon every seventh day, chiefly choral, in praise of the attributes of the Supreme. Our religion is a belief in One Supreme Being, the center of action in all nature. He distributed a portion of Himself at an early age to the care of man who has attained the highest development of any of His terrestrial creatures" (Hopkins 131). Even though Ai does not figure this religion as Christian, the seventh-day worship suggest Christian-like practices. Further, Ai's description of the Supreme distributing a portion of himself to the care of man evokes the Christian idea of a God taking on a human form through Jesus.

Hopkins' encounters between Reuel and Ai look less colonial and more fantasy-like when Ai's descriptions of the Telassarian belief system are mapped onto Reuel's Christian belief system. Ai and Reuel, though, share a more important religious connection: they both envision a religion that combines something like Christianity with psychology and the mesmeric sciences. Ai continues the above statement by saying, "Our religion is a belief in One Supreme Being, the center of action in all nature. He distributed a portion of Himself at an early age to the care of man who has attained the highest development of any of His

terrestrial creatures. We call this ever-living faculty or soul Ego" (Hopkins 131). This final sentence suggests that Telassarian belief is almost Quaker in the sense that God is distributed into each person as a kind of everlasting light. But it is Quaker with a bit of modern psychology; the "ever-living faculty" is called the "Ego."

When Ai and Reuel are engaged in mesmeric activities, they both demonstrate their commitment to a religion that encompasses metaphysical qualities. Later in the novel, Ai quizzes Reuel about his beliefs. He asks, "You believe in the Soul?...As a Personality that continues to live after the body perishes?", to which Reuel answers "Most assuredly!" Ai continues to ask, "You believe that we can hold communion with the living though seas divide and distance is infinite, and our friends who have passed to the future life of light are allowed to comfort us here?" Reuel says that he believes. This conversation moves directly into one about seeing into the future and past. The idea of the Soul is integral to the mystical and psychological interests they share.

Reuel's struggles with religion will recall James's writing not in his *Principles*, but in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and in particular his lecture on saintliness. James claims that a saint becomes that way first by giving up everything. James writes, "by poverty he immolates his exterior possessions; by chastity he immolates his body," but it is only through obedience that he can fully give himself over to God. By obedience, James exclaims, the saint "gives to God all that he yet holds as his own, his two most precious goods, his intellect and his will" (265). This fits Reuel: over the course of the novel he works to more and more give up his own sense of knowledge (and embrace others), and to give up his will. Nevertheless, Reuel's letting go of his will recalls less James's sense of a strong, controlled will, and more James's sense of what a religious will—or absent will—might look like. As

such, Reuel both contests James's predominant sense of healthy will, and also puts into relief James's own ambivalence about will. Reuel, then, figures as a religiously based and psychotherapeutically-infused sense of soul.

When we meet Reuel, he asserts his own will, which sets up a surprising development as he becomes more open to the power of fate, or God. We meet Reuel in his room on that gloomy, rainy day, while he is reading about " 'absurdities' of supernatural phenomena or *mysticism*," his scientific interests (Hopkins 4). After some reading and moody thought, Reuel declares to himself, "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" (Hopkins 4). Alisha Knight characterizes this as Reuel being "determined to succeed despite the disadvantages he faces" (68). What is important about this passage, though, is how the novel later insists that Reuel succeeds not because of his determination, but because of his willingness to let go of control. Rather than succeeding by "will," Reuel seems to enter into "the bourne"—a small stream—and allow the strength of life to flow around him and direct him.

In fact, just paragraphs later the novel describes Reuel looking into the night sky and seeing it as a vision that holds his attention despite his desires: "he tried to move, uneasily conscious that this strange experience was but 'the effect of the imagination,' but he was powerless." After the vision leaves, he "stared about him in a bewildered way like a man awakening from a heavy sleep" (Hopkins 5). Later, "conscious of an odd murmur in his head, which seemed to control his movements, he rose and went toward the window to open it" (Hopkins 5). The novel describes Reuel as mesmerized to the point of not having a will or will-power, despite his earlier declaration. As the novel continues, we learn about his

mystical gifts, and though those around him attribute them to Reuel, Reuel himself continues to describe his actions as partially or fully out of his control.

Even when explaining that Reuel is able to bring people back to life, the narrator describes this gift as non-agential. Reuel ends up in this position when Dianthe falls into a sleep resembling death. Reuel is the only person able to bring her back to life due to his studies, during which he made "his discover": "he had stumbled upon the solution of one of life's problems: *the reanimation of the body after seeming death*" (Hopkins 29, italics hers). At this early stage in the novel, Reuel still thinks of himself as having some control, as evidenced by him taking credit for the discover; nevertheless, the novel articulates him "stumbling" across that discovery. The novel already hints at its suggestions that Reuel may not have complete control, and that the lack of control may work to his benefit.

The novel's account of Reuel's journey to Ethiopia opens with the novel declaring that he not have control over his life, and that this lack of control was a good thing. Although he begins the trip in resigned despair at having "abandoned happiness for duty," he soon finds that "peace returned to his mind." He gains this sense of peace, and finds "some unseen presence spoke to his inner being words of consolation and hope," words that shows "very clearly his own inability to control events, and that his fate was no longer in his own hands but ordered by a being of infinite pity and love" (Hopkins 75-6). Even when Reuel falls into a depression due to Dianthe's supposed death, he is eventually pulled out of the depression by his sense of some larger power. When he searches for the entrance to the hidden ancient city, he stumbles across a hissing snake. "Reuel jumped and stood still. He who had been desirous of death but an hour before obeyed the first law of nature. Who can wonder? It was but the reawakening of life within him" (Hopkins 110). As the narrator continues, this lack of

control takes on a religious tone: "…that care for what has been entrusted to us by Omnipotence, will remain until death has numbed our senses" (Hopkins 110). Indeed, over and over Reuel finds peace when he gives up control.

As the novel develops, the sense of the larger power presents itself not only as coming from the divine, but also as coming from lineage. In other words, Reuel increasingly interprets his own abilities as due not to his own work or effort, but rather to his heritage. Late in the novel, after he has entered Telassar, he imagines his abilities as handed down, generation to generation. The narrator describes:

> Upon Reuel a strange force seemed to be working. If what he heard were true, how great a destiny was his! He had carefully hidden his Ethiopian extraction from the knowledge of the world. It was a tradition among those who had known him in childhood that he was descended from a race of African kings. He remembered his mother well. From her he had inherited his mysticism and occult powers. The nature of the mystic within him was, then, but a dreamlike devotion to the spirit that had swayed his ancestors; it was the shadow of Ethiopia's power. (Hopkins 126)

In this passage, the novel articulates Reuel's powers as "a strange force," "destiny," an inheritance, "nature," and "a dreamlike devotion." Words like "destiny" and "nature" clearly link into the heritage conversations of the turn of the century, but the novel combines that with language that suggests being overtaken by some other power; in fact, the description of the "strange force" and "dreamlike devotion" echoes the language of mesmeric influence. In this passage, Reuel's loss of will is characterized as a combination of ancestry and susceptibility to outside forces, a characterization that sounds like turn of the century concerns about the will, but Hopkins turns those social scientific conversations on their head,

making it a positive thing to be controlled by heritage and outside forces. As importantly, his companions by the end of the novel also characterize his powers as due to heritage. Whereas the beginning of the novel portrays Reuel gaining accolades for his singular genius, the end of the novel describes him simply fulfilling a role he had been destined for since birth. Hopkins turns from praising the power of individual work, study, and will, to suggesting that something like destiny, heritage, or a "strange force" might be of more use to African Americans in post-reconstruction America.

Conclusion

Of One Blood suggests that we think of the soul as a way to understand nations and individuals. Through characterization and the mode of melodrama, *Of One Blood* condemns new psychology's theory of a unified consciousness by portraying how that theory may affect a nation such as the United States. By creating a kind of narrative subliminal consciousness, *Of One Blood* limns a nation haunted by its record of slavery because of the nation's refusal to recognize and integrate into its history past and present horrors such as inequality, abuse, and rape.

Through the character of Reuel, though, Hopkins offers the soul as an alternative to systems of oppression. In a person such as Reuel, the soul is an amalgam of hidden and unhidden consciousness, the divine, and heritage, much of which may be unknown to the individual. In other words, Hopkins's novel encourages African American individuals to understand themselves as more than American narratives may suggest. Further, in contrast to modern narratives of self-control, the novel insists that unknown parts of the soul can only be accessed through letting go of control. As such, the novel critiques the idea that power and control can only be obtained through a strong will—a particularly salient critique for black

Americans in the years following Reconstruction. *Of One Blood* refigures modern American psychology and Protestantism to encourage those bearing the legacies of slavery to look within themselves for relief, and to open themselves to the capacities of their own souls.

Sweet and Clean like a Washing Machine:

Transformation and the Crowd in American Pentecostalism

Nothing so well demonstrates the strange convergence of race, democracy, and religious transformation in turn-of-the-twentieth-century American writing about religious experience as the conflict between white Pentecostal preacher Charles Parham and the leaders of the interracial Azusa Street revival. For the first few months of the Los Angeles revival, which began in the fall of 1906, organizers described Parham as the father of the Azusa mission, in part due to his vital role in the development of the theology of tongues, and in part due to his mentorship of Azusa Street leader, William Seymour. After a much-heralded visit in October of 1906, though, Parham denounced the worship as infected with "hypnotic influences, familiar-spirit influences, spiritualistic influences, mesmeric influences, and all kinds of spells," and "people crowded together around the altar, and laying across one another like hogs, blacks and whites mingling" (Parham 329, qtd. in MacRobert 60). Such images rendered religious transformation in the period's language of atavistic devolution to an earlier state of civilization.[1]

The editors of *The Apostolic Faith*, the periodical of the Azusa Street revival, published thirteen times between 1906 and 1908, responded to Parham's visit not by addressing the charges of hypnosis or developmental regression, but rather by suggesting a modification in the leadership structure of the movement. In December of 1906, the periodical published the following statement:

> Some have been asking if Dr. Chas. Parham is the leader of this movement. We can answer, no he is not the leader of this movement of Azusa Mission. We thought of

[1] For the most thorough study of atavism in the late nineteenth century, see Dana Seitler's *Atavistic Tendencies.*

having him to be our leader and so stated in our paper, before waiting on the Lord. But the Lord commenced settling us down, and we saw that the Lord should be our leader. (1-2)

The strikingly different language used in the discussion of the same event begs these questions: why did Azusa Street worshippers decide that charges of hypnosis and devolution spoke to issues of social structure, and what was at stake for Parham when he combined religious and atavistic transformation?

My work suggests that answers to these questions may be found by tracing linkages between crowd psychologists and Pentecostals using *The Apostolic Faith*. For instance, it is no coincidence that only five years after the start of the Azusa Street revival, sociologist Charles Cooley echoed Parham when explaining that the crowd creates "a collective mind of a low order which stimulates and unifies the cruder impulses of its members. The men are there but they 'descend to meet'" (Cooley 150). Cooley contributed to a much broader conversation on crowds that conceived of groups of people as moving down the evolutionary ladder, a conversation I argue stretched beyond the social sciences. Besides an occasional passing remark, however, these crowd psychologists and American Pentecostals rarely actually addressed each other. In this chapter, I uncover the ways Pentecostal writers modified and were modified by psychological formulations. Further, putting psychologists and Pentecostals in conversation shows that ecstatic religious experience worked as an imaginative category of discourse through which writers debated blackness in America.

This chapter analyzes Pentecostal descriptions of ecstatic experience published in *The Apostolic Faith* in order to delve into the ways believers addressed blackness in the United States. Comparisons with crowd psychologists show that contributors to the periodical

implicitly suggest that embodied religious practice may allow black Americans equality.[2] Writers portraying the interracial revival rarely explicitly mention race, and when they do, it is in order to prove that race is not an issue on Azusa Street, but race most certainly was an issue at the Azusa Street revival, held in multiracial Los Angeles of the turn of the century. Despite the radicalism of an interracial revival in Los Angeles during the United States' Jim Crow period, *The Apostolic Faith* seems bereft of an obvious position on the place of African Americans in the United States; by drawing out the conversation between crowd psychologists' individualistic and devolutionary psychology of crowds and Pentecostals' theology of transformation, I will show that apostolic believers figured ecstatic religion as a political alternative to American racial inequality.

To excavate a Pentecostal politics is first to advocate an apostolic politics, which runs counter to a tendency in contemporary writing on religious history to see early Pentecostals as focused solely on that which lies beyond the earth. In one of the few recent texts on Pentecostalism and science, James K.A. Smith and Amos Yong put it bluntly: "when scholars or journalists think of Pentecostals, visions of laboratories or particle accelerators don't usually come to mind" (1).[3] Rather, scholars look to Pentecostalism for emotionalism. Descriptions of ecstatic religious practices have long attracted scholars across disciplines, in part because of the lush descriptions of physical displays—weeping, falling prostrate, and tongues: experiences literary and cultural critic Harold Bloom insists helped "Pentecostalism

[2] Although, as Walsh and Blumhofer note, Azusa Street included a broader understanding of race than simply a black/white dichotomy, the periodical and the writings of turn-of-the-century psychologists suggest that ecstatic religious experiences fostered conversations specifically about African Americans in the United States.

[3] Very few texts theorize or historicize Pentecostal or charismatic engagement with the sciences. James K.A. Smith and Amos Yong's recent interdisciplinary book (and the related articles) address contemporary perspectives. See Smith and Yong, *Science and the Spirit*. Also see Brown's work on charismatic perspectives on faith healing and prayer, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*.

[break] through every snare devised by the supposedly rational structure of our society," making it a form of "American shamanism" (179-80). Like Bloom, historian Alan Hollenweger highlights the non-rational, explaining Pentecostal communication as "not verbal agreement but a correspondence of sentiments" (xvii). Similarly, sociologist David Martin contrasts this non-rational impulse with modern America, describing early Pentecostalism as "stomping alongside American modernization" (5).[4] Scholars often align this non-rationality with a primitive impulse, what Bloom terms a "primal abyss" and Martin dubs "a primal layer of spiritual energy" (Bloom 179, Martin 5). In his pivotal contribution to Pentecostal history, *Heaven Below*, Grant Wacker describes how difficult it can be to reconcile Pentecostal heavenly aspiration with earthly existence. Believers and observers alike claimed, "other Christians behaved pragmatically, according to a calculus of self-interest, not Holy Ghost folk" (Wacker 9). In a strange twist, this means that the bulk of scholarly work on early Pentecostalism "tend[s] to relegate religious motives to a secondary role," such that scholars supply the "rational" account of religious ecstasies when Pentecostals seem to fail to adequately explain their beliefs and actions. Religious historians of Pentecostalism either explain transcendence through materialism—i.e., Holy Ghost baptism occurs as a response to economic desperation—or they explain transcendence en masse as a purely emotional phenomenon.

This chapter registers concern with what Robert Orsi and, more recently, Tracy Fessenden identify as the invisibility of "good" religious practice, and the heightened visibility of "bad," seemingly non-rational religious practice, particularly in American

[4] For a good example of a writer who approaches the relationship between "the modern" and religious practices with a bit more complexity, see Orsi, in particular "When 2+2 = 5" and *Between Heaven and Earth.*

religious history.[5] For example, Pentecostal writers are described as communicating out of emotion, despite the fact that their practices speak to broader debates about consciousness prevalent amongst turn-of-the-century social scientists. To be fair, it is difficult not to attribute a kind of studied non-rationalism to early believers when they insisted on a connection with God not mediated by logic. Wacker notes one pastor who went so far as to claim: "I detest and despise…this higher criticism, rationalism, and this seeking on the part of ungodly professors to do away with objectionable parts of the Word of God," disavowing both intellectual thought and academic tradition (211). Further, the periodical of the Azusa Street Revival abounds with descriptions of ecstatic religious experiences that highlight emotion over reason. It is clear that the apostolic believers of Azusa Street wished to broadcast their religious experience as an anti-intellectual, non-rational, crowd-driven religion.

Yet this dual move of explaining religion materially and removing earthly motivation from believers means that critics often overlook what Wacker rightly calls "the genius of the Pentecostal movement": "its ability to hold two seemingly incompatible impulses in productive tension" (10). In other words, what academics miss is the apostolic intersection between earthly and heavenly concerns, and the ways transcendent practice may intersect with daily life and even science. I would like to attempt to address Smith and Yong's question, "must pentecostalism entail what most would expect—a head-in-the-sand ignoring of science, or worse, an anti-intellectual rejection of science?" (2). Where Smith and Yong find a Pentecostal engagement with science outside of ecstatic practice, I instead argue that

[5] Fessenden argues that an invisible form of American Protestantism undergirds American secularism. See Fessenden 1-12. Orsi discusses this explicitly in "On Not Talking to the Press," 19.

ecstatic apostolic practice indirectly attended to political and social ills at the turn of the century, and particularly to racial inequality.

Lived concerns with race are evident in both the predominantly racially segregated form of Pentecostalism in America today, and the rocky beginnings of the movement, a movement born from the relationship between Charles Parham and William Seymour.[6] Parham founded and first put enacted the key tenant of Pentecostal theology—believers must experience speaking in tongues—and Seymour took Parham's teachings to Los Angeles to found the Azusa Street Revival.[7] *The Apostolic Faith* historically documents these developments. But by reading *The Apostolic Faith* as also a racial document, I will demonstrate how its rhetoric offers alternative approaches to racial inequality in America.

While the apostolic movement expanded nationally and internationally through William Seymour, Parham first codified the practice of glossolalia (speaking in tongues).[8] Years before Parham and Seymour met, the former founded a Christian healing school in Topeka, Kansas, that in 1900 he dedicated to determining the biblical sign of the Spirit's presence—speaking in tongues—and then to achieving this experience.[9] In early January of 1901, while Parham was out of town, a student named Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues,

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[6] For more information on racism in the early years of Pentecostalism, see Iain MacRobert *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA*.

[7] Wacker notes that others of "Parham's disciples bore the Apostolic Faith to Chicago, and then to urban areas of the Northeast, especially New York City" (6). But, as Randall J. Stevens notes, *The Apostolic Faith* became a cornerstone periodical, and as such help to establish the Los Angeles revival as a sort of epicenter. Perhaps most importantly, though, Pentecostals today (especially in African American majority denominations) favor Seymour over Parham as the founder of the faith.

[8] Wacker has a good explanation of Parham, especially showing that he didn't appear out of a vacuum, but that his move to connect tongues to a particular theology was instrumental in the early Pentecostal movement. See Wacker, 5-6.

[9] Pentecostalism built off of the Holiness movement's two-step progression from conversion to sanctification. Jacobsen delineates out how this "three-step view" played out specifically at the Azusa Street Revival. See Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit,* 69-74.

inaugurating the apostolic faith, and Parham and the rest of the school soon followed.[10] As Parham's work in Kansas expanded, he shifted his sites to Houston, Texas, where he met and instructed Seymour. As an African American believer, Seymour listened to Parham's teaching from a chair just outside the classroom, yet soon felt God calling him to abandon his holiness roots and take the teachings of Pentecostalism to Los Angeles. Seymour and the movement rented the now-fabled Methodist church at 312 Azusa Street, and thus began the interracial and widely successful Azusa Street mission.

For some time, Parham enjoyed the status of "father" of the mission, but when he found his movement eclipsed by Seymour's interracial group, he turned to accusations of hypnotism and unholy transformation to discredit the group. The Azusa periodical subtly documents the process of the split, while Parham's memoirs fill in the more graphic details of his denunciation. In the second issue of *The Apostolic Faith* (October, 1906), the editor trumps Parham's expected visit, writing, "Before another issue of this paper, we look for Bro. Parham in Los Angeles." In expressing anticipation of Parham's arrival, the writer describes Parham as "a brother who is full of divine love and whom the Lord raised up five years ago to spread his truth" (3). The reunion should have been celebratory, but instead, when Parham visited, he gave a scathing review of the work at Azusa Street, referencing hypnotism and racial mixing as the two primary pieces of evidence of ungodliness.

Parham, concerned with the transformative power of groups of people, could have found sympathy with crowd psychologists. Part of a subset of the burgeoning social sciences, crowd psychologists such as French founder Gustave Le Bon and American psychologist Charles Cooley warned readers of the degenerating power of crowds. Unlike Parham, these

[10] Parham claims this happened on New Year's Day thus inaugurating a new century of the Spirit's activity, but Cook insists it was weeks later.

writers applied theories of crowds to democratic political movements. American crowd psychologies provide scientific backing for the disenfranchisement codified in Jim Crow policies, but early Pentecostal descriptions of ecstatic experiences contest psychologists' claims. By highlighting the overlapping concerns between psychologists and Pentecostals, I demonstrate that Pentecostal conceptualization of the individual—its boundaries, its stability—creates a politics of transformation aimed at countering Jim Crow America.

Crowds and the Compromised Individual

Apostolic writings on ecstasy and racial equality derived from a combination of specific Pentecostal theology and creative application of that theology. The apostolic revival in Los Angeles began with a theology that required believers to open themselves up to the Holy Spirit. Whereas Protestant Evangelical groups defined conversion as a one-step experience, at the end of the nineteenth century Holiness groups added a second step called sanctification in which God—as an act of grace—cleansed the believer of sinfulness.[11] At the turn of the twentieth century, early Pentecostals added the third step of Holy Ghost baptism, manifested by speaking in tongues, an addition that drew on Acts 2: 2-47.[12] The baptism of the Holy Spirit followed justification and sanctification as the third part of what Douglas Jacobsen calls "a three-step view of the progression of the Christian life" (68). Through Holy Ghost baptism, the Spirit was thought to "aid the fully saved and sanctified believer in the

[11] As a result of this theology, many Holiness groups used the name "perfectionists," emphasizing the possibility of perfection in a lifetime. Although John Wesley and Charles Finney—the theological fathers of the Holiness movement—thought it possible that sanctification was a lifelong process, leaders such as the dynamic Phoebe Palmer trumpeted crisis-like moment of complete cleansing. The crisis of perfection usually came with varied, unspecified physical manifestations that often served as evidence of God's work.

[12] For more on early American Pentecostalism, see Wacker, Cox, Synan, and Jacobsen. Blumhofer addresses the start of the Assemblies of God denomination in *Restoring the Faith*, and Stephens has an excellent comparison of Holiness and Pentecostal movements.

ministry of the gospel to others" (Jacobsen 70).[13] Most importantly, glossolalia meant opening ones physical body to the uses of the Holy Spirit, whatever those uses may be.

The Azusa Street commitment to Spirit baptism illustrates overlapping concerns between early Pentecostals and turn-of-the-century psychologists: both groups demonstrated an interest in understanding the boundaries of the individual – physical and spiritual – and the way glossolalia bridges the boundaries. Apostolic writers anxiously signal this overlap when they confuse the sciences of the mind with religious ecstasy. Sister John Woodruff's declaration that "I was fearful [speaking in tongues] was hypnotism till I got right hungry for it," suggests an awareness of and discomfort with overlapping interests between psychologists and Pentecostals (3). That psychologists shared with Pentecostals an interest in the permeability of the human psyche is not surprising given the intellectual and theoretical shifts in American psychology over the nineteenth century. The well-documented mid- to late-century imbrication between mesmeric psychology and Protestantism set the groundwork for the meeting of apostolic religion and the science of consciousness, and Parham's earlier reference of hypnosis and mesmerism reflects this historical formation. But the turn of the century saw a new institutionalization of the social sciences, and as such, it is Parham's addition of developmental regression to existing discussions of hypnosis/mesmerism that best evokes American psychology. Crowd psychology, perhaps more than any other field in the social sciences, connected the idea of permeable consciousness to evolution in order to warn against the manipulability of seemingly stable racial categories. The unique formulation of an infectious developmental regression in crowds can be attributed to the popular French psychologist and anti-revolutionist Gustave

[13] From the beginning there were exceptions to the three-way process. For instance, in Chicago, W.H.Durham postulated a two-step process in which justification and sanctification were simultaneous. Durham was expelled from the Apostolic Faith Church by Seymour.

Le Bon. As the inspiration for the form of crowd psychology that took hold in America, Le Bon demonstrates how social scientists combined analyses of individual boundaries with arguments about race in order to condemn mass political involvement.

By declaring the end of the nineteenth century the "era of the crowds" in 1895, the popular French psychologist christened the Western study of crowds (*le foule*). Le Bon is widely known for "both inaugurat[ing] and popularize[ing] the subdiscipline of collective psychology" (Schnapp and Tiews x). Le Bon's synthesis is developed most clearly in his text *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, first published in French in 1895, with an English edition in 1896. This text reflects his concern with France's move away from the rule of a few in favor of the rule of irrational crowds (Le Bon xv).

Le Bon characterized crowds as fundamentally irrational, "little adapted to reasoning" and "quick to act." His primary goal was to warn against the revolutionary political strife growing in Europe during the nineteenth century (xvi). He laments "the progressive growth of the power of the masses" and their "determination to utterly destroy society as it now exists, with a view to making it hark back to that primitive communism which was the normal condition of all human groups before the dawn of civilisation" (Le Bon xv-xvi). The French revolutions of the nineteenth century, then, scared Le Bon of a government controlled by an unthinking mob.[14] He feared, Clark McPhail explains, "the impact of a popularly based democracy on the future of France" (3).

[14] Robert A. Nye argues that "by the 1890's, crowd phenomena had become or were becoming an integral part of the public sphere, and therefore a part of the national struggle for power that was taking place everywhere between old liberal elites (and their aristocratic allies) and leaders and spokesmen for the newly enfranchised masses. Crowds were no longer merely *representative* of local or corporate interests but dramatic *representations* of powerful social and cultural forces in the modern nation-state." See Nye, 46-47. Susanna Barrows insists that "all crowd psychologists were acutely sensitive to contemporary uprisings and violence in French political and social life." See Barrows, 5.

While Le Bon anticipated irrational mass rule in France, he did not argue that French collectives were comprised of irrational and easily manipulated people, but rather that crowds could create an irrational body out of any aggregation of people, a principle he calls the "*law of the mental unity of crowds*" (2, emphasis in original). This law dictates that "whoever be the individuals that compose [the crowd], however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation" (5-6).

To explain how any group could become a crowd, Le Bon turned to the ideas of contagion and suggestibility developed by the French Nancy and Salpêtrière schools of hypnotism research.[15] Referencing this research, Le Bon explains that "by various processes an individual may be brought into such a condition that, having entirely lost his conscious personality, he obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradiction with his character and habits" (10-11). In crowds, Le Bon argued, the influence of repetition and the mass of bodies acted on individuals like hypnosis, vitiating individual control and thus making people more suggestible. "We see, then, that the disappearance of the conscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction…. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will" (12). Thus, the first step toward crowd-formation was rendering individuals suggestible. Suggestibility made them irrational, unreasonable and easy to manipulate. While he warns against suggestibility, Le

[15] Le Bon argues that three causes determine crowd formation—contagion, suggestion, and a feeling invincibility, the last of which is the least important, and as such I will not address. See Le Bon, 10-11.

Bon's greater worry is a group's mind spreading like an infection. Le Bon states that "[contagion] must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order…. In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest" (10).[16] Through the spread of the rule of the masses, Le Bon insists, a group of people may lose the ability to think rationally.

Le Bon is most famous for applying theories of hypnosis and suggestion to groups of people. I want to argue that his embodiment of the masses through a range of epidemiological metaphors established crowd studies as a venue in which to codify racial inequality. For example, turning to more specific language than that of "contagion," Le Bon asserts, "In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power, crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of enfeebled or dead bodies" (19).[17] Le Bon's turn to epidemiological language is matched by his move to characterize a collective as itself a new body, produced through evacuating individuals. The language of a new body is connected to his argument that a crowd has "a collective mind" that "forms a single being"; through suggestibility, individuals in a group forfeit their own minds and beings in favor of the one new being (Le Bon 2). As Nicole Wiedenmann argues, "within [Le Bon's] mass, the individual dissolves into a new organism" (194). Further, Le Bon declares that "a crowd

[16] 10. Barrows argues that the idea of "emotional contagion" came from both research on hypnotism, and nineteenth-century sociologist Alfred Espinas, who argued that "alarm and danger are transmitted from one individual to the group by visual contagion" (Barrows 117). Erika G. King, on the other hand, argues that the idea of contagion came out of ideas on sympathy. See King, 9.

[17] Le Bon's metaphorical statement suggests that the body crowds attack—presumably the French government—is already enfeebled or dead. Also, Le Bon's language of diseased crowds stands as a contrast to his argument that crowds will always turn to a leader. In fact, it is precisely the contagion of suggestibility that requires a leader; as McPhail explains it, "he argued that contagion yielded uncritical and immediate implementation to the leader's suggestions by crowd members" (McPhail 4).

scarcely distinguishes between the subjective and the objective": the subject melts into the object, destabilizing individual boundaries (45-46). Le Bon's crowd, then, voids individual content in order to create one unified, specifically bodied mass.

Le Bon does not just erase individuality, but replaces individual bodies with a single, racialized body. By suggesting the dissolution of individual bodies, Le Bon declares, "in this respect a crowd is closely akin to quite primitive beings" (17). As participants in crowds succumb to the transmissibility of suggestibility, they regress developmentally. Le Bon states,

> …by the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian…He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings. (12)

Le Bon identifies a bodily transformation in individuals from civilized to primitive and, at times, from a civilized individual to one large primitive crowd body. This has prompted contemporary scholar Susanna Barrows to claim that, according to Le Bon, "crowds loomed as violent, bestial, insane, capricious beings whose comportment resembled that of the mentally ill, women, alcoholics, or savages" (5).[18] In this instance, Barrows' own description takes part in the confusion—is each crowd a single bestial being acting like a single savage, or is each crowd composed of people acting variously like the mentally ill, women, alcoholics, and savages? Both understandings highlight how embodied Le Bon's crowds are, and specifically embodied, especially as savages or women.

Le Bon characterizes crowds as women and savages—commonly understood irrational beings—in order to support his argument that crowds are unthinking beings;

[18] As I noted above, Le Bon often turns to the mentally ill, women, and alcoholics to describe crowds. American crowd psychologists at times compare crowds to women, but most often use the idea of "the savage," and compare crowds to African Americans.

ultimately his connection of specific bodies to crowds allows writers in Europe and American to construct racial hierarchies. Le Bon demonstrates this move when he writes:

> It will be remarked that among the special characteristics of crowds there are several—such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides—which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution—in women, savages, and children, for instance. (6)

Describing his crowds with such bodily specificity allows Le Bon to draw on stereotypes of women and certain racialized groups of people (for Le Bon this is especially the Spanish) in order to further delegitimize the rule of the people. Additionally, by embodying crowds Le Bon could capitalize on what Mary Esteve calls "a Kantian dualism between the sensible and the intelligible (or supersensible), between affect and reason," in which the physical body is the irrational opposite to the ration mind (8). In other words, describing a crowd in flesh could evoke to a reader an irrational mass, one not equipped to reason or to govern. Le Bon's paradox of a crowd that is both abstract and particular first evacuates crowd members of individuality, and then imputes primitive traits to them: he empties bodies in order to position them as other, primitive bodies.

Within a few years of Le Bon's work on crowds, the field of American crowd psychology coalesced around his theories of suggestibility and contagion.[19] As early as 1896, the sociologist Franklin Henry Giddings described suggestibility as "the spell that holds the

[19] The field became so popular that pragmatist philosopher John Dewey complained about the insidious hold of "the suggestibility school" over the burgeoning social sciences at the turn of the century (qtd. in Leach 14).

crowd" (151).[20] In 1903, the sociologist Robert Park declared suggestibility a fundamental trait of crowds: "it must be concluded that the suggestive influence exerted by people on each other constitutes the deciding characteristic of the crowd," highlighting both suggestibility and its movement from one person to another (18). Cooley, as quoted above, claimed in 1911 that the crowd-mind "is merely a collective mind of a low order which stimulates and unifies the cruder impulses of its members" (150).

Park and Cooley's fears about suggestibility seemed to play out at the Azusa Street Revival, but contributors to the revival's periodical embraced suggestibility. The apostolic revival in Los Angeles began with a theology requiring that believers give themselves over to the works of the Holy Spirit. Although it seemed new, Parham's young apostolic group developed from the Holiness movement, a religious movement that branched off from mainstream Protestantism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Whereas Protestant Evangelical groups defined conversion as a one-step experience, in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Holiness movement added a second step to the Christian spiritual process. Holiness believers posited that God's forgiveness of sins through conversion (also known as justification) could be perfected through a second step called sanctification, in which God—as an act of grace—cleansed the believer of sinfulness. As a result of this theology, many Holiness groups used the name "perfectionists," emphasizing the possibility of perfection in a lifetime.[21] Whereas Holiness groups saw sanctification as the last step in a believer's transformation, nascent Pentecostals made the final step Holy Ghost baptism

[20] Giddings worked as a journalist before studying sociology. The bulk of his career was in the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago.

[21] Although John Wesley and Charles Finney—the theological fathers of the Holiness movement—thought it possible that sanctification was a lifelong process, leaders such as the dynamic Phoebe Palmer trumpeted crisis-like moment of complete cleansing. The crisis of perfection usually came with varied, unspecified physical manifestations that often served as evidence of God's work.

accompanied by speaking in tongues. Holy Ghost baptism followed justification and sanctification as the third part of what Douglas Jacobsen calls "a three-step view of the progression of the Christian life" (68). Unlike the first two steps, Holy Ghost baptism was not seen as an act of grace, but as an act of empowerment in which the Spirit "aid[s] the fully saved and sanctified believer in the ministry of the gospel to others" (Jacobsen 70). As such, many Pentecostals required glossolalia as Biblical evidence (from the book of Acts) of the Holy Spirit's action.[22] Glossolalia worked not only as evidence, but also as specific skills equipping Pentecostals to spread God's Word to people all over the world. Most importantly, though, glossolalia meant opening one's physical body to the uses of the Holy Spirit such as proselytizing.

The apostolic believers writing in *The Apostolic Faith* join Le Bon in describing crowd experiences as compromising the individual, but they embrace that which Le Bon feared: the language of suggestion and contagion. Crowd contagion functions in the periodical as a way to spread Pentecostalism around the world. Further, as I will demonstrate, through their language of communicability, these believers imagined bodies that made impossible racial inequality. Early Pentecostals described faith spreading—like a Le Bonian disease—in order to discuss the periodical itself, but then turned to images of fire in order to indicate a more destructive effect of the Holy Ghost acting in large-group worship.

The Pentecostals describing the work of the newspaper in *The Apostolic Faith* celebrate ecstasy spreading like a disease through touch and communicable by inanimate objects like newspapers. As the Azusa Street Revival exploded in participants and their

[22] From the beginning there were exceptions to the three-way process. In Chicago, W.H.Durham postulated a two-step process in which justification and sanctification were simultaneous. Durham was expelled from the Apostolic Faith Church by Seymour. There was much controversy over Durham at the time.

influence within the larger Pentecostal movement, William Seymour and Lucy Farrow established *The Apostolic Faith*—publishing sermons, letters, biblical exegeses, and accounts of revivals that occurred around the world—which they distributed around the country and the world. Because the newspaper was financed by donations and depended on funding, new issues came out only every two or three months. The authors, though, insisted, "papers will be sent to any address in quantities needed, as the Lord furnishes the means" (Oct 1906 1).[23] The revivalists clarify in the periodical that the paper facilitated belonging by carrying the Holy Spirit to disparate believers as well as by instigating conversion. An account published in November, 1906 describes a scene in which "One [person] received the Holy Ghost and gift of tongues while reading the first number of the paper. May the Lord continue to bless these printed messages to souls. We expect the Spirit to accompany this paper to the heart of each reader" (4). Indeed, contributors celebrate the newspaper's ability to spread both the words of the faith and the fire of the Spirit.

Despite the somewhat sporadic nature of its publishing, *The Apostolic Faith* held a significant and transformative place for believers; as Randall Stephens notes, "pentecostal papers assumed a kind of sacred aura. Certain papers, including *The Apostolic Faith*, were so revered, in fact, that they were thought to have curative powers," and many believers turned to the physical copies for some kind of healing (200). For instance, in a letter from South Africa published in May, 1908, an unnamed missionary writes: "A few days ago, I was much blest in having a couple of pages, in a very much dilapidated condition, of The Apostolic Faith put into my hands. Both these pages have pieces torn from them, nevertheless I do just

[23] Printing the paper cost about $1 to issue and mail a hundred copies. But they never asked for a collection. "Our first issue was 5,000. These were taken so eagerly and brought in so many replies from hungry souls, that we made our next issue 10,000. This issue was as eagerly sought as the first, so we have concluded that we will publish 20,00 this issue, the means being provided." (Nov 1906 4).

feel that God has put them into my hands to revive my heart" (1). Although far from the physical revival, this contributor describes contracting emotional healing from the material of the paper.

In *The Apostolic Faith*, writers insist that the paper not only transmits the Holy Spirit to believers, but also reaches out and changes its readers. Early Pentecostals capitalized on crowd psychologists' mass media anxieties of suggestion and infection. For instance, after the missionary from South Africa describes experiencing healing properties of the paper, she declares, "the paper is now setting afire the hearts of a few other Christians" (May 1908 1). The paper itself acts as kindling for the spreading fire of Pentecostalism, and this quote illustrates a common rhetorical move from communicability to fire. Whereas Le Bon leaned heavily on metaphors of disease, Pentecostal writers turned to images of fire, which allowed for descriptions of more severe and sudden transformation.

Metaphors of Crowds in *The Apostolic Faith*

The image of fire is ubiquitous in contemporary popular and scholarly portrayals of Pentecostalism, in part because of the namesake of the religious movement, Pentecost, the incident described in the Bible when the Holy Spirit appeared to the apostles as tongues of fire on their heads. Apostolic writers often used fire to connect the new Pentecostal movement with the first Pentecost. In November 1906, contributors refers to Acts explicitly when claiming that believers "received the Holy Ghost, and prophesied…cloven tongues could be seen upon their heads" (2). By echoing Pentecost as described in Acts, this passage lends credence to the biblical nature of the revival and portrays the believers as latter-day apostles.

To claim that contributors imagined destructive flames—a departure from the peaceful, productive flames of Pentecost—is to suggest a unique Pentecostal appropriation of fires. When the Holy Spirit takes the form of fire in the biblical Pentecost, it is not to demolish believers but rather to facilitate their unity by enabling people of different backgrounds to communicate despite speaking different languages. In most descriptions of fire in *The Apostolic Faith*, flames burn not only on peoples' heads as on the first Pentecost, but also burn across cities and homes, obliterating everything in the vicinity. Believers using images of fire reiterate Le Bon's sense of crowd contagion as destroying the individual. Such destruction seems out of line with the acts of the Holy Spirit, but for contributors it too serves to unite the faith community and even to eradicate racial differences.

Because the symbol of fire may represent God, God working through the Holy Spirit, or the apostolic movement itself, the fiery images in *The Apostolic Faith* read as ambiguous. The following anonymous passage from November 1906 illustrates the complexity of the figure of fire:

> Before the fire broke out in … a brother had a vision of fires springing up and then gathering together and advancing in a solid wall of flame. A preacher was trying to put it out with a wet gunny sack, but it was evident there was no use fighting it. Our God is marching on. Hallelujah. The man with the wet gunny sack is here also, but his efforts only call attention to the fire. (3)

In this passage, the fire most immediately seems to represent God, as directly after the author describes the fire, he declares "our God is marching on." God is portrayed as an uncontainable force, destroying everything in his path, represented by "a solid wall of flame." The man with the gunny sack—any skeptic—attempts to put out God's power, but fails, both

because God is unstoppable, and because, by talking about it, he draws attention to God. In my interpretation, the whole scene portrays God's work in the apostolic revivals, particularly on Azusa Street. Biblical references to fire often align the fire to God or to the Holy Spirit, but descriptions of crowd religion as spreadable, such as those offered by crowd psychologists, suggest an interpretation in which the fire signifies the transformed people.

If we use Le Bon's formulations to read Pentecostals, the representations of fire in *The Apostolic Faith* begin to evoke crowds of believers. Thus, I want to reread this passage and suggest that fire symbolizes a mob of saints and the "fires springing up and then gathering together" represent the formation and expansion of a community of believers. The fires springing up refer to Holy Ghost baptism, alluding to the cloven tongues from the original Pentecost in Acts. As individuals receive their Pentecost (their Holy Ghost baptism), they gather and spread the faith. Once they congregate, their individual selves are destroyed, and they become one huge wall of fire. As this passage illustrates, fire metaphors do the double duty of portraying God and the movement as unstoppable, and the individual eradicated in favor of the faith. Passages in *The Apostolic Faith* that use fire imagery appear nearly identical to formulations in Le Bon where apostolic crowds spread like a disease from person to person, taking over and dissolving boundaries. However, in *The Apostolic Faith*, the contagious fire of the Holy Spirit spreads not merely in one crowd setting, but rather over time and distance, in order to create a permanent community across America and around the world.

Contributors to *The Apostolic Faith* who use the metaphor of fire in describing an interracial ecstatic experience envision the individual body as ephemeral—a radical approach to the body in the turn-of-the-century United States. This vision of the body had implications

for American conceptions of race. When contributors to *The Apostolic Faith* mobilized images of fire to discuss Pentecostal community, they portrayed a community that can destroy all differences. Where Le Bon used crowds to entrench further racial inequality, early Pentecostals writing in the Azusa Street periodical opted for mass religion that makes impossible the retention of essential bodily traits, race included. Images of fire can be seen as one response to crowd psychology; yes, they assert, this revival is contagious, and yes, it will destroy your individuality. The result, however, will be unity not available anywhere else in post-reconstruction America.

Early Pentecostals used a wide array of figurative language to describe religious experiences and communities, and often describe a more complicated negotiation between dissolving and maintaining the self than that portrayed by fire.[24] In fact, these believers used the image of fire far less frequently than images of melting, liquids, and electricity, a fact that no scholar of Pentecostalism has noted.[25] For instance, in the first issue alone, passages refer to images of melting or water nearly twice as often as those of fire. Images of melting, water, and electricity theorize the individual body as porous, and ever transforming. Crowd psychologists' writings further illuminate how conceptions of the individual body in *The Apostolic Faith* contested social scientific notions of individuality, personhood, and race.

Like fire, images of melting in *The Apostolic Faith* suggest a unified group of believers, but whereas fire results in complete destruction, melting preserves some of the original material, and allows that material to flow easily between individuals or an individual

[24] Titles of books and articles on early Pentecostalism demonstrate the obsession with fire: Cox, *Fire from Heaven*; Stephens, *The Fire Spreads*; Anderson, *Spreading Fires*; and Syan, "The Fire-Baptized Way," in *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 44-67.

[25] In my research on early Pentecostalism, I have yet to find a scholar who notes the importance of melting or liquids in early Pentecostal rhetoric. Randall Stephens pays the most attention to non-fire images, including the image of electricity, but does not mention melting or liquids.

and his/her surroundings. At times melting figuratively follows burning, such as when an anonymous contributor declares that "All over this city, God has been setting homes on fire and coming down and melting and saving and sanctifying and baptizing with the Holy Ghost" (Sept 1906 1). Fire continues to represent God's power in the Holy Spirit; however, the believers experience melting, rather than burning. Passages use melting to explore the line between preserving and running individual boundaries: this imagery emphasizes a self with permeable boundaries.

In *The Apostolic Faith*, passages about melting portray individual bodies that dissolve, but do not disappear. In one instance a contributor connects the melting self to the possibility of racial equality. In the November 1906 issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, an anonymous contributor declares, "This meeting has been a melting time. The people are all melted together by the power of the blood and the Holy Ghost. They are made one lump, one bread, all one body in Christ Jesus. There is no Jew or Gentile, bond or free, in the Azusa Street Mission" (3). The participants soften into one community of believers. Unlike in fire images, in this excerpt the individuals are not completely destroyed; instead, the boundaries between individuals dissolve, allowing them to melt together to create one new entity. Because this passage is chronicled in the Azusa Street periodical, it implies that people of all races and ethnicities mix together. Often melting imagery accompanies descriptions of crowds, and like fire, these groups of believers use the crowd experience to create a unified movement. Christ and the Holy Spirit dissolve boundaries and combine individual components to make one body of worship. In doing so, the Azusa Street Revival creates a place of racial equality. Although descriptions of both burning and melting illustrate eliminating individual difference in order to eradicate racial inequality, melting offers a significantly different ontological

position than the former. A city burning for God reduces a crowd of believers to nothing except the faith community, but a person melting retains him/herself even while softening in the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the November 1906 issue, Brother Burke from Anaheim writes, "I told the Lord to search my heart and melt me down" (1). By asking for melting, Burke indicates an investment in destroying his individual boundaries not to meld with community, but to commune with and be remade by God.

Imagery of water or oil implies an even more significant ontological contrast to fire than melting. Water and oil often test containability; however, in passages describing liquids individuals are able to maintain their bodily boundaries. And while at times water figures as the community, most often the symbol represents God or the Holy Spirit. An unnamed contributor to the November 1906 issue of periodical writes about one woman who believed God hated her, but had a dream in which

> She seemed to be on a boat on which all the people but herself were rejoicing and praising God. She heard the captain call out to the pilot, 'Sound the depths and compare it with the love of God.' The depths were sounded and the call came back 'No bottom! No bottom!' She awoke in an ocean of God's love. (3)

Here God's love, and thus God's power, proves limitless, and the power of spiritual experiences remains uncontained. Upon waking, she too found herself in the midst of and entering into the uncontained, in "an ocean of God's love."

Boundaries disappear in descriptions of melting, whereas in passages that highlight flowing liquids, contributors register a tension between permeating and retaining boundaries. For example, a Yorkshire farmer captures this tension when he writes that he would like to be "like the bed of a river, perfectly still, but wide enough to admit a flood" (Oct-Jan 1908 1).

The farmer references a common practice of creating two riverbeds in order to prevent floods: one bed is the actual size of the river, and the other is larger than the river in order to contain flooding. The paradox of a flood contained within a riverbed (which would make it precisely not a flood) evokes a desire for an endlessness of God that is contained within the boundaries of his body. He conveys a desire for no boundary between himself and God, yet he wants to retain the edges of his body. Mother Griffith, a matron of a rescue home, similarly describes her interactions with God through images of water, all of which seem to elicit an easy permeability of boundaries, but in fact retain the body. Mother Griffin writes of her baptism: "It seemed to me when I got saved, I got into the ocean; and when I got sanctified, it seemed the ocean got into me; and when I was baptized with the Holy Ghost, it seemed I got the life preserver on and began floating on the ocean of salvation" (2). In the first step of her Christian life, the water is outside of her body, but in the second it moves inside. She is cleansed superficially in the conversion, and it is only through sanctification that the power of the Holy Spirit can cleanse her completely. Griffin's language shows movement back and forth between the porous boundaries of her body; however, in her final stage she finds herself on a life preserver, a human construction that requires her intact, human body. Despite seeming to dissolve her boundaries, Griffin, therefore, retains her individual body.

Metaphors of liquids contrast with those of fire and melting. Contributors insist that the boundary between God and human disintegrates, while the discrete individual remains. In descriptions of religious experiences, writers reference liquids to indicate a tension between containability and uncontainability. Contributors to *The Apostolic Faith* both embrace the language of crowd psychology and also complicate it by suggesting that such religious

experience may be profoundly individual. Thus, by drawing on the language of crowd psychology, contributors both embrace and undo the connection between race, ecstatic religious experience, and religion.

Theorizing a Dialogue

Pentecostal visions of the fire of the Holy Spirit moving through the world parallel the figure of Le Bon's infectious crowd, but the fact that images of melting and liquids appear more frequently suggests a slightly different symbolic meaning. Rather than complete abnegation of the self, early Pentecostals intimate a desire to simultaneously maintain boundaries and allow those very boundaries to be permeated by God in the form of the Holy Ghost. American crowd psychologists articulate similar concerns, suggesting a political edge to apostolic concerns. Like Pentecostals, American crowd psychologists wished to retain certain crowds in service of democracy. By putting these two sectors of American life in conversation, I argue, that there are earthly, political concerns behind Pentecostal writings.

Despite his overwhelming success at home and abroad, American scholars responded to Le Bon with some ambivalence because they saw his work as a threat to democracy.[26] His basic ideas of suggestibility and contagion served as the starting point for American scholars of crowds, and yet many, such as University of Michigan sociologist and founding member of the American Sociological Association Charles Cooley, also denounced Le Bon as "somewhat inclined to exaggerate" the pathology of crowds (149-50). Like Le Bon, most American scholars articulated the stakes of crowd psychology as political—they distanced themselves from Le Bon primarily in defense of democracy. Erika King explains that "in America…the illiberalism of the Europeans was explicitly rejected" because American

[26] The one glaring exception to this was Boris Sidis, who embraced Le Bon. See Sidis, *The Psychology of Suggestion* and "A Study of the Mob."

scholars believed "rational deliberation was possible in representative assemblies and democratic electorates alike" (338). In fact, King goes so far as to argue that "American writings on the crowd continued to be infused with cautious optimism about public opinion, with most expressing enthusiastic support for liberal democracy" (340). However, by articulating the conversation on crowds as one about politics, American crowd psychologists expose the limits of their arguments: American crowd studies only evince "cautious optimism" about the politically enfranchised. Crowd psychologists turn to a racialized, non-rational crowd in order to save democracy.

Social scientists at the turn of the century rescued democracy from Le Bonian psychology by delineating two different types of groups: crowds and publics, the latter of which writers position as the bedrock of democracy. To make distinctions between types of groups, American crowd psychologists drew on another European crowd psychologist whose work preceded Le Bon's by a few years: Gabriel Tarde. A French sociologist and criminologist, Tarde distinguished the crowd from another aggregate, which he dubbed the public. Whereas the crowd proper (*le foule*) is a physical collective, in his *La logique sociale* (1895), Tarde argues that the public is "a purely spiritual collectivity, a dispersion of individuals who are physically separated and whose cohesion is entirely mental" (277).[27] In other words, a collective can maintain rationality through space: a group may meet for a brief time, and then separate in order to preserve clear thinking. As early as 1896, Columbia professor of sociology Franklin Henry Giddings used Tarde's ideas to argue that "in the prolonged deliberations of a group of men that alternately meet and separate, or that

[27] Tarde cleverly illuminates both the lack of nuance in crowd psychology, and also crowd psychology's hypnotic pull over its scholars: "not only does a crowd attract and exert an irresistible pull on the spectator," Tarde writes, "but its very name has a prestigious attraction for the contemporary reader, encouraging certain writers to use this ambiguous word to designate all sorts of human groupings" (277).

communicate without meeting, the highest thought of the most rational mind among them may prevail" (151).[28] American scholars used Tarde's distinction between the crowd and the public to distance themselves from the Le Bonian politics that made democracy suspect because, as Henry Elsner, Jr. explains, they saw the public as not only an alternative view, but as "the polar opposite [of the crowd]," in large part because of "its engaging in rational discussion and debate, and in arriving at a consensus which does not impose unanimity on its members" (xiv)[29]

In conjunction with leaning on Tarde's public, American sociologists and psychologists demonstrate a resistance to complete individuality by including social interaction as a part of personality. In her examination on crowds in American, Mary Esteve points out that, for many Americans "Kantian individualism" held sway; for this reason it is especially startling that American psychologists and sociologists described individuals as benefited by groups (8-10).[30] Sociologist Edward Ross begins his influential "Recent Tendencies in Sociology" by explaining: "our science inherited from the eighteenth century an extremely individualistic theory of mind. In the psychology of that time, men are like billiard balls, which touch, but never interpenetrate" (537).[31] Ross laments completely

[28]Further, he states "The spell that holds the crowd must be broken….To this end the crowd must disperse; the assembly must adjourn; the legislator must now and then go back to his constituents. When this is done the social mind may deliberate as rationally as the individual mind" (151). Giddings' proof of how well deliberation works is the abolition of slavery after years of discussion. Erika King notes that psychologist J.M. Baldwin agrees. King explains that Baldwin argues, "the suggestibility, credulity, and irrationality of physically proximate groups tended to dissipate when collectivities were spatially separated" (338).

[29] Park was newspaper reporter turned Chicago School sociologist, and he wrote his PhD thesis *Masse und Publikum: Eine methodologische und sociologische Untersuchung* in 1904.

[30] Esteve describes this Kantian individualism as taking hold in America through George Bancroft's program for secondary education. Because of Bancroft's prominence, Esteve's argument that an alternative view held sway in literature is significant.

[31] Ross was a sociologist who held tenures at both Stanford and Columbia, and as such was firmly entrenched in and contributed to American sociology.

impermeable individual boundaries but finds that studies of crowds can account for the social aspects of people's lives.[32]

Crowd psychologists echo Pentecostal tension between the individual and the crowd, and at times go so far as to blur the boundary between crowd and individual. Giddings disputes Le Bon's argument that the crowd mind is different from the individual mind: the crowd mind, he asserts, "is astonishingly like the individual mind, and in no respect more so than in its rational processes" (151). Similarly, Cooley argues that "the crowd mind is not, as is sometimes said, a quite different thing from that of the individual" (150). But crowd psychologists' dependence on racial difference to distinguish the crowd from the public show that in order to have a democratic public, psychologists need a shadow of the public—a racialized and politically disenfranchised crowd.

Despite their concerns over the political implications of Le Bon's theories, and despite their claims to save collectives, American crowd psychologists base their work on Le Bon's theories of suggestibility and contagion. In fact, America's embrace of suggestibility was so widespread it prompted pragmatist philosopher John Dewey to complain about the insidious hold that "the suggestibility school" had over the burgeoning social sciences at the turn of the century (Dewey qtd. in Leach 14). Sociologist Robert Park even suggests that "it must be concluded that the suggestive influence exerted by people on each other constitutes the deciding characteristic of the crowd," highlighting both suggestibility and its movement from one person to another (19). Like Le Bon, Park declares suggestibility a fundamental trait of crowds, and by "crowds," he means a group distinct from the public.

[32] He goes so far as to declare that "what we need is a means of accounting for the groupings and regroupings we find crowded into the brief span of perhaps two or three generations" (537, 538).While Ross turns to Le Bon for the beginnings of crowd psychology, he asserts that "Le Bon, while he skilfully [sic] lays bare the soul of the crowd, errs greatly in exalting this immediate ascendency of the collective mind over individual minds to be the all-in-all of social unity" (540).

Whereas Le Bon claimed that any collective was susceptible to suggestibility, American crowd psychologists declared only *some* groups susceptible. Despite seeming to accept dissolved individual boundaries, both Giddings and Cooley continue to argue that crowds, as distinct from publics, act irrationally; Cooley explains that the crowd mind "is merely a collective mind of a low order which stimulates and unifies the cruder impulses of its members. The men are there but they 'descend to meet'" (150). By using specifically the language of crowds, Cooley's statement again depends on the differentiation between crowds and publics.

Le Bon's formulations should leave anyone susceptible to crowds; however, the construction of the American public creates a crowd peopled by the disenfranchised. Writers such as Cooley and Giddings did not simply perform the act of classification. Rather, the existence of the public depended on the existence of the not-public, the crowd. Thus, if American crowd psychologists tie functioning democratic collectives to the politically enfranchised public, as I argue above, that leaves the area of the crowd—Le Bon's crowd—to be filled by the politically disenfranchised. Further, despite the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, American crowd psychologists portray irrational crowds as races, and specifically, as African American.[33]

Giddings and his likeminded colleagues encountered the simultaneously vacated and embodied Le Bonian crowds. While scholars like Giddings want to salvage the rational collective, it requires a discrete, non-changing individual. To this end, Esteve incisively notes, there were "many nineteenth-century social scientists who retreated from their own theory of

[33] Le Bon also racializes his crowds (as I address below), but he and other European crowd psychologists as often describe crowds as women and alcoholics. While American crowd psychologists sometimes gender crowds, "primitive" (and specifically black American) descriptions are much more frequent.

imitation-suggestion—and back into an essentialist individualism—at the point where it conflicted with their ideological desire to preserve the domain of innovation, leadership, and social progress" (5). Further, like Le Bon, American crowd psychologists emptied out and then re-embodied irrational crowds, and crowds took on the characteristics of the politically disenfranchised, especially African Americans. However, many academic crowd psychologists make this move obliquely.

To differentiate rational (democratic) crowds from their irrational counterparts, American psychologists and sociologists drew on the developmental model I discussed in the previous chapter, arguing—echoing Parham—that crowds transformed individuals atavistically. Setting the terms of American arguments, Tarde claims, "in the lowest animal societies, associations are above all material aggregates. As one goes up the tree of life, social relations become more spiritual" (278). Ross takes Tarde's argument and reverses it: in crowds, individuals regress. Referencing Tarde, Ross states:

> The crowd is a psychological unity which puts the persons composing it 'in possession of a sort of collective mind, which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual would feel, think, and act, were he isolated.' This is due to the fact that in the crowd men lose their acquired characters and individualities, and revert to their instinct. (538)

While academic psychologists describe this process tangentially, writers of more popular works explicitly connected infectious development and growth to African Americans. For instance, psychologist and president of Colgate University George Cutten seamlessly combines epidemiology with particular bodies in order to argue that the African American students were particularly susceptible to crowd irrationality. He argues that African-

Americans are predisposed to crowd suggestibility and contagion. He describes a scene at an African-American school established for refined black American students, where, despite the "dense ignorance and weak will with vivid imagination and volatile emotion" characteristic of "the negro," these students had become civilized (171). Unfortunately, Cutten laments, these characteristics cause "[the negro] to be especially easily moved in a crowd" (171). In this particular moment, the students were, as he describes it, betrayed by their own racial predispositions.

> The exceptional occasion was when the students were gathered together, several hundred of them, and sang one of the negro songs in as proper a manner as any white students could do. In some way an old negro "auntie" had found her way into the building, and at the end of the first verse she shouted, swayed, and started into the second verse before the organ could begin. Like wildfire the students followed the "auntie," as if all the native, pent-up emotion were but tinder to the spark so unconsciously set by this illiterate old woman. It was sufficiently contagious to carry them excitedly through the song, notwithstanding the former control of years. (173)

In this anecdote, Cutten attributes their actions the students' savage genes, which were triggered by emotional song. Cutten illustrates the general principle underlying American crowd psychology: the democratic public can only be understood by contrasting it with the irrational crowd—a crowd thought not fit to participate in democracy.

That American social scientists longed to prove the inability of African Americans to participate rationally in American politics is not surprising. But positioning their complicated rescue of democracy in conversation with early Pentecostals illuminates how apostolic

theology and religious practice may, for a brief moment, have offered a modern alternative to Jim Crow politics.

Politics of Transformation

Contemporary scholars' continued use of fire images to describe Pentecostalism obscures the openness and creativity in early Pentecostal conceptions of religious transformation. Contributors to *The Apostolic Faith* used a variety of images to configure Holy Ghost baptism as a progressive transformation: individual, human bodies become more modern, more efficient, and more productive. In descriptions of liquidity and machinery, Pentecostals countered the specific, racialized embodiment integral to European and American crowd psychology. Instead of transforming into less developed people, these believers change into modern, non-human bodies. Accounting for Pentecostals' use of non-fire images significantly revises contemporary histories of the faith movement; putting apostolic believers in conversation with crowd psychologies makes clear that their descriptions of holy transformations were political.

For both crowd psychologists and Pentecostal contributors to *The Apostolic Faith*, discussions on crowds turn on the idea of transformation. For crowd psychologists, the potential of transformation in a crowd reveals their concerns about race. Specifically, crowd psychologists argue that crowds cause an atavistic transformation, and they connect that transformation to black bodies. And, while Pentecostal writers often seem to endorse crowd psychology's theories by celebrating that which crowd psychologists fear, their transforming bodies contest crowd psychologists by becoming more modern.

Passages in *The Apostolic Faith* challenge Ross and Cutten's atavistic transformations by figuring the apostolic Bible faith and practice fully modern. Antoinette Moomau, with

whom I open this chapter, illustrates the combination of the biblical and the modern when she asks God to turn his searchlight on her heart. The searchlight, a powerful electric light, situates the Pentecostal God firmly in the twentieth century. Others, though, make this combination of modern and biblical personally transformative. In April of 1906, G.A. Cook began attending the Azusa Street Revival, at first skeptical, but increasingly invested as "Pentecost came to the place," and found himself immersed in crowds of believers speaking in tongues (Nov 1906 2). In the passage he submitted to *The Apostolic Faith*, Cook describes his experience receiving Holy Ghost baptism. He writes that after his period of cynicism, God "melted my heart," and he began to "earnestly seek for the Lord to have his way with me" by taking control of his heart and giving him the baptism. Cook uses diverse images to indicate transformation, mixing biblical and modern metaphors. First he uses a classic biblical metaphor: "the Holy Ghost showed me that I must be clay in the Potter's hands, an empty vessel before the Lord" until he "became absolutely empty." To describe the Holy Ghost, though, he writes that "the power [was] going through me like electric needles," and "each time I would come out from under the power, I would feel so sweet and clean, as though I had been run through a washing machine" (2). In his descriptions, God and the Holy Spirit act like machinery to cleans him and prepare him for justification.

Whereas he first describes God figuring divine entities as modern, Cook's final experience of baptism shows he himself transformed into a modern vessel for a biblical experience. After five weeks, Cook declares, he finally submitted to God completely, such that Holy Ghost baptism was imminent; on a Saturday morning in early summer, he began the process of justification. He writes of reaching toward heaven, until "I was shaken violently by a great power, and it seemed as though a large pipe was fitted over my neck, my

head apparently being off." After feeling as though a pipe is fitted on his neck, he feels as though a pump "under terrific pressure," fills him with oil until he "could feel all the filling in my toes and all parts of my body which seemed to me to swell until I thought I would burst." Finally his "soul and spirit" floats in the air above his physical body, which becomes "hard and metallic like iron." Cook's baptism is cut short at this point, as "it was now time for me to arise and go to work," but he insists that had it not been for his job, he would have definitely spoken in tongues. A day later he returns to the Azusa Street Revival, and "felt my throat and tongue begin to move, without any effort on my part," at which point he spoke in tongues, and "talked and laughed with joy far into the night." Cook concludes by writing, "praise His name for such a wonderful experience of power and love and joy" (2).

In his account, Cook evokes the biblical image of a vessel holding oil, where his physical body is the vessel, and the oil symbolizes the power of the Holy Spirit. Here, the border of Cook's physical body—his skin—functions as a membrane that can barely contain the oil (power) that is the Holy Spirit, as Cook emphasizes the feeling of almost bursting, or coming as close to breaking the boundary as possible without actually rupturing the body. This rupture is striking because his body is "hard and metallic." In his description, Cook shows a transformation at odds with that of crowd psychology: instead of becoming primitive, Cook morphs into a contemporary vessel: a pipe with a pump. In light of crowd psychologists clearly connecting primitive ecstatic experience and race, Cook's baptism implicitly works against racism by declaring interracial religious transformation progressive and modern.

Passages in *The Apostolic Faith* echo theories on crowds in ways that emphasize the growth of their community, and the destruction of racism, but mutate these theories to insist

that Pentecostal transformation is not regression—it is spiritual and physical progression. Implements of modern rationality and efficiency work as tools for apostolic, non-rational worship. Further, the combination of primitivist and modern images (oil running through a pump), and the tension between maintaining boundaries and dissolving boundaries, emphasizes their restorationist impulse. As Pentecostals of Azusa Street attempt to restore the church to its original, biblical form, the amalgamation of biblical and contemporary, of primitive and modern, collapses the time between the original apostles and these apostles. The apostolic believers published in *The Apostolic Faith* neither progress past primitive "early religion," nor give up on modernity. The modern is not disposed of in favor of the biblical; nor is the biblical rewritten as purely modern. Instead the writers collapse the time between, making modern objects into biblical symbols—now oil moves through a pump—and biblical metaphors fully modern. Religious practice involves the 'primitive' loss of self, and the modern, Protestant, individual relationship with God. Thus, when believers describe Holy Ghost baptism in *The Apostolic Faith*, they not only perform a theology of transformation, but also recommend a politics of transformation. Writings by believers such as Moomau and Cook imply that an interracial community may only be possible through individual commitment to open up to fundamental, personal change, and that such change is the future of the American public.

Conclusion

The story of the interracial Pentecostal effort beyond Azusa Street is one of disappointment. The revivalists regularly fell short of their attempts to dissolve inequality by becoming "one lump, one bread, all one body in Christ Jesus." Within a decade of the Azusa Street Revival, the Pentecostal movement split along racial lines—the Assemblies of God

denomination predominantly white, and the Church of God in Christ and Pentecostal Assemblies of the World predominantly African American. For the most part, the racial split amongst American Pentecostal denominations continues to this day. The lesson of the early apostolic church, then, is clearly not a lesson in how to establish and maintain a sphere of interracial collaboration. In fact, the story of Azusa Street reminds us of the precariousness of racial equality in the United States. But I want to end by insisting that Azusa Street, and in particular its periodical, call scholars to see emotional religious practice and the writing of religious ecstasy as potential sites of political activity.

Studies of ecstatic American religion and especially black religiosity often assume a split between interior experiences of spirituality and exterior experiences of politics. At times, as Kathryn Lofton laments, black luminaries are relegated to mere emotion, and at times, as Claudia Tate mourns, African American writers are valued only for their clear political statements. (Lofton 171-91, Tate 4-6). I insist that religious texts reveal a complex negotiation of the personal and the social. Religious movements, especially among the disenfranchised, may negotiate and challenge scientific theories of race. Part of why it is difficult to see how ecstatic religious practitioners speak to science is because, especially in the case of black writers, they were not given the space to do so directly at the beginning of the century. Theorizing such conversations, though, unearths the dialogue between the sciences and American Christian movements, and demonstrates how those conversations may speak to the politics of race. For contributors to *The Apostolic Faith*, Spirit-filled worship thwarted the social injunction for racial inequality.

When 'the thing became real':

Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, Conversion, and the Storefront Church

Toward the end of Nella Larsen's 1928 novel *Quicksand*, the protagonist Helga Crane—wet from the rain and symbolically lost and alone—stumbles into a storefront church in Harlem. The congregation, predominantly women but led by a leering man, sing, shout, and fall into ecstasies, acting, the narrator notes, like "savages" (Larsen 113-14). For much of her experience at the storefront church, Helga is both amazed and disgusted, alternately laughing and recoiling at the theatrics of believers clamoring for her soul. Indeed, for much of the service the narrator describes the experience as almost horrific; and yet, at the end of the scene, Helga has a conversion experience. Surrounded by moaning believers, Helga transcends her body, and, for once, finds happiness.

I describe these plot points in detail because, despite the crucial role the conversion plays in the novel—the religious experience undergirds Helga's decision to move south for, we are to surmise, much of the rest of her life beyond the novel—scholarship demonstrates a reticence to read the event as any sort of actual religious experience. Instead, scholars identify it as a symbol of, or metaphor for, either unthinking release, or a capitulation to an identity based on race and gender stereotypes. Cheryl Wall, while declaring the scene of conversion to be "credible," describes it as one of "temporary catharsis," identifying the moment as not actually about religion, but rather, more broadly, about emotional release. For Wall, as for others, Helga's experience in the church is therefore, surprisingly enough, a mirror of what she encounters earlier in the novel while dancing to jazz in a Harlem cabaret. As Wall puts it, "this scene resembles that of the cabaret," the only difference being that "this time Helga has lost the ability to be critical" (104).

The moment of religious transformation indeed frequently appears to scholars as a paramount instance of emotion triumphing over reason and critical thinking. For Anne Hostetler, when Helga converts, she specifically "gives in…to [the congregation's] construction of her self as a scarlet woman," thereby "cutting [her]self off from identity as process and change" (43-44). According to Hostetler, then, when Helga converts she actually resigns herself to embodying an easy, one-dimensional stereotype, despite having resisted such formulations for the bulk of the text. Hostetler goes so far as to put quotation marks around "conversion" and "religion," treating these notions as, at best, distractions from what is really going on. Mary Esteve offers a slightly different interpretation of the conversion as less than what it seems, suggesting that it should be read as an "absurd" scene—the setting of a storefront church and the act of conversion apparently being incompatible with realist fiction (153-54). Scholars thus seem wholly resistant to any possibility that *Quicksand* might posit conversion into an emotional form of Christianity as a productive experience for Helga.

In this chapter, I suggest that we read Helga's conversion as an intentional and readable decision that is neither more nor less than what it is. To make this argument is not to read the ending of the novel through rose-colored glasses. Larsen's portrayal of the rural town that Helga moves to following the conversion as stultifying and oppressive must been understood as critical. Reading Helga's conversion as intentional, sincere, and productive, though, reframes and adds specificity to Larsen's critiques. *Quicksand* ends not with a vague concern about inequality, but with a withering assessment of religious communities as acting something like quicksand itself. In other words, the novel suggests that the transformative experience of conversion is no protection against the religiously justified inequality.

To argue that her conversion is intentional is also to make a case for rethinking Helga's agency, which may seem paradoxical given the novel's trajectory. Reading Helga's conversion as symbolic or representative of her experiences of oppression seems to me to be symptomatic of a trend in *Quicksand* scholarship: reading the novel as primarily social commentary, and Helga as an illustration of oppression at work, and thereby rescinding Helga's ability to enact a complex kind of choice. Interpreting Helga's experiences as illustrative of social inequality renders many of her decisions questionable. For instance, since her relationship with Copenhagen artist Axel Olsen proves offensive, she *should* have left immediately, but instead, remained abroad for quite some time.[1] Similarly, since her marriage to Alabama preacher Reverend Pleasant Green pushes her into traditional, oppressive gender roles, she *should* have avoided the geographic change, or at the very least regretted it earlier; in the text, though, Helga spends several years embracing Alabama before recognizing it as the quicksand it is. In both moments, Helga's decision-making—choosing to remain in seemingly exploitative situations—seems to leave scholars no choice but to portray those experiences as resulting from pressures outside her control.

Often, these scholarly moves seem thoughtfully protective of Helga; if we see her relationships with Axel and Reverend Pleasant Green as exploitative, we save Helga by explaining her time with them as the result of something other than her decision. As Judith Brown suggests, however, one consequence of these readings is that scholars also miss Helga's personal sense of pleasure, which seems to take forms that often prove troubling to her readers. Several scholars such as Brown have attempted to recuperate Helga's ability to

[1] Scholarly conversations about the Copenhagen passages are also vexed because of debates about how autobiographical Larsen was. See especially George Hutchinson's magisterial *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006). See also Thadious M. Davis, *Nella Larsen, Novelist of the Harlem Renaissance: A Woman's Life Unveiled* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1994).

make decisions and experience pleasure in situations and objects readers find discomfiting. In important early interventions, Claudia Tate has insisted that we see Helga as not simply succumbing to social structures of inequality, but as also trying to understand and satisfy her own unclear desires. Brown builds on Tate's work and suggests that, contrary to most approaches, we should not elide the enjoyment Helga takes in being viewed as a primitive object.

Despite these important moves toward taking Helga's specificity seriously, the scene in the storefront church has remained one of the most difficult for *Quicksand*'s readers to handle, for reasons that seem inextricable from its religious basis. Perhaps, however, we should not find this so surprising. Scholars across disciplines have charted the way the secularity of much contemporary feminist thought may limit our ability to understand women's religious belief, often with the effect of producing what Ann Pellegrini calls a "white genealogy of queer and feminist studies" that "leav[es] to the side the women of color and transnational feminisms whose relationships to religion have historically been far more complex and variegated" (208). Anticipating Pellegrini's claims, Saba Mahmood described the "vexing relationship between feminism and religion" by reference to religion's challenge to the "secular-liberal politics of which feminism has been an integral (if critical) part," which helps explain the difficulty feminist writers have understanding why women would "support a movement that seems inimical to their 'own interests and agendas'" (1-2). For scholars invested in expanding women's freedoms, that is, religious justifications for seemingly oppressive social arrangements are often troubling. What Pellegrini, Mahmood, and others demonstrate, though, is that merely writing off religious practice may risk erasing or silencing already marginalized women. Tracy Fessenden argues that secular feminism has

been and continues to be used to bolster racial hierarchies, through "a history of cooperation between movements to expand women's freedom, on the one hand, and movements to consolidate Anglo-Saxon domination, on the other," a narrative she insists has been written out of histories of Western feminisms ("Disappearences" 140-41).[2] In other words, she argues, the genealogy of secular feminism must be seen as entwined with the genealogy of Western colonialism. This intellectual history of writing off religious women through claims of oppression should, at the very least, give us pause when reading accounts of Helga's conversion.[3] I believe it should also call us to ask what Helga may have found productive about her conversion and subsequent move to the South. In other words, while it may be difficult to imagine emotional religion as a solution to oppression, we need to take seriously the possibility that Helga may have made the decisions she made precisely in an attempt to rewrite or revise her own subjugation. This reading should make clear the limited options the novel tells us Helga had; through the end of the novel, Larsen insists that for a conservative religious town to feel like a solution, the other options had to have been horribly stultifying.

Works such as those by Pellegrini, Mahmood, and Fessenden also highlight the complex coupling of racialized bodies and homelands in nationalist enterprises, a coupling *Quicksand* incarnates in Helga Crane. Larsen's novel details the psychological experience of being unable to feel at home in the world or in the body, a psychological position limned through what Hortense Spillers calls the "neither/nor" racial identity of the mulatto figure in literature (165). In *Quicksand,* Barbara Johnson insists, "the question of that neither-nor of

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[2] An earlier version of this argument appears in Fessenden's *Culture and Redemption*, 161-80. In *Culture and Redemption*, Fessenden argues that Western secularism is so tied to Protestantism that it can be difficult to see secular forms and ideals as influenced by a particular form of Christianity.
[3] See also Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, "Introduction: Times Like These," in *Secularisms*. Pellegrini, Jakobsen, Mahmood, and Fessenden's ideas all build off of Talal Assad's *Formations of the Secular*.

racial designation is tied…to the question of *place*: shack or big house, North or South, Europe or America" (39). Helga's quest to find a place to feel settled—she lives in Tennessee, Chicago, New York, Copenhagen, and Alabama—is only matched by her sense that she does not fit in the racial categories available to her. Just as the novel suggests that Helga is unable to find a geographic home, the text also proposes that Helga paradoxically may need to exceed her body in order to feel at home in her body. Helga's discontent in different places underlines her sense that the space of her body is itself a place in which she feels out of place. As "the question of place…intersects with a question of space," as Johnson notes, it becomes a question "of the inside/outside boundaries of the self" (40). Indeed, Johnson's exclamation that, "the title, *Quicksand*" suggests "the self is utterly engulfed by the outside because there is nothing outside the engulfing outside to save it," both misses and reveals Helga's reasoning behind turning to an omnipotent, external God for saving (40). Helga momentarily finds comfort in the transcendence of religious conversion and belief in God, even if that very conversion leads to her entrapment in perhaps the most repressive community she encounters.

In this chapter, I read Helga's conversion as a momentarily productive decision that leads to entrapment. I ask why Larsen turns to conversion as a possible, if temporary, solution to Helga's bodily and geographical displacement. I claim, contrary to previous work, that *Quicksand* is ambivalent about Helga's conversion, and that Larsen uses the storefront church as a means to explore this ambivalence. The storefront church represents both a space in between set identities—a space of potential refashioning—and also a symbol of gendered and racialized oppression. In this essay, I historicize the setting of the storefront church to show how it both allows for refashioning of the self, and also threatens to tie the self down

into racial and gendered categories. I argue that Helga embraces her conversion because it allows her to transcend her body and place, but that her move to Alabama traps her, possibly for life. I argue, then, that *Quicksand*'s ambivalence about Helga's religious experiences reveal fleeting potentiality in the spaces between fixed identities.

As importantly, though, if Helga's conversion is intentional, we can see the ending of the novel as a specific critique. If the conversion is representative of something unrelated to religion, Larsen's critique can only be read as directed at abstract oppressions, or broad social concerns; if the conversion is actually religious, we can see that Larsen's critique—like other specific critiques in her novel—is directed towards specific kinds of religious communities. In other words, while the conversion represents a space of potential, Larsen's portrayal of the community argues that such repression is endemic to religious communities.

Home and the Body

Larsen's novel charts a biracial woman's attempt to feel at home, in her body and in the world, as a racialized body in the world. Helga tries different tactics to gain a sense of control over what her body signifies. Indeed, an urge to migrate often follows a discomfiting sense that she, as an embodied person, does not fit in with her community. Helga tries two specific strategies to negotiate her body's signification—changing the surface of her body, and exceeding her body. Brown suggests that surfaces may be useful for Helga in her attempts to "control…this representation [of herself]," to "author her own image" (133). *Quicksand* details Helga's multiple attempts to use her representation in order to have control over her image.

The novel opens by charting Helga's investment in the surfaces around her and of her own body.[4] In the first two sentences of the novel, the narrator describes Helga "alone in her room," observing her surroundings:

> Only a single reading lamp, dimmed by a great black and red shade, made a pool of light on the blue Chinese carpet, on the bright covers of the books which she had taken down from their long shelves, on the white pages of the opened one selected, on the shining brass bowl crowded with many-colored nasturtiums beside her on the low table, and on the oriental silk which covered the stool at her slim feet. (Larsen 1)

We are introduced to Helga through the things surrounding her, and covering her surroundings, including a "black and red shade" covering a light, a "blue Chinese carpet" covering the floor, and "bright covers of…books." While resting in her room, surrounded by the ornate carpet and book covers, Helga wears a "vivid green and gold negligee and glistening brocaded mules" (2). To Helga, this attractive room fosters "tranquility," "quiet," and "rest." Hostetler describes this as an "illusion" that Helga can "create herself through a careful arrangement and selection of artifacts" (36). The novel's opening paean to objects of beauty presents the reader with one hypothesis that Helga tests: altering the skin of the body can change one's position as a racialized self. [5] The passage demonstrates Larsen's investment in "the external objects that shape [Helga's] self-image," and reveals Helga's

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[4] For a particularly productive discussion of Helga and things, see Hostetler, "The Aesthetics of Race and Gender in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*." For work on this scene portraying Helga as a consumer, see Lena Ahlin, *The 'New Negro' in the Old World: Culture and Performance in James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Fauset, and Nella Larsen*. For more about *Quicksand* and capitalism, see Anthony Dawahare, "The Gold Standard of Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 52.1 (Spring 2006): 22-41.

[5] Bill Brown's theorizing of things proves helpful at this moment. Brown defines things as objects that "transcend their merely physical instantiation" and take on a role beyond market value. See Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003), 185.

desires for "surfaces" to be able to "create the self" (Brown 135, Hostetler 36). By manipulating the things surrounding and adorning her body, Helga hopes to attain a sense of belonging.

When Helga moves to Copenhagen, she commits herself fully to the possibility of things helping her feel comfortable inside herself. Helga's new life in Denmark first makes her hopeful that a life focused on things, her appearance, and attention may help her feel settled. The narrator notes that Helga "always had wanted, not money, but the things which money could give, leisure, attention, beautiful surroundings. Things. Things. Things." Copenhagen, with these things, helped her to feel "consoled at last for the spiritual wounds of the past" (Larsen 67). Very quickly, though, Helga finds that creating her bodily home through things means others can also control her image for their gain. Her host, her Aunt Karina Dahl, quickly makes clear that "she had determined the role that Helga was to play in advancing the social fortunes of the Dahls of Copenhagen," and that meant decorating Helga in ways that made her feel like "a veritable savage," decked out in bright colors, jewels, and low-cut dresses (Larsen 68-69). Helga responds ambivalently to her own objectification, feeling humiliated, and yet "she…enjoyed her prominence" (Larsen 70). After some time, she determines that the "new expensive clothes" and her role as exotic provocateur simply "enhance what was already in [her] possession" (Larsen 74). Indeed, for some time Helga feels at home.

The surface of Helga's body seems to allow her the possibility to change herself to fit a new local; yet, she eventually feels out of place in Copenhagen. During Helga's second year in Denmark, the narrator notes, "came an indefinite discontent," which distresses Helga. "Why," she asks, "couldn't she be happy, content, somewhere?" (Larsen 81). The

punctuation of this question obfuscates whether she wants to be *happy* somewhere, or simply be *somewhere.* The question itself suggests that Helga is unable to feel like she belongs in any particular place. Shortly after the passage on her discontent, the novel moves into a description of a traveling American circus that highlights the way her physical body and physical surroundings make her feel out of place.

When Helga attends an American circus, she feels that a concealed aspect of herself—an aspect that is nonmaterial and yet tied to her body—is exposed. When the performers, "two black men, American Negroes undoubtedly," begin to sing and dance, Helga feels "shamed, betrayed, as if these pale pink and white people among whom she lived had suddenly been invited to look upon something in her which she had hidden away and wanted to forget" (Larsen 83). In this scene, Helga registers her sense that, because of her skin color, something unwanted and perhaps alien lurks within her body. She feels uncomfortable due to her body in this place and due to her body as her space within which she resides. In the sentence after the circus experience, the narrator declares, "it was at this time that Axel Olson asked her to marry him," a transition that highlights that Helga's displacement occurs at the intersection of her body and her place, since Axel objectifies Helga as a strange, Other body (Larsen 84).

That the novel positions the narrative of the circus next to Axel Olson's proposal and sexual advances illuminates Helga's sense that her discomfort is due to Axel essentializing her concrete, physical skin. While Axel's coincident interest and revulsion in Helga initially intrigues her, by the time he proposes to her, she finds it infuriating. In fact, the narrator notes, when Helga realizes after the fact that Axel had "paid her…a rather florid compliment" insinuating "something less—and easier" than marriage, she changes her relationship with

him, and had "cease[s], even remotely, to consider him other than as someone amusing, desirable, and convenient to have about" (Larsen 84, 85). The novel explains this backstory—her recognition of his racially motivated sexual insinuations and her subsequent distance from him—as part of the narrative of his proposal, suggesting that his offer of marriage was always about her body. When Axel asks why she had refused "his other, earlier suggestion," Helga answers by claiming a place—America—as home. To the artist's confusion over her rejection of sexual advances she replies: "Because, Herr Olsen, in my country, the men, of my race, at least, don't make such suggestions to decent girls" (Larsen 86). Helga, in that moment, owns the U.S.A. as her home, despite the fact that we know that no place in the United States has yet to make her feel at home. This passage serves not to establish America as her home, but rather to emphasize that Copenhagen, too, is not home. Her attempt to refashion herself by attending to her surface fails to give her the sense that she can feel comfortable in either her body or her geographical place.

Helga tests her theory that changing her skin may change her comfort in her body, but finds it lacking, and so experiments with exceeding her body in order to feel at home in her physical form. The cabaret scene portrays Helga experiencing transcendence, and, as such, almost gives her a feeling of ownership and comfort in her body, but it also ends in failure. Paradoxically, when she transcends her body in the cabaret, she becomes pure racial essence, an abstraction that ultimately traps her in her body. At the cabaret, Helga is portrayed as dancing with abandon, and entering a primal state in which her individual self seems to dissolve, thereby allowing her to be anyone at any time or place. The narrator reveals, "for a while Helga was oblivious of the reek of flesh, smoke, and alcohol, oblivious of the oblivion of other gyrating pairs, oblivious of the color, the noise, and the grand distorted childishness

of it all." This oblivion suggests a removal from Helga's current place, an interpretation buttressed by the narrator's declaration that, "when suddenly the music died, she dragged herself back to the present with a conscious effort" (Larsen 59). Pressed against one another, the skin of gyrating pairs seems to become one large, moving skin. They become one body, but one body that signifies a familiar racialized essence, and Helga finds that the clear distinction between herself and others disappears. This moment captures a contradiction inherent in, but vital to, primitivist modernism: the racialized body references pure essence that is rooted in a specific body.

As Helga continues to dance, she senses herself carried out of the cabaret and into another land that, like her body, seems to both be abstract and yet reference a specific environment—the jungle. In fact, *Quicksand*'s descriptions of dancing repeatedly reference an abstract form of nature. She describes the cabaret's dancing denizens to "whirling leaves," "shaking themselves ecstatically to a thumping of unseen tomtoms." Dancing gives Helga herself a sense that "the essence of life seemed bodily motion," and she feels that "not only had she been in the jungle, but … she had enjoyed it" (Larsen 59). Such a move thus takes Helga outside of her singular self, temporally and spatially.[6] Helga, though, develops a strong discomfort about her participation in such an activity: "…she wasn't, she told herself, a jungle creature" (Larsen 59). This moment captures Helga's need for both uncontained openness and the ability to determine her own identity: by talking to herself, Helga indicates a sense of multiplicity, but in talking to herself she also tries to fix herself down. And while

[6] Judith Brown explains this moment as a moment of release that Larsen, through Helga, uses to escape racial signification: "These writers [such as Larsen] do not necessarily critique or denaturalize the category of the primitive, but rather find an ambivalent pleasure in which a chosen objectification, through the embrace of an exoticized other, enables a momentary release from different (racist) objectifications. Primitive glamour plays both with racial and gender destabilization as it loosens rigid boundaries and undoes, at least momentarily, the stranglehold of identity." Brown, 127.

the transcendent trip to the jungle seems almost healing, Helga resists being connected to the jungle, because she was unable to have agency over her body or to fully escape her body.

Transcendence as Home

Whereas Helga finds incomplete transcendence in the cabaret, the novel suggests that she has some success in a small storefront church. In this setting, Helga resists but eventually engages in emotional worship, which leads to an ecstatic moment of conversion that fully transports her outside of her skin and her geographical location. Nevertheless, *Quicksand* undercuts the sacredness of this experience by bookending it with Helga's most significant sexual encounters. Through this structure, the novel posits a blurry line between sexual and religious ecstasy, and portrays a conversion experience that is simultaneously fully sacred and profane. Whereas Helga's experience of ecstasy in the cabaret is neither fully transcendent nor bodily, the conversion manages to be completely both.

The chain of events leading up to Helga's conversion begins with her unsuccessful and humiliating attempt to finally act on her passionate feelings towards Robert Anderson, a man about whom she has ambivalent feelings. Reading his cues—including a drunken kiss—as a desire to have sex, Helga attempts to initiate sex, only to be rejected. Following this final interaction with Robert, the narrator describes Helga as "broken" because of her own knowledge that she had "made a fool of herself" in front of him (Larsen 109-10). More than humiliation, though, Helga feels "distracted," "agitated," and "incapable of containing herself" (Larsen 110). Whereas the cabaret showed Helga uneasily sensing herself changing, Helga's response to Robert is to feel the need to escape her physical form, but the inability to do so. Unsure of how to address her discontent and sorrow, Helga dresses up and wanders outside, despondent.

Helga's ramblings through the city show her desire to have control over her appearance. Indeed, she enters the small storefront church because she is concerned about dying in "such a messy, wet manner," demonstrating her continued cognizance of the complicated relationship between her façade and her interior. These natural forces both imperil Helga's agency over her surface, and also remind Helga about her inability to escape her body. Helga's experiences with Robert and then outside of the storefront church seems to emphasize to Helga that she cannot make herself feel at home by modifying her appearance, and she cannot successfully escape her body.

Helga thus enters the small space of God with a feeling of hopelessness, yet is greeted by a song that suggests a new, potentially problematic solution. Shortly after entering the storefront church, the believers sing the hymn "All of Thee," the lyrics of which progresses from exhorting "All of self, none of Thee" to "less of self, more of Thee" (Larsen 111).[7] The lyrics describe a relationship with the body that involves dissolving or perhaps abandoning the self completely and replacing the self with an outside force: God. In the cabaret Helga felt her self momentarily transported outside of time and place, but realized she had actually remained tied to her body. As such, the church offers a kind of transcendence unavailable anywhere else.

The church, like the cabaret and the experience with Robert Anderson, initially alarms Helga, but eventually affirms her desires to fully transcend her body. The conversion scene echoes the jungle experience in the cabaret scene in that Helga again has a sense that she is experiencing something from a far-off time and place. When she enters the storefront church, "she was aware that, inside, people were singing a song which she was conscious of

[7] The first hymn they sing upon her entering is "Showers of Blessing," which made Helga laugh hysterically.

having heard years ago—hundreds of years it seemed;" the word "seemed" emphasizes the affective valence of Helga's experience in the church (Larsen 110). The steadfastness of the worship further contributes to Helga's transport to another world, especially in the repeated "cadenced" or "moaning chant" that proceeds "with the persistence of some unconquerable faith exalted beyond time and reality" (Larsen 113). Helga's response to the church service morphs from a concern with being transported elsewhere to fear of transformation, as she interprets the congregants changing from human to animal. Interested in the women of the congregation, Helga sees them reaching towards her with "savage frenzy," "dragg[ing] themselves upon their knees […] like reptiles." Although Helga is scared, feeling that she is being overtaken by an "obsession," something about the groups of women transforming their human bodies pulls her in. Indeed, it is at this moment that the narrator declares, "the thing became real," indicating Helga's sense of genuine conversion (Larsen 114). Despite her skepticism of and disdain for the ecstatic religiosity around her, the possibility of completely changing her self draws Helga in and, at least temporarily, satisfies her.

Helga describes her experience right after "the thing became real" as a shift outside of time and place, away from surfaces, and away from the life and self she has known. Helga felt "a miraculous calm," as "life seemed to expand, and to become very easy." Indeed, the elusive happiness Helga felt unable to define in the early part of the book becomes clear and attainable at this moment: "Helga Crane felt within her a supreme aspiration toward the regaining of simple happiness, a happiness unburdened by the complexities of the lives she had known." And as the "realness" of the conversion experience permeates her, Helga "seem[s] to sink back into the mysterious grandeur and holiness of far-off simpler centuries"

(Larsen 114). Helga's later meditations on her conversion indicate that she has been able to change, to reconstitute her self as a new person.

Quicksand portrays conversion as an ecstatic experience that destabilizes Hegla's sense of who she is. In using the term "destabilization" I reference Massimo Leone's semiotic analysis of conversion texts in which he describes accounts of conversion experiences portraying three stages: destabilization, crisis, and restabilization. Leone argues that the destabilization of conversion is an event in which "the system of religious (or irreligious) ideas of a person is shaken by the encounter with a spiritual message which speaks a different language" (1). Specifically, Leone claims that this "disorganization of the (more or less) coherent structure of beliefs" is one that happens to "both the person (or psychical) and collective (or social) identity of a person" (79). Leone theorizes that written accounts of conversion depict the experience as one that disrupts and then reorganizes a unified sense of the self. Helga's conversion, then, serves to reconstitute the individual—to give her a new language and understanding of the self and surroundings, a result of conversion Leone calls "restabilization."

Helga reorganizes herself as a religious person bartering things for happiness. It is clear that the novel engages with the possibility that conversion may offer Helga a kind of control over her body attained through transcending her body. She explicitly states finding peace and happiness in this moment, and as such the conversion cannot be written off as unimportant or unproductive for Helga. Nevertheless, the novel also indicates Larsen's ambivalence about this solution to Helga's unhappiness. Immediately after Helga's conversion, the holy Reverend Pleasant Green has sex with his new convert, an experience that the novel suggests is simultaneously coercive by Green and also empowering for Helga.

As Pleasant Green walks Helga home, Helga muses to herself that the Reverend's mind aims to be about spiritual things, but is, "by habit, at home amongst the mere material aspect of things, and at that moment consumed by some longing for the ecstasy that might lurk behind the gleam of her cheek, the flying wave of her hair, the pressure of her slim fingers on his heavy arm" (Larsen 115-16). The novel's narrator suggests that Helga does not blame the Reverend the morning after the seduction, but rather thinks that *she* seduced *him*, because "it's that easy." This blurring of religious and sexual feelings, especially at the hands of a religious leader, makes the conversion scene troubling indeed, and as such the sex scene also highlights the novel's ambivalence toward Helga's conversion. Helga's manipulation by and of Reverend Green positions her conversion as both sacred and profane (both in the sense of being non-religious and also obscene).

Through Helga's experience with Reverend Pleasant Green, the novel highlights both the exploitative nature of Helga's conversion, and also her sense that it may also be something other than exploitation.[8] Helga later explains the conversion as her chance to be free from things, and in the process, the text obfuscates whether it is religious or sexual ecstasy that gives her this relief. The day after Helga experiences her conversion—which is also the day after she sleeps with the Reverend—Helga expresses happiness that this is the first time her life *isn't* about things. In fact, she declares to herself, "all I've ever had in life has been things—except just this one time." The text leaves ambiguous what this "one time" is: was it when she experienced conversion, or when she had sex? The narrator mentions that

[8] Ann duCille argues that "*Conversion* is an interesting word, used satirically by Larsen to refer to and to link Helga's religious and sexual initiations," but reads this as a way for "Larsen…to indict marriage, family, and religion as institutions which conspire to constrict and confine female sexual and spiritual independence." See duCille, *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), 111. While I agree with that linkage, I want to suggest such a linkage does something more complex than just indict religion.

"she couldn't be sure that it wasn't religion that had made her feel so utterly different from dreadful yesterday," but she clearly is not certain that it *was* religion. Helga finally decides that "things…hadn't been, weren't, enough for her. She'd have to have something else besides. It all came back to that old question of happiness. Surely this was it." Again, the text is unclear as to what *this* is. The word "it" seems to refer to "happiness" and the word "this" seems to refer to her current sense of self, but the text does not specify what, precisely, is synonymous with or conducive of happiness. Helga goes on to ponder if she can pay the cost required to "retain, to bear, this happiness" (Larsen 116). Finally she makes clear that:

> …she had made her decision. Her resolution. It was a chance at stability, at permanent happiness, that she meant to take. She had let so many other things, other chances, escape her. And anyway there was God, He would perhaps make it come out all right. Still confused and not so sure that it wasn't the fact that she was 'saved' that had contributed to this after feeling of well-being, she clutched the hope, the desire to believe that now at last she had found some One, some Power, who was interested in her. Would help her. (Larsen 117).

Again the text obfuscates the root of Helga's transformation, though it does illuminate Helga's sense that she can find hope only outside of her self, a thought that immediately seems to be her saving grace, but ultimately proves to be her failure. Again, the novel holds in tension opposing possibilities—manipulation and agency, subjugation and liberation, the profane and the sacred. The storefront church is crucial for the novel's ability to show such a conflicting experience, and as such understanding Helga's conversion means contextualizing the space of her conversion.

Storefront Churches

Larsen's choice of a storefront church as the setting for Helga's conversion enables the novel to demonstrate its ambivalence about religious conversion insofar as storefront churches during the Great Migration were spaces that held together a series of opposites—specifically, urban and rural, home and far away, sacred and profane. Indeed, Helga had two other opportunities to embrace Christianity, and she rejected all but the conversion in the storefront church. The first time we see Helga respond to Christianity is when she is sitting in her room in Naxos. After pondering the beautiful items surrounding her, Helga reflects on a recent talk at Naxos given by a southern white preacher. Helga condemns the preacher for being "banal," "patronizing," and "insulting" in his remarks. The preacher had encouraged the students of Naxos to have "good sense" and "good taste," by which he meant avoid being "avaricious and grasping," and "stay in their places" (Larsen 3). In this scene, Helga seethes at this version of Christianity that extols "contentment," and this version of "the South" that hems African Americans in. When she moves to the North, Helga experiences an alternative form of black Christianity at a large, established church in Chicago. Despite not thinking herself religious, Helga "attended the very fashionable, very high services in the Negro Episcopal church on Michigan Avenue," where she "hoped that some good Christian would speak to her, invite her to return, or inquire kindly if she was a stranger in the city," but "none did," and "she became bitter, distrusting religion more than ever" (Larsen 34). By the time Helga arrives at the storefront church, then, we know that she could only be interested in a religious service that is not quite southern, but is warmer and more welcoming than a northern church, and a service that encourages believers not to be simply content, nor to be simply fashionable.

It is fitting that *Quicksand* stages Helga's conversion in a storefront church, as it was a space that brought the South into the North, combined the sacred and the secular, and, as such, allowed for personal and spiritual reinvention. Many American storefront churches were founded during the Great Migration in order to serve as worship centers for southern migrants.[9] African Americans from the South hoped for stable work and better treatment than they found in the South, but often found the North unfamiliar and isolating; as such, many sought out help in religious groups.[10] While some of these believers joined established churches, many looked for worship services inflected with southern culture and structured with familiarity in mind. Storefront churches in 1920s New York symbolized the generative possibilities of religious practice by being spaces of cultural reinvention, but to many northerners, these religious spaces also represented manipulative religion. Helga's moment of conversion embodies both positive and negative perspectives on storefront churches infusing popular and artistic conversations during the Harlem Renaissance. In *Quicksand*, then, the

[9] Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana U P, 1989). Carole Marks places the beginning of the migration in the year 1916, when the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, "motivated by a shortage of labor and influenced by a venture to import black students to Connecticut tobacco fields, sent agents South to recruit new laborers" (1). Marks notes that, though the migration happened between 1916 and 1930, it is "conservatively estimated that over 400,000 left in the two-year period, 1916-1918" (1). Marks argues that the Great Migration occurred primarily as a response to, first, the "environmental calamity" of the boll weevil, and second, the South taking on colony status in relation to the North. As to the second, Marks argues that the products of northern industrialism consistently undercut southern consumer goods, and, as a result, "certain sectors of the southern population became both expendable and superfluous," in particular the population not engaged in agricultural labor. These two "push" factors created a perfect labor market for northern cities dealing with reduced immigrant laborers due to the European war, thus creating a "pull" factor. The final "pull" factor was the potential for less discriminatory racial practices. Wallace D. Best observes that the migration in fact occurred in two phases, with the second happening from the Second World War until the early seventies. See Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005), 7.

[10] Mary E. Abrums, studying a single storefront congregation in migration-era Seattle, declares that today, "all the members…have roots in the South." Abrums, *Moving the Rock: Poverty and Faith in a Black Storefront Church* (Plymouth, UK: AltaMira P, 2010).

storefront church is an emotional space of home and renewal, and yet also place of entrapment.

The unconventional religious spaces of the storefront served a psychological function of being a "home" for people out of place in the city. For many migrants, the small, informal spaces provided more intimacy, comfort, and southern culture than established churches. Often, church people moved north and "then invited their minister to join them to reorganize a church depleted by exodus," thus bringing a nearly intact southern church to the North (Sernett 160-61). A 1920s Chicago businessman explains the sense of home provided by these religious organizations in this way:

> Many of the older people, especially from the South like small churches, because they are homelike…Then too, the people are poor, and some of them can't dress fancy enough to want to be seen in a big church…Some want to lead the prayer meetings, teach Sunday school and the like who feel that their old backwoods prayers and their manner of speech won't fit into the larger churches. (Drake in Sernett 289, fn 39)

This unnamed businessman details common reasons that new migrants from the South might have preferred a storefront church. Much as in the case of Helga's experience in a large church in Chicago, southern migrants often found larger churches unfamiliar and unwelcoming due to cultural differences and, at times, class differences.[11] Mary E. Abrums explains that the storefront church provided community and comfort for migrants who "were required to adapt to a mostly white world where it was cold and rainy and far away from home" (Abrums xvii). Similarly, historian Robert L. Boyd declares, "migrants often felt

[11] Wallace Best notes that class during the migration era was not clear-cut, and in fact, many black communities engaged in class formation due to the influx of migrants. In fact, migrants seemed to form a new working-class that existed not as the lowest class, but as a lower middle class group. See Best, 40.

anonymous and alienated in the larger churches of the urban North," and were thus drawn to smaller, less traditional religious spaces.

Storefront churches provided not only a space of cultural familiarity, but also a spiritual home, because they often housed emotional, "southern folk" styles of worship.[12] Congregations in storefront churches did not share a homogenous sense of worship; nevertheless, as Wallace Best insists, their southern roots lent themselves to particularly demonstrative worship (55). By transporting practices such as shouting, lively singing, and, later, gospel music, these religious spaces infused the north with southern religious affect; these believers created spaces that were adamantly both northern and southern, and demonstrated cultural refashioning, what Wallace Best describes as the active construction of religion (Best 3-5).[13] Best argues, "far from being passive observers of religion during the Great Migration, black Christians actively produced a religious cultural expression that reflected social, cultural, and political concerns" (3). Ira E. Harrison uses more uplifting language, claiming, "Storefront churches may be seen as revitalization movements" because they are deliberate, conscious, organized efforts of migrants to create a more satisfying mode of existence by refurbishing rural religious behavior to an urban environment" (162). According to Valeria G. Harvall, storefront churches then served as places where believers could "craft new identities or revamp old ones" (157).

Quicksand presents the storefront church as warmer, more home-like religious center than the cold Chicago church; the novel, though, also suggests that the storefront church counters the contentment and stasis recommended by the white preacher by allowing for

[12] Sernett notes that "storefronts have been characterized as bizarre, doctrinally deviant religious groups" (188).
[13] Evelyn Higginbotham explains the work of poor African American believers in stronger language, claiming, "the black poor waged a struggle over cultural authority" (159).

creative refashioning of practices, individuals, and spaces. Just as the worship and affective environment of storefront churches created a hybrid space, so the physical environment suggested the possibility of transformation by combining the sacred and the profane. Storefront churches were housed in former commercial spaces and, Harvall argues, believers "improvised their own 'space' by converting vacant secular buildings into sacred facilities" (160). "Emerg[ing] from the depression of the neighborhood," storefront churches filled empty spaces with religious life, but "bluntly remind[ed] people of that depression by occupying otherwise vacant commercial spaces" (Harvell 157). Believers refurbished the spaces such that their exteriors reflected the new life within; Herbert Collins notes, "the facades are painted, papered, curtained, or sheathed, and generally embellished with biblical iconography" (66).

Architecturally commercial and yet ornamented with the décor of the sacred, storefront churches blurred the line between religious and secular. The building of a storefront church thus always referenced commercial transactions as well as divine interactions: though religious, storefront churches as buildings begged the questions of whether residues of commerce remained in the worship space and whether bits of the sacred might have seeped into the secular world outside. [14] It is a space that, in *Quicksand*, allows Larsen to portray Helga's conversion as one that is pure *and* sullied, liberating *and* confining, transcendent *and* bodily. As such, the storefront church works in *Quicksand* as space of opportunity wherein Helga can reshape her identity.

[14] For more on the blurring of sacred and secular spaces, see Candy Gunther Brown's work on spaces of healing. See especially "From Tent Meetings and Store-front Healing Rooms to Walmarts and the Internet: Healing Spaces in the United States, the Americas, and the World, 1906-2006." Omar McRoberts explains that they "break tacit societal norms about where and how people should worship" (McRoberts 57).

Nella Larsen turns to the storefront church in *Quicksand* as a space of possibility and regeneration for Helga; yet, Larsen also leans on the storefront church to capture the repressive aspects of religious life. Storefront churches served migrating southerners well, but northerners such like Larsen expressed concern that these unconventional worship spaces may have done more harm than good. In voicing concerns, northerners registered anxiety about the changing face of the urban landscape and often leaned on negative stereotypes about southern culture and emotional religion.[15] Southern believers came to the North as a part of the lower classes, and participated in a worship style that critics characterized as "stressing otherworldly religion at the expense of progressive social action" (Sernett 161).[16] In other words, northerners characterized participants in storefront worship services as being primitive in the sense of caught up in some far off land, much like dancers transported to a far off jungle. Concerns about this "otherworldly" nature of storefront churches were voiced by not only established religious organizations, but also by the arts community in Harlem.

Although Nella Larsen is rarely seen as an important voice on black religiosity during the Harlem Renaissance, in *Quicksand* she engages in popular and literary conversations on the possibilities and dangers of new forms of Christianity in the North. [17] None of the major

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[15] Black and white northerners alike expressed worry about the "rapid increase" of the congregations, gesturing at concern about the kind of people populating new congregations in the North (Sernett, 191). Some articulated this worry as a concern about the possibility of over-churching the urban environment, leading churches to close for a lack of people to fill the pews; others worried that northern black communities would fracture from such an excess of sites of worship (Best, 52-3). Best, however, stresses that, "the content of these complaints revealed that the concern was not so much about the number [and possible reduction] of mainstream churches but the kinds of churches and the people who occupied" storefront churches (52, 54).

[16] Indeed, St. Clare Drake notes that storefront churches became thought of as "the religion of the lower class" due to their location in run-down parts of cities. Drake in Best 55.

[17] To say there is a paucity of work on the Harlem Renaissance and religion is an understatement. To my knowledge, there is only one sustained study: Jon Michael Spencer, "The Black Church and the Harlem Renaissance." Texts such as Jean Toomer's *Cane*, James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*, and Zora Neale Hurston's writing collected in *The Sanctified Church* incorporated or

biographies about Larsen devote time to explaining her relationship with religion; nevertheless, *Quicksand* suggests that we rethink her supposed silence on religion, especially given the contested space of the storefront church in 1920s Harlem.[18]

James Weldon Johnson's writings exemplify concerns about the culture and form of Christianity imported from the South through storefront churches, and as such, his critiques shed light on how *Quicksand*'s storefront church serves as a warning about manipulative religion. In his book *Negro Americans, What Now?*, Johnson describes his concern with a certain form of African American Christianity permeating Harlem and beyond. Johnson declares:

> The church together with the race as a whole must do a certain amount of clearing away in the religious field. We must stamp out as far as we can the bootleggers of religion, those parasites who, whenever they can get together a sufficient number of poor, hard-working women, will … peddle a spurious brand of Christianity at a relatively exorbitant price. (21)

Johnson's description of the congregants as "poor" and "hardworking" suggests religious groups that drew in African Americans of low socioeconomic standing, which points to storefront churches. Further, his description of the leaders as "bootleggers" and "parasites" suggests foreign or non-local figures entering into a community, and promoting something alien to that community, again gesturing towards the form of Christianity imported from the

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engaged with black religiosity, and as such require more study as texts that speak to churches during the Harlem Renaissance.

[18] Thadious Davis and George Hutchinson, both address Larsen's relationship to organized religion by briefly mentioning that she was not religious, was uncomfortable with religion, and married into a religious family (that of Elmer Imes). See Davis, 59, 104, 122, and 172. See Hutchinson, 56, 124, 219, and 280. Jon Michael Spencer suggests the lack of scholarly interest in her approach to religion may be because of her stated atheism. Darryl Pinckney, though, claims, "as a member of a white immigrant family, [Larsen] had no entrée into the world of the…black church" and as such had little to say about the church (26-28).

South via the Great Migration, and usually found in storefront churches. Finally, Johnson's characterization of the congregants as specifically women taps into the stereotype of emotional religion as primarily a women's world, as a place for possibly erotic release and taboo expression of feelings. In this moment, then, Johnson strongly echoes Helga Crane's revulsion of the "reptile"-like women shouting for Helga's soul.

In a later passage, Johnson characterizes the storefront religion as "hypnotic," a familiar characterization of emotional religious practices in the first half of the twentieth century, that indicates discrimination based on class or region. Johnson exhorts the church to "abolish hypnotic religion, that religion which excites the visions of the delights of life in the world to come" (23). Johnson describes this emotional religion as hypnotizing African American believers through promises of the afterlife. His concerns draw on very real and founded concerns of white Christianity fed to black slaves with the goal of mollifying them. Indeed, Johnson goes on to note that this form of religiosity "gives us no insight into the conditions we encounter in the world in which we now live," reaffirming the sense that this heaven-centered "hypnosis" is used to blind black Americans to the inequalities around them.

Quicksand uses the storefront church to suggest the creative potential of religious conversion. Helga finds that particular religious space compelling because it combines the North and the South, and the secular and the profane. Helga is also drawn to conversion in the nontraditional space because it is a space that encourages refashioning, which gives Helga the hope that she can become a different person, one who feels at home in her body and in her environment. The storefront church as a symbol, though, also carries with it the possibility of manipulation, of drawing believers' gazes towards heaven in order to prevent them from seeing oppression on earth. This latter, critical view of religion saturates Helga's

life in Alabama, and as such illuminates Larsen's deep ambivalence about Helga's conversion.

After "the thing became real"

Helga's life after her conversion is nothing short of a tragedy. Indeed, the book is unequivocal about her time in Alabama: Helga's existence in the South is terrible. Her experiences are marked by an insistence that she is out of place in the town until she rescinds any agency in what home might mean, and until she resigns herself to being fully shackled to her body. Despite temporarily accepting these terms, Helga ends the novel forlorn and angry over her entrapment. Helga's time in Alabama serve as a fulfillment of the warnings present in the stereotypes of the storefront church.

Helga seems happy at first in Alabama, yet she is quickly reminded that she does not fit in the town and has no control over her body. Although she is enthusiastic about her new life for some time, the narrator notes, "after the first exciting months Helga was too driven, too occupied, and too sick to carry out any of the things for which she had made such enthusiastic plans." Pregnancy, which begins after several months and continues, nearly unabated for twenty months, takes over her home and body. Helga's sense of frustration with her own body is highlighted in a moment of disjuncture between what Helga tells us (through the narrator), and what we know from earlier in the novel. When Helga first becomes pregnant, the narrator describes Helga's surprise by explaining that "she, who had never thought of her body save as something on which to hang lovely fabrics, had now constantly to think of it" (Larsen 123). While we may assume that Helga's interactions with her body change radically with pregnancy, the novel makes clear throughout that Helga is aware of her body in the world, and more precisely, she is cognizant of not feeling comfortable in her

body. This moment, like her declaration about her home when she is in Copenhagen, serves not to suggest that she once felt comfortable in her body, but rather to emphasize that she now certainly does not.

Helga's only recourse seems to be accepting that she can have little to no control over her life. After having three children in the space of twenty months, Helga visits another woman in town, Sary Jones, to ask advice. Sary's advice is to "Jes' make de be' yuh can," because, "we all gits ouah res' by an' by. In de nex' worl' we's all recompense'. Jes' put yo' trus' in de Sabioah" (Larsen 125). The community of faith encourages her to give up any sense of agency over her life; in fact, Sary Jones seems to suggest that this is not mere advice, but Christian teaching.

Indeed, most important to this chapter is Helga's changing opinion on religion. For some time she embraces Sary Jones's advice and discovers that "the possibility of alleviating her burdens by a greater faith became lodged in her mind," and giving herself over to it, she finds "it *did* help. And the beauty of leaning on the wisdom of God, trusting, gave to her a queer sort of satisfaction." For some time, then, Helga believes this practice of faith—which became easier as she weakened—protected her "from the cruel and unbearable reality" of her life (Larsen 126, italics hers). Only after a near-death labor does Helga change her views on religion, and she does so forcefully and thoroughly. Upon waking from her deep, coma-like sleep, Helga "knew only that, in the hideous agony that for interminable hours—no, centuries—she had borne, the luster of religion had vanished," and along with that, she had developed a "revulsion" towards her husband (Larsen 129).

Helga first ties her disgust with religion to her husband, but as the narrator expands on her feelings, it becomes clear that Helga feels personally betrayed by a God she believed

in, or, more accurately, betrayed by the idea of the God she believed in. The narrator explains:

> In that period of racking pain and calamitous fright Helga had learned what passion and credulity could do to one. In her was born angry bitterness and an enormous disgust. The cruel, unrelieved suffering had beaten down her protective wall of artificial faith in the infinite wisdom, in the mercy, of God. For had she not called in her agony on Him? And He had not heard. Why? Because, she knew now, He wasn't there. Didn't exist. (Larsen 130).

Helga's sense of abandonment by the God she had believed in transitions to her believing that the idea of God was developed by the oppressive white hegemony in order to keep African Americans blind to worldly inequality. Helga describes "the obscuring curtain of religion" as only offering:

> The white man's God. And His great love for all people regardless of race! What idiotic nonsense she had allowed herself to believe. How could she, how could anyone, have been so deluded? How could ten million black folk credit it when daily before their eyes was enacted a contradiction? (Larsen 130).

Helga expresses with absolute certainty that religion in America "enacts a contradiction" by telling believers that they are all loved, but by refusing them equal care and love in society. Helga does momentarily "admit that it wasn't new, this feeling of dissatisfaction, of asphyxiation. Something like it she had experienced before. In Naxos. In New York. In Copenhagen. This differed only in degree. And it was of the present and therefore seemingly more reasonable" (Larsen 134). Nevertheless, Helga and the novel tie her unhappiness to the particular form of religion she first encountered in a storefront church in New York.

In the passages on Helga's time in Alabama, *Quicksand* leans heavily on the kinds of stereotypes of storefront religion that peppered James Weldon Johnson's writings. It is my contention that Larsen invokes the storefront church in order to explore both the potential and the danger of such a church, and in order to describe the danger, she turns to the stereotypes available to northerners during the 1920s. The novel uses the stereotype of storefront church patrons as poor southerners to help populate Helga's Alabama town, and also to fill out what Helga encounters as the victims of religious propaganda. While thinking about her near-death experience and developing her new perspective on religion, Helga notes that, "religion had, after all, its uses. It blunted the perceptions. Robbed life of its crudest truths. Especially it had its uses for the poor—and the blacks." At this juncture, Helga refers to Sary Jones's "childlike trust" and "absolute conviction, 'In de nex' worl' we's all recompense'" as examples of the ill fate of believers (Larsen 133). The novel's use of dialect for southern African Americans underscores Helga's implied sense that these believers are not only southern and poor, but also simple-minded. At the end of the novel, the narrator declares that, "the neighbors and churchfolk came in for their share of [Helga's] all-embracing hatred. She hated their raucous laughter, their stupid acceptance of all things, and their unfailing trust in 'de Lawd'" (Larsen 134). Helga interprets these southern believers according to northern stereotypes about storefront church participants, and *Quicksand* exploits those stereotypes in order to critique religious communities' responses to racial oppression.

The novel is unequivocal about Helga's story being a tragedy, and the tragedy is one of her body and her place. Larsen draws on negative portrayals of storefront churches in order to delineate the dangers of becoming a part of a religious community, especially for an

African American woman. Thus, the conversion scene gives her a moment of transcendence, but life in a repressive religious town more firmly ties her to her body and to the place.

Conclusion

After trying several strategies to feel more at home, Helga embraces conversion, and embraces it fully. To understand this moment we must contextualize the conversion as one of a specific kind—emotional, crisis-like—and as one happening in a specific place—the storefront church. The storefront church holds opposites together; it contains the urban and the rural, the bodily and the transcendent, and the profane and the sacred. In this novel it also holds together great potential and great danger. As a place of opposites, the storefront church creates a space between such categories, and as such presents Helga with the potential to step outside of her fixed identity. This relief, though, is temporary, as her move to Alabama serves only to cement her identity and trap her in the roles of wife and mother. As such, the storefront church also represents the danger of religious community.

We must address the conversion scene in light of what comes after it, but we must also resist the urge to reduce the moment of conversion to what comes after it. In other words, *Quicksand* asks us to think ambivalently about Helga's religious transformation; the novel portrays Helga's conversion as a sincere, productive moment for the character, a moment that allows her to step outside of her racialized and gendered body and her historical place. The moment religious practice becomes danger is the moment when Helga stops searching and settles in Alabama. When Helga puts down roots, she becomes trapped in a repressive community.

This, like many of the stories that animate this project, is a story of failure. After her conversion, Helga's attempts to balance the change promised by the storefront structure lead to her entrapment in an oppressive community. The possibility of change melts away leaving only fixedness and despair. *Quicksand*, though, dares us to read Helga, and other religious women, as potentially acting out of a desire for a complex sense of self—a sense of self that sees the possibility of change that does not necessarily lead to entrapment.

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DISSERTATION

Title: "Power and Ecstasy: Race, Religion, and Psychology in America, 1890-1930"
Committee: Jennifer Fleissner (director), Paul Gutjahr, Candy Gunther Brown, Christoph Irmscher

"Power and Ecstasy" is a study of the language used to describe ecstatic religious experiences at the turn of the twentieth century in America. By bringing together literary, religious, and psychological texts, "Power and Ecstasy" argues that writers mobilized ecstatic religious experiences in order to contest racial inequality.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American fiction; theories of race and gender; American psychology; American religious history; religious minorities in America

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Review Article

"The Pleasure of Habit," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 71.4 (October 2007): 531-47.

Book Review

Review of *The Rabbi's Daughter: A Memoir*, by Reva Mann. *The Indiana Review*, 31.1 (Summer 2009), 80.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Tarkington Fellowship in American Literature (Fall 2010)
Indiana University, Department of English

Nominated for "Best First-Year Teacher Award" (Spring 2007)
Indiana University, Department of English

Departmental Fellowship (Fall 2005-Spring 2006)
Indiana University, Department of English

Thresher Award for Outstanding Senior Thesis (Spring 2004)
Bethel College

Presidential Academic Award (Fall 2000-Spring 2004)
Bethel College

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentations

"Sweet and Clean as a Washing Machine: Early Pentecostalism and Psychology at the Turn of the Century" (January 2011), *MLA*, Los Angeles, CA

"The Potential of Ecstasy: Race, Pentecostalism, and Psychology at the Turn of the Century" (May 2010), *C19: The Society of 19th-Century Americanists*, Penn State University

"The Pleasure of Habit in Mennonite Cookbooks" (Fall 2006), *Mennonite/s Writing*, Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio

"An Act of Faith: Allegory and Narrative in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*" (Spring 2006), *Festival of Faith and Writing*, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

"The Move of a Decade: Nikki Giovanni's Poetry, 1968-1978" (Spring 2006), *LitFest*, the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio

Invited Talks

"An Early Pentecostal Politics of Race" (May 2013), Trinity Episcopal Church, Bloomington, Indiana

"Sweet and Clean Like a Washing Machine: Turn of the Century Crowd Psychology and a Pentecostal Politics of Race " (September 2012), Americanist Research Colloquium, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

"Race in *The Apostolic Faith*" (October 2012), Catholic Worker Roundtable, Bloomington, Indiana

"Pentecostalism in Print: Reading *The Apostolic Faith*" (March 2010), *Protestant Christianities*, Master's Class, Department of Religious Studies, University of Dayton

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Search Committee, Booth Tarkington Chair of American Literature (2012-13)
Department of English, Indiana University
Attended search committee meetings, helped organize and facilitate campus visits, gathered graduate student responses and presented responses to the faculty.

Graduate Studies Committee (2011-12)
Indiana University, Department of English
Joined faculty meetings about graduate curriculum and served as liaison to the graduate student body.

Undergraduate Studies Committee (2008-09)
Indiana University, Department of English
Attended faculty meetings regarding undergraduate curriculum and served as liaison to the graduate student body.

Organizing Committee for Annual Graduate Student Conference (2008-09)
Indiana University, Department of English
Designated and invited the keynote speakers, helped develop the themes, registered participants, and facilitated national conferences.

Research Assistant for Professor Jennifer L. Fleissner (2007-10)
Indiana University, Department of English
Gathered research, organized findings, delivered materials, and assisted in class preparations.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Indiana University, Visiting Lecturer, Instructor of Record

Professional Writing (2014)
Taught students the rhetoric of different professional documents, created syllabi, constructed assignments, graded assignments and led all classes.

Indiana University, Course Development and Teaching Fellow, Instructor of Record

Advanced Expository Writing for Multilingual Writers (2012)
Developed the department's first Advanced Expository Writing class structured specifically for advanced international students, created the syllabus, constructed all assignments, developed the reading list, graded all assignments, and led all classes.

Indiana University, Teaching Fellow, Instructor of Record

Introduction to Fiction: Transformations (2012, 2013)
Developed courses that introduced students to the analysis of fiction using the theme of transformations as a structuring device, created the syllabi, constructed all assignments developed the reading lists, graded all assignments, and led all classes.

Indiana University, Associate Instructor, Instructor of Record

Professional Writing (2010, 2011, 2013)
Taught students the rhetoric of different professional documents, created syllabi, constructed assignments, graded assignments and led all classes.

Composition for Multilingual Writers (2007, 2008, 2011)
Created composition courses geared specifically toward international students. Created all syllabi, constructed all assignments, developed reading lists, graded all assignments, and led all classes for 6 different sections.

Introduction to College Composition: Online and Offline Identities, Groups College Preparation Course (Summer 2009)
Led a class offered to first-generation college students to teach college-level composition skills through inquiries of what identity means in our technology-saturated world, worked in collaborative teaching teams, created the syllabus, constructed assignments, developed the reading list, graded all assignments and led all classes.

Elementary Composition: The American Dream (2006, 2007)
Developed a course to guide first-year students in college-level composition, created the syllabi, constructed assignments, developed the reading lists, graded all assignments, and led all classes.

Indiana University, Associate Instructor, Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Writing and the Study of Literature: Obsession/Compulsion, taught with Professor Jennifer Fleissner (2009)
Led discussion sections introducing students to approaches to literature, graded all assignments, and developed and gave a lecture to a class of approximately 85.

Introduction to Writing and the Study of Literature: Town and Country—from Virgil to Baby Mama, taught with Professor Scott Herring (2008)
Led discussion sections introducing students to approaches to literature, graded all assignments, and developed and gave a lecture to a class of approximately 85.

Dhamtari Nursing School, Dhamtari, India

Beginning English (2004, 2005)
Developed the nursing college's English language courses for first-year Indian nursing students slated at the beginner level of English, created the syllabi, constructed the assignments, developed the reading list, graded all assignments, and led all classes.

Intermediate English (2004, 2005)Developed English language courses for first-year intermediate Indian nursing students, created the syllabi, constructed the assignments, developed the reading list, graded all assignments, and led all classes.